

1 BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE SENATE FINANCE  
2 AND ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

3 JOINT LEGISLATIVE HEARING

4 In the Matter of the  
5 2023-2024 EXECUTIVE BUDGET ON  
6 HUMAN SERVICES

7 Hearing Room B  
8 Legislative Office Building  
9 Albany, NY

10 February 13, 2023  
11 11:35 a.m.

12 PRESIDING:

13 Senator Liz Krueger  
14 Chair, Senate Finance Committee

15 Assemblywoman Helene E. Weinstein  
16 Chair, Assembly Ways & Means Committee

17 PRESENT:

18 Senator Thomas F. O'Mara  
19 Senate Finance Committee (RM)

20 Assemblyman Edward P. Ra  
21 Assembly Ways & Means Committee (RM)

22 Senator Jabari Brisport  
23 Chair, Senate Committee on Children  
24 and Families

Assemblywoman Maritza Davila  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Social Services

Senator Roxanne Persaud  
Chair, Senate Committee on Social Services

Assemblyman Ron Kim  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Aging

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3 PRESENT: (Continued)

4 Senator Cordell Cleare  
Chair, Senate Committee on Aging

5 Assemblywoman Kimberly Jean-Pierre  
6 Chair, Assembly Committee on Veterans' Affairs

7 Senator Jessica Scarcella-Spanton  
8 Chair, Senate Committee on Veterans,  
Homeland Security and Military Affairs

9 Assemblyman Khaleel M. Anderson

10 Senator John C. Liu

11 Assemblyman Eric M. Dilan

12 Assemblywoman Jennifer Lunsford

13 Senator Samra G. Brouk

14 Assemblywoman Yudelka Tapia

15 Senator Andrew Gounardes

16 Assemblywoman Grace Lee

17 Assemblyman William Conrad

18 Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon

19 Senator Jake Ashby

20 Assemblyman Jeff Gallahan

21 Assemblywoman Taylor Darling

22 Assemblyman Brian Maher

23 Senator Dean Murray

24 Assemblyman Chris Eachus

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3 PRESENT: (Continued)

4 Assemblywoman Sarah Clark

5 Senator Rob Rolison

6 Assemblywoman Marcela Mitaynes

7 Assemblyman Chris Burdick

8 Assemblywoman Jessica González-Rojas

9 Assemblywoman Karines Reyes

10 Senator Alexis Weik

11 Assemblywoman Phara Souffrant Forrest

12 Assemblyman Tony Simone

13 Assemblywoman Pamela J. Hunter

14 Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar

15 Assemblyman Sam Pirozzolo

16 Assemblywoman Marjorie Byrnes

17 Senator Peter Oberacker

18 Assemblyman Juan Ardila

19 Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman

20 Assemblyman Andy Goodell

21 Assemblyman Lester Chang

22 Senator Rachel May

23 Assemblyman Angelo J. Morinello

24

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16	Steven Morales NY Policy Director All Our Kin		
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18	Krista Hesdorfer Government Relations Manager Hunger Solutions New York		
19	-and-		
20	Kate Ryan Executive Director Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance		
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16	William T. Gettman, Jr.		
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17	Northern Rivers Family		
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19	Executive Director		
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5 Joan Gerhardt  
Director of Public Policy  
6 and advocacy  
New York State Coalition Against  
7 Domestic Violence

-and-

8 Emilia Sicilia  
Managing Attorney  
9 Empire Justice Center

-and-

10 Dede Hill  
Director of Policy  
11 Schuyler Center for  
Analysis & Advocacy

-and-

MJ Okma  
13 Senior Manager of Advocacy and  
Government Relations

14 SAGE-Advocacy & Services for  
LGBTQ+ Elders

-and-

15 Stephen Piasecki  
16 Upstate Coordinator  
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17 of New York

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18 Melinda Mack  
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5 Gavin T. Walters Sr.  
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8 Board Member  
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1 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Good morning.

2 I am Helene Weinstein, chair of the  
3 New York State Assembly's Ways and Means  
4 Committee and cochair of today's hearing.

5 Today we begin the sixth in a series  
6 of hearings conducted by the joint fiscal  
7 committees of the Legislature regarding the  
8 Governor's proposed budget for 2023-'24. The  
9 hearings are conducted pursuant to the  
10 New York State Constitution and the  
11 Legislative Law.

12 And today the Assembly Ways and Means  
13 Committee and the Senate Finance Committee  
14 will hear testimony concerning the Governor's  
15 budget proposal for human services.

16 I'll now introduce the members who are  
17 here from the -- in the majority in the  
18 Assembly, and then Senator Krueger, chair of  
19 the Senate Finance Committee, will introduce  
20 her colleagues. And then our ranking members  
21 will introduce their colleagues.

22 So first we have the chair of our  
23 Social Services Committee, Assemblywoman  
24 Maritza Davila. We have Assemblyman Conrad,

1 Assemblywoman Lee, Assemblywoman Lunsford,  
2 Assemblywoman Simon.

3 And I just wanted to mention that some  
4 of our -- that Assemblyman Hevesi  
5 unfortunately -- chair of our Children and  
6 Families Committee -- couldn't be here today.

7 We have Assemblywoman Clark with us.  
8 Senator Krueger?

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
10 much.

11 Good morning. We are joined by  
12 Senator Jabari Brisport, Roxanne Persaud,  
13 John Liu.

14 Senator O'Mara, from the Republican  
15 rankers side, is running a little late, but  
16 we are joined also by Senator Murray,  
17 Senator Weik, Senator Ashby, and  
18 Senator Rolison.

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman Ra,  
20 if you can introduce your colleagues.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Yes, good morning.

22 We are joined by Assemblyman Gallahan;  
23 Assemblywoman Byrnes, our ranker on Children  
24 and Families; and Assemblyman Maher, our

1           ranker on Social Services.

2                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

3                   I just want to -- so we have  
4           Assemblywoman Darling, who's joined us. And  
5           I do think -- oh, sorry, and  
6           Assemblyman Eachus, who's joined us.

7                   And with that, let me go over the  
8           ground rules for today. For both witnesses  
9           and members, I just want to mention the time  
10          clocks and the times. That's -- well,  
11          actually for the governmental witnesses, let  
12          me start there, you'll each have your panel,  
13          but you each have 10 minutes to make your  
14          presentations. And after both of you have  
15          concluded, we will then have questions from  
16          the respective members of both houses.

17                  Nongovernmental witnesses, many of  
18          whom are I believe sitting here will have  
19          three minutes to make their presentation.  
20          And I believe everyone will be in a panel.  
21          Each member of the panel gets three minutes,  
22          and then members will have an opportunity to  
23          ask questions.

24                  In terms of the legislators, in terms

1 of asking questions of the governmental  
2 witnesses, they're 10 minutes for the  
3 chair -- that's 10 minutes for the panel, not  
4 each individual witness. For the rankers of  
5 those -- of the respective committees, it's  
6 five minutes to ask questions and answers.  
7 All other -- and the chairs do get a second  
8 round of three minutes if they need it.

9 All other members, it's three minutes  
10 to ask questions. And when I say ask  
11 questions, it's questions and to get the  
12 answer.

13 Senator Krueger and I have needed to  
14 have a gavel handy after we had an incident  
15 at our first -- at one of our early hearings.  
16 We've yet to have to use it. And as Senator  
17 Krueger says, we haven't figured out if it's  
18 to bang the gavel on the table or to throw it  
19 at unruly individuals.

20 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Legislators, not  
21 the audience.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Not the  
23 audience, yes. The legislators.

24 So I just encourage my colleagues,

1 don't make us have to make a decision on  
2 that.

3 (Laughter.)

4 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So with that, I  
5 believe -- and I know there will be a number  
6 of members coming and going. We do ask the  
7 members to please indicate, by the time the  
8 governmental panel has finished making the  
9 presentation, if you want to ask a question.  
10 Because otherwise we find that people come in  
11 an hour into it and start asking questions  
12 that have already been asked.

13 So with that, I'd like to introduce  
14 our -- and welcome our first presenters for  
15 today, Suzanne Miles-Gustave, acting  
16 commissioner, New York State Office of  
17 Children and Families, and Daniel Tietz,  
18 New York State Office of Temporary and  
19 Disability Assistance.

20 So if -- Suzanne, if you can go first,  
21 and then we'll move on. Thank you.

22 Oh, and just before you go, I'm sorry,  
23 I just want to -- both -- for everyone  
24 listening, all of your testimony has been

1 distributed and received by the members, so  
2 please don't read your full testimony. The  
3 time goes much faster than people think it  
4 does, and then we end up not hearing the meat  
5 of what you want to present to us.

6 So thank you.

7 Senator Krueger, did you want to  
8 introduce some colleagues?

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I do. I just  
10 want to introduce Senator Cordell Cleare.

11 Did any other Senators sneak in? I  
12 think that's it. Thank you.

13 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. I'm  
14 sorry, Suzanne, if you can begin.

15 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
16 Thank you. Good morning, Chairs Krueger and  
17 Weinstein, and Children and Families  
18 Committee Chairs Brisport and Hevesi -- in  
19 his absence -- and distinguished members of  
20 the Senate and Assembly.

21 I am Suzanne Miles-Gustave, the acting  
22 commissioner of the New York State Office of  
23 Children and Family Services. I appreciate  
24 this opportunity to present Governor Hochul's

1 fiscal year 2024 budget and its potential to  
2 enhance our mission -- a mission I know is  
3 near and dear to each of you as well --  
4 ensuring all of New York's children, families  
5 and communities are served and uplifted.

6 This year's Executive Budget makes  
7 smart, responsible investments and provides  
8 ongoing support for OCFS's core childcare,  
9 child welfare, and juvenile justice  
10 programs while advancing a bold and ambitious  
11 agenda to make New York more affordable, more  
12 livable, and more equitable for all  
13 New Yorkers.

14 The Governor's budget proposals  
15 thoughtfully weave investments in children  
16 and families into the fabric of the larger  
17 human services network, rebuilding New York's  
18 mental health care system and addressing the  
19 housing crisis.

20 Never before in New York's history  
21 have we had a Governor with such a deep  
22 commitment to increasing access to quality,  
23 affordable childcare than Governor Hochul.  
24 From the moment she took office, it has been

1 among the Governor's top priorities to build  
2 the strong and equitable childcare system  
3 that New Yorkers need and deserve.

4 Building on the extraordinary momentum  
5 of last year's budget, this proposal  
6 increases the state's commitment to childcare  
7 assistance to an unprecedented 7.6 billion  
8 over four years. The budget would also  
9 increase the income eligibility limits for  
10 childcare assistance to 85 percent of the  
11 state median income -- that's approximately  
12 93,000 per year for a family of four. This  
13 is the maximum allowable by federal law and  
14 will make an estimated 113,000 children newly  
15 eligible for childcare assistance. In total,  
16 the Executive Budget invests over 1 billion  
17 for the New York State Child Care Block  
18 Grant, an increase from year to year of  
19 \$137.5 million.

20 And we'll address the patchwork of  
21 standards across the state, ensuring that all  
22 of our most vulnerable families -- such as  
23 those who are unhoused or those who are  
24 caring for children in foster care or kinship

1 care -- are provided the childcare assistance  
2 they so desperately need.

3 There's no doubt we need this funding  
4 to make childcare assistance available to  
5 more families. But we also know that less  
6 than 10 percent of all eligible children  
7 actually receive assistance. Although there  
8 are many reasons this might be the case, one  
9 barrier is New York's cumbersome and  
10 antiquated application process, which makes  
11 it far too difficult for families to apply  
12 for assistance. This year's budget includes  
13 important initiatives to streamline and  
14 centralize the childcare assistance  
15 application process.

16 First, we'll launch a statewide online  
17 solution that will allow families to  
18 pre-screen for eligibility and apply for  
19 assistance electronically.

20 Additionally, for families that  
21 already participate in other programs such as  
22 SNAP, HEAP, Medicaid and WIC, the budget  
23 proposes to eliminate the senseless and  
24 redundant requirement that these families

1           also prove their income eligibility for  
2           childcare assistance. This will provide  
3           easier access for an estimated  
4           83,000 children and families that are already  
5           eligible.

6                        Last year we invested in a second  
7           round of stabilization grants for providers,  
8           with at least 75 percent of those funds  
9           dedicated specifically to supporting the  
10          workforce. This year the budget invests an  
11          additional 389 million for a third round of  
12          stabilization grants for workforce retention  
13          incentives.

14                      The budget also maintains last year's  
15          investment to support the increase in the  
16          market rate to the 80th percentile, among the  
17          highest in the nation -- which not only  
18          broadens childcare options for families but  
19          also dramatically increases payments to  
20          providers, by over 40 percent for some.

21                      Building off of last year's successful  
22          \$100 million childcare desert initiative, the  
23          Governor's budget also includes several  
24          proposals aimed at rebuilding the supply of

1 childcare.

2 First, New York Homes and Community  
3 Renewal will give priority to applications  
4 for its low-income housing tax credit that  
5 incorporate space for childcare facilities.  
6 On top of that, the budget proposes a  
7 flexible statewide business income tax credit  
8 for businesses that create or expand  
9 childcare slots for their employees.

10 The budget also provides 4.8 million  
11 to launch a new Employer-Supported Childcare  
12 Pilot Program in three regions of the state.  
13 Employers would contribute a third of the  
14 cost for low- and middle-income families, and  
15 the state will match it, reducing  
16 out-of-pocket costs for families who would  
17 not otherwise be eligible for childcare  
18 assistance.

19 Finally, the budget invests \$1 million  
20 in state dollars for a new business navigator  
21 program in each of the state's 10 Regional  
22 Economic Development Council regions, to help  
23 businesses identify childcare options for  
24 their employees.

1                   The Executive Budget also makes  
2                   important investments in New York's most  
3                   vulnerable children and families by investing  
4                   7 million for preventive and permanency  
5                   placement services for foster, adoptive and  
6                   kinship families. The 2.5 percent COLA  
7                   that's included in this year's budget will  
8                   also benefit families and the voluntary  
9                   agencies who care for New York's children in  
10                  foster care and adoptive parents.

11                  The budget also increases the  
12                  appropriation authority for child welfare  
13                  payments, reinforcing the state's commitment  
14                  to this landmark funding stream that provides  
15                  an open-ended reimbursement for preventive  
16                  services, child protective services,  
17                  independent living services, after-care  
18                  services, and adoption assistance.

19                  The budget includes 17 million to  
20                  support voluntary foster care agencies that  
21                  provide medically necessary care to children  
22                  and youth placed in congregate settings and  
23                  that are impacted by federal requirements  
24                  related to Institutions for Mental Disease,

1 or IMD. For impacted voluntary foster care  
2 agencies, this funding will support the  
3 hiring of necessary staff, mitigate the loss  
4 of federal Medicaid reimbursement, and allow  
5 them to invest in additional programmatic  
6 needs.

7 OCFs applauds Governor Hochul's  
8 proposal to index the state's minimum wage to  
9 inflation, which will provide a vital  
10 economic lifeline to New York's low-wage  
11 workers, who are disproportionately women and  
12 people of color, and many of whom work in  
13 human services.

14 We continue to face a daunting  
15 workforce crisis in careers that are critical  
16 to OCFs's mission. The Governor's budget  
17 also includes 3.8 million to supplement  
18 state-funded contracts to mitigate the impact  
19 of the wage increase on struggling human  
20 services providers.

21 Before I close and take your  
22 questions, I just wanted to take a moment to  
23 say that I'm thrilled to work in partnership  
24 with each of you to accomplish these very

1           lofty goals. It is my unwavering intention  
2           that our services reflect the communities we  
3           serve, that we hear the voices of children,  
4           parents and providers, and that our work  
5           promotes a safe, equitable and justice-driven  
6           reality for all New Yorkers. This is OCFS's  
7           mission.

8                        In closing, this budget reflects our  
9           commitment to the safety and permanency of  
10          New York's children and families and to  
11          uplifting all New Yorkers to a standard that  
12          reflects the dignity and humanity of us all.  
13          Thank you so much.

14                      CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

15                      CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes. Yes, you  
16          can go, and then we'll have questions.

17                      OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Thank you.

18                      Good morning, Chairpersons Krueger and  
19          Weinstein, Social Services Committee chairs  
20          Persaud and Davila, and the other members of  
21          the Senate and Assembly.

22                      I'm Daniel W. Tietz, the commissioner  
23          of the Office of Temporary and Disability  
24          Assistance. I welcome the opportunity to

1 speak to you today about Governor Hochul's  
2 2024 Executive Budget and its impact on the  
3 important work our agency performs on behalf  
4 of New Yorkers.

5 OTDA supervises programs that provide  
6 economic and other assistance and support to  
7 eligible families and individuals. This  
8 includes helping New Yorkers living in or  
9 near poverty meet their essential needs and  
10 ensuring their economic security by providing  
11 opportunities for stable employment, housing,  
12 and nutrition. Our agency carries out this  
13 mission in cooperation with local social  
14 services districts and community-based  
15 service providers.

16 The Governor's budget maintains the  
17 essential funding of our agency's core  
18 programs, which serve the critical needs of  
19 millions of New Yorkers daily, while making  
20 targeted investments for areas of particular  
21 need.

22 Beyond what is proposed relevant to  
23 OTDA's work, Governor Hochul's proposed  
24 budget includes many important initiatives

1           that will undoubtedly improve the lives of  
2           the families and individuals our agency  
3           serves. The Governor's plan proposes  
4           groundbreaking investments in mental health  
5           care, childcare and housing, while focusing  
6           on reducing and preventing gun violence and  
7           helping workers meet increased costs for  
8           household needs by indexing the minimum wage  
9           to inflation.

10                       Significantly, the Executive Budget  
11           includes \$1 billion for OTDA to help New York  
12           City provide shelter and services to support  
13           asylum seekers who have been coming to New  
14           York in record numbers over the last year.  
15           This funding will help offset the costs  
16           incurred through New York City's shelter  
17           system and the Humanitarian Emergency  
18           Response and Relief Centers.

19                       The Governor's historic New York  
20           Housing Compact, which aims to build  
21           800,000 new homes over the next decade, is a  
22           comprehensive and multifaceted approach to  
23           addressing the state's housing shortage.

24                       On a related note, the budget

1 continues the Governor's \$25 billion,  
2 five-year housing plan to create or preserve  
3 100,000 affordable units, including  
4 10,000 supportive housing units. OTDA's --

5 (Protestors interrupt proceeding.)

6 (Off the record.)

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you all  
8 for being here. And I just want to remind  
9 people, we've let you have a few moments to  
10 speak. We've done that at prior hearings. I  
11 want to remind people that you can submit  
12 written testimony. It will be posted on our  
13 website, both the Assembly and the Senate,  
14 and it will be available for all members and  
15 all members of the public to be able to see  
16 that.

17 So I would encourage those that are  
18 here and other members of your organization  
19 to do that, so that we have that information  
20 in writing available to all of us.

21 UNIDENTIFIED PROTESTOR: We appreciate  
22 that.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for  
24 being --

1 (Overtalk from protestors.)

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for  
3 being here. Thank you for being here.

4 (Continued interruption.)

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for  
6 being here. Thank you. Please send in your  
7 written comments --

8 (Continued loud chanting.)

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we will  
10 restart -- we will in a moment start up the  
11 clock now that everybody's woken up.

12 (Laughter.)

13 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: If we could  
14 start the -- are you okay just continuing?

15 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Yup.

16 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. So if we  
17 can just restart the clock, please continue.

18 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I just want  
19 to state my gratitude for the activism and  
20 the participation in democracy that we just  
21 witnessed.

22 On a related note --

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Pull the mic a  
24 little closer, Dan.

1 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Sure.

2 I think I left off here.

3 On a related note, the budget  
4 continues the Governor's \$25 billion,  
5 five-year housing plan to create or preserve  
6 100,000 affordable units, including  
7 10,000 supportive housing units. OTDA's  
8 Homeless Housing and Assistance Program, with  
9 \$128 million in the proposed budget, is a key  
10 part of this effort by funding capital  
11 projects that provide permanent supportive  
12 housing to families and individuals who have  
13 experienced homelessness.

14 HHAP also is the only state resource  
15 for the development of emergency shelters,  
16 which often play a critical role in  
17 communities' comprehensive homeless services  
18 system. Supportive housing brings together  
19 permanent housing and tailored services  
20 necessary for individuals to achieve and  
21 maintain stable lives in the community. The  
22 budget also includes increased funding to  
23 support these critical services and ongoing  
24 operation of permanent supportive housing.

1                   The budget further proposes changes to  
2                   public assistance that will improve the  
3                   economic stability and outlook of recipients,  
4                   and increases access to education and  
5                   training opportunities, by ending the  
6                   requirement for education to be combined with  
7                   other activities after 12 months of  
8                   post-secondary education.

9                   Additionally, the budget authorizes  
10                  the disregard of income a public assistance  
11                  recipient receives from participating in a  
12                  qualified work activity or training program,  
13                  when calculating their monthly benefit. It  
14                  also provides for a one-time disregard of all  
15                  of a public assistance recipient's earned  
16                  income following job entry for a period of up  
17                  to six consecutive months, provided that the  
18                  recipient's total income does not exceed 200  
19                  percent of the federal poverty level.

20                  These amendments will help ease the  
21                  effects of any benefits cliff by  
22                  strengthening the recipient's financial  
23                  footing when they become employed, before  
24                  their household is no longer eligible for

1 public assistance due to those earnings.

2 Unfortunatley, we've been seeing  
3 instances here in New York, and nationwide,  
4 of thieves using skimming devices to copy  
5 Electronic Benefit Transfer or EBT card and  
6 personal identification number information  
7 from SNAP and public assistance recipients  
8 and steal their benefits.

9 In December, thanks to New York's  
10 congressional delegation, the federal  
11 government agreed to partially reimburse SNAP  
12 recipients whose benefits have been stolen.  
13 I'm pleased to say that the Executive Budget  
14 includes language that will allow the state  
15 to reimburse public assistance recipients who  
16 have been victimized as well.

17 This proposal will ensure that both  
18 SNAP and public assistance recipients can be  
19 reimbursed up to the lesser of the full  
20 amount stolen, or the amount of assistance  
21 provided during the two most recent months  
22 prior to their benefits being stolen.

23 The Governor is also committing  
24 \$18 million in this coming year, growing to

1           \$37 million on an annual basis, to launch a  
2           new Youth Opportunities Program that will  
3           augment the Summer Youth Employment Program  
4           during the school year, providing year-round  
5           part-time employment to an estimated  
6           2,500 youth. This program will operate in  
7           localities that have experienced high rates  
8           of violent crime.

9                     Additionally, there's a \$1 million  
10           increase for the Summer Youth Employment  
11           Program to \$47.1 million, to accommodate the  
12           most recent minimum wage increase and ensure  
13           that the same number of youths can be served  
14           this year as last summer.

15                    As you know, the application portal  
16           for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program,  
17           or ERAP, closed on January 20. More than  
18           225,000 payments have been made on behalf of  
19           tenants to landlords, totaling more than  
20           \$2.8 billion, and OTDA expects that we will  
21           fully utilize all available funds with the  
22           applications submitted through January 20.

23                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Dan, we're still  
24           having trouble hearing you. Maybe another

1 microphone (inaudible).

2 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I'll put  
3 this right in my face, how about that.

4 Where was I?

5 This program has overwhelmingly  
6 benefited some of our most vulnerable  
7 communities, with nearly nine out of  
8 10 payments made on behalf of households at  
9 or below 50 percent of the area median  
10 income. When all is said and done, ERAP will  
11 have provided more than \$3 billion in federal  
12 and state funding to keep our fellow New  
13 Yorkers who suffered financially due to the  
14 pandemic in their homes when they were unable  
15 to pay their rent.

16 The Child Poverty Reduction Advisory  
17 Council, of which I'm a cochair, continues  
18 its work to develop a plan for reducing child  
19 poverty by 50 percent statewide over the next  
20 decade. The council will have its third  
21 meeting in a few weeks, and I expect the pace  
22 of our work will increase moving forward.

23 I'm excited about the opportunity we  
24 have before us to meet this goal. Poverty

1           remains a reality for millions of  
2           New Yorkers, but we know it is a problem that  
3           we can solve.

4                         In closing, Governor Hochul's  
5           Executive Budget outlines a bold agenda that  
6           focuses on making New York State a more  
7           affordable, livable, and safe place for all.  
8           This plan includes sound investments and  
9           forward-looking policy proposals that will  
10          benefit all New Yorkers.

11                        We look forward to our continued  
12          partnership with the Legislature in the  
13          coming months. Thank you again for the  
14          opportunity to testify, and I welcome your  
15          questions and comments.

16                        CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

17                        Since the hearing began, we were  
18          joined by Kimberly Jean-Pierre, chair of our  
19          Veterans Committee; Assemblyman Kim, chairman  
20          of our Aging Committee; and Assemblyman  
21          Simone.

22                        Did you want to introduce some people  
23          before we go to questions?

24                        CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

1 Senator O'Mara, the ranker on Finance.

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And Assemblyman  
3 Pirozzolo has joined us.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm sorry --

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Go ahead.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator  
7 Scanlon --

8 SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON:  
9 Scarcella-Spanton.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you so  
11 much. I did it backwards and I got myself  
12 messed up. Thank you.

13 Oh, and Senator Gounardes just joined  
14 us. Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. So  
16 now we'll go to -- and there may be some  
17 other colleagues joining us as the hearing  
18 continues.

19 So now we go to our first set of  
20 questions and answers for 10 minutes, to our  
21 Social Services chair, Assemblywoman Davila.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN DAVILA: Good afternoon,  
23 Commissioner Tietz. It's good to see you.

24 So my first question is directed

1           towards public assistance. And the public  
2           assistance caseload for the safety net  
3           singles is projected to decrease by nearly  
4           19,000 statewide. What are the factors that  
5           play into the decrease?

6                     OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I think  
7           certainly an improving economy has made a  
8           difference here, and that people have more  
9           opportunities.

10                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN DAVILA: What factors  
11           are contributing to the increase of the  
12           TANF families and the safety net public  
13           assistance recipients, which are estimated to  
14           increase by nearly 29,000 and 18,000  
15           respectively?

16                    OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I think what  
17           we're seeing here in part is the continuing  
18           impact of the COVID pandemic. We saw an  
19           increase in the last three years, and it's  
20           certainly proven challenging for families in  
21           particular.

22                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN DAVILA: My next  
23           question would be on youth opportunities  
24           programs.

1                   The budget involves funding for a new  
2                   Youth Opportunities Program for localities  
3                   participating in the Gun-Involved Violence  
4                   Elimination -- the GIVE -- initiative. How  
5                   will funds be distributed to the localities?

6                   OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: It's based  
7                   on the WIOA program from previous. So the  
8                   communities with the highest rates of gun  
9                   violence in the state will see additional  
10                  funds through this program.

11                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN DAVILA: Well, we have  
12                  seen gun violence in New York City -- the  
13                  increase is everywhere. Will this program be  
14                  a sort of program that is -- that not-CBOs  
15                  can apply for?

16                  OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: In New York  
17                  City?

18                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN DAVILA: Yes.

19                  OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: No. This  
20                  program -- the expansion here is for  
21                  communities outside of New York City.

22                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN DAVILA: Okay. Thank  
23                  you.

24                  The next question is on emergency

1 rental assistance. The Executive Budget does  
2 not include additional funding for the  
3 Emergency Rental Assistance Program, the ERAP  
4 program. In fiscal year 2023 and '24, how  
5 many rounds of additional federal  
6 reallocations can we anticipate?

7 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I believe  
8 that there are a few more reallocations from  
9 the federal Treasury. In the last  
10 reallocation, which was a few weeks ago, we  
11 received \$63 million. I think that our  
12 expectation is that that's in the ballpark of  
13 what we may see going forward. But I think  
14 we're in the low tens of millions, maybe, and  
15 not more than that.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN DAVILA: Is it not true  
17 that the applications have closed down now  
18 in -- starting January 2023?

19 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Yes.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN DAVILA: So people can  
21 no longer apply for ERAP?

22 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: That's  
23 correct, Assemblymember.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN DAVILA: Okay. The next

1 question is on the Migrant Resettlement  
2 Program. The executive proposed 5 million to  
3 support a new enhanced Migrant Resettlement  
4 Program. How will these funds be allocated  
5 regionally?

6 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: So in the  
7 Governor's budget we've of course proposed a  
8 billion dollars overall, some in cash and  
9 some in kind, to help support migrants in New  
10 York State.

11 The single largest part of that,  
12 \$767 million, will help cover the cost of  
13 shelter and services in New York City. There  
14 are significant costs here involved in terms  
15 of the approximately 900 National Guard that  
16 are right now helping to serve in those  
17 sheltering locations in New York City. There  
18 are costs with regard to Medicaid,  
19 significant investments that the state is  
20 making.

21 Among the resources we're providing  
22 here will be \$25 million for resettlement in  
23 welcoming communities elsewhere in the state.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN DAVILA: Okay. The next

1 question would be on eviction prevention  
2 assistance.

3 The Executive Budget proposes to move  
4 the funding for eviction prevention legal  
5 assistance to your agency. Will this  
6 impact -- how will this impact the contract,  
7 and how will it be administered? How many  
8 people have received service under the  
9 program? How many evictions were prevented  
10 as a result of legal assistance?

11 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Thank you  
12 for the question.

13 The initial \$25 million has been  
14 increased to \$35 million, and in the last  
15 budget it was moved from HCR to OTDA. So  
16 OTDA has actually managed these contracts  
17 from the beginning. And it's largely through  
18 Legal Services Corporation providers across  
19 the state.

20 To date, I believe about 9500  
21 households have been assisted.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN DAVILA: I am going to  
23 ask this last question because I've been  
24 asking a lot of questions today. I think

1           this is extremely important.

2                     The Executive Budget includes  
3           assistance to recipients who had their  
4           benefits stolen as a result of card skimming,  
5           cloning and other similar fraudulent  
6           activities. What will the application  
7           process be? What would be the steps for an  
8           applicant filing to receive their benefits?

9                     And one of the reasons why I think  
10          this is extremely important is because it's  
11          taking an awful long time, once people have  
12          suffered the fraud, to go back to PA and ask,  
13          you know, to restore their benefits. It's  
14          taking a long time. And we know that a  
15          person can't be an extra month, two months  
16          without benefits and not suffer any  
17          consequences.

18                    Going forward, will there be more  
19          safety measures to ensure the recipient's  
20          benefits will not be stolen again? As the  
21          Article VII states, then applicants cannot --  
22          can seek reimbursement no more than twice in  
23          a fiscal year. So that maybe a little  
24          problematic.

1                   OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: So in the  
2                   federal omnibus that was passed near the end  
3                   of December, it included for the first time  
4                   granting the USDA authority to permit  
5                   reissuance of federal SNAP benefits. Until  
6                   now, no state has been able to reissue  
7                   federal SNAP benefits. A handful of states  
8                   have had state funds to reissue benefits for  
9                   some reasons, but the federal government  
10                  until now hadn't permitted this, the use of  
11                  federal funds.

12                  So for the first time we are -- we  
13                  will soon be able to issue the lesser of the  
14                  actual amount stolen or two months, twice in  
15                  a year. The goal here would be to keep folks  
16                  from going hungry. So the idea would be  
17                  until you get your next regular benefit, you  
18                  would have something to sustain you.

19                  The USDA just in the last week issued  
20                  guidance to states on submitting a plan. We  
21                  expect to submit our plan to USDA before the  
22                  end of the month. It would appear, on the  
23                  face of it, that the requirements for  
24                  demonstrating that loss will be pretty

1           achievable, fairly modest. We won't know for  
2           certain until we actually submit that plan  
3           and obtain their approval.

4                        So our hope is that within the next  
5           few months that the USDA will approve our  
6           plan and we'll begin to then roll that out to  
7           local districts so that they can in fact  
8           reissue the benefit.

9                        ASSEMBLYWOMAN DAVILA: Thank you.

10                      No further questions.

11                      CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

12           We've been joined by Assemblyman Anderson.

13                      And we go to the Senate.

14                      CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

15                      We'll start off with our chair,  
16           Jabari Brisport.

17                      SENATOR BRISPORT: (Mic off;  
18           inaudible.) Okay, I think okay. Great.

19                      Well, thank you, Madam Chair.

20                      Thank you, Commissioners. My  
21           questions are all for OCFS. Good afternoon.  
22           Thank you for being here, Commissioner.

23                      My questions -- I want to start out by  
24           talking about the continued and accelerating

1 collapse of the childcare sector. We  
2 conducted a hearing on the childcare crisis a  
3 few weeks ago, and the Children's Agenda  
4 estimated that New York State has lost  
5 roughly 20,000 childcare slots as a result of  
6 childcare programs closing since 2020. That  
7 would be 10,000 from March of 2020 through  
8 July of 2022, and then an acceleration of  
9 another 10,000 on top of that just from July  
10 of 2022 through the start of 2023.

11 Does that match OCFS's assessment?

12 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: So  
13 we can -- I don't have that data with me  
14 here, but I'm happy to bring that back to  
15 you.

16 The additional acceleration from July  
17 2022 sounds not like the numbers that I know  
18 of, but we'll confirm that and get back to  
19 you.

20 But I do hope you know that after the  
21 pandemic, coming out of the pandemic and all  
22 the federal funds that we were so gracious to  
23 receive, we did issue, as I mentioned in my  
24 testimony, that \$100 million childcare desert

1 grant. So that desert grant is meant to help  
2 build supply, because we do recognize we lost  
3 supply.

4 But that desert grant is not the only  
5 supply building we're doing. Our office has  
6 quite frankly almost doubled because we have  
7 so much focus on not only getting the money  
8 out the door for assistance and getting more  
9 families into the system, but also building  
10 supply. So we're laser-focused on that  
11 build. But it's -- it's not easy, so it's --  
12 the pandemic was devastating to our industry,  
13 and we're continuing to work on building that  
14 back up.

15 SENATOR BRISPORT: Thank you. And not  
16 just the pandemic, you know, the Children's  
17 Agenda noted that this had been a long-term  
18 trend over the past decade with collapsing  
19 childcare slots across the state, some  
20 regions losing over 50 percent of their  
21 childcare slots in the past decade. Does  
22 that match OCFS's assessment?

23 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: So  
24 I will agree with you that it is not just the

1 pandemic. I think the pandemic put a  
2 spotlight on this incredible infrastructure  
3 priority that no one else really knew about  
4 or cared about until after the pandemic. So  
5 good for OCFS, because we've always known it  
6 was important.

7 But yes, childcare has needed support  
8 for many, many, many years. I know many  
9 states like New York were also  
10 super-disappointed with Congress when they  
11 couldn't get Build Back Better passed. So I  
12 think nationally, again, the spotlight is on  
13 childcare. Hopefully next year -- we'll  
14 cross our fingers -- that Congress will also  
15 recognize. Because I know the focus is  
16 looking towards universal childcare, and the  
17 states just can't do that by themselves. We  
18 definitely need the federal support.

19 But we're doing a million things by  
20 ourselves. We're doing what we can with the  
21 money that we have.

22 SENATOR BRISPORT: Gotcha. And I just  
23 want to clarify that despite these annual  
24 stabilization grants, we continue to see an

1           exodus of childcare workers and providers  
2           from the sector, yes?

3                     ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
4           Data that I would need to get back to you on.

5                     But the childcare workforce is in  
6           crisis, I would not disagree there, as are  
7           many other workforces after bleeding out from  
8           the pandemic. This is a very difficult time.  
9           And I know that we are focused on not only  
10          providing the childcare workforce with  
11          stabilization grants -- we get that they're  
12          one-time incentives -- but we're working  
13          towards, as you know, the Childcare  
14          Availability Task Force that will -- has been  
15          reimagined by Governor Hochul -- will come  
16          together shortly.

17                    And one of their tasks is to look at  
18          the impact of the pandemic on the childcare  
19          industry, including the workforce crisis.  
20          And also including, phased in, a rollout of  
21          universal childcare. That, granted, we  
22          likely can't do by ourselves, but I do  
23          believe that we look forward to having all  
24          the advocates and all the experts help us.

1 This is a huge problem that we need all of  
2 our partners to help solve.

3 SENATOR BRISPORT: Thank you.

4 And I just want to keep circling back  
5 to this notion of stabilization. We're in  
6 multiple rounds of stabilization grants now.  
7 At last year's hearing I asked your  
8 predecessor if she considered the childcare  
9 sector as stable. She said no. Would you  
10 say the childcare sector is stable now?

11 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
12 No, it's not stable now. I think this  
13 Governor's budget proposes that additional  
14 \$389 million as a round 3 for stabilization,  
15 to help try to stabilize it. But we have --  
16 we're -- we've done many things over the past  
17 two years. We have much more to do.

18 SENATOR BRISPORT: In taking the same  
19 strategy, though, of using a one-time  
20 infusion of federal funds for one time  
21 bonuses, do you think that the 389 million  
22 will stabilize the childcare sector this  
23 year?

24 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: I

1 think it will help. I think -- as you know,  
2 we've increased the market rate to the  
3 80th percentile. I think that's helped  
4 stabilize some providers. I think the  
5 stabilization grants, as I've gone on tours  
6 myself, providers were very thankful. It  
7 helped them greatly.

8 So I think these sometimes one-time  
9 funding we get -- we're using our pandemic  
10 funding as effectively as we can. It is  
11 helpful. But I think we have a lot more to  
12 do.

13 SENATOR BRISPORT: Where did the  
14 \$389 million figure come from?

15 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: I  
16 would need to get back to you on the analysis  
17 of that dollar amount.

18 SENATOR BRISPORT: I have some other  
19 questions about reimbursement rates and  
20 compensation. I've been looking at the  
21 OCFS's market rates survey, and I've also  
22 seen reports from Cornell University and  
23 Ed Trust-New York regarding the true cost of  
24 care, and it seems like there's a big gap

1           between the true cost of care and what  
2           New York is reimbursing its childcare  
3           providers. Would you agree that there's a  
4           gap?

5                     ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: I  
6           would agree there's a gap. And we were in  
7           collaboration with Ed Trust, and I think they  
8           did a great job with their report.

9                     But again, that's one of the questions  
10          that we have for our reimagined Child Care  
11          Availability Task Force. I think we all  
12          recognize that these questions aren't  
13          answered, and they have a big charge.

14                    SENATOR BRISPORT: Do you think there  
15          are any benefits to our current practice of  
16          paying childcare providers less than what it  
17          costs them to provide care?

18                    ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: I  
19          do not think it makes sense. I do know that  
20          we are -- with the 80th percentile change, it  
21          increased payments to providers by an average  
22          of 33 percent. Some regions got 40. So I do  
23          think that's helpful, absolutely.

24                    I think we can see in the budget,

1           because we have this third round of  
2           stabilization, that yes, we need more. We  
3           need to support our workforce and our  
4           industry as much as we possibly can.

5                         SENATOR BRISPORT: In the OCFS  
6           analysis for its market rates survey, does  
7           that include a living wage for the childcare  
8           workforce? Or does it assume a low wage for  
9           childcare workers?

10                        ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: If  
11           I understand your question, the market rate  
12           doesn't contemplate wages. It speaks to the  
13           rate that providers charge families. That is  
14           the survey that we take. The rate providers  
15           charge families, those who only receive  
16           families that get assistance. That is then  
17           tabulated by region, by modality, and the  
18           market rate is then set.

19                        We are at the 80th percentile, so it's  
20           eight to 10 providers are accessible to our  
21           families who receive our childcare  
22           assistance.

23                        SENATOR BRISPORT: Has OCFS calculated  
24           how much more it would take to pay providers

1           what it actually costs them to provide care?

2                    ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:

3           No, we have not engaged in a cost-of-care  
4           study. That, again, was in Build Back  
5           Better. The funding for that was in  
6           Build Back Better; that unfortunately did not  
7           pass.

8                    So as I mentioned, we were working  
9           collaboratively, providing data that we had  
10          to Ed Trust, and we're familiar with their  
11          report.

12                   I know there are some think tanks  
13          looking to assess what that -- what that  
14          would cost, and Ed Trust is one of those.  
15          So, you know, the -- again, the childcare  
16          task force will look at this issue as well,  
17          one of their charges. And my hope is that we  
18          get additional federal support.

19                    SENATOR BRISPORT: I had some  
20          questions about eligibility and who gets  
21          childcare.

22                    The Governor's proposal continues to  
23          exclude undocumented children from childcare.  
24          Why is that?

1                   ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: So  
2                   unfortunately our childcare dollars, our  
3                   federal dollars did not allow -- well, they  
4                   dictate who can get assistance and who can't.

5                   Our current regulations do allow  
6                   children with favorable immigration status to  
7                   get assistance or be eligible for assistance,  
8                   regardless of the eligibility of their  
9                   parents. But that is federal law.

10                  So our CCDF funds do not allow --

11                  SENATOR BRISPORT: I'm just going to  
12                  interrupt you briefly just for a time.  
13                  Federal funds cannot be used for undocumented  
14                  kids, I understand that. But even in  
15                  New York City, they use city funds. And  
16                  there is the option to do state funds.

17                  So my question is, why has the  
18                  Governor refused to use state funds to give  
19                  access to childcare to undocumented children?

20                  ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
21                  Well, I mean, I think this budget makes  
22                  really difficult choices. I know that there  
23                  is an access point for undocumented families  
24                  in our New York State Head Start, or federal

1 Head Start, and Early Start, of which we have  
2 about 278 in the state. So that is a federal  
3 program that does allow children to get care  
4 even if they're undocumented.

5 SENATOR BRISPORT: I have more  
6 questions about eligibility and waiting  
7 lists. We saw a letter from the New York  
8 City ACS to OCFS from May. It was requesting  
9 to amend their response whenever there is a  
10 waiting list when there are not sufficient  
11 funds to open all eligible cases from yes to  
12 no, essentially saying that they did not want  
13 to have a waiting list. Do you know if OCFS  
14 granted that request for ACS?

15 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: So  
16 I'm not familiar with that specific letter,  
17 but I can talk to you a little bit about  
18 ACS's previous waitlist that no longer  
19 exists.

20 So there are federal requirements to  
21 operationalize the federal funds for  
22 childcare, and one of the primary focuses is  
23 parental choice. So the concept of a  
24 waitlist was problematic, and New York City

1 recognized that. And so now there is no  
2 waitlist and they are addressing the requests  
3 for assistance as they come in.

4 SENATOR BRISPORT: Thank you.

5 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
6 Assembly.

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We've been  
8 joined by Assemblywoman Mitaynes.

9 And we go to Assemblywoman Byrnes for  
10 five minutes, the ranker.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BYRNES: All right.  
12 Thank you.

13 I want to thank both of the witnesses  
14 that are here. My questions, though, will be  
15 directed, ma'am, to the acting commissioner  
16 of OCFS.

17 First I want to just make one  
18 statement, and that is -- and I'm sure that  
19 everyone can agree on this -- the Minority is  
20 having an inability to actually contact our  
21 legislative coordinator, John Divito, and  
22 it's been for quite a while. And as a  
23 result, we can't get any answers to our  
24 questions.

1                   So I just would respectfully ask that  
2                   when we go back to the office, if there's  
3                   anything you can do to try to make it so that  
4                   our inquiries of him are responded to. I'd  
5                   be most appreciative.

6                   ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: I  
7                   really thought you were joking, I'm sorry.  
8                   John Divito is incredibly responsive. But if  
9                   there is something open, we will absolutely  
10                  respond to you.

11                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN BYRNES: No, no, I was  
12                  given specifically his name, that we've been  
13                  trying to reach out, and we haven't.

14                  All right, I'm going to move on,  
15                  because I do have questions. But I wanted to  
16                  make sure that was not lost in the shuffle.

17                  Look, obviously childcare is a major  
18                  part of this budget, and so I want to talk  
19                  about that and ask some questions about it,  
20                  ma'am. No disrespect to you, sir, but.

21                  Look, how many more families, how many  
22                  more children are going to be eligible for  
23                  childcare by changing the income threshold to  
24                  85 percent of SMI?

1                   ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:

2                   Sure. Currently, what, 300 percent of the  
3                   federal poverty level and about half of  
4                   New York's children are eligible.

5                   Once we, per our proposal, increase it  
6                   to 85 percent of SMI, which is the highest  
7                   allowable, another 113,000 children will be  
8                   eligible.

9                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN BYRNES: All right.  
10                  Now, you made a comment in your opening  
11                  statement that less than 10 percent of the  
12                  eligible children currently receive, but yet  
13                  apparently 50 percent would be eligible but  
14                  only 10 percent receive.

15                  Now, if you propose and if it goes  
16                  through that this is increased dramatically  
17                  so that many more people, children, would be  
18                  eligible, how would you go about trying to  
19                  make sure that these children, now expanded  
20                  exponentially, will be actually receiving  
21                  services?

22                  ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
23                  Sure. So we know that there's like several  
24                  reasons why only 10 percent of our uptake has



1           able to reach out to these families through  
2           an online solution to vast portions of our  
3           state that have no internet?

4                    ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
5           Mm-hmm. Sure. I mean, we do intend to roll  
6           out a multilayered solution. So a family can  
7           still go down to the social services district  
8           and request a paper application and apply for  
9           assistance --

10                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN BYRNES: They would have  
11           to know that they were eligible. They would  
12           have to know that there was a reason to go  
13           down and do that.

14                    ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
15           Correct. So last year we entered into like a  
16           multimedia campaign. So -- and that is  
17           ongoing this year as well. So it was radio  
18           ads, TV ads, bus ads, billboards. We do  
19           recognize that not everyone knows that  
20           they're eligible for childcare.

21                    So we are -- we began that media  
22           campaign last year, and we will continue that  
23           this year. The goal is to get the word out,  
24           for sure.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BYRNES: Now, are there  
2 actually enough daycare providers to provide  
3 services for this increased pool of people?

4 And even if we have enough actual  
5 providers, are there actually workers, people  
6 that can work for these providers, that are  
7 sufficient to handle this dramatic increase  
8 in people who are -- children who are  
9 eligible?

10 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
11 Yes. Well, we do think it's going to be a  
12 slow rollout. We do not think that  
13 113,000 children will come to the doors of  
14 social services this year. Again, half of  
15 New York's children are already eligible and  
16 our uptake really is 10 percent.

17 So we do believe it will be a slow  
18 rollout, but we're encouraging to recognize  
19 their eligibility, come down to the social  
20 services district --

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BYRNES: But even if  
22 they're eligible, even if they come down -- I  
23 mean, at some point you have to have bodies  
24 to take care of them.

1                   ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:

2                   Yes.

3                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN BYRNES: And that is a  
4                   major problem in every aspect of our lives.

5                   ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
6                   And supply is something that's a main focus  
7                   of ours, increasing supply.

8                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

9                   Before we go to the Senate, we've been  
10                  joined by Assemblywoman González-Rojas and  
11                  Assemblyman Ardila.

12                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

13                  Tom?

14                  SENATOR O'MARA: We've been joined by  
15                  Senator Rolison and Senator Oberacker.

16                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

17                  And next up is Senator Roxanne  
18                  Persaud, chair, 10 minutes.

19                  SENATOR PERSAUD: Good morning,  
20                  everyone.

21                  Commissioners, it's always great  
22                  seeing you. And I just want to first thank  
23                  you and -- both of you and your staff for  
24                  everything that you do for us whenever we're

1 calling. And, you know, we constantly call.

2 I would like to start with  
3 Commissioner Tietz. And my first question to  
4 you, Commissioner, you know, is always the  
5 COLA. We have this COLA that we talk about  
6 that's now proposed at 2.5 percent. But not  
7 everyone qualifies for the COLA, even though  
8 they're all doing the same work.

9 Can you give me your opinion of that  
10 and justify why someone who's doing the same  
11 work is not qualifying for the same COLA?

12 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Yeah, the  
13 COLA as proposed in the Governor's budget  
14 covers one of our programs at OTDA. It's the  
15 Nutrition Outreach and Education Program.

16 But you're correct that it doesn't  
17 reach to others.

18 We believe, of course, that everyone  
19 deserves a livable wage. And I can't say  
20 more on that, I guess.

21 SENATOR PERSAUD: Do you think --  
22 would you say if you're having conversations  
23 about that? Because across human services,  
24 the need for a wage increase is great. These

1 are people who are taking care of the most  
2 vulnerable people in our communities. And  
3 we're not treating them the same way even  
4 though they are doing the same work.

5 So I really would love for the  
6 Governor to look at that and see how can we  
7 rectify that so that everyone who's doing the  
8 job receives the COLA.

9 Can you tell me, also, stolen public  
10 benefits in the Article VII. As you know,  
11 we've been talking about it. People -- the  
12 money is placed on their card, and two  
13 minutes later it's gone and there's no way of  
14 them receiving a refund or the funds being  
15 replaced.

16 Can you tell me, are there any plans  
17 in place -- we know we're working with the  
18 federal government to rectify the problem,  
19 and for the federal government to fund it.  
20 What is OTDA doing about that?

21 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: So there's a  
22 few things that we're doing. So as I'd  
23 mentioned earlier with regard to the SNAP  
24 benefits, we now have -- soon, you know, when

1 we submit that plan later this month and  
2 hopefully soon thereafter receive USDA's  
3 approval on that plan, we will then roll that  
4 out to the districts so that they can replace  
5 up to two months of benefits twice a year for  
6 those who've suffered losses.

7 On the public assistance side, we're  
8 doing something very similar. It's much the  
9 same idea. We expect to be able to roll that  
10 out soon as well. We've essentially made  
11 these two efforts look similar, which I think  
12 is both helpful for recipients and helpful  
13 for the staff in the local districts who are  
14 charged with handling the matter.

15 In addition, we've taken several steps  
16 with regard to getting messages to recipients  
17 as well as to local districts. We've had  
18 some campaigns on how you can protect  
19 yourself. Among the ways in which you can  
20 protect yourself is to change your PIN  
21 frequently or change your PIN after every  
22 use.

23 In addition, we're speaking with our  
24 vendor that handles the EBT cards to permit

1 recipients to turn their card on and off, to  
2 essentially lock it as they would like, as  
3 well as to prevent out-of-state transactions  
4 as well.

5 So there are several steps that we've  
6 done to help ensure that people don't suffer  
7 losses.

8 SENATOR PERSAUD: So talking about  
9 that, have we spoken to the vendor about  
10 updating their technology? Because, you  
11 know, we've been asking about having chips  
12 embedded in the cards. So what is the status  
13 on that with the vendor?

14 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Yes. With  
15 regard to chip-enabled cards, which  
16 essentially then we get away from this  
17 problem of the PIN and magnetic stripes,  
18 which can be copied.

19 So for -- for the -- there's no state  
20 in the nation right now that actually has a  
21 chip-enabled card. We of course would need  
22 guidance and assistance and approval  
23 ultimately from USDA to do this.

24 We are working right now with our

1 vendors on a contract matter, so there's --  
2 there's a big dispute with regards to the  
3 vendor that was awarded the contract going  
4 forward. So once that's settled, we'll then  
5 have -- which I'm hoping soon -- we'll then  
6 have conversations with that vendor. We know  
7 that that same vendor has begun such  
8 conversations with California on chip-enabled  
9 cards.

10 So we're -- I don't want to  
11 overpromise here. I'll just be clear that  
12 this will take a couple of years.

13 SENATOR PERSAUD: Thank you on that.

14 So we'll go to supportive housing.  
15 The reimbursement rates are not the same.  
16 Can you tell us the key difference between  
17 the two models, say for NYSSHP and ESSHI, why  
18 is it that the -- there's such a disparity in  
19 the reimbursement rates?

20 And then while you're looking at that,  
21 you can think about ERAP. What are we doing  
22 for the NYCHA tenants in ERAP? I know we've  
23 had this conversation; I just wanted to just  
24 go it over again.

1                   And would you agree with me if I say  
2                   that the time frame that we have for people  
3                   who are in a holding pattern is too long?  
4                   We're waiting for people to respond, and  
5                   we're waiting and waiting, they're not  
6                   responding, and we're still holding that  
7                   money -- while we have people who have  
8                   cleared everything and have qualified, but  
9                   they're not getting the money.

10                   Meanwhile, they're -- so do you think  
11                   if I say that we need to shorten the time  
12                   frame, would you agree with me on that?

13                   OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Yes.

14                   To go back to your supportive housing  
15                   question, I actually can't explain why  
16                   there's a difference in the rates for those  
17                   two programs. I'm happy to get you an  
18                   answer. This predates me. The NYSSHP  
19                   program is certainly well-established and  
20                   older than ESSHI. But I'm happy to get you  
21                   an answer on that.

22                   With regard to ERAP, so your first  
23                   question was with regard to public housing.  
24                   And, I'm sorry, repeat it.

1                   SENATOR PERSAUD: Right now they're  
2                   just -- there are so many of them waiting  
3                   because they didn't qualify, they weren't in  
4                   the categories that were listed. What are we  
5                   doing -- is there a plan for us to assist  
6                   those people?

7                   And would you -- if I say that the  
8                   state should say, let's just cover all of  
9                   that NYCHA arrears and then with the  
10                  understanding that NYCHA will say everyone  
11                  who fell under the pandemic arrears that, you  
12                  know, we paid and swiped out and they go  
13                  forward -- would you say that's something  
14                  that we should think about?

15                  OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: So for  
16                  subsidized housing, including for public  
17                  housing, in the program as given to us by the  
18                  Legislature as settled in the last two  
19                  budgets, it placed subsidized housing in a  
20                  low priority. Believing that, I suspect,  
21                  given that they already have a subsidy for  
22                  their housing, they were placed in a lower  
23                  priority than those who don't have subsidized  
24                  housing.

1                   At this moment I would say that  
2                   there's approximately 73,000 subsidized  
3                   housing applications. Those are largely on  
4                   hold. Because they're a lower priority, they  
5                   haven't been actively reviewed in the same  
6                   way as the non-subsidized housing  
7                   applications.

8                   I suspect that we're -- at this moment  
9                   we -- you know, we're working through the  
10                  applications we received right through  
11                  January 20. In the last three weeks of the  
12                  program we received more than 17,000  
13                  applications. Our expectation is that we are  
14                  a little shy of having sufficient resources  
15                  to fund the nonsubsidized housing and no  
16                  resources, therefore, to fund subsidized  
17                  housing.

18                  We would leave to the Legislature and  
19                  Governor how best to address the shortfall  
20                  relative to subsidized.

21                  SENATOR PERSAUD: Okay. So while my  
22                  time is running out, I just want to cover  
23                  TANF. You know, why does the proposal  
24                  continue to reimburse New York City for only

1           85 percent of expenditures? And, you know,  
2           let me ask this question of you: Why is so  
3           much of the cost being shifted to New York  
4           City?

5                     OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: It's a fair  
6           question. I appreciate the question.

7                     This well predates me. I think that  
8           this goes back maybe a decade to the prior  
9           administration, that the share that -- we  
10          cover 100 percent of TANF eligible in every  
11          district except New York City, in which we  
12          cover 85 percent of the TANF-eligible cost.

13                    SENATOR PERSAUD: Well, we have to  
14          continue fighting against that, pushing back  
15          on it.

16                    Then my final question, while my time  
17          is going, there's \$1 billion that's being  
18          allocated for the migrant population. Could  
19          you cover that? Tell us, you know -- could  
20          you go over that, what is it really covering?

21                    OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Sure. So of  
22          the billion dollars, the vast majority,  
23          767 million is to cover the cost -- a portion  
24          of the cost of shelter and services. And

1           that includes both DHS and the Humanitarian  
2           Relief and Response Centers.

3                     Another \$130-some million is for our  
4           cost on Medicaid. Somewhere around  
5           \$150 million is our share of the cost for the  
6           National Guard who are serving in those  
7           shelters. And then there are smaller  
8           amounts -- for example, for resettlement.

9                     CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

10                    SENATOR PERSAUD: Thank you very much.

11                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Sorry  
12           to cut you off, Roxie.

13                    SENATOR PERSAUD: That's okay.

14                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: The ranker on  
15           Social Services, Assemblyman Maher, five  
16           minutes.

17                    ASSEMBLYMAN MAHER: How's everybody  
18           doing? Thank you so much for being here.

19                    The first question I have is for you,  
20           Commissioner. I know my colleagues started  
21           talking about the industry, childcare  
22           services, and you had brought up in your  
23           comments the desert grants, I know this is a  
24           structure that's put in place to help that

1 workforce and to support these childcare  
2 service agencies and daycares.

3 So there's actually a handful in my  
4 district that are struggling through this  
5 application. Is there any flexibility in  
6 terms of the payments? I know that some  
7 facilities are waiting on their next \$50,000  
8 payment because they have to hit certain  
9 thresholds to hire employees to have enough  
10 seats. Has your office had this experience  
11 statewide? And what is a potential solution?

12 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: So  
13 thank you for that question. We have had  
14 this experience statewide, and I do believe  
15 we're trying to resolve it.

16 The purpose of the childcare desert  
17 grant was to absolutely build supply, and the  
18 first portion of that was for new providers.  
19 So if you've gotten your license, you're  
20 fulfilling the requirements of the  
21 regulation, you are not in violation and  
22 you're open, serving children, I believe  
23 we're working through the issues with those  
24 providers who are close to meeting those

1 milestones.

2 So if we are not in touch with those  
3 providers, we can get in touch with them.  
4 I'm happy to have my office reach out to your  
5 office.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN MAHER: So in a specific  
7 case, if someone said, Hey -- and they had  
8 real proof -- we're going to have to shut our  
9 doors, we're really going to need this, you  
10 would work with them and try to make that a  
11 priority?

12 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: We  
13 would have to look at, obviously, the  
14 circumstance. But we are working with  
15 providers who are open and serving children,  
16 absolutely.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN MAHER: Okay, great.

18 The second part is if they hit that  
19 10 percent number, individuals who are  
20 receiving the childcare assistance. Now,  
21 obviously a lot of that, as you explained, is  
22 part of the process and there's some things  
23 that you're going to work on internally. But  
24 how much of it is also promotion? And what

1 kind of partnerships have you created with  
2 counties, even elected officials, to try to  
3 work with getting the information out there  
4 appropriately?

5 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:

6 Right. Well, I mean, I'm happy to work with  
7 anyone here to get the word out for our  
8 childcare assistance program.

9 But we did launch a huge campaign last  
10 year -- again, as I said, a multimedia  
11 campaign. And we have our community  
12 partners, we have our CCR&Rs who are out  
13 there in each region, helping our providers.

14 But we are open to any  
15 recommendations, because getting the word out  
16 truly is the priority.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN MAHER: We look forward to  
18 working with you to do that, for sure.

19 Another section in here with the  
20 Employer-Supported Childcare Pilot Program,  
21 you talked about three regions being  
22 selected. How will that process take place?  
23 Which regions will be awarded, and how does  
24 that work?

1                   ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: So  
2                   all the details are still pending. But it is  
3                   a process that I know we are mirroring from  
4                   other states where it's been successful.

5                   So I do think that we're still working  
6                   through the details, but the important thing  
7                   is that we've gotten the proposed funding in  
8                   the budget.

9                   ASSEMBLYMAN MAHER: Okay. And I know  
10                  certain things are being developed. But  
11                  would a partnership with a large employer,  
12                  let's say a warehouse -- we have a lot of  
13                  warehouses going on for a lot of internet  
14                  sales going on -- would you creatively work  
15                  with a business like that to try to establish  
16                  potentially childcare facilities on the  
17                  premises to make it more affordable and to  
18                  create incentives for workers to take those  
19                  jobs?

20                  Because as much as those jobs are  
21                  available, there's a lot of people who aren't  
22                  taking the jobs because they don't want to  
23                  work in that situation where they can't  
24                  provide childcare because they don't make

1           enough money.

2                       So if there's incentives through a  
3           public/private partnership with these larger  
4           businesses, is that something that you guys  
5           have taken a look at so far?

6                       ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:

7           Well, that sounds like our business income  
8           tax incentive. That's also in the budget.  
9           So that program would have a business  
10          significantly underwrite childcare for their  
11          employees and then apply to the state for a  
12          tax credit.

13                      So also the details aren't quite  
14          worked out there either. But yes, the point  
15          is that we're looking at the economics of  
16          this all. And we're looking at private --  
17          public and private partnerships for both of  
18          those two programs.

19                      ASSEMBLYMAN MAHER: I am excited about  
20          that tax credit. And time's running short,  
21          but we very much look forward to seeing those  
22          details and hopefully working through your  
23          office to see how we can make it a perfect  
24          process -- as perfect as possible.

1                   ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:

2           Yes. Thank you.

3                   ASSEMBLYMAN MAHER: Thank you.

4                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

5                   We've been joined by Assemblywoman  
6           Tapia.

7                   To the Senate.

8                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

9                   Senator Murray, ranker, for five  
10          minutes.

11                  SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you very much.

12          Thank you, Madam Chair.

13                  Thank you for being here.

14                  I'm going to piggyback, actually, on  
15          what the Assemblyman was just talking about  
16          as far as childcare and businesses and the  
17          workforce.

18                  First, just for clarification, when  
19          you said the statewide business income tax  
20          credit for businesses that create or expand  
21          childcare access for their employees, do you  
22          mean financially or do you mean on-site or  
23          both?

24                  ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: I

1 think it can be both. We partner with  
2 providers if they're looking to do an on-site  
3 facility that would likely need a licensed  
4 provider to come to their on-site location.

5 But yes, it's -- the point is to be  
6 creative. We're trying to be as creative as  
7 possible.

8 SENATOR MURRAY: And first, I don't  
9 want it going without saying that I applaud  
10 you, I applaud the Governor for taking this  
11 seriously and doing what she's doing in this  
12 budget, because we are in a crisis. And it's  
13 a threefold crisis. It's a crisis of are we  
14 reaching enough children and families.

15 When we do, are there providers  
16 available and are there workers available?  
17 And the answer is no to all of those.

18 So getting creative with the business  
19 community. So when we talk about business  
20 and private -- public/private partnerships,  
21 have you been in contact with groups like  
22 NFIB, the Business Council, MACNY, Ignite  
23 Long Island, some of these that maybe can  
24 create incentives. Because for any

1 businesses out there listening -- Pssst: If  
2 you want a big advantage, offer this as a  
3 benefit. You will attract the best and the  
4 brightest to come there.

5 Because the ones that benefit the  
6 most, other than the parents getting --  
7 knowing they're getting good childcare for  
8 their children, are the businesses.

9 We don't -- we have a problem getting  
10 people back in the workforce now, and the  
11 problem is because -- and I've talked to  
12 several who've said "It will cost me to go to  
13 work because of childcare."

14 Are we working with these groups,  
15 again, getting creative -- because again, the  
16 businesses are going to benefit from this.  
17 Is there maybe an effort in place to create a  
18 fund or something where they can contribute  
19 to offer even more incentives?

20 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: So  
21 love your ideas. We're going to write them  
22 down and take those back to our office.

23 But I think those two public/private  
24 partnerships that do involve business, that

1 really speaks to the economic infrastructure  
2 issue we're trying to get at, and the  
3 business income tax incentive program is  
4 going to be throughout the 10 Regional  
5 Economic Development Councils. The REDCs are  
6 involved.

7 I don't know if we're working with  
8 those specific people, but I'm sure someone  
9 very smart in my office or the Governor's  
10 office has.

11 SENATOR MURRAY: We'll definitely talk  
12 on that and provide them.

13 But now I've talked to some in the  
14 industry who have also said, Well, that's  
15 great, but -- you had mentioned them, and I  
16 quote, the cumbersome and antiquated  
17 application process for families. But also  
18 for providers. They're saying, Hey, you  
19 know, we're jumping through a lot of hoops  
20 here.

21 Is there an effort to streamline the  
22 system?

23 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
24 Yes. So actually when we increased the

1 market rate to the 80th percentile, we tried  
2 to streamline the process for the providers,  
3 particularly those who serve 100 percent of  
4 children that receive childcare assistance.  
5 So we streamlined the application as much as  
6 we could by state statute and regulation.

7 So we are. I mean, streamlining  
8 really is the name, like the word of the day.  
9 So our office has regional offices, we  
10 contract with CCR&Rs, they work with  
11 providers. So we have an infrastructure in  
12 place to provide providers with that support.  
13 We're trying to give as much flexibility now  
14 to the parents.

15 SENATOR MURRAY: Okay, good.

16 In my remaining time I want to focus  
17 on the funding too. Now, if I have my  
18 numbers right, it says the Executive proposes  
19 to utilize an estimated 800 million in  
20 unspent and rollover funds in addition to  
21 500 million in federal pandemic.

22 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:

23 Right. Yes.

24 SENATOR MURRAY: How long will that

1 last? And then when that runs out, is that  
2 going to shift onto localities, onto the  
3 counties? Or how do we handle that?

4 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: I  
5 think, as we mentioned -- even last year, the  
6 Governor made this historic investment in  
7 childcare at 7 billion. This year it goes  
8 on. It's 7.6 billion over four years.

9 I don't think any of us thought we'd  
10 be here four or five years ago. And I think  
11 in last year's financial plan we saw the  
12 investment in years out, and in this year's  
13 financial plan we will also see the  
14 investment in years out. So I think the  
15 Governor has made a commitment to support  
16 this industry.

17 So yes, our pandemic funds will  
18 eventually run out. We want our local  
19 counties to use their subsidy. But there is  
20 significant rollover every year. So we're  
21 just going to invest all of our funds as  
22 effectively as possible.

23 SENATOR MURRAY: Okay, great.

24 Thank you again. And I look forward

1 to working with you together to maybe come up  
2 with some creative solutions. So thank you  
3 so much.

4 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
5 Thank you. Thank you, Senator.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

8 On the Assembly side we now move to  
9 three minutes for members to both ask the  
10 question and receive the answer. So make  
11 sure you leave time for our commissioners to  
12 respond as we go through the many members who  
13 have questions.

14 So we go first to our Veterans Affairs  
15 Chair Jean-Pierre, but only -- it's  
16 three minutes now. Kimberly?

17 (Off the record.)

18 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to our  
19 Aging chair, I'm sorry, for three minutes.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: Thank you. Thank  
21 you, Chair.

22 And thank you, Commissioners, for  
23 testifying today.

24 My first question is to Children and

1           Family Services. The 16 million in the  
2           capital funding that the Executive is  
3           requesting, is that for third-party provider  
4           capital projects or is it for your agency  
5           capital needs?

6                    ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
7           Thank you, Assemblymember. No, the  
8           16 million is to support the state-operated  
9           facilities, our juvenile justice facilities.

10                   We have an aging infrastructure, and  
11           we know we need to modernize our facilities  
12           to really meet the needs of youth we have  
13           now, with programming and education and  
14           vocational and mental health services. So  
15           that is for the state-operated facilities.

16                   ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: Thank you. And in  
17           your testimony you said that funding is to  
18           support facilities that provide programming,  
19           education, mental health, treatment services.  
20           These are all in-house services that your  
21           agency is servicing directly to constituents,  
22           not third parties?

23                   ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
24           Yes. Yes. OCFS operates nine residential

1 juvenile justice facilities, and we staff  
2 those facilities with clinicians, educators,  
3 program leads. So it's fully state-operated.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: Great. State  
5 workers, public pension, the whole nine  
6 yards.

7 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
8 Yup.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: Got it, okay.  
10 For the OTDA commissioner, my  
11 colleague from Queens has done a wonderful  
12 job -- Khaleel Anderson -- of highlighting  
13 this problem with the scam involving SNAP and  
14 EBT cards and PIN cards. And you point to  
15 this problem in your testimony as well.

16 I think we all deal with these type of  
17 scams in one form or another dealing with  
18 vulnerable populations. And whenever we deal  
19 with identity theft, it is such a challenge  
20 to properly report it. We get punted from  
21 the local police to the state, sometimes the  
22 feds. It's a -- there's no one-stop place to  
23 really understand what the problem is.

24 And is there anything you're doing

1           administratively to improve the situation?  
2           And is there any kind of data that you  
3           already have around the victims and what  
4           vulnerable populations that we should be  
5           focused on in trying to prevent these types  
6           of scams?

7                     OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ:  Yes.  As I'd  
8           mentioned earlier, our messaging to  
9           recipients as well as to local districts  
10          about how to prevent this from happening to  
11          them has been pretty extensive, and we're  
12          happy to do more.

13                    As I mentioned earlier, we expect to  
14          roll out within the next few months, pending  
15          USDA's approval of our plan, which we expect  
16          to submit later this month.  I don't believe  
17          that that plan will necessarily require a  
18          police report.  We'll see.

19                    ASSEMBLYMAN KIM:  Okay.  Thank you.  
20          Very quickly.  The migrant services, is that  
21          an in-house program that you're -- are there  
22          OTDA personnel that's actually going to  
23          support this population, or is this an  
24          outsourced contract model you're adopting?

1 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: A quick yes or  
2 no. There will be a later opportunity to  
3 explain.

4 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: It's a yes  
5 and a no.

6 (Laughter.)

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. We'll  
8 take that up later. Thank you.

9 To the Senate.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Three  
11 minutes to Cordell Cleare.

12 SENATOR CLEARE: Good morning.

13 Commissioner Tietz, I hope I get this  
14 right. This is my first hearing.

15 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Your mic.  
16 Your mic.

17 SENATOR CLEARE: I have a question  
18 about the employment opportunities for youth,  
19 the GIVE initiative. Why is New York City  
20 excluded from the program? And if -- how do  
21 we increase, how do we get these  
22 opportunities to young people in New York  
23 City? We know that money is necessary for a  
24 lot of our younger New Yorkers, year-round

1 employment is necessary.

2 Can you just answer?

3 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Yeah, I'm  
4 very pleased about the increase to the  
5 minimum wage for the Summer Youth Employment  
6 Program, to \$47 million.

7 Admittedly, as I had mentioned earlier  
8 the new program is targeted to communities  
9 outside of New York City with high rates of  
10 violence. I would leave to the Legislature  
11 and the Governor how best to address concerns  
12 about the absence of that program in New York  
13 City.

14 SENATOR CLEARE: Okay. And on the  
15 SNAP benefit or the public assistance benefit  
16 reimbursements, I think -- how long does  
17 verification or that determination take from  
18 your agency to -- I just want to see how much  
19 time is it between that and when someone gets  
20 their benefits reimbursed.

21 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: So at this  
22 moment we just in the last week received  
23 guidance from USDA. So the next step here is  
24 for us to submit a plan to USDA. That plan

1 will go to them by the end of the month.

2 Some of the basics around that will be  
3 that you'd expect that a recipient would need  
4 to report to the local district that -- the  
5 loss of the benefits due to theft within  
6 30 days.

7 SENATOR CLEARE: You said within  
8 three days?

9 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Thirty days.  
10 Thirty days.

11 But beyond that, we actually haven't  
12 written that response to them yet. So I'll  
13 say that the guidance we got from USDA  
14 frankly doesn't expect a lot. So our goal  
15 here is to keep the administrative burden for  
16 recipients and the districts to a minimum and  
17 to be --

18 SENATOR CLEARE: Okay, can you just  
19 please follow up and let us know how long  
20 that's going to take? Because that's very  
21 important.

22 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Sure. Yes.

23 SENATOR CLEARE: Okay. There were  
24 some advocates in here earlier, and I am

1 concerned about what they were speaking  
2 about. The plan for AIDS housing for the  
3 rest of the state, is there a plan for AIDS  
4 housing?

5 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: So a handful  
6 of years ago when the blueprint to end the  
7 epidemic was developed under the prior  
8 governor, it included HASA-like benefits for  
9 the rest of the state. The cost of that  
10 would be borne at the existing city/state  
11 split in terms of the share. So 71 percent  
12 of that cost would be borne by the district,  
13 and 29 percent would be borne by the state.

14 It was always an option, it remains an  
15 option for districts outside of New York City  
16 to expand services to people with HIV. None  
17 have chosen it.

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
19 Assembly.

20 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman  
21 Conrad, three minutes. (Pause.)

22 Assemblyman Burdick, you're next.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BURDICK: Thank you.

24 And this is a question for the

1 commissioner of OTDA.

2 First, thank you for your testimony  
3 and your work. I'm very pleased that OTDA  
4 helped provide funding for Freedom Commons,  
5 which provides housing for those released  
6 from New York State correctional facilities.

7 You mentioned that the budget includes  
8 \$128 million for the HHAP program. And just  
9 three questions on that. Are there any  
10 rollover funds for HHAP? And do you believe  
11 that OTDA can help promote an increase in  
12 such transitional housing as part of a  
13 consortium with HCR and ESSHI and other  
14 agencies? And lastly, does OTDA reach out to  
15 Osborne, Fortune and other community-based  
16 organizations for creating more transitional  
17 housing?

18 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Thank you.  
19 To your first question, of the \$128 million,  
20 we pretty much annually get applications to  
21 use those funds in the year, within the same  
22 budget year. To the degree that they're not  
23 all taken up in that year, they roll to the  
24 next year. So the short answer to your

1 question is yes, they roll to the next year.

2 We expect to have applications and  
3 approvals in the current year that will use  
4 the available funds.

5 Your next question was --

6 ASSEMBLYMAN BURDICK: Well, I was just  
7 trying to find out whether or not the -- it's  
8 128 million plus any funds left over or any  
9 reappropriation.

10 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Well, there  
11 weren't from last year. So -- so --

12 ASSEMBLYMAN BURDICK: So the answer to  
13 that's no.

14 The second question is, you know, do  
15 you reach out to Osborne, Fortune and other  
16 community-based organizations to increase  
17 transitional housing?

18 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: We know each  
19 of those organizations well and respect their  
20 work. We think that folks coming out of  
21 prison are an important constituency and have  
22 great needs. We're always happy to engage  
23 with them about how best to meet those needs.  
24 I'm certainly happy to take up any

1           conversations with them with regard to  
2           expanding transitional housing.

3                   ASSEMBLYMAN BURDICK:  And if I may, do  
4           the applications that you have for housing  
5           exceed, you know, the available funds?

6                   OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ:  So both  
7           projects have multiple funding sources.  
8           Could include tax credits, could include --  
9           so if they're in the city, for example, it  
10          could include resources from HPD, what have  
11          you.

12                   So there's -- I would say that our  
13          funds for sure help to encourage others to  
14          come on board.

15                   ASSEMBLYMAN BURDICK:  But for the HHAP  
16          program itself, do you have applications,  
17          grant applications that exceed 128 million?

18                   OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ:  Oh, I'm  
19          sorry, exceed; I thought you said "seed."  
20          Exceed 128 million -- yeah, I'm not certain.  
21          I'd have to get back to you.  I don't  
22          believe --

23                   ASSEMBLYMAN BURDICK:  If you could,  
24          that would be great.

1 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Sure. I  
2 don't believe we do in the current year.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN BURDICK: Super. Thanks  
4 so much.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

7 Senator Rolison for five minutes,  
8 ranker.

9 SENATOR ROLISON: Thank you.

10 It's good to see you. And I have some  
11 questions for OCFS.

12 In reference to discussions that we've  
13 had in previous Public Protection budget  
14 hearings, and we also had conversations on  
15 data as it relates to public safety, one of  
16 the things that I have heard in my former  
17 capacity as mayor of the City of Poughkeepsie  
18 for seven years was the inability to find  
19 secure beds in cases where individuals have  
20 been taken into custody and are being brought  
21 through the Family Court system now because  
22 of Raise the Age.

23 And in one particular case, an  
24 individual who was charged with three gun

1 crimes and there was inability to find a  
2 secure bed in two of those cases.

3 And I know that in the Governor's  
4 proposed budget there is additional upgrades  
5 for capital costs for OCFS facilities. And I  
6 know also, too, probably during the pandemic  
7 a lot of this building was not taking place  
8 because of all the restrictions that  
9 everybody found themselves under.

10 Commissioner, can you give us an  
11 update on where we are? Because we have had,  
12 especially in the criminal justice system --  
13 and OCA was here; I asked the same  
14 question -- where we're at with that?

15 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
16 Absolutely. Thank you, Senator, for that  
17 question.

18 You're correct, the pandemic put a  
19 stop on much of our progress with respect to  
20 Raise the Age implementation. And as you  
21 know, detention is a local obligation. So we  
22 are working with all -- at this point it's  
23 six plus New York City, so seven counties  
24 that operate detention. We have been talking

1 with them since 2017. But then the pandemic  
2 hit. And they all, by the way, had expansion  
3 plans.

4 So I think we all recognize that we  
5 needed additional beds because Raise the Age  
6 required that we open specialized secure  
7 detention. That didn't exist prior to the  
8 law. So all of these counties have expansion  
9 plans that were pretty much put on hold.

10 So we do work with counties daily, we  
11 provide 24/7 support to counties, to  
12 sheriffs, to find beds where they don't exist  
13 sometimes. But we often always find  
14 solutions for our counties.

15 But currently we are working with our  
16 partners' stock and expediting all of those  
17 capital plans. Every single county that  
18 operates has a capital plan for expansion.  
19 They are all moving forward. All told,  
20 within the next two to three years there  
21 should be 150 additional beds, based on all  
22 the plans from all the counties.

23 SENATOR ROLISON: So two to three  
24 years, if I understand the time frame. And I

1 would say that, you know, obviously the  
2 challenge is real right now, you know, as  
3 we're here today.

4 And is it -- it might not necessarily  
5 just be more money, it's just capacity in  
6 trying to get these beds constructed. What  
7 about staffing as it relates to staffing the  
8 new beds and/or the new facilities?

9 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:

10 Well, I'll tell you. So two to three years  
11 is the capital timeline. But we hope to have  
12 more beds open up way before then. Because  
13 staffing also impacts the capacity issues.  
14 So some of our counties, coming directly out  
15 of COVID, have challenges in workforce just  
16 like every other industry.

17 So we are working with them,  
18 encouraging them to increase their salaries  
19 for this critical workforce. And many  
20 counties have done so. So there are some  
21 counties that have really good data on their  
22 vacancy rate increasing, and we have some  
23 counties that are operating detentions that  
24 have beds that they can't fill because they

1 don't have staff.

2 So we do think that the focusing on  
3 the staffing will open up beds more quickly,  
4 but then ultimately every county, as I said,  
5 has a capital plan to expand their physical  
6 footprint.

7 SENATOR ROLISON: Do you know -- and  
8 if you don't, certainly we can talk offline  
9 about this. You talked about the additional  
10 150. Do you know currently in the state what  
11 our bed capacity is for individuals that need  
12 to be remanded for safety reasons, both for  
13 themselves and also while they're, you know,  
14 awaiting their time through the system?

15 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
16 Yes, I do, actually. For secure and  
17 specialized secure -- there's additional  
18 nonsecure beds, which I don't have. But for  
19 secure and specialized secure, New York City  
20 has about 212. And the rest of the state --  
21 I'll get back to you. I think it's 179, but  
22 I'll get back to you on that.

23 SENATOR ROLISON: Okay, good. And  
24 thank you for your discussion with us here

1           today.

2                    ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  No  
3           problem.  Thank you.

4                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER:  Thank you.  
5           Assembly.

6                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:  We go to  
7           Assemblyman Goodell, for three minutes.

8                    ASSEMBLYMAN GOODELL:  Thank you very  
9           much.

10                   For OTDA, thank you very much.  I saw  
11           in your testimony that you recognized the  
12           fiscal cliff and one of the proposals you had  
13           was a six-month income disregard, which I  
14           think is great.  So it helps people get their  
15           feet on the ground and establish some  
16           employment experience before they start  
17           losing benefits.

18                   But at the end of six months, you have  
19           the same fiscal cliff facing you.  Is there  
20           anything in this budget that would phase down  
21           the benefits on a coordinated basis so that a  
22           person can afford to earn more money after  
23           the six months?

24                   And along the same lines, is there any

1           proposal in this budget to, for example,  
2           reduce the premium charge once you lose  
3           Medicaid and you go into the health exchange,  
4           any discussion about changing the Earned  
5           Income Tax Credit so it can jump, for  
6           example, at fiscal cliffs? Or maybe even  
7           replacing categorical aid with cash, which is  
8           much easier to phase down.

9                         So other than the six-month extension,  
10           what in your budget proposal addresses the  
11           fiscal cliff?

12                        OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Well,  
13           Assemblymember, you came with a whole list of  
14           ideas. I appreciate that.

15                        So I'll note that in the last budget  
16           of course you made some important changes  
17           with regard to public assistance so that  
18           folks could in fact have higher earnings and  
19           remain on public assistance. So this is  
20           taken together with that.

21                        I appreciate your concerns about, you  
22           know, more is needed here. And certainly I  
23           would leave to the Legislature and the  
24           Governor on what exactly more might be useful

1 or needed.

2 With regard to tax credits, I think  
3 maybe it's relevant to some degree to the  
4 work of the Child Poverty Reduction  
5 Advisory Council, which I cochair with  
6 Deputy Secretary Jihoon Kim. You know, there  
7 were -- you know, we just have pulled that  
8 together, had the first couple of meetings,  
9 we expect the third meeting in early March.  
10 And, you know, in a careful look using data  
11 and New York-specific research, we're going  
12 to come with recommendations, as charged by  
13 the statute. And I would expect that tax  
14 credits would likely be a part of that  
15 discussion when the time comes.

16 Unfortunately, in advance of this  
17 budget, we're not there yet.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN GOODELL: And I appreciate  
19 your efforts with the Child Poverty Reduction  
20 Task Force.

21 So I would hope as part of that you  
22 also look at the impact of our current cash  
23 system as it relates to two-parent families.  
24 Because as you know, if both parents are

1 together, 100 percent of both parents' income  
2 is included in calculating eligibility. But  
3 if the parents are separated, the  
4 noncustodial parent only has that portion of  
5 their income that's attributable to childcare  
6 counted. So it's 17 percent for one child,  
7 24 percent for two, and so on.

8 It might make long-term sense to us to  
9 expand the income disregard regardless of  
10 whether you're together or not, as a way of  
11 addressing child poverty.

12 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Appreciate  
13 it.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
15 To the Senate.

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
17 Senator Gounardes.

18 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you.

19 Good morning. I actually want to pick  
20 up where my colleague just left off on  
21 talking about child poverty.

22 Obviously we're waiting for the  
23 recommendations of the Action Council. We  
24 know we're required by law to have our child

1 poverty rate halved by 50 percent over the  
2 next seven or eight years. And by any  
3 objective measure, we know that any way to do  
4 that's going to require a substantial  
5 increase in child tax credits or in funding  
6 families so they can pay for their  
7 necessities.

8 Setting that aside, because we know  
9 that it's not in this budget, what in this  
10 budget proposal -- and this is for both of  
11 you -- can we point to that will actually  
12 help tackle the child poverty crisis that we  
13 have here in New York, where we are one of  
14 the highest-poverty states in the nation for  
15 children living in poverty.

16 What in this budget proposal can you  
17 point to that would help do that, aside from  
18 the lack of investment in the child tax  
19 credit?

20 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: My fellow  
21 commissioner just said that I should start.

22 (Laughter.)

23 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Eeny, meeny, miny,  
24 moe.



1 material hardships have -- are the greatest  
2 predictors, quite frankly, of the risk of a  
3 family's involvement in the child welfare  
4 system. So we've been looking at  
5 anti-poverty tools for quite some time. We  
6 are so happy to be part of the advisory  
7 council and look forward to those  
8 recommendations.

9 But outside of that, we've been  
10 focusing on prevention, and most of the time  
11 those prevention dollars are provided as  
12 services to families. However, in our  
13 Child Welfare Unit, we are doing really  
14 innovative and creative things and looking at  
15 economic and concrete supports as a way to  
16 mitigate child welfare involvement. We have  
17 a direct --

18 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Commissioner, I'm  
19 going to have to cut you off there because I  
20 have one more question and 30 seconds. I  
21 appreciate it, though, and I'll follow up  
22 with you more on those ideas.

23 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
24 Absolutely.

1                   SENATOR GOUNARDES: This question is  
2                   for Commissioner Tietz, and it's about our  
3                   shelter allowance. It's my understanding all  
4                   of our local social service districts can  
5                   choose to propose to increase their shelter  
6                   allowance from the bare minimum, and only a  
7                   number have -- I think only about 20 or so  
8                   have so far in this state.

9                   And I was wondering if you have any  
10                  insight as to why more jurisdictions have not  
11                  taken advantage of the opportunity to  
12                  increase their shelter allowance, especially  
13                  given that the state picks up the lion's  
14                  share of that investment.

15                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You're out of  
16                  time; you'll have to answer him later.

17                  OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: All right.

18                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
19                  Assemblywoman Lunsford.

20                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN LUNSFORD: Thank you  
21                  very much.

22                  My question is for Commissioner  
23                  Miles-Gustave.

24                  OPWDD has been delegating much of its

1 responsibility for our most profoundly  
2 disabled children, the ones that are not  
3 adequately served by our school system, to  
4 OCFS, and mainly our county CPS services. As  
5 a result of this, children with profound  
6 disabilities have been effectively living in  
7 our emergency rooms, sometimes for months on  
8 end.

9 Can you talk a little bit about how  
10 that's been a burden on your agency, on our  
11 county CPS services, and what if anything  
12 this budget does to help address that issue?

13 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:

14 Thank you so much for that question.

15 So we do see this issue coming up year  
16 over year over year. But I will say that we  
17 have been collaborating, as state agencies,  
18 more now than I think I've ever seen. So we  
19 are in constant conversation with OMH and  
20 OPWDD and DOH to figure out not only funding  
21 streams but potentially even new licensing  
22 structures. Like how can we help and support  
23 these youth with very complex needs?  
24 Particularly coming out of COVID, like the

1           mental health needs are stunning.

2                       So we are in constant contact with  
3           OPWDD. We do know that child welfare is the  
4           system of last resort, unfortunately. But I  
5           think the recognition of that is there.

6                       And as you know, we have a  
7           cross-systems workgroup with our Council on  
8           Children and Families. We look at, case by  
9           case, children in the emergency room to try  
10          to figure out what the next path is for their  
11          permanency. So we look at every child and,  
12          you know, try not to let any child fall  
13          through the cracks. But we are looking to  
14          systematize that -- that cross-collaboration  
15          with respect to the potentially new funding  
16          streams or new licensing structures.

17                      So there's no specific funding in the  
18          budget right now, but we've been known at  
19          OCFS to use our existing funding quite  
20          creatively. So we're committed to trying to  
21          solve this problem.

22                      ASSEMBLYWOMAN LUNSFORD: I think this  
23          is a case that illustrates well the need to  
24          start to blend some of our funding streams.

1           Particularly when you have these children who  
2           have funds that come from different agencies,  
3           it becomes very complicated, the  
4           administrative cost is very high.

5                        To that end, I also wanted to ask you  
6           a little bit about the \$17 million for  
7           voluntary foster care agencies. Can you  
8           speak a little bit about the loss of the  
9           Medicaid funding for that and what you're  
10          doing to help alleviate that issue?

11                       ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
12          Absolutely. Thank you.

13                       So the IMD concern -- IMD stands for  
14          Institutions of Mental Disease. It's a  
15          federal Medicaid concern. And so I'll make a  
16          very long story short. But IMD facilities  
17          are 17 beds or more, where the primary focus  
18          is to diagnose and treat for mental disease.

19                       In us rolling out Family First, our  
20          volunteer agencies have increased their level  
21          of care. They had to do that to continue to  
22          receive Title IV-E funding. So we're at a  
23          point right now where some of our voluntary  
24          foster care agencies could potentially be

1 considered IMDs, and then they would no  
2 longer be able to draw down federal matching  
3 funds.

4 So the Governor recognized this. This  
5 is a problem. We are talking with our  
6 partners at DOH. We've been talking with  
7 them for quite some time. And so we're going  
8 to solve this problem. But the 17 million in  
9 the budget is a recognition that this may be  
10 an opportunity to transform our system. And  
11 our voluntary agencies need investment to do  
12 so. So that 17 million will go in a variety  
13 of ways -- to hire more staff or make  
14 programmatic changes or even some structural  
15 changes to bypass the IMD definition.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LUNSFORD: Thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

18 To the Senate.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
20 much.

21 To Senator Jessica Scarcella-Spanton.

22 SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: Thank you.

23 And I want to make sure I don't say  
24 this incorrectly, so Commissioner

1 Miles-Gustave.

2 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:

3 Yes, thank you.

4 SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: Okay,  
5 good. Fellow hyphenated names.

6 (Laughter.)

7 SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: I just  
8 want to bounce back to the childcare stuff  
9 really quick.

10 In November it was announced, after  
11 the childcare desert funds had dried up, that  
12 they were going to make the unused funds  
13 available. We have a few facilities in my  
14 district, one specifically which is expanding  
15 her daycare facility --

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Jessica, I'm  
17 sorry, you only get three minutes on this  
18 panel. You do get 10 minutes a little later.  
19 Sorry. Thank you.

20 SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: Yeah, that  
21 one I knew.

22 (Laughter.)

23 SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: Oh, they  
24 put it -- okay.

1                   So yeah, for the childcare desert  
2 funds. One of them, they let her know that  
3 they were going to make them available and  
4 they'll let those eligible providers know.  
5 She's in the process of reopening a new  
6 facility. Do you know when those grants,  
7 those childcare desert grants, may be made  
8 eligible again?

9                   ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:

10                  Sure. So our -- we had two specific RFPs.  
11                  So Childcare Desert 1 was for new providers  
12                  who wanted to open up new spaces in childcare  
13                  deserts. So those have been pre-awarded, and  
14                  people are working towards getting up and  
15                  running.

16                  Childcare Desert 2 is for existing  
17                  providers who wanted to expand their slots.  
18                  So those have also been pre-awarded, but the  
19                  pre-awards are working towards getting the  
20                  licensure necessary to open up those  
21                  additional spots.

22                  So I don't think we've made awards to  
23                  the second group, that Childcare 2, but we  
24                  can definitely get back to you. If you know

1 someone in your -- one of your constituents  
2 was waiting for an answer, we can for sure  
3 get back to you. But all that is moving.

4 SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: Okay,  
5 great. And I guess my second question to  
6 that was if you're doing more than just  
7 expanding slots, so she's opening an actual  
8 second facility nearby, same childcare  
9 desert, to expand care, would she be eligible  
10 for that? Since she's not technically new  
11 and she's opening a new facility.

12 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: It  
13 would depend on her modality of care, if she  
14 was a center versus family-based. So we  
15 would have to look at that specific scenario.

16 SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: Okay. So  
17 I'll make sure I send the specifics over to  
18 you. But thank you so much.

19 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: No  
20 problem.

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
22 Assembly.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
24 Assemblyman Simone. You need someone to give

1           you a chair. Thank you.

2                   ASSEMBLYMAN SIMONE: Hi, I have two  
3           questions, the first question for  
4           Commissioner Tietz. Hi, Dan.

5                   I thank the Governor for the  
6           significant investment to assist New York  
7           City providing aid to asylum seekers, many  
8           who come to the Port Authority in my  
9           district. Is your office also advocating for  
10          additional federal aid and relief in the city  
11          and across the state, and can the city count  
12          on additional support?

13                   OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: So -- I  
14          appreciate the question. The budget  
15          contemplated essentially covering a third of  
16          the estimated cost. And certainly the  
17          Governor and governors from other states that  
18          are so affected are speaking to the  
19          White House and continuing to urge additional  
20          funding and resources in coordination with  
21          regard to migrants. So that -- that is  
22          ongoing.

23                   I think at the present moment the idea  
24          was that essentially at the existing social

1 services share, as split between districts  
2 and the state, we sort of kept to that  
3 formula. So the sort of sheltering and  
4 services related cost here represents about  
5 29 percent of the estimate for the city's  
6 expense to date.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN SIMONE: This is for  
8 Commissioner Miles-Gustave.

9 Students are going to be recovering  
10 from the COVID learning gap for years to  
11 come. I often hear from after-school  
12 programs on lack of funding in my district.  
13 How does the budget reconcile filling that  
14 need while offering no increases in the  
15 Empire State After School Program and cutting  
16 the Advantage Program by 5 million?

17 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: So  
18 there is no actual cut in the -- either  
19 Advantage or Empire. What the budget does  
20 this year, it proposes to move the funding  
21 from SED to OCFS, because we are in fact  
22 operating those programs. We facilitate all  
23 the contracts, we do them ourselves in-house.

24 So the Advantage After School and

1 Empire contracts have been troubled because  
2 of COVID. Things shut down, as you know.  
3 But we have been working with all of our  
4 providers to try to get them back on track.  
5 Like we had to be slightly nimble during the  
6 pandemic, and the contract framework changed  
7 from, say, an expenditure base to an  
8 attendance base. But now, with talking with  
9 the advocates, talking to providers, and at  
10 their request, we are transitioning those  
11 contracts back to expenditure-based.

12 So those providers are in the middle  
13 of a contract amendment right now. And trust  
14 me, we have tons of people at our office  
15 working on this to make sure that those  
16 payments get out.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN SIMONE: Thank you.

18 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

20 Senator Persaud for three minutes,  
21 follow-up.

22 SENATOR PERSAUD: Thank you.

23 Commissioner Tietz, I just want to go  
24 back to you again. Could you tell us what of

1 the \$1 billion that's covering the migrant  
2 services, the funding that's allocated to the  
3 National Guard, could you tell us what it's  
4 covering? What is it that the National Guard  
5 is doing with that funding?

6 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Yeah,  
7 they're actually supplying National Guard  
8 troops to assist with the sheltering and  
9 services in New York City. So there's  
10 approximately 900 National Guard troops right  
11 now serving, and that represents the cost of  
12 that service. They don't do security, they  
13 do program-related work.

14 In fact, I think I was in your  
15 district the other day visiting just one of  
16 those locations, and I have to say that the  
17 National Guard troop that was in charge there  
18 was frankly extraordinary. I was like, do  
19 you want a different job? I can give you a  
20 different job.

21 (Laughter.)

22 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: He was quite  
23 good. I was very impressed.

24 SENATOR PERSAUD: Okay. And can you

1 tell us, what is the status of the  
2 applications to the federal government for  
3 the hot meals program?

4 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Yes, we are  
5 expecting -- the application is in to them  
6 for review. We expect to hear something  
7 soon.

8 SENATOR PERSAUD: Like in a month, two  
9 months?

10 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Yeah, I  
11 would say within the --

12 SENATOR PERSAUD: The end of the year?

13 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: No, no, I  
14 think -- I think within the next 60 days we  
15 can expect to have an answer, yeah.

16 SENATOR PERSAUD: Okay. And if the --  
17 I'm not saying "if." When our application is  
18 approved, how long do you think the program  
19 will take to roll out?

20 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: It's well in  
21 order. I would say that we've got a staffer  
22 who you know well who is a go-getter on this,  
23 and I expect that we'll have this up and  
24 ready very quickly.

1                   SENATOR PERSAUD: Okay, thank you.

2                   And Commissioner Suzanne, again, I'm  
3 finally coming to you to ask you a question.  
4 It's about the minimum wage.

5                   And you heard me talk about the COLA.  
6 What are you going to do for -- to push for  
7 an increase in the COLA on your side?

8                   And, you know, we have the  
9 \$3.8 million to fund the minimum wage  
10 increase, but that's not enough, because we  
11 are -- we're bringing these workers, these  
12 critical workers, up to a minimum wage, but  
13 they're still dependent on social services.  
14 What are we doing for that?

15                   ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
16 Thank you for that question, Senator. I know  
17 every industry's workforce is suffering.  
18 That is without a doubt.

19                   I do know that -- if you recall,  
20 several administrations ago, right, there was  
21 no COLA. So we are happy that there is a  
22 COLA, there was a COLA last year, and there  
23 is a COLA in the budget this year.

24                   You know, I know that we all want more

1 in the budget. But the COLA that's applied  
2 to the OCFS programs will support the  
3 voluntary foster care agencies, and they went  
4 through challenges last year as well. The  
5 good thing is that the budget also -- the  
6 language in the appropriation recognizes like  
7 the very unique nature of our foster care  
8 agency rates. So we're hoping that this will  
9 be a benefit to them.

10 SENATOR PERSAUD: Thank you.

11 I think I was cheated on my time.

12 (Laughter.)

13 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

16 Assembly.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to

18 Assemblywoman Clark.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Hello. Thank  
20 you. My questions are also for Commissioner  
21 Miles-Gustave.

22 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:

23 Gus-tauv, no "ay."

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: No "ay,"

1           Gustave. Got it.

2                       So I have three quick questions on  
3           childcare that I'm hoping I can get in.

4                       I'm really looking forward to the  
5           Childcare Task Force meeting and finally  
6           getting to their very tough job of figuring  
7           out how to get us to universal childcare here  
8           in the state. What we have seen, I think, is  
9           that right now we do have dollars in the  
10          system and they're still not being used.  
11          They're not being used by families, we have  
12          providers start closing their doors.

13                      I appreciate the investment into the  
14          workforce, but I just think these continued  
15          one-time investments or using these  
16          stabilization grants isn't sustainable.  
17          Truly if we're going to get sustainable, I  
18          think we need to get to the true cost of  
19          care, not market rate. The previous  
20          governor -- we passed in the Assembly a move  
21          to true-cost care, allowing that to replace  
22          our market rate. That was vetoed by the  
23          former governor.

24                      Could we get support, if we get it

1 through the Legislature, to move to a  
2 true-cost model for New York so that we could  
3 start to raise wages?

4 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
5 Well, I can say that the market rate increase  
6 I do think has been a significant increase  
7 for all providers, like really cash in their  
8 pockets.

9 And I would say that we honestly do  
10 need the federal government. I mean,  
11 increasing wages, absolutely, we all want to  
12 do that. But we need the federal government  
13 to pass that Build Back Better.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Okay.

15 Second, I appreciate the also  
16 increased -- I mean, I do want to just say  
17 that we can't pay workforce more. No one can  
18 afford to pay more. Families can't afford to  
19 pay more. So how are we sustaining wage  
20 increases without really looking at true  
21 cost?

22 On the expansion of eligibility, I  
23 think it's great, but at 93,000 even for a  
24 family, what happens when that one parent

1 makes a dollar more? All of a sudden they go  
2 from maybe paying \$200 a month to \$2,000 a  
3 month -- we're going to lose that parent. I  
4 understand this is the federal maximum, but I  
5 really think we need to start looking at  
6 state funds to have step-downs so we don't  
7 lose parents out of the workforce the moment  
8 they make a dollar more than eligibility. So  
9 I'd just add that.

10 And then as for the employer piece --  
11 and what we've heard from our hospitals and  
12 other systems, our emergency workers, our  
13 front-line workers during COVID is we need  
14 24-hour drop-in centers. We need childcare  
15 to work when overtime is all of a sudden  
16 offered.

17 Can we start to really look at how we  
18 pay through the subsidy system to make it  
19 follow the child and the family, not  
20 attendance, and really look at a way we could  
21 support these 24-hour drop-in centers?

22 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: So  
23 not aligned with our assistance, but aligned  
24 with our providers, we do have nontraditional

1 hours, and that was an incentive in our  
2 childcare desert grants.

3 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
4 Thank you, Commissioner.

5 We go to the Senate.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

7 We have Senator Ashby.

8 SENATOR ASHBY: Thank you,  
9 Madam Chair.

10 Thank you, Commissioners, for being  
11 here.

12 OCFS has a great innovative program  
13 with the family-type adult homes. And I was  
14 wondering if you could give me a policy  
15 update with that, because one of the things  
16 that's come up in my district is the hospice  
17 waiver that goes along with that. So you  
18 have elderly folks in place here who are used  
19 to this family-type adult home being their  
20 home, and then when they require hospice,  
21 there's a very big gap in terms of being able  
22 to remain in their home and receive treatment  
23 there.

24 And it's caused a bit of turmoil, and

1 I'm wondering if you could give me an update  
2 and comment on that.

3 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: So  
4 thank you for that question.

5 I'm not familiar with your specific  
6 scenario, but I can say that our family-type  
7 home for adults has been the topic of our  
8 conversation with DOH for quite a bit. So  
9 we're collaborating with DOH to look at what  
10 is needed -- is there a need for a change in  
11 our licensing of our family-type homes for  
12 adults? Because you're right, it is not  
13 supposed to be nursing level of care. But we  
14 do want people to be able to age in their  
15 homes -- and that is really their home, for  
16 all intents and purposes -- gracefully and  
17 safely.

18 So we can get back to you. If you  
19 have a very specific scenario, I'm happy to  
20 get back to you.

21 But I also want to point out that you  
22 all know the Governor issued the executive  
23 order to create the Master Plan for Aging,  
24 the state's first Master Plan for Aging, with



1           you, Commissioner and Acting Director, for  
2           your work and your testimonies today.

3                     I'm Assemblywoman Taylor Darling, and  
4           I represent the 18th Assembly District in  
5           Nassau County. I also currently serve as the  
6           chair of the Subcommittee on Foster Care.

7                     I'm grateful this year's budget  
8           provides us some opportunities to attempt to  
9           make the human services industries whole, but  
10          we have some serious issues that we have to  
11          really plan out this year. So we must  
12          increase the salaries for foster care direct  
13          care workers. At their current salaries,  
14          foster care direct care workers aren't able  
15          to live on the salary alone, requiring them  
16          to have multiple jobs.

17                    The turnover rate currently for these  
18          workers across the state is around  
19          50 percent. This is disastrous for a lot of  
20          reasons, but we have to always stress the  
21          continuity of care that is necessary for our  
22          children and families, and we need these to  
23          increase positive outcomes. So where we  
24          stand right now, there is not a lot positive

1           happening in this industry with these workers  
2           and the families they serve.

3                        So I wanted to hear your thoughts  
4           about the direct care workers.

5                        ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
6           Thank you for that question.

7                        So I would agree that our foster care  
8           population is also in crisis, that workforce  
9           is in crisis. And we do recognize that the  
10          voluntary agencies and the foster care  
11          workforce, they are the backbone of what we  
12          do. Like they are the frontline workers of  
13          all of our work.

14                        So I think we've done a couple of  
15          things to help the industry -- not only just  
16          foster care workers that work in congregate  
17          settings, but foster boarding homes, like  
18          foster families. So we have raised the MSAR  
19          for foster family boarding homes. And you  
20          may have noticed we had a settlement last  
21          year where we required the local districts to  
22          pay 100 percent of the MSAR for foster  
23          boarding homes. So that's coming I think  
24          full circle this year.

1                   And then we did promise that we'd also  
2                   release an extraordinary rate, which would  
3                   provide foster parents with a higher rate to  
4                   support youth with complex needs so those  
5                   youth can still remain in that foster home.  
6                   So that extraordinary rate regulation will be  
7                   issued pretty soon. That was the third part  
8                   of our settlement promise.

9                   So those rates will be out shortly.  
10                  We plan to follow that up with some policy.  
11                  So that's what we're doing on the foster  
12                  boarding home side.

13                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN DARLING: Great.

14                  Okay, I have two more questions.

15                  ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:

16                  Sure.

17                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN DARLING: I'm concerned  
18                  about the restoration of the 65/35 child  
19                  welfare funding to 75/25, as well as OCFS's  
20                  shift from mandated reporting to mandated  
21                  supporting.

22                  ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: So  
23                  the 62/38 open-ended funding -- as you've  
24                  mentioned, just landmark funding -- with your

1           unwavering support, we were able to issue  
2           that.

3                     It's been one of the major tools for  
4           the reduction in the foster care numbers.  
5           Because counties use this open-ended funding  
6           stream, New York has one of the lowest foster  
7           care admission rates in the country. And we  
8           do point to that funding stream for the  
9           field.

10                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
11                    To the Senate.

12                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
13                    Three minute follow-up for Chair  
14           Jabari Brisport.

15                    SENATOR BRISPORT: Thank you.  
16                    Thank you, Commissioner Miles-Gustave.  
17           I know we've been all figuring that today.  
18           But a pleasure. Thanks for taking my  
19           questions again.

20                    I think my first just follow-up about  
21           the Governor's pilot program, the tri-share  
22           program between the state, employer and  
23           parent -- we've seen issues with tying  
24           healthcare to people's jobs, including but

1 not limited to people staying in jobs that  
2 are not good for them or that they don't like  
3 because they want to keep their healthcare.

4 Do you see any similar issues coming  
5 up with tying childcare to somebody's current  
6 specific employment?

7 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: I  
8 mean, I see your point. But I think it's  
9 just an incentive.

10 I don't see it as a negative, I see it  
11 as more of a positive than anything else,  
12 because there's so many industries that do  
13 not even recognize the importance of  
14 childcare. So these employers will not only  
15 recognize the importance but invest in their  
16 employees. So I do believe the good would  
17 outweigh the bad here.

18 SENATOR BRISPORT: Okay, thank you.

19 And my second question is just about  
20 uptake rates. You know, in the Governor's  
21 proposal she talks about how many more  
22 children will become eligible, but the number  
23 that is eligible is not the number that  
24 participates.

1                   What's the current uptake rate for  
2                   childcare assistance in New York?

3                   ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: So  
4                   there are 100,000 families that are eligible  
5                   for subsidy. About 66,000 get it every  
6                   month. Annualized was 100,000.

7                   So no, we do have a lot of work to do  
8                   to get that number up. And I do think that  
9                   the streamlining of the application and  
10                  making things more electronic and accessible  
11                  will increase that.

12                  SENATOR BRISPORT: I like  
13                  streamlining. I think eliminating  
14                  means-testing in general would be the best  
15                  way to streamline.

16                  But in addition to streamlining the  
17                  application there's also the issue of not  
18                  enough providers, right? So while waiting  
19                  lists -- does OCFS keep a list of how many  
20                  kids are on waiting lists to even get  
21                  childcare around the state?

22                  ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: So  
23                  my understanding is that there are no  
24                  waitlists around the state. Counties don't

1           have waitlists anymore. It was more money to  
2           open cases. And granted, a lot of providers  
3           have low enrollment because we're still  
4           coming out of the pandemic.

5                        So I think ultimately we need more  
6           childcare spots, absolutely. We have  
7           deserts. So those deserts are being filled  
8           right now. But there are many providers that  
9           are out there that have open spots.

10                      So we don't keep private-sector  
11           waitlists. I'm sure there are some daycare  
12           centers in New York City that have waitlists.  
13           But OCFS wouldn't keep that.

14                      As far as waitlists for subsidy, local  
15           districts don't have waitlists. There are no  
16           waitlists for any local districts that I know  
17           of.

18                      SENATOR BRISPORT: Okay, I wish you  
19           had attended our hearing on the childcare  
20           crisis a few weeks ago. You would have heard  
21           providers saying that they've never seen  
22           their waitlists so long in the history of  
23           their time being a provider.

24                      My last thing is in terms of child

1 welfare, New York State is still continuing  
2 to fail to reimburse counties at the  
3 statutorily required 65 percent. We're still  
4 doing 62 percent. Why is that?

5 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:

6 Well, 62/38 I believe is in the  
7 appropriations. So that's the share that  
8 gets appropriated year after year.

9 SENATOR BRISPORT: But do you think we  
10 lose and do decreased services from doing  
11 less than 65 percent?

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You'll have to  
13 follow up with him afterwards, sorry.

14 And everyone, remember, when you get a  
15 clock, it's both for you to ask and for your  
16 testifiers to answer. So testifiers, we're  
17 hoping that you will follow up in writing on  
18 questions you couldn't answer.

19 And if you get them to both Helene and  
20 myself, we will make sure to get them to all  
21 committee members. Thank you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

23 We go to Assemblywoman Forrest for  
24 three minutes.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Thank you.

2 My question -- thank you,  
3 Commissioners. My question is for  
4 Commissioner -- I'm not going to mess it up,  
5 I promise -- Miles-Gustave.

6 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
7 Thank you.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Okay. Just a  
9 question on the stabilization grants, right?

10 The stabilization grants two years ago  
11 were around \$1 billion, and we lost childcare  
12 providers. Right? Will this year's proposal  
13 of 389 million stabilize the sector?

14 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
15 Thank you for your question.

16 I think it will help. I think the  
17 \$1 billion stabilization was in the height of  
18 the pandemic, when we knew we couldn't have  
19 childcare providers close even when schools  
20 were closed. So that was a critical lifeline  
21 for our community of providers.

22 And then last year's Stabilization  
23 2.0, we've been hearing from providers that  
24 helped a lot. A majority of that



1           you, yes.

2                    ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:

3           Oh. I don't understand the question. Data  
4           matching for --

5                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: So data  
6           matching would be where if someone puts in  
7           information about this program SNAP, it would  
8           then populate and be able to say for --

9                    OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Okay.

10                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Oh, he's -- I  
11           thought it was for you. I really was --

12                   OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I apologize.

13                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: OTDA does SNAP.

14                   OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Yes.

15                   So yes, there actually is a unified  
16           application now. It does that now.

17                   So outside of New York City -- so  
18           New York City has New York City Access, which  
19           does much the same thing -- but if you put  
20           in, you know, you apply for SNAP or you apply  
21           for public assistance, you apply for  
22           Medicaid, there is -- it's shared. So  
23           there's a single application now.

24                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Have you heard

1           any reports on the effectiveness of this  
2           single application? Because even in New York  
3           City it has hiccups, but ...

4                     OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Yeah, I  
5           won't suggest this is perfect. I mean, I'll  
6           note that the integrated eligibility system,  
7           which we're working on now, and I think the  
8           first bits will roll out in about three and a  
9           half years, will do this much better.

10                    But yes, we're all heading in that  
11           direction.

12                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Thank you,  
13           Commissioners.

14                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
15           To the Senate.

16                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
17           I think I'm the last Senator, so to  
18           speak.

19                    So going back to the migrant services  
20           and assistance money that the Governor put in  
21           her budget, so is it a billion dollars for  
22           New York City -- oh --

23                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Ten minutes on  
24           the clock for Senator Krueger.

1 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thanks.

2 Is it a billion dollars for New York  
3 City or statewide?

4 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: It's largely  
5 for New York City.

6 So it's a billion dollars. The vast  
7 majority of it, some 75 percent of that money  
8 is in the same kind of reimbursement that the  
9 city knows well for shelter and services. So  
10 that's the biggest chunk of it.

11 Some of this is in-kind, but it's  
12 all -- even that in-kind is for New York  
13 City. So that's referencing some Medicaid  
14 costs and some National Guard costs and what  
15 have you.

16 The only portion of this which is  
17 somewhat arguably not New York City is the  
18 \$25 million for resettlement.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So when my  
20 paperwork says that 741 million of this  
21 billion is used to provide New York City with  
22 29 percent reimbursement for supportive  
23 services and assistance, my mayor is telling  
24 me that the costs are radically higher

1 already than what a third coming from the  
2 state would be.

3 So is this really -- you're going to  
4 pay 29 percent of supportive services and  
5 assistance, so it could be more than  
6 741 million in order to get to that -- keep  
7 at that 29 percent level?

8 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: The budget  
9 proposes to spend 741 plus the existing  
10 \$26 million to get to \$767 million, for  
11 essentially 29 percent of the city's estimate  
12 for shelter costs from earlier in this state  
13 fiscal year through June of '24. That's  
14 what's on offer here right now.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So you've  
16 mentioned Medicaid costs and also safety net  
17 costs. So those aren't really new dollars  
18 because they're for migrants, those are  
19 benefits that if you're eligible in New York  
20 State, you get them. So we might see a  
21 projected increase in some costs because of  
22 this population.

23 But I don't think that should really  
24 be counted as migrant funds, do you?

1                   OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: To the  
2                   degree that that Medicaid expense is in fact  
3                   for migrants, I think that it could be fairly  
4                   counted in that billion dollars.

5                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And what about  
6                   the safety net money?

7                   OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: The same is  
8                   true there.

9                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Why? There's not  
10                  a new program, safety net for migrants, is  
11                  there?

12                  OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: No, but  
13                  there is some tracking of course of migrants  
14                  within the HRAs, right? So doing the  
15                  eligibility, they are now keeping track of  
16                  who are -- you know, the piece of paper you  
17                  come with. Right? So these are all  
18                  documented migrants. They're mostly asylum  
19                  seekers. They are paroled into the country.  
20                  Based on that eligibility status they may or  
21                  may not get safety net assistance. That can  
22                  be tracked.

23                  And so this represents a portion of  
24                  that cost.

1                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So what I'm  
2                   trying to get at is trying to understand, of  
3                   the billion dollars defined as being for  
4                   migrant services in the budget, what  
5                   percentage of that billion is actually new  
6                   money versus dollars that would have been in  
7                   the budget anyway, we just call it something  
8                   different this year?

9                   OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I would say  
10                  again that the vast majority is new money, if  
11                  only because -- I mean, the 741 by itself is  
12                  clearly new money. It wouldn't otherwise be  
13                  in this equation.

14                  I'm happy to take a look further and  
15                  answer your question maybe with greater  
16                  detail, but I think it is fair to describe  
17                  that billion dollars as largely new money.

18                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: What are we  
19                  paying the National Guard \$162 million for?

20                  OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I think it's  
21                  covering the cost of the -- that personnel  
22                  and their services for a lengthy period of  
23                  time. It's 900 --

24                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So current or

1 going retroactive?

2 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Yeah,  
3 it's -- it's current. It's right through  
4 that same period. So this is essentially  
5 looking at -- this is an estimate of how much  
6 National Guard troops we would need to  
7 continue to serve in the way in which they  
8 are now.

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Starting  
10 April 1st going forward, for the new year.

11 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Yes.

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Does the state  
13 pay anything for them in the previous year?

14 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I'm sorry?

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Did the state pay  
16 anything for their services for the current  
17 fiscal year?

18 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I'm  
19 uncertain. And we can certainly follow up  
20 with you on that.

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. And what  
22 happens if the city's costs just continue to  
23 grow and grow and grow for this population  
24 far beyond what's projected in the Governor's

1 budget?

2 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I think it's  
3 a very difficult equation all the way around.

4 Certainly we're concerned about the  
5 capacity of the city to continue to take  
6 migrants at this rate. I think we're  
7 hopeful -- you know, myself here at OTDA, my  
8 sister state agencies and the city are  
9 hopeful that with the changes that the  
10 federal government's made at the end of  
11 December, beginning of January, that we'd see  
12 a decrease in the number of migrants.

13 I'll note that last week we saw a  
14 slight dip in terms of entrants to DHS or to  
15 HERCs. So -- but for sure it will be  
16 challenging going forward, and we stand ready  
17 to assist further as needed.

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Because of the  
19 growth in the migrant population, there seems  
20 to be almost a triggered new set of problems  
21 for people who were in our homeless shelter  
22 system already -- I think partly because of  
23 just the volume of people, where they can  
24 possibly go, how many providers there are who



1 a bottomless pit of nonprofit providers ready  
2 and able, willing, right here, right now, to  
3 staff up some new shelter. The city is in  
4 over 80 hotels. The -- the -- rather than  
5 traditional, how about nonmigrant shelter  
6 residents -- actually there's been only a  
7 slight uptick in this same period, mostly on  
8 the families with children side. So there's  
9 maybe around 49,000. But for migrants, the  
10 shelter census actually wouldn't be much  
11 changed from a year ago.

12 But with, you know, some 21,000 in DHS  
13 and another 8,000 in HERCs that are overseen  
14 by the city's Health + Hospitals, it's --  
15 it's become a serious challenge to operate  
16 the entire system.

17 I'll frankly admit that I worry at  
18 times about the potential collapse of DHS.  
19 But for what was -- what we did with regard  
20 to the HERCs, which I'm very grateful for  
21 emergency services in New York City and  
22 New York State and for Health + Hospitals in  
23 stepping up to do what was necessary. And I  
24 think, you know, with my other state

1 colleagues, we will continue to step up as  
2 necessary.

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I am also very  
4 grateful for all of their work. I am just  
5 afraid that there's just going to be, at some  
6 point in the next few months, a total  
7 breakdown of these systems because they can't  
8 absorb and handle this many assignments at  
9 one time. So I share your appreciation, but  
10 I also -- I really feel like we are literally  
11 at the verge of just total chaos in trying to  
12 operate these programs. And we need to come  
13 up with more ideas and more assistance for  
14 the City of New York on these issues.

15 Now, I'm biased, obviously; I  
16 represent Manhattan, and everybody's in my  
17 island. And I'm not saying they shouldn't  
18 be, I'm just saying we need a lot more help  
19 coming into the future.

20 I will give back my one minute. Thank  
21 you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

23 We go to Assemblyman Gallahan,  
24 three minutes.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN GALLAHAN: Thank you,  
2 Madam Chair.

3 Thank you both for your testimony  
4 today and all you do every day to make New  
5 York a better place to live.

6 My question is for Commissioner Tietz  
7 regarding ERAP and LRAP.

8 We know that 225,000 checks have been  
9 cut and that the application period ended on  
10 the 20th of January. It's my understanding  
11 that only applicants who have applied through  
12 October 31, 2022, are being reviewed. And  
13 will applicants after October 31, 2022, also  
14 be reviewed going forward?

15 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: So we're  
16 reviewing applications received right through  
17 January 20. We're currently paying for those  
18 that are otherwise eligible and approved  
19 through November 30.

20 Looking at resources available, my  
21 expectation is that for the non-subsidized  
22 housing we'll be in the ballpark.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN GALLAHAN: Okay. How much  
24 of the appropriated money from the fiscal

1 year budget '23 has been awarded so far, and  
2 how much is left?

3 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: So I don't  
4 know off the top of my head in terms of the  
5 amount of appropriation for '23. We've  
6 distributed, as you noted, about  
7 2.82 billion. I think the total is  
8 somewhere -- leaving aside LRAP and the over  
9 80 program, but ERAP alone, I think the total  
10 is somewhere around 3.1 billion. So we have  
11 around 300 million or so left.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN GALLAHAN: Thank you.

13 And as far as the LRAP, how much money  
14 from the 125 million for LRAP in the fiscal  
15 year '23 appropriation has been awarded to  
16 recipients? And how much money would be left  
17 there?

18 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Almost all  
19 of it has. That -- there's a handful of  
20 millions left in the LRAP program.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN GALLAHAN: Okay, thank  
22 you.

23 And should the state reopen LRAP with  
24 new funding?

1 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I'm sorry,  
2 say again? Say again?

3 ASSEMBLYMAN GALLAHAN: Should the  
4 state open LRAP again with new funding?

5 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I leave, of  
6 course, to the Legislature and the Governor  
7 on how best to address the need.

8 We've not -- the Governor's budget  
9 doesn't propose to add any additional state  
10 resources to this program. But certainly if  
11 there is an interest, I leave to you all how  
12 best to address.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN GALLAHAN: So I'll let you  
14 know in my district that I hear quite  
15 frequently from landlords saying "I've never  
16 been made whole." They can't maintain their  
17 properties and keep a good place to live for  
18 their tenants. They're broke, they can't pay  
19 their taxes, they can't pay the utilities.

20 So it's paramount that we do something  
21 for those folks. Thank you very much.

22 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Of course.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: The Senate is  
24 finished with questioners, so we're going to

1 just keep calling on Assemblymembers.

2 Assemblywoman Simon.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

4 Thank you.

5 So, Commissioner Tietz, I have a  
6 question to sort of follow up some of the  
7 recent questions about the issues around  
8 migrants and being able to work, which I know  
9 is federal, but there have been relaxations.

10 What is the state doing to help kind  
11 of push the feds into allowing people to be  
12 able to work more quickly? Because right now  
13 they're working off the books, they're not  
14 protected. And they're not paying taxes.

15 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: So you're  
16 correct that this is federal rules.

17 So the -- in the normal course for an  
18 asylum seeker, as I understand it, you would  
19 have to apply, and then it's essentially 180  
20 days from receipt of your application that  
21 you would have work authorization.

22 I know that the Governor, along with  
23 sister state governors, is urging our federal  
24 friends to permit work authorization, to

1 provide work authorization sooner.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

3 And Commissioner Miles-Gustave, I have  
4 two questions.

5 One is I notice that after-school  
6 programs are being moved to OCFS. Advantage  
7 After School is going to lose \$5 million. So  
8 one question is, like what's the purpose of  
9 this? Is there -- does anybody think we need  
10 fewer after-school programs?

11 And then the other issue is the  
12 proposed elimination of the Committee on  
13 Special Education state share to those  
14 residential programs. And my question is,  
15 who's going to be picking up that tab, and do  
16 they have that money?

17 And also, what about the out-of-state  
18 placements that actually cost us more and in  
19 some cases are highly problematic in other  
20 ways?

21 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:

22 Thank you for your question.

23 So just to clarify, the after-school  
24 funding is moving from SED's budget to OCFS's

1 budget because we've functionally been  
2 operating these programs for the past several  
3 years. So it just made more sense for it to  
4 come to our budget.

5 And there is not an actual decrease.  
6 We are looking to consolidate the future RFP,  
7 to consolidate the programmatic requirements,  
8 which will help us consolidate the payments  
9 and the claims. So there's Empire and  
10 Advantage; our hope is to let a consolidated  
11 RFP for the next contract year.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Like a cost  
13 savings, you're saying.

14 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: I  
15 don't think it was a cost savings, but we can  
16 surely get back to you.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Okay. Please,  
18 because we have -- and then the other thing  
19 is the CSE state share on the residential  
20 programs.

21 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
22 Yes, thank you.

23 So that was an extension, that that's  
24 the current operations currently. We

1 don't -- the state does not pay that share.  
2 It's to the CSEs and the local districts. So  
3 under the proposal in the budget is to make  
4 that permanent.

5 But for the past several years, I  
6 think folks realized that these children are  
7 in voluntary agencies placed by CSEs in the  
8 custody of local districts. So that's the  
9 current operation of the fiscal -- that  
10 share.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: I'll follow up.  
12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
14 Assemblyman Pirozzolo.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: Good  
16 afternoon. Thank you both for being here. I  
17 truly appreciate it.

18 My questions are really going to go to  
19 Commissioner Miles-Gustave.

20 Unfortunately, you know, a lot of the  
21 work that we get to do, some of it is  
22 pleasant, some of it is unpleasant. And my  
23 question is going to go into more -- probably  
24 the most unpleasant things that come up.

1                   But could you just give me a brief  
2                   overview of what your office does when it  
3                   comes to the abuse, exploitation and  
4                   trafficking of children?

5                   ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: So  
6                   we have the Safe Harbour laws in New York  
7                   State, I think one of the most supportive and  
8                   helpful.

9                   So we have divisions in our OCFS  
10                  office that provide -- we have funding that  
11                  provides allocations to local counties. So  
12                  human trafficking is something that the local  
13                  districts provide services and support.

14                  But again, we have Safe Harbour laws.  
15                  So the point of that is that we're not --  
16                  we're no longer criminalizing young women  
17                  for, say, prostitution if they've been  
18                  trafficked. And I think the point of  
19                  focusing on trafficking is to make sure that  
20                  we get to the trauma of that trafficked  
21                  individual. So we take trafficking and  
22                  trafficking prevention very seriously.

23                  And in the rollout of our Family First  
24                  implementation, there are several voluntary

1 agencies that were interested in becoming one  
2 of our QRTP exceptions, which is an EMPOWER  
3 program specifically for youth who are at  
4 risk of being trafficked. So there's now a  
5 congregate setting for those potentially  
6 trafficked youth.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: So I  
8 appreciate that. But do you have any  
9 suggestions or any way we could work with you  
10 so -- the victims certainly need as much help  
11 as they can get, but what do you see that we  
12 can do, or what can we do to go after the  
13 people who are actually doing the abuse?

14 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
15 Yes. Such a huge issue. I do not disagree  
16 with you.

17 I know that some of our voluntary  
18 agencies and local districts are working in  
19 partnership with their local law enforcement,  
20 with the DA. There were situations that  
21 happened maybe several years ago in one of  
22 our voluntary agencies where the FBI was  
23 brought into this specific case. So I know  
24 there's partnership between the child welfare

1 system, our voluntary agencies, and local  
2 county social services and local DAs, to try  
3 to stave off this very -- it's very  
4 troubling, a very troubling issue.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: Well, I  
6 appreciate all the work that you're doing. I  
7 certainly look forward to working with you in  
8 the future on ways that we can reduce the  
9 amount of incidents that's happening by maybe  
10 better prosecution of people who are  
11 perpetrating these crimes against our  
12 children.

13 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
14 Absolutely.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: Thank you very  
16 much.

17 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:  
18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblywoman  
20 Mitaynes.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: Hello. Good  
22 afternoon.

23 This is for the OTDA Commissioner.  
24 This is about SNAP benefits fraud.

1           It seems that this state is allocating  
2           the money it received from the federal  
3           government to only replace the stolen funds  
4           on or after October 1, 2022, through  
5           September 30, 2023. And it seems that it may  
6           only replace once in the federal fiscal year  
7           for funds stolen after October 1, 2024.

8           Why hasn't OTDA looked into providing  
9           more funding as well from the state so that  
10          those with funding stolen before October 2022  
11          are also covered and made whole? The federal  
12          government has already committed to  
13          addressing instances after October 2022, but  
14          it seems that the state has not moved further  
15          to supplement the existing aid.

16          OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I think you  
17          actually wanted me to answer that, yes.

18          So just to be clear, the federal law  
19          as of late December permits states, once they  
20          submit a plan that's approved by USDA, to  
21          replace two -- benefits equal to two recent  
22          months of your benefits, twice in a year. I  
23          think it's through 2024, and thereafter once  
24          per year.

1                   And you're right that that law  
2                   begins -- that's for, you know, losses  
3                   October 1, 2022, going forward. Right? And  
4                   so of course we're doing the same, we've  
5                   proposed to do much the same with regard to  
6                   the public assistance benefits. This is not  
7                   confined to SNAP.

8                   As I had mentioned earlier, our  
9                   expectation is that within the next few  
10                  months, following the USDA's approval of our  
11                  plan, which we're submitting later this  
12                  month, that we'll be able to begin reissuing  
13                  those benefits to the local districts.

14                  With regard to earlier periods, of  
15                  course we leave to the Legislature and the  
16                  Governor how best to address that need. But  
17                  the proposal is what we have here on the  
18                  table now.

19                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: Okay, so we  
20                  would have your support to be able to do  
21                  that?

22                  OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I'm happy to  
23                  do at OTDA whatever the budget requires of  
24                  me.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: Just very  
2 quickly, a second question, and this is about  
3 childcare and the fact that it leaves out  
4 undocumented kids. Has OCFS calculated the  
5 cost of a dedicated state fund to provide  
6 childcare for undocumented children?

7 ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: So  
8 we don't have that data right now. I don't  
9 know if we would even begin to know if that  
10 would be statewide. But I'm happy to take  
11 your question back to my team and get back to  
12 you.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: I appreciate  
14 it, thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
16 Assemblyman Ardila.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN ARDILA: Thank you so  
18 much, Madam Chair.

19 Thank you, Commissioner Tietz; thank  
20 you for coming. And I really appreciate you  
21 both for showing up today. I wanted to talk  
22 to you a little bit about HRA predominantly  
23 impacting New York City residents.

24 Maybe you can tell me a little bit

1           about this when it comes to SNAP benefits,  
2           public assistance. When people are applying  
3           and there's a wait time and they don't hear  
4           back, and then when they try to contact HRA,  
5           they can be on the phone for hours without  
6           being in contact with anyone. Can you talk  
7           to me about that, why that's taken place?

8                     OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I couldn't  
9           speak to that specifically. I'm happy to get  
10          you an answer about the wait times.

11                    I can say, more broadly, that the city  
12          of course has sought waivers from us for  
13          federal or state rules with regard to  
14          timeliness of issuing benefits or conducting  
15          a certification or a recertification. We  
16          have again -- as we have since early 2020,  
17          we've again waived a bunch of those rules  
18          after the city proposed taking some --  
19          several actions to fill seats. They're  
20          having a staffing problem.

21                    And I think we were satisfied that  
22          their proposal with regard to how best to  
23          fill those seats was sufficient to further  
24          extend by six months those waivers.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN ARDILA: Okay. And then  
2 to that point, right, so when we have -- this  
3 impacts a lot of seniors in my district, a  
4 lot of people that are waiting for SNAP  
5 benefits, SNAP assistance, and this is  
6 essentially what makes or breaks -- so they  
7 can help -- it helps them make ends meet.

8 So, you know, what can we do to work  
9 together to ensure that we don't have those  
10 staffing issues? What can the State  
11 Legislature do to ensure that we have the  
12 proper resources so people don't have to have  
13 those wait times where their cases are  
14 pending, they don't know the status, they  
15 want to do check-ins in terms of where they  
16 are in the application process?

17 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Yeah, I'd  
18 say that we're happy to take up any idea that  
19 would both help the city fill the open seats  
20 and to retain the staff they have.

21 Admittedly, much of this is within  
22 their control alone, and not ours.

23 So if -- I would just say that if the  
24 waivers in and of themselves were enough,

1           they'd have worked by now. So I think it's  
2           important, because you want to keep people on  
3           benefits, and for those who apply to get them  
4           benefits and to limit the workload by issuing  
5           those waivers, so you don't have, for  
6           example, to do recertifications at the same  
7           rate or pace as you would have in the absence  
8           of those waivers.

9                         But at the end of the day, it is on  
10           the city to figure out how best to fill those  
11           seats. We stand ready to help in any way we  
12           can if there's some measure beyond issuing  
13           those waivers.

14                         ASSEMBLYMAN ARDILA: I appreciate  
15           that.

16                         And I do want to say appreciate the  
17           work you do, and you have my full commitment  
18           to reach those goals.

19                         Thank you.

20                         CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

21                         We go to Assemblywoman Lee, three  
22           minutes.

23                         ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEE: Good afternoon.

24                         Thank you. My first question is for OTDA.

1           I commend the Governor for recognizing  
2           the need for more housing in the budget. But  
3           I wanted to ask, what are the state standards  
4           for the siting of homeless shelters and  
5           ensuring that there's not a  
6           disproportionate concentration in any  
7           particular neighborhood, particularly in  
8           low-income communities of color?

9           OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: The siting  
10          of -- I'm presuming you're asking principally  
11          around New York City.

12          ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEE: Yes.

13          OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: So the  
14          siting of shelters is really up to the city's  
15          Department of Social Services -- and therein,  
16          it's the Department of Homeless Services --  
17          and other city officials.

18          Our role at OTDA is to engage in  
19          oversight with regard to the services, the  
20          quality of services, to certify shelters, and  
21          to provide resources. But the actual siting  
22          of them, the determination about where best  
23          to place them, is up to the City of New York.

24          ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEE: Understood. Thank

1           you.

2                       And for OCFS, as you mentioned, local  
3           districts can set different standards under  
4           the Child Assistance Program, but  
5           standardization doesn't necessarily mean  
6           improved care.

7                       So specifically for New York City, can  
8           you please elaborate more on how  
9           standardizing benefits and services will  
10          impact how New York families will receive  
11          care, and also how they will be applying?

12                      ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE: So  
13          for New York City they have a slightly more  
14          complicated process. They have a contract of  
15          care system, which is EarlyLearn for older  
16          children. They still have typical standard  
17          childcare assistance for infants and  
18          toddlers.

19                      So our hope is that for that  
20          specifically for the infant and toddler  
21          population, the systems will be standardized.  
22          They have no waitlists, so in New York City  
23          you might have heard from your constituents  
24          with issues getting to childcare because

1           there was a significant waitlist. That is  
2           now gone. They are giving waivers, and we  
3           are monitoring that process.

4                        So it really should be standardized  
5           and should be beneficial to all families.

6                        ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEE: Okay, great.  
7           Thank you.

8                        And then when it comes to ERAP, I  
9           wanted to focus specifically on the 73,000  
10          applications that you said are outstanding  
11          for subsidized housing. How many of those  
12          are specifically for NYCHA residents?

13                       OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I don't know  
14          off the top of my head, although it is a  
15          substantial number. We can get it. We can  
16          get that to you.

17                       ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEE: Okay, great. And  
18          so would you know how much in need those  
19          73,000 applications represent?

20                       OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: So because  
21          they're of a lower priority, you know, given  
22          the two previous budgets that set them at  
23          that priority, we haven't thoroughly reviewed  
24          them. They're essentially on hold.

1           If there were resources available,  
2           then of course we would go through the  
3           process of reviewing them. So we would have,  
4           at best, you know, just an estimate. So I  
5           couldn't tell you today exactly what the  
6           value of those are.

7           ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEE: Okay, thank you.

8           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

9           We go to Assemblywoman Gonzalez-Rojas.

10          ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZALEZ-ROJAS: Thank  
11          you. Thank you both for being here.

12          Commissioner Tietz, benefits  
13          skimming -- again, this is just a critical  
14          issue. You're hearing this quite a bit  
15          today. How much in dollars would you  
16          estimate has been skimmed from New Yorkers at  
17          this point?

18          OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: The last  
19          numbers I saw were somewhere in the ballpark  
20          of \$5 million.

21          ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZALEZ-ROJAS: And is  
22          there language that allows for the  
23          replacement of SNAP in particular? As I  
24          understand, this is about 50 percent of the

1 cases that have been happening in terms of  
2 skimming.

3 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Actually I  
4 think that the SNAP skimming represents a  
5 significant majority of the losses, as  
6 opposed to the public assistance cash  
7 benefit. And, I'm sorry, your question was?

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZALEZ-ROJAS: The  
9 replacement of that SNAP. I know that there  
10 is money in partnership with the federal  
11 government, but --

12 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Actually,  
13 it's their money.

14 So to be clear, we couldn't -- we  
15 cannot, even as of this very moment, we  
16 cannot replace stolen SNAP benefits.

17 So in the budget, in the omnibus  
18 budget the federal government passed in late  
19 December, for the first time it's permitting  
20 the replacement of those benefits, consistent  
21 with a plan, a state plan that we submit to  
22 them, which we're intending to do by the end  
23 of the month.

24 Once approved by them, we will then

1 roll out guidance to the districts on  
2 actually implementing that plan. So  
3 essentially, as I've mentioned earlier, a  
4 couple of months, an amount equal to the  
5 lesser of the amount stolen or two months of  
6 benefits, twice in a year thereafter.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZALEZ-ROJAS: Is  
8 there a way to do more than just that  
9 minimum? I know that minimum was standard --  
10 the standard by the federal government. But  
11 just, you know, the two replacements and the  
12 two months, it just seems very limiting for  
13 people who have maybe lost thousands of  
14 dollars in skimming.

15 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Not with  
16 federal resources. So that would be the  
17 limit with regard to replacing the federal  
18 benefit.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZALEZ-ROJAS: Could  
20 we put in money at the state level to do  
21 that?

22 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Well, I  
23 leave it to the Legislature about how best to  
24 address that.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZALEZ-ROJAS: And  
2 given that SNAP is our number-one hunger  
3 program, and that the NOEP has increased the  
4 number of people on SNAP, why isn't there  
5 more here for NOEP? We know that's just  
6 incredibly effective programs. Many counties  
7 stand to see a reduction altogether, or loss  
8 of SNAP assistance.

9 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I don't have  
10 it in front of me, but I know that we've  
11 increased the amount to NOEP. I want to say  
12 it's \$5 million. But I think we've carried  
13 that on from previous.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZALEZ-ROJAS: And in  
15 my last seconds I want to go back to the HIV  
16 out of state. Would you -- you know, there's  
17 activists that joined us earlier. Is there  
18 anything in the Executive proposal that would  
19 provide housing? I know you mentioned some  
20 of the counties haven't opted in. But what  
21 can we do to ensure that there's greater  
22 access to housing for people with HIV?

23 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Um --

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I think you're

1 going to have to answer that offline.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZALEZ-ROJAS: Thank  
3 you. Thank you so much.

4 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: You know,  
5 again, as the Senator said, answers to any  
6 questions that are posed here that there  
7 isn't time to answer, please send us the  
8 answers and we'll make sure all the  
9 colleagues receive them.

10 So we move on to Assemblywoman Reyes.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYES: So this is for  
12 Commissioner Tietz.

13 In 2020 we passed legislation to start  
14 in New York State a restaurant meals program  
15 through the SNAP program. Just wondering  
16 where you guys are on the implementation of  
17 that pilot program, if you have gotten the  
18 necessary approvals from the U.S. Department  
19 of Agriculture, and whether there are  
20 resources that the state can provide to help  
21 kind of move that along.

22 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Yes, your  
23 colleague asked it earlier and I had  
24 mentioned that our plan is in to USDA and

1           that we expect in the next, I would say  
2           within 60 days, to have a response from them.  
3           I'm hopeful that it will be an approval.

4                     And I would suggest that we're pretty  
5           much all set to roll it once approved.

6                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYES: Perfect.

7                     My next question is so your office  
8           works on child support issues along with the  
9           courts. We are working on a proposal that is  
10          currently being revised that would create a  
11          streamlined, expedited settlement conference  
12          process for families who generally agree on  
13          child support in family courts.

14                    Do you see the need for this sort of  
15          new process and the value in helping families  
16          who want to utilize this option to establish  
17          child support orders as a more streamlined,  
18          straightforward process?

19                    OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Yes.

20                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYES: Great. And it's  
21          also my understanding that the state is  
22          reimbursed for costs associated with the  
23          child support program through the federal  
24          Title IV-D Social Security funds. Would

1           those funds be available for a program like  
2           an expedited settlement conference process  
3           for child support in family courts?

4                     OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Now you've  
5           gotten off of my page. So we'll follow up  
6           with you on that.

7                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYES: Okay.

8                     Those are my questions. Thank you.

9                     CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

10                    We go to Assemblyman Chang.

11                    ASSEMBLYMAN CHANG: Thank you,  
12           Madam Chairman.

13                    Thank you, Commissioners, for being in  
14           here. You have a thankless job. It's a very  
15           tough judgment of this program. Thank you.

16                    I represent Sunset Park, Boro Park and  
17           Dyker Heights. I'm a 24-year veteran and I  
18           served a tour in Afghanistan. So I have a  
19           question about veterans; that's for  
20           Commissioner Tietz.

21                    Veterans are included as an eligible  
22           group for the affordable housing program in  
23           the Empire State Housing Initiative. How  
24           many veterans have been recipients of this

1 program, and how much have they been awarded,  
2 sir?

3 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I'm  
4 uncertain, but I'm certainly happy to -- I  
5 don't have that detail in front of me, but  
6 I'm certainly happy to get it to you.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN CHANG: Okay, thank you.

8 And earlier in your testimony you  
9 praised the National Guardsmen that had been  
10 doing outstanding service in providing  
11 immigrant services. You have the resources;  
12 how would you expand their scope and mission  
13 if you had that desire?

14 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I think  
15 ideally, as much as we are grateful for the  
16 presence of the National Guard, it is an  
17 unusual -- I would suggest it's a somewhat  
18 unusual use here. Ideally we would have  
19 nonprofit human services, shelter providers  
20 on contract to do the entire task.

21 So, for example, in the site that I  
22 visited in Brooklyn last Friday, there is a  
23 nonprofit partner there, they just don't have  
24 all of the staff in place yet. So hence, the

1 National Guard to fill that gap.

2 Again, grateful for that. I don't  
3 think that's the ideal approach. And we  
4 would prefer that the nonprofit staffed up as  
5 usual.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN CHANG: Okay, thank you.

7 And a question for the Landlord Rental  
8 Assistance Program, the LRAP. How many  
9 applicants have been completed -- I know that  
10 the program's been closed, but how many have  
11 been completed and processed and how many  
12 have not, sir?

13 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: So as of the  
14 end of last month, we made almost 28,000  
15 payments to landlords totaling more than \$283  
16 million. That was after last February we  
17 moved some of the unexpended under-80 program  
18 to the LRAP program because the LRAP program  
19 was oversubscribed. So that's how much we've  
20 put out to date.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN CHANG: And you were so  
22 oversubscribed, so what's left on  
23 oversubscriptions, sir?

24 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I don't have

1 the amount left. I know it's a modest sum.  
2 That program is, you know, oversubscribed as  
3 well, but it's a modest sum that's left.  
4 We're working through existing applications.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN CHANG: I see. Thank you.  
6 That's all the questions I have,  
7 Commissioner.

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
9 We go to the Ways and Means ranker,  
10 Assemblyman Ra, for five minutes.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.  
12 Good afternoon, Commissioner and  
13 Commissioner. Commissioner Tietz, thank you  
14 for that meeting last week to discuss some of  
15 the budget proposals. And I appreciate your  
16 answers today.

17 With regard to ERAP, though, I wanted  
18 to get into a little bit, as we're winding  
19 down this program, a few issues including  
20 Guidehouse, the outside entity that was  
21 contracted to -- obviously before your  
22 time -- to administer this program. My  
23 understanding is their contract is going to  
24 expire in May, is that correct?

1 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Yes.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: And will there be any  
3 need to continue any type of contract with  
4 them, or do you think everything will be  
5 wrapped up by that point?

6 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Oh, it would  
7 be nice if it were wrapped up. But no.  
8 We're moving to extend that contract.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. Do you know  
10 how long that would be for or what any of the  
11 terms of that might be expected to be?

12 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I don't have  
13 the term of the extension. I think our hope  
14 is that by the end of calendar '23 that the  
15 vast majority of this work on ERAP would have  
16 been completed.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. So by the end  
18 of the calendar year you're expecting to have  
19 the program --

20 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Largely  
21 done, that's right.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Yeah, okay.

23 So I know that as you're going  
24 through, you know, these processes, a couple

1 of issues that have been brought to my  
2 attention that are kind of recurring, one of  
3 them being applicants who have been denied  
4 multiple times but continue to apply.

5 Is there any process to streamline if  
6 they've applied again and again?

7 OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: Yes, we've  
8 worked with the vendor to do an initial sort  
9 for just such applications.

10 So in some instances folks have  
11 reapplied because they didn't obtain, as an  
12 initial matter, the full amount available to  
13 them -- so 12 months of rent or three months  
14 of prospective rent. In other cases there  
15 may have been errors, what have you. But --  
16 so in some instances.

17 But where they essentially have  
18 applied in much the same way and it's  
19 clearly, you know, not a fundable  
20 application, then we would quickly move to  
21 deny it. At which point, by the way, then, I  
22 think what you're hitting at here is the  
23 protections that come with the statute.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Yes.

1                   OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: In which  
2 case the protections then are not in  
3 existence.

4                   So if -- I would just note that for  
5 someone who's never had an approved  
6 application, then -- for whatever sets of  
7 reasons -- they don't have the protections  
8 upon denial. But because, say, in the  
9 instance in which someone had a previously  
10 approved application, got some funding, then  
11 they actually have the eviction protections  
12 for a period of time going forward.

13                   ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. And then  
14 regarding owners, I've heard of situations  
15 where owners have had payments and then they  
16 get clawed back, you know, months later.  
17 Why, you know, would this be happening to  
18 some -- is there a change in information?  
19 What requires that? And what if any recourse  
20 does an owner have if, you know, they dispute  
21 the reason that the money's being clawed  
22 back?

23                   OTDA COMMISSIONER TIETZ: I would --  
24 you know, among the states with ERAP

1 programs, New York ranks high in terms of its  
2 success rate here in terms of getting dollars  
3 out the door to as many households as we've  
4 done. I think some evidence of that is we've  
5 obtained nearly \$400 million from the federal  
6 Treasury in reallocations from unspent  
7 dollars from elsewhere. So I think we've  
8 demonstrated an ability to get these  
9 resources out the door to those most in need.

10 There are errors, as there are with  
11 any program. The error rate in this program  
12 is at about 6 percent, which is frankly akin  
13 to most public assistance programs. So, for  
14 example, that's an error rate akin to SNAP.  
15 And so that would be the instance in which we  
16 would potentially look to claw back some  
17 resource.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay, thank you.

19 And just with my limited time,  
20 Commissioner Miles-Gustave, just relative --  
21 you know, we've talked about the providers,  
22 the childcare providers. And certainly, you  
23 know, the minimum wage proposal, on the one  
24 hand it's going to help lots of people

1            hopefully be able to afford childcare, but it  
2            certainly has the potential to drive up costs  
3            for providers.

4                        So I hope that's something we can keep  
5            an eye on with some of the things we're doing  
6            with regard to ensuring there are adequate  
7            opportunities for childcare.

8                        ACTING COMMISSIONER MILES-GUSTAVE:

9            Yes.

10                       CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

11                       So this concludes this portion of the  
12            hearing.

13                       Just to restate that to the extent  
14            that there are questions that there wasn't  
15            sufficient time to answer, please -- to  
16            Senator Krueger and myself -- forward those  
17            answers.

18                       And next we are going to be hearing  
19            from the New York State Office for the Aging,  
20            Greg Olsen, acting director; and New York  
21            State Division of Veterans' Services,  
22            Reverend Viviana DeCohen, director.

23                       And while we are having a quiet  
24            transition, if you have any conversations,

1 please take them into the hall. I just want  
2 to remind people who are going to be  
3 testifying later to make sure that you've  
4 checked in with the desk at the top of the  
5 stairs so that we know that you are here.

6 Commissioner, if we could --  
7 Assemblywoman, if we could take the  
8 conversation out in the hall.

9 (Pause.)

10 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And while we  
11 are getting ready to start, I want to  
12 acknowledge we've been joined by  
13 Assemblywoman Hunter. Assemblywoman  
14 Jean-Pierre joined us recently. And I think  
15 that's it for our new members.

16 So we're ready to start our second  
17 panel of governmental witnesses. A reminder  
18 to both of you that you each have 10 minutes  
19 to make your presentation; then there will be  
20 a number of members who have questions. And  
21 hopefully they will be leaving you enough  
22 time to be able to answer those questions.  
23 Thank you.

24 So Greg, do you want to start?

1                   NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Sure,  
2                   happy to. Thank you.

3                   Just let me know, is that close enough  
4                   for you guys? Okay, great.

5                   Well, good afternoon, Chairpersons  
6                   Krueger, Weinstein -- Senator,  
7                   congratulations on getting the Senate  
8                   Committee on Aging -- and of course  
9                   Assemblyman Kim and all the distinguished  
10                  members of the Legislature.

11                  My name is Greg Olsen. I'm the acting  
12                  director of the New York State Office for the  
13                  Aging, and I'm honored to testify today.

14                  Governor Hochul's Executive Budget is  
15                  aptly named "Achieving the New York Dream."  
16                  The Executive Budget seeks to create a more  
17                  affordable, more livable, and safer New York,  
18                  while opening doors to the communities and  
19                  people who have historically been blocked  
20                  from equal chances at success.

21                  I am pleased, as always, to testify on  
22                  provisions of Governor Hochul's proposed  
23                  budget that directly affect NYSOFA programs  
24                  and our services, along with additional

1 budget proposals that will positively impact  
2 older New Yorkers and their families and move  
3 towards the broader goal of creating a more  
4 affordable and livable New York.

5 The Governor's State of the State  
6 message and subsequent Executive Budget  
7 proposal aims to make New York the healthiest  
8 state in the nation through a multi-agency,  
9 coordinated effort that's focused on  
10 developing a Master Plan for Aging, improving  
11 physical and behavioral health, combating  
12 social isolation, preventive health care  
13 strategies, expanding access to services and  
14 training for LGBTQ individuals, supporting  
15 informal as well as working caregivers,  
16 addressing disparities, diversity, equity and  
17 inclusion, and more.

18 Utilizing the state's 2019-2024  
19 Prevention Agenda as the umbrella, and  
20 instituting a "Health Across All Policies  
21 approach," New York State agencies are  
22 incorporating health considerations into our  
23 planning, programs, and initiatives. As  
24 agencies, we are committed to working

1 together and considering how our policies  
2 fulfill New York's pledge as the first  
3 age-friendly state in the nation.

4 Now we have an opportunity to further  
5 strengthen and coordinate this vital work  
6 through the Governor's priority of developing  
7 a Master Plan for Aging. This master plan is  
8 consistent with the goals and work that New  
9 York has been engaged in to improve  
10 communities for people of all ages and create  
11 healthy environments in which to grow up and  
12 grow old.

13 In 2018, as you know, New York became  
14 the first age-friendly state in the nation to  
15 receive that designation from AARP and the  
16 World Health Organization. New York was  
17 first because we rank pretty high in the  
18 eight domains of age-friendly, livable  
19 communities, and due to our comprehensive  
20 plan to systematically build age-friendly and  
21 smart-growth principles into how government  
22 operates and functions.

23 Through much-needed investments, the  
24 Governor's FY '24 Executive Budget expands

1 and strengthens the foundation with  
2 initiatives that help individuals access  
3 needed services and lead healthy lives by  
4 maintaining funding for vital services like  
5 the Community Services for the Elderly  
6 program, or CSE; elder abuse and Holocaust  
7 survivors funding; increasing funding for the  
8 Master Plan for Aging; continuing the  
9 historic \$23 million investment to help older  
10 New Yorkers who are awaiting services;  
11 continuing the \$2.9 million to expand our  
12 efforts to combat isolation, bridge the  
13 digital divide, address elder abuse, and  
14 strengthen NYSOFA's stipend program for  
15 volunteer recruitment and retention;  
16 continuing our bill-payer service program in  
17 10 counties in Western New York to prevent  
18 and mitigate financial exploitation of older  
19 adults; the continued improvements in our  
20 New York Connects system, further increasing  
21 access to long-term services and supports;  
22 maintaining a half a million dollars that's  
23 used to draw down more than \$2 million in  
24 federal funds to combat elder abuse and

1 financial exploitation through our enhanced  
2 increasing multidisciplinary team program;  
3 continuing funding that was in the budget  
4 last year for the Long Term Care Ombudsman  
5 Program, and providing a 2.5 percent human  
6 COLA for our providers.

7 The Governor's budget provides the  
8 support necessary to continue our  
9 trailblazing initiatives. Examples include  
10 our award-winning animatronic pet project;  
11 the GetSetUp platform that offers more than  
12 900 lifelong learning and health and wellness  
13 classes; our Virtual Senior Center to bring  
14 senior center programming into the homes of  
15 older adults; our Elli-Q program that  
16 provides a proactive artificial intelligence  
17 tool to combat isolation and loneliness and  
18 improve connectivity to others as well as  
19 improving overall health and wellness; our  
20 GoGoGrandparent partnership, which provides  
21 specialized ride-sharing to increase  
22 transportation options; and our  
23 evidence-based caregiver support platform,  
24 TRUALTA, which is available to any New

1           Yorker, regardless of age, who provides some  
2           type of uncompensated care to somebody else.

3                     Further, the proposed Executive Budget  
4           increases eligibility for those older adults  
5           that wish to use services via a private pay  
6           model. Legislation that we passed in 2019  
7           allowed individuals and families for the  
8           first time to purchase services directly from  
9           their area Agency on Aging when their income  
10          was above 400 percent of the federal poverty  
11          level.

12                    What we found is that created a gap,  
13          and so we're pleased that this year the  
14          Governor's proposal expands access to these  
15          services for those individuals between  
16          250 and 400 percent of the federal poverty  
17          level.

18                    NYSOFA has also launched several pilot  
19          projects that expand outreach, communication  
20          and engagement, as well as measure the  
21          effectiveness of these new models. These  
22          innovations will inform the Master Plan for  
23          Aging. One such innovation is the launch of  
24          a multicounty evidence-based intervention

1 pilot that uses complex analytics to identify  
2 caregiver burnout. It's called TCARE, and  
3 it's a leading cause of referral to higher  
4 levels of care for older adults.

5 NYSOFA is also currently conducting  
6 the state's first-ever statewide needs  
7 assessment survey. The results of this  
8 assessment will not only inform our federal  
9 plan that is due to the feds this summer, our  
10 county plans that will be due later in the  
11 year, but also the Master Plan for Aging.

12 NYSOFA is also the nation's first  
13 state unit on aging to partner with the  
14 National Association of Home Builders to make  
15 their Certified Aging in Place Specialist, or  
16 CAPS, training certification available to our  
17 case managers. This certification improves  
18 the ability of our front-line staff to  
19 assess, recommend, and incorporate home  
20 safety features into care plans, helps  
21 individuals age in place, and prevents  
22 injuries and falls.

23 Finally, through our partnership with  
24 the Department of Health, we will be

1 expanding a successful integrated care model  
2 that coordinates aging services with health  
3 services and physicians' offices and  
4 strengthens the New York Connects data and  
5 reporting system as well as the state  
6 resource directory.

7 But the budget is much more than any  
8 one program or service. It must be examined  
9 holistically. Older adults, like all  
10 New Yorkers, touch many different systems in  
11 their day-to-day lives, not just the Office  
12 for the Aging, which is why the Governor's  
13 systemic investments are so important.

14 Key investments and proposals that  
15 will further our ability to allow New Yorkers  
16 to age in place include -- and some have been  
17 mentioned already -- the New York Housing  
18 Compact to build 800,000 new homes; expanding  
19 access to behavioral health services;  
20 strengthening EMS, which for many is the  
21 first healthcare responders; making energy  
22 more affordable to reduce out-of-pocket  
23 costs; expanding food access -- and there's  
24 many, many more.

1                   So NYSOFA will continue to engage our  
2                   sister agencies, private partners,  
3                   not-for-profits, and community-based  
4                   organizations as we work to serve New York's  
5                   older population and their families as  
6                   effectively as possible.

7                   I really appreciate all of your guys'  
8                   support and the opportunity to be here, and  
9                   I'm happy, as always, to answer any  
10                  questions.

11                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

12                  Reverend?

13                  DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Good  
14                  afternoon, everyone.

15                  Good afternoon, Chairs Krueger and  
16                  Weinstein and distinguished members of the  
17                  Senate and Assembly. My name is Viviana  
18                  DeCohen, I'm a Marine Corps veteran, and I  
19                  have the distinct honor of being the director  
20                  of the New York State Division of Veterans'  
21                  Services, or DVS.

22                  Thank you for the opportunity to  
23                  discuss Governor Hochul's 2023-2024 Executive  
24                  Budget as it relates to New York State

1 Veterans' Services.

2 Governor Hochul has made clear in her  
3 administration and in her budget the  
4 importance of veterans, servicemembers and  
5 their families here in our great state. As  
6 we approach our agency's transition from a  
7 division to a department, the Governor's  
8 expansion and improvements in the veterans  
9 services realm have been outstanding, and DVS  
10 stands ready to continue providing the  
11 highest-quality services for our New York  
12 State veterans, servicemembers, and their  
13 families.

14 Under Governor Hochul's  
15 administration, New York continues to be a  
16 state where veterans and their families are  
17 proud to call home thanks to the continued  
18 investment into veterans and their families.  
19 These investments can be seen through new  
20 programs, staffing, and additional funds for  
21 peer-to-peer support programs such as the  
22 Joseph P. Dwyer Program.

23 DVS has increased its economic impact,  
24 which directly benefits the lives of

1 New Yorkers throughout each and every  
2 community. Through these increases, DVS  
3 assisted veteran families in bringing in over  
4 \$900 million in tax-free federal dollars in  
5 2022. This is in addition to the  
6 \$400 million brought into New York with over  
7 23,000 veterans utilizing educational  
8 opportunities.

9 These funds filter their way into  
10 every community across the state, to support  
11 the over 688,000 veterans of New York. The  
12 work of this agency delivers concrete results  
13 and benefits for veterans and their families  
14 in New York State in the form of federal  
15 funds and healthcare access.

16 We know that we could not produce such  
17 outstanding results alone. We are grateful  
18 for the support of the Legislature, Executive  
19 Chamber, and the tremendous work of DVS staff  
20 which has enabled us to rise to the occasion.  
21 No one is an island unto themselves, and we  
22 do know that without all of you and our  
23 incredible partners, the work we do would not  
24 be possible.

1           Our work addressing food insecurity,  
2           increasing access through digital  
3           technologies and transportation, and  
4           educating providers on veteran and military  
5           competency is only possible through our  
6           continued partnership.

7           Food insecurity has been repeatedly  
8           cited as a concern for our military-connected  
9           families. One in nine working-age veterans  
10          lives in food-insecure households nationally.  
11          We know that this is unacceptable, and in  
12          New York State we're doing something about  
13          it. We're very proud that this past year the  
14          millionth meal was distributed -- between our  
15          partners -- to our New York veterans,  
16          servicemembers and their families through a  
17          partnership between the New York State  
18          Division of Veterans' Services and Hello  
19          Fresh, which will continue on into 2023.

20          This builds on the successful Nourish  
21          New York initiative, a multi-agency effort to  
22          reduce food insecurity and support our food  
23          producers.

24          Additionally, Governor Hochul has

1 committed to doubling the funds committed to  
2 the FreshConnect checks program which allows  
3 our veterans, servicemembers and their  
4 families to receive food vouchers to use at  
5 farmers' markets and stands across the state.

6 DVS continues to create and provide  
7 additional points of access for veterans and  
8 their families to learn about the benefits  
9 they earned through their military service.  
10 One of the most common issues we hear when  
11 talking about bringing veterans into contact  
12 with their benefits is transportation and  
13 isolation. We want to pursue innovative  
14 solutions to address that.

15 In her Executive Budget Governor  
16 Hochul is supporting an initiative to help  
17 DVS find and serve veterans in their  
18 communities -- find and serve -- through the  
19 dedication of \$300,000 for the purchase of  
20 vehicles that will form our first-ever fleet  
21 of Mobile Veterans Service Centers.

22 This initiative will allow us to reach  
23 those with some of the highest needs and the  
24 largest barriers to access by eliminating

1 transportation concerns. These mobile  
2 centers will bring the DVS's accredited  
3 veterans benefits advisors and their  
4 best-in-class technologies on the road to  
5 meet our New York veterans, servicemembers  
6 and military families where they work, live,  
7 where they thrive.

8 Lastly, DVS understands the immense  
9 burden that finding quality, affordable  
10 housing can pose to a veteran and their  
11 family. This is why Governor Hochul's  
12 administration is taking a twofold approach  
13 to this with the required military and  
14 veteran cultural competency trainings for  
15 supportive-housing providers that receive  
16 state funds for veteran-designated housing  
17 units and a \$1.1 million investment to create  
18 the Homeless Veterans' Housing Program, which  
19 will be used for emergency housing, providing  
20 temporary shelter, repair to homes damaged by  
21 disasters, and renovating homes to house  
22 veterans with certain special abilities --  
23 some call them disabilities. This creates a  
24 holistic and comprehensive approach to

1 address the unique needs that veterans, our  
2 servicemembers and their families face with  
3 housing.

4 Governor Hochul's State of the State  
5 agenda and Executive Budget provide DVS with  
6 the resources to build upon these successes  
7 and to deliver more support than ever to New  
8 York's veterans and their families. DVS  
9 appreciates the continued support of Governor  
10 Hochul and her administration in addressing  
11 the needs faced by our veterans,  
12 servicemembers and their families.

13 Thank you for the opportunity to  
14 discuss the Governor's Executive Budget with  
15 this committee. And on behalf of New York's  
16 veteran families, thank you for your  
17 continued support of the agency's mission. I  
18 look forward to answering any questions that  
19 you may have.

20 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

21 We go to Assemblyman Kim, chair of the  
22 Assembly Aging Committee, first.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: Thank you. Thank  
24 you both for your testimonies today.

1                   According to a report by the Center  
2                   for an Urban Future, older New Yorkers grew  
3                   in population by 31 percent from 2011 to  
4                   2021. During this time the State Office for  
5                   the Aging's budget grew by approximately  
6                   25 percent. There seems to be about a  
7                   6 percent gap between overall growth of older  
8                   adults, older New Yorkers, versus SOFA's  
9                   budget, causing the delay in services and an  
10                  increase in waiting lists for vital services.

11                  During this period, older New Yorkers  
12                  living below the poverty line, and who most  
13                  likely qualified and applied for Medicaid,  
14                  increased by 37 percent in the last 10 years.

15                  My office ran some models, with the  
16                  help of the Association on Aging, based on  
17                  how much we would have saved on Medicaid if  
18                  we fully invested in non-Medicaid care  
19                  programs administered by SOFA. In the last  
20                  10 years, our conservative figures show that  
21                  we could have decreased older adults living  
22                  in poverty by up to 10 percent and saved the  
23                  state \$3.75 billion.

24                  An additional \$390 million investment

1 in SOFA in the last 10 years would have saved  
2 the state \$3.75 billion in Medicaid spending  
3 and decreased the number of older adults  
4 living in poverty.

5 Now, I know, Director Olsen, you  
6 already know these numbers. And I wonder why  
7 the former governor, the current governor,  
8 and the Department of Health won't fully  
9 invest in SOFA. Do they not care, or are  
10 they just incompetent at taking care of older  
11 adults?

12 You don't need to answer that,  
13 Commissioner.

14 (Laughter.)

15 ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: But what we do know  
16 is that \$3.75 billion in Medicaid waste ended  
17 up in the pockets of predatory nursing homes  
18 and corrupt home care agencies that see older  
19 adults as dollar signs, not humans. We  
20 systematically, systemically force older  
21 adults to spend down into poverty so we can  
22 institutionalize them into facilities we  
23 supposedly oversee to protect consumers  
24 through an advocacy program called the

1 Long Term Care Ombudsman Program that we  
2 purposely underfund.

3 And here you are, Director Olsen,  
4 knowing all this, biting your tongue for  
5 years, trying your best to make things work  
6 under a broken and aged system, but offering  
7 alternative solutions to finance SOFA's work.

8 So please tell us, for my first  
9 question, more about the Executive's Article  
10 VII private payment system and the impact  
11 that could have on the state's waiting list.

12 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah,  
13 thanks, Assemblyman. You know, the question  
14 was directly about private pay. I just want  
15 to, you know, just mention something in terms  
16 of some other things you said.

17 I think this administration really  
18 does care about older adults. So we've got a  
19 couple of things we're working on now with  
20 multiple state agencies. As I said, you  
21 know, our partnerships with folks like DVS  
22 are critical. We have 24,000 veterans in our  
23 caseload; 63 percent of the state's veterans  
24 are over the age of 60. And, you know, the

1 Reimagine Long Term Care is going to be --  
2 once we get the appointments, we'll be  
3 working on that.

4 But the private pay I think, you know,  
5 I've heard a couple of folks back in '19 when  
6 we passed this, and now that we're trying to  
7 make it really a technical amendment, are  
8 suggesting that we would be passing costs on  
9 to low-income individuals.

10 As you know, Assemblyman, I've been  
11 doing this work for 31 years. That is not  
12 the intent of this, and that's not what it  
13 is. We have never been allowed, the  
14 network, to offer individuals that have the  
15 ability to pay -- we have 1.6 million older  
16 adults that have incomes of \$55,000 or more.  
17 That's not a lot of money. But you have  
18 people like me that could afford to purchase  
19 a service on behalf of my mother or my  
20 father -- we were literally barred, under  
21 law.

22 So the only thing the private pay  
23 allows is for the AAA network who wants to  
24 opt in -- it's not mandatory -- to offer it

1 if they have already utilized their federal,  
2 state and local dollars.

3 Ninety-nine-point-five percent of all of our  
4 funding goes towards individuals who are  
5 low-income, limited English, cultural and  
6 ethnic minorities. That's by federal law,  
7 state law. And those are folks we want to  
8 protect. So this really provides an option.

9 And one last thing. Families are  
10 already doing this. You do what you gotta do  
11 to help the people in your family, your loved  
12 ones, et cetera. We would rather that they  
13 come to us because we can look much more  
14 holistically, connect you to the hundreds of  
15 programs -- federal, state and local -- that  
16 Veterans provides, connect you to OMH or  
17 OASAS if it's alcohol and substance abuse,  
18 and so on and so forth.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: And I guess the hope  
20 is that if we allow folks to purchase the  
21 program who can, that may alleviate some of  
22 the people on the waiting list so we can  
23 promptly get to those on the bottom of that  
24 income bracket who are still on the waiting

1 list. Correct?

2 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah,  
3 that was the design. So, you know, there's a  
4 cost to the service. And so like if a  
5 home-delivered meal is \$7, what we allowed  
6 but capped it was a max of, you know, the  
7 cost of the service plus 20 percent. That  
8 could be because you're contracting with  
9 Medicare Advantage, an MLTC, Mainstream, or  
10 just somebody in the community that finds  
11 these things valuable.

12 What we required is all the accounting  
13 to be separate and if there's any revenue  
14 generated from this proposal for the  
15 services, it is required by law to go back in  
16 to serve lower-income people, because that's  
17 our book of business.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: And since 2019,  
19 since we allowed the network to purchase --  
20 or charge older adults for the programs, how  
21 many -- do you have data on how many older  
22 adults actually purchase services from the  
23 local agencies?

24 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: We do,

1 Assemblyman. The date that that was supposed  
2 to go into effect -- so it passed in fiscal  
3 year 2019, April of 2019. It was to go into  
4 effect April 11, 2020, and we know what  
5 happened in March of 2020. So I would be  
6 tone deaf as an individual to be pushing this  
7 during the middle of the pandemic. So we  
8 didn't do that.

9 I think we're going to be reevaluating  
10 where we wind up this year. But right now we  
11 have five counties that chose the opt-in.  
12 Most of it is for the personal emergency  
13 response system, which has been shown  
14 overwhelmingly to reduce hospitalizations, ER  
15 visits, observation status. It's about  
16 \$200,000.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: I mean, obviously if  
18 we can find the necessary funding to cover  
19 all, or other fundings and mechanisms, public  
20 finance mechanisms to eliminate the waiting  
21 list, it's best to pursue a path that we  
22 don't have to charge any older adults seeking  
23 SOFA services.

24 But here we are, because of some of

1 the references that I made earlier, that we  
2 know what the impact this could be on  
3 Medicaid and on Medicaid populations, we're  
4 trying to find alternative solutions, trying  
5 to get us there. But if we work together in  
6 the coming weeks to figure out a different  
7 pot of money, different revenue to fully fund  
8 SOFA's programs, I'm hoping that we don't  
9 have to charge any older adults.

10 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: You  
11 know, it would be great to fully subsidize  
12 everybody. And I don't think that we can do  
13 that. And, you know, you and I have had this  
14 conversation, Assemblyman. This body, the  
15 Legislature, Governor's office and county  
16 governments, have picked up all of the costs  
17 where the feds have really let us down.

18 The Older Americans Act has been  
19 amended 13 times and added a whole bunch of  
20 work to us and to the network. All of it is  
21 appropriate, all of it. But none of it came  
22 with any money, so the least amount of money  
23 that this state receives is from the federal  
24 government, which is directing us on what we

1 need to do.

2 Which is why we developed an  
3 Older Americans Act modernization proposal.  
4 Senator Gillibrand is embracing that. We're  
5 working with her to get really the due share  
6 that we deserve that can really go a long  
7 way. What we need is an annual increase  
8 of -- in my opinion, of about \$2.7 billion,  
9 which would bring the resources to New York  
10 to allow this network to do what it does so  
11 well: You know, promote happy, healthy  
12 lives, living with dignity, avoiding  
13 hospitalizations and so forth, but having a  
14 strong infrastructure if people wind up in  
15 those settings and then are discharged back  
16 to the community.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: We're going to be  
18 taking testimony from AARP later, and I think  
19 they'll be releasing a report on the  
20 ineffectiveness of the ombudsman program.  
21 And the data just looks -- the initial data  
22 that we're getting looks horrifying:  
23 52 percent of nursing homes and other care  
24 facilities failed to receive a long-term-care

1           ombudsman visit due to lack of resources and  
2           staff. Nearly 80 percent of New York City's  
3           nursing homes and other care facilities  
4           failed to receive a single visit from an  
5           ombudsman. You know, the data goes on and  
6           on.

7                     And, you know, we need -- my  
8           colleagues and I, you know, we want to  
9           professionalize, we want to reset the  
10          ombudsman program, we want to rebuild it.  
11          But every time, you know, we have these  
12          discussions we run into institutional  
13          pushback that people tell us, "Oh, if we  
14          remodel this, we may not qualify for the  
15          federal dollars."

16                    It's my understanding the original  
17          framers of the program at the federal level  
18          wanted the LTCOP program to be independent.  
19          And there are other states that even host  
20          this under nonprofit organizations, not even  
21          government agencies, to execute that  
22          independence of this program.

23                    So I think it's just a matter of  
24          political will to get us to a better place

1           where we can truly have an advocacy program  
2           for these facilities.

3                     And I'll continue my questions in my  
4           next five minutes. Thank you.

5                     CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
6                     To the Senate.

7                     CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
8                     And to our new chair of Aging,  
9           Senator Cordell Cleare.

10                    SENATOR CLEARE: Thank you.  
11                    And thank you for your testimony. I'm  
12           looking forward to sitting down and speaking  
13           with you, Commissioner.

14                    NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN:  
15           Absolutely.

16                    SENATOR CLEARE: I'm not on -- it is  
17           on?

18                    NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yes.

19                    SENATOR CLEARE: Anyway, I'm going to  
20           try to project.

21                    I'm Senator Cordell Cleare. I  
22           represent the 30th Senatorial District, which  
23           is Harlem, East Harlem, West Harlem, a  
24           portion of Washington Heights and the

1 Upper West Side.

2 And I listened to your opening remarks  
3 about people who are historically blocked  
4 from achieving success. And a group of those  
5 people, I think, are home care workers. AARP  
6 submitted testimony that I was reading;  
7 nearly half of home care workers live in or  
8 near poverty, and more than half depend on  
9 public assistance to survive. These workers  
10 are continuously training and developing  
11 their skills and expertise to elevate the  
12 level of care they can provide, only to  
13 remain unable to support themselves and their  
14 families because of low wages.

15 The proposed Executive Budget provides  
16 for a 2.5 percent COLA for hardworking staff  
17 that fall under SOFA as well as other  
18 agencies. Why is this less than last year's  
19 5.4 percent? And how is this low figure  
20 expected to retain staff and provide  
21 continuity of services? And also, what can  
22 we do to link it to the rate of inflation so  
23 this doesn't keep --

24 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah.

1 Well, as you know, Senator -- and it was  
2 great talking to you last week, and look  
3 forward to our partnership. You know, the  
4 Governor proposed an increase that is tied  
5 to -- why am I drawing a blank -- the  
6 inflation rate.

7 So there was a couple of different  
8 things that you mentioned in there. Our COLA  
9 that we're provided this year was like 5,  
10 5-plus percent last year -- 2.5, that was  
11 used primarily to cover the rate increase for  
12 personal care aides that we fund through our  
13 in-home program, which is separate from the  
14 Medicaid program.

15 And you're right, the wages are low.  
16 I mean, many of our counties, we authorized  
17 them to negotiate their own rates back in  
18 2014 when MLTC kind of entered the  
19 marketplace. It was originally tied to  
20 Medicaid's rate. But in order to get aides  
21 assigned to the individuals that we serve  
22 that are just above Medicaid limit, they can  
23 negotiate their own rates. So many of our  
24 counties are paying a much higher rate,

1           between 30 and 40 dollars an hour.

2                       And I think some of them are starting  
3           to make sure that the contracts that they  
4           have with the licensed home care services  
5           agency has language that passes those  
6           increases actually to the worker and not to  
7           the administrative side.

8                       So, you know, the COLA is developed  
9           based on -- the three big areas are the  
10          WIN program, Wellness in Nutrition; EISEP,  
11          Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly  
12          Program; and the CSE program. And that's --  
13          and the value is about \$5 million.

14                      SENATOR CLEARE: Okay. I was going to  
15          cut you off, but I wanted to hear everything  
16          you had to say.

17                      But right now this is not enough money  
18          for our very valuable workers. And it  
19          affects even the care and the amount of care  
20          that people are receiving, and I'd like to  
21          see us work toward increasing that rate.

22                      I'm going to try to speed up my  
23          questions, and you answered about private  
24          pay.

1           The Master Plan for Aging. You know,  
2           there has been a million-dollar appropriation  
3           in the budget for the master plan. Can you  
4           just explain such a large expenditure for the  
5           development of the master plan and also, in  
6           creating it, how much stakeholder input will  
7           be provided or sought out? And if you know,  
8           who is a part of that body right now? Who is  
9           a part of the --

10           NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: I do.  
11           I mean, you know, there's a partnership that  
12           we have with the Department of Health, we're  
13           cochairing. Health is taking the lead.  
14           We're certainly a part of it.

15           But as was mentioned earlier, you  
16           know, we have over 20 state agencies as part  
17           of this. We have a stakeholder group that  
18           has I think 25 people. We plan on -- you  
19           know, what we have talked about over and over  
20           in the first couple of meetings that we've  
21           had is the responsibility that we ask of them  
22           not only to participate but to make sure that  
23           their partnerships and coalitions throughout  
24           the state are also represented. And we have

1 an association group.

2 The original dollars that were put in  
3 last year's budget was half a million  
4 dollars, and so we -- you know, we're using  
5 NYSTEC to coordinate. There's a lot that  
6 goes on behind the scenes in getting this  
7 together. Like we talk every day, every  
8 morning; we have several calls during the  
9 week.

10 So the million dollars is going to,  
11 again, help us continue this, because the  
12 effort's about 18 months long, and then  
13 anything else that we identify that we need  
14 to do. We plan on doing a lot of public  
15 outreach. We need you guys engaged. We're  
16 going to be out around the state. But we  
17 really just started the -- the executive  
18 order was signed in November. We've had a  
19 couple of state council meetings. And moving  
20 on, I think next week will be our second  
21 stakeholder meeting, and then the  
22 association. But there's a lot of moving  
23 pieces and certainly I can give you the  
24 website where we're starting to populate



1           So again, I thank you guys and the Governor  
2           for adding that 2.5 million in last year's  
3           budget that is baseline this year. That  
4           allowed us to hire 35 staff. So we went from  
5           30 percent of facilities visited to between  
6           50 and 60.

7                     You know, this goes back to my  
8           original points on the federal government.  
9           This is a required program that could either  
10          be in-house or external, and we've looked at  
11          a variety of ways to structure this. And  
12          it's now, you know, with us. But we get \$1.4  
13          million from the feds to run a statewide  
14          program. I mean, you can't do that with the  
15          number of facilities that we have in the  
16          state.

17                    The fundamental flaw of the  
18          Older Americans Act when it was passed in  
19          1965 is the heavy reliance on volunteers.  
20          And volunteers are fantastic. We have almost  
21          a million of them over the age of 55. But I  
22          don't know how you could have a professional  
23          network when you're relying on somebody  
24          giving their time and energy.

1                   And when you talk about the Long Term  
2                   Care Ombudsman Program or the Health  
3                   Insurance Information Counseling and  
4                   Assistance Program, those are really, really  
5                   intense programs and need to be -- you need  
6                   to have hired staff, not volunteers. We  
7                   lost --

8                   SENATOR CLEARE:   What was that annual  
9                   amount you said you needed?

10                  NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN:   From  
11                  the feds we get about \$1.4 million.

12                  SENATOR CLEARE:   And you need?

13                  NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN:   What's  
14                  that?

15                  SENATOR CLEARE:   And how much do you  
16                  need?

17                  NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN:   What we  
18                  need is to try to get to a ratio where you're  
19                  visiting every facility, you know, maybe 7:1  
20                  or 5:1 or something to that effect.   So that  
21                  we can cover what we're supposed to cover.

22                  And again, I think that that will be a  
23                  conversation I'm sure you guys will all have  
24                  over the next couple of months.

1                   SENATOR CLEARE: Well, what's the  
2                   dollar amount? I'm sorry.

3                   NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: The  
4                   total dollar amount?

5                   SENATOR CLEARE: Yeah.

6                   NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: We  
7                   receive about 6.9 million altogether. But if  
8                   only 1.4 of that is federal, then -- you do  
9                   the math.

10                  SENATOR CLEARE: Okay. We'll continue  
11                  the conversation. Thank you.

12                  We've continued to hear a lot about  
13                  unmet need and waiting lists for services at  
14                  the county offices for the aging, which the  
15                  Legislature has provided increased funds a  
16                  few times to address. Can you walk us  
17                  through the state of things there? And is  
18                  there still unmet need? Are we making  
19                  progress?

20                  And also, can you update us on the  
21                  Reimagining Long Term Care Task Force?

22                  NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah,  
23                  I'll start with the latter first.

24                  So we're waiting for the appointments

1 to come in. I think all of the Governor's  
2 appointments are done. It's the  
3 Legislature's appointments. So we're hoping  
4 to get that up and running soon.

5 So yes, you know, we had an original  
6 baseline of \$15 million four budgets ago, and  
7 then the Legislature added another eight to  
8 it two years ago. So we receive about  
9 \$23 million. That has provided services for  
10 people who are on -- who are assessed and  
11 needing services, 26,000 over the first two  
12 years of that funding.

13 Yeah, waitlists are going up. A lot  
14 of it is for the personal care aide shortage.  
15 So, you know, we don't -- we don't, Senator,  
16 wait for things to happen, we try to make  
17 things happen. And here's what I mean by  
18 that. So back in the day, all the county  
19 offices for the aging hired their own  
20 personal care aides, and then they all got  
21 out of the business and contract with LHCSAs,  
22 licensed home care services agencies.

23 We have been pushing with our  
24 association trying to get the counties to

1           either hire their aides, so that we can  
2           eliminate the waitlists in those particular  
3           areas, or work with their LHCSAs to have  
4           aides assigned. We have 12 counties now that  
5           fit that mold. So there's other things that  
6           we can do.

7                         SENATOR CLEARE: Okay. I'm going to  
8           ask a short question. I think you mentioned  
9           800,000 units of housing in your opening  
10          remarks.

11                        NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yes,  
12          that's the Governor's --

13                        SENATOR CLEARE: How much of that is  
14          senior -- dedicated for senior housing,  
15          assisted --

16                        NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Well,  
17          it's a five-year, \$25 billion plan. I'm not  
18          sure which is -- why HCR is so important for  
19          the Master Plan for Aging, because we need  
20          all of those agencies that are working across  
21          the age spectrum.

22                        The Master Plan for Aging is not just  
23          about aging, it's obviously inclusive. But  
24          it's across all agencies. I was also sitting

1 here for the first two testimonies. The  
2 impact of poverty on children and middle  
3 income -- access to food, education,  
4 et cetera -- is going to matter for -- as  
5 people age, and so we need to really look at  
6 this across the age spectrum.

7 SENATOR CLEARE: Thank you.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
9 Assembly.

10 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We've been  
11 joined by Assemblywoman Hyndman.

12 And we go to our Veterans chair,  
13 Assemblywoman Jean-Pierre.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: Well, good  
15 afternoon. Thank you both for your  
16 testimonies.

17 My question will go to Reverend  
18 Viviana DeCohen. Thank you for meeting with  
19 me and my staff just a few weeks ago to catch  
20 up. But I have a few questions.

21 So last December the Assembly held a  
22 hearing on veterans' services and the  
23 assessment of going from a division to a  
24 department. And one of the questions that

1 have been held is that there was no  
2 representation from your office at the  
3 hearing. And as we transition from a  
4 division to department, some folks are  
5 asking, What are going to be some of the  
6 stronghold communications between the  
7 department to the Legislature? And what type  
8 of funding shifts will be necessary, needed  
9 for the change?

10 DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Thank you,  
11 Assemblymember.

12 First of all, let me say good  
13 afternoon again to all of you.

14 One of the things that happened with  
15 that hearing is something that is innate when  
16 there's technology. It was a lack of  
17 communication, and we actually did not  
18 receive our formal invitation. However, we  
19 did listen to the hearing and heard all of  
20 the thoughtful questions that were given by  
21 you as well as our stakeholders.

22 One of the first things that we did  
23 was to reach out to our stakeholders to  
24 ensure that we were all on one page going

1 forward as we make this transition from  
2 division to department. We know that more is  
3 going to be needed on our part.

4 One of the things that I'm proud that  
5 we were able to do as we move into this  
6 transition -- and the communication will  
7 continue with all of our stakeholders on our  
8 monthly meetings that we have, with our  
9 in-person visits that we have -- and  
10 continues to be central on all of our media  
11 platforms as well -- is to ensure that the  
12 information, the communication is going to be  
13 done before, during and after the process.

14 We've already begun to change all of  
15 our forms as we move into that era. Our  
16 forms that used to ask and be able to  
17 ascertain assistance with benefits, we're now  
18 asking crucial questions: Are you sheltered  
19 now? Do you need help or assistance with  
20 rent now? Do you have food in your home? So  
21 that we can continue to meet all of our  
22 veterans' needs across the board.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: So the  
24 second part of my question -- thank you for

1 the first part. The second part of the  
2 question was, what are going to be the  
3 funding needs from -- because it is going to  
4 be a department. So do you anticipate  
5 funding needs, and what are those needs?

6 DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: We're so  
7 glad to tell you that the Governor's  
8 Executive Budget just gave us \$300,000 for  
9 the veteran-mobiles. We know that this is  
10 going to be something that will allow us to  
11 access those veterans who are often hidden,  
12 and those who often will not walk into a  
13 building for these services. That's the  
14 money that's been given.

15 As we continue to go through the  
16 process, we're going to know step by step  
17 what we're going to be needing at that time.  
18 But the money that's been released thus far,  
19 we know that that's going to be huge in the  
20 impact as we continue to move into the  
21 department.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: Okay,  
23 thank you. And I look forward to being  
24 one-on-one so we can talk more about those

1 funding needs.

2 But also during that testimony there  
3 were some veterans who provided some  
4 emotional testimonies as far as homelessness.  
5 And in the executive proposal, there was  
6 1.1 million to assist homeless veterans.

7 And so my question is, how many  
8 veterans -- do you have a number of how many  
9 veterans face housing insecurity in New York?  
10 And with this funding, is there going to be a  
11 joint program? How many veterans do you  
12 think that 1.1 million is going to be served?

13 DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: First of  
14 all, let me say, as not only the director of  
15 Veterans' Services but as a veteran who has  
16 experienced this, if we have one veteran  
17 who's served their country, God and country,  
18 and then come out to continue the service  
19 with family and the continued service with  
20 community, it is one veteran too many that is  
21 homeless.

22 We are so happy to hear that money is  
23 coming not just for our veterans for this  
24 program, who are unsheltered, but those again

1           who have received devastation. So many of  
2           our veterans have experienced fires and end  
3           up being unsheltered, and they've lost so  
4           many other things. And then we have so many  
5           of our veterans with chronic conditions that  
6           moved them to where they have to have  
7           accessibility to their homes, and this is  
8           crucial.

9                        So we are very excited about this  
10            funding. You know, to a lot of people, you  
11            know, it seems -- people say it's such a  
12            little amount with what's out there. You  
13            know, but there was a story of a woman who  
14            had just a vial of oil, and she went and got  
15            bigger vats and she began to pour the oils  
16            into the vats. And as she did that, the  
17            bigger vats were overflowing and overpouring.

18                       And we feel that's what this  
19            Governor's budget is, that what seems like  
20            little is so much in the right hands. The  
21            last year's budget allowed us to bring in  
22            \$900 million of services to our veterans  
23            across the state, with another 400 million in  
24            educational benefits. So, you know, we're

1 very grateful for what we've been able to do.  
2 We've been able to accomplish a lot together.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: So just  
4 for the essence of time, because I have a few  
5 more questions. So on behalf of myself and  
6 the Legislature, we thank you for your  
7 service and your expertise here. But the  
8 \$1.1 million we still, as a Legislature, need  
9 to see numbers and who and how and where and  
10 how many is going to be served under  
11 \$1.1 million. Because dollars matter here,  
12 and numbers matching dollars is critical.

13 So if you can get us what that  
14 \$1.1 million is going to serve, and are there  
15 any participating programs that's going to  
16 support this \$1.1 million?

17 And my third question is: So  
18 irregardless to last year's budget, again,  
19 we're talking about dollars. Five million  
20 dollars was a capital grant program. What is  
21 the progress so far, approvals, how many have  
22 applied? Do we have any stats on the \$5  
23 million capital project?

24 DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Yes, thank



1                   I see I have a little bit more time,  
2                   so I'm just going to go back to something you  
3                   said about the 300,000. So that's in this  
4                   year's Executive Budget proposal, to  
5                   establish a fleet of mobile veterans'  
6                   services. How many veterans will they serve?  
7                   Again, it's going back to dollars and how  
8                   much is going to serve what population.

9                   So what services will they provide? I  
10                  know you talked about regional one time we  
11                  met. But what is the 300 -- compared to  
12                  300,000, how many veterans is it going to  
13                  serve and where is it going to serve?

14                 DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Well, we  
15                 are going to begin this program -- and again,  
16                 we're very grateful and excited about it,  
17                 because for us this program is getting to  
18                 those veterans who were like myself, that  
19                 were not in areas where there was a local DSO  
20                 across the street.

21                 So these mobile units are so important  
22                 to be able to go across the state. We're  
23                 going to begin with three -- one at the  
24                 beginning, New York City, one in the middle,

1           and one at the end -- so that we can get into  
2           those places and spaces where our veterans  
3           are.

4                         One of the things that we're doing as  
5           we transition into the department is a  
6           program called Find and Serve.  And Find and  
7           Serve allows us to get on these mobiles and  
8           take them into an area where a veteran will  
9           know that every Wellness Wednesday at the  
10          Piggly-Wiggly, between this time and this  
11          time, there's a van there that can help them  
12          to seek their services and all of the things  
13          that they've earned through the services, and  
14          be able to have someone there that can check  
15          their health status and ensure everything  
16          else that they're in need of.

17                        ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE:  Thank you.  
18                        My time is up.  Thank you.

19                        CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:  Thank you.  
20                        We go to the Senate.

21                        CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER:  Thank you.

22                        Our new chair of Veterans,  
23           Senator Scarcella-Spartan -- Senator  
24           Scarcella-Spanton.  I'm making you a Spartan.

1 (Laughter.)

2 SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: Hi,  
3 Reverend. Thank you so much for being here  
4 today.

5 We had a wonderful meeting where we  
6 got to discuss a lot of these ideas, and now  
7 we're seeing them, you know, come to  
8 fruition.

9 The one thing that I was concerned  
10 about with this upcoming Executive Budget was  
11 the cut of almost 14 percent to the Veterans'  
12 budget. I do understand that a lot of those  
13 legislative adds will be put back. But the  
14 5 million for veterans nonprofit capital  
15 funding is something I would love to see  
16 continued as members also patch in with their  
17 local district needs as well.

18 But the one thing I did want to start  
19 with, which I think is wonderful, is the  
20 300,000 for the mobile veterans advisor  
21 clinics. As we discussed, it's really  
22 important to meet people where they're at. I  
23 think it's great, the Find and Serve motto.

24 I guess I wanted to ask, how long will

1           it take to actually get these mobile vans up  
2           and running? And do we have a breakdown of  
3           where they'll be going, which counties? Is  
4           it every county? And how frequently?

5                     DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Thank you  
6           so much for that question, Senator.

7                     We're looking at all of the details  
8           right now as far as having them wrapped, what  
9           is going to be supplied on there. because  
10          there may be a few surprises on there. We  
11          may be able to not only give them some of the  
12          services that they need on paper, but we just  
13          may be able to supply them with a good pair  
14          of warm socks on there as well.

15                    And again, we're looking forward to  
16          having them in all of those places. We've  
17          been listening to our partners, and some of  
18          our partners are looking forward to getting  
19          these into areas where they feel may have  
20          been a little large for them and conjoining  
21          with them.

22                    One of the wonderful things that I  
23          have to tell you that I'm proud of the  
24          Governor, but also so many of you that sit

1 here, is that we were allowed to go out and  
2 to join with you and support so many of our  
3 veteran partners at over 425 events just  
4 between September and December.

5 And seeing you there and supporting  
6 our veterans, and seeing their response, and  
7 utilizing not veterans as a number -- because  
8 we are not numbers -- but allowing all of you  
9 and all of us to be able to listen to them  
10 and not assume their voice, but to use a  
11 qualitative, phenomenological approach to  
12 asking them what their needs were -- when I  
13 saw this, and we received the responses as to  
14 the things that we need, that helps us to  
15 know what it is that we need on these  
16 mobiles.

17 Because some of them needed diapers.  
18 Others needed the food coupons that our  
19 Governor has invested in again. Some of them  
20 did not need some of the other programs that  
21 we were assuming that they need.

22 But I want to thank you again, because  
23 we saw you out there at these over 400 events  
24 in the past few months, and listening to what

1           it is that the veterans need. And I know if  
2           we continue to do that, continue to listen to  
3           them and allow them their own voice, then  
4           we're going to do bigger and better even this  
5           year than that 900 million that we brought  
6           in.

7                         SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: So, you  
8           know, I think that was a very positive piece  
9           of the budget and something that everybody is  
10          going to be able to utilize, and hopefully  
11          our collective offices will be able to call  
12          upon these mobile units to request them at  
13          different VFW meetings in our own districts.

14                        The one issue that I really took --  
15          that I wanted to highlight was in the  
16          Executive Budget it indicates that there's a  
17          decrease in funding for veteran nonprofit  
18          capital programs. Why are we decreasing this  
19          funding? And which nonprofit capital  
20          programs will be affected as a result of that  
21          decrease?

22                        DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Thank you  
23          for that question. I'm going to have to get  
24          back to you on that because I'm not --

1                   SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: That's  
2                   okay.

3                   And also the \$1.1 million in funding  
4                   for the Veterans Homeless Housing Program,  
5                   could you provide details on plans for this  
6                   funding? Is there supportive housing built  
7                   into this?

8                   In our district in Coney Island we  
9                   have Surf Vets, which is affordable housing  
10                  for veterans. And one of the issues that we  
11                  run into is that these are people with  
12                  service-related disabilities, they may have  
13                  mental health issues, they're people who were  
14                  formerly experiencing homelessness. So  
15                  there's not a lot of support within that  
16                  housing -- within that affordable  
17                  housing system.

18                  So I think that anything with housing  
19                  for veterans really does need to be  
20                  supportive. I say this as a military wife of  
21                  somebody with a service-connected disability.  
22                  And you need to provide resources for people  
23                  who have mental health conditions.

24                  So I would love to see supportive

1           housing built into this. I don't think that  
2           1.1 million could possibly provide the  
3           support that it needs. So I wanted to see  
4           what you do need to provide the supportive  
5           housing.

6                       DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Thank you,  
7           Senator. And I look forward to working with  
8           you on that as we actually -- we're in talks  
9           now for that program, because that's exactly  
10          what we want.

11                      This is not a one-tier with these  
12          veterans. We have to meet them at the  
13          several levels to where they are. And that's  
14          why we're having this thoughtful discussion,  
15          to ensure that that happens. I look forward  
16          to continuing that work with you.

17                      SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: Okay. And  
18          if you guys could please get me a number on  
19          what it would take to have a real  
20          comprehensive and supportive housing program  
21          for veterans, that would be great.

22                      I also wanted to -- I know when we met  
23          we discussed the funding for the Veterans  
24          Memorial Registry, which is built in here,

1           which is wonderful. I wanted to see if there  
2           was any comprehensive list of resources for  
3           veterans and their families. I think  
4           sometimes there's these great  
5           organizations -- I met with one today,  
6           Cohen Veterans Network, that provides mental  
7           health services to not just veterans but also  
8           their families, their children, spouses,  
9           whoever may need it.

10                    Is there a comprehensive list within  
11           the state that veterans and their families  
12           could tap into? And if there's not, would a  
13           similar project like the registry for  
14           memorials make sense?

15                    DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Thank you  
16           for that question. And we're actually  
17           working out the details of that. In fact,  
18           after this meeting I have a meeting -- we  
19           have a meeting to discuss that program as  
20           well.

21                    But we're looking forward to that half  
22           a million dollars that the Governor has given  
23           us to have this searchable database so that  
24           our family members can continue to honor the

1 memories of their loved ones and have access  
2 to that for their children and their  
3 great-grandchildren. I happen to be a  
4 grandmother of 10, so I will appreciate when  
5 my grandchildren are able to look up Grandma  
6 and see the services in there as well.

7 Thank you for that, and look forward  
8 to working with you on this piece.

9 SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON:  
10 Absolutely.

11 And my last question will be about the  
12 Dwyer Peer-to-Peer Program, which is a  
13 wonderful program. I think that veterans  
14 supporting veterans, especially upon their  
15 return, is critical to their success in  
16 reintegration into civilian life.

17 Do you feel that the Governor's budget  
18 sufficiently covers it? There was a very,  
19 very moderate increase to the funding for the  
20 peer-to-peer program. Do you think that it's  
21 sufficient or it should be increased?

22 DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Well, as  
23 you know, the Joseph P. Dwyer Program is an  
24 essential program around this nation. And

1           for our state, we were happy last year when  
2           the Governor doubled that budget to the  
3           7.7 million, which allowed us to be able to  
4           work with them and OMH to be able to get this  
5           program out to our various counties  
6           throughout the state so that they could erect  
7           a program as well.

8                       We work closely with OMH to be able to  
9           do that, as well as our SUNY Albany  
10          researchers and partners, to be able to put  
11          together a concise listing, a guideline  
12          booklet, a Q&A booklet on how to erect and  
13          continue to strengthen and support them.

14                      You know, wherever they are right now,  
15          we are committed, I'm committed to -- because  
16          this is a program that I used to send my  
17          veteran students to many years ago. So we  
18          know that this team is committed to  
19          continuing to support them with where they  
20          are, and we'll continue to push them as far  
21          as we can to ensure that our veterans across  
22          the state are serviced by that program.

23                      SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: And if you  
24          could also just let me know -- I see that

1           there's a breakdown by county. We don't have  
2           it quite as broken down for New York City, it  
3           just has New York City listed as the county.

4                     If you could send me a breakdown of  
5           the peer-to-peer services and the funding  
6           that are in both Kings County and Richmond  
7           County, I think that would be really helpful.  
8           We're happy to get the word out and, you  
9           know, provide support to our local veterans.

10                    And yeah, I just wanted to say thank  
11           you for your service and I know I'm very much  
12           looking forward to working together with the  
13           mobile vans. I think it will be a great help  
14           to veterans in need.

15                    So thank you.

16                    DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Thank you  
17           so much, Senator.

18                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we go to  
19           Assemblyman Eachus for three minutes.

20                    ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you,  
21           Ms. Chair.

22                    Reverend DeCohen, thank you for your  
23           service. And I assure you your division,  
24           soon to be department, has all my support.

1                   I also want to thank you for your  
2                   optimism when you're sitting there eyeing a  
3                   governor's state appropriations of a decrease  
4                   of \$4.78 million, or approximately 14  
5                   percent, and you still seem to have a little  
6                   bit of a smile on your face.

7                   So -- and relative to those new vans,  
8                   do please check with the counties. My county  
9                   is very, very concerned and gracious to all  
10                  veterans. We have vans traveling throughout  
11                  the county. We actually take veterans to  
12                  their medical appointments and to shopping  
13                  and so on like that.

14                  But the question I have for you is I  
15                  would like to first let you know that for  
16                  40 years I was a high school teacher, and I'm  
17                  affiliated with many of the military service  
18                  organizations. And I was wondering if you  
19                  knew about something with the American  
20                  Legion -- I'm going to pick out one service  
21                  organization -- the Boys State and Girls  
22                  State program at all.

23                  This is a program where posts across  
24                  the state can send kids for a week of

1            basically boot camp, and every student that I  
2            have ever sent there through these  
3            organizations and has returned has bragged  
4            about it.

5                       And we no longer support that -- we,  
6            being the state, no longer support that. So  
7            I am definitely going to ask for an  
8            appropriation of 150,000 for the Boys State  
9            and 150,000 for the Girls State to get us  
10           back helping these programs, because I feel  
11           they really need help.

12                      Would your department support these  
13           programs?

14                      DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: First of  
15           all, let me happily and proudly say I am a  
16           Legionnaire, and so I am very familiar with  
17           these programs.

18                      And as a Legionnaire -- listen, as a  
19           department -- as a division to department, we  
20           want to continue to support all of our  
21           partners who are supporting our veterans.  
22           Part of our veterans is their families as  
23           well as the children. And there is no better  
24           way that we know to continue to strengthen

1           our partnership than to ensure that the next  
2           generation continues to have the fortitude  
3           and the strength and the knowledge and  
4           support them, you know, as they go into  
5           adulthood, honoring our nation's heroes.

6                        So I look forward to working with you  
7           with that, Assemblyman.

8                        ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Director Olsen, I  
9           only have a half-minute, so I'm just going to  
10          pose my two questions. There won't be any  
11          time to answer them.

12                       But the first is back to the LTCOP  
13          program. Eighty percent of those  
14          participants, those ombudsmen, are  
15          volunteers, and I just would like to hear  
16          specifically at some point in time what  
17          you're doing to encourage these volunteers.  
18          Because I didn't even know about the program,  
19          and I was 12 years on the Orange County  
20          Legislature.

21                       And then the other question I would  
22          have is you have in your key investments and  
23          proposals "strengthening EMS," and I'd like  
24          to hear how you're going to do that too.

1 Thank you.

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

4 Senator Ashby, five minutes, ranker.

5 SENATOR ASHBY: Thank you,

6 Madam Chair.

7 Thank you, Director DeCohen. Thank  
8 you, Commissioner Olsen.

9 Real quick, Commissioner Olsen, what's  
10 the timeline for the master plan?

11 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: We're  
12 supposed to have a draft early on in the  
13 spring, and then it will commence --  
14 hopefully after, you know, huge public  
15 input -- sometime next year.

16 SENATOR ASHBY: Okay, appreciate it.  
17 Director DeCohen, good to see you.

18 DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Yeah, it's  
19 good to see you, Senator.

20 SENATOR ASHBY: You know, I'm happy to  
21 hear that we're starting to put something  
22 forward with, you know, these -- the mobile  
23 response. I think that's a good thing.

24 But in light of, you know, really the

1           lack of funding and the lack of effort that  
2           we've seen with this Governor's  
3           administration with this new department, I'm  
4           kind of surprised to hear that, you know,  
5           that's the only thing that's going on. I  
6           mean, are there any other subdivisions that  
7           you're looking to outfit? Is there any other  
8           federal programming or federal dollars that  
9           you're looking to get to implement into this  
10          new agency?

11                       DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Oh, thank  
12          you, Senator. Thank you for that.

13                       Absolutely. And again, being into the  
14          public and going across this state now, from  
15          New York City, Bronx, all the way to Buffalo,  
16          has allowed us to be able to listen to the  
17          needs of our veterans. And so absolutely.  
18          We're continuing to work with our veterans  
19          who are incarcerated. As you know, we've  
20          already put in programs and veterans benefit  
21          advisors into so many of these correctional  
22          programs, and we're doing the welcome back  
23          with them as well so that they have a warm  
24          handshake back into society when they come

1 in.

2 Our volunteerism, our programs for our  
3 veterans -- as you know, volunteerism has  
4 been a lifesaver for so many of our veterans  
5 who have gotten their dignity back because  
6 their self-worth is not only in God and  
7 country and family, but now back into the  
8 community with that.

9 Continuing to meet the needs of our  
10 veterans who are expecting babies and  
11 unemployed -- and this state has done a great  
12 job in our --

13 SENATOR ASHBY: Director DeCohen, if I  
14 could interrupt you, though.

15 Is -- are there any -- aside from the  
16 prison program that you had mentioned, is  
17 there any specific program that you know of  
18 right now that you're looking to implement  
19 with this new agency? I mean, other than the  
20 volunteers, which are great, but -- the  
21 elevation allows us to garner federal dollars  
22 for this. What are we targeting?

23 DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Well,  
24 we're continuing to target our suicide

1 prevention programs. We're continuing to --

2 SENATOR ASHBY: I'm glad you brought  
3 that up. And I -- because I only have five  
4 minutes, I apologize for interrupting you.

5 DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: That's all  
6 right.

7 SENATOR ASHBY: But the Dwyer program,  
8 part of the aim of elevating the division to  
9 an agency is the hope that the Dwyer program  
10 could be permanent funding, so we wouldn't  
11 have to go back and do this each and every  
12 year. Is that something that your department  
13 is committed to?

14 Because right now, I mean, we're  
15 seeing a modest increase in that. This is  
16 something that needs to happen, that we hear  
17 about it every day. And I know that we have  
18 people here in the audience that are going to  
19 provide testimony to this.

20 Why is the Governor not moving on this  
21 issue the way that we need her to?

22 DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Well,  
23 Senator, we're glad for the movement that we  
24 have because, again, so much has been

1           accomplished with the Dwyer program and what  
2           they're doing, and the doubling of those  
3           funds to \$7.7 million.

4                         And we continue to work with them as  
5           well as OMH and all of our other partners.  
6           We're going to ensure that we continue to  
7           support them in any way that --

8                         SENATOR ASHBY:   And I'm sure in your  
9           role, Director, and as a veteran, you know  
10          that that's not good enough.  I know that  
11          that's not good enough.  Our veterans and  
12          their families deserve better than that.  And  
13          we've worked too hard over the last years to  
14          elevate this division to an agency to be  
15          satisfied with that response.  That's as  
16          plain as it gets.

17                        With \$30 million -- take a look at  
18          these numbers.  Thirty million in funding for  
19          New York State veterans.  We have roughly  
20          700,000 veterans in New York.  In New Jersey  
21          they have \$104 million in state funding.  
22          They have 300,000 veterans.  In  
23          Massachusetts, \$97 million in funding,  
24          roughly 300,000 veterans.

1                   There's a huge disparity there. And  
2                   we have a great opportunity here, and we have  
3                   a great leader in you. And we need to do a  
4                   better job for our veterans in making this  
5                   happen. I know that you recognize this, and  
6                   I know that you're pushing for it in a  
7                   variety of ways. But New York State's  
8                   veterans and their families deserve better.

9                   What do we need to do as a Legislature  
10                  to make that happen? What do we need to do  
11                  to make the Dwyer funding permanent, to  
12                  capitalize on federal grants and programming  
13                  that could benefit our veterans and their  
14                  families? This is your opportunity.

15                 DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Thank --  
16                 thank you, Senator.

17                 One thing that we need to do is to  
18                 continue to work together to allow the voices  
19                 of our veterans to allow us to know what  
20                 their needs are. But also we have to look at  
21                 what we've brought in. And again, the work  
22                 that we've done this past year with what we  
23                 were given has brought in so much and helped  
24                 so many that remain unseen to all of us.

1                   And as we know, our service, as was  
2                   said earlier, is often unthanked, often  
3                   unknown to all of the things that you're  
4                   doing. But I want you to know that so much  
5                   has been done already with what we have  
6                   accomplished this past year, and we can only  
7                   continue to do more. And we will.

8                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you,  
9                   Reverend. Thank you, Senator.

10                  DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Thank you,  
11                  Senator.

12                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

13                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblywoman  
14                  Clark.

15                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Thank you.

16                  Good to see you. This is to  
17                  Director Olsen at Aging.

18                  I thank you for your testimony and for  
19                  some of the many good things that are in  
20                  there, but I know you were at -- in Rochester  
21                  last week, and I, at a breakfast that our  
22                  organizational group around aging issues was  
23                  there. And you heard firsthand, as I did,  
24                  that one of our amazing groups that does a

1 lot of work in this space said it was  
2 probably one of the worst budgets she'd ever  
3 seen for older New Yorkers. And so that  
4 really does throw a huge amount of concern to  
5 me.

6 I think that particularly when you  
7 look at the issues we see around increasing  
8 poverty in our older New Yorkers, when you  
9 see the just huge population growth in older  
10 New Yorkers, when you understand what COVID  
11 has done in our long-term-care facilities,  
12 that even holding flat is a disappointment  
13 when we know we need to move forward to  
14 really make this work.

15 And I want to focus on the Long Term  
16 Care Ombudsman Program quickly, which we've  
17 heard a lot about. And I get that we keep  
18 saying we need federal support and we need  
19 federal investment, but last I heard we were  
20 39th in the country in terms of a state  
21 investing dollars into that program. So if  
22 38 other states are doing more than we are  
23 right now, I think we owe it to do more as  
24 well.

1                   What do you think would be -- I mean,  
2                   you know we can't run this program on  
3                   volunteers. We can't have weekly visits  
4                   based on volunteers. We can't have  
5                   volunteers going toe-to-toe with DOH on  
6                   answers for complaints. Do you sort of  
7                   recognize that we have to get to the point  
8                   where we truly professionalize this and  
9                   invest dollars into it?

10                   NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: I think  
11                   the entire network needs that. Again,  
12                   because the structure of the Older Americans  
13                   Act 50-something years ago really relied on  
14                   volunteers.

15                   We are working with, you know,  
16                   physicians' offices, hospitals, plans,  
17                   long-term-care facilities, et cetera. And  
18                   you're absolutely right, you can't expect,  
19                   you know, 75-year-old, 80-year-old volunteers  
20                   -- who are unbelievably dedicated and smart  
21                   -- to do the job that a professional ought to  
22                   do.

23                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Excellent.

24                   And I just also want to say, you know,

1           some of the things to flag as we look  
2           particularly at removing and getting --  
3           continuing to get older New Yorkers who are  
4           on these waitlists for critical basic needs  
5           off these waitlists. You know, DOH had  
6           2.1 million in its budget to create a new  
7           program that is particularly or could be  
8           considered duplicative to what we're already  
9           doing. Why not put that into SOFA? Why not  
10          get that extra \$9.5 million that we need to  
11          remove waitlists, let alone go above and  
12          beyond to see what we can do to really help  
13          seniors in poverty?

14                   Thank you.

15                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

16                   To the Senate.

17                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

18                   Senator May.

19                   SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

20                   Hi, Commissioner Olsen, or  
21          Director Olsen. Great to see you again.

22                   NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: You  
23          too.

24                   SENATOR MAY: I wanted to thank

1 Senator Cleare for asking a number of the  
2 questions that I had.

3 But I wanted to follow up about the  
4 NORC funding in the budget. And I'm glad to  
5 see there's Neighborhood NORC as well as the  
6 traditional NORC funding. But what are you  
7 thinking about our upstate cities which don't  
8 fall typically into either category? Is  
9 there planning for a third category of NORCs  
10 so we can have smaller apartment buildings,  
11 for example, in our upstate cities  
12 participate in this program?

13 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah,  
14 Senator, good to see you as well.

15 You know, when we did the  
16 modernization of the NORC program a few years  
17 ago, it was at '14 or so, we did attempt in  
18 there to create models that would serve rural  
19 communities, urban communities and suburban.  
20 We worked with you last year and some of the  
21 NORCs, specifically for one in your district  
22 in Syracuse, where a couple of other tweaks  
23 needed to be made.

24 So, you know, I think that's something

1           that we should all look at. It's  
2           budget-neutral, and what the Naturally  
3           Occurring Retirement Communities does was so  
4           ahead of their time in terms of bringing  
5           together healthcare and social determinants  
6           of health, social services that we provide to  
7           serve people holistically. So it's not meant  
8           to be exclusive, and I think that's what we  
9           tried to do, and the modernization might need  
10          a tweak.

11                         SENATOR MAY: Okay, great.

12                         And then following up to what  
13           Assemblymember Clark said, I heard you say  
14           earlier that we were hoping to get to about  
15           60 percent coverage of nursing homes with  
16           ombudsmen.

17                         NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: That's  
18           where we are now with the additional 35 staff  
19           that was negotiated, thanks to you and then  
20           the Governor last year, to add that to our  
21           budget.

22                         SENATOR MAY: Okay. Because by law it  
23           should be 100 percent, and so we've got to  
24           start putting the money in to make sure that

1 we're getting to 100 percent. That's where I  
2 am.

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
5 Assembly.

6 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman  
7 Gallahan.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN GALLAHAN: Thank you,  
9 Madam Chair.

10 Thank you both for your testimony and  
11 all that you do for us here in New York  
12 State.

13 Director Olsen, I have one topic, and  
14 it is constantly coming across my email  
15 screen, it is constantly on my phone, and I  
16 constantly get bombarded with it, and it has  
17 to do with home healthcare aides. And the  
18 biggest complaint I have is retention and  
19 hiring, which we all are well aware of that.  
20 The biggest problem I have is in my own  
21 community. There's such a shortage, the  
22 retention rate is -- it's just dysfunctional.  
23 It's terrible. Because all these folks are  
24 going to McDonald's and Burger King for two

1 and three dollars more an hour.

2 Now, you know, the state mandated  
3 wages for fast food workers. Is there any  
4 discussion about this situation with home  
5 healthcare aides? And if there is, I would  
6 love to know, so I can report that back to my  
7 constituents. Because I'm really -- I'm  
8 really catching it on this, and rightfully  
9 so. I mean, our loved ones are not getting  
10 the care that they need, and they're the most  
11 important people in our lives.

12 So I would really respect your  
13 response.

14 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah,  
15 absolutely, Assemblyman. That is the  
16 problem.

17 As you know, last year's budget  
18 contained a \$2 increase for personal care  
19 aides and home care aides, and another dollar  
20 coming up in October of '23.

21 You're right, it's difficult work.  
22 You know, you're not guaranteed a certain  
23 number of hours, you don't get paid when you  
24 travel. And the people that are in that



1 I think -- well, this one in particular, but  
2 there's other models of things that the  
3 Offices for the Aging do so well that really  
4 we're excited to bring to the Master Plan for  
5 Aging and the Reimagine Long-Term Care.  
6 Because I think a real continuum starts at  
7 the community level, and hopefully Medicaid  
8 is the payer of last resort.

9 And there's things out there that have  
10 been tried and tested and show a return on  
11 investment, both in terms of savings but  
12 really these are people, as you had talked  
13 about. I would love to -- I know I'm done, I  
14 was just going to offer in your district, we  
15 should have a conversation and see if that's  
16 something we can get the county executives to  
17 do.

18 I also just want to mention that, you  
19 know, as of this morning -- and vouchers may  
20 be late -- our AAAs have about \$77 million  
21 available to them for ARPA funds through '24.  
22 That can certainly help.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank --  
24 thank -- thank you.

1                   NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: I'm so  
2                   sorry, Assemblywoman.

3                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

4                   ASSEMBLYMAN GALLAHAN: Thank you.  
5                   Thank you very much.

6                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: To the Senate.

7                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

8                   To Roxanne Persaud.

9                   SENATOR PERSAUD: Thank you.

10                  Reverend, it's always great to see  
11                  you. And thank you for your passion and your  
12                  commitment to, you know, your colleagues,  
13                  your fellow veterans. I really appreciate  
14                  everything that you continue to do.

15                  Director Olsen, are you aware of our  
16                  legislation where we're talking about  
17                  breaking up the 24-hour work rule for home  
18                  health attendants?

19                  NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah.  
20                  That's not applicable to us, Senator, I'm  
21                  sorry --

22                  SENATOR PERSAUD: No, I'm just asking.

23                  NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah,  
24                  I'm familiar with it.



1 nutrition program in the country.

2 I'll also just mention that, again,  
3 meals are -- was the number-one service  
4 provided from the beginning of the pandemic  
5 to now, no question. And it's  
6 extraordinarily important. Food is medicine.

7 SENATOR PERSAUD: We're still having  
8 some -- so I have -- for example, I have a  
9 couple, both of them are cancer patients, and  
10 they're still trying to get it. They're  
11 constantly calling about having meals  
12 delivered. And, you know, we contact the  
13 agencies and, you know, then we have a  
14 stop-gap method, and then it happens again.

15 So, you know, we'll send -- we'll  
16 follow up with you on that, because --

17 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah,  
18 I'd appreciate that.

19 SENATOR PERSAUD: -- it's something  
20 that, you know, we need to --

21 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: I'd  
22 appreciate that.

23 SENATOR PERSAUD: -- to address.

24 And one last thing for you -- no, that

1 was it, what we -- the home-delivered meals.  
2 I think I covered it --

3 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Can I  
4 just say something in 48 seconds really to  
5 everybody here?

6 SENATOR PERSAUD: Sure.

7 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: SNAP  
8 benefits are extraordinarily important that a  
9 lot of older adults are eligible for that  
10 don't use it. It could put an extra \$2,000  
11 in their pocket.

12 Starting probably in the next month,  
13 last year's budget raised the income level  
14 for the Medicare Savings Program.

15 SENATOR PERSAUD: Right.

16 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: That  
17 will serve 300,000-plus people, put \$7,000  
18 back into their Social Security checks.

19 We could really use your help, in  
20 addition to the networks that we're going to  
21 engage, to get the word out so that -- again,  
22 you put just those two together, that's  
23 \$10,000 in people's pockets in this really  
24 difficult inflationary time. So we could



1 report are we talking about?

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: SOFA is  
3 supposed to give a report.

4 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: You're  
5 talking about an annual report?

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: The Master  
7 Plan for Aging report, yes. And it's  
8 supposed to be given.

9 But who is actually leading this --  
10 the report? And do you have a time frame on  
11 when this --

12 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: You  
13 mean leading the development of the plan?

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Yes.

15 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: So the  
16 Health Department is leading that, and we are  
17 working hand in hand with them.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Do you know a  
19 time frame? Is there a time frame, a month,  
20 two months?

21 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Oh,  
22 absolutely. Like I said, we were supposed to  
23 have the draft report due in the spring, but  
24 it's an 18-month process. The final report

1 will be in 2024. I'd be happy to tell you  
2 what the timelines are that were laid out in  
3 the executive order.

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: In the  
5 meantime, the \$1 million that is in the  
6 executive report, is that part of that  
7 \$1 million being spent on this plan as well?

8 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: It's  
9 for development and technical support.  
10 There's -- like I said, there's a lot that  
11 goes on behind the scenes, from the  
12 development of a website to organizing the  
13 meetings and the calls and things like that.

14 So, you know, in last year's budget  
15 and State of the State, the Governor had  
16 announced that we would get 1.5 million. We  
17 got 500,000 last year and then preserve that  
18 commitment this year.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: All right,  
20 thank you.

21 And then also the AARP says that  
22 96 percent of New York City's nursing homes  
23 and adult care facilities failed to receive a  
24 single visit from the New York federally

1 required adult oversight program, the  
2 ombudsman program. Right? And they said  
3 that the -- you need one employee to visit  
4 five different facilities. And I'm a nurse,  
5 so I'm all for safe staffing, right?

6 Can you explain why this funding is --  
7 I still don't understand, and I want to make  
8 sure. Why is this funding still not properly  
9 allocated? I mean, an only \$2.5 million  
10 increase does not man the entire state, much  
11 less just -- it doesn't man New York City,  
12 much less the whole state.

13 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah, I  
14 think, you know, it has traditionally been  
15 underfunded. I talked to you about how much  
16 we get from the federal government, and we  
17 have cobbled together through a variety of  
18 sources since at least I've been at NYSOFA,  
19 to try to increase --

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: I'm not  
21 talking about the federal, I'm talking about  
22 the New York City -- New York State's  
23 commitment.

24 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Again,

1 I can't comment on AARP's visits or not. I  
2 can get you data directly from us.

3 I think budgets are hard because  
4 they're big and there's a lot of different  
5 things that people want, and this is the  
6 beginning of the process where, you know,  
7 Governor outlays her priorities, you guys  
8 will do the same thing, and then, you know,  
9 there'll be a dialogue over the next couple  
10 of months --

11 (Inaudible overtalk.)

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

13 Senate?

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

15 Cordell Cleare, three-minute second  
16 round, to close for the Senate. Oh, I'm  
17 sorry, not to close for the Senate. I forgot  
18 Senator Weik.

19 Three minutes, go ahead.

20 SENATOR CLEARE: Okay. Director  
21 Olsen, I just wanted to ask, did SOFA receive  
22 any pandemic money directly or through  
23 another agency? And if so, is it continued  
24 in the '23-'24 budget proposal?

1                   NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Are you  
2 talking about stimulus dollars?

3                   SENATOR CLEARE: Any dollars that SOFA  
4 received to --

5                   NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah,  
6 we received five different packages of  
7 federal stimulus dollars. That's what I was  
8 mentioning; the largest one is the ARPA funds  
9 that expire September 31, '24. And there's  
10 still quite a bit of available resources to  
11 the counties.

12                   All of our money, except those that  
13 are outlined in our budget, are required by  
14 law to go to the counties. So I'm frustrated  
15 that some of them are not spending dollars  
16 that could help, again, with some of these  
17 needs that we have.

18                   SENATOR CLEARE: Okay. And also a  
19 little off-topic, you know, I have senior  
20 centers in my district that provide  
21 incredible service to the seniors that are  
22 living there, who are living at home who  
23 depend on them daily for social, health and  
24 other resources. And they are literally,

1 many of them, falling apart. They're not in  
2 good facilities, they are in need of capital.

3 How can SOFA help these very important  
4 centers? In my district I have A. Philip  
5 Randolph Center -- I mean, and they're  
6 scrambling, they're providing really critical  
7 services, as you know --

8 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: They  
9 really are. And there's never been federal  
10 or state capital dollars for senior centers.  
11 They're mostly funded, besides the service  
12 money we provide, they're mostly funded  
13 locally, as you know.

14 But you're right. I've been around,  
15 you know, for 31 years; I've seen a lot of  
16 these centers. Some of them are amazing in  
17 terms of their structure, and some of them  
18 are really struggling.

19 SENATOR PERSAUD: Yeah, and we really  
20 need it, because some -- they need to be  
21 retrofitted, they need to have bathrooms  
22 done, they need their kitchens --

23 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: They  
24 need to be welcoming.

1                   SENATOR CLEARE: They need to be  
2                   welcoming, and they need to be habitable for  
3                   the period of time that people are in them,  
4                   technology needs, and so forth and so on.

5                   So that's just something I really want  
6                   to bring to you and talk to you about how we  
7                   can get those centers upgraded. I have  
8                   Central Harlem Senior Center, they're  
9                   operating in a basement. You know, that's  
10                  not -- it's just not cool.

11                  So I just thank you for that. The  
12                  pandemic money -- you know, I saw senior  
13                  centers and senior programs happening during  
14                  the pandemic that really should have been  
15                  happening all along. So that's why I asked  
16                  that question about pandemic dollars, because  
17                  some of that needs to be continued. We  
18                  should have been doing it even pre-pandemic.

19                  NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: You're  
20                  absolutely right. We can talk afterwards  
21                  because there's a lot of things that we  
22                  launched with our association partners in  
23                  counties over the last two years that  
24                  absolutely are continuing.

1                   SENATOR CLEARE: Thank you.

2                   And Reverend, I'd just like to thank  
3 you for your service. I will contact you  
4 about the mobile units.

5                   DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Thank you,  
6 Senator.

7                   SENATOR CLEARE: Thank you.

8                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
9 Assembly.

10                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman  
11 Burdick.

12                  ASSEMBLYMAN BURDICK: Thank you.

13                  And thank you, Reverend DeCohen, for  
14 your service and for your testimony.

15                  And I have to confess that I do share  
16 the concerns and being perplexed how your  
17 testimony seems to describe an increase in  
18 services and yet there's a substantial  
19 decrease in the budget. And, I mean, it kind  
20 of defies gravity.

21                  And I'm wondering if you could try to  
22 explain how that might be accomplished,  
23 particularly with what I think is very  
24 laudable, to have the new Homeless Veterans

1           Housing Program.

2                   And, you know, the other question I  
3 would ask in connection with the latter is  
4 whether that's a program that you intend to  
5 work in collaboration with OTDA.

6                   DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Oh, thank  
7 you. Thank you, Assemblymember.

8                   That program, as I stated, it's still  
9 a new program to us, so we're still hashing  
10 out all of the details.

11                   Less, I don't know from this  
12 administration, but I do know the dollar and  
13 cents amount that we were able to bring in.  
14 And again, that \$900 million in services to  
15 our veterans across the state is a number  
16 that exceeded the one on last year.

17                   And we know that there's more to be  
18 done, especially as we are moving into our  
19 new nomenclature as a department. There's so  
20 many levels and so many tiers. And we know  
21 that that is not our area, but we are looking  
22 forward to working with you to be able to  
23 ensure that this is going to meet the needs  
24 of all of our veterans across the state as we

1 move forward.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN BURDICK: Well, I think  
3 it's a daunting task, you know, with the  
4 decrease in expenditures, as one of my  
5 colleagues noted. And, you know, it's  
6 commonly known that it's almost a 14 percent  
7 cut in the budget at a time of high inflation  
8 as well as increasing needs and a large  
9 veterans population. And as one of the  
10 Senators noted, it contrasts quite poorly, I  
11 think, frankly, with Massachusetts,  
12 New Jersey, other states in terms of the  
13 funds that they devote in their state budgets  
14 to their veterans services.

15 So I think there certainly will be  
16 some interest in increasing the budget. I  
17 don't know whether we'll be successful in  
18 that. But I think that that's something that  
19 we all would like to see.

20 But in any event, we certainly thank  
21 you for your service and everything that  
22 you're trying to do on behalf of the  
23 veterans.

24 DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Thank you,

1 Assemblymember.

2 I'd like to say, in this last  
3 17 seconds, I remember the old adage of my  
4 grandmother having a half a cup of rice and  
5 looking like she could only feed herself, and  
6 she ended up not only feeding the entire  
7 family but she felt she was able to feed the  
8 community as well. And that's what we're  
9 hoping to continue to do with what we have.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN BURDICK: Sounds like a  
11 biblical reference.

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
13 To the Senate.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
15 Senator Weik.

16 SENATOR WEIK: Thank you very much.  
17 And I want to say thank you to  
18 Reverend DeCohen. Thank you for your  
19 service. Thank you for your testimony today.

20 I come from Suffolk County, which has  
21 the greatest number of veterans in all of  
22 New York State. I'm very proud to say that.  
23 And I work very hard with our veterans to  
24 make sure that we're providing however we

1 can.

2 We do have a lot of veterans who are  
3 complaining of kind of the same thing over  
4 and over again, which is that their posts are  
5 in disrepair. They've been applying for  
6 grants, they're waiting for signatures,  
7 they've gotten that far. And these posts are  
8 really vital to their services when they  
9 provide Joseph P. Dwyer Peer-to-Peer Program  
10 services. And if I heard you correctly, that  
11 you'll be going around assisting to try to  
12 help them apply for these grants. Is that  
13 accurate, you're able to do that?

14 DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Yeah. The  
15 grants gateway is open and they have recorded  
16 a video on how to apply for the grant and all  
17 of the Q&A that are out there.

18 Just so that you know, Suffolk -- I  
19 used to work in Suffolk and Nassau County,  
20 and so I know so many of these  
21 organizations -- and I have recused myself  
22 from the actual process of who was applying.  
23 But we did ensure that there was a  
24 comprehensive video that has been made that

1           they can still access on how to, what to, and  
2           all of the questions and answers. And thus  
3           far, I've been told from a great many of them  
4           that are applying, that is relatively easy to  
5           follow.

6                         SENATOR WEIK: I guess getting the  
7           signatures at the end is the hard part; that  
8           continues to be holding them up.

9                         So of course if there's any way that  
10          you can advocate for them as well, that would  
11          certainly be much needed and truly  
12          appreciated.

13                        I know our homeless veterans is a big  
14          issue as well in many areas. Are there any  
15          other services that you're going to be able  
16          to provide to assist getting them out of  
17          these tents in the woods and into shelters of  
18          any sort?

19                        DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: We were --  
20          we were happy to be able to have the service  
21          of Find and Serve and to utilize a platform  
22          for more outreach, the Find and Serve. And  
23          on Veterans Month we were able to access so  
24          many, so many veterans. One of our advisors

1 walked over a couple of our veterans to the  
2 Department of Social Services and was able to  
3 get them the assistance that they needed.

4 One of them that I can tell you from  
5 last year now has 100 percent of her  
6 services, having been housed. We were able  
7 to work with and continue to work with those  
8 who have been sheltered with our resources so  
9 that they can get things like furniture and  
10 continue to get the food and other things  
11 that they need -- and especially those that  
12 have children, to be able to get them the  
13 book bags that are fully slotted.

14 So absolutely. Listen, we could make  
15 a list of a hundred things today and tomorrow  
16 the list is going to be a thousand, and more  
17 and more. Because I have to tell you, as a  
18 veteran, I always say if I could bounce a  
19 basketball and do a layup, everything that we  
20 would need as a veteran would be in our home  
21 free of charge.

22 SENATOR WEIK: Well, I look forward to  
23 working with you in the future.

24 Thank you.

1                   DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: I look  
2 forward to working with you as well, Senator.

3                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
4                   Assemblywoman Hunter.

5                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN HUNTER: Thank you.  
6                   Thank you to you both.

7                   Director DeCohen, at our  
8 December hearing we heard from several  
9 different witnesses. They were very  
10 compelling, and I wish you had been able to  
11 be in-person to hear the gentlemen talk about  
12 being homeless, not having housing.

13                   So while we're having aspirational  
14 dreams about this budget and what both the  
15 Assembly and Senate will have to put in --  
16 because it is not adequate where it is right  
17 now -- I'd like know what services are  
18 available today while another veteran is  
19 homeless. So that's my first question.

20                   My second question -- and again, this  
21 was from the hearing, but I live and breathe  
22 it every day. As a veteran, I actually have  
23 a case that spanned four years that was one  
24 of the biggest issues that was brought

1 forward from our service providers about not  
2 getting assistance from the state to help  
3 them facilitate these claims from the feds.

4 So my second question is, what is your  
5 relationship with the federal government in  
6 aiding our veterans to get their claims  
7 processed which have been languishing for  
8 years?

9 And my last question is relative to  
10 mental health and PTSD. We had a  
11 conversation about 988 and you press 1 and it  
12 will get you to someone who can speak to  
13 someone who can help a veteran. They have  
14 millions and millions of calls since that  
15 number was instituted, and that leaves the  
16 veteran hanging out, waiting. That's a lot,  
17 millions and millions, just to get to someone  
18 to talk to.

19 And so I'm looking for leadership.  
20 I'd like to see the \$300,000 worth of vans.  
21 Give them to the county, give them to the  
22 direct service organizations. We don't need  
23 to see the state-level people right in the  
24 area, because our local people know where

1           these veterans are.

2                   And so if you could answer my  
3           questions in the time allotted. Thank you.

4                   DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Thank you  
5           so much. And if you don't mind, I'll answer  
6           them not directly in the order that you've  
7           given.

8                   With the 888 {sic} number, we've been  
9           working with the American Red Cross. I'm  
10          wearing the band today. There is actually a  
11          committed and dedicated hero care line for  
12          our veterans for not just emergencies with  
13          fires, but all emergencies that they need,  
14          whether it's housing, emergency housing,  
15          emergency clothing, emergency cash for gas to  
16          get to school.

17                   We continue to work with our partners  
18          at the VA right now, especially as the  
19          PACT Act has become a reality. We've also  
20          put out a video for that as well. We  
21          continue to talk with them.

22                   They're also having an aggressive  
23          program right now where they've hired more  
24          people to address homelessness by getting

1 dedicated workers and social workers and more  
2 in the mental health.

3 And right now we're doing just what we  
4 said. The 15 that we found and the 14 more  
5 that just came to us, we have had them walked  
6 over to shelter assistance ourselves, and  
7 then we've put in resources to assist those  
8 shelters to get the clothing and the things  
9 that they need while they're in shelter.

10 We continue to work with the  
11 Department of Labor to ensure the jobs, to  
12 ensure the education and even to ensure that  
13 their military transcripts are properly  
14 translated into jobs and things that they can  
15 get right now.

16 We're about the right amount of  
17 services because so many of us have been that  
18 homeless person.

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you,  
20 Director.

21 Senate?

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senate is closed.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay, we have  
24 several more Assemblymembers.

1 Assemblyman Pirozzolo.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: I'd like to  
3 say thank you to both of you for being here  
4 today. Reverend DeCohen, thank you for your  
5 service.

6 This question is really for both of  
7 you. Director Olsen, it kind of falls to you  
8 under Aging, and then, Reverend DeCohen, it  
9 falls to you because -- just because, right?

10 So last Friday I was sitting in my  
11 office and a gentleman comes in through the  
12 door, and he was a veteran from the  
13 Vietnam War. And he had his tax bill with  
14 him, and he said, "Could you do me a favor?  
15 Could you go over this and see what  
16 exemptions or tax breaks I'm not getting?"  
17 And we were able to do that, and I think we  
18 found two, if not three.

19 So as our veterans age, maybe using  
20 the internet or getting this information or  
21 emails, for some -- not all, absolutely not  
22 all, right -- but for some veterans who are a  
23 little bit older, it's more difficult to use  
24 this system.

1                   So how do we let these veterans know  
2                   or what are ways we can increase avenues to  
3                   let all veterans know that there are tax  
4                   exemptions, tax credits that they can be made  
5                   aware of? How can we do a better job of  
6                   doing that?

7                   NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: So I  
8                   guess I'll start.

9                   And I know Beth Finkel is following us  
10                  at some point today from AARP, but AARP and  
11                  many other community organizations sponsor  
12                  free tax services. It's like here in Albany  
13                  they'll do that every Sunday during the  
14                  entire tax season for hundreds and hundreds  
15                  of people.

16                  I think that there's a lot of things  
17                  that happen that either the state's working  
18                  on or the counties are working on that the  
19                  public generally doesn't know about because  
20                  we don't consolidate them somewhere to be  
21                  able to provide that this may be available  
22                  in, you know, the district that you work in  
23                  or what have you.

24                  So there are those types of services

1           that are available free of charge for older  
2           adults specifically. I'm not sure their  
3           veteran status would matter. If you're just  
4           an older adult and you need help, those types  
5           of things are available.

6                       DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Thank you,  
7           Assemblymember.

8                       And Greg and I actually work hand in  
9           hand with our seniors -- I am a senior now.  
10          And so we've been able to partner together to  
11          ensure, when we're having our seminars, that  
12          those who are aging do get the information.

13                      We have it not only posted on our  
14          website, but now we have flyers that are  
15          posted in places like laundromats and the  
16          post office, with the names of our advisors,  
17          that says, Call us and you can ask us any  
18          questions -- especially for those who are  
19          aging, as far as knowing what their benefits  
20          are for home health aides for themselves  
21          through aides and attendants, for themselves  
22          and also for their spouses, anything that  
23          they do.

24                      You know, the municipalities are

1           serving so many with their own tax benefits,  
2           and we're working with them to do the same --  
3           some of the same things that we're doing to  
4           get the message out in places and spaces that  
5           they frequent.

6                         ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: Thank you very  
7           much.

8                         And I'd just like to say, once again,  
9           thank you for your service. I'd like to  
10          thank every veteran for their service. If  
11          you think about it, if it weren't for the  
12          service of veterans, hearings like this may  
13          not be happening.

14                        DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Thank you.

15                        CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

16                        We go to Assemblywoman Lee.

17                        ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEE: Good afternoon.

18           Thanks for being here.

19                        I just had a quick question for  
20          Director Olsen about NORCs. I wanted to get  
21          a better understanding of how the services  
22          for NORCs are provided. Is it mostly  
23          privatized, or is there any of the services  
24          administered from the county and state

1 agencies?

2 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yup.

3 So there are multiple -- so we have NORCs  
4 throughout New York State, but most of them  
5 are centralized in the city. The original  
6 NORC SSP started there in '95, and then we  
7 drafted, when I was in the legislature, the  
8 Neighborhood NORC program in '05.

9 So what we did or have done on  
10 multiple occasions is an RFP that provides  
11 money to the community, and what they use is  
12 the same community infrastructure in the city  
13 that they would use for, you know,  
14 home-delivered meals. The nursing could go  
15 like VNS or others. But, you know, there's a  
16 pretty large infrastructure in the city of  
17 vendors that DFTA and others use to provide  
18 the services, and that's how that would work.  
19 They're not-for-profits and community-based  
20 organizations.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEE: And how did this  
22 model evolve? Like why is it that it's  
23 mainly privatized or given off to -- you  
24 know, farmed out to nonprofit organizations

1           rather than being serviced in-house?

2                       NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: I'm not  
3           sure I understand the question.

4                       So all of the services that are  
5           provided within a NORC building are also  
6           provided in residential homes throughout  
7           New York State. So what this model tried to  
8           do in the beginning was recognize that people  
9           had moved into a particular building at the  
10          time, when they were much younger, and they  
11          aged into the building. And so you have  
12          density of ability to serve individuals with  
13          both healthcare and social services.

14                      So it's not farmed out, it's -- you  
15          know, an organization would apply for the  
16          funds and provide the services, based on the  
17          geographic area.

18                      ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEE: Thank you.

19                      CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
20          Assemblyman Ra for five minutes, ranker.

21                      ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

22                      Directors, thank you for being here.

23                      Director DeCohen, I just want to  
24          somewhat continue where my Senate colleague

1 left off, you know, in terms of the overall  
2 funding. We did have a proposal that we  
3 worked on last year putting forward that  
4 would put \$250 million on the services side,  
5 \$250 million on the capital side for our  
6 organizations and all of that. And I think  
7 that's more in the ballpark of where we need  
8 to go.

9 But, you know, I hope with your  
10 leadership and the passion of people like my  
11 colleague Senator Ashby we can get there.

12 I will say, though, one of the -- I'm  
13 happy with the expansion of the Dwyer funding  
14 last year, happy to see it's in this, you  
15 know, executive proposal. But there is a cut  
16 that would potentially impact a bunch of  
17 other programs, including Helmets to Hard  
18 Hats, the Outdoor Prescription program which,  
19 you know, gets veterans outdoors and has them  
20 taking advantage of things that we think are  
21 therapeutic for their mental health.

22 So, you know, while I feel like the  
23 Legislature will advocate for those  
24 restorations, you know, I wish that didn't

1           have to be the case, that they could be there  
2           in the Executive Budget proposal. So I won't  
3           even ask you to comment on that, because I  
4           think you probably agree.

5                        But I do want to ask about -- there  
6           was some capital in the budget last year to  
7           help our veterans service organizations,  
8           which I think any of us in this Legislature  
9           have heard from them about the need for, you  
10          know, new roofs and paving the parking lot  
11          and boilers and everything under the sun to  
12          keep those places better places for veterans  
13          to gather and access services and, you know,  
14          be with people that have that shared  
15          experience.

16                       So could you tell me -- I know  
17          applications are still open till the end of  
18          March -- but how that's gone or how many  
19          applications have come in? Do you think the  
20          information has gotten out there to the  
21          veterans' organizations that this capital  
22          funding is available?

23                       DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Thank you,  
24          Assemblymember. I'm going to go back to what

1 I stated earlier, that right now we have a  
2 dozen in the process.

3 And we're continuing to put out the  
4 word actually monthly on all of our  
5 platforms, by snail mail -- we're still doing  
6 that -- by email, on all of our social  
7 platforms, including our website as well.

8 We were so happy to be one of the  
9 first states to have the Outdoor Rx program,  
10 and we have six people right now to be able  
11 to get the \$25,000 to have an extensive  
12 program in their natural lands to continue to  
13 have those programs for our veterans, our  
14 military, and our families, that we know it's  
15 so vital to have these outdoor programs that  
16 can help on a mental level, a physical level,  
17 and on every level for our veterans across  
18 the state.

19 So very happy that the Governor was  
20 able to roll that out.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. And just going  
22 back to the capital. So do you see a need  
23 to, you know, maybe do another round of that,  
24 put it -- you know, match that funding again

1           this year so that we can help more veterans  
2           organizations keep roofs over their heads so  
3           there's a place for those veterans to go?

4                   DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Listen, we  
5           want everything and everything times 10 for  
6           our veterans across this state. And so we  
7           know that this is just the beginning of so  
8           many programs that together we'll be able to  
9           roll out more and more -- all of our  
10          veterans, and especially our supporters who  
11          are supporting our veterans and their  
12          families.

13                   ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Great. Thank you  
14          very much.

15                   DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Thank you.

16                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
17          Thank you both for (pause) -- for staying  
18          here just for another three minutes --

19                   (Laughter.)

20                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: -- while  
21          Assemblyman Morinello asks a question.

22                   ASSEMBLYMAN MORINELLO: Hi.

23                   I want to thank you for your service.  
24          I'm a veteran also, and that is -- and I've



1           again, for the RFP for the new \$25,000 apiece  
2           for our new Rx program -- which is going to  
3           be ending very soon, and we will be  
4           disbursing the funds in April for those six  
5           recipients of that \$25,000 grant. We're glad  
6           that that's there.

7                     The other program -- I'm sorry, sir --  
8           I was not familiar with as --

9                     ASSEMBLYMAN MORINELLO: Well, Helmets  
10          to Hard Hats, I'd ask you to maybe look into  
11          that.

12                    DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: That's  
13          right.

14                    ASSEMBLYMAN MORINELLO: Okay? Because  
15          it's been a very valuable program.

16                    And apparently it's probably been  
17          asked also, the elimination of the 5 million  
18          for capital improvements. The money from  
19          fiscal year '23, it's still available in  
20          appropriation -- reappropriations. How much  
21          of that, do you know, has been  
22          reappropriated, how much is available, and is  
23          there still an opportunity to request?

24                    DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: The

1           \$5 million capital grants management program  
2           is still in effect. And so we're still  
3           working through all of the applications. We  
4           have 12 in process right now.

5                     And we're looking forward to being  
6           able to disseminate those funds, and of  
7           course looking forward to continuing the  
8           program in the future.

9                     ASSEMBLYMAN MORINELLO: Thank you.

10                    And I want to compliment you on the  
11           creation of the mobile veterans benefits  
12           advisory clinics. I think you know rural  
13           areas, there's many veterans that live in  
14           rural areas. It just seems that a lot of the  
15           rural individuals are those that are willing  
16           to volunteer.

17                    Will those be dispersed throughout the  
18           state?

19                    DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: We do have  
20           some counties that already have this program,  
21           so we will continue to work with those  
22           veterans service organizations and those  
23           counties that have been asking for this, that  
24           have been telling us that transportation

1 continues to be the number-one problem, that  
2 they're looking forward to it. It's for  
3 those that want it. And those that have it,  
4 you know, we're so happy to be able to see  
5 our veterans being served.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN MORINELLO: Let me just  
7 add one last thing --

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I'm sorry,  
9 Judge. The time has expired.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN MORINELLO: Thank you.  
11 I'm done.

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay.  
13 Actually, I misspoke before. Assemblyman  
14 Ron Kim, our Aging chair, has a second round  
15 of three minutes.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: Thank you, Chair.

17 Director Olsen, just to wrap up my  
18 questions from earlier. So in  
19 Washington, D.C., the state's Long Term Care  
20 Ombudsman Program is housed under AARP's  
21 national office. The head of that program is  
22 Mark Miller, who actually used to head the  
23 New York State LTCOP program. In Michigan,  
24 the LTCOP is housed under the Michigan Elder

1 Justice Initiative. And I'm sure there's  
2 plenty of other examples like this in the  
3 country.

4 And I bring these up because I just  
5 want to demonstrate the flexibility of the  
6 program. And depending on how we're able to  
7 build capacity for these programs, we can do  
8 a lot more. And I just want to give you an  
9 opportunity to discuss what we need to be  
10 doing together to fully fund and  
11 professionalize the Long Term Care program,  
12 which will save lives of nursing home  
13 residents.

14 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: I mean,  
15 I think the short answer is you need to hire  
16 staff, which, you know, we were able to bring  
17 on 35 new people to take the place of, again,  
18 asking people to volunteer for a very  
19 complicated program. As part of our federal  
20 Older Americans Act modernization, a huge  
21 increase in workforce across the aging  
22 network, but also included in the Long Term  
23 Care Ombudsman Program for that reason.

24 So, you know, I think again -- I think

1           you were out, Assemblyman -- I see there's a  
2           lot in the budget, there's a lot of needs.  
3           We hear them from every single agency, from  
4           every constituent, and it's a starting point  
5           for a dialogue.

6                         ASSEMBLYMAN KIM:  And, honestly, going  
7           back to the private payment system, it's a  
8           very intriguing, you know, concept for me  
9           because when you think about charging people  
10          a fee-for-service model, we often think about  
11          the MTA, the buses, the bridges, the tunnels,  
12          and it's usually housed under public benefit  
13          authorities or corporations who are able to  
14          leverage those fees to borrow against those  
15          incomes for -- to finance future projects.

16                        And you're kind of -- because SOFA  
17          doesn't deal with intermediaries like MLTCs  
18          and through EISEP, counties are able to  
19          directly administer the reimbursements.  You  
20          know, it's a unique situation for us to  
21          experiment on how to properly finance  
22          long-term care.  And I'd love to stay in  
23          touch with you about not only this, but  
24          different mechanisms where we can rethink

1 about public financing long-term care.

2 NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah, I  
3 am always interested in having that  
4 conversation.

5 And the other thing, just to point  
6 out, is the service infrastructure that  
7 we oversee with the counties and their  
8 1200 partners intervenes a lot earlier. And  
9 so you can help somebody get better or  
10 maintain themselves and not have to devolve  
11 to a point where they need a higher level of  
12 care.

13 And that should be -- that's what a  
14 real system of long-term care -- it goes from  
15 information to skilled nursing, but that's  
16 what a real system ought to look like.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: Great. Thank you.

18 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

19 Thank you both for being here and  
20 participating in today's hearing.

21 I know there's some questions that  
22 there wasn't time to answer, so to the extent  
23 that you have some answers to individual  
24 members, please send them also to myself and

1           Senator Krueger so we can distribute to all  
2           of the members.

3                     Thank you.

4                     DVS DIRECTOR REV. DeCOHEN: Thank you.

5                     NYSOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Thank  
6           you guys. Thanks, everybody.

7                     CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So now we will  
8           go to -- we are completed with the  
9           governmental witnesses, so now we will have  
10          witnesses from the members of the public. If  
11          you're following along, it's Panel A: Early  
12          Care & Learning Council; All Our Kin; Hunger  
13          Solutions New York; Adirondack Birth to Three  
14          Alliance; and Docs for Tots.

15                    If there is anybody here who hasn't  
16           checked in -- I think most people have --  
17           please let us know. I know people tend to  
18           stay in the back, but the panel after this  
19           will be AARP, New York StateWide Senior  
20           Action Council, Project Guardianship,  
21           Association on Aging -- so some of those  
22           folks may want to, as this panel nears its  
23           end, move a little further down.

24                    We also have been joined by a member

1 of Ways and Means, Assemblyman Dilan. So you  
2 have to do a little sharing of the  
3 microphone.

4 Just a reminder, everybody gets three  
5 minutes to make their presentation after all  
6 members of the panel have completed their  
7 presentation. Any members that wish to ask  
8 questions, just let myself or Senator Krueger  
9 know. And members, all members will have up  
10 to three minutes to ask questions, and please  
11 leave time for the answer.

12 So maybe just identify yourselves when  
13 you speak. I think we'll -- I think  
14 everybody's checked in. So why don't we  
15 start with the Early Care & Learning Council,  
16 the way I introduced people.

17 MS. CHIMENTO: Good afternoon. And  
18 thank you, Chairs Krueger and Weinstein.

19 My name is Meredith Chimento. I'm the  
20 executive director of the Early Care &  
21 Learning Council. ECLC is the coordinating  
22 body for the network of some 35 childcare  
23 resource and referral agencies that you've  
24 heard a lot about today.

1                   We often refer to CCR&Rs as the  
2                   workforce behind the childcare workforce. At  
3                   the start of the pandemic, we worked directly  
4                   with OCFS to ensure that childcare stayed  
5                   open --

6                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Excuse me one  
7                   second.

8                   The clock should say three minutes  
9                   because we are nongovernmental.

10                  MS. CHIMENTO: As federal funds flowed  
11                  through OCFS, it was the network that ensured  
12                  that these childcare programs could access  
13                  much-needed financial relief. We are  
14                  grateful to the Governor and OCFS for their  
15                  commitment to childcare, but unfortunately  
16                  these investments do not go far enough.

17                  In 2012, CCR&R state contracts were  
18                  cut and have remained flat-funded ever since.  
19                  Imagine no core contract increase in more  
20                  years than it takes to send a child through  
21                  the public school system. CCR&Rs are faced  
22                  with a more dynamic and complex system,  
23                  bigger problems -- funding levels have failed  
24                  to keep up.

1                    Since 2012, inflation has risen at a  
2                    rate of 29.7 percent. What are we to do, a  
3                    resourceful group of nonprofits, one that  
4                    seeks out alternative funding streams and  
5                    continuously cuts cost. But now things are  
6                    too tight. Like our childcare providers,  
7                    many of our agencies are struggling.

8                    It is with this in mind that ECLC and  
9                    the network of CCR&Rs respectfully request  
10                   that the Governor and Legislature support the  
11                   following increases:

12                   Increase childcare resource and  
13                   referral contracts, including registration  
14                   contracts, by \$7.9 million annually to cover  
15                   increasing costs to staff the network who  
16                   train the 17,000 licensed and regulated  
17                   childcare providers serving 400,000 children  
18                   in our state. Last year we delivered  
19                   50,000 hours of technical assistance and  
20                   helped 32,000 families find quality,  
21                   affordable care through our referral  
22                   networks.

23                   We also ask for \$6.5 million annually  
24                   to fund the Stabilization and Deserts Grant

1 technical assistance positions. The funding  
2 for these positions will sunset in the next  
3 year. CCR&Rs offer core business trainings  
4 to assist providers who are often financially  
5 unstable and at a risk of closing their  
6 doors.

7 As you've heard, 64 percent of  
8 New York State is a childcare desert.  
9 Without the TA specialists working closely  
10 with new and existing childcare providers,  
11 the situation will only deteriorate,  
12 undercutting parents' ability to work and  
13 undermining the state's economic future.  
14 These TA positions delivered grant assistance  
15 to 10,600 existing childcare providers and  
16 helped 846 prospective providers navigate the  
17 grant process.

18 Additionally, we request \$4 million to  
19 increase infant/toddler mental health  
20 consultation programming to ensure that our  
21 younger children get off to the start they  
22 deserve, with nurturing and responsive care,  
23 and an additional 5.5 million to provide DEIB  
24 training to mitigate and address racism and

1 unconscious bias.

2 CCR&Rs were established into law in  
3 1993. We are asking that you continue to  
4 honor the critical role that CCR&Rs play in  
5 the New York State economy through their  
6 support of childcare businesses, employers,  
7 and families, by increasing contracts that  
8 have unfortunately remained stagnant for far  
9 too long. Our work, which is critical to  
10 keeping New York working, will struggle to  
11 continue without this adjustment.

12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next, All Our  
14 Kin.

15 MR. MORALES: Senators, members of the  
16 Assembly, my name is Steven Morales, and I'm  
17 the New York policy director at All Our Kin.  
18 All Our Kin is a nonprofit organization that  
19 trains, supports, and sustains family  
20 childcare educators in New York City, and  
21 we're also proud members of the Empire State  
22 Childcare Campaign.

23 Family childcare, or home-based --  
24 childcare in a home-based setting is a

1 critical part of New York's childcare  
2 infrastructure, and many parents choose  
3 family childcare for its ability to offer  
4 flexible hours, mixed-age, culturally  
5 responsive care in a family's home language.

6 In New York State, 40 percent of  
7 children in publicly funded care are cared  
8 for in family childcare settings.

9 Despite the demand for care across the  
10 state in any type of setting, our childcare  
11 system remains in crisis, with programs  
12 across the state closing their doors. At the  
13 core of the childcare crisis lies one simple  
14 fact: Compensation for childcare  
15 professionals is woefully inadequate. On  
16 average, childcare educators in New York are  
17 in the bottom 3 percent of all earners, and  
18 when childcare providers struggle, children  
19 and families suffer the consequences.

20 Since the beginning of the pandemic,  
21 New York State has experienced a net loss of  
22 over 1,300 childcare programs, which  
23 translates to over 10,000 lost childcare  
24 slots. That's thousands of working families

1           whose lives are disrupted daily because of  
2           lack of childcare access. And the crisis is  
3           ongoing.

4                        In a December survey, one-third of  
5           family childcare educators in New York  
6           expressed that they are considering leaving  
7           their jobs and closing their programs, and  
8           the number-one reason for that is low  
9           compensation.

10                      So to begin addressing this crisis,  
11           All Our Kin is calling for the following  
12           investments. First, in the short term, a  
13           childcare workforce compensation fund of  
14           \$1 billion this year. We consistently hear  
15           from childcare providers that past  
16           stabilization grants temporarily helped keep  
17           their business afloat, but when temporary  
18           payments stopped, providers found themselves  
19           back at square one wondering how they would  
20           pay the bills.

21                      The \$389 million in the  
22           Executive Budget for stabilization grants is  
23           a good start but is not enough to keep  
24           educators from leaving the field for

1 higher-paying jobs in other sectors. So we  
2 ask that you build on the Governor's  
3 investment by increasing the amount to  
4 \$1 billion this year.

5 Second, we know -- and a recent  
6 EdTrust study confirms -- that our current  
7 childcare subsidy system pays educators  
8 thousands of dollars less than it actually  
9 costs to run a childcare program. So we need  
10 a long-term commitment to pay educators based  
11 on what it actually costs to provide care so  
12 they can be in the field for the long term.

13 And finally, we call on the state to  
14 expand childcare access to all children,  
15 regardless of immigration status, by  
16 investing \$60 million in a childcare fund for  
17 undocumented children. No child should be  
18 denied access to childcare and an education  
19 because of their immigration status.

20 In closing, despite the achievements  
21 of last year's budget, the childcare crisis  
22 in New York State is far from over, and we  
23 urge you to seize the opportunity to invest  
24 in children and families this year.

1                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. We  
2 go to Hunger Solutions New York.

3                   MS. HESDORFER: Good afternoon, and  
4 thank you for the opportunity to testify  
5 today.

6                   My name is Krista Hesdorfer, and I'm  
7 here representing Hunger Solutions New York,  
8 a statewide nonprofit dedicated to  
9 alleviating hunger for all New Yorkers by  
10 maximizing federal nutrition assistance  
11 programs, including SNAP, WIC, school meals,  
12 and other child nutrition programs.

13                   Today I'll focus on SNAP, our nation's  
14 largest anti-hunger program, which provides  
15 monthly food benefits to more than  
16 2.8 million New Yorkers.

17                   For over 35 years, through a contract  
18 with OTDA, we have worked to maximize SNAP  
19 through the Nutrition Outreach and Education  
20 Program, or NOEP. Through NOEP, a network of  
21 community-based organizations provide  
22 outreach and assistance to help more eligible  
23 low-income New Yorkers connect with SNAP  
24 benefits.

1                   Recognizing the importance of this  
2                   work amid an ongoing hunger crisis, last year  
3                   the Legislature successfully championed an  
4                   additional \$1 million in NOEP funding, for a  
5                   total of 4.22 million. That additional  
6                   funding supported 14 new SNAP assistors in  
7                   high-need and rural counties, and expanded  
8                   remote SNAP assistance statewide.

9                   This year NOEP is on track to reach  
10                  134,000 New Yorkers. However, without  
11                  sustained funding, NOEP will be forced to  
12                  scale back. And unfortunately, the executive  
13                  proposal does not include the \$1 million that  
14                  the Legislature added last year.

15                 Without added investment this year,  
16                 NOEP services will be reduced in Erie and  
17                 Monroe counties and all boroughs of New York  
18                 City. Chemung, Cortland, Essex, Franklin,  
19                 Lewis, and Schuyler counties will lose all  
20                 NOEP services.

21                 To avoid these devastating cuts, we  
22                 ask the Legislature to restore and build on  
23                 previous investments, funding NOEP at  
24                 \$5.22 million to sustain and expand outreach

1 and assistance for SNAP and other federal  
2 nutrition programs, all of which are  
3 undertapped in New York.

4 This modest investment brings a  
5 uniquely high return. Every dollar the state  
6 invests in SNAP outreach is federally matched  
7 dollar for dollar. And because SNAP benefits  
8 are 100 percent federally funded, NOEP has  
9 had a more than 27-fold return on investment  
10 for New York.

11 And I must mention one other critical  
12 anti-hunger proposal, outside of human  
13 services on paper but not in spirit.  
14 New York must provide free school buses and  
15 lunch for all students across the state.  
16 This is a critical step to support families,  
17 providing an estimated \$140 per child in  
18 monthly grocery savings, while also  
19 supporting children's learning and  
20 development.

21 We urge the Legislature to adopt these  
22 vital anti-hunger proposals to support  
23 families and alleviate hunger across the  
24 state. Thank you.

1 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

2 Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance.

3 MS. RYAN: My name is Kate Ryan. I'm  
4 the director of the Adirondack Birth to Three  
5 Alliance, the signature program of Adirondack  
6 Foundation. We're a coalition of providers,  
7 organizations, and community members across  
8 the Adirondacks. We appreciate the  
9 opportunity to share with you the needs of  
10 our region.

11 The Adirondacks are home to  
12 approximately 7,000 children three years of  
13 age or younger. Our population density is  
14 14 people per square mile, compared to the  
15 state average of 428. Although beautiful,  
16 our landscape presents unique challenges.  
17 Many families travel over an hour to access  
18 services, including childcare.

19 The childcare crisis cannot be solved  
20 for our region with centers serving 30 to  
21 100 children. We need family or group family  
22 childcare. This is a big undertaking, as it  
23 requires eight to 12 family and group  
24 childcare providers to serve 100 children.

1                   Prior to the pandemic, nearly  
2                   80 percent of our census tract were already  
3                   considered childcare deserts, and since then  
4                   we've lost another 1200 slots. Investments  
5                   and recruiting and onboarding new childcare  
6                   providers are essential.

7                   I'm proud to sit on this panel with my  
8                   colleagues. Much of my testimony seeks  
9                   investment in the work that they do. Local  
10                  childcare resource and referral agencies are  
11                  uniquely positioned to provide support to new  
12                  and existing childcare providers and assist  
13                  families in identifying programs.

14                  CCR&Rs in the Adirondacks simply do  
15                  not have the capacity to recruit and support  
16                  the large number of families and group family  
17                  providers needed. The alliance supports the  
18                  Early Care & Learning Council's request for  
19                  new state funding of \$7.9 million to support  
20                  the CCR&R program.

21                  High-quality early childhood education  
22                  systems rest on standards that are based on  
23                  longstanding and current research that  
24                  demonstrates improved outcomes for children.

1           QUALITYstarsNY provides support to program  
2           staff and providers to achieve these  
3           standards, and we request an additional  
4           investment of \$20 million.

5                       There is a need to invest in the  
6           development of trauma-informed practices in  
7           classrooms that incorporate appropriate and  
8           social/emotional strategies implemented  
9           through racial equity and multigenerational  
10          poverty lenses. In 2018, the Infant/Toddler  
11          Mental Health Consultation Project was  
12          launched. An increased investment would  
13          ensure that young children birth to five  
14          would have access to nurturing environments  
15          with the skills and resources to address  
16          social, emotional, and behavioral needs. The  
17          alliance supports the ECLC request for  
18          4 million to support mental health  
19          consultants.

20                      Lastly, the Help Me Grow model works  
21          to promote child development, makes  
22          developmental and social and emotional  
23          screening universally available, and provides  
24          ongoing support for families. Help Me Grow

1 is a proven prevention model that fosters  
2 strong families and ensures that all children  
3 get the support they deserve. The alliance  
4 supports an investment of \$500,000 to enhance  
5 access in the existing catchment areas and  
6 additional funding to expand the program into  
7 regions like the Adirondacks.

8 On average, our families earn \$10,000  
9 per year less than other New Yorkers.  
10 Approximately 18.2 percent of our region's  
11 children live at or below the federal poverty  
12 level. Franklin County rates second in the  
13 entire state for the percentage of children  
14 ages 18 and under living in poverty.

15 The proposals I have mentioned only  
16 address a fraction of the issues faced by the  
17 Adirondacks, but each would be highly  
18 impactful toward improving the services  
19 offered to young children and their families.

20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

22 And Docs for Tots.

23 MS. ISAKSON: Hi. Good afternoon,  
24 everyone. Thank you for the opportunity to

1 speak today regarding New York State's Help  
2 Me Grow model.

3 My name is Liz Isakson, and I'm the  
4 executive director of Docs for Tots. Docs  
5 for Tots is a nonprofit organization that  
6 believes that every child under five deserves  
7 a chance to reach their full potential. We  
8 believe that working together, from family  
9 members to Assemblymembers and Senators like  
10 yourselves, we can ensure New York's zero to  
11 five thrive their whole lives.

12 What is Help Me Grow? Help Me Grow  
13 New York represents the four existing Help Me  
14 Grow systems: Long Island, Western New York,  
15 Finger Lakes, and Onondaga. Each Help Me  
16 Grow is organized locally and respectively  
17 organized by Docs for Tots, Community  
18 Connections of New York, the Children's  
19 Institute, and the Onondaga Early Childhood  
20 Alliance. However, within each community,  
21 there's a coalition or leadership team.

22 If you put together all the people  
23 that are involved in overseeing and creating  
24 this Help Me Grow system, over 100

1 community-based organizations over  
2 17 counties in New York State are currently  
3 working to build better systems for young  
4 children.

5 Help Me Grow is a national  
6 evidence-based model of community support for  
7 families with children under five. It's  
8 basically a form of primary prevention,  
9 addressing things before they start. It  
10 focuses on promoting optimal child  
11 development by linking families to existing  
12 community resources, identifying  
13 developmental concerns early through  
14 universal access to screening, and  
15 celebrating the amazing transformation that  
16 occurs from the time you take that newborn  
17 home from the hospital to the day you're  
18 sitting at their fifth birthday party and  
19 they're blowing out the candles on their  
20 cake.

21 The model works across sectors --  
22 human services, healthcare, childcare -- to  
23 help families at the community level  
24 effectively navigate really unfamiliar

1 systems. In 2022 alone, the four Help Me  
2 Grow systems reached 10,000 children.

3 Why is this needed? For too many  
4 families in New York, whether because of  
5 location, poverty, or systemic inequity,  
6 access to vital services for the  
7 under-five-year-old child are out of reach.  
8 They're just unknown. Children thrive when  
9 their families are informed and supported,  
10 and Help Me Grow provides that information  
11 and support to new families.

12 It doesn't replicate resources, it  
13 elevates existing ones. The four Help Me  
14 Grow communities in New York State are  
15 serving a fraction currently of their  
16 potential need. Yet additional communities,  
17 like the North Country over there, are eager  
18 to join the ranks and become Help Me Grow  
19 communities. They see how the model improves  
20 their community-level data, their services  
21 and supports for young children.

22 We are disappointed that the  
23 Executive Budget merely reappropriated  
24 last year's investment of \$200,000 -- which

1 we haven't even got the chance to spend  
2 yet -- and does not allocate continued  
3 funding for Help Me Grow.

4 We request \$500,000 total to maintain  
5 the four communities and add at least one or  
6 two new communities. Ideally, with everybody  
7 who's lined up to become a Help Me Grow,  
8 something like \$2 million would really help  
9 us.

10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

12 So for questions -- just a reminder  
13 colleagues, three minutes for both question  
14 and answer. And we go first to Assemblywoman  
15 Clark.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: I never get to  
17 go first. Thank you, Chairwoman.

18 A couple of questions. First, Krista,  
19 just -- I know it's not the committee of  
20 jurisdiction, but I just want to uplift  
21 universal school meals. No child should go  
22 hungry in our state. Both of my school  
23 districts that I talked to about this, one  
24 went up 40 percent and one doubled when there

1           were universal school meals. We know we were  
2           reaching children who were going unreached  
3           before. So thank you for bringing that up.  
4           We will continue that drumbeat.

5                         This is a question for some of our  
6           childcare experts. We do talk about the  
7           stabilization grants, we talked about  
8           different -- differential rates, we talked  
9           about all these different things. What do  
10          you see as sort of the real how we get to  
11          really uplifting on a permanent, sustainable  
12          basis for paying our workforce a wage -- I  
13          mean, no one can afford it, right? Families  
14          can't pay more, and providers don't have the  
15          dollars to give their staff more money.

16                        So the stabilization's great, but I  
17          think you kind of touched on it a little.  
18          And we've been trying to put a drumbeat  
19          around this. So just wondering what you see  
20          as a real answer to getting to that point  
21          where we sustain wages at a higher level.

22                        MR. MORALES: Absolutely. There we  
23          go. Okay, yeah, absolutely. We need to get  
24          to a place where we are paying providers

1 based on the actual cost of care.

2 What our current subsidy system does  
3 is it pays them based on a collection of what  
4 the state is able to charge families. And we  
5 know that families are already not able to  
6 pay what it costs.

7 And so there are studies out there,  
8 multiple studies that show that it really  
9 costs thousands more dollars per child than  
10 we pay. So we need to do that, in addition  
11 to the stabilization measures, and then we  
12 need to continue expanding access to care to  
13 more and more families.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Excellent.

15 And then on the differential pay, we  
16 would love to hear as well -- you know, one  
17 of the things we're struggling with in terms  
18 of not just -- I mean, providers are closing  
19 their doors, but the nights and weekends are  
20 really, really an issue. As far as we've  
21 been told, the differential pay can be a  
22 bump-up of 5 to 15 percent, but most counties  
23 are paying 5 percent.

24 Do you see, if we actually got a

1 differential pay up to 15 percent across the  
2 state, that it might make a difference  
3 towards there being more spots available for  
4 nights and weekends?

5 MR. MORALES: I mean, increases in  
6 funding and reimbursement rates are always  
7 great, and providers appreciate them. But  
8 again, we're not going to get to the place  
9 where we need to get to until we're paying  
10 based on the cost of care. Because at a  
11 certain point the mathematics for a childcare  
12 provider, whether they are a center or a  
13 home-based program, don't add up.

14 So we have to get --

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Well, we have a  
16 bill for that. So we'll get you on it.  
17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
19 Senate?

20 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Jabari  
21 Brisport.

22 SENATOR BRISPORT: Well, good  
23 afternoon. Thank you all for sticking it  
24 out. And a pleasure to see some of you

1           again.

2                       My question is for the panelists in  
3           the childcare space.  Earlier this -- earlier  
4           today I was speaking with OCFS; I asked them  
5           about waiting lists, if they had more data on  
6           just the need for childcare.  And they  
7           weren't able to give a number or any  
8           sensitivity of waiting lists, what was going  
9           on.

10                      Could any of you speak to waiting  
11           lists, what you're seeing?  Are they getting  
12           longer?  Are people who qualify for  
13           subsidized childcare on these waiting lists?  
14           What can you share with us?

15                      MS. CHIMENTO:  Sure.

16                      So the state doesn't require childcare  
17           providers to maintain waiting lists.  And our  
18           referral database, which does the majority of  
19           parent referrals, does not necessarily track  
20           waiting lists.  It's not set up to do that.  
21           So it's the individual childcare provider  
22           that maintains the waitlist.

23                      With that said, I have three staff  
24           coming back from maternity leave; they're two

1           years out to find infant care in the Capital  
2           Region. It's not available. It's that  
3           simple.

4                        SENATOR BRISPORT: Thank you.

5                        I also just had a question, too, for  
6           All Our Kin, Mr. Morales. The gap in  
7           between, you know, the cost of care and how  
8           much we reimburse, how does that affect your  
9           providers?

10                      MR. MORALES: It makes our providers  
11           make extremely difficult choices every day.  
12           We've seen that. We've seen providers  
13           themselves who have had to close or who have  
14           lost staff members to other industries.

15                      And so that gap is really taking money  
16           out of the pockets of educators, because what  
17           they are doing is they are then subsidizing  
18           the system with their own dollars, with their  
19           own time, when they're working extra shifts.  
20           And so they're doing their best to care for  
21           children. But when the money is not there,  
22           they're making those really tough calls,  
23           working 80, 100-hour weeks to make up for the  
24           difference.

1                   SENATOR BRISPORT: Thank you.

2                   And with the time I have left, just  
3                   one more question for Adirondack. Ms. Ryan,  
4                   I believe someone from Adirondack gave us  
5                   written testimony for our hearing earlier on  
6                   the crisis, and basically gave us the data  
7                   that prior to the pandemic, around 80 percent  
8                   of your census tracts were considered  
9                   childcare deserts. And then since then,  
10                  you've lost 1200 more slots, or 25 percent of  
11                  your capacity.

12                  Have the stabilization grants slowed  
13                  that down or reversed the trend of losing  
14                  childcare slots in the Adirondacks?

15                  MS. RYAN: I don't have the data to  
16                  support that. But I will say anecdotally  
17                  that it was helpful, but we are still seeing  
18                  serious discrepancies and loss of slots.

19                  Specifically, many of our centers that  
20                  have been able to maintain are no longer able  
21                  to do so, and we're seeing them closing.

22                  SENATOR BRISPORT: Thank you. I  
23                  appreciate it.

24                  I believe it was said earlier when

1 OCFS was here, but \$1 billion in  
2 stabilization grants wasn't enough to save  
3 the sector about two years ago. And we  
4 definitely need more than 389 million this  
5 year.

6 Thank you all.

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
8 Assembly.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
10 Assemblyman Maher.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN MAHER: Thank you. Thank  
12 you for painting this portrait of what you  
13 all do on the ground level. And obviously on  
14 behalf of all of us, thank you so much for  
15 what you're doing. Hopefully our job is  
16 going to be able to do what we can to support  
17 you all to go back into the community and do  
18 what you do.

19 I have three questions, and anyone  
20 who'd like to jump out and answer, I just  
21 would love to have your feedback.

22 First, we talked earlier -- my  
23 colleagues and I asked some questions of the  
24 Office of Children and Family Services.

1           Specifically, I would love to know your  
2           interactions with providers on applying for  
3           desert grants, how difficult that can be. It  
4           can be frustrating in terms of receiving  
5           funding and then not getting to the next  
6           step. Do you have any recommendations that  
7           we can pass on to our contacts at the Office  
8           of Children and Family Services?

9                     The second is promoting more folks to  
10           let them know that they are eligible for the  
11           expansion of childcare assistance, not taking  
12           into account the fact that it's difficult to  
13           apply for. Is there anything promotionally  
14           that you guys are currently doing that we can  
15           assist you with and we can collaborate on?  
16           That's something we can do offline as well.  
17           But if you have some specific things, I'd  
18           love to have everybody hear from them.

19                     And then public-private partnerships.  
20           For the new tax credit that's going to be  
21           coming out, have you guys already started to  
22           engage with private businesses on potentially  
23           having sites on-site for some of these  
24           warehouse jobs and other locations that

1 people would work at if they had some relief?

2 MS. CHIMENTO: Thank you. Those are  
3 great questions.

4 So as far as Stabilization and  
5 Deserts, OCFS funded 70 positions through the  
6 CCR&R network to have -- help them navigate  
7 the process of applying for the grants. It  
8 was at times laborious. And childcare  
9 providers serve and care for the love of  
10 children, which is why the business support  
11 specialists that I spoke about are so  
12 necessary. They are the ones that are  
13 helping childcare providers run a business --  
14 a losing-proposition business, but still a  
15 business.

16 So I think the piece about  
17 Stabilization and Deserts is increased  
18 access, multiple languages -- all the things  
19 that they've done -- but it's keeping these  
20 70 staff in place to help them navigate the  
21 process.

22 The second piece that you asked was  
23 about business partnerships. That is  
24 something that the CCR&R network also does.

1           It's another piece of what we'd like to do,  
2           is to continue to employ business experts  
3           that are able to navigate that public-private  
4           partnership. And some of the Governor's  
5           recommendations have funding identified for  
6           that. We would like to see that funding --  
7           some of that funding come to the CCR&R  
8           networks.

9                     I forget the third question.

10                    ASSEMBLYMAN MAHER: The third one was  
11           promotion of the expansion of childcare  
12           services, what we can do to kind of  
13           collaborate, on some of the efforts you've  
14           been making, to promote it.

15                    MR. MORALES: I mean, I think I would  
16           love to see a concerted effort on the part of  
17           OCFS and working with local agencies in  
18           making folks aware of the services that they  
19           are eligible for.

20                    I worked for New York City for a time,  
21           in the Department of Education, on the  
22           expansion of pre-K, and there was a dedicated  
23           team whose job it was to go out into  
24           communities and make sure folks knew that

1           they were eligible for these things.

2                       So that's something I think we could  
3 really think about.

4           ASSEMBLYMAN MAHER:  Would love to work  
5 with you on that.

6           MS. CHIMENTO:  We do that through the  
7 CCR&R network.

8           ASSEMBLYMAN MAHER:  Thank you.

9           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:  Thank you.  
10 To the Senate.

11          CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER:  Thank you.  
12 Senator Samra Brouk.

13          SENATOR BROUK:  Hi.  Thank you so  
14 much.

15                 First, I just want to thank all of you  
16 for being here and sticking it out and  
17 sharing this testimony.  So often many of us  
18 talk about giving voice to the voiceless,  
19 right?  You're literally giving voice to the  
20 little kids who can't come here and advocate  
21 for themselves, and then probably very  
22 overworked parents who can't make it here as  
23 well.  So thank you for everything you do.

24                 I have two questions.  One of them is



1 the trends. We know that programs continue  
2 to close. And they're going to continue to  
3 do so without that sustained investment.

4 SENATOR BROUK: And we're talking not  
5 10 years from now, five years from now. When  
6 you're thinking about collapse, what's your  
7 time frame you're thinking about?

8 MR. MORALES: So I'm pretty sure in a  
9 recent survey in December, done by the  
10 National Association for the Education of  
11 Young Children, they surveyed providers in  
12 New York. And they were worried that --  
13 33 percent of family childcare providers said  
14 they were worried about having to close  
15 within the next year.

16 SENATOR BROUK: In the next year.  
17 Thank you.

18 My next question is about something,  
19 Mr. Morales, that you brought up around  
20 children with specific immigration statuses.  
21 And I was just curious -- I didn't catch  
22 it -- how many children right now are not  
23 covered because of their immigration status?

24 MR. MORALES: So I can follow up, or

1 someone from the Empire State Campaign can  
2 follow up with that estimate. Because we  
3 have -- we have some estimates which we can  
4 share with you.

5 SENATOR BROUK: And your best guess,  
6 maybe having talked to any of these families,  
7 what do they do?

8 MR. MORALES: I -- I think there's a  
9 range. They do what any parent who's  
10 struggling to find childcare does. They  
11 might have a relative. They might have a  
12 neighbor. They might go to a family  
13 childcare provider who might offer them a  
14 discount out of their own pocket, which we  
15 see a lot of times.

16 So really -- and a lot of times they  
17 leave the workforce or they're unable to work  
18 because of it. So there's a lot of negative  
19 consequences for -- when we don't provide  
20 care.

21 SENATOR BROUK: Thank you. I  
22 appreciate it. Thank you.

23 MR. MORALES: Thank you.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

1 Assembly.

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We were joined  
3 a little while ago by Assemblywoman Rajkumar.

4 And we go to Assemblywoman  
5 Gonzalez-Rojas.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZALEZ-ROJAS: Thank  
7 you all for your testimony.

8 Krista, these questions are for you.  
9 Can you tell us how much families save per  
10 month in groceries if we fund universal  
11 school meals?

12 MS. HESDORFER: Happy to.

13 It's an estimated \$140 per child per  
14 month in grocery savings.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZALEZ-ROJAS: Great.

16 And can you talk about some of the  
17 other specific benefits in funding universal  
18 school meals? As you know, I'm a champion  
19 for this initiative, and I really want the  
20 Assembly and Senate to really understand the  
21 implications of something so profound and how  
22 helpful it could be for our families and  
23 children.

24 MS. HESDORFER: Yes, definitely, thank

1           you for your continued support.

2                       It's really hard to imagine a more  
3           impactful investment that New York State  
4           could make. Providing universal free school  
5           meals supports children's education. Kids  
6           score better on tests, they're better able to  
7           focus and engage, their attendance improves.  
8           Of course it reduces food insecurity, which  
9           is of concern to many folks here today. And  
10          it also improves children's mental and  
11          physical health.

12                      There's also benefits for schools.  
13          They're no longer spending administrative and  
14          financial resources chasing down debt from  
15          families who can't afford to pay.

16                      ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZALEZ-ROJAS: Can you  
17          talk about the way in which it could draw  
18          down funds from the federal government if we  
19          put our own money into this?

20                      MS. HESDORFER: Yes. So our work  
21          focuses on maximizing the federal Nutrition  
22          Assistance Program. So I spoke a little bit  
23          about how the NOEP investment would be  
24          federally matched, all SNAP outreach dollars.



1 in recent years has been 27-fold, because  
2 SNAP benefits are 100 percent federally  
3 funded and because SNAP outreach dollars that  
4 the state invests are matched dollar for  
5 dollar by USDA SNAP outreach funds.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZALEZ-ROJAS: Great,  
7 thank you so much.

8 I want to underscore how helpful this  
9 is for children and families. But we heard  
10 from the earlier panel that many seniors who  
11 are eligible for SNAP are not enrolling  
12 because they're not aware.

13 Thank you. Any comments there?

14 MS. HESDORFER: Yes. I'll just say  
15 there is an estimated 200,000 seniors who are  
16 eligible and not participating in New York  
17 State, and part of our work is providing the  
18 resources and assistance to help senior  
19 service providers connect more of those folks  
20 with SNAP as well.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZALEZ-ROJAS: Thank  
22 you for your work. Thank you all.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
24 Senate?

1 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

2 Senator Rolison.

3 SENATOR ROLISON: Thank you, Chair.

4 We had a hearing a few weeks ago about  
5 this very topic, which was described as a  
6 crisis and is being described again as a  
7 crisis by you, and I think we all understand  
8 that. And I don't think we talked about this  
9 in the hearing, so I wanted to get your  
10 perspective, and anybody can really jump in.

11 Let's just say money became available,  
12 staff could get hired based on the money  
13 available and the wages paid, and to staff up  
14 and create additional childcare slots and to  
15 retain the employees that are currently doing  
16 this great work throughout the state.

17 What goes into -- timewise and  
18 finances -- to properly train someone in the  
19 business of childcare? It is not something  
20 where obviously you're going to bring someone  
21 in at an entry-level position and say just,  
22 you know: Go do the best you can, and we're  
23 here to help you out. I mean, I know that  
24 there are programs out there, but it seems to

1 me that that seems to be something sort of  
2 new, that the emphasis on the training of the  
3 individuals who are doing this critical work,  
4 when we know statistically zero to three is  
5 so important, right, in the development of a  
6 child.

7 So could you just, in a minute and  
8 45 seconds, just give us a brief -- give me a  
9 brief understanding of what goes into this  
10 and how the state can be helpful in that area  
11 as well?

12 MS. CHIMENTO: Thanks, that's great.

13 So there's a variety of organizations  
14 throughout the state that work on the  
15 business of childcare and work on the quality  
16 of childcare: The National Association -- or  
17 New York Association for the Education of  
18 Young Children, PDI, QUALITYstars, the CCR&R  
19 network, the unions, to name a few.

20 There is a prescriptive career ladder  
21 that childcare providers can follow to  
22 maintain or to attain certain educational  
23 requirements. The CCR&R network, through  
24 Stabilization and Deserts, implemented a

1           seven-part core business training series to  
2           focus on the business, the finances behind  
3           the childcare business. But it's those  
4           considerable investments in all of the  
5           agencies that I spoke about that can really  
6           bring that -- the educational piece of it,  
7           along with the business support.

8                         Funding for wages is great, but  
9           funding for operations and infrastructure is  
10          just as critically important. You had --  
11          someone had asked why people were leaving or  
12          what could happen with Stabilization and  
13          Deserts. Just increased awareness about what  
14          they are being held accountable for during  
15          the process will improve what -- how  
16          childcare providers are responding to these  
17          investments.

18                        SENATOR ROLISON: So there's a  
19          corresponding system that needs to be  
20          enhanced as well, just besides just raising  
21          wages?

22                        MS. CHIMENTO: One hundred percent.

23                        SENATOR ROLISON: Thank you.

24                        Absolutely. Thank you.

1 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

2 We go to Assemblyman Eachus.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you, Chair.

4 Krista, the first thing that I'd like  
5 you to know is -- which my colleagues know --  
6 I was 40 years in the classroom. Okay? I  
7 was a teacher, and I absolutely know that  
8 there's a difference between the kids who  
9 know where their next meal's coming from in  
10 the learning pattern versus those who are  
11 worried about it and what they're  
12 concentrating on, 100 percent. And so as  
13 these folks know, I'm completely in on that  
14 program, the universal breakfast and lunch  
15 program.

16 I would like you, though, sometime, if  
17 possible, to call or come to my office to  
18 explain to me a little more about the SNAP  
19 program and how the elders qualify for it --  
20 maybe what process they need to go through,  
21 so I can transmit that to them.

22 Meredith, hi. I must apologize, I had  
23 to run up to session to make sure I was  
24 checked in up there, and I missed it. But

1 when I walked back in, I heard a term, TA.

2 Is that what you use?

3 MS. CHIMENTO: Technical assistance.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Technical  
5 assistance, okay. All right. Because I was  
6 wondering exactly what that was, and I --

7 MS. CHIMENTO: Sure. As an educator,  
8 you wonder.

9 It's the services that childcare  
10 resource and referral agencies provide to  
11 childcare providers. And it can be anything  
12 from running a budget to social-emotional  
13 development within our mental health  
14 consultation project.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Okay. And  
16 Senator Rolison just asked my question,  
17 actually. I was wondering what it took to  
18 train an individual to be a childcare worker,  
19 you know, and specialist. And going from  
20 testimony before, we realize that actually,  
21 as of today, most of the people that are in  
22 childcare, they're in there because they love  
23 it and they love their children and they love  
24 what they do.

1                   But one of the things I was thinking  
2                   about -- because I heard this relative to  
3                   another program which I won't go into -- is,  
4                   are you making this available to college  
5                   students? Maybe training and so on like  
6                   that? Is -- you know, maybe that's a  
7                   resource if you're not taking advantage of --  
8                   especially when we talk about the Adirondacks  
9                   and all. We know we have SUNY schools up  
10                  there and all that, you know, I hope there's  
11                  some method by which we're advertising.

12                  I had to work -- I won't tell you, but  
13                  I had to work three or four jobs to get  
14                  through college while in college. So, you  
15                  know --

16                  MS. CHIMENTO: Yeah, I mean, there  
17                  absolutely is. SUNY Adirondack, all of those  
18                  programs have -- or were looking to implement  
19                  CDA prep programs, so that's the Child  
20                  Development Associate degree. After-school  
21                  programs, childcare centers definitely  
22                  attract the young college students, and it's  
23                  a great way for them to enter.

24                  ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Yeah, because

1           that was one of the questions -- just real  
2           quickly, that was one of the questions about,  
3           you know, after business hours and through  
4           the night hours. And of course most college  
5           kids are up during that period of time  
6           anyway.

7                         (Laughter.)

8           MS. CHIMENTO: Why not, yeah.

9           ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: So -- yeah. So  
10          okay. Thank you very much.

11          MS. CHIMENTO: You're welcome.

12          MS. ISAKSON: Do you mind if I take  
13          the last 15 seconds and just jump in?

14                         So I'm a pediatrician by training,  
15          right? So when we're talking about  
16          stabilizing the market of childcare, we  
17          forget about stabilizing the care for the  
18          children.

19                         So turnover of care providers has a  
20          real damaging effect on young kids. And so  
21          we have to kind of -- I think actually Dr. --  
22          Senator Rolison kind of mentioned that, the  
23          impact.

24          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So -- thank

1           you, Liz. The time is up.

2                       I don't believe we have any other  
3           questions. Thank you for being here. I just  
4           wanted to remind all of my colleagues and the  
5           people who are going to be coming in the  
6           panels after, that all of the written  
7           testimony has been submitted, has been  
8           received by all of the legislators. And  
9           again, not to read your testimony so we have  
10          time for the questions.

11                      So our next panel will be AARP  
12          New York; New York StateWide Senior Action  
13          Council; Project Guardianship; and  
14          Association on Aging in New York.

15                      Gail, do you want to start?

16                      MS. MYERS: I'm happy to.

17                      Yes, thank you. Thanks. My name is  
18          Gail Myers. I'm deputy director at New York  
19          StateWide Senior Action Council.

20                      Investments are needed now to ensure  
21          access to services that are vital to  
22          preserving the dignity of older New Yorkers  
23          and their ability to age in their community  
24          homes. Reports are coming, task forces will

1 be producing those, but we cannot wait.

2 We operate two programs that are  
3 funded through the New York State Office for  
4 Aging, through your good graces. We have  
5 operated our patients rights hotline and  
6 advocacy projects since 1987. The executive  
7 proposal is \$31,500 in funding. You have in  
8 the past added, which we appreciate,  
9 \$200,000 -- a total funding of 231,500.

10 We implore you to let us keep the  
11 lights on. Please restore that program.  
12 It's a cut otherwise, and we really need to  
13 continue to offer the services.

14 We also operate the Managed Care  
15 Consumer Assistance Program. You heard  
16 Director Olsen talk about the increase in the  
17 income levels that you granted last year for  
18 the Medicare Savings Program. An extra  
19 300,000 people will be eligible for cash in  
20 their pocket.

21 It doesn't happen just because you  
22 pass those programs. Someone needs to do the  
23 case finding, the outreach, the enrollment  
24 assistance, make sure that they're being

1 followed up on, so that they get those  
2 benefits that you have entitled them to and  
3 that they so much need. So I'm asking you to  
4 increase the funding for those programs to  
5 help us to achieve the capacity we need.

6 So we are very concerned about the  
7 private-pay program that is being proposed to  
8 be expanded by reducing the income  
9 eligibility in the budget. We are  
10 particularly concerned that middle-income  
11 residents will think that the network of  
12 aging service providers are not available to  
13 them unless they pay a 20 percent surcharge  
14 or tax to receive those services. It's  
15 120 percent of the fee. Otherwise, they --  
16 now they get it for 100 percent.

17 So we ask you to look at that very  
18 carefully. We don't think that the  
19 justification to say there's not enough money  
20 to support aging services is a justification  
21 for doing these things. You make difficult  
22 decisions during the budget based on your  
23 priorities, and we ask you to make these  
24 decisions that -- just like childcare needs

1 all your support, very, very important, we  
2 need to make sure that elder care is being  
3 supported as well.

4 Home care worker shortage. There's  
5 12 hours to be said on this; I know I have  
6 like four seconds. We support Fair Pay for  
7 Home Care. We reject the Governor's cap on  
8 wages for home care workers. And we ask you  
9 to also reject the pay equity provisions in  
10 the CDPAP program.

11 The ombudsman program, we certainly  
12 support an increase in those services.  
13 However, there's also a Part Z in the funding  
14 in the Article VII bill that changes the way  
15 the surveillance is for assisted living, and  
16 we would ask you to make sure that the  
17 ombudsman is included in those  
18 recommendations.

19 Please see my written 27 pages of  
20 testimony --

21 (Laughter.)

22 MS. MYERS: -- and I'm happy to answer  
23 any of your questions.

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

1 Yes, go ahead.

2 MS. PREVE: Good afternoon, and thank  
3 you all for hosting this very important  
4 hearing.

5 I'm Becky Preve. I'm the executive  
6 director of the Association on Aging in  
7 New York, and I have the pleasure to  
8 represent the 59 Offices for the Aging that  
9 you heard Director Olsen testify about today.

10 I want to make you all aware, as I'm  
11 sure you are, the population of older  
12 residents in the State of New York is rapidly  
13 growing, as is the demand for our services.  
14 The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the  
15 older population, and the need for services  
16 has substantially increased without adequate  
17 investments to support the 4.6 million  
18 individuals over the age of 60 in the State  
19 of New York.

20 On behalf of the network, we were very  
21 shocked that the proposed budget does not  
22 include any significant investments for the  
23 New York State Office for the Aging. The  
24 state has proudly announced a Master Plan on

1 Aging with executive order language stating,  
2 and I quote: Ensure older New Yorkers can  
3 live fulfilling lives in good health with  
4 freedom, dignity, and independence to age in  
5 place as long as possible.

6 However, the proposed budget refuses  
7 to acknowledge or address the funding needs  
8 that have been presented repeatedly. In  
9 fact, the budget continues to harm aging  
10 services providers specifically regarding  
11 home care services.

12 We serve individuals that are above  
13 income from the Medicaid benchmark to receive  
14 home care services, but they can't afford to  
15 privately pay for the care. We use the exact  
16 same licensed home care provider network as  
17 the Medicaid system, and we're also mandated  
18 to pass a \$2 rate increase on October 1st for  
19 all the personal care aides serving the older  
20 population, with no investment from the state  
21 to absorb this cost.

22 This obviously has created a huge  
23 issue within this aging services  
24 infrastructure, because we also are facing a

1           \$1 mandated rate increase for October 1 of  
2           2023. And again, the proposed Executive  
3           Budget completely ignored the fact that we're  
4           serving thousands of older New Yorkers with  
5           our home care program and did not receive  
6           these investments.

7                     I also want to put into perspective  
8           that the individuals that we're serving in  
9           the aging services network absolutely qualify  
10          for nursing home placement. Our traditional  
11          client is an 83-year-old female who lives  
12          alone, is low-income, and has four or more  
13          chronic conditions, and needs assistance with  
14          activities of daily living such as going to  
15          the bathroom or taking a shower.

16                    We know that our aging services  
17          infrastructure serves that individual for  
18          less than \$10,000 per year, on average for  
19          six and a half years -- versus \$150,000 per  
20          year in a skilled nursing facility.

21                    We know that people waiting for the  
22          services through the aging services network  
23          on waiting lists, 10 percent of them will go  
24          directly to a nursing home, another 7 percent

1 will spend down to MLTC. On the current  
2 waiting list right now we have in the State  
3 of New York for services, it's going to cost  
4 \$70 million for those 10 percent of  
5 individuals to go to nursing homes.

6 Additionally, the proposed  
7 Executive Budget completely disregards the  
8 rising costs of inflation that severely  
9 impacted the largest nutrition program in the  
10 country, which is ours. We know the cost of  
11 raw food, transportation and workforce has  
12 substantially increased, along with an  
13 increase in the older population. Coupled  
14 with inflation and the loss of federal  
15 stimulus dollars, the aging services network  
16 in the State of New York is facing severe  
17 issues and very long waiting lists for  
18 services.

19 Again, under the context of the  
20 Master Plan on Aging, we wanted to ask the  
21 Legislature to really take into consideration  
22 the fact that we have to make sure that the  
23 basement isn't flooded before we can build  
24 the fourth floor. And we really need to look

1 at our current infrastructure, which I  
2 outlined in my written testimony.

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
5 Project Guardianship.

6 MS. GEORGE: Hello? Hi. Thank you,  
7 Chairs Krueger and Weinstein and committee  
8 members.

9 My name is Kimberly George. I'm the  
10 president and CEO of Project Guardianship.  
11 We are a nonprofit organization providing  
12 person-centered, court-appointed guardianship  
13 services to hundreds of limited-capacity  
14 New Yorkers.

15 Our clients are living with  
16 disabilities, serious mental illness,  
17 dementia, substance misuse disorders,  
18 traumatic brain injury, and other conditions  
19 that negatively impact their ability to make  
20 decisions.

21 We serve clients regardless of their  
22 ability to pay and provide services for some  
23 of the most compelling and complex cases in  
24 New York. We also share research and policy

1 recommendations for a better guardianship  
2 system and advocate for more equitable  
3 service provision for people in need of  
4 decision-making supports.

5 For New Yorkers with limited capacity,  
6 the New York Mental Hygiene Law provides for  
7 the appointment of a guardian to help manage  
8 personal and/or property needs. Guardianship  
9 is a critical link between supportive  
10 services for New Yorkers whose functional  
11 limitations have prevented them from  
12 accessing those services. And while New York  
13 is fortunate to have strong legal protections  
14 that entitle individuals access to  
15 guardianship services, this mandate is  
16 underfunded, and there's currently no direct  
17 funding stream to ensure statutory  
18 compliance.

19 If a family member cannot serve as  
20 guardian, nonprofits, county social services  
21 districts, and private attorneys must step in  
22 to provide services in a patchwork manner.  
23 But the demand for assistance greatly  
24 outpaces capacity. In some regions there's

1 no access to these resources, especially for  
2 low-income individuals with family, without  
3 family, and unable to pay for a private  
4 attorney.

5 At the same time, our state's older  
6 population is growing, becoming more diverse,  
7 and increasingly living in poverty. You know  
8 the stats, and they're in my written  
9 testimony so I won't go through them now.  
10 But because of them, guardianship petitions  
11 are on the rise.

12 Guardianship itself encompasses many  
13 services, including legal services, financial  
14 management, healthcare coordination, and  
15 other vital tasks to promote the overall  
16 health, safety, and stability of the  
17 individual.

18 An effective guardian works to prevent  
19 institutionalization and supports these  
20 populations in their own communities. Not  
21 only do these efforts support the local  
22 economy by redirecting funds back into the  
23 community, but guardianship also saves public  
24 dollars by decreasing Medicaid spending on

1           avoidable hospitalizations and  
2           institutionalizations.

3                       Guardianship services are also  
4           critical in achieving the goals of the  
5           Master Plan for Aging. With data that  
6           clearly reflects the imminent need of growing  
7           guardianship, it is crucial that  
8           community-based guardianship programs be  
9           robustly funded to ensure that New Yorkers  
10          are able to access the services that they  
11          need.

12                      We, along with a coalition of  
13          guardianship providers and advocates called  
14          Guardianship Access New York, are asking for  
15          a \$15 million investment to provide nonprofit  
16          community guardianship services to 1,500  
17          people annually across the state. This  
18          funding would help us provide technical  
19          assistance, quality assurance, data  
20          collection, and a statewide guardianship  
21          prevention and support helpline.

22                      CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

23                      AARP?

24                      MS. FINKEL: Can you hear me? Sorry.

1                   Good evening. Thank you so much,  
2                   Senator Krueger and Assemblymember Weinstein.  
3                   So much of the data -- and all of you for  
4                   hanging out with us. I really appreciate it.

5                   I know a lot of data has been given.  
6                   I appreciate -- many of you have quoted  
7                   AARP's data, and I'm very appreciative of  
8                   that. As you heard, 65-plus is the fastest  
9                   growing, and it grew by 31 percent in the  
10                  last decade. We just commissioned a report,  
11                  which we will share with all of you -- there  
12                  are now more people 65-plus in New York State  
13                  than 15 and under. Which is kind of a sad  
14                  thing in some ways, and a good thing in other  
15                  ways.

16                  But we're here today because we really  
17                  need to talk about how the budget is going to  
18                  address this demographic shift. We talked  
19                  about caregivers; my colleagues have talked  
20                  about home- and community-based services. We  
21                  really feel like we need a stable home care  
22                  system so people can age in place so we can  
23                  get those savings that were just documented  
24                  before.

1                   We also want to make sure that we have  
2                   fair pay, that we make sure that the money  
3                   that was allocated in the budget that you did  
4                   last year actually ends up going to the home  
5                   care workers, because we know it's getting  
6                   caught up with the insurance companies and  
7                   it's not getting through. And that's just, I  
8                   think, appalling to everybody.

9                   We also want to make sure that we  
10                  relieve the pressure of the home care family  
11                  members, like all of us -- there's two and a  
12                  half million of them in New York who are  
13                  feeling this pressure.

14                 We know that -- Becky talked about the  
15                 10,000 waiting list. But we also know that  
16                 we don't actually have a true reading on that  
17                 number because there's no transparency. SOFA  
18                 is supposed to report those numbers every two  
19                 years, and they haven't. We need to do that  
20                 so that all of you can decide how the budget  
21                 should be spent and where, so we can really  
22                 document where people are waiting for  
23                 services and what they need.

24                 We need to make sure that we're

1 cost-effective and compassionate about all  
2 this home care. We also -- I want to just  
3 hit the LTCOP really quickly. We're asking  
4 for 15 million in LTCOP. Again, we know that  
5 people have not been going in to visit --  
6 it's supposed to be one every week, and we  
7 know that only 9 percent of the facilities in  
8 New York State are getting that one visit a  
9 week, which is unconscionable.

10 Finally, we want to talk about data  
11 matching. I know that came up earlier.  
12 There is over \$4.4 billion of federal funds  
13 that are not coming into New York State as an  
14 economic stimulus because of SNAP, Medicare  
15 Savings Program, and HEAP benefits -- that  
16 are federal dollars, for the most part -- and  
17 they're not reaching seniors. If they did,  
18 there would be as, I said, the 300,000  
19 Medicare Savings Program beneficiaries -- who  
20 would, by the way, get on the average \$7,000  
21 back every year in their Social Security  
22 checks. And just the economic stimulus from  
23 that alone is over \$2 billion.

24 So I know you're all going to help us

1 in this fight, so I thank you all.

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

3 We go to Assemblyman Kim.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: Thank you. It's  
5 good to see everyone. Thank you for your  
6 patience today. And a couple of quick  
7 questions.

8 Rebecca, the -- I just wanted to  
9 simplify the numbers for a minute. So if we  
10 put in a dollar toward SOFA programs, we can  
11 save, in my calculation, up to \$8 in the  
12 back end on Medicaid savings. Does that  
13 sound about accurate?

14 MS. PREVE: It does, yes.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: Okay. And I just --  
16 I mean, the number is so stunning to me,  
17 that -- and there are between 7 to 10 percent  
18 of people on the waiting list that if we  
19 don't serve today, they will spend down to  
20 poverty level so that they can qualify for  
21 Medicaid. So we are systemically fueling  
22 older adults into poverty by not fixing this,  
23 correct?

24 MS. PREVE: I 100 percent agree. And

1 I would say -- and I know I've had this  
2 conversation with you numerous times -- we  
3 look at prevention in every other system's  
4 infrastructure. Right? We want to make sure  
5 that pregnant moms know about the WIC program  
6 so they can prevent health disparities moving  
7 forward.

8 We're doing nothing to prevent  
9 impoverishing people down to Medicaid. And I  
10 can tell you from direct practices -- I used  
11 to be a director that did home visits -- if I  
12 knew I had 200 people on my waiting list but  
13 I had an 85-year-old who really needed home  
14 care, I would get them a full trust that week  
15 and get them on Medicaid coverage because  
16 they needed the care, and that's exactly a  
17 backwards system.

18 And if the state is very concerned  
19 about savings overall, we know the efficacy  
20 of our programs. Why are we not investing on  
21 the front end to make sure we're keeping  
22 people in homes and communities, as the  
23 master plan outlines, and keeping them off of  
24 the Medicaid system so that Medicaid can

1           serve the purpose that it's been intended to  
2           do, to support low-income older individuals.

3                   ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: Right. And as far  
4           as the EISEP non-Medicaid home care services  
5           and the problems with reimbursement of wages,  
6           it's further exacerbating the problem because  
7           if you don't take care of the reimbursements,  
8           people will again try to go to Medicaid  
9           health care and not wait for SOFA's EISEP  
10          program.

11                   So it's urgent, it's incumbent upon us  
12          to make sure that we put in funding for the  
13          non-Medicaid to make sure that the entire  
14          home care universe of older adults are  
15          properly serviced.

16                   Gail, you mentioned the ZZ  
17          surveillance around LT -- can you just expand  
18          on that? I want to give you 30 seconds just  
19          to expand on that.

20                   MS. MYERS: Yeah. There is a  
21          provision within the Governor's budget that  
22          she says is about improving quality, and it  
23          changes -- it lays out a system for allowing  
24          industry to self-regulate and to say that

1           they have met quality measures, which would  
2           allow the Department of Health to extend the  
3           frequency of surveillance inspections.

4                     And there's no -- while you need to  
5           examine that on its own, if you agree to do  
6           that, we really would like you to see the  
7           ombudsmen play a role in establishing  
8           quality.

9                     CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

10                    To the Senate.

11                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Cordell  
12           Cleare.

13                    SENATOR CLEARE: I want to thank you  
14           all for coming today and hanging around this  
15           long.

16                    So I just have a couple of questions  
17           maybe AARP can answer. You know, I know  
18           you're strong supporters of Fair Pay for Home  
19           Care, as I am. And if you could tell me what  
20           that looks like for your members. And also,  
21           you know, have you seen the crisis getting  
22           worse or getting easier? And also I'll  
23           just -- let me give you -- no, I'm going to  
24           stop right there.

1 MS. FINKEL: Absolutely. I hear it  
2 from everywhere I go. It's probably the  
3 number-one call that I get. When I'm out  
4 with my own friends and relatives, it's the  
5 number-one thing that I hear.

6 So yes, there is a dearth of home care  
7 workers. And it's mostly because they are  
8 not getting a decent wage and they can't  
9 support their own family. We're not being  
10 respectful of the worker, and we're certainly  
11 not being respectful of the person who needs  
12 the care, is desperate for the care.

13 MS. MYERS: And if I can, from our  
14 patients' rights helpline, the two biggest  
15 concerns that we have are on the lack of  
16 home care workers, both the people who need  
17 to stay at home and for people who want to  
18 exit the nursing home and then go back home,  
19 and they can't get discharged because they  
20 don't have a safe environment.

21 The second thing, of course, is the  
22 quality of care in nursing homes, which  
23 increasingly the ombudsman program certainly  
24 will help to address.

1                   SENATOR CLEARE: The Association for  
2                   the Aging, if you could just tell me more  
3                   about the rates for home care workers. We're  
4                   hearing that some counties are not increasing  
5                   the funding to agencies to meet the mandated  
6                   wage. Can you speak to that?

7                   MS. PREVE: What I can tell you -- and  
8                   I think the commissioner spoke to this  
9                   earlier -- most of our counties are actually  
10                  paying well above Medicaid rates. And that's  
11                  why I really talk about an un-level playing  
12                  field.

13                  So because our authorizations are  
14                  traditionally lower than the Medicaid system,  
15                  we're not as attractive to a licensed home  
16                  care provider because you're not getting a  
17                  block of hours at one individual's home.

18                  So again, I surveyed the members last  
19                  month; we're paying anywhere between 35 and  
20                  \$40 an hour for personal care services. We  
21                  were mandated for the \$2 rate increase above  
22                  the minimum wage benchmark. On October 1st  
23                  we got no revenue in the State Budget to  
24                  absorb that. We have no revenue forecasted

1 for the additional \$1.

2 Again, it's an unfunded mandate on the  
3 non-Medicaid system for a solution that  
4 didn't solve the problem. Because now as you  
5 index minimum wage, you're going to see the  
6 same thing -- home care becomes a  
7 minimum-wage job once again, in competition  
8 with retail, fast food, et cetera.

9 So it's really done nothing to  
10 alleviate the long-term problem, which is why  
11 we support Fair Pay for Home Care.

12 SENATOR CLEARE: Thank you.

13 And to StateWide Senior Action  
14 Council -- and you can send this answer to  
15 me -- I just need -- I want a breakdown of  
16 the private pay and why it's not a good  
17 thing. Why is that something that -- because  
18 it was confusing to me when I heard it, and I  
19 heard it again and it's still confusing. And  
20 I'd like to get some more clarity, because I  
21 think I'm right.

22 (Laughter.)

23 MS. MYERS: I think you're right too.

24 Let's talk.

1                   Just very quickly, just if you look at  
2                   the EISEP services, EISEP is a sliding scale  
3                   up to 250 percent of the federal poverty  
4                   level. At 250 and above, it's 100 percent  
5                   pay. This proposal would say it's  
6                   120 percent pay if the county opted into  
7                   providing it in this particular way.

8                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
9                   Assemblywoman Clark.

10                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Thank you.

11                  It's been a long day, so I'm going to  
12                  do some rapid-fire questions so that --

13                  Can we ever get to once-a-week visits  
14                  across all our long-term care facilities  
15                  without the trustful eye of our volunteers?

16                  MS. FINKEL: Absolutely not.

17                  And that's why we need the \$15 million  
18                  in the budget for the long term care  
19                  ombudsman. We can't have what happened in  
20                  COVID again. We have to have transparency.  
21                  We have to have advocates looking out for --

22                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Thank you. You  
23                  answered my second question, so I'll move to  
24                  my third question for you.

1                   We get the visits, we understand that.  
2                   Are we getting clear access to the reports  
3                   and data on the visits from SOFA, what the  
4                   visits entail, and if the complaints are  
5                   resolved?

6                   MS. FINKEL: I'm going to have to get  
7                   back to you on that one, but the complaints  
8                   do go to DOH.

9                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Are you getting,  
10                  are we as a state getting good access to the  
11                  data on those visits, on those complaints?

12                  MS. FINKEL: I will get back to you.

13                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Okay. I think I  
14                  know the answer, but we will keep working on  
15                  that.

16                  I have some questions on elder abuse.  
17                  So first and foremost, are we seeing more or  
18                  less cases of elder abuse right now?

19                  MS. PREVE: We have seen an explosion  
20                  in elder abuse -- most predominantly,  
21                  financial exploitation and scams. I think  
22                  all of you have heard in your district  
23                  offices of very, very well-rehearsed, very  
24                  tangible scams that are targeting older

1 individuals.

2 And again, I'm glad you raised this,  
3 Assemblymember Clark. When you look at the  
4 Executive's proposed budget, there was a  
5 \$375,000 cut to Lifespan of Greater  
6 Rochester, who host the Statewide Elder Abuse  
7 Coalition. And again, when you look at a  
8 million dollars being invested into a  
9 planning committee for the Master Plan on  
10 Aging, and yet you're going to cut the  
11 service organization that protects the one in  
12 24 older New Yorkers that actually report  
13 that they were exploited, it's kind of hard  
14 to wrap your mind around that.

15 So, you know, again in my testimony we  
16 fully support full implementation of  
17 restoring that funding for Lifespan.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: And these  
19 complaints are getting more or less confusing  
20 and complicated -- more?

21 MS. PREVE: Absolutely.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Last but not  
23 least, on the prevention piece of this, if we  
24 were to reach more seniors' basic needs, if

1 we were able to take care of them, if we were  
2 able to hand-hold them through some of the  
3 complex issues, would we or would we not save  
4 money in the long run on healthcare?

5 MS. PREVE: We would save an  
6 extraordinary amount of money.

7 And when I -- every year I come in and  
8 talk at these budget hearings, we're talking  
9 about the high need, right, that 85-year-old  
10 who needs home care? That doesn't take into  
11 account the thousands of other older  
12 New Yorkers that we serve through wellness  
13 programs and prevention through volunteer  
14 activities.

15 So, you know, again, I would love to  
16 be able to talk about the fact that our  
17 transportation program gets older individuals  
18 to medical appointments, which we know then  
19 reduces emergency department visits. We know  
20 that 80 percent of home-delivered meal  
21 participants self-report that the reason  
22 they're able to stay in homes and communities  
23 is because of a meal that costs \$7 a day.

24 So again, we desperately need the

1 investment.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Thank you.

3 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

4 To the Senate.

5 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Tom

6 O'Mara.

7 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you,

8 Chairwoman.

9 Good evening. Thank you for your  
10 testimony here today.

11 I've just got one question, with  
12 regards to the change in the -- I guess the  
13 number of ADLs needed for home care. Have  
14 any of you received any justification for  
15 this change and why they're going about it?  
16 Because it seems to me it's going to -- it's  
17 going to cost a lot more money.

18 MS. MYERS: Well, we've seen the  
19 Medicaid Redesign Team put this forward as a  
20 cost saving for the state. There were not  
21 consumers on that panel to be able to say,  
22 Here's what happens if you reduce our  
23 benefits.

24 In other words, if -- you're saying

1 the only time you can get home care under  
2 Medicaid, under that provision -- which may  
3 soon go into effect -- would be if you were  
4 otherwise eligible to be in a nursing home.  
5 And it just flies in the face of good  
6 prevention to be able to say some  
7 housekeeping, some assistance with bathing,  
8 some food services in the home may be able to  
9 keep a large number of people off of  
10 Medicaid. And also, it keeps them active in  
11 their houses of worship and their social  
12 programs locally. And that ending isolation  
13 is incredibly important in terms of the  
14 prevention piece as well.

15 MS. PREVE: And I would just add,  
16 Senator, that the changes on the Medicaid  
17 side will actually create more customers on  
18 the aging side, because we did not change our  
19 triggers for home care services. So we still  
20 provide Personal Care Level 1, which is  
21 housekeeping, grocery shopping, bill paying.  
22 And when that's carved out of the Medicaid  
23 benefit because of the ADL requirements,  
24 we're going to get customers that come to our

1 service infrastructure.

2 Additionally, when Medicaid home care  
3 puts into effect the 30-month lookback  
4 period, people that traditionally would have  
5 been able to access Medicaid for home care  
6 services will no longer be eligible. And  
7 guess where they're going to come? They're  
8 going to come to Office for the Aging for the  
9 care. So ...

10 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you. Thank you  
11 very much. Very concerning.

12 MS. MYERS: One of the things that --  
13 just if I may, one of the things that you did  
14 last year, which was great, was you expanded  
15 the income eligibility for Medicaid.

16 So some of the most needy people  
17 within the Office for Aging services will now  
18 become Medicaid-eligible under that  
19 expansion. That's a good thing for them  
20 getting comprehensive benefits. It's also a  
21 good thing to allow more dollars to go to  
22 people above the Medicaid level.

23 But if the ADL piece goes through and  
24 they are newly eligible for Medicaid, they're

1 not going to get the services that they had  
2 the day before under the EISEP program.

3 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you all.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
6 Assemblywoman Rajkumar.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN RAJKUMAR: Thank you.

8 My question is about the waiting  
9 lists. So there have been calls for an  
10 increase in the provision of public  
11 information, specifically regarding waiting  
12 lists. And according to you, the Association  
13 on Aging in New York, over 10,000 seniors in  
14 our state who are not Medicaid recipients are  
15 waiting for essential services such as adult  
16 day care, meal delivery, and transportation.

17 I understand that there's a call for  
18 clear information on how many seniors are  
19 waiting and what services they are waiting  
20 for, as well as requesting a change to  
21 reporting on a county-wide level versus a  
22 statewide aggregate.

23 So can you tell this legislative panel  
24 what you're seeing on the ground with regards

1 to waiting lists and how it's affecting  
2 families?

3 MS. PREVE: So I can tell you that we  
4 have roughly about 10,000 people that are  
5 waiting for services. It's nuanced, because  
6 you might have someone waiting for a meal and  
7 personal care services, so you could have  
8 duplicate services within that catchment.

9 But I can tell you, just for case  
10 management, these would be unique customers.  
11 We have 7,713 that are waiting for services  
12 today. And what that means is those  
13 individuals are seeking alternate ways to get  
14 care, whether that be spend down to  
15 Medicaid -- unfortunately, many times, by the  
16 time someone gets to our service network, if  
17 they're told you might have a six-month  
18 waiting period, the family automatically  
19 looks towards assisted living or skilled  
20 nursing facility placement out of necessity.

21 And it also means that specifically  
22 regarding home care services, because the  
23 home care workforce is in such crisis -- I  
24 can tell you I surveyed all of the AAAs:

1           100 percent of them reported waiting lists  
2           for personal care services due to the lack of  
3           direct care professionals.

4                        So this is something, you know, we've  
5           talked about at a state perspective. It's  
6           also a federal issue; you're seeing a  
7           national shortage as well. But we're never  
8           going to be able to serve individuals if we  
9           don't have funding to do so, but also if we  
10          don't have an infrastructure to serve them.

11                      And that's why Fair Pay for Home Care  
12          to actually raise these wages to a livable  
13          wage, and getting 50 percent of home care  
14          workers off public service benefits, is so  
15          important for the state, because it's going  
16          to save us money long-term.

17                      ASSEMBLYWOMAN RAJKUMAR: Thank you.

18                      And also I'd like to ask you about  
19          data matching again, which has already come  
20          up. Last month Governor Hochul announced a  
21          new data matching policy to help connect  
22          recipients of one benefit to other benefits  
23          to which they are entitled. And the plan  
24          identified families receiving benefits who

1 are eligible for childcare assistance.

2 So do you support basically a similar  
3 data matching program for seniors --

4 MS. PREVE: Yes.

5 MS. FINKEL: Yes.

6 MS. MYERS: Absolutely.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN RAJKUMAR: -- to connect  
8 them to SNAP, HEAP, and the Medicare Savings  
9 Program? I assume you do. But can you speak  
10 to how that expansion of data matching would  
11 help?

12 MS. FINKEL: Well, we know there are  
13 300,000 New Yorkers 65-plus who are now newly  
14 eligible for MSP. We also know that there  
15 are 200,000 older New Yorkers that are now  
16 eligible for SNAP that are not getting it.  
17 And we know that there are a lot of people  
18 that are struggling out there to pay their  
19 utility bill.

20 So when you put all of that together,  
21 yes, we know that it would help. Why you  
22 would just single out family and children and  
23 leave out older adults is something that we  
24 really can't understand.

1                   And you saw, when we asked -- when  
2                   someone here asked the OTDA commissioner, he  
3                   said that it's going to be three and a half  
4                   years. Well, I've been hearing it's going to  
5                   be five years for the last 20 years.

6                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN RAJKUMAR: Okay.

7                   MS. FINKEL: So honestly, I don't  
8                   understand it. We're making people struggle  
9                   personally when they don't have to. They  
10                  could have upwards of seven or eight or nine  
11                  thousand dollars back in their pocket every  
12                  year. And --

13                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

14                  MS. FINKEL: Sorry.

15                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

16                  MS. FINKEL: This is an issue I'm very  
17                  passionate about.

18                  (Laughter.)

19                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN RAJKUMAR: Thank you for  
20                  that information.

21                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you,  
22                  Beth.

23                  So we move on to the Senate.

24                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Murray.

1                   SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you, Chair.

2                   Thank you all for being here in this  
3 kind of late hour.

4                   I want to touch on something -- I hear  
5 the frustration in your voice, we hear it all  
6 the time as far as home care workers and pay.  
7 But I want to take it from a different angle.

8                   Can you tell me, first, how long does  
9 it take to properly train a home care worker  
10 and how much investment does it take to do  
11 that?

12                   MS. PREVE: So you have to become  
13 certified through a licensed home care  
14 agency. And I can follow up -- I believe the  
15 requirement is a six-week-long in-person  
16 training for the personal care worker.

17                   And we've really seen a variety. So  
18 there's many licensed home care providers  
19 throughout the state. Predominantly, they're  
20 not-for-profits that absorb the cost of the  
21 training because they have to.

22                   Specifically in upstate, those  
23 licensed home care agencies are also trying  
24 to reimburse travel time, which they don't

1 get reimbursement for on the Medicaid side.  
2 And specifically in my district, you could  
3 drive 50 miles in between cases.

4 So the licensed home care providers  
5 are absorbing those costs to get individuals  
6 trained, but then what you run into is  
7 extensive competition with healthcare.  
8 Right? Because the CNA at a nursing home can  
9 make much more than a community home care  
10 worker can.

11 So it's -- and then with recruitment  
12 and retention bonuses, you also run a risk of  
13 then having an aide that's trained who then  
14 has to jump agency to agency to get that  
15 benefit.

16 So again, you know, the CUNY research  
17 report that came out two years ago clearly  
18 outlined that a significant state investment  
19 of about 4 billion would reach \$7 billion in  
20 return by raising those wages to 150 percent  
21 of poverty.

22 SENATOR MURRAY: And there's also the  
23 problem of the quality of care, because I've  
24 heard from seniors who they'll get a home

1 care worker, they feel very comfortable with  
2 them, they trust them -- and before you know  
3 it, they're gone. And now they have to get  
4 to know someone else, maybe they're not as  
5 comfortable. You start shifting who you're  
6 sending, causing all sorts of problems.

7 So as much as recruiting is a problem,  
8 would you say retention is also as high or  
9 higher?

10 MS. PREVE: Retention is a huge issue.  
11 And again, competition with other markets.

12 And again, we believe everyone should  
13 get a living wage. But I find it  
14 disheartening that my 16-year-old son works  
15 at a local farm and he makes more than a  
16 home health aide does for an hour of care  
17 where they're giving someone a bath.

18 And, you know, I think to talk about  
19 the home care workforce, these people are so  
20 dedicated, they are so in love with the  
21 position that they work two or three jobs to  
22 support their families because they believe  
23 in the cause.

24 But again, you raise a great point.

1           These are personal relationships. Home care  
2           workers are social workers, they're nurses,  
3           they're physicians, they're therapists, and  
4           they need to be paid in a way that we can  
5           retain them and have them part of a  
6           long-term-care team.

7                         SENATOR MURRAY: And I'm wondering if  
8           something like -- I mean, we have IDAs and we  
9           have Economic Development Councils for  
10          businesses. Is there something we can do for  
11          the workers similar to what we do for EMS and  
12          all, where we give maybe retirement credits  
13          or something, but somehow thinking outside of  
14          the box to offer some sort of a longevity  
15          bonus or something to that effect? Would  
16          that be helpful?

17                        MS. PREVE: I completely agree. And I  
18          think that the model that Director Olsen  
19          referenced this morning in the 12 counties  
20          that are directly employing aides, we've seen  
21          100 percent retention of those home health  
22          aides.

23                        In Putnam County specifically, they  
24          had over 80 people on a waiting list. Their

1           waiting list has been cleared for two years,  
2           and they have the same aides.

3                     SENATOR MURRAY:  Wow.  That's great.  
4                     Thank you very much.

5                     CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER:  Thank you.  
6                     Assembly.

7                     CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:  We have no  
8           other questioners.

9                     CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER:  We have one final  
10          questioner, Roxanne Persaud.

11                    SENATOR PERSAUD:  Good evening,  
12          everyone.

13                    I just wanted to ask a question to  
14          follow up on something Director Olsen said.  
15          When asked if -- because we were saying many  
16          agencies and aging reports were saying there  
17          are wait lists for home delivery meals,  
18          et cetera.  And he said that he was not  
19          hearing that.

20                    But you just said the opposite of what  
21          he said.  Could you clarify that for me,  
22          please?

23                    MS. PREVE:  I can tell you we have  
24          362 people waiting in the State of New York

1 for a home-delivered meal.

2 SENATOR PERSAUD: Thank you.

3 MS. PREVE: You're welcome.

4 MS. MYERS: You know, and in part  
5 they're waiting for an assessment, they're  
6 waiting for case management to be able to say  
7 they've done a home visit, they see that this  
8 person is homebound, that they need these  
9 services in order for that spigot to start.

10 So you were talking about somebody who  
11 was getting emergency home-delivered meals  
12 and then it runs out and then they try to get  
13 it again and it runs out?

14 SENATOR PERSAUD: No, it's just a  
15 person waiting for home delivery.

16 MS. MYERS: Right. Waiting and  
17 waiting.

18 SENATOR PERSAUD: The whole process,  
19 yes.

20 MS. MYERS: So part of it that  
21 connects together with all of the workers  
22 that are needed in the aging network are also  
23 to make sure that there are enough case  
24 managers to do that assessment so that people

1 are getting the services that they have  
2 earned after so long living in our community.

3 SENATOR PERSAUD: What's the average  
4 time for the 300-plus people who have been  
5 waiting?

6 MS. PREVE: It really varies based on  
7 your geographic area and population density.  
8 So we can absolutely talk offline if you want  
9 further information specifically about your  
10 constituents.

11 SENATOR PERSAUD: Absolutely.

12 MS. PREVE: But traditionally,  
13 especially post-discharge from an acute care  
14 facility, we try to start meals within seven  
15 days. There are some areas of the state  
16 where that's not possible, based on geography  
17 and also waiting lists. But it's definitely  
18 more prevalent in the New York City region  
19 than it is in other parts of the state.

20 But again, when you talk about the raw  
21 cost of food, everybody feels this at the  
22 grocery store right now. We're feeding, you  
23 know, hundreds of thousands of older  
24 New Yorkers, and the food cost has gone up

1 with no revenue to offset it. Gasoline for  
2 meal delivery -- again, a huge expense that  
3 we haven't been reimbursed for.

4 So I think you're going to see that  
5 waiting list grow if we don't do something to  
6 address those ongoing issues.

7 SENATOR PERSAUD: Ongoing.

8 Thank you very much. We'll talk.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you to  
10 all the members of this panel.

11 And we're going to now ask Panel C to  
12 come: New York State Network for Youth  
13 Success; New York State YouthBuild Coalition;  
14 Northern Rivers Family of Services; Prevent  
15 Child Abuse New York; Council of Family and  
16 Child Caring Agencies; and Children's Health  
17 Home of Upstate New York.

18 And so that we don't mess up -- so we  
19 get your name correctly on the broadcast, if  
20 we can go in that order, starting with  
21 New York State Network for Youth Success.

22 MS. MORGAN: Hello. Thank you for  
23 allowing me to testify today.

24 My name's Trudy Morgan, and I'm the

1 policy director at the New York State Network  
2 for Youth Success. Our goal as a statewide  
3 network is to build an effective and  
4 integrated statewide system of high-quality,  
5 expanded learning programs in New York.

6 Decades of research shows that  
7 after-school and summer expanded learning  
8 programs play a critical role in improving  
9 student outcomes. Research spanning several  
10 states shows that every dollar invested in  
11 our school programs saves at least \$3.

12 In New York, an overwhelming majority  
13 of caregivers are satisfied with their  
14 child's after-school and summer school  
15 experience. It is no surprise that the  
16 impact of after-school spans across critical  
17 issue areas. For many students and families,  
18 after-school goes beyond after-school hours.

19 After-school provides a safe haven for  
20 some, a support system for others, academic  
21 empowerment for leadership development or  
22 career exploration or youth development.  
23 After-school is integral to students'  
24 education. These programs complement what

1 students learn in school by providing more  
2 time for deeper learning, creative spaces for  
3 hands-on projects, and opportunities to  
4 explore careers.

5 After-school is also integral to  
6 New York's childcare system. After-school  
7 services, through high-quality school-age  
8 childcare programs, promote stability in  
9 families who rely on them to balance work and  
10 life. That is why any improvements to the  
11 childcare system must include support for  
12 school-age childcare and children.

13 After-school is integral to youth  
14 development. In after-school, children and  
15 youth are surrounded by caring adults and  
16 mentors that help create a safe space for  
17 participants to express themselves, along  
18 with a sense of belonging and discovering  
19 their passions while fostering an environment  
20 that supports healthy development.

21 Over the last few years New York's  
22 after-school programs have experienced many  
23 crises, and that's why we have presented a  
24 roadmap in this year's budget to reimagine

1 the system. And among our priorities we ask  
2 for your support to reorganize after-school  
3 through a \$219 million investment.

4 And this is a critical year to align  
5 the Empire State After-School Program and  
6 Advantage After School Program, as both  
7 programs follow very similar objectives and  
8 benchmarks. Streamlining these programs will  
9 mitigate the many barriers providers face  
10 when accessing after-school funding.

11 And as we take this critical step, we  
12 must do more and do things differently to  
13 ensure that our programs are better  
14 resourced, by adopting a higher per-student  
15 rate of \$4,300 and engaging the expertise and  
16 experience of after-school stakeholders to  
17 develop and access program success, and  
18 guaranteeing the current base funding for  
19 these programs, including the restoration of  
20 Advantage by \$5 million.

21 We also ask that you dedicate 500,000  
22 through the CCDBG grants to support technical  
23 assistance for after-school providers that we  
24 provide support for as the statewide

1 after-school network. Currently the state  
2 does not provide any dedicated funding to  
3 support TA for after-school, and this funding  
4 can help sustain these programs while helping  
5 us to partially pay the statewide landscape  
6 analysis for after-school, summer, and  
7 expanded learning programs, which is  
8 currently lacking and much needed.

9 After-school, summer and expanded  
10 learning programs help keep students safe,  
11 support working families, and empower youth  
12 success. We count on your support to  
13 continue these programs.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

15 New York State YouthBuild Coalition.

16 MS. LANDI: Thank you, Senator  
17 Krueger, Assemblywoman Weinstein, for the  
18 opportunity to provide information on the  
19 value of YouthBuild programs in New York  
20 State.

21 First, on behalf of the thousands of  
22 vulnerable youth we serve, thank you for the  
23 '22-'23 budget support we received in the  
24 amount of \$10 million in ESD Pay for

1 Performance Workforce strategies funding and  
2 2.5 million appropriated for the Legislature  
3 to fund YouthBuild program wraparound  
4 services, such as addressing mental health  
5 and substance use issues, addressing  
6 community gun violence, housing insecurity,  
7 food insecurity, job coaching, resume  
8 writing, self-care, proper hygiene, how to  
9 dress appropriately, how to speak  
10 appropriately, and leadership development --  
11 all of which have been determined as integral  
12 to the outstanding outcomes YouthBuild  
13 programs achieve.

14 We are requesting the same level of  
15 budget funding that we received in the  
16 '23-'24 budget.

17 Recently, YouthBuild participated in  
18 an OCFS Workforce Development Demonstration  
19 Project. The outcomes from that project  
20 clearly indicate the effectiveness of the  
21 comprehensive training provided. Those  
22 outcomes were:

23 Programs exceeded the number of  
24 required enrollments by 6 percent, serving

1 more than what was expected;

2 Placement rate in a job or a  
3 post-secondary education program after  
4 completion, 100 percent;

5 HSE and industry-recognized  
6 credentials earned, 99 percent;

7 Youth with prior justice system  
8 involvement, no rearrests -- zero recidivism.  
9 We're very proud of that.

10 As a point of information, YouthBuild  
11 began right here in New York State, in 1978  
12 in East Harlem. In 1992 it was replicated by  
13 the federal government and expanded across  
14 the nation into 44 states. Today there are  
15 over 225 YouthBuild programs nationwide.

16 Currently in New York State there are  
17 17 programs, located from Long Island to  
18 Buffalo. Additionally, we have requests from  
19 Hudson, Monticello, Syracuse, and Yonkers,  
20 who are seeking to start a YouthBuild  
21 program.

22 As you are aware, the aftermath of  
23 COVID has exacerbated the inequities facing  
24 young people of color. One of the most

1           troubling issues facing these young people is  
2           community gun violence. YouthBuild programs  
3           across the state have already begun to take  
4           the necessary steps to address the issue and  
5           its adverse effects on our young people.

6                     The highly successful YouthBuild  
7           program model. Our efficacy rates indicate  
8           YouthBuild has the ability to address the  
9           very issues leaders and U.S. state  
10          policymakers are grappling with for young  
11          people. However, program resources are  
12          limited. We need the willingness of the  
13          state to continue to invest in our efforts.

14                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

15                    MS. LANDI: We must stop reinventing  
16          the wheel and keep these youth working --

17                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

18                    MS. LANDI: -- toward what they need  
19          for success.

20                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Next, Northern  
21          Rivers Family of Services.

22                    MR. GETTMAN: Good evening, members of  
23          the Legislature and chairs.

24                    My name is Bill Gettman. I'm the CEO

1 of Northern Rivers Family of Services. I'm  
2 here representing the 18,000 children,  
3 adults, and families that we serve in  
4 40 counties across New York State.

5 I'm also here today to talk on behalf  
6 of the 1400 employees who work for Northern  
7 Rivers -- seven days a week, 24 hours a  
8 day -- 25 percent who have a second job,  
9 10 percent who have to have a third job to  
10 make ends meet.

11 I'm here today to talk about while we  
12 appreciate the Governor's investment after a  
13 decade of poor investments in the areas of  
14 mental health and childcare and other areas,  
15 we need to go a step further.

16 First, we need to go ahead with the  
17 8.5 percent COLA that has been advocated by  
18 many associations around New York State. Our  
19 workers need to hear from the Legislature and  
20 the executive branch that they are respected,  
21 they are cared for, and the work they do is  
22 important to the future of this state.

23 Our staff take care of families and  
24 kids when no one else will do it. Just

1 Friday night, we admitted an 11-year-old who  
2 was in the hospital who had no place to go.  
3 They ended up at our doorstep, and we  
4 admitted them. We will place them in a  
5 foster home, and we will get them back to a  
6 permanent and safe situation someday.

7 But you don't do that if 25 percent of  
8 your staff have to work a second job, if you  
9 have a turnover rate of 30 percent. And I  
10 have 105 vacancies today. I have over 1,000  
11 on my waitlist for mental health services and  
12 community-based services. We need a trained  
13 and experienced workforce to meet those  
14 community needs.

15 Mental health and child welfare are a  
16 single item. The Governor's proposal for  
17 mental health we applaud. However, in child  
18 welfare we provide mental health every single  
19 day. And as part of that, we need to correct  
20 some of the deficiencies in the Governor's  
21 budget related to rate-setting and the  
22 underfunding of the childcare agency budgets.

23 Our rates will end on April 1st this  
24 year unless the Legislature takes decisive

1 actions. I don't know how many  
2 businesspeople can provide services without  
3 knowing what they're going to get paid.  
4 However, we have thousands of kids in our  
5 care, and we need to improve the  
6 rate-setting.

7 We also need to look at prevention.  
8 And so I call to your attention the bills in  
9 the Legislature to increase primary  
10 prevention to 75 percent, and also to the  
11 Poverty Agenda that the Governor's task force  
12 has worked on. We need to make long-term  
13 investments so that we can change the curve  
14 and create a better place for kids in this  
15 state.

16 Kids are our future. They will take  
17 care of all of us. They will take care of  
18 our grandchildren. They are the people that  
19 are going to care for us, and we need to  
20 invest in them now if we want to make  
21 New York a great place to live, work, and  
22 raise a family.

23 So thank you for your time. I applaud  
24 you for what will be some tough decisions in

1 the next few weeks, but thank you for your  
2 dedication and your service, because you also  
3 are heroes.

4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

6 Next is Prevent Child Abuse New York,  
7 Timothy Hathaway.

8 MR. HATHAWAY: Good afternoon.

9 My name is Tim Hathaway. I'm the  
10 executive director with Prevent Child Abuse  
11 New York. Thank you to the members of this  
12 committee for your dedication this afternoon  
13 and throughout this legislative session.

14 Prevent Child Abuse is a training and  
15 technical assistance organization serving  
16 folks across the State of New York, as well  
17 as providing policy and advocacy work.

18 Primarily, we're looking at how do we build  
19 strong families in the state. And that work  
20 is critical to avoid the downstream impacts  
21 that we all know are extremely  
22 cost-prohibitive.

23 So our testimony outlines a number of  
24 different priorities. They're bulleted on

1 the first page of my testimony, and I want to  
2 just take a couple of minutes and dive into  
3 some specifics on a couple.

4 The first one is around the Child and  
5 Family Well-Being Fund. We know that the  
6 best solutions to prevent child abuse come at  
7 a neighborhood level. The research tells us  
8 that. When families are strong, when  
9 neighborhoods are strong, kids do better.  
10 This fund is aimed at directly that.

11 How do we get more money directly down  
12 to the faith-based communities, the  
13 organizations that are operating on a  
14 shoestring budget? How do we make sure that  
15 they receive a part of the funding that  
16 really helps get them to the next level so  
17 that they can do what they do best, help  
18 families in their neighborhood do this work?

19 We also want to talk about maternal,  
20 infant, and early childhood home visiting.  
21 We applaud the state's investment in  
22 Healthy Families New York. We do have a  
23 concern, and we want to urge restoration of  
24 the \$200,000 line item for ParentChild+.

1 This is something that was in the budget, has  
2 been taken out.

3 We also want to encourage the  
4 restoration of \$200,000 for Help Me Grow.  
5 You've heard from those folks earlier today.

6 We also are pushing forward this large  
7 investment around universal home visiting.  
8 We know this model works, we've seen it work  
9 in other states. It's an investment in the  
10 future of New York and in our children and  
11 families.

12 Childcare, we continue to support --  
13 and love the testimony from our earlier  
14 folks -- after-school programs. We know this  
15 is critical to what we do in terms of  
16 prevention and building strong families. The  
17 work that Mr. Gettman already outlined around  
18 75/25 is very important; we urge that.

19 And then relative to housing, the  
20 right for counsel bill that will be coming  
21 before you folks. Again, strong families  
22 need safe housing. They need good housing.

23 And I'll close with that.

24 (Laughter.)

1 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

2 Appreciate it.

3 Next up is the Council of Family and  
4 Child Caring Agencies, Kathleen  
5 Brady-Stepien.

6 MS. BRADY-STEPHEN: Hello. My name is  
7 Kathleen Brady-Stepien. I'm the CEO of  
8 COFCCA. We represent the state's child  
9 welfare nonprofit organizations.

10 This past year the state took action  
11 to diminish funding for foster-care programs  
12 and services. It was an unacceptable action  
13 that has left our foster-care programs in  
14 free fall, unable to plan ahead for their  
15 budgets. And still right now, today, these  
16 programs do not know what rate they're going  
17 to receive from the state as of April 1st to  
18 provide care and services for young people in  
19 foster care.

20 We are asking for the Legislature's  
21 support in ensuring that these programs are  
22 fully funded through the end of their current  
23 fiscal year, which goes to June 30th, so that  
24 they don't receive a midyear rate reduction,

1 and also that we invest meaningfully in  
2 salaries to support the very hardworking  
3 foster-care staff, of which we have a  
4 49 percent turnover rate across the state.  
5 This is a Darling/Brisport proposal that we  
6 strongly support.

7 Human services programs have had to  
8 contend with incredibly rising costs, and so  
9 we have to not only get to an 8.5 percent  
10 COLA to support these programs, but we also  
11 have to make sure that those programs that  
12 have been left out of this human services  
13 COLA in the past are included going forward.  
14 And for us, in our world, that's prevention  
15 services programs, it's also health home care  
16 management supporting children. Let's make  
17 sure that they're included going forward  
18 also.

19 And not only do we need the COLA for  
20 prevention services programs, but we want to  
21 make sure that we invest meaningfully in  
22 doing more prevention across the State of  
23 New York so that families are kept safely  
24 together and are supported in the challenges



1 of state-only Medicaid until such time that  
2 there is a federal solution to ensure that  
3 children and youth in residential foster care  
4 can receive federal funding for their  
5 healthcare and their behavioral healthcare.

6 Thank you for the opportunity to  
7 testify.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
9 much.

10 Okay, and our last testifier on this  
11 panel, the Children's Health Home of Upstate  
12 New York, Nicole Bryl.

13 MS. BRYL: Good evening.

14 My name is Nicole Bryl, and I'm the  
15 CEO of the Children's Health Home of Upstate  
16 New York, also referred to as CHHUNY.

17 I would like to thank Chairs Krueger  
18 and Weinstein and all members of the  
19 Legislature for allowing me to provide  
20 testimony today.

21 CHHUNY is the largest upstate health  
22 home designated to serve children and youth  
23 under the age of 21. We serve over  
24 13,500 members each month and almost

1 18,000 unique members annually. CHHUNY  
2 provides health home care management services  
3 in 55 counties and upstate New York through a  
4 network of over 90 care management agencies.  
5 Our population consists of seriously  
6 emotionally disturbed children, medically  
7 fragile children, children with multiple  
8 chronic conditions, developmentally disabled  
9 children, and children who have experienced  
10 complex trauma.

11 I want to start by commending  
12 Governor Hochul for the significant  
13 investments in mental health services as  
14 proposed in her Executive Budget. With over  
15 75 percent of the children and young people  
16 we serve experiencing at least one mental  
17 health condition, we applaud her  
18 acknowledgment of the dire need to support  
19 this sector.

20 Today I'm here on behalf of the  
21 1,000-plus individuals that make up our  
22 children's health home care management  
23 workforce and the children and families we  
24 serve. I am here to ask for your support in

1           ensuring that our Children's Health Home  
2           Program is specifically identified as an  
3           eligible program for the proposed human  
4           services COLA, and that the COLA be  
5           consistent with the Consumer Price Index,  
6           which would equate to 8.5 percent instead of  
7           2.5 percent.

8                       Over the last six years, care  
9           management services for children have been  
10          consolidated under the health home model to  
11          streamline and simplify the children's system  
12          of care. OMH Targeted Case Management  
13          transitioned in 2016, and then six waiver  
14          programs previously under OMH, OCFS, and  
15          OPWDD state agencies transitioned in 2019.

16                      With these transitions came immense  
17          responsibility and new requirements to  
18          understand all systems of care for children,  
19          truly breaking down silos by consolidating  
20          pathways to care and ensuring no wrong door  
21          for struggling youth and families.

22                      Unfortunately, over the past six years  
23          the state has failed to support our program  
24          through these transitions and added

1 responsibility. Since the inception of this  
2 program, our rates have increased by only  
3 1 percent. Children's health homes were  
4 excluded from the 5.4 percent COLA last year,  
5 and without your support to explicitly  
6 identify our program as eligible in this  
7 year's budget, we again will be excluded from  
8 a COLA, while our colleagues who serve health  
9 home members in OPWDD or the adult Health  
10 Home Plus world are benefiting from the COLA  
11 the past two years. So due to the  
12 bifurcation of this program, and under our  
13 DOH oversight, Children's Health Home is  
14 consistently left out of funding  
15 opportunities.

16 Children's Health Home services are  
17 not adult health home services. Our systems  
18 are multifaceted, and our care managers are  
19 expected to know how to navigate state plan  
20 services -- OMH, OCFS, OPWDD, OTDA, State Ed,  
21 Early Intervention, managed care waiver, and  
22 so much more.

23 And although the lift is a lot for one  
24 person, our care managers are doing it

1           successfully. We are seeing positive  
2           outcomes such as increased annual  
3           primary-care visits and annual dental visits,  
4           increased compliance with metabolic  
5           monitoring when a child is on two or more  
6           antipsychotic medications, and improving the  
7           completion of post-hospitalization outpatient  
8           appointments.

9                        Thanks.

10                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

11                   So we go to Assemblyman Maher, for  
12           three minutes.

13                   ASSEMBLYMAN MAHER: Sorry about that.  
14           I actually did not have any particular  
15           questions at this time.

16                   I do plan to reach out to all of you,  
17           and just thank you so much for all that you  
18           do. Such amazing information you give us,  
19           also -- thank you.

20                   MS. BRYL: Thank you.

21                   MR. GETTMAN: Thank you.

22                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

23                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Jabari Brisport.

24                   SENATOR BRISPORT: Thank you,

1 Madam Chair.

2 And thank you, panelists. I really  
3 appreciated your testimonies.

4 I just had a question about public  
5 safety. You know, a lot of times in Albany  
6 when we discuss public safety the  
7 conversation gets framed around policing,  
8 prisons, the criminal legal system. But many  
9 of the programs that you offer and advocate  
10 for seem like they could serve a much more  
11 expansive vision of what keeps us safe. So  
12 I'm just curious, how could these investments  
13 that you're talking about help make our  
14 communities more safe?

15 And this is for everyone. I'm  
16 certainly interested in the YouthBuild  
17 answer, Northern Rivers, CHHUNY, but it's  
18 open to everybody.

19 MR. GETTMAN: So let me start. We  
20 have partnered with the City of Albany and  
21 the County of Albany to look at how we can  
22 use our prevention staff and our  
23 community-based staff to reduce the  
24 occurrence or reoccurrence of the violence in

1 the community.

2 And it goes back to what Tim was  
3 talking about: It's about prevention. It's  
4 about housing. It's about having the care  
5 manager in partnership with the family to  
6 create means of a plan for alternatives to  
7 perhaps stress, inappropriate reactions to  
8 conflict.

9 But it's about investing in our  
10 workforce, who is out there every day. So  
11 it's the prevention workforce, it's our  
12 health home workforce, it's our YouthBuild  
13 partners, who do great, great work keeping  
14 kids meaningfully employed and then getting  
15 them jobs in the future.

16 MS. LANDI: I would like to address  
17 the gun violence issue as well.

18 When gun violence became prevalent  
19 amongst YouthBuild programs, we did not wait  
20 to have somebody come in and tell us what we  
21 needed to do. We took the bull by the horns,  
22 and we went in and we tried to address those  
23 issues by providing the preventative care  
24 that the young people need.



1 young people are most likely to engage in  
2 juvenile crime or be victimized by crime.  
3 And so we recognize that the after-school  
4 hours are a critical part of students'  
5 development and also their safety as well.

6 And I'll also share that in addition  
7 to this, after-school provides protective  
8 factors such as self-management,  
9 self-control, and enables them to have the  
10 social networks to help them thrive.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

12 SENATOR BRISPORT: Thank you.

13 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

14 We go to Assemblyman Ra.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you. Can you  
16 hear me? There we go. Sorry about that.

17 So I just wanted to go, Kathleen, with  
18 regard to the COLA and all of that stuff.  
19 Because I think it's important, but it's  
20 technical as to where we are.

21 So you have -- last year we have this  
22 COLA, but it's not in the normal rate-setting  
23 that you go through. So we hit the end of  
24 our budget year, and now you have a gap

1           between the end of the state budget year and  
2           the calendar year -- or the budget year that  
3           you would -- the providers operate on,  
4           correct?

5                     MS. BRADY-STEPHEN: Right.

6                     ASSEMBLYMAN RA: So there's -- you  
7           don't know what it looks like for that gap  
8           between April 1st and, what, June 1st?

9                     MS. BRADY-STEPHEN: That's right, yup.

10                    So we're six weeks out from April 1st,  
11           and we don't know what rate the programs will  
12           get. Because of what happened last year,  
13           yes.

14                    MR. GETTMAN: And we will not take the  
15           money back from our workforce. If anything,  
16           we need to invest in them. So this is a  
17           double whammy.

18                    ASSEMBLYMAN RA: But, I mean -- so  
19           really what we need in this budget is, you  
20           know, something to plug that gap in that last  
21           quarter, correct?

22                    MS. BRADY-STEPHEN: Yup, that's right.

23                    ASSEMBLYMAN RA: And then a COLA for  
24           next year.

1 MS. BRADY-STEPIEN: Yup.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: But we have to make  
3 sure this all ties together so that we don't  
4 at some point go back to a rate-setting that  
5 looks at a number from two or three years ago  
6 at that point, correct?

7 MS. BRADY-STEPIEN: That's right. And  
8 so what we need to accomplish is making sure  
9 that the programs have their full funding  
10 through the end of the fiscal year to  
11 June 30th.

12 Then we have to make sure that the  
13 COLA continues forward into the rate so that,  
14 as Bill says, you know, nobody is pulling  
15 money back from their workforce. In fact,  
16 we're here talking with all of you about the  
17 need to build on that, right?

18 And so what we have to accomplish  
19 together really is making sure that we have  
20 the funding not only for right now, but  
21 building into the future, so that we can give  
22 these staff the increases that they need.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Yeah. I mean, if you  
24 don't -- I mean, I would look at it this way.

1 If you don't carry a COLA forward years into  
2 the future, really it was a one-year bonus,  
3 not --

4 MS. BRADY-STEPIEN: Right.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: -- a COLA, correct.

6 MR. GETTMAN: And they will go find  
7 another job. Because the message that will  
8 be sent is "Your work is not valued. We love  
9 you, but we're not going to pay you." They  
10 will go find another job, especially if we're  
11 being -- indexing minimum wage. That's one  
12 of the harsh realities that our workforce  
13 faces.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: All right. Well,  
15 thank you, guys.

16 MS. BRADY-STEPIEN: Thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Cordell  
19 Cleare.

20 SENATOR CLEARE: Thank you, all of  
21 you. I -- that -- you took my question. But  
22 some of my question, you answered it. But I  
23 do want to just thank all of you for the work  
24 that you do. It is very important that every

1 child should have after-school.

2 And YouthBuild, I've got to shout you  
3 out, because it started in my district,  
4 East Harlem. Nina Saxon is a big cheerleader  
5 for you over there. And I know how important  
6 that work is, not just because it provides  
7 something for young people to do, but it also  
8 gives them a skill, something that they will  
9 make money from and they will be able to live  
10 off of. So I support the work that you do a  
11 hundred percent.

12 MS. LANDI: Thank you. It supplies  
13 affordable housing, too.

14 SENATOR CLEARE: Absolutely, that  
15 part.

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
17 Assembly.

18 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman  
19 Eachus.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you very  
21 much.

22 And I want to thank all these groups  
23 for what they do.

24 Just to let you know, I had 13 foster

1 brothers and sisters, so --

2 MR. GETTMAN: We could reenroll you,  
3 if you'd --

4 (Laughter.)

5 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thanks.

6 But what I would like to say is that  
7 earlier in the hearing there were some folks  
8 talking about like the GIVE program, if  
9 you're familiar with that, and, you know, why  
10 isn't it in New York City and all. New York  
11 City has a number of programs which are great  
12 and hopefully address that. But I want you  
13 to know that I taught in the second most  
14 violent city in all of New York, and that's  
15 in upstate New York: Newburgh. Okay? And  
16 so we definitely need these programs in  
17 upstate also.

18 And so I think I'm just going to make  
19 an ask of you folks. I hope that you will  
20 visit my office at some point in time, come  
21 in, talk to me in depth, and let's find out  
22 what we really can do to, you know, get you  
23 out there. Because I have to honestly say  
24 that I have not heard of a few of your

1 programs. I'm unaware of them. Not that I'm  
2 supposed to know everything, but I would love  
3 to learn more, so --

4 MS. LANDI: We just started one in  
5 Newburgh last year.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Okay, great.  
7 Thank you.

8 MR. GETTMAN: Thank you.

9 MS. MORGAN: Thank you.

10 MR. GETTMAN: We'll be there.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I don't believe  
13 we do have any other Senators, no.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And no further  
15 Assemblymembers.

16 So thank you all for being here.  
17 Thank you for the work that your  
18 organizations do for New Yorkers.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

20 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next we have  
21 Panel D: New York State Coalition Against  
22 Domestic Violence, Empire Justice Center --  
23 and if you're keeping score, we have a --  
24 Jessica Radbord couldn't be with us today

1 because of illness, and Emilia Sicilia is  
2 replacing her. Then we also have the  
3 Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy;  
4 SAGE - Advocacy & Services for LGBTQ+ Elders;  
5 Supportive Housing Network of New York; and  
6 New York Association of Training and  
7 Employment.

8 So if you can go in that order,  
9 starting with the New York State Coalition  
10 Against Domestic Violence.

11 MS. GERHARDT: That would be me.

12 Hello, everyone. Thank you.

13 I'm Joan Gerhardt, director of public  
14 policy and advocacy at the New York State  
15 Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

16 NYSCADV is recognized by the U.S.  
17 Department of Health and Human Services and  
18 the U.S. Department of Justice as the  
19 information clearinghouse and resource center  
20 on domestic violence in the State of  
21 New York.

22 Domestic violence advocates are  
23 dedicated and passionate professionals.  
24 Their work is challenging and requires unique

1 skills and training. It is a 24-hour-a-day,  
2 seven-day-a-week obligation, meeting domestic  
3 violence survivors where they are at the  
4 police station, in the hospital, and in  
5 court. We provide crisis services which are  
6 often life-stabilizing and lifesaving.

7 Recognizing this critical need,  
8 domestic violence advocates were included in  
9 New York's pool of essential frontline  
10 workers at the start of the pandemic. And  
11 it's a good thing, because during the  
12 pandemic and even since, the demand for  
13 domestic violence services is incredibly  
14 high. In fact, it's the highest in the  
15 nation. In the nation. On just one day last  
16 year when the national count was conducted,  
17 more than 9100 adult and child victims  
18 received services. Extrapolate that for a  
19 full year -- we're talking about thousands of  
20 New Yorkers in need.

21 That's why it's so frustrating that  
22 far too many domestic violence advocates do  
23 not earn a living wage. Their compensation  
24 is tied to restrictive contracts with

1 New York State which are not sufficiently  
2 funded. At current salaries, most domestic  
3 violence staff do not earn enough to afford a  
4 two-bedroom rental.

5 DV advocates were not included in the  
6 pool of human service workers who received  
7 additional salary, bonuses and COLA  
8 adjustments last year. Nor are we included  
9 in this year's COLA proposal. These  
10 employees are mostly women providing support  
11 to other women and children. They should be  
12 first on the list to receive a wage increase.

13 At the beginning of the pandemic a  
14 tremendous number of domestic violence staff  
15 left their jobs for fear of working in  
16 congregate settings. Now thousands of  
17 positions are still vacant because domestic  
18 violence agencies can't offer a living wage.  
19 NYSCADV urges the Legislature to increase the  
20 minimum wage of all domestic violence staff  
21 and provide us with a COLA.

22 I also want to mention our request  
23 that the Legislature carry forward a  
24 \$14.4 million transfer to OVS for victim

1 service providers, as well as appropriate  
2 11.7 million for the 87 providers who  
3 received significant cuts in the most recent  
4 round of awards. Over the three-year course  
5 of those contracts, these legacy providers  
6 stand to lose 35.1 million. New York's crime  
7 victims will bear the brunt of these costs.

8 These are certainly described more in  
9 our written testimony. I will leave it at  
10 that. Thank you.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

12 Empire Justice.

13 MS. SICILIA: Hello. My name is  
14 Emilia Sicilia, and I'm a managing attorney  
15 at the Empire Justice Center. I want to  
16 thank Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, the  
17 committee chairs, and other members here  
18 today.

19 The Empire Justice Center is a  
20 nonprofit law firm that seeks to make the law  
21 work for all New Yorkers, especially those  
22 who need it the most. We teach the law by  
23 providing training, support, and technical  
24 assistance; we practice the law by providing

1 direct civil legal assistance and undertaking  
2 impact litigation; and we change the law by  
3 engaging in policy analysis, research, and  
4 advocacy.

5 Support for human services has never  
6 been more essential. As we work to recover  
7 from the pandemic, we must strengthen access  
8 to healthcare and other benefits and address  
9 the disparities laid bare. We must also  
10 prepare thoughtfully for coming changes,  
11 including the end of the public health  
12 emergency and the expansion of the  
13 Medicare Savings Program.

14 Our written testimony includes more  
15 details about the following priorities. For  
16 public benefits, the need to increase the  
17 basic needs grant amounts, the need to  
18 address skimming of public benefits, and the  
19 need to expand and improve the rental  
20 supplement program.

21 The need to increase the shelter  
22 allowances for households with children.  
23 OTDA has not updated the shelter allowance  
24 schedule since 2003, even though rents have

1 doubled since then. For households without  
2 children, OTDA has not increased the shelter  
3 allowance since 1988, but rents have tripled  
4 in the last 35 years.

5 The opportunity to support children  
6 who have lost parents and family members  
7 caring for these children by establishing a  
8 kinship legal network pilot program.

9 The need to increase funding for the  
10 Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program --  
11 notably, to be prepared to respond to the  
12 expansion of the Medicare Savings Program.

13 The importance of maintaining funding  
14 of \$35 million for OTDA's Emergency Rental  
15 Assistance Program, which provides legal  
16 representation to low-income renters outside  
17 of New York City facing eviction, and where  
18 there's no right to counsel.

19 I'd like to spend the rest of my  
20 allotted time discussing the need to increase  
21 funding for the Disability Advocacy Program,  
22 known as DAP. This year marks the  
23 40th anniversary of DAP, which was created by  
24 this Legislature in 1983. And for four

1 decades, DAP has been providing civil legal  
2 assistance to low-income disabled New Yorkers  
3 denied or cut off from their federal  
4 disability benefits -- Supplemental Security  
5 Income, known as SSI, or SSD, Social Security  
6 Disability.

7 DAP services help stabilize people's  
8 income, which in turn helps to stabilize  
9 health, housing, and quality of life overall.  
10 And for every dollar invested in DAP, at  
11 least \$2 is generated to the benefit of  
12 New York State and local governments in the  
13 form of public assistance costs avoided and  
14 in money spent in local economies.

15 The disability appeals process is  
16 complex and becoming increasingly more  
17 challenging. Financial issues, homelessness,  
18 inadequate healthcare, and sometimes the very  
19 symptoms of the disability often make it  
20 exceedingly difficult to gather the evidence  
21 needed for a claim.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

23 MS. SICILIA: Thank you.

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Schuyler

1 Center.

2 MS. HILL: Yeah, hi. Good evening,  
3 and thank you to the chairs and members of  
4 the respective committees for the opportunity  
5 to present our testimony.

6 My name is Dede Hill, and I'm policy  
7 director at the Schuyler Center. For more  
8 than 150 years we have been advocating for  
9 policies that strengthen and improve public  
10 systems that serve low-income and  
11 disenfranchised New Yorkers, with a real  
12 focus on children and families.

13 I'll begin with a general observation  
14 about this Executive Budget. While it  
15 includes some important investments to  
16 improve child and family well-being -- absent  
17 our key poverty-reducing proposals -- also  
18 missing are the significant sustained  
19 investments that are truly needed for  
20 New York's child-serving systems, which have  
21 been chronically underresourced for many  
22 years. But there is time and we think real  
23 opportunity to craft a final enacted budget  
24 that centers New York children and families.



1 small one-time bump in pay.

2 Also missing from the Executive Budget  
3 is an expansion of childcare assistance to  
4 children currently excluded due solely to  
5 their immigration status. Among those  
6 children who are excluded currently are many  
7 children who are lawfully present. Many of  
8 the children who are here seeking asylum are  
9 among that group who are excluded. New York  
10 should end this exclusion immediately.

11 Other missed opportunities: New York  
12 is overdue to increase the monthly  
13 foster-care housing subsidy and index it to  
14 inflation. We haven't changed that housing  
15 subsidy since 1988.

16 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

17 SAGE?

18 MR. OKMA: Good evening. My name is  
19 MJ Okma, with SAGE.

20 SAGE has been serving LGBTQ+ and  
21 HIV-affected older New Yorkers for over  
22 four decades, providing comprehensive social  
23 services and community-building programming  
24 through a network of LGBTQ+-welcoming older

1 adult centers across New York City. We are  
2 also the on-site service provider of the  
3 state's first LGBTQ-affirming elder housing  
4 developments and run the statewide SAGE  
5 Veterans Program.

6 As they age and need more assistance  
7 and care, LGBTQ+ and HIV-affected elders have  
8 fewer biological family caregivers than older  
9 people in general. Because of thin support  
10 networks, they are more likely to rely more  
11 heavily on community service providers, yet  
12 they're often distrustful of providers after  
13 facing a long history of stigma and  
14 compounding discrimination.

15 For many of these elders in New York,  
16 SAGE is their lifeline. It is because of  
17 them I'm here today, respectfully asking for  
18 your support in the fiscal year '24 budget  
19 for restoration of our programming. This  
20 includes restoration of 300,000 to support  
21 LGBTQ+ residents and community members in and  
22 around New York State's first  
23 LGBTQ+-welcoming affordable elder housing  
24 developments; a restoration of 150,000 to

1           increase our multilingual programming  
2           services; a restoration of fiscal year '22  
3           levels of funding of 260,000 for SAGEVets,  
4           after receiving a smaller designation last  
5           fiscal year; and, finally, a new funding  
6           designation of 150,000 to help meet the  
7           growing demand for services among  
8           HIV-affected older people across the state  
9           through the expansion of our SAGEPositive  
10          program.

11                         With the support of the New York  
12          Legislature, SAGE has been able to evolve and  
13          expand to best address the widespread  
14          disparities facing LGBTQ+ New Yorkers. SAGE  
15          has redesigned our program and service  
16          delivery models to provide a variety of  
17          in-person, virtual, and hybrid options. This  
18          helps draw elders in for in-person services  
19          while addressing the direct needs of  
20          homebound elders, those with mobility  
21          challenges, those with caregiving and work  
22          responsibilities, and those elders who have  
23          health concerns about returning to in-person  
24          programs and services.

1                   As noted, SAGE works with prominent  
2 developers to directly address the housing  
3 insecurity experienced by many LGBTQ+ elders,  
4 by building the first LGBTQ+-welcoming  
5 affordable elder housing developments. Here  
6 we provide on-site services to residents and  
7 surrounding community members, including  
8 programming, wellness checks, a food pantry,  
9 grocery delivery, and coordinated care with  
10 other providers. We have also expanded our  
11 multilingual programming into Spanish,  
12 Mandarin, and Cantonese.

13                   Utilizing state funding and the  
14 momentum of the passage of the Restoration of  
15 Honor Act, our SAGEVets program helps older  
16 LGBTQ+ veterans navigate the VA to get the  
17 benefits they deserve, aiding in their  
18 overall health and wellness and providing  
19 referrals to counsel for discharge status  
20 upgrades. SAGE provides this life-changing  
21 support while saving New York significant  
22 amounts of funding by ensuring veterans  
23 access all their federal benefits instead of  
24 relying solely on state programs to address

1           their housing and healthcare needs.

2                       SAGE respectfully requests for the  
3           restoration of our funding to continue this  
4           vital work. We also request the new funding  
5           designation to replicate the success of the  
6           SAGEVets program and similarly provide  
7           statewide support for older New Yorkers  
8           living with HIV through the expansion of our  
9           SAGEPositive program.

10                      Thank you so much.

11                      CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

12                      Supportive Housing Network of  
13           New York.

14                      MR. PIASECKI: Hi, everyone. I'm  
15           Steve Piasecki, with the Supportive Housing  
16           Network of New York. And thank you,  
17           Chairs Krueger and Weinstein and all the  
18           members of the committee, for this  
19           opportunity to thank you for a bunch of other  
20           stuff, to start with.

21                      The Governor's budget has really got  
22           lots of bright new, shiny new things for  
23           supportive housing. I'll focus on the ESSHI  
24           program that we've been working on for the

1 past decade or so.

2 But now, Year 7, I'm happy to report  
3 that (a) the funding for ongoing services and  
4 operations for the existing ESSHI units that  
5 are up and running -- which are now over 7400  
6 in total -- meeting the Governor's obligation  
7 for that supportive housing plan, is fully  
8 funded in the OTDA budget. So that is  
9 excellent news for us.

10 We're happy that the recommitment for  
11 the Affordable Housing Fund last year in the  
12 HCR budget is present, and that will help us  
13 build the next 1400 units worth of supportive  
14 housing.

15 We're also happy for the new  
16 initiative around the mental health housing  
17 in the OMH budget.

18 But really what I'm here today to talk  
19 about is our legacy programs, or the first  
20 generation of supportive housing, that have  
21 gone underfunded to an extent that dwarfs  
22 imagination -- in particular, the NYSSHP  
23 funding program.

24 NYSSHP, the New York State Supportive

1           Housing Program, has been around for almost  
2           30 years. It funds a little bit of services  
3           in a lot of different supportive housing  
4           programs, about 20,000 units statewide. Half  
5           of them are a joint project with New York  
6           City DHS, and the other half are spread all  
7           around the state. They serve individuals and  
8           families at this point. The families were  
9           added in 2002.

10                    These programs are funded at about  
11           1/10 of the rate of the funding that the  
12           ESSHI program has -- maybe \$2400 to \$3500 per  
13           unit per year, as compared with \$25,000 for  
14           ESSHI. So we're really looking to fix that.  
15           The total price tag to fix it, to be honest  
16           with you, would be about a little less than  
17           \$150 million.

18                    But we're also looking for a technical  
19           fix, as many others are. For some reason,  
20           even though this program funds strictly  
21           staffing that provide direct services to  
22           homeless people in supportive housing, it has  
23           never been in the COLA, so it didn't receive  
24           the 5.4 percent last year like many of my

1 colleagues have already talked about.

2 And once again, we really need to have  
3 that added as an ongoing program to the COLA  
4 legislation that is being proposed this year,  
5 and carried forward in the future, as another  
6 means to catch up.

7 We're also advocating for additional  
8 funding to support the state's Preservation  
9 Plan that was funded last year. It's sort of  
10 the same thing -- there is just not enough  
11 support for programs that really need to be  
12 physically rehabilitated without expanding  
13 the services.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

16 New York Association of Training and  
17 Employment.

18 MS. MACK: Hi. Good evening,  
19 everyone. Let me know if you can't hear me.  
20 Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to  
21 testify again this year. I always appreciate  
22 the chance to share with you what our members  
23 care about.

24 My name is Melinda Mack. I am the

1 executive director at NYATEP, which is the  
2 statewide workforce development association  
3 representing the education, job training and  
4 employment providers across New York State.

5 As I'm sure you are speaking to folks  
6 in your districts, you're hearing that people  
7 just don't want to work and people should  
8 just go out and get a job. I'm here to tell  
9 you that over the last decade our labor force  
10 participation rate has begun to slide, and  
11 it's been happening long before COVID.

12 And it's predominantly due to  
13 retirements, lack of birth rate -- sort of,  
14 you know, folks don't have 10 kids, like they  
15 used to -- and also the challenges we're  
16 having around educational attainment across  
17 New York as well as, you know, low-wage work.  
18 You're hearing about some of it today. Some  
19 of it is grossly underpaid, and in many ways  
20 it's something that we absolutely need to  
21 rectify if we're going to recruit and retain  
22 folks.

23 In our last four annual State of the  
24 Workforce Development reports we basically

1           laid out the fact that the vast majority of  
2           jobs in New York are low-wage work. In fact,  
3           2 million jobs from the top 10 largest  
4           occupational groups pay less than a living  
5           wage.

6                     In addition to that, when you take  
7           those two points between low-wage work and  
8           the fact that 36 percent of our population  
9           has a high school diploma or less, we  
10          understand why we're not getting more folks  
11          into good or better jobs.

12                    One of the challenges we have  
13          identified as a major hurdle that keeps  
14          low-income New Yorkers not able to access  
15          economic mobility is the benefits cliff. And  
16          the benefits cliff, for those who are  
17          unaware, is a sudden or gradual loss of your  
18          benefits because you took a job, because you  
19          decided to go into an apprenticeship program  
20          that gave you a wage, because you are taking  
21          a subsidized job training program. A lot of  
22          folks make the decision not to participate  
23          because they will lose their benefits  
24          immediately.

1                   Thankfully, both the Governor and the  
2                   Legislature have put forth proposals to  
3                   support a six-month income disregard. We are  
4                   fully supportive of that income disregard and  
5                   thank the leadership here that has supported  
6                   that on our behalf.

7                   In addition to that, you already heard  
8                   earlier that the Office of Strategic  
9                   Workforce Development at Empire State  
10                  Development has also provided support to many  
11                  community-based organizations on the ground.  
12                  This year in the Governor's budget the  
13                  Governor, despite saying they support  
14                  workforce, it provided zero dollars. There's  
15                  no money going to ESD this year for the  
16                  Office of Strategic Workforce Development.

17                  That's a problem because without job  
18                  training, again, that 36 percent of  
19                  New Yorkers who have a high school diploma or  
20                  less will not be accessing good or better  
21                  jobs.

22                  Thank you.

23                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

24                  Assemblyman Eachus.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you again,  
2 Ms. Chair.

3 Joan, I'm going to pile on here a  
4 little bit of stuff. Your call for an  
5 increase in wages and benefits is absolutely  
6 important, because domestic violence is  
7 generational. It gets passed from one  
8 generation down to the next, down to the  
9 next. And when you're talking about that,  
10 you're sometimes talking about parents to  
11 many children.

12 And we've seen this with the increase  
13 in teen violence, with relationships, and  
14 that's something that we need to stop now, as  
15 it may be.

16 I'm going to do a little dirt here and  
17 do a little PR for a program that I have  
18 locally. It's called FEARLESS. It used to  
19 be called formerly Safe Homes. My wife  
20 worked for it for years as a volunteer, but  
21 they do have professionals that are paid  
22 there. But they do function a lot on the  
23 volunteers.

24 And I encourage anybody who can avail

1           themselves to it to see what's called their  
2           T-Shirt Project. It is hundreds upon  
3           hundreds of T-shirts from folks who were  
4           affected by this domestic violence. And you  
5           should take the opportunity to view that if  
6           you can. Thank you.

7                         CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

8                         CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Jabari  
9           Brisport.

10                        SENATOR BRISPORT: Thank you,  
11           Madam Chair.

12                        And thank you all for being here and  
13           your testimonies. I have questions for SAGE  
14           and for Schuyler Center.

15                        For SAGE, I just want to express my  
16           gratitude. You do incredible work in my  
17           district in Fort Greene. I actually just  
18           feel guilty that others don't have a SAGE to  
19           help out their LGBTQ+ seniors.

20                        I'm just curious, in any of your  
21           analysis, if you have a way to share a sense  
22           of like the need throughout this state, like  
23           if you have any numbers of how many LGBTQ+  
24           seniors are not being served at the moment.

1                   MR. OKMA: I will say that it's really  
2                   hard to get adequate data about this  
3                   population, so there isn't a good number of  
4                   how much.

5                   We have data that says that there is  
6                   everywhere from 250,000 to like 800,000  
7                   LGBTQ+ elders in New York State. So there's  
8                   a big disparity. And part of that is we  
9                   really do need more sexual orientation and  
10                  gender identity data collected on all places  
11                  where demographic data's collected, to get a  
12                  sense of how big this population is.

13                  I will stress, though, specifically  
14                  with the new funding designation that we're  
15                  asking for SAGEPositive, is that we do have  
16                  data that shows that by 2030, 72 percent of  
17                  New Yorkers living with HIV will be over the  
18                  age of 50. And quite frankly, the state just  
19                  is not adequately prepared to make sure that  
20                  we're serving that population.

21                  SENATOR BRISPORT: Thank you. So we  
22                  have a long way to go.

23                  And for Schuyler Center, thank you for  
24                  reiterating the need for workforce support.

1           As you know, and I just want to repeat  
2           it for everyone here, the Executive Budget is  
3           once again attempting to stabilize the sector  
4           by doing -- using one-time federal funds.  
5           And I'm just curious if you've heard in your  
6           advocacy from any providers anywhere if  
7           they've used this one-time limited infusion  
8           to create long-term wage increases.

9           MS. HILL: No, I have not heard that.

10          What I can say is that what we heard  
11          from providers who received the first round  
12          of stabilization, and the second round, where  
13          they had -- they could use those funds in a  
14          real broad variety of ways, they used almost  
15          all of it for workforce. I mean, that is the  
16          number-one issue. And they've poured it all  
17          into workforce, and they're still losing  
18          workforce every day. It's not enough.

19          SENATOR BRISPORT: Thank you.

20          CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

21          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman  
22          Burdick.

23          (Pause.)

24          CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Is he here?

1 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: He left.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I don't see him.

3 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So the Senate.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Oh, okay. We  
5 have Senator Murray.

6 SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you, Chair.

7 And thank you all for being here.

8 I'd like to ask Ms. Mack a couple of  
9 things.

10 First, when we talked about the  
11 benefit cliff and you talked about holding on  
12 to the benefits for six months, we're just  
13 looking for a little clarification. Were you  
14 talking about the benefits they currently  
15 have with the state, or would it be  
16 transitioning to the benefits they would have  
17 when they go?

18 MS. MACK: Yeah, so the benefit cliff  
19 is really around losing your public benefits,  
20 so the public assistance that you're already  
21 receiving.

22 What we find is that again, even with  
23 the Summer Youth Employment Program, it was  
24 again the Legislature that really helped us

1 out, because we had young adults who were  
2 unwilling to participate in SYEP because, if  
3 they did, that couple hundred bucks they'd  
4 earn over the summer, it would likely kick  
5 their family off of public assistance.

6 It makes no sense for us to keep  
7 people poor, especially folks who are trying  
8 to do all of the right things to get out of  
9 poverty.

10 SENATOR MURRAY: Right. I wanted to  
11 talk also about when we talk about the  
12 different types of jobs, I've spoken to many  
13 manufacturers who are saying their number-one  
14 problem -- it's not taxes, not  
15 infrastructure -- they can't find a trained  
16 workforce.

17 Are we investing enough in BOCES,  
18 CTE programs, things like this?

19 MS. MACK: Absolutely not.

20 And again, in the Governor's infinite  
21 wisdom she opened this new office of  
22 Strategic Workforce Investment, but they are  
23 providing zero dollars, zero flexible  
24 dollars for workforce development this year.

1                   So the vast majority of workforce  
2                   development funding is federal funding that  
3                   has very specific requirements in terms of  
4                   how you can spend it.

5                   We need to meet people where they're  
6                   at. Again, everybody who is available to  
7                   work should be able to get a good job in  
8                   New York, and we have great programs that are  
9                   not being attended because people can't cover  
10                  the cost of their childcare, because they  
11                  can't cover transportation, they don't have a  
12                  car, they don't have a driver's license.

13                  Think of all the places in your  
14                  district that you need to get to with a car.  
15                  And I lived in Brooklyn for a while -- try to  
16                  get to Kingsborough without a car.

17                  (Laughter.)

18                  MS. MACK: It will take you the whole  
19                  day.

20                  SENATOR MURRAY: And I was also going  
21                  to ask, when you mentioned -- so you  
22                  mentioned childcare, you talked about the  
23                  workforce and reasons that people aren't  
24                  getting back into the workforce. How big of

1 a problem is the childcare issue?

2 MS. MACK: It's one of the number-one  
3 issues. Childcare, transportation,  
4 workforce, housing. So, you know, affordable  
5 rents, but then also, again, this benefits  
6 cliff.

7 The vast majority of people who are  
8 underutilized are either utilizing public  
9 assistance or have low basic educational  
10 skills and often can't step away from the  
11 low-wage job they have for job training.

12 SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you very much.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman  
15 Burdick.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN BURDICK: Thank you.

17 This is a question for Joan Gerhardt.  
18 And I first want to apologize for not being  
19 here at the time of your testimony, but I did  
20 read it.

21 And I'm wondering if you could explain  
22 more fully what you have experienced or what  
23 agencies have experienced with respect to the  
24 loss of funding, these legacy agencies that

1           have been handling victim services for quite  
2           some time and I think were just totally  
3           shocked that they didn't get the funding  
4           levels that they had before -- actually, at a  
5           time when Linda Rosenthal and I thought that  
6           we had gotten the money into the budget that  
7           we thought would do the trick so that those  
8           agencies would not sustain some drastic cuts  
9           in funding.

10                        What was the outcome? I mean, what  
11           have you heard? Have victims been turned  
12           away? Have staff been cut? Can you describe  
13           a little bit what those outcomes have been?

14                        MS. GERHARDT: Absolutely, and thank  
15           you for the question.

16                        It's been devastating. It's really  
17           been devastating for those 87 programs.  
18           We've heard of vacant positions. You know,  
19           we've heard of layoffs. We've heard of job  
20           postings that have been pulled back because  
21           they can't offer the position any longer.

22                        For the legal service organizations  
23           that are included in that mix, we've heard  
24           that they've been unable to take on new

1 clients because they are ethically required  
2 to be able to follow that client through the  
3 end of their proceeding. And with those  
4 cuts, they're not sure how long those  
5 employees will still be in their rolls.

6 So yeah, it's \$11.7 million to the  
7 state's infrastructure, this critical  
8 infrastructure of victim service providers.  
9 And like you said, we thought we had dealt  
10 with this in last year's budget, but  
11 unfortunately, with OVS's recent round of  
12 awards for these 87 programs, we didn't  
13 resolve anything. So I think it's a dramatic  
14 impact.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN BURDICK: Well, thank you  
16 for that.

17 And, you know, we will try to see what  
18 we can do, because I think that the Executive  
19 just wasn't aware. Some may take a cynical  
20 view; I don't. I think that they just didn't  
21 realize that it wasn't enough to go up by  
22 14.4 million, because the whole process of  
23 the competitive bidding that was required by  
24 the Comptroller resulted in new agencies --

1           which I'm sure are doing a good job scoring  
2           very high for the desert areas.

3                     And so we're going to work very hard  
4           to try to get the funding in for the legacy  
5           agencies.

6                     MS. GERHARDT:     I appreciate that.

7                     ASSEMBLYMAN BURDICK:  Thanks for your  
8           work.

9                     MS. GERHARDT:     Thank you.

10                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER:  Thank you.

11                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:  Senate?

12                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER:  Excuse me.

13                    Senator Jessica Scarcello-Stanton -- I'm  
14           going to get it right, I promise, yes.

15                    (Laughter.)

16                    SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON:  I know,  
17           it's a tough name.  It's Jessica  
18           Scarcella-Spanton.

19                    Hi.  My question is for you, Joan.  I  
20           just wanted to thank you for the work that  
21           you're doing.

22                    I know that incidents of domestic  
23           violence have gone up significantly from the  
24           pandemic.  How are you balancing the uptick

1 in domestic violence cases?

2 And I also want to say I think you're  
3 doing a really wonderful job highlighting  
4 different kinds of abuse. We often talk  
5 about physical abuse. I'm happy to see that  
6 you're highlighting stalking, emotional  
7 abuse -- there's all sorts of abuse which  
8 you're talking about, which I also imagine  
9 results in more cases for you.

10 So how are you balancing an uptick in  
11 caseload with a loss of workforce, especially  
12 given that they can't afford it, is the first  
13 part of my question.

14 My second part of my question is I  
15 think domestic violence victims often have a  
16 hard time trusting people. So if a domestic  
17 violence victim is working with a certain  
18 caseworker or an advocate, and then through  
19 that process they lose that advocate, how  
20 does that impact the progression of the case?  
21 Which we know a lot of times victims of  
22 domestic violence tend to take -- I believe  
23 it's eight times before they finally go. So  
24 how does that impact the case?

1 MS. GERHARDT: Great. I don't think  
2 we are balancing that difficulty between the  
3 increased demand and the loss of -- the  
4 increase in job vacancies. I think it's  
5 every program in the state -- there's  
6 100 programs with about 250 facilities that  
7 they operate -- is struggling with this,  
8 whether they received cuts or whether they,  
9 you know, are maintained. It's a case by  
10 case.

11 And I want to point out, too, it's not  
12 just the increase in numbers of requests for  
13 service, it's the lethality that's connected  
14 to those requests. Because what we're  
15 hearing as well is not only the increase in  
16 number, but they're much more volatile  
17 incidents.

18 So I agree with you, it's not just  
19 physical violence, but of the individuals who  
20 are in that circumstance, the lethality  
21 factors are very, very high. So I agree with  
22 you there.

23 And I would say we need more help.  
24 We're not balancing it well. And victims are

1 going to be the ones who bear the brunt of  
2 that.

3 And I forget your second question, I'm  
4 sorry.

5 SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: Oh, my  
6 second question was, you know, if -- because  
7 of the lack of COLA increases, because of the  
8 lack of a pay raise, if a victim is working  
9 with an advocate -- I think a lot of times it  
10 takes a victim of domestic violence a while  
11 to actually trust who they're confiding in  
12 and who they're working with. It's -- like I  
13 said before, it can take up to eight times  
14 for a victim to leave before they finally  
15 actually leave.

16 So if you lose an advocate while  
17 you're in the middle of working with a  
18 victim, how does that impact the progression  
19 of some of your case -- of your caseloads?

20 MS. GERHARDT: Thank you.

21 Often they won't come back for  
22 services. So if they're working closely with  
23 an advocate and they've developed a  
24 relationship and that advocate for whatever

1           reason is no longer there, that could be  
2           enough for them to say, You know what, I  
3           didn't get the assistance I needed, I don't  
4           want to start over again.

5                     And I think that is one of the issues:  
6           We ask survivors over and over and over again  
7           to tell their story, which is very  
8           re-traumatizing.

9                     SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON:  
10          Absolutely. Thank you so much.

11                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

12                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

13                    No more Assemblymembers. Any  
14          Senators?

15                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, we have  
16          Senator Cordell Cleare.

17                    SENATOR CLEARE: Thank you, everyone,  
18          for your testimony.

19                    I just -- you know, you all do a  
20          fantastic job of talking really fast --

21                    (Laughter.)

22                    SENATOR CLEARE: -- so I missed a few  
23          things a little bit.

24                    And SAGE, you know, I'm a fan of your

1 work and you're also in my district, so I  
2 feel really lucky to have you there. You  
3 said \$300,000 for housing and then I think  
4 there's some -- \$150,000 for HIV-impacted  
5 older people. But I missed the other 150.

6 MR. OKMA: Yeah, of course. Thank you  
7 so much.

8 The restoration of 150,000 to support  
9 our multilingual programs and services.  
10 So we currently offer programs and services  
11 in English, Spanish, Cantonese, and Mandarin.  
12 And the support of the Legislature really  
13 helps us provide that, and we'd love to  
14 expand for more language options as well.

15 And then the other designation was for  
16 our SAGE --

17 SENATOR CLEARE: 250,000.

18 MR. OKMA: 260 for SAGEVets. And I  
19 will say that that is fiscal year '22 funding  
20 levels -- we saw a reduction last fiscal  
21 year, where we got 150,000 -- and we saw a  
22 really big impact in what we were able to do  
23 specifically in being able to partner with  
24 more providers and affiliates outside of

1 New York City to make sure that we provide  
2 the service.

3 It is the only program that  
4 specifically serves LGBTQ+ older veterans,  
5 and we would really like to see it restored  
6 back to those fiscal year '22 levels.

7 SENATOR CLEARE: Thank you so much.

8 I'm sorry, I don't know your -- could  
9 you tell me about the DAP program?

10 MS. SICILIA: Yes.

11 SENATOR CLEARE: Yeah.

12 MS. SICILIA: Yes. From Empire  
13 Justice, Emilia Sicilia.

14 SENATOR CLEARE: I wanted to hear a  
15 little bit -- you went down a little bit and  
16 I didn't hear everything.

17 MS. SICILIA: Thank you for -- I'm  
18 happy to talk at length about DAP.

19 (Laughter.)

20 MS. SICILIA: So we in the DAP program  
21 are facing many obstacles in helping our  
22 clients overcome many of the hurdles that  
23 they're facing. And they've been compounded  
24 by the pandemic and compounded by the

1           difficulties at the Social Security  
2           Administration with severe understaffing that  
3           has resulted in a lot of difficulty in our  
4           clients accessing those services.

5                        So although --

6                        SENATOR CLEARE: Just tell me what DAP  
7           was for, because the {inaudible} --

8                        MS. SICILIA: Excuse me?

9                        SENATOR CLEARE: DAP, what is that?

10                      MS. SICILIA: Oh, DAP is the  
11           Disability Advocacy Program.

12                      SENATOR CLEARE: Oh, okay.

13                      MS. SICILIA: So we're assisting  
14           individuals who have been denied benefits and  
15           representing them in their appeals.

16                      And so we are -- it is a -- the  
17           appeals process is really difficult, lasts a  
18           long time. And at this moment we're  
19           really -- we're addressing a lot of  
20           COVID-related obstacles due to closures of  
21           Social Security. They were closed for two  
22           years and reopened with real severe  
23           understaffing.

24                      And we also are representing many

1 people with Long COVID claims. That's  
2 something that is amounting to new  
3 challenges, in that it's not very well  
4 understood. Those claims present a lot of  
5 difficulty also in obtaining the evidence  
6 that's required. And again, there's just a  
7 lot of access issues for our clients.

8 And so although we've -- we're really  
9 grateful for the executive funding increase  
10 last year, we really do need the Legislature  
11 to restore the \$3 million add-on in order to  
12 continue to meet the current demands that  
13 have been compounded -- presented by the  
14 pandemic.

15 SENATOR CLEARE: Thank you.

16 MS. SICILIA: Sure.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay.

18 Senator Rolison.

19 SENATOR ROLISON: Thank you, Chair.

20 This question is for Ms. Gerhardt.

21 There was a time when crime victims  
22 were essentially voiceless -- and I'm going  
23 back many years, as a retired police officer  
24 of 26 years. And there was the term "crime

1 victim-centered approach," which we were all  
2 trained in and we needed to really do more  
3 for the victims. And this was through the  
4 entire system. And systems were put in  
5 place, money was allocated, groups got  
6 together, we collaborated, we weren't in  
7 silos because it was about the crime victim.

8 In the Executive Budget there is  
9 additional money for DCJS in a variety of  
10 areas that are important. There is a small  
11 increase, I think, in the Crime Victim  
12 Compensation Fund, probably -- definitely not  
13 enough. But now we're hearing from you,  
14 we've heard this from others in other  
15 hearings and other testimony, where we're  
16 stagnant and we're going backwards in the  
17 area of domestic violence and crime victim  
18 services.

19 And speaking with my colleague from  
20 the Assembly, I think we're talking a little  
21 over \$11 million. Is that the number, what  
22 needs to be restored, reallocated, or  
23 increased to make sure, as we've heard from  
24 all of the members of the Legislature today

1 about the importance of having those  
2 advocates, having people you can go to, even  
3 creating places that -- where every service  
4 was brought together so you weren't going  
5 from one place to another, because people  
6 wouldn't go. Or they'd go to the first step  
7 and they wouldn't go to the second or to the  
8 third.

9 I'd like to take the position, too, as  
10 my colleague, that maybe this is an  
11 oversight. Because if you think about the  
12 money that's committed in DCJS and other  
13 agencies related to public safety, that's not  
14 a whole heck of a lot of money, in my  
15 estimation. And I hope that when this budget  
16 is debated and people work together to try to  
17 create some changes, that will be one of  
18 them.

19 I'd like to be helpful to the extent  
20 that I can. But I realize, as a freshman  
21 Senator, I won't have probably those  
22 opportunities other than to advocate for you.  
23 But we're going backwards. We've made a lot  
24 of strides, and now here we are in 2023 and

1           it sounds like we're talking about what we  
2           were talking about in the '80s and in the  
3           early '90s when these changes were made.

4                    MS. GERHARDT:    You know -- thank you,  
5           Senator.  We're doing a lot of talking about  
6           public safety and increases in crime rates,  
7           and very little about crime victims.  Very  
8           little about crime victims.

9                    SENATOR ROLISON:  Right.  Because  
10          they're there no matter what the crime rate  
11          is.  Somebody is a victim.  And that is the  
12          loneliest place in the world to be if you  
13          don't have people there to help you through  
14          it.

15                   I give you all the credit in the world  
16          for what you're doing -- all of you.  Thank  
17          you.

18                   MS. GERHARDT:    Thank you.

19                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER:  Thank you.

20                   I believe I'm the last Senator.

21                   So for Stephen, Supportive Housing.

22                   MR. PIASECKI:    Yes.

23                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER:  So you described  
24          the continuing saga of the older programs

1 getting so little reimbursements instead of  
2 the newer ones.

3 So I've been telling people for years,  
4 just don't do the older contracts. Move your  
5 resources to the newer contracts. Trust me,  
6 the state will come up with the money rather  
7 than have nobody provide those programs.  
8 Because it's ridiculous that you've been  
9 strung along like this forever and that we  
10 don't make progress on this. So that's just  
11 my advocacy position.

12 Shelter allowance. Seriously, they're  
13 paying you almost less than -- a little more  
14 than half of what they're paying the newer  
15 contracts. You're supposed to be doing the  
16 same services for --

17 MR. PIASECKI: It's 10 percent.

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Pardon me?

19 MR. PIASECKI: Ten percent of what is  
20 in the newest contracts.

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Far less.

22 So, you know, the punch line is  
23 apparently we think you can keep doing it  
24 because you keep doing it. So stop doing it.

1 MR. PIASECKI: Well, some of --  
2 there's been some erosion. There's certainly  
3 erosion in the physical plants of many of the  
4 early supportive housing buildings.

5 And that's why last year you guys were  
6 gracious enough to create the Preservation  
7 Program.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Because you know  
9 what, we're desperate for supportive housing.

10 MR. PIASECKI: Yeah.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No one's letting  
12 those really go. You just have to -- we're  
13 playing a game of chicken, and -- if I'm the  
14 government in this conversation, and we're  
15 winning. And that's wrong, in my opinion.

16 Shelter allowance also. How many  
17 families might not be evicted every year in  
18 New York State if we just adjusted the  
19 shelter allowance, even just for inflation?

20 Does anybody -- do you have any  
21 calculations on that?

22 MS. SICILIA: I would be happy to  
23 bring that back to my colleagues who prepared  
24 our written testimony on that point and be in

1 touch with you with the specifics.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Because I'm  
3 almost going to guarantee we are spending so  
4 much more money on the emergency rents in  
5 assorted programs that we're paying because  
6 we just won't pay a realistic shelter  
7 allowance.

8 So it's -- but I would like you to --

9 MS. SICILIA: We'd agree with you.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- get back to me  
11 with any data you have.

12 And on domestic violence, you talked  
13 about the number -- the demand going up so  
14 much during the pandemic and post-pandemic.  
15 Are you also seeing growth in the number of  
16 victims of sex trafficking coming to you for  
17 help? And are they eligible for the same  
18 kinds of services that your other --

19 MS. GERHARDT: Yes. So that the pool  
20 of service providers that I've been talking  
21 about includes providers of services for  
22 trafficking victims.

23 I'd have to give you some more -- you  
24 know, go back and research if there's been a

1 bump in the number of trafficking survivors  
2 that have been provided assistance. I'm  
3 happy to do that.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Great. I  
5 appreciate it.

6 And thank you all for the very hard  
7 work you do.

8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
10 Thank you for being here with us. And I want  
11 to echo the thank you for the work you do to  
12 help New Yorkers.

13 MR. OKMA: Thanks.

14 MS. GERHARDT: Thanks.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Our last, our  
16 final panel, Panel E, Hudson Valley National  
17 Center for Veteran Reintegrating, and  
18 New York State Council of Veterans  
19 Organizations.

20 (Pause.)

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So sometimes we  
22 say we save the best for last. Thank you  
23 both for staying with us throughout this day.

24 And we can go first with

1 Hudson Valley.

2 MR. WALTERS: Thank you. My name is  
3 Gavin Walters. Thank you, Senate and  
4 Assembly members, for allowing me to sit here  
5 and represent our military community.

6 I sit here on behalf of the  
7 Ulster County Dwyer Program, which is under  
8 the Hudson Valley National Center for Veteran  
9 Reintegration, and have the great privilege  
10 of sitting here as the facilitator of the  
11 New York State Dwyer Coalition, also known as  
12 the Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer Support  
13 Project, which is officially a state program.

14 2022 was a tremendous year for the  
15 PFC Joseph Dwyer Program because it was  
16 expanded to every county in New York State.  
17 This will allow every veteran and their  
18 family to become connected to veteran peers.

19 The Dwyer program has allowed  
20 servicemembers to feel equally represented,  
21 because time, duty, and length of service do  
22 not matter when you put on the uniform. If  
23 you're homeless, let's pay for a day or two  
24 for a hotel. If you enjoy the outdoors,

1 well, let us take a hike or camp out. Equine  
2 Encounters, Mindfulness, and groups help  
3 continue the camaraderie that we experienced  
4 in the service. That is what the Dwyer  
5 counties represent, and that is what was  
6 brought to every county in New York State.

7 Now, for every Dwyer county to be  
8 represented, we knew a united front and a  
9 collective body were needed. In  
10 December 2020, the New York State Dwyer  
11 Coalition, under the Hudson Valley National  
12 Center for Veteran Reintegration, was  
13 created. We have been meeting once a month  
14 to discuss challenges that we have seen in  
15 our communities. Guest speakers as well as  
16 representatives from our New York State  
17 Assembly and Senate sit at the table and hear  
18 our voices. Our open and well-represented  
19 meetings give our community a large voice.

20 With the support and leadership of  
21 OMH, DVS, the Dwyer Evaluation Team, and the  
22 Governor's Office, the Dwyer Coalition uses  
23 its voice to help with the collaboration to  
24 assist new counties to develop their

1 programs. The collaboration amongst these  
2 departments reflects the unity that was  
3 created within the Dwyer Coalition.

4 Our importance for being at any table  
5 means that we are being represented  
6 collectively, as one voice, when issues may  
7 bother us or challenges might affect us. For  
8 each of the counties that house a  
9 Dwyer program, representation is very  
10 important, because every Dwyer program in  
11 their respective county is supposed to  
12 service their community uniquely and with  
13 100 percent autonomy. Those two caveats have  
14 allowed every program to help an armed forces  
15 member that received a dishonorable or  
16 honorable discharge.

17 Collectively, many Dwyer programs have  
18 shared the concern of the program never  
19 receiving an increase in funding since its  
20 enactment in 2012. The Dwyer program has  
21 evolved into peers transporting veterans,  
22 assisting with food insecurities, advocating  
23 for housing, and many more. With inflation  
24 and the cost of living increasing, some

1 programs have been able to offset the  
2 additional cost with fundraising and  
3 community generosity, which sometimes doesn't  
4 cover the cost of many services.

5 Sitting here as a Jamaican-born  
6 immigrant that honorably served in the  
7 U.S. Air Force and now who is a disabled  
8 veteran with invisible wounds fighting for a  
9 service connection, I understand the  
10 advocacy. That is why funding the  
11 Dwyer Coalition and an increase in funding  
12 for Dwyer programs would positively impact  
13 each county.

14 Thank you for your time.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

16 Kirby?

17 MR. HANNAN: Well, don't be fooled by  
18 Gavin's title, Hudson Valley National Center  
19 for Veteran Reintegration. That's his job,  
20 okay? But what he does with Dwyer is he's  
21 got at least 30 to 40 counties that are  
22 participating on a weekly basis -- on a  
23 monthly basis in his furthering of --  
24 {cellphone interruption}.

1                   Yeah, I know. Don't worry about it.

2                   You know, it has to happen. I apologize.

3                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay.

4                   MR. HANNAN: And what he's done is  
5                   he's brought the Dwyer program to a brand-new  
6                   level. It went from 30 counties to  
7                   60 counties. Thank you so much, okay.

8                   And what is Dwyer doing now? Every  
9                   peer-to-peer situation is something that's  
10                  happening at a post level. You don't walk  
11                  into a brick building and say, I'm here to  
12                  get peer-to-peer mentoring. No, it's  
13                  something that happens through a veteran's  
14                  service officer, it's something that happens  
15                  in a whole variety of ways.

16                  So first of all, thank you, Gavin, for  
17                  bringing this. We've been talking about this  
18                  for about eight years. And some folks here  
19                  recognized the Dwyer program eight years ago  
20                  in four counties -- and I won't mention what  
21                  counties they were. But nonetheless, Dwyer  
22                  has now migrated to the whole state.

23                  Terrific. All right?

24                  Having said that, at every county

1           there's a veteran service officer, there's  
2           county veteran service officers, there's VFW  
3           veteran service officers, there's DAV veteran  
4           service officers, AMVET veteran service  
5           officers, and Legion veteran service  
6           officers. The funding was just increased for  
7           them to about \$25,000, the state's share.

8                         But where we're going from here is  
9           keep an eye on the veterans service officer,  
10          because not only does that person perform a  
11          claims function -- and you heard from DVS  
12          earlier today -- but that person is also a  
13          leader, a veteran leader in their community.

14                        So when we talk about veteran service  
15          officers, you've got to understand that  
16          that's also an integral part of Dwyer's  
17          peer-to-peer program. So keep in mind  
18          funding for that.

19                        Finally, Veterans Treatment Court and  
20          the Veterans Defense Program. Okay, you've  
21          got two pieces of that. Veterans Treatment  
22          Court is mostly for misdemeanors, all right?  
23          I'm going to say that the Veterans Defense  
24          Program is largely felony level, all right?



1           come to think of it.

2           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Go ahead.

3           MR. HANNAN: I have to give you guys,  
4           everybody up there, the Hard Ass Award.

5           (Laughter.)

6           MR. HANNAN: Yeah.

7           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: How'd you know?

8           (Laughter.)

9           MR. HANNAN: Seriously.

10          (Laughter.)

11          MR. HANNAN: You've heard it before  
12          but, you know, you people are just fantastic.  
13          And thank you very much.

14          CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We'll take it.

15          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yeah, we'll  
16          take it.

17          We go to Assemblyman Ra.

18          ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you two very  
19          much for your patience today, and certainly  
20          for your service and serving our veterans.

21          So Mr. Walters, quickly, I mean, I  
22          think it's so great to hear from somebody  
23          like you that the state has now invested to  
24          grow this program. And it takes people like

1           you to, you know, make this program great.  
2           And that's why we know it's always worked is  
3           because of the people who've walked in those  
4           same shoes that are working with our  
5           veterans.

6                     But what have you seen in those  
7           counties that are, you know, putting this  
8           into effect for the first time as a result of  
9           the funding last year? Is there just a  
10          growing need to continue investing in this?  
11          I would think there is.

12                    MR. WALTERS: Investing financially or  
13          just investing --

14                    ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Financially and  
15          otherwise.

16                    MR. WALTERS: Definitely financially,  
17          yes. Time, yes.

18                    I sit with the individuals from OMH,  
19          DVS, as well as the Dwyer Evaluation Team,  
20          where we sit and discuss what can be done  
21          regarding the counties that's trying to  
22          figure out what to do if they're a different  
23          process -- because every county is unique,  
24          every county is different. So each county

1 has their own, you know, challenges or, you  
2 know, questions about, okay, what should I  
3 do, how can I run this, you know, who can I  
4 hire. You know, it goes through a different  
5 process. So it's an ongoing thing.

6 But financially, absolutely. One of  
7 the things that, you know, I sit here is  
8 because the Dwyer program has not been --  
9 since its enactment about 10 years ago, it  
10 has not been increased. So just from the  
11 program's deliverables of people doing things  
12 like going and helping individuals with  
13 groceries or sitting with someone at the  
14 store or whatever it is, you know, the  
15 service has increased just from the  
16 peer-to-peer, but just -- you know, they've  
17 actually turned into like case managers, but  
18 without being case managers. Advocates. You  
19 know, speaking with someone at 2 o'clock in  
20 the morning, where I've taken a phone call  
21 from someone suicidal.

22 Those are things that we've done  
23 beyond, you know, just our office hours or  
24 just beyond what we have to do.

1                   But absolutely, the need for  
2                   financial -- you know, a monetary gain would  
3                   be great for a lot of the programs.

4                   ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Great. Thank you.

5                   And Mr. Hannan, I don't know if you  
6                   were here earlier, but when we were talking  
7                   to the director --

8                   MR. HANNAN: DVS?

9                   ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Yes. We mentioned  
10                  the grant program that was in the \$5 million  
11                  in grants that was put in for veterans  
12                  service organizations.

13                  MR. HANNAN: That's for infrastructure  
14                  improvements and the like.

15                  ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Yeah, in last year's  
16                  budget.

17                  And the number of applicants seemed to  
18                  be very low. So are local veterans  
19                  organizations aware of this? I just --

20                  MR. HANNAN: You just asked my  
21                  favorite question.

22                  You know, the problem as I see it --  
23                  and, you know, I'm outspoken, and I apologize  
24                  for that. But DVS is treating it as a

1 procurement program, not a grant program. So  
2 if it's a procurement program, they can't  
3 answer any questions.

4 Have you ever navigated that grants  
5 gateway? I have. It's a bear. It's  
6 incredibly counterintuitive.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

9 To the Senate.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

11 (Slowly.) Senator Jessica

12 Scarcella-Spanton.

13 SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: Ooh, very  
14 good. Thank you.

15 (Laughter, applause.)

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I have been  
17 making mistakes with her name all day.  
18 That's why we're laughing.

19 SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: It is --  
20 it's tough.

21 But Kirby, Gavin, I just wanted to  
22 thank you both so much for being here today  
23 and being patient and making us laugh at the  
24 end of the day also.

1 (Laughter.)

2 SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: But the  
3 Assemblyman asked the question I was going to  
4 ask -- is, you know, how is that \$5 million  
5 that's not being allocated in the  
6 Executive Budget going to affect you?

7 And I also wanted to ask if the -- if  
8 it's sufficient, the amount of peer-to-peer  
9 funding that you have to include all the  
10 counties this year -- if it's enough, if you  
11 need more. I just wanted to -- I know it's a  
12 very, very important program, so I want to  
13 make sure that it's being appropriately  
14 funded.

15 MR. HANNAN: Well, it's different  
16 things for different people. Gavin said it,  
17 all right? So, you know, you have to look at  
18 it in terms of one county maybe is adequately  
19 funded and another county has obviously  
20 significantly more needs. Rural versus  
21 urban, et cetera. Transportation versus  
22 homeless, you know. So all of that is going  
23 on.

24 I can't say whether more funding needs

1 to -- my testimony says that Dwyer ought to  
2 be allowed to evaluate this in a grassroots  
3 way with SUNY, and that at the end of some  
4 budget period you need to take a second look  
5 at, okay, where do we allocate our funds.

6 Because I think that it's a very  
7 important question, and I don't -- I think  
8 that there's not a clear-cut answer for it.  
9 Certainly I don't have one.

10 SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: And that  
11 makes sense. If you're in an area that is  
12 more densely populated with veterans, whether  
13 it's, you know, if you're near a VA, or if  
14 you're up in Fort Drum, and maybe that's just  
15 the area that they tend to gravitate to, they  
16 may need more funding than an area who  
17 doesn't have as many veterans.

18 So it gives you the opportunity to  
19 have more flexibility with how you spend that  
20 money. Is that correct?

21 MR. HANNAN: Well, yes.

22 And I think a lot of people don't  
23 realize that Dwyer is actually -- a lot of  
24 people think that it's connected with DVS.

1           It's really not. OMH contracts with Dwyer,  
2           with the county OMH as well as the county  
3           Division of Veteran Services, and that's how  
4           they figure out what CBOs and what  
5           not-for-profits are out there that can  
6           provide some of the services that are  
7           specific.

8                     Do me a favor, don't listen me. Just  
9           Google "WHY6Vet." WHY, 6, Vet.

10                    MR. WALTERS: We Have Your 6. It's  
11           called "We Have Your 6." It's an  
12           organization that helps veterans in need that  
13           are suicidal and just going through the  
14           issues that so many of us, you know, have  
15           experienced.

16                    But they are one of those  
17           organizations that's out there that have been  
18           helping many veterans. But it's WHY6, but  
19           it's We Have Your 6.

20                    MR. HANNAN: And for your information,  
21           because I've heard several people asking  
22           about New York City and certainly  
23           Staten Island, Senator. And DVS just --  
24           New York City, just issued how they're going

1 to administer Dwyer for New York City. So  
2 it's -- and if anybody wants it, just give me  
3 a shout and I'll --

4 SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: I want it.

5 (Laughter.)

6 MR. HANNAN: Okay. All right,  
7 Senator.

8 SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: Thank you  
9 so much.

10 MR. HANNAN: You bet. Okay.

11 SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: I  
12 appreciate it.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman  
15 Eachus.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: There we go.  
17 Thank you.

18 Thank you for your service, and thank  
19 you for helping out vets. It's very  
20 important.

21 Just recently when I was home, one of  
22 the complaints I heard from a member of the  
23 posts has to do with brick and mortar, and  
24 that is the fact that there really are no

1 funds out there that are available for posts  
2 to fix their facilities unless they spend the  
3 money first.

4 And many of them told me: You know  
5 what, if we had the money to spend, I  
6 wouldn't go through all the paperwork to try  
7 to get grants from New York State to work on  
8 these buildings.

9 MR. HANNAN: Let me -- let me correct  
10 you on something.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Sure.

12 MR. HANNAN: The way DVS has worked it  
13 out, and the way I know DASNY, Dormitory  
14 Authority of the State of New York, has  
15 actually interacted on this issue is that  
16 they've got a method by which they can  
17 reimburse the contractor.

18 So the 5 million that we were talking  
19 about before for infrastructure improvements,  
20 that can actually be contracted for with the  
21 contractor, and then DASNY will take over and  
22 execute the contract and will actually pay.  
23 So you don't have to spend the money first.

24 That was the case a while back, in the

1 last round of -- I'll call them crest  
2 fundings -- but not this time.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Well, I thank you  
4 for that. I deal with a number of folks that  
5 are even older than myself, and maybe they  
6 remember from those points in time.

7 Gavin, I just wanted to ask you real  
8 quickly, how does the Dwyer program work with  
9 the county service officers?

10 MR. WALTERS: So depending on which  
11 county you go to, you know, it might be  
12 different.

13 I could speak about Ulster County. We  
14 have a great relationship with Mark Cozzupoli  
15 at the Ulster VSA, where we will meet --  
16 actually, last year we met once a month just  
17 to speak about the veterans in the community,  
18 the veterans that are being impacted, such as  
19 the ones that were homeless or just had some  
20 type of need of services. But we always will  
21 work with one another.

22 We have luncheons that we'll actually  
23 sit at different tables together to share  
24 each other's resources. If a veteran -- we

1 know a lot of servicemembers will not go to  
2 the VSA. So when they do actually come to  
3 our office, we'll actually speak to them and  
4 say, Hey, you know, have you gotten your  
5 service connection? Or what do you know  
6 about benefits? And we'll actually escort  
7 them to there, speak to them collectively and  
8 say, Hey, this is the person that you should  
9 speak to regarding service connection, and  
10 then come back to our office and then see  
11 what you want to do.

12 So that relationship really blends,  
13 you know, when you work really well with your  
14 VSA.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: That's great to  
16 hear.

17 The final thing that I would say is  
18 you mentioned about OMH. It is my hope that  
19 OMH is working very closely with you.  
20 Because when you have a veteran that calls up  
21 and has an immediate, serious problem, there  
22 should be somebody in OMH, a professional --  
23 I mean, thank you for what you do, thank you  
24 for all the volunteers and so on like that,

1 but there should be a professional also  
2 available to answer the questions and help  
3 that particular --

4 MR. WALTERS: They actually sit at our  
5 coalition meetings monthly. So they sit at  
6 our meetings, and anytime we have an issue or  
7 anything like that, they actually will  
8 address us and speak to us. So their  
9 relationship is really close to us now.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Good.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Tom  
13 O'Mara.

14 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you, gentlemen,  
15 for the great work you do day in and day out  
16 for our veterans.

17 I think, as we've heard testimony  
18 throughout the day today, kind of the state's  
19 attention to veteran services is woeful and  
20 could be a heck of a lot better. But you're  
21 doing a great job with what you have.

22 Can you comment at all, are we making  
23 any progress in the treatment of  
24 post-traumatic stress and how that fits into

1 the whole equation of our mental health and,  
2 frankly, addiction issues of so many  
3 veterans? What kind of progress is being  
4 made there?

5 MR. WALTERS: Well, I think the  
6 biggest hurdle is the reintegration. Because  
7 we know once someone's in service and once  
8 they get out is two different attitudes.  
9 Because we'll see someone when they're in the  
10 most harsh situation.

11 And because there's not that piece of,  
12 like, connecting them right before they get  
13 to our county, then it becomes that challenge  
14 of trying to reach out to them and say, Hey,  
15 how you doing, what's going on, are you  
16 experiencing any issues?

17 And we know the young veterans will  
18 not reach out to anybody unless -- until, you  
19 know, they need to get somewhere. But the  
20 older veterans, we do know that they will --  
21 you know, they're more willing to reach out  
22 to someone. If we go to the VA or wherever,  
23 they'll be willing to speak to us.

24 But the younger veterans are the ones

1           that we're always trying to reach out to,  
2           because they're the ones that's usually not  
3           willing because -- as a young veteran that  
4           came out myself, that didn't have any service  
5           connections, just got -- you know, just  
6           was I'll say booted out, I didn't want to  
7           speak to anybody because I didn't feel like I  
8           qualified, as well as I didn't think anybody  
9           understood.

10                         It took a long time until another  
11           veteran talked to me and said, Hey, Gavin,  
12           you might qualify for some VA services, speak  
13           to someone. And that connection with another  
14           peer actually connected me. And that's what  
15           usually happens with a lot of the veterans.

16                         So just for the PTSD, or just speaking  
17           to someone with that, it's about the  
18           reintegration part where we actually -- if we  
19           just speak to somebody if like when they --  
20           you know, if we knew that they were in  
21           combat, if we knew that they were deployed  
22           somewhere and we were able to talk to them  
23           right before they got -- came back to the  
24           States, that would be a big impact.

1                   That would be so good that we could  
2                   say, Hey, we know that you're going through  
3                   something, come to our office. Or, listen,  
4                   if you're not able to come to our office,  
5                   we'll talk to you, we'll talk to your  
6                   family -- or educate their families, which is  
7                   the biggest component where eight, nine times  
8                   out of 10, it's the families that's reaching  
9                   out to us.

10                   So if we could educate the family  
11                   members to say, Hey, listen, if you know your  
12                   sister, brother, cousin, or whoever is in  
13                   this situation, these are the tools that you  
14                   should have. Have a number that's on text or  
15                   speed dial that you could just reach out to  
16                   somebody while you're comforting that person  
17                   in the corner and they're crying. Listen,  
18                   don't make them feel like they're, you know,  
19                   isolated or anything like that, just give  
20                   them the necessary tools to understand that  
21                   they're not alone, and then reach out to that  
22                   person or that friend that they might have  
23                   that could get connected to them.

24                   So it's an interesting process. It

1           just depends on where you might -- who you  
2           might speak to, who you might go to. But  
3           there's no real good answer for that. I just  
4           say I always go back to the reintegration  
5           part, where if we can actually speak to  
6           someone when they leave service, that will be  
7           the biggest component to actually dealing  
8           with that.

9                         SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you.

10                        CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We do have  
11           Senator, I believe, Ashby. Senator Ashby.

12                        SENATOR ASHBY: Thank you,  
13           Madam Chair.

14                        Gavin, Kirby, thanks for being here  
15           today. Thanks for your testimony. Thanks  
16           for all the work you do every day.

17                        The Dwyer program in Ulster -- is it  
18           growing?

19                        MR. WALTERS: Yes, it's growing. With  
20           the funds and with the individuals and the  
21           individuals that see what we're doing, it is  
22           absolutely growing.

23                        SENATOR ASHBY: And the other members  
24           across the state in your program, are their

1 Dwyer programs growing as well in terms of  
2 participation?

3 MR. WALTERS: I believe so, yes.

4 SENATOR ASHBY: And when you look at  
5 the increase that we saw in this  
6 Executive Budget, do you think it's  
7 commensurate with the growth that we're  
8 seeing in Dwyer throughout the state? Or do  
9 you think it should be more?

10 MR. WALTERS: It should be more,  
11 absolutely.

12 The 7.7 million was a great impact  
13 because it actually gave every county a Dwyer  
14 program, which was huge. But it didn't cover  
15 what the Dwyer programs were actually doing  
16 in the counties.

17 Like for us, I'm the actually only  
18 full-time individual in the county, and then  
19 everybody else is part-time. And then we  
20 have one person part-time on Monday and  
21 another person three days part-time, and then  
22 one two days part-time. And it's all around.

23 But then when you have a veteran  
24 that's in crisis, I'm usually the one that

1 would actually default to that. And then if  
2 someone's in crisis at nighttime, I'll be the  
3 one that will default to that.

4 So the burden will actually default to  
5 the program managers, anyone in that  
6 full-time role, to really do -- you know,  
7 interact with someone. Where if we had  
8 individuals to really cover a lot of this  
9 stuff, it will be a big impact.

10 SENATOR ASHBY: Yeah.

11 MR. WALTERS: And a lot of our funds  
12 even go to paying for hotel fees and stuff  
13 like that. So it's through fundraising that  
14 we actually -- that we can pay for a hotel  
15 for our veteran.

16 SENATOR ASHBY: Right.

17 And when you see how much the  
18 Dwyer program has grown over the years and  
19 the effectiveness that it's had, you know, at  
20 this point, with the division being elevated  
21 to an agency, it gives us the opportunity --  
22 more of an opportunity, I believe, to make it  
23 a permanent part of the budget. You know, so  
24 that way, you know, we don't have to come

1 back and ask for this.

2 And I think the other programs that  
3 Kirby had mentioned, the legal funding -- and  
4 reintegration really as a whole, right, we  
5 have the opportunity to take, you know, a  
6 50,000-foot-level perspective on this and  
7 really mold this.

8 So I really hope that you're in  
9 contact with Director DeCohen on this and  
10 some of the other people that made this  
11 program -- made this, you know, elevation  
12 happen behind the scenes. Because we do have  
13 a real opportunity here, and I hope that the  
14 Governor hears what you have to say on this.

15 MR. HANNAN: Senator, you asked if the  
16 program is growing, and I believe it is. I  
17 don't think we have specific statistics that  
18 can point to that.

19 But women are getting left behind  
20 right now because they don't go to the post  
21 to engage in peer-to-peer-type activities on  
22 a regular basis. So if you're expecting this  
23 program to grow, I think you have to take a  
24 look at women veterans. They're 17 percent

1 of the veteran population right now, okay?

2 But hey, you know, I'm part of the  
3 veteran population that -- at sixty -- at  
4 79 years old -- trying to give myself a break  
5 there -- you know, I got eight years of life  
6 expectancy. So what's going to happen to  
7 that veteran population? It's going to rise  
8 to at least 25 percent women.

9 And what we need to do now is start to  
10 plan so that women veterans have the type of  
11 peer-to-peer counseling activities that make  
12 sense -- childcare, women's health, all of  
13 those things. Because this is just the tip  
14 of the iceberg in terms of the changing  
15 dynamic.

16 SENATOR ASHBY: Thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

18 One more Senator, Cordell Cleare.

19 SENATOR CLEARE: My questions were  
20 mostly answered.

21 First of all, thank you so much for  
22 your service. Thank you for hanging in there  
23 with us today. You get an award, too.

24 (Laughter.)

1                   SENATOR CLEARE: This is the first one  
2 I've ever gotten.

3                   But I just wondered, is there a place  
4 where all the posts are compiled? Lists of  
5 posts. Are they registered in one place?

6                   MR. HANNAN: Yes.

7                   MR. WALTERS: Yeah.

8                   SENATOR CLEARE: I would like to know  
9 all the posts in my district.

10                  MR. HANNAN: That's yet another thing.  
11 I'll send you the DVS New York City  
12 information. And I'll send -- there are not  
13 enough posts in New York City, but I'll send  
14 you the posts in New York City.

15                  SENATOR CLEARE: Right. Right.

16                  I'd like to know which ones are there  
17 and where the need might be. I'm interested.  
18 So thank you.

19                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So I think the  
20 Senate is closed.

21                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thanks.

22                  So I want to thank you both for being  
23 here, sticking with us till the end. And --

24                  MR. WALTERS: Would it be okay if I

1 submit some other information? Because I --  
2 that I've brought to you guys as well on your  
3 email?

4 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Sure. You  
5 know, if you have anything you want to add,  
6 you can send -- make sure to send information  
7 to myself and Senator Krueger's office, and  
8 we will make sure it's distributed to all the  
9 members.

10 In fact, anybody can submit  
11 information regarding -- before the hearing  
12 ends, people can submit testimony. So we may  
13 have some other written materials that have  
14 been submitted, but we'll make sure that it's  
15 distributed to all of the members of the  
16 respective committees.

17 I want to thank you for the work you  
18 do and staying with us till the end of this  
19 hearing.

20 MR. WALTERS: Thank you.

21 MR. HANNAN: Thank you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So the  
23 Human Services hearing is now over.

24 We ask you to join us, if you're

1 listening, and colleagues, tomorrow morning  
2 at 9:30, when we will have the  
3 Environmental Conservation hearing.

4 The hearing is adjourned.

5 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

6 (Whereupon, the budget hearing  
7 concluded at 7:09 p.m.)

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