BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE SENATE FINANCE
AND ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEES

JOINT LEGISLATIVE HEARING
In the Matter of the
2024-2025 EXECUTIVE BUDGET
ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS/
GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Hearing Room B
Legislative Office Building
Albany, New York

February 6, 2024
9:39 a.m.

PRESIDING:

Senator Liz Krueger
Chair, Senate Finance Committee

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

PRESENT:

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

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

Assemblyman Edward C. Braunstein
Chair, Assembly Committee on Cities

Senator Luis R. Sepúlveda
Chair, Senate Committee on Cities 1

Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr.
Chair, Assembly Committee on Local Governments

Senator Monica R. Martinez
Chair, Senate Committee on Local Government

Senator Rachel May
Chair, Senate Committee on Cities 2

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Local Government Officials/
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PRESENT: (Continued)

Assemblyman Harvey Epstein

Senator John C. Liu

Senator Jeremy A. Cooney

Assemblyman Charles D. Fall

Senator Andrew Gounardes

Assemblyman Jonathan G. Jacobson

Assemblyman Robert C. Carroll

Assemblyman William Conrad

Senator Shelley Mayer

Assemblyman Steven Otis

Assemblywoman Latrice Walker

Assemblywoman Rebecca A. Seawright

Assemblyman Chris Eachus

Assemblywoman MaryJane Shimsky

Senator Rob Rolison

Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon

Assemblywoman Yudelka Tapia

Assemblyman Al Taylor

Senator Roxanne J. Persaud

Assemblyman Michael Reilly

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PRESENT: (Continued)

Senator Cordell Cleare

Assemblyman Michael Tannousis

Assemblywoman Jessica González-Rojas

Assemblyman Zohran K. Mamdani

Senator Leroy Comrie

Assemblyman Nader J. Sayegh

Assemblyman Ari Brown

Assemblyman Jeff Gallahan

Senator Steven D. Rhoads

Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar

Assemblywoman Dana Levenberg

Assemblyman David I. Weprin

Senator Robert Jackson

Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow

Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman

Senator Samra G. Brouk

Assemblywoman Taylor Darling

Assemblyman Scott Gray

Senator Simcha Felder

Assemblyman Jonathan Rivera

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PRESENT: (Continued)

Assemblywoman Chantel Jackson

Assemblyman Steven Otis

Assemblyman Demond Meeks

Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal

Assemblywoman Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn

Assemblyman Alec Brook-Krasny

Senator Alexis Weik

Assemblyman Lester Chang

Assemblyman Michael Novakhov

Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy

Assemblyman Tony Simone

Senator George M. Borrello

Assemblyman Manny De Los Santos

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ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Good morning.

I'm Fred Thiele, chairman of the New York State Assembly's Local Governments Committee, and I am filling in for Ways and Means Chair Helene Weinstein as cochair of today's hearing.

Chair Weinstein is recovering from knee surgery and is hoping to join us soon. And by soon, I mean maybe as soon as this afternoon.

Today we begin the eighth in a series of hearings conducted by the joint fiscal committees of the Legislature regarding the Governor's proposed budget for fiscal year '24-'25. The hearings are conducted pursuant to the New York Constitution and the Legislative Law.

Today the Assembly Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee will hear testimony concerning the Governor's budget proposal for local governments.

I will now introduce the participating members from the Assembly, and after that Senator Krueger will introduce members from

the Senate. In addition, Ranking Ways and Means Member Ra will introduce members from his conference.

So Assembly Majority members participating today: Assemblymember Braunstein, who chairs our Cities Committee, which is one of the participating committees today; Assemblymember Darling; Assemblymember Fall; Assemblymember González-Rojas; Assemblymember Mamdani; Assemblymember Sayegh; Assemblymember Shimsky; Assemblymember Simon; Assemblymember Weprin; and Assemblymember Epstein. And Assemblymember Seawright.

Senator?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much. Good morning, everyone.

And I'm glad to be joined by my special guest partner today, Fred Thiele. Each hearing I've had a special guest Assembly leader.

I want to introduce Senator Roxanne Persaud; Senator Andrew Gounardes; Senator Sepúlveda; Senator Felder;

Senator Liu; Senator Martinez; Senator May; Senator Hoylman-Sigal; Senator Comrie; Senator Cleare.

And I'm going to turn it over to my ranker on Finance, Tom O'Mara, to introduce his members.

SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you, Chairwoman Krueger.

Good morning, everyone.

On our side we have our ranker on Local Governments, Senator Steve Rhoads; our ranker on the Cities 2 Committee, Senator Rob Rolison. And we also Senators Alexis Weik and George Borrello.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember Ra to introduce the Minority members.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

Good morning. We have with us this morning Assemblymember Reilly, our ranker on Cities; Assemblymember Ari Brown, our ranker on Local Governments; and Members Gallahan, Gray and Tannousis.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: The ground rules for today, before we start. The time limits

for witnesses: Governmental witnesses have 10 minutes, nongovernmental witnesses have three minutes.

Time limits for questions and answers by legislators: The chairs of the committee relevant to each governmental witness will get 10 minutes, and a second round of three minutes if desired. Ranking members of these committees will get five minutes each. All other members of relevant committees will get three minutes each.

To our witnesses, all written testimony has been submitted to the legislators in advance so we ask that all witnesses please do not read your testimony to us. Please, instead, summarize.

Legislators, please let myself or Senator Krueger know if you wish to question each witness or panel of witnesses. After the opening remarks of each witness or panel of witnesses has been concluded, the list will be closed.

Witnesses and legislators should locate the time clock and keep an eye on it.

Please note that when the clock is down to zero, you will be alerted that your time is up. Please be considerate and respect the clock so that everybody has a chance to be heard.

Please note that these time frames for questioning include both questions and answers. So members are respectfully requested not to commence a new question with insufficient time on the clock to permit the witness to answer.

Due to the length of our hearings, we have no alternative but to strictly enforce these time limits.

I should add that if any witnesses for later in the day are here and have not yet checked in, please do so at the top of the stairs.

I will now call our first witness, which is the mayor of the great City of New York, Eric Adams.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: (Mic off; inaudible.) I want to thank you, Chair Krueger, and in her absence my

long-time colleague, Brooklyn colleague Chair Weinstein, and Cities Chairs Sepúlveda and Braunstein, Local Government Chairs Martinez and Thiele, and members of the Assembly Ways and Means and the Senate Finance committees.

I feel like it was only days ago that I was sitting behind that chair as a State Senator serving in this body.

I am Eric Adams, the mayor of the City of New York. I'm proud to be here today with Jacques Jiha, director of our Office of Management and Budget.

And as I said in my recent State of the City, our city has been a place of possibilities. It is a place where you can start a business, start a family, and make your mark.

Two years ago we came into office with a clear mission: To keep the American dream burning bright and alive by protecting public safety, rebuilding our economy, and making our city more livable.

Twenty-four months later -- it only

has been two years; sometimes it's hard to believe. But being a mayor is like dog years -- one day is many days. But you look at the city, crime is down, jobs are up, and every day we are delivering for working-class New Yorkers.

You have been our partners. I talk about it all the time, how we were so successful in the last two years. To keep New York City on its upward trajectory, we must continue that strong participation.

Protecting public safety means granting New York City the power to shut down illegal smoke shops, so New Yorkers can walk down the street without being bombarded by illegal shops that operate outside the law and put New Yorkers at risk.

Rebuilding our economy means creating homes for New Yorkers that they can afford, so working-class families can earn a living, raise their kids, and make it in the greatest city in the world.

It also means preparing our young people to succeed. Reading and math test

scores are up, and we are outpacing the state, but if we don't extend mayoral accountability, we risk going backwards.

Making this city more livable means investing in cleaner streets and more vibrant public spaces. To continue those investments, we need financial support to cover the costs of the asylum-seeker humanitarian crisis.

These are urgent needs that support working-class families in New York City, and our administration is asking for your help once again.

But first, I want to thank you for your partnership in "getting stuff done" in New York last year. Thanks to your leadership, we will preserve more affordable housing as a result of J-51 benefits. We were able to make substantial investments in our young people’s education, and we were able to defray some of the substantial costs associated with managing the asylum-seeker humanitarian crisis.

New York City is proud to uphold our

legacy as a city of immigrants. And we are proud that we have demonstrated leadership and compassion, when so many others showed only cruelty. Over the past 22 months, we have provided more than 173,900 asylum-seekers with food, medical care, shelter, and education for their children. Of those, we have helped more than 107,000 -- more than 60 percent -- take the next step on their path to self-sufficiency and the American dream. We have helped tens of thousands file Temporary Protected Status, asylum and work authorization applications, bringing them one step closer to living a more stable life.

However, right now there are more than 66,000 asylum-seekers still in our care. When you add in the 55,000 longtime New Yorkers in the city's DHS system, as well as others, that means we have close to three times the number of people in our shelter system than when we came into office. And it all comes at a great cost to our city.

In November, due to the growing

asylum-seeker humanitarian crisis, sunsetting federal stimulus that was used to support vital programs, and the cost of funding long-ignored labor contracts, we faced a historically large $7.1 billion budget gap. We are legally required to balance fiscal years '24 and '25 in January. So we developed our financial plan without relying on federal assistance because, after many trips to Washington -- 10, to be exact -- I realized that the federal cavalry was not coming to the rescue.

We did not procrastinate. We knew that the faster we made the painful but necessary decisions, the faster we could stabilize the city's finances. We front-loaded our implementation of the plan, which includes multiple rounds of savings through our Plan to Eliminate the Gap, or PEG, a hiring freeze, and a freeze on other-than-personal-services spending, among other things.

These decisions proved to be effective, resulting in a record level of

$6.6 billion in PEG savings over fiscal years '24 and '25 in the November and January plans. And we accomplished all this without layoffs, without raising taxes or major disruptions to city services. Our savings include $1.7 billion that we achieved by taking steps to manage the cost of providing services for new arrivals by, one, reducing daily household costs; negotiating and renegotiating rates and rebidding contracts and shelters run by for-profit vendors; implementing intensive case management support to help asylum-seekers reach their final destinations and leave our care; and transitioning away from a humanitarian-relief-centered model of care to nonprofit service providers.

And in January, after a careful review of savings initiatives we implemented in November, we restored funding for critical initiatives protecting public safety, public spaces, and young people.

While these actions are important to New Yorkers, they represent less than

3 percent of the savings we achieved over the two years. But I need to be crystal clear: Although we have stabilized our financial situation through hard work and advanced planning, we're not out of the woods. But I want you to understand that -- we are not out of the woods.

While we appreciate the commitment the Governor made last year to cover one-third of the city's asylum-seeker costs, this was based on the premise that the city, the state, and the federal government would split the costs three ways. The federal government has only committed $156 million, the vast majority of which we have yet to receive because of a complicated reimbursement process. Despite our efforts, we cannot assume they will give us any more.

While we are deeply grateful for the $1 billion that was appropriated in this year's State Budget, the midyear adjustment of nearly $900 million, and the $1.1 billion in shelter costs proposed in the Governor's Executive Budget, we are still shouldering

the largest share of asylum-seeker costs.

In our budget, we assume that the state will meet its commitment to cover one-third of $10.6 billion in migrant costs over fiscal years '23 through '25. As of the Governor's Executive Budget, the state's commitment to the city is just over $3 billion, or roughly 28 percent, which is $400 million short.

This, along with $200 million in budget hits like the Distressed Hospitals Fund sales tax intercept and school aid reduction, grows our fiscal year '25 gap by $600 million. New Yorkers are already carrying most of the asylum-seeker costs. It's wrong to ask them to do more, and it's put our city in a precarious position. Today we're asking the state to increase its commitment and cover at least 50 percent of our costs.

Next, when it comes to our schools, we strongly support the Governor's four-year extension of mayoral accountability. Mayoral accountability allows us to make much-needed

systemic changes quickly, efficiently, and equitably. Under the current system, the buck stops with me, and you've seen that we were able to produce results.

Thanks to mayoral accountability, we have improved reading and math test scores over the last two years, outpacing the state, while closing racial disparities. We also launched New York City Reads, a nation-leading curriculum that teaches our kids the fundamentals of reading.

This is more than a curriculum change, it's a reading revolution. New York City Reads is already being implemented in 90 percent of our schools.

We need mayoral control to continue the success that we have produced. Chancellor Banks and I know that our public schools can change lives and produce the leaders of tomorrow.

In addition to having a good education, every child has a right to a safe, clean place to live, and that's what we want to do.

And I will turn over my time on time.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Okay. First I'd like to add that we've been joined by Assemblymember Carroll, Assemblymember Rivera, Assemblymember Eachus, and Assemblymember Tapia.

For our first question, I call upon Assemblymember Fall.

And we're also joined by Assemblymember Taylor. Sorry.

Oh, I'm sorry, we do the chairs first. My apologies.

Assemblymember Braunstein. Sorry.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you, Fred.

And thank you, Mr. Mayor and your team, for coming up here to join us today.

You mentioned you have 66,000 asylum-seekers in your care now. Does that number fluctuate, or is it typically consistent around that number?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: We are getting anywhere between 2500 to 4,000 asylum-seekers a week, a week.

And as they come in with our new 30-day initiative, and 60-day for children and families, we are trying to get as many out the door as possible to be self-sustaining. So that number does fluctuate and it does change based on how many we get in. From time to time we get a surge coming from particularly the state of Texas. But the number does move from time to time.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Can you give me like a low and a high?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: A low and a high of how many we get in?

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: How many you have at any one time. Is it sometimes you have 40,000, sometimes you have 80,000?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: No, we have never gotten down to those numbers.

We had, as I indicated, 172,000 total. We were able to get 60 percent out of care, but it has never gone down below around 60,000.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: And what's

been the highest?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: A hundred and seventy-three thousand.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: In your care at one time?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: At one time, the highest number has probably been around roughly 100,000.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. So right now it's at 66,000 but there was a time when you had 100,000 in your care.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes. And the reason we were able to move from the high-water mark of having over 100,000 is because of the initiatives we put in place to have people being self-sustaining.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. You let the current -- in the recent financial plan the state sets aside $1.9 billion for the city to assist with asylum-seekers. How much of that money have you drawn down?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: On the current amount.

You have the current numbers, Jacques?

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Yes. Yes. As of the end of December, we submitted invoices for about -- because these are liquidated invoices, as per the agreement with the state, about $1.2 billion. But we only get credit for 28 percent.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: So out of the 1.9 you've put in requests for 1.2?

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: One-point-two billion dollars.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: And Assemblymember, we should be clear, it's not a dollar-for-dollar reimbursement, both on the federal level and on the state level. If it was dollar for dollar, it would be easy for us to draw down on it, but we only get a twenty -- 28 percent based on the dollars we submit. So if we submit a hundred dollars, we would get 28 percent of that returned to us.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. The Governor's Executive Budget sets aside 2.4 billion to help with the asylum-seekers.

How would you spend that money?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Some of it is going to be spent already on the humanitarian relief centers that we have in place. And it's going to be spent on housing and some of the other needs that come with the asylum-seekers.

We have to -- and I think it's important for all of us to note -- we have to take full care of the asylum-seekers. That's cleaning, housing, feeding. Everything a family needs, we're picking up the cost for those needs.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: So let's talk about humanitarian relief centers. Right? Those are generally the tents, like you have at Floyd Bennett Field? I have one at Creedmoor in my district. My district we have -- you know, it's a tent, it's a 1,000 single men, it's in the middle of a residential community, there's a school across the street, there's a senior center next door. It's been problematic for the community, you know, without question.

And here in your testimony you tout that you're transitioning away from the humanitarian relief center model.

So I guess for my constituents we want to know how long can we expect this Creedmoor site to be there? And is there an end date in sight?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Assemblyman, your -- I grew up in Queens and I know that community very well. And what your residents are feeling is what I would feel if it was on 134th Street or -- 167th Street, I should say, where my mother's house is. This should not be happening to your community. It should not be happening in Floyd Bennett Field, it should not be happening anywhere in our city. And no, I don't see a relief in sight. I see that everyone is starting to ship migrants and asylum-seekers to New York City. It's happening every day, and there's not any relief in sight.

That's why I went down to the southern border. That's why I went to South America. And what I saw down there is telling me there

is no relief in sight for us.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: So you mentioned that at one time you had 100,000 asylum-seekers in your care. You're current at 66,000. So where are the other -- you know, at some point there was 100,000. That extra 30,000, where were they being housed?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: What we did, we realized that we were not going to receive financial assistance the way we deserve from the federal government. There was no solution or plan coming from the Congress or from Washington, D.C. We knew we had to put in place a two-pronged plan. One, we had to decrease the number of our census that was in our care. That's why we did the 30-day and the 60-day program.

Eighty percent of the people that we put in the 30-day program were able to self-sustain themselves. We did a re-ticketing program because many people came here and did not want to come to New York. We were able to send them to their final

destination. And others were able to find their way, like many of our immigrant families have done in generations prior.

And that's how we were able to bring down the number in care.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: But that's not -- my question is if at one time you were housing 100,000 and now you're housing 66,000.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: We have 67,000, as Jacques just shared with me. Both -- when we looked at the number I've given you of 100,000, that is the asylum-seekers plus the long-term traditional New Yorkers who were in our homeless shelter system. It's a combination of the two.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: So we got the numbers crossed up. We'll follow up on that.

Finally, I just want to get back to the Creedmoor tent. If the numbers come down, do we have your commitment that the tents will be the first places taken offline?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I'm sorry, if the numbers come down --

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: If the asylum-seeker numbers come down and you start having the opportunity to move people out of shelter, will the tents be the first places to be taken offline? Or will you start moving people out of hotels and keep the tents up?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: No. Our goal is to move people out of the tents. And as soon as we can move those people out of the tents, we're going to do that. It's costly. It is not the ideal situation for people to be in. And it's not good for the communities that they're located in.

So our goal is to move people out of the tents as we deal with this shifting emergency. And I want to be clear on these numbers. At the low end of 2500 a week, that's 10,000 a month that we have to find care for. So we have to be very clear on what this administration has done. Ten thousand people a month we have to find care for. We don't want to put people in tents. We have been placed in an unsustainable

situation.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. I'm just going to shift to one more topic while I've got two minutes left.

The city's moving forward to implement Local Law 97. I represent -- the affordable housing in my district is co-op housing. It's garden apartments, it's seniors on fixed income, young families starting out. The lawyers for the co-ops are telling us that to comply with Local Law 97 they're looking at increasing everybody's monthly maintenance costs 15 percent. And remember, that's before property taxes, which these co-op owners, under our unfair property tax system, pay some of the highest effective property tax rates in the city already. They're looking at increased maintenance costs of 15 percent per month.

We've suggested the city work with us on a tax abatement, property tax abatement, to help some of these buildings comply with Local Law 97. I'll tell you, a lot of them are just looking now to just figure out how

they're going to pay the penalty. They're not even thinking about how they're going to comply.

Would your administration be willing to work with us to try and find a way to offer a property tax abatement to incentivize some of these co-ops to comply with the new energy mandates?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes, more than willing. You know, my first apartment was a -- I should say my second apartment was a co-op. I know what it is to have working-class people live in a co-op. That is where their value is and that's where the large amount of the assets -- we would love to sit down with you and figure out how we can be as helpful as possible.

And we've taken some major steps to try to minimize the pain to those co-ops and property owners. But I agree with you 100 percent.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: All right. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: (Inaudible.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Good morning, everyone.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Good morning.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Just for people who don't know, both the panel and the guests, you have to press the button pretty hard to go from green to red and red to green. And so we've all been practicing. So it's not you, it's that the systems are brand-new. Thank you.

Our first up is the chair, Senator Sepúlveda.

SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: Good morning, Mayor.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: How are you, Senator?

SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: Good morning, Senator Savino. Good to see you.

So I've been on a mission for about two years now to reform the property tax system in New York City. I've done extensive research about what it can do to help develop affordable housing in the City of New York.

And I think it would be a monumental shift in policy for the city to transform the property tax system.

Just recently I attended the hearing at the Tax Equity Now NY LLC case versus New York City at the Court of Appeals, and sat for the entire argument. And based on my 31 years of being an attorney, I believe the city is going to lose that case.

Is the city prepared to comply with that case in the event that you lose the case in a couple of months when the decision will be rendered? Is the city prepared to take actions to modify the property tax system in the City of New York?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Senator, thank you for that.

One of the original lawsuits was with Martha Stark. She used to be the finance chair. I was going to sign on as amicus court brief, but I couldn't. My property in Bed-Stuy is hit with unfair taxes as well.

And we're not ready right now. We are looking internally of how to do what many

administrations have been attempting to do to adjust this unfair property tax system. There's several proposals. Even the Comptroller put forward a proposal. We want to continue to move this forward and in next year so we can get this addressed.

SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: Very good. Thank you. Because I believe that that's -- it would be a major step. When we're talking about that affordable housing and developing more affordable housing, I think that would be a major step to correcting some of these issues.

Now, there have been a lot of discussions up here and in the city over housing itself. So can you tell us, based on your information, what would happen if Albany up here doesn't act?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: If Albany fails to act?

SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: Yes.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: We're dealing with an inventory problem, even with our expansion of the FHEPS vouchers. Many people are

walking around with FHEPS vouchers in their possession, but they cannot find housing. Our battle is an inventory problem as well as an affordability problem.

And so that is why we presented several initiatives, in partnership with the Governor. We have 136 million square feet of available office space that can be converted. We can raise our FAR. We could also come up with a real tax incentive. And I think there's a place to have tenant protections. I think it's time for us to come together and come up and deal with the inventory crisis that we're facing. And if we don't, we're going to continue to see an increase in our shelter population.

SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: Well, as chair of Cities 1 I'm here to make sure that we do everything we can to address these issues.

Now, can the city help low- and moderate-income homeowners finance the potential conversions of basements to create more inventory?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes. And that is

part of the proposal that we put forward and that's part of the proposal that the Governor has included in their budget.

We have many basement and other dwellings, from grandparents' additional housing on properties that we could use to help with the housing crisis that we're facing. We have to think differently about building housing. And that's one of the proposals in our City of Yes plan that we put in place.

Many of the areas in the city, they have not participated in building affordable housing. And we have had development and zoning rules that have really prevented our city from being integrated at the level that it ought to be.

SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: And discuss with us the benefits of extending the 421-a tax exemption program for the City of New York.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Many properties -- on many projects we did not put a shovel in the ground, Senator, due to COVID. And it really prevented the level of development

that we deserve. And when you look at the numbers that we presented and the large number of housing we built, 51 percent was dealing with 421-a.

So if you remove -- if we don't have some form of tax incentive, no matter what the name of it is, it is going to prevent the level of building that we need to deal with the housing crisis that we're facing.

So I'm hoping that our lawmakers will look at the success that we had and realize the role that 421-a played as we continue to look at how we find a balance of tenant protection as well as building new units of housing, as we do also rehab units of housing.

SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: Let me shift topic a little bit here. The Executive Budget proposes increasing the Transitional Finance Authority bonding from 13.5 billion to 19.5 billion from July 1, 2024, and from 19.5 billion to 25.5 billion beginning July 1, 2025.

This cap hasn't increased since 2009.

What necessitates the increase in bonding authority now?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: A combination of things. We have some huge capital obligations that's in front of us, everything from building four new jails, the BQE, class size. When you look at the capital initiatives we have coming through the School Construction Authority, we have real capital obligations. And if we don't raise our limit and allow us to do so, it is going to impact many of those major projects that we have in front of us.

We have to be able to raise the cap so that we can reach our building obligations that's been handed down to us.

SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: On the public safety front, one of the issues that's discussed in my district, especially at the community boards, is the issue of e-bike safety. We've proposed -- several of us have proposed legislation to combat the issue of e-bikes on streets, the danger, the crime that's committed with these e-bikes.

What steps is the city taking or can the city take, with our assistance if possible, to combat the issue of these e-bikes that are essentially creating unsafe environments in our communities?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Well, I'm not the choir; I wrote the song on this one.

(Laughter.)

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Every community meeting I attended, and at my town halls, this topic comes up. We had a reuse of our streets after COVID. After COVID, there was a large use of online ordering, restaurant ordering, and it gave a boon to e-bikes, micromobility, and we have to now adjust to that.

And we have several phases that we're doing. Number one, education. We want to partner with our delivery services, our restaurants, and those who are considered deliveristas, that we were able to increase and give them the pay that they deserve, to educate them on how to properly use the streets.

Number two, enforcement. We've removed thousands of illegal mopeds and e-bikes off our streets. Many of them were being used for illegal means. They were being used to commit crimes. They were unregistered. Many of them were stolen. So we did the proper enforcement.

And then we wanted to partner with the City Council to put in place a real registration program so that we could identify those who are abusers and make sure that we're taking those bikes off the streets so they won't continue to be used illegally in the process.

SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: Mayor, I proposed legislation to do exactly that at the state level. I hope that I can get the city's support to pass this legislation, because it's going to require registration, it's going to require certain requirements of those that sell the e-bikes. And certain safety measures to train people to use e-bikes, to register, to get insurance, things of that nature.

And I look forward to the city's support with that.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: And we need to do that. But I also want to be clear. When it comes to pedestrian fatalities, what we have done in the city -- we have the lowest pedestrian fatalities since 1910. That's how well we are doing with our Vision Zero. We have a long way to go. We're nowhere near the zero that we're looking for. But we've made some real improvements with Commissioner Ydanis Rodriguez over at the DOT, and we're going to continue to do so. But e-bikes is one of our areas of focus.

SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: Thank you for that, Mayor.

Now, one last question. Senator Comrie and I believe Assemblywoman Rajkumar have a bill, the SMOKEOUT bill, on the illegal smoke shops that we have in the city. Now, you had indicated that if we give you the authority to be able to close them down, that you can do it in 30 days.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes, I can. And my

hat's off to the -- Senator Comrie and Assemblywoman Rajkumar, because this important initiative that came out of the state, what you wanted to accomplish is going up in smoke.

And there are too many illegal shops. And I think all of you are experiencing this; it's not only localized to New York City. The dream of legalizing cannabis is going in the wrong direction. And if I'm given the authority to locally address this problem, we will rid our city of illegal smoke shops in a 30-day period.

SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: Thank you, Mayor.

Now, just the statement I want to make is that the issue with the migrant crisis is something that's unprecedented in the history of the City of New York. And I know there are many critics about what you've done, but there was no blueprint to help the city do that. So I want to congratulate you for at least taking a humane position and understanding that these people come here, many of them, for a better life. And we know

there have been incidents of crime recently that don't bode well for them. I hope not everyone's --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator, I --

SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: -- painted with the same brush, but thank you for the position you've taken.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I have to be the mean one to cut you off. Thank you, Senator Sepúlveda.

Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Yes, thank you, Senator.

We are joined also by Assemblymember Seawright and Assemblymember Taylor.

And our next questioner is our Assembly Cities ranker, Assemblymember Reilly, for five minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Good morning. How are you?

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: So lately of course in the news we've seen recently with the asylum-seekers, the migrants, with the involvement with the New York City Police Department, especially in Times Square. The issues have arisen that, you know, you have an executive order, you have a state of emergency.

Will you commit to or consider issuing an executive order that will resist or take away the restraints that the NYPD and other law enforcement have to have collaboration with federal ICE, so that those who commit crimes like that are actually notified at the federal level so they can look to remove them.

What's your stance on that, and would you consider that?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Well, first, the incident that we all are familiar with that took place in Manhattan was despicable. And the actions of what you saw there is not a reflection of the -- of over 100,000 migrants and asylum-seekers who are in our city.

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: So, Mr. Mayor, let me be clear. I'm not saying that the NYPD should notify on all asylum-seekers. I understand that we have the sanctuary city law.

But the idea of an executive order would be to suspend it for issues like the incident that happened in Times Square. And we're seeing that it's happening more and more, because the next day there was another one. So there's a fine-tuning that we can do, and I think there's an ability to do that.

So that's my question for you is, is that something you will consider?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Well, first, I didn't think you were saying that it was for everyone. And you and I share the same vision. Those who come here should have the opportunity.

There was a law that was passed by the City Council that made the decision that we could not cooperate with ICE. It was a law. I cannot turn back that law. That's the

City Council's action, and the City Council must make that decision.

I believe if you create repeated felonies in our city, the federal government should do its job and have that individual deported from our city. There is a privilege to be here and participate in the American dream. I don't have the authority to do that. The City Council would have to do that.

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: So my -- so I'm going to reiterate the executive order position here. You issued an executive order, declared a state of emergency in the city, you suspended the shelter laws, which were created by the City Council. There's an ability to suspend laws that were created by the City Council. That's what the idea of the executive order is. And I don't mean it in any disrespect that way.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: No, I don't think we take it as that.

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: I'm just trying to explain to the audience and to the people

that -- why I'm addressing this question. You have the ability to issue that executive order, to suspend that law temporarily, whether it's up to five days or it can be extended at that time. Will you do that?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: The -- as I shared with you, as you saw, we had one case in Staten Island that the Staten Island judge made an opinion, a decision that we were overreaching our executive order authority.

If I could have the authority and if my legal team tells me I have the authority to have cooperation with ICE for those who commit felony dangerous crimes, that is something we would love to entertain and to look at.

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: So you mentioned the case in Staten Island. It automatically was appealed. And then fast forward, the same type of argument the city presented in Manhattan was actually decided in that case in Staten Island.

So the ability for the city to address the migrant asylum crisis was given the

opportunity with the decision in Staten Island. So why did the city appeal instead of allowing that decision to stand and it would have helped in the right to shelter case?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: No --

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Instead, it moved forward in Manhattan court.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: No, it -- it's interpreted that it may have helped. We don't believe it would have helped.

Our goal is to ensure that the right to shelter ruling is not dealing with the migrant and asylum-seeker crisis. That's two different incidents.

The right to shelter that was put in place over 40 years ago was dealing with those New Yorkers that needed shelter, those few men. It did not deal with a migrant and asylum crisis. And that is what we want to get classified in the court, and that is what we are fighting for right now.

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

So just to be clear, I think an executive order allowing ICE to be notified by the NYPD will restore public safety and will also build morale in the NYPD. Because right now I think there's low morale because of that. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you, Assemblymember Reilly.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Roxanne Persaud. Oh, I'm sorry, another rule for the day: If somebody is called up and they need a microphone, someone else kindly gives them their seat.

Thank you.

SENATOR PERSAUD: Thank you. Good morning, Mr. Mayor and team.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Good morning.

SENATOR PERSAUD: Thank you for being here. I just have a few questions pertaining to social services and the amount of funding that is being used to provide resources to the immigrant population that we're experiencing now. Could you tell us that cost?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: The cost of those services?

SENATOR PERSAUD: Yes.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Jacques, will you give some numbers for us?

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: It's about $4.2 billion this year and about $4.9 billion next year. And it covers everything ranging from housing --

(Call of "microphone.")

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: It's on.

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: It's on.

And it covers everything ranging from housing to security and, you know, food and everything.

So I don't know if that's what you're referring to, the overall costs.

SENATOR PERSAUD: All costs.

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Yes.

SENATOR PERSAUD: So we know that food, the issue of food in the migrant community has become an issue. And last week you announced the shift that you are going to -- that your administration is going to --

instead of giving the food, you're going to be giving prepaid cards.

And so people are asking us, as the Social Services Committee, why is that?

And I think we also had people who were not aware that everyone in housing, in temporary housing, gets certain accommodations. And the conversation is that you're only giving this accommodation to this population. Could you address that?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: If there's one thing I learned in New York, New Yorkers are very opinionated and they share their thoughts.

And so first we want to dismiss the misinformation. We're not giving people American Express cards. We found that the food delivery service that we set up during the emergency, we could find a better way to do it in our belief that we want to cut 20 percent of the migrant cost. So we have a pilot project with 500 people, that we are giving them a food card, so instead of -- a debit card. Instead of having to deliver food and have people eat food that we were

seeing waste in food, they are now able to get their own food that is going to be spent $12 a day. So we're going to save money on delivery, we're going to save money on people wasting food. And this is a pilot project we're going to use that is going to save us $6.7 million a year and is -- if the pilot turns out to be successful, then we're going to expand it not only with the migrants and asylum-seekers, we would look to do that expansion throughout the entire system.

We're trying to find smarter, more cost-effective ways to deal with this crisis that was dropped in our lap.

SENATOR PERSAUD: Okay, thank you. My time is up already. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

We've been joined by Assemblymember De Los Santos, Assemblymember Rajkumar, Assemblymember Simone, Assemblymember Levenberg.

And our next questioner is

Assemblymember Fall, for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN FALL: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Mayor, for being here. But also really want to thank your team for the incredible work that they do with my office every time I call. They're very responsive. So always got to give kudos to your incredible team that's here.

You know, public safety is a -- it's a big priority for me, so the fact that your administration has removed thousands of guns off of our streets makes a difference. We truly appreciate that. The North Shore Action Plan, you know, you have with Councilmember Hanks, you know, I think it shows what the vision is for the North Shore of Staten Island.

And as far as Lower Manhattan, the issues that EDC has tried to address with the helicopter issues as far as quality of life, I appreciate all the work that's being done there.

I want to bring the issue related to

DEP. Obviously every time it rains we have heavy flooding that's taking place out on Staten Island and certain parts of Lower Manhattan. What can I share with my constituents on the short-term measures that the city has taken, and long-term measures that you look to accomplish in the future to prevent such flooding?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you, Assemblyman. First off, thank you for your kind words. And we try to be one of the most accessible administrations that we want to be in the history of the city.

I took a drive out to Staten Island, I think it was at that time Senator Savino, who's here with us now, she was a Senator at the time, and saw firsthand of the impact of the water damage that happens after a storm.

And there's a short-term, there's a long-term, and there's a mid-term plan. Long term, we really have to deal with the environmental crisis that we are facing. And just as with the climate changes, it's going to include, number one, shoring up our

shorelines of -- making Rit Aggarwala, who's my DEP commissioner, is part of our most recent plan and Plan NYC -- our Plan NYC proposal shows how we're looking throughout the entire city in general, but specifically in areas like Staten Island, the Lower East Side, out in the Rockaways, Jamaica Bay area, how we're using several different coastal flood protections, flood protection for buildings, cloudbursts. Something that we're using a lot of, combined sewer overflow management, is something that's important. We're doing green infrastructure, sewer repair.

So there's a short-term and mid-term and a long-term plan. This environmental crisis we face is going to take all three levels of approach. And that's what DEP is doing.

ASSEMBLYMAN FALL: Gotcha.

I only have 20 seconds left, so I do want to call to your attention the Stapleton projects, the Carter Center. The provider there needs to change. It's not working for

the community. It hasn't been working for over a decade. We need to see some improvements there.

And I also would love to have --

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I'm sorry, I didn't get -- that word was --

ASSEMBLYMAN FALL: The Carter Center in Stapleton.

And I would love to have a fast ferry from Staten Island to Brooklyn.

(Laughter.)

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I would like that also (laughing).

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Next up is my friend Senator Borrello, who I don't think has ever visited New York City.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So maybe you want to have him come.

(Overtalk.)

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I'm going to invite you to a Broadway play.

SENATOR BORRELLO: I've been there

several times and --

(Laughter; overtalk.)

SENATOR BORRELLO: First of all, Mayor Adams, thank you for being here.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

SENATOR BORRELLO: Diane Savino is looking at me like "be nice."

So, look, we all know that the root cause of the problems that you're experiencing with the migrant crisis is the fact that the Biden administration has failed to secure our border. Okay? That's the disease that has to be cured. The rest of us are just trying to manage the symptoms. So I understand that's the position that you're in.

But if I heard you correctly, you're saying it's about a $10 billion cost this year. The federal government has not stepped up, and you would like the state to increase that $2.4 billion to like $5 billion? Is that correct?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: The first level is the state agreed to a third. We would like

to get them to the third. And the reason they agreed to the third, because it was going to break it down a third for the feds, a third for the city, and a third for the state.

The feds never gave their third. So we're getting 70 percent of the burden. And we're saying that we're the economic engine of the state and we've always been here for the state. We need the state now to be here for us in the city.

SENATOR BORRELLO: So you've reached out to the federal government. They originally agreed to the third? Or was that the proposal and they just decided to --

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: They never agreed to the third. That was the decision that was made here in Albany, we would divide it in three ways. We never thought we would get a third from the federal government.

SENATOR BORRELLO: Okay. So what kind of response do you get from the federal government about, you know, essentially -- I mean, are you calling on the federal

government to secure the border to help stop this?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I'm calling for our partners in the Senate and Congress and the White House to come up with a real solution for immigration reform so that cities like New York, Chicago, Houston and others are not going through this. Cities should not be dealing with a national crisis.

SENATOR BORRELLO: I understand that's the narrative that we need to have comprehensive immigration reform. But that's like somebody walking into an emergency room with symptoms of a heart attack and the doctor says, Well, I can't treat your heart attack until we address your diet and exercise regimen.

No, we have to address the security threat first and foremost. But -- so with that being said, my next question is New York City remains a sanctuary city, which is a welcome mat to people across the world to come here.

Do you stand on the policy that

New York City should remain a sanctuary city?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes, I do. I think that being a sanctuary city is the origin of all of us. All of us came from some level of immigration.

But I think that those who come here and abuse our good nature, they need to be dealt with on the federal level, deported. And that's the type of abuse we saw.

SENATOR BORRELLO: Well, there's no way to distinguish that. The bottom line is New York City remains a sanctuary city. That is what's drawing people here. I know we want to blame Governor Abbott. That's only about 10 percent of the folks are actually bused here. In fact, many of them are coming from NGOs that are being funded by the federal government that are bringing them here to New York.

Once again, we need to repeal the sanctuary status in order to stop the flow so you can manage the situation as best as you can.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: No, I don't think

people come here because we're a sanctuary city. I think they come here because we're the greatest city on the globe. And that's why the World Cup decided to come here. you know, we're the greatest city in the greatest state on the globe.

And when I was in South America, people wanted to come. They thought this was the start of the American dream. That's what I believe.

SENATOR BORRELLO: God bless you, and good luck.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you, Senator.

Assemblymember Mamdani, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Thank you.

Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Good morning, Assemblyman. Good to see you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Good to see you as well.

Mr. Mayor, Columbia and NYU are two of the largest property owners in New York City,

yet are exempted from paying $327 million a year in property taxes all because of an exemption granted to them by the State Constitution. Would you support ending this exemption?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I would entertain that. I would like to see what the exemption is looking like. I think at this time everyone needs to participate. And I think there are ways of using those institutions. They all need to do more and give more.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Thank you.

Mayor Adams, in your testimony you spoke of the importance of legal requirements, and you've also described yourself as a law-and-order mayor. Is that correct?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I like to believe that.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Okay. So on to my question.

We have the slowest buses in the country. And recognizing the need to speed up our buses, the law required you to build

20 miles of bus lanes in 2022. In that year you built 12.9 miles. The law then required you to build 30 miles of bus lanes in 2023. You built 7.8 miles.

How can you call yourself a law-and-order mayor when New Yorkers can't trust you to follow the law?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Well, I think that -- first of all, that's a -- that's an unfair accusation. I spent 22 years of my life following, protecting, and ensuring the law is followed.

And so when you cannot fulfill a requirement of building a number of bus lanes to all of a sudden say that, you know, you don't believe in law and order, I think that's a far stretch.

We've done an amazing job of building bus lanes. And what I did that was different from previous administrations, I did something revolutionary. I'll allow communities to communicate. We spoke with community residents. We heard from them. So in addition to being a law-and-order mayor,

I'm a mayor that listen to communities.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Okay. Well, I would just say that in a time when you have spoken a lot about fiscal prudence, the Citizens Budget Commission has said that speeding up our buses by just 15 percent would save the MTA more than $260 million a year.

Moving on to my final question, Mayor Adams, more than 27,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israel over the last four months, with more than 7,000 still missing under the rubble. How many more Palestinians have to be killed for you to call for a ceasefire?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Well, I've been extremely clear on calling for anything that ends this conflict. Bring the hostages home. Free the hostages.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Absolutely --

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I saw what happened on October 7th. I saw the despicable act of Hamas. I saw babies were killed. And so no innocent family should die on the Palestinian

side or on the Israeli side.

We need to be extremely clear. My record is sound and solid on fighting on behalf of people in this city and across the globe.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: So would you --

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: It's sound and solid. And I don't think anyone who's come on the scene recently can look at my 30-year uninterrupted history on fighting on behalf of Palestinians, Jews, African-Americans, LGBTQ, AAPI. I have a solid record, brother, and you cannot come up against it.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

We've been joined by Robert Jackson.

And next up is Senator Hoylman-Sigal.

SENATOR HOYLMAN-SIGAL: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. Welcome back to Albany.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

SENATOR HOYLMAN-SIGAL: As you know, the Executive Budget, as was mentioned, includes 2.4 billion in supplemental aid to the City of New York. Over the last year,

you've announced a series of cuts to various programs, including libraries, 3-K and sanitation. I appreciate that you've restored some of those cuts. But as I understand it, you're still planning to cut up to 1.2 billion in your next budget. And we know, in my district, that libraries are still closed on Sundays.

If you do get this 2.4 billion -- that's a pretty big tin cup -- do we have your commitment that all the cuts will be restored to at least where they were in the FY '24 enacted budget?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Senator, this is a moving crisis that -- as I indicated earlier to Assemblyman Braunstein, that we don't see an end to. And year after year we have to fulfill our obligation of balancing our budget.

We were able to restore cuts to the NYPD class, to the libraries. We were able to restore some of the cuts to our education, to the Department of Education, to our parks, our fire department. We were able to do that

because we successfully brought down the population of the number of migrants and asylum-seekers we had in our care. We were successfully able to do that.

In addition to that, we had better than expected revenues to do so. So as much as we can prevent the upcoming PEGs, we would like to do so. And as much as we could bring down the population in care, we will continue to look of how we could restore. But we're not out of the woods. We're long out of the woods.

SENATOR HOYLMAN-SIGAL: So are you saying that the 2.4 billion isn't enough?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: No. No. No, it is not. We need -- we need more. We are --

SENATOR HOYLMAN-SIGAL: Is there a number?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Jacques, do we have an exact number?

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: We talk about 50 percent of the costs. Because currently the -- the $2.4 billion you're referring, it's only $1.1 billion in new

commitment to the city. Okay? And we already had like 1.9 already accounted for, so it's only $1.1 billion of new commitment that the state made.

So a portion of it is for the tents, the HERRCs -- the Creedmoors, the Randall's Islands. That was already budgeted for, that was already included in the budget. So the only thing that is new is $1.1 billion.

SENATOR HOYLMAN-SIGAL: In my last 30 seconds, is the language in the Executive Budget on giving localities the authority to close illegal cannabis shops sufficient for you to do the job?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: It moves us in the right direction, but it's not going to fulfill what needs to be done.

Local authorities should address the cannabis issue -- not being heavy-handed, but being able to close down the shop and hold people responsible.

SENATOR HOYLMAN-SIGAL: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember Weprin for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Mayor, for coming up here with your team. And I think I've worked with each and every one of the members of your team on many issues. And I appreciate your close relationship with the State Legislature; possibly your having served in the State Senate for many years may have contributed to that.

I am now -- well, I am chair of the Assembly Insurance Committee and have worked very closely with Chris Ellis, who's here, dealing with small contractors, including many small businesses and MWBEs who often struggle to find competitive insurance options to meet the standards required for public construction projects.

Last year, with Chris and his team's assistance, we passed legislation to remove the prohibition on using owner-controlled insurance policies, OCIPs, allowing city

departments like the Department of Ed, New York City IDA, Health + Hospitals, and the New York City Housing Authority to authorize contracts on certain projects.

This bill was signed into law by Governor Hochul on October 25th of last year. It took effect immediately.

I'd like to inquire -- and maybe Chris has been monitoring it -- on the status of the implementation of these contracts and what impact has it had in the city and the departments handling these contracts. And have the awarded contracts been representative of the MWBEs that we hope would benefit from this legislation?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you. Thank you. You have been a partner on so many different initiatives throughout the years, Assemblyman. We want to thank you for that.

The city is now working to roll out the program, particularly around MWBEs in our construction contracts. So we are in the process of rolling out the program.

ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Thank you. And

if you could kind of give me an indication -- I know it's recent, the law just went into effect. But if you could monitor it and maybe have someone get back to me as to how many contracts have taken place and what the effect of the legislation has been.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Chris does not -- he does not fail to remind us. You're one of his favorite Assemblypersons --

(Laughter.)

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: -- so I'm sure he's going to -- he's going to reach out to you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Okay, thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Next up is Senator Felder.

SENATOR FELDER: Good morning. How are you?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Hey, how are you, Senator, good to see you.

SENATOR FELDER: Thank you, Senator Krueger, for allowing me to ask a question.

And good morning, Mr. Mayor. Thank you for schlepping up to Albany.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

SENATOR FELDER: As you know very well, New York's special-needs children and their families are hurting and have been hurting for a very long time. I know that you inherited these issues from previous administrations, but that cannot be an excuse for us not to take everything -- do everything possible to help these families.

In July a federal judge ordered the city's Education Department to implement approximately 40 reforms to be in compliance with federal law and improve special education services in the city. It's my understanding, based on the special monitor's report, that some of the deadlines have been met; others have not been met.

Now, these issues have been neglected for a very long time, and that's why I was so moved, when you ran for mayor, you chose to speak about your personal experience with dyslexia, a learning disability that was discovered late in life.

You have made great progress for

children with dyslexia in the city and you've kept the issue at the forefront. But the priorities stated in your first State of the City address, and I quote, "as someone who struggled with an undiagnosed learning disability Mayor Adams is committed to giving students with learning disabilities the tools they need to succeed."

The fact is that today children and families with special needs, children with special needs and their families are hurting terribly. And it is a crisis that's been going on for a long time.

So my question to you today is, how are we going to work together to finally resolve this issue? You know, I'm not looking for a hundred percent; I know that's impossible. But we can't say that just because something's been going on for a very long time that we can't do anything about it.

And I'm begging you, you know -- you know, that's my question. What are we going to do to finally get our hands around this problem to resolve it?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Well said, Senator.

And really my first introduction into this was Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon and the work she has done. We -- the administration added 490 million to Carter Cases. And this is not enough. The real price tag is about a billion dollars. And we cannot continue to deny these families, I agree with you 100 percent. And we're going to continue to do what we have to do to look after these families.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And I have to be mean to you, Mr. Mayor, and cut you off. Thank you.

Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember Epstein for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you, Chair.

And Mr. Mayor, thank you for being here and for your work.

So just to be clear, you support tenant protections, good cause, in all city residential buildings that are not subject to

rent regulation?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I support a version of tenant protection. I'm a small property owner, and I know what tenant protection is. Every one of my tenants signed a lease that I would never raise their rent as long as they're in.

So I support tenants. And there's a place we can all come together that we can build and protect.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: That's great, Mayor.

So we have a lot of expiring use 421-a buildings. There's -- every year thousands of units come out of rent regulation because they were pre-2013 rent-regulated because of 421-a. We don't have a lot of tools right now to be able to continue to regulate those units and keep those as affordable housing.

I'm wondering, are there other tools that you're looking for, for HPD for those old expiring 421-a units? We have a bill, Senator Cleare and I, about helping those retain affordability around some condo

conversions. But I'm looking at what else your office is doing to protect those units that are coming out of rent regulation.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Well, you know, I presented this when I was a State Senator and we reached a roadblock because of releasing of information.

We need to use technology better to identify our entire housing stock that should be protected. And we should identify when it's about to leave, for whatever reason -- if it's in court, or there's some form of landlord abuse -- so we can give it the resources that they deserve. We're hemorrhaging affordable units, and we're finding out after we lose them. We have to use technology better to stop hemorrhaging these units.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So I know Senator Cleare and I, as well as other folks, want to work with your office to try to retain all those affordable units. Because the more we lose from here, the more the crisis is going to exacerbate.

I know we talked a lot about basement apartments and legalization of cellar and basement apartments. Can you tell us, you know, what the opportunity will be this year to try to get those units legalized and what the city would do if we allowed you to modify the MDL to legalize those units?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: The goal is to -- the cost of legalizing those units is extremely high. And the goal is to be able to offset the costs and give the support to those families that would like to legalize these units. And by having that authorization, it's going to move us forward in the right direction to do so.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I want to turn to cannabis. Do you think what the Governor is proposing now will allow you to padlock all the illegal establishments so they can no longer operate? And if not, what other authority do you need?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: No. The way to propose this -- it's a step in the right direction. It's an acknowledgment that this

is a process that has gotten out of control. But the authorizations we need is to do the inspections. Right now police officers, the sheriff cannot go in and do the actual inspections unless it's cigarettes.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Gounardes.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. Thank you very much for being here.

I want to start asking about housing. Obviously it's the issue that everyone is grappling with and talking about. I know that the city, through it's City of Yes proposal, has talked about leveraging religious institutions and bringing them in as partners for the construction of housing. This is something that you worked on even at the borough president's office.

With the City of Yes proposal for religious institutions, how many units of housing do you think that will help us unlock

across the city? What are the administration's projections for how much housing can be created by leveraging religious institutions?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: And first I want to correct something if it was misspoke. We never -- I never stated that the Governor is paying 50 percent of our migrant costs. I just want to be clear on that, because somehow that was misinterpreted.

The number of exact units that we projected -- do we have the exact number? Our goal --

(Off the record.)

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: The City of Yes is 100,000, but our overall goal is to get 500,000 units. But the City of Yes is 100,000.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Okay. One of the things in the City of Yes proposal with religious institutions, it's a bill that Assemblymember Cunningham and I are working on to do that statewide. We like the idea of partnering with religious institutions. We

think the greatest opportunity is in New York City, just given the number of institutions we have. And so we'd love to work with you more on how we can both advance the City of Yes proposal there, and also our statewide legislation, to make these institutions partners to create the type of affordable housing that we need.

I want to shift gears --

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: And we would love to work with you. You've always produced some smart bills from even the red light cameras. And so our team would love to look at that bill and work with you on this.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: That's great.

I was very glad to see in your State of the City address last week -- I guess two weeks ago now -- your focus on social media and the focus of this to be the health commissioner's advisory on this. It builds upon what the Governor's put out.

I am working on two bills with Assemblymember Rozic around the addictive algorithms and the collection of data from

minor users that I think fit very nicely with what your administration has put out. Would love to have your team weigh in on those bills. Would love to have your support for those bills. Because we agree this is the mental health crisis of our time, and these companies are making billions by profiting off the mental health and personal privacy of minors and they're getting away with it scot-clean. And it's having a huge impact.

And so in my last few moments here I want to think about social media in schools. What impacts are you seeing with the proliferation of social media, the impact on students and in our school buildings currently?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Well, we met with social media companies last week, the major companies -- TikTok, Google, Meta and Instagram -- and the commissioner, Dr. Vasan, did a forum on this. And we're seeing a major impact -- depression, suicidal thoughts, et cetera -- and it's being sourced and being connected to social media.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember González-Rojas for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: I am asking this not just as a legislator but as a parent. As a legislator, we fully funded Foundation Aid for our schools. But as a parent, I'm watching the impacts of the proposed $550 million cuts that we have.

Last year I had a -- my son's teacher cried to me that she was being excessed, and she took her talents to Long Island. So we're losing our talented teachers, and our students are struggling.

And I ask this as a mom: How can we trust you? Why should we trust you with mayoral control?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Well, you know, just as you are a mom, I'm a dad. And I know what

we need to help our children. But not only am I a dad, the schools that you're talking about, I wore a bulletproof vest for 22 years and protected those babies that you're talking about. And the decisions I'm making of outpacing the city and outpacing the state in education -- dyslexia screening, educational opportunities, keeping our schools safe.

And so if you have a lack of trust in the commitment that we've shown, I find that surprising.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: I know I'm experiencing this as a mom. My partner is on CEC 30. There's just a lot of concerns our parents have for children who are in school right now.

Moving on, are you aware that HRA is required to process public benefits within 30 days of application?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes, I am.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: We have food insecurity still on the rise. I see it in my district in Jackson Heights, East

Elmhurst, Corona, Woodside, and yet cash assistance application processing rates have declined nearly 41 percent and SNAP processing has not picked up to pace despite litigation. I'm worried about my neighbors going hungry.

Can you speak to what you're doing to specifically address this? We asked this question last year, and we're still not seeing those rates increase to the level needed.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: And Assemblywoman -- and I agree with you, no family should go hungry. The SNAP backlog is now at what we consider functionally zero, less than 800 cases overdue. This is over a 65 percent reduction from where we were most of the summer.

So you asked the question last year. We took action. And the action that we're going to take and we're taking is taking an antiquated method that had people waiting too long, duplication of services, and we're doing this even with the manpower issue that

we're facing.

So because you asked that, we did not walk away here not fully understanding how serious this is. And we took appropriate action, and it's revealed in the numbers. And my team will give you a full report to show how much we've taken that action.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Thank you.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Rolison.

SENATOR ROLISON: Thank you, Chair.

Good to see you, Mr. Mayor, and your team here this morning.

A question on Floyd Bennett Field --

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes, sir.

SENATOR ROLISON: -- a federal installation. My understanding is -- is that that is not being given to the City of New York by the federal government without cost. Is that correct?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: That's correct.

SENATOR ROLISON: And what is that,

approximately? I saw it before, but I was just --

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: (Conferring.) You say that number. I don't even want to say it.

We're going to get back to you on the specific cost of the field. But it's not free. And it's not cheap.

SENATOR ROLISON: I know it's not. And is that cost being borne essentially just by city funds, or are there state funds mixed in with that too, do you know?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: The state is picking that up.

SENATOR ROLISON: Okay. To go over to the retail theft issues that obviously the state is experiencing, in the Governor's proposed budget she put in approximately $40 million for various initiatives, $20 million going to the State Police to create a task force.

Is there money carved out in that that you know of, Mr. Mayor, that's going right to the NYPD?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I'm not sure in that budget, do we know -- no, it's not going directly to the NYPD.

But we held -- we don't have that number yet if it's going specifically to the NYPD. But we held a retail theft summit and came away with real ideas, and we're seeing a real impact. And many of the retail thefts that we're experiencing are repeated offenders.

SENATOR ROLISON: Right. Because I see that in May of 2023 the chief of crime control strategies, Michael LiPetri --

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes.

SENATOR ROLISON: -- he had spoke about the small number of, say, 250 individuals who had been arrested almost 2500 times.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Exactly.

SENATOR ROLISON: And like you, I was on the job for 26 years, and I know that there's got to be additional measures that can be taken to isolate these people so they're not continually doing it and causing

this retail theft, which destabilizes the entire retail market. Some people don't even want to go into stores because they're constantly seeing it.

So as someone that was on the job and had a career, what are your thoughts that -- what else needs to be done that we could be helpful here in the State Legislature?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: That's a great question. And I appreciate your service at the same time.

But many people believe that retail theft is not hitting everyday communities. When you have a Miss Jones that must take the bus to go pick up her medicine because the drugstore closed down that's in her community, that hits her directly. When you lock up the items in the store and you see our stores are closing, that hits our unemployment directly.

So you have a small number of people that are repeated offenders, and they are arrested and then they're back out on the street doing it again. And so we need to

send a very clear and loud message that we're not going to allow those repeated offenders to continue. And I don't think we have sent that message clearly enough.

We have really energized the owners of these stores to report it. We're doing our job as the police. We need the other parts of the system to do their job as well.

SENATOR ROLISON: I agree with you. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember Brown for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: I think I get five as the ranker.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: It's all good. You have a good first name.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Mr. Brown, you get three minutes. This is -- Cities gets five for this, and then when we get to the local governments, you'll get five.

ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Okay.

Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Good morning.

ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: We're honored to have the second-best-dressed guy in the state here before us.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Today is a special day, not just because it's my birthday -- it's also President Reagan's birthday. President Reagan had that famous quote: Government's first duty is to protect the people, certainly not to run their lives.

Mr. Mayor, in 2021 you had said we should protect our immigrants. New York City will remain a sanctuary city under an Adams administration.

Mayor Adams, why were the criminal migrants that assaulted NYPD officers near Times Square released without proper bail? And what measures are being taken to ensure their return to court, especially considering that all of them gave us the middle finger, fled out West, and thank God they were just caught in Arizona.

Can you explain the criteria behind the decision to release these individuals, especially given their prior arrests and the severity of the charges they face?

Given the criticism surrounding the release of these attackers, what changes or reforms are you considering to ensure the safety of law enforcement officers and of the public? Have you petitioned the Governor to use her power under Section 24 of the State Public Officers Law to get rid of DA Bragg? If not, why not?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: The -- that was -- that was a mouthful (laughing).

ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: I think it wiped out two minutes.

(Laughter.)

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: First, as I stated, the assaults on our police officers that we all witnessed was not only assault on individuals, but assault on our system of justice. And I want to be clear on that. And it was a despicable display of how you respond to a city that provided services.

And we cannot mix up the role of sanctuary cities with the actions of those. The overwhelming number of migrants and asylum-seekers are doing the right thing, taking the next step on their journey. I have no authority on what happens on the other arms -- on the prosecutorial level or on the federal level. My job is to make sure our police officers do their apprehension, which they did, which they are doing and continue to do. No matter who it is, you break the law, the New York City Police Department is going to carry out their function.

ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Along the same lines, antisemitism is at an all-time high, especially in New York City and places of education and certainly in places of higher education. New York City Public Schools Chancellor David Banks had made several empty statements about zero tolerance but continues to allow the antisemites to bully, harass, indoctrinate

our children and attack our teachers and children in New York City public schools.

Why haven't you taken control to ensure that those teaching these lies and spreading Jew hatred are stopped and removed from the classroom and that teachers and students who are bullying and harming our Jewish children and teachers in our schools are held accountable?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Well, I think that as I shared with your colleague a little earlier, not only is my position strong on ending Islamophobia, antisemitism, LGBTQ violence, anti-Sikh violence. Our life record has shown that. And I think Chancellor Banks has made it clear not only in his presentation a few days ago, but in his actions, that he's not going to create or allow an environment to exist in the New York City public school system that is going to be against anyone that lives in our school system.

And the increases that we're seeing, particularly after October 7th, has been in

not only antisemitism but even in Islamophobia. You're seeing an increase in hate. In New York City we don't have any room for hate in our schools or on our streets.

ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

In fact, the Jewish population of the world is a fraction of a percent, so the percentage of antisemitism is extraordinarily greater than any other population.

I appreciate that the chancellor has said these things in words. But really what action has he taken? Where is this action? What is it? Can you help elaborate on that, please.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Well, I think every day, from his instructions in school to bringing together groups, what we're doing with breaking bread, building bonds, bringing groups together.

One of the biggest issues that we're seeing, Assemblymember Brown, we live in an isolated society and our children don't grow

up hating. Our children learn hate from the society that we're in. And that's part of what Senator Gounardes was talking about what social media is doing -- the misinformation you see on social media, it's unimaginable. We have our young people believing that Bin Laden was right for taking down our Trade Center. Something is wrong in our society when we're seeing hate being so pervasive and so available and so normalized. That includes what we're seeing with antisemitism.

ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. What I was saying was I would hope he would take action by removing the teachers that are spreading this hate. Action. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you, Assemblymember.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

Next up is Senator Comrie.

SENATOR COMRIE: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: How are you, Senator? Good to see you.

SENATOR COMRIE: Good to be seen and not looked at.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR COMRIE: I'll tell you about that later.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR COMRIE: I have three questions.

Number one, the Public Service Advisory Commission for the MTA has come out with a plan that would save seniors and ultimately the handicapped a lot of money and clear up the fare system around the MTA so it will be clearer by, number one, expanding the Fair Fares program. I hope that we can expand that to 200 percent of the poverty level.

And that we can also do better advertisements so people are clear. People aren't clear about what they can save because there's no -- not enough advertisements at the booths or anywhere to show people that

there is a Fair Fares program or alternate programs.

So I hope that we can -- that your team will take a look at it and support that program. It would increase ridership, especially for people in the outer -- better boroughs, as I like to say. You could save 10 or 12 hours a week in commute time if we expand that program. I hope you can support that.

I would also hope that you can support my bill to lower insurance rates for commuter vehicles. We have too many vehicles -- most of the vehicles that are servicing the airports, servicing passengers, even many ambulance services, they're all paying 60,000 to $80,000 a year in insurance rates. We have a captive insurance program that's been adopted by this Governor in other parts of the state. I hope that you can support that also.

I do have two other questions. I want to thank you for supporting the SMOKEOUT bill that Assemblymember Rajkumar and I have to

make sure that we can eliminate these scourge of smoke shops that unfortunately were put in place by the actions of our previous governor.

And can you just explain to the public that -- I've gotten some concerns from people that too many people would be arrested, and how that could be implemented in a safe manner.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you. And just dealing with the Fair Fares, which I think is a great equalizer, we put $20 million into the $75 million annual program. And it helps a lot. It makes a huge difference.

And to respond to your bill for the SMOKEOUT, it's not going to be heavy-handed. We are not going to go backwards. I fought for years in the police department to stop overaggressive policing around marijuana use, and I'm not going to see our police department go backwards. We can find an balance of not allowing the abuse of the bill and allowing our children to be sold not only the cannabis but other illegal products

inside these stores. We can find that balance.

SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you. I've got five seconds.

I support mayoral accountability. I know you can't answer it now, but if you could just tell the public what actions you'll take to improve communications between parents and people who say that they can't access the system now.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you, Senator.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: We are joined by Assemblymember Hyndman.

And our next questioner is Assemblymember Darling, for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DARLING: Thank you.

Hi, Mayor and team.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: How are you doing?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER DARLING: Thank you for coming here. And thank you always for your proactiveness and responsiveness. I know it's a lot to govern the biggest, largest,

most amazing city in the world, so I thank you for that.

And as you know, I represent Nassau County, and I always want to encourage our residents to come and enjoy the city because we know we need that for revenue streams and to support each other.

So my question is, how do you plan to navigate potential differences in priorities and resources between Nassau County and New York City while working towards common goals for the betterment of the entire region?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: For which --

ASSEMBLYMEMBER DARLING: For Nassau County. So I'll say it again.

How do you plan to navigate potential differences in priorities and resources between Nassau County and New York City while working towards common goals for the betterment of the entire region?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: And I think that that question is an important one, and we saw a reflection of our regional approach by the

World Cup.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER DARLING: Yup.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: You know? To be able to partner with Governor Murphy to bring this major event to the global stage was important.

And what I'm finding in other parts of the country, there's a regional plan.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER DARLING: Exactly.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: We have the Regional Planning Authority, they're doing an amazing job. But I think we could do a better job with our region, the smaller, more micro-region -- Nassau, Westchester, Long Island -- and come up with real ways around public safety, because we're finding that people who are committing crimes are going throughout our entire region --

ASSEMBLYMEMBER DARLING: Exactly.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: And also in economic development, tourism, we should be all part of the same team. And so I look forward to some ideas that you may have and partner with Andrew Kimball, who's in charge of our EDC,

to see how we could attract businesses into our area.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER DARLING: I love that, and I love that we're on the same page. We know that we're going to be stronger together. So I look forward to that partnership, and tag me in, because I want to be a part of that.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Love it.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER DARLING: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Cleare.

SENATOR CLEARE: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: How are you doing, Senator?

SENATOR CLEARE: Good. I have a couple of questions about housing, the 421-a extension.

How many projects does that represent, and how many units is that, how many units of housing?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: That we were able to build with 421-a? Or are you saying --

SENATOR CLEARE: No, that are being impacted by the extension, the time needed for them to complete their projects. There were some projects that were waiting. And if we have a list of where they are, that would be helpful.

SENIOR MAYORAL ADVISOR SAVINO: Senator Cleare, you're speaking about the vested -- so the proposal in the Governor's budget, there's an extension for 421-a for vested projects, and then there's a replacement for the existing housing project --

SENATOR CLEARE: The vested projects.

SENIOR MAYORAL ADVISOR SAVINO: So the 421-a vested projects, it's a moving target. It's very hard to quantify the number of units because as -- we had Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer up last week and she addressed this, I think, very extensively with Senator Kavanagh and Assemblywoman -- Rosenthal, thank you. I'm getting senile in my old age here.

It's hard to quantify the number of

units. It's not an exact number because some of them, they were shovels that went into the ground and then the program expired and they never moved forward. We will not know, because people don't apply for the 421-a benefit until the end of their application, not at the beginning. So it's not as if they apply for benefits, the program expired and we're waiting. So it's really difficult to answer that question.

SENATOR CLEARE: Okay. So when you can, please send it. As soon as you all know.

Also, I just want this administration to really lift up senior housing. Housing is the number-one concern that walks into my office in my district. You know, we have overcrowded families, we have people wanting to get an apartment. And particularly our seniors who want senior housing, the waiting list is five, six, seven years to get into senior housing. And I just really want, as chair of the Aging Committee and also as a representative of my district, to lift up the

need for senior housing.

The migrant crisis has really impacted my district with a large number of African migrants into my community. We want to be compassionate -- and are compassionate -- and extend a hand, but this has really impacted our district. The quality of life issues, overcrowding -- we have blocks where there's 400, 500 men on the street on a daily basis. We have houses of worship who want to participate in the program that the city offers to sleep and have them in an adult day care setting. But they can't meet the code that they are being asked to meet.

Can some of this money that the state is giving, or money that the city has -- how can we help those houses of worship provide a space for these people to be? And I want to thank your office, by the way, for their really working with me on these issues around our new New Yorkers.

We'll talk later.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Sometimes the questioner takes all the time --

(Laughter.)

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I'm easy. I'm low maintenance.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you. I'd like to recognize Assemblyman Ra so he can recognize some of his members who have come to the hearing.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: I want to recognize we've been joined by Mr. Brook-Krasny, Mr. Chang, and Mr. Novakhov. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

And our next questioner is Assemblymember Seawright for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you, Chairs Thiele and Krueger.

And thank you, Mr. Mayor and your team, for coming up to Albany today. I want to thank you for your women-forward New York City action plan with the ERA State Equality Amendment on the ballot this November. We appreciate all that you're doing.

Not a day goes by that I don't hear from a constituent about e-bikes, so I

appreciate your response to Senator Sepúlveda on enforcement and education and partnering for registration.

But I'd like to focus my remarks today on the 5G towers that are being placed. I had sent a letter to you back in 2022 calling for a moratorium until a study could be done on the environmental and health aspects of the towers.

And so why not stop this until we could have this study? The community board in my district has passed a resolution against this. The community doesn't want it. In one instance a tower was placed right outside the window of a baby nursery. And if you look at the study done in New Hampshire and other states, you know, they have called for a moratorium and for further distance away from homes and apartments for these towers to be installed.

Have you considered parks or other places away from where residents live to install the towers?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yeah, the -- you

know, there's always a period of reflection when you deal with new technology, new ways. In just about everything you introduced, there are pros and cons. I cannot tell you how much this 5G and using these towers is helping so many places that don't have access to the technology that they need. And I think there's a place that we can sit down and find a middle ground.

But we want to continue to move forward. I've made it clear that I want to use technology to run our city more efficiently. And we don't want to do anything that's going to be harmful to communities and to families. We have not witnessed any real danger in using these towers from our reports and from our studies. If you have something to counter that, we would love to look over it. Because that's our goal. These structures, they're 5G antenna towers that are designed to bring free, high-speed internet access across the five boroughs.

We saw during COVID-19 that high-speed

internet is not a luxury, it's a necessity, and we need to make sure that we can get it across the entire city. And that's our goal, and we want to do it in a safe way.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you.

And as we focus on affordable housing, as the chair of the People with Disabilities Committee, I would just ask that we really focus on not only housing being affordable, but it also being accessible for seniors and people with disabilities.

Thank you.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Well said.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And I don't think we've said it yet today, but if there are questions that you don't have time to answer or, as you said, you need to get back to us on, we'd appreciate it if you send that information to both Ways and Means and Finance and we'll make sure all the members get the answer.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: We'll make sure. Just as Chris talks about his favorite Assemblyperson, he talks about you being his

favorite Senator.

(Laughter; inaudible cross-talk.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You're cutting people's throats on your own team.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, where are we supposed to be? We are next at Senator Robert Jackson.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

Mayor Adams and your team, welcome to Albany.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you. Good to see you.

SENATOR JACKSON: So my question is, the first one, Aid to Municipalities, $715 million are given to municipalities around the State of New York -- with the exception of New York City. And they can spend the money as they deem appropriate.

Why aren't we getting it? And I ask you to support me when I raise it in the Democratic Conference. But we need AIM money just like everybody else. So what's your opinion on that real quick, if you don't

mind?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I am with you, Senator. You know, I believe you are 100 percent correct. And I think it's admirable that you have taken on this fight, and everyone needs to line up behind you. It's just fair that New York City should receive that as well.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

My next question, I attended a mayoral accountability or mayoral control hearing in Manhattan. About 60 people spoke. And it talked about, you know, that mayoral accountability, control, is not working. And they want to move to a transition over a period of time similar to other cities in the United States, Chicago and other places like that.

So -- and as you know our Governor has proposed to give you mayoral control for four years. And that's exceeding your term of office. Obviously you're in an electoral process, and that will happen. But in your current term I'm not willing to give anyone

more than their term. That's me as an individual.

But I want you to know that the transition is very important. Almost everyone who spoke at the hearing talked about a transition away from mayoral accountability, mayoral control. What's your quick opinion about that?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Well, we have almost a million students in our school system, hundreds of thousands of parents. And when we have hearings that on average have less than a hundred people, just proportionately, the numbers just don't add up.

And of course you and I both know in this business of government the most passionate about being against something is normally those who come out the most.

The reality is we have a school system that before mayoral control we were graduating around 50 percent of our students. We're at 80 percent. We are outpacing the state in reading and math. We are dealing with dyslexia, healthy food --

SENATOR JACKSON: Mayor Adams, I'm sorry, I just have one more question of you before the time is up.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes. Okay, I just wanted to --

SENATOR JACKSON: No, I heard you, but I want you to know the sentiment of the people who attended those hearings. And obviously that I'm sure you're aware of it.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Right.

SENATOR JACKSON: Class size reduction. That's supposed to occur over the next several years. I hope and expect, expect it to be met. Let me just say that to you as someone that filed a lawsuit. I'm not hearing anything else but that.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: One hundred percent, we're going to follow the law. And we stated that over and over again, and we will do so.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

We are joined by Assemblymember

Bichotte Hermelyn.

And our next questioner is Assemblymember Simon, for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: It always sneaks up on you.

So thank you very much, Mr. Mayor, for your testimony and for your hard work. I have a couple of questions for you.

One is -- and I just want to appreciate your work and your administration's work on dyslexia and literacy. And we need to really ensure full implementation. I'm curious how you're going to do that, because I'm cognizant of some of the blips. So that's one question.

The other is a real problem with enforcing of parking prohibitions with cops and various agencies parking in bike lanes. Which raises the issue of where are the bike lanes that are protected bike lanes that we need that will help limit that? It's a huge issue in my district.

And then second --

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: And that's parking

in the bike lanes?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Parking in the bike lanes, other prohibited places. Often it's agency workers and police officers. And you don't have the jail and the central booking.

And then the other issue of course is truck traffic. You've been great on WIM. But the trucks are going through the neighborhoods. It's a huge problem, particularly in Cobble Hill. Too long -- the trucks are too long and we're allowing them in. What are we doing about enforcement?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: And we're going to look at -- are you talking about particularly area in the district that this is happening?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Well, it happens all over. But it's particularly problematic on those streets that border the BQE.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Okay. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. So why don't we bring in the local precinct commander and my head of traffic and find out specifically what is the issue over there. There's been a long problem over

there through the BQE. They've tried many different things to try to free the flow of traffic, even closing certain areas in a particular time, the entrance going out down by Red Hook.

We're going to continue to figure it out. We have too many vehicles on the street, you know, and now with the last-mile delivery services, that adds to the problem. And that is why we have to come up with a real way of dealing with more micromobility and improving our transit system.

But let us look at and try to come up with the right solutions over there.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: And the parking, the placard parking, the cops parking in bike lanes and what's happening with building --

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: And they shouldn't be -- the local integrity control officer at every precinct should be policing around his or her precinct. And if there's a problem there, I want to really encourage you to reach out to the commanding officer, meet with the local integrity control officer and

Deputy Commissioner Stewart, who is in charge of community affairs, so we can address that problem. Because that shouldn't happen.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: We've done that. And the issue for us often is the fact that because it's central booking, people come in from all over and park even though they're not the local precinct. So it's cops coming in from all over. So it really needs to be a bigger, broader umbrella push from your office.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Right. Right. And let me look into it, because that's not an acceptable answer from him.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. I want to introduce Senator Weik, but I want to say it's Senator Rhoads' time to question. Sorry, Senator Weik.

SENATOR RHOADS: Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Hello, Mayor Adams. Thank you --

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: How are you?

SENATOR RHOADS: -- for your testimony

today. I only get three minutes, so I'm going to try and make it quick.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Oh, good.

SENATOR RHOADS: You've indicated before that the migrant crisis is something that will destroy the City of New York.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes.

SENATOR RHOADS: Yet you've indicated today that you have no plans to change the city's designation as a sanctuary city. Why is that?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Well, I think you're -- we're mixing the two. Migrants and asylums are paroled into the country. People who have sanctuary city are those who are immigrants, and they're not turned over to ICE. So there's two different -- sanctuary city and migrants and asylums are two different issues. They're paroled into the country legally. They're here legally.

SENATOR RHOADS: Well, they're given -- my understanding is they're given legal status. Right? The Biden administration is calling them

asylum-seekers, but asylum is supposed to be for those who are suffering political persecution in their home country.

We've had 8½ million border crossings in the last three years; 8.5 million people have been given legal status, 170,000 of which are winding up in the City of New York.

This isn't a problem -- with all due respect, this isn't a problem with respect to our ability to handle migrants. The ultimate problem is the ability -- is the Biden administration allowing these individuals access into the country and then walking away from the problem and leaving yourself, as mayor of the City of New York, leaving the governor of Texas, leaving the mayor of Chicago to handle the resulting chaos.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: And it is extremely a full-time job being the mayor of the City of New York. I cannot solve a national crisis. The national government needs to solve that crisis, and I've said it more than once. And that includes the White House and it includes the lawmakers that should come up

with the answers so that cities like Chicago and Denver and New York are not taking the weight.

SENATOR RHOADS: Which leads me to my next question.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes.

SENATOR RHOADS: Why has there been -- you're talking about a crisis that is going to cost the City of New York $4 billion this year. The federal government has given you $157 million in support. The same federal government is charging the state my estimation is $300 million for the use of Floyd Bennett Field, federal property. Not only are they not giving it to you for free, they're actually charging us to be able to house some of those migrants.

Have you, Mayor, done anything to coordinate with Governor Abbott in Texas, who is dealing with a problem probably 10 times the amount of the problem that we have here in the City of New York -- or other mayors and governors in border states -- to force the federal government to take responsibility

for their failed border policies?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Our coalition has grown. We have reached out and attempted to coordinate with Governor Abbott. We have been successful in coordinating with mayors across the city. Unfortunately, he does not seem willing to coordinate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember Tannousis for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN TANNOUSIS: Thank you.

Mr. Mayor, I want to direct your attention to the incident that occurred a few days ago where the migrants assaulted those police officers. The first question I have for you is, is there any possibility or potential of you speaking to the City Council to actually reverse the sanctuary city law that would not allow the city to cooperate with ICE, with the federal government, in detainer proceedings?

The second question I have for you is, there were 14 people involved in that incident. Six of them were charged; only one

of them the district attorney of Manhattan requested bail for. We have a district attorney in Manhattan that thinks he was elected to be a public defender and not a district attorney.

Is there anything you can do on your end to ensure that these district attorneys offices around the -- from the five boroughs do what they're supposed to do? In this situation, those six people were charged with violent crimes. All of those crimes were bail-eligible, and yet the district attorney only requested bail for one out of those six.

Is there any way you can work with the district attorney's offices around the boroughs to ensure that the right thing is done by our community?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: First, the cooperation with ICE. It is my strong belief that if a person commits a serious crime -- felony, violent crime -- the federal government should do its job and deport that individual if they're found guilty. And I will continue to say that.

With my five district attorneys throughout the entire city, we have worked collaboratively with them. They have been real partners in bringing down crime. They have a non-mandate. And I think there's a reason they have a non-mandate, that they determine how they're going to prosecute crimes and which crimes they're going to prosecute. I think DA Bragg as well as the other DAs, Eric Gonzalez and others, they have been real partners in this pursuit of making our city safe, and I think they're going to continue to do that.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Weik.

SENATOR WEIK: Good afternoon, Mayor, and thank you --

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: How are you?

SENATOR WEIK: -- for joining us today. We're glad to have you here.

I have three questions, so we'll try to squeeze them in. My first is, with congestion pricing being a target for New York City, the American Red Cross is

located in Lower Manhattan and congestion pricing threatens their very existence. What have you done to fight for some kind of exemption for them or repeal congestion pricing?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I think that when this decision came out of the state, I would have loved for the city to have more power and authority over this to make decisions, since these are our streets. We have very little. We have one appointment, and much of the decision is between the MTA and the federal government. We should have more power and authority, and I think we would have a different version.

I can continue to advocate and lift my voice to make sure that it is executed fairly, but we did not have the power when that was handed down from the state.

SENATOR WEIK: Well, please don't underestimate the value of your voice. I know that a lot of organizations are looking to you to make sure that you're advocating on their behalf.

I'm going to move on to my next question, which is the FDNY. FDNY hasn't had any new classes. They struggle to respond to fires safely because of bus lanes and bike lanes being occupied. What's your plan to assist or provide more for FDNY?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: We just did that in our -- we put money back into the FDNY, bringing the fifth man in many of our sites.

We just settled a contract, I think they had over 90 percent ratification. The more we make the job impressive and attractive, the more we can continue to recruit. And we have held them harmless as we continue to build the manpower within the F --

SENATOR WEIK: What can we do -- I'm sorry, because of time.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yeah, no problem.

SENATOR WEIK: What can we do to make it easier for them to respond to fires throughout the city?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Congestion pricing. You know, unclog our streets.

SENATOR WEIK: All right, we're going to agree to disagree on that one.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR WEIK: I'm going to move on to my last question, which of course is NYPD. There are more demands than ever. What are you doing to advocate for their safety and for their ability to do their job.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Well, you know, as I like to remind people all the time, I know what that job is about and what it's like. And that's why I joined them the other night when they executed a warrant to deal with those --

SENATOR WEIK: Well, what are you doing, Mayor, to make sure that we're increasing whatever we can to give them as many tools as possible to be able to handle this what seems like a daily migrant crisis on our streets that are threatening the safety of the people who live in New York City?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Well, I think when you really look at what we are doing, number

one, the number-one thing the PBA, who represents them, calls for is to give them a fair contract. We did that, after almost eight years.

And number two, I think that any lawmaker --

SENATOR WEIK: Will you be working with the DA to try to make sure that we're able to remand these individuals and keep our officers and our streets safer?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: The --

(Time clock chiming.)

SENATOR WEIK: We tried.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You'll have to get back to us with the rest of the answer. Thank you.

Assemblymember.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember Hyndman for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Always good to see you, Mayor.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you, Assemblywoman. (Inaudible.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I also want to

give kudos to Chris and his responsiveness, especially when it came up for the City of Yes. Sometimes it seemed like the City of Yes has turned into a city of no for our community boards and civics.

So I think the preliminary meeting we had with Mr. Garodnick was good, but more outreach needs to be done, especially when it comes to the basements and ADUs. Because as you know, Southeast Queens, we have so many homeowners who are really concerned about the quality of life as far as their blocks becoming crowded, more congestion.

And so when our colleagues talk about bike lanes and expansion, it's not that Southeast Queens doesn't want to be part of more green infrastructure, it's just that transportation in Southeast Queens has not improved.

I know that Senator Comrie talked about the fair fares. And if we could really work collaboratively to get the commuter fares for the Long Island Rail Road reduced, and that's something I think our communities

could be -- really work towards.

Thank you also for having so many deputy mayors that are women. I think that's important for a lot of young women, especially the daughters I have in the public school system.

I know the Governor has put in four years for mayoral accountability. I'm not sure where I stand on that yet. I will say that the -- Chancellor Banks has been very responsive to Southeast Queens when it comes to any problems or assistance that we need.

I think -- but I do believe that it should be taken out of the budget, because the more and more policy that we put in the budget I think is detrimental. And I think mayoral control deserves to really be talked about with colleagues in New York City.

And for all of my colleagues I really -- who live outside of the City of New York, I hope they will work with their county execs to help us with the migrant issue and not continue to say no. They sound

very concerned, so speaking to their executives I'm sure would help us alleviate the problem.

And that's all I have today. Thank you.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you. Thank you for that. And I agree with you with Chancellor Banks. Many people talk about having parents have access. When you have a million students, you have to create ways of access, and no one has done it better than Chancellor Banks. Chancellor Banks he attends more meetings, more groups, focus groups, communicates with people. His level of accessibility is impressive.

But we want to be clear. Mayoral accountability is just that. I want to be held accountable. And if you water it down to the point that I'm not held accountable, then it's not mayoral accountability. It's either mayoral accountability or it's not mayoral accountability. And I'm hearing a lot of proposals that turns it into other folks' accountability. One person should be

responsible for the school system.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator John Liu.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Mayor, always good to see you.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Always.

SENATOR LIU: I agree with and I applaud your strong statement that people come to New York City not because it's a sanctuary city, but because we are the best city in the world. So thank you for that.

Thank you also for setting a tone with your administration in terms of responsiveness. Everyone on your team is responsive. Actually, Diane Savino responds even before I say or ask anything.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR LIU: So I suppose I appreciate that.

Earlier on you had answered questions about the request for increasing the city's borrowing authority. All right. Now, we haven't done that since the Great Recession in 2008, and 9/11 before that. Your

predecessor asked for that, didn't really give a strong argument for that, so we didn't do it.

You cited a few things. I'm kind of happy to hear that you mentioned class sizes and that you pledged to comply with the law that requires reduction of class sizes in New York City. Which, again, addresses a decades-old problem that was not your making. But you're the mayor now, and we have now fully funded Foundation Aid, so we do need you to do that.

But no one has said anything about what the capital plan is to reduce class sizes. So how much of that additional borrowing authority would you use to reduce class sizes? What kind of plan is there? And if the answer is you're putting together a plan, it's probably important to do it right away.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: And Jacques will go over the details, because every time he goes over it with me, my head spins, you know.

But let me say this. We execute the

laws that are handed down to us. The state made a decision, and it is our obligation and responsibility to fulfill that decision, including figuring out how we're going to hire more teachers and start the whole recruitment process that's connected to that.

But Jacques, can you go over --

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Yeah. We currently have, for the School Construction Authority, about $17 million for school construction in general.

SENATOR LIU: So how many additional seats would that --

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: But we would probably give you -- all give you a briefing on the specifics on how much of those resources are basically dedicated specifically for class size. Okay? We'll review them, those numbers, with you, okay, and provide you the information that you need.

SENATOR LIU: So you're looking for about another $10 billion of borrowing authority.

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: We're looking for $19 billion, because we have --

SENATOR LIU: Ten in the first round?

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Not just for schools. It's --

SENATOR LIU: So what would come first, the schools or the jails?

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: (Laughing.) It's a good question.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR LIU: Say schools. Say schools. Quickly, before I run out of time!

(Laughter.)

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: We have three major --

SENATOR LIU: No answer.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I think we would like very much everything on --

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Sure, definitely, we'll provide --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- those numbers and, on behalf of the Finance Committee, the entire capital proposal of two years' bonding

authority.

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Sure. Sure.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember Bichotte Hermelyn for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Thank you. Good to see you, Mr. Mayor.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you. Always good seeing you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Good seeing you and the team.

I want to first thank you and the whole team for just phenomenal work, responsive. And again, I want to thank you all for pushing and making sure that we pass these landmark MWBE bills. So we're very, very grateful for pushing equity and empowerment in our community.

I also want to just commend you on your hard work on dealing with this unprecedented asylum seeker/migrant issue. No other city is dealing with this burden

that we are, and you're doing as much as you can with the very little that we have.

My question to you today is about mayoral control -- mayoral accountability. It says that the Center for American Progress has repeatedly shown that mayor-led school districts improve school and student performance, full stop.

I wanted to know what has your administration done to continue this trend to improving student and school success. But also I want to know if mayoral accountability is not renewed, what is the alternative? Is it going back to the school boards, where separate but unequal was a big contributing fact to our segregation, our school segregation? Can you expound on that?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you. And I think that's such an important question.

When you do an analysis of what this chancellor has done, even down to New York City Reads, and what he's doing that not only is the state embracing this, but even national leaders are now seeing what we're

doing around dyslexia screening, around a better environment.

And how the equity issue is being addressed. Brownsville has been ignored for so many years. And with the resources we are putting into Brownsville, turning around their numbers.

The request is a simple one. Let us finish the job. Let us finish the job. An 80 percent graduation rate, outpacing the state on reading and math. A safe environment. And so we can't play with this and go backwards. We have two public-school-reared -- one mayor and one chancellor that really understand what these children need, everything from teaching our children how to do self-care with breathing in the morning, to better food so we don't feed the healthcare crisis through bad food. You're just seeing what you asked for.

There was a vision of mayoral accountability. This is what you envisioned. You know, what you envisioned when you passed it is what you are getting right now. So why

take that away from the success that we're having? We can't go backwards. Too much is at stake. We can't go back to 50 percent graduation rates. We have 80 percent graduation rates and we are moving even better.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Tom O'Mara, ranker.

SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you, Chair Krueger.

Good morning, Mayor. Thank you for being here.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Good to see you.

SENATOR O'MARA: I applaud your career, to mayor through Senate, New York Police Department -- captain, I believe, right?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes.

SENATOR O'MARA: I started my law career as an assistant DA in Manhattan. So I commend you for that work. And what a sad state we're in, frankly, in this state and in

the City of New York as it comes to enforcement of crime. I applaud your efforts, but you seem to be the lone voice in the wilderness calling for sanity with regards to bail, with regards to calling for deporting these rogue packs of migrants that are committing crimes. Not just the assault on the NYPD officers the other day, but now I'm reading today about a pack of moped riders going around snatching phones, snatching purses, dragging a woman down the street.

And I applaud your calls to at least ask for bail, but also that we should be considering and pursuing deportation of these criminals that are coming here illegally. Yes, maybe they're getting asylum once they get here, but they're crossing the border illegally. And the crisis at the border is certainly your crisis right now, and it's our crisis as a result of that in New York State.

Many states have sent National Guard troops to Texas, to the southern border, to help enforce the border. The Republican

conferences of the State Legislature have called on Governor Hochul to send New York National Guards to the border to help stem this crisis and at least slow down the flow of these illegal migrants coming into the country.

Do you support the Governor sending the National Guard from New York down to the border to help stem this tide?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: No, I think the Governor is using the Guards correctly here. She's assisting us in certain levels of our operation.

Many of the migrants and asylum-seekers that are going through the border, they are leaving those areas and coming up to the city areas. That's what I learned when I was down in El Paso. I commend the Governor how she's using our Guards here to deal with this crisis that we're facing.

SENATOR O'MARA: Well, if they weren't in El Paso to begin with, they wouldn't be coming up here to New York and being our

problem. We need to stop them from getting into El Paso, and have a legal system to get them here.

So I certainly disagree with you on that, because we're working on the problem after the fact and not stemming the problem.

I read recently there's been some improvements in crime on the subways. And I think that's a result of a significant surge in law enforcement activity that you were pushing. Now, recently, I've read there might be somewhat of an uptick on subway crime.

Can you talk a little bit about the surge that you put in place, and has that been retracted at all since then? And the cost of that surge of NYPD officers into the subways, what the cost to the city was and I think the state. Governor Hochul said they were going to help share in that. What has been the cost to New York State for that surge to help the crime in subways?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I believe the exact amount was $40 million. We'll get the exact

amount for you. But it was --

SENATOR O'MARA: State, state money?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes.

It was such a crucial move with the subway safety plan. Because that was a time when we couldn't get passengers back on our subway system. And the Governor stepped up, and, you know, you guys and ladies stepped up. And it was a game-changer. We went from dismal ridership to over 4 million daily riders. That's our economic engine for our city, and I cannot thank the state and the Governor enough, because it was a very challenging period of time.

And we have to shift and make sure manpower is deployed correctly, because we can't lose our subway system.

SENATOR O'MARA: Has there been a decline in that surge now? Is that resulting in somewhat of an uptick in subway crime at this point?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes. There has been a decline in the manpower. We're doing some creative things, going to 12-hour tours, and

really shifting our deployment where we're seeing the crime taking place.

We have a real leader down there, Chief Kemper, and we're going to continue to push back any attempt to make our subway system a dangerous place.

SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you, Mayor.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember Gallahan for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GALLAHAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, mayor, for your testimony today, and your staff.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN GALLAHAN: My question pertains to the World Trade Center.

This past July the Governor announced that the Public Authorities Council Board approved new construction of 1200 units, housing units, at 5 World Trade Center. According to the Governor's press release, this will become the only housing site at the

World Trade Center.

And, further, the units will be available to those with incomes between 40 percent and 120 percent of the area median income, which is about a little under 40,000 to a little under $119,000 for an individual living alone. Also, 20 percent of the units will be set aside for those who lived or were working in Lower Manhattan during 9/11 and in the immediate aftermath.

My question is, does your administration still support this new housing at the World Trade Center? And what role will your administration have in the construction in Tower 5?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: We think what the Governor's proposing is very important. We believe that it is an area where we can have housing. And we believe, as part of our City of Yes plan, we look at the entire city to build more. And whatever way we can partner with the Governor, we are willing to do so.

ASSEMBLYMAN GALLAHAN: Thank you.

Is there any concern with the site and

its neighbors -- St. Nicholas Orthodox Church being one, the Liberty Park -- and will this affect public access to these places? Will it be impacted or limited by this project?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I don't believe so.

I believe you get a substantial number of visitors that are there each year now. There are several houses of worship in that area. And I don't believe it will have a negative impact on that at all.

ASSEMBLYMAN GALLAHAN: And what is the exact timeline meant by "immediate aftermath"? I'm having a hard time understanding what "immediate aftermath" might be.

And what is the range of dates that you must have worked or lived in Lower Manhattan to qualify for these 20 percent set-aside units?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I think that's something the Governor's office can give you the exact answer to that question.

ASSEMBLYMAN GALLAHAN: And what is the definition of Lower Manhattan for the

purposes of the 20 percent for the set-aside units? Which streets and addresses are being considered Lower Manhattan?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Again, I think that should come from the Governor's office.

ASSEMBLYMAN GALLAHAN: And my final question is, are you concerned that you'll find enough people who lived through 9/11 where the attacks were to live in this building that is across the street and overlooks Ground Zero, and will you be able to meet the 20 percent, do you believe you'll be able to meet that 20 percent? And I believe that's probably connected to the aftermath question that I asked earlier, but what's your opinion of that?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yeah, I believe we'll be able to find enough people that lived -- after 9/11 that lived in that area as well. I don't think there's going to be a problem accommodating that.

ASSEMBLYMAN GALLAHAN: Thank you so much.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you very much.

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

So, Mr. Mayor, many questions have been asked, and I'm going to try not to repeat anything. Although I do want to just tie into things you were already talking about.

One, the very first questioner from the Senate about the e-bikes and the issues that we need to address. And I also want to continue to work with the city, because I carry a number of those bills. And I think that we are in the same place, but we need to get this done because it's just too dangerous out there for pedestrians.

But also I know that the NYPD has recently started a -- at least a model of being on the bridges and stopping the mopeds coming in without license plates. And I think that that's an incredibly effective model to address a huge problem, because the illegal mopeds without the license plates are also involved with crime. We also see them riding on sidewalks and in bike lanes.

And the Governor has a number of proposals to fix this within her budget, so I hope the city can endorse and support that effort as well, because I think it fits in very well with what you're trying to do and what we need to do in densely crowded New York City.

Something that didn't get asked today -- and I don't know that you will have an answer, I just want to know who to talk to. So we have all these hospitals that are closing or being proposed to close. We even have hospitals that want to open. And yet there doesn't seem to be anyone in city government who's ever asked to play a role in this.

So for example, in Manhattan, Mount Sinai Beth Israel has announced it's closing at a ridiculously quick pace without permission from the state. And we're very concerned that there will be no hospital, basically, south of 34th Street to provide services to patients in Lower Manhattan.

And the fact is that a huge number of

patients Beth Israel sees are actually coming across from Brooklyn, because the data from Brooklyn is that about half of Manhattan hospital patients are from Brooklyn because they're not getting adequate hospital care in Brooklyn. And yet the state is talking about radically shrinking or actually closing Downstate in Brooklyn, and then yet Northwell wants to put a giant hospital on the Upper East Side where we have more beds per capita than anywhere in the country.

So I have frustrations with the state government about why we aren't asking the hard questions and having government play a role in regional hospital planning.

So I'm curious, does anyone ever ask the city? Does the city see that this also should be a responsibility? I'm told that if Beth Israel closes, Bellevue estimates they'll need $150 million more per year to take care of the patients that will flow to them. That certainly is your issue. That if SUNY Downstate closes in Brooklyn, there will be much larger demand at Kings County.

That's your issue.

So again, I'm just curious. Who should we be talking to? Because I don't think the state is factoring in enough of the really big issues for the people of the City of New York.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: And I think you raise a great point. Because when you look at Downstate, clearly it's going to have an impact on Kings County. And when you look at the fact that you won't have any hospitals south of 30-something Street, it's going to impact, you know, Lower Manhattan. And you're right, many residents from Brooklyn travel into Manhattan. I think it's a misnomer that you can't get quality care in Manhattan, because you do. You have some great hospitals in Brooklyn -- a misnomer that you can't get good care in Brooklyn.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Mm-hmm.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: We've had conversations with the Governor over one of the hospitals in the borough that -- in the Borough of Brooklyn that we're going to

continue to be as supportive as possible.

The H+H system, I think that's a starting point, with Dr. Katz, to sit down and -- as you stated, there needs to be a regional conversation. Because when we close one, how does it impact some of the other safety-net hospitals and how does it impact our H+H system. As you know, we don't have an impact -- we don't have any, you know, decision-making authority on closing a hospital or not. It's the state. But I think you're right, there should be a regional conversation about this.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. And so I should recoordinate with Dr. Katz?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes. Dr. Katz and Dr. Vasan, the commissioner of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

For the record --

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- would you agree with me --

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I always get scared

when I hear that.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- that the majority of asylees to New York, the majority of migrants to New York are not criminals and are not committing crimes.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Without a doubt.

And, Senator, if we would allow them to work, it would be a game-changer for our city. Food service workers, nurses, lifeguards -- anything you could imagine. We have an employee shortage in our city. If we would just allow them to work, we will have a different outcome in this entire crisis.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Great. Sometimes I sit up on this podium and I hear some of my colleagues and I just think, even if they don't live in New York City like we all do, they have this illusion that every person who's come here from a different country has come here to commit crimes and create threats to the rest of us.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Far from true. Far from true.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: That's far from true. So I wanted you on the record on that. Thank you.

We already started to talk about the issues of how -- what you need the capital money for. And I think we are going to have some separate briefings, so I won't go into that. But I did want to ask you -- and it's a self-serving question, because I carry a bill called the Climate Change Superfund Act which would require that the gas and oil companies who cause the most pollution and climate change damage have to pay the State of New York $3 billion a year for the next 25 years. That would be $75 billion.

And when I read your budget, I see that there's an estimate that New York City plans to spend $829 million on projects that are exclusively for adaptation and resilience, and another 1.3 billion on projects that are partially for these climate purposes.

We know the federal government has told us we need to build a seawall at the

cost of $52 billion, and we've all been having lots of discussions about who's responsible for paying. But you know the City of New York is going to end up responsible for paying a whole lot of that. And if we don't deal with it, we won't have Lower Manhattan -- even though one of my colleagues apparently has never been there so doesn't know where it is. But trust me, it's a great area, and we don't want it underwater.

So would you agree that we need more money to do the work that you're ending up responsible for, but the oil and gas companies are responsible for creating the damage?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I agree. And I think that far too often those who are responsible for some of the damages that's impacting our cities and our families are being left harmless. And they should play a better role.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm just checking in my brief. Two minutes left.

I think we already talked about cannabis and all of our desire to close those illegal stores as fast as possible, and I have been coordinating with Senator Savino about additional language that we're working on to try to get this done. Because I would love to see you be right and your being able to close all the illegal shops in New York City in 30 days. That would be a pretty amazing accomplishment that every neighborhood cares about.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: And your neighborhood is hit extremely hard --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Tell me about it.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: -- with all these illegal shops.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yes. Yes. You know, I have Grand Central, Penn Station, all the areas that people come through. And look, people want the legal shops. That's the other thing I've learned. I thought that neighborhoods like mine might object. It turns out -- it's fascinating -- that the highest users of the legal shops are over

60 years old.

And I even learned that there's kosher weed and a big demand for it. I thought it was a vegetable. I didn't even know it had to be kosher.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Felder and I will discuss it later, or perhaps one of the other Assemblymembers here. I didn't really think we needed to make it kosher, but apparently we do and there's huge demand. So I want it legal. I want you to be able to get these illegal stores closed as fast as possible.

And I'm going to cede back my 48 seconds. Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

We've been joined by Assemblymembers Jackson and Meeks.

Our next questioner is Assemblymember Ra, Ways and Means ranker, for five minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

Mayor, thanks for being here today. I

just wanted to get into a little bit of the issues with the city's budget that have been ongoing. Obviously a lot has been talked about with, you know, the costs of asylum-seekers that the city has borne. I think we all agree that the federal government needs to step in and provide more support with regard to this issue.

But I think there are other factors at play as well. And one of the things that I think we're dealing with, both at the state level and I think at the city level, is the outmigration trends that have caused a loss in revenue in the last few years.

Any thoughts with -- or concerns with regard to taxpayers leaving New York City and what initiatives are perhaps there to help reverse this trend, both in terms of, you know, residents but also less people coming into offices and shows and all of that and the impact that has on the city's revenue.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: And when you do an analysis of who we're losing, we're losing working-class people. The affordability is a

real issue. And because of the partnership we've had with the state, we've been able to put money back in the pockets of everyday working-class people.

And don't underestimate that partnership. It was through the state we were able to get the increase in earned income tax credit. That was a huge win. It was through the state that we were able to reduce the cost of childcare from $55 a week to less than $5 a week. That was a huge win. When you look at the hundreds of thousands of people that live in NYCHA, to have good affordable housing -- we put it in our housing plan, but it was the state, our partnership, that allowed us to get the NYCHA land trust. That was a huge win.

And so the reports are clear: Working-class people are finding it extremely difficult to stay in the city, and many was leaving because of education. We expanded gifted and talented programs that many people are taking a second look at our educational system. And the schools are getting better.

So we are doing those things -- public safety, education, livability. That is going to slow down this hemorrhaging.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: And I know that recently there was a management report that was released regarding staffing shortages that are slowing or hindering the work of several of the city agencies. How are you planning to address that given, you know, the budget crunch and the hiring freeze that is currently going on, to make sure that those services are available to the residents?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yeah, we were -- even prior to the hiring freeze, Assemblyman, we were dealing with a real staffing shortage. We had 14,000 jobs that were available that we couldn't fill, and it was for a number of reasons.

Number one, civil service was not paid a comfortable and a respectable salary. We were able to settle close to 95 percent of our union contracts, 100 percent of our uniformed services contracts. Now that we have this hiring freeze, because we're

dealing with a real economic strain -- and we don't want to put a pause on hiring. Our goal is to fill the jobs that we needed. Some of the areas we've left harmless, like our public safety areas and some of our social services areas.

But there are other jobs we would like to fill if we could deal with this economic challenge that is really being fed by the asylum crisis that we're experiencing.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: And then, lastly, mayoral control. We have a proposal in this budget for a four-year extension. One of the things I heard a lot about from our New York City members is just they want to increase transparency.

So as -- you know, if this extension were to be passed in this budget, what is your plan to try to increase the transparency and accountability within the system so the parents, you know, know what's going on within the school system?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: There is a high level of transparency from our PEPs to our

PTAs. You know, we've been in this business a long time. And I'm sure you go to many town halls, many meetings; there's never going to be enough feeling as though we want more input, we want more input.

If we didn't have mayoral accountability in place, we would have a real problem dealing with the asylum-seeking crisis. Imagine going to every school board to figure out where children are going to go, in which school. How are we going to deal with the class-size issue without mayoral accountability in place? You need to have an entity such as the mayor and the chancellor that can make these very tough and difficult decisions.

And I think, lastly, we are winning.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, Mayor.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: The Senate is done. So please, Assembly, continue.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Okay, we will.

Assemblymember Jackson, for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Thank you,

Chair. Hi, Mr. Mayor.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: How are you doing, Assemblywoman?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Always well.

All right. So I'm sure my colleagues have talked to you through the moon about this issue, 2.4 billion for migrants and asylum-seekers. So in the Bronx, of course we have a lot of people who may be undocumented, having housing issues. You can name all the issues that we have in the South Bronx.

When they see that we're putting $2.4 billion in the budget for migrants and asylum-seekers, they think, well, what about me? What about my housing need? What about my health insurance need? What about my fast track to workforce?

How do you wish we should respond to that, as people who are responsible for taking care of the whole City of New York?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: That's a legitimate question. And New Yorkers, they're angry. Particularly in those communities that are

underserved, they feel as though, you know, why are we being overlooked?

And I think you should respond to them that the mayor's not overlooking you. The same services and more that we give to migrants and asylum-seekers, we're giving to long-term New Yorkers. Migrants and asylum-seekers can't get FHEPS vouchers. You know? Long-term New Yorkers can get that. Migrants and asylum-seekers at the HERRCs, they're taking showers outdoors. They're sleeping on cots. Their restroom facilities are outdoors.

And so there's this misbelief that the migrants and asylum-seekers are getting more than what long-term New Yorkers are getting. That's just not true.

And job training -- migrants and asylum-seekers are not getting job training over long-term New Yorkers. In fact, the federal government's not allowing them to work. And that is at the heart of the problem.

So I think you should share with them

that when you do an analysis of the delivery of services and resources to low-income New Yorkers of -- this administration has put low-income New Yorkers in struggling communities first.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you. Assemblymember Meeks for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN MEEKS: (Mic off; inaudible.)

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: How are you?

ASSEMBLYMAN MEEKS: (Mic off.)

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Good.

(Off the record.)

ASSEMBLYMAN MEEKS: Can you hear me now?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes, we can.

ASSEMBLYMAN MEEKS: As it relates to the full funding of Foundation Aid, how has that affected your school district?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: It has not. We have 100 percent of funding of FSF, 100 percent.

It has not impacted at all. We've gone beyond the call of duty in doing so. And under the Governor's budget, the FY '25, we received $222 million more than we received in FY '24.

But the real issue is that DOE would have received an additional $130 million more than in FY '25. So we are concerned about some of the particular changes that are going to take place. And we want to make sure that we are being held whole in the process.

You want to add to that answer?

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: It's about -- yeah. Like the mayor said, it would cost us about like $130 million.

ASSEMBLYMAN MEEKS: Okay. And I also want to commend you all on the major strides to go from a 50 percent graduation rate to over 80 percent. Highly commendable.

What would you say were like the major cultural changes as it relates to that?

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yeah. In my first -- I just want to go back. When I first stated it would not impact, I was

thinking when you were talking about Fair Student Funding. That's what I was thinking about, Fair Student Funding. So I'm glad, Jacques, you caught that.

I think it's a combination of things. You know, Chancellor Banks has always made it clear that by the time our children reach 11th grade, they ask why was I here? What was the purpose? And we removed the purpose of education. And not every child is going to go to college, but they should be able to have a pathway to be a contributor to society. And Chancellor Banks has really changed the game with his partnerships with outside entities -- tech companies, hospitals, facilities. And we have started to give children their purpose. And previous administrations as well, from Mayor Bloomberg to Mayor de Blasio. We're continuing that tradition of saying the responsibility lies with the mayor and the chancellor.

Prior to that, Assemblyman, no one knew who to point to. There was a group of boards, there was a lot of mismanagement of

funds, there was a lot of issues around that. And now people are able to point: This is your responsibility, the buck stops with you, and you must produce the product and be able answer the questions that come with that.

ASSEMBLYMAN MEEKS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Okay, our last questioner --

UNIDENTIFIED LEGISLATOR: Oh, no, please.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: -- is Cities Chair Braunstein for his second round of three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you, Fred.

Just a couple more questions. The Transitional Finance Authority's outstanding debt, the city comptroller reports that it has $48 billion in outstanding debt for the fourth quarter of 2024. The cap is currently 13.5 billion. So what do you attribute that extra $35 billion of outstanding debt to?

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: This is --

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: If you could speak in the mic.

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Yeah. This is debt that is outside of that $13.5 billion. There is a cap of $13.5 billion, okay, that doesn't count toward the debt limit. And anything above that counts toward the debt limit. You follow what I'm saying to you?

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: No.

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Okay. We have a debt limit --

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: 13.5 billion.

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: There is a total debt limit for the city that is basically based on the values of properties in New York City in general. Okay?

There -- so when the city reached the debt limit back in the nineties, so -- {no audio} -- transitional fund, the TFA, to basically issue more debt.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. Okay.

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: The city has authority up to $13.5 billion, okay? But

at some point it gets to a point where the city becomes almost -- it was basically easy for the city, easier for the city to issue TFA instead of GO debt. So the city issued TFA debt that fall outside.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: But that's still under the city's other general --

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: The general debt limit.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay.

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Okay?

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay.

The other question I have is I know that you're facing some challenging financial decisions because the federal stimulus money is drying up, particularly when it comes to your education budget -- you know, 3-K program, summer programs. How much stimulus funding is drying up this year from last year?

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: It's about $900 million {no audio}.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Year to year, 900 million?

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Yeah. But -- {mic off; inaudible}.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: That's not a few years out, that's just in one year you're -- so last year you got 900 million more from the federal government than you're getting this year.

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: (Nodding.)

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: For education or for everything?

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Educational programs, about 700. But overall it's about $900 million.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: So but for the education piece --

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Seven hundred.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: -- like we're talking about, you were using for 3-K, Summer Rising --

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: 3-K, Summer Rising, yup.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: -- 700 million from one year to the next.

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Yup. Yup.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: A huge hit. A huge hit. You know, permanent programs with temporary dollars.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: I know. I mean, ideally we would have -- if we knew it was coming, we would have tried to plan for it. But I understand it's a lot of --

NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: That was the plan. But because of the migrant crisis, we have to pivot. Okay? That was the plan all along, transitional financing to basically take care of this problem. {Mic off; inaudible.}

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay, thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you very much.

And Mr. Mayor, thank you for your testimony --

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: -- and for your responses to the Legislature's questions

today.

We look forward to working with you in the coming weeks as we craft a budget for the city and for all the State of New York.

Thank you.

NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

And we're going to take a short break, everyone. Which still doesn't mean you should all attack the mayor right away. Let them head out into the hallway.

(Brief recess taken from 12:12 to 12:29 p.m.)

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: We are resuming the hearing with Panel A: Honorable Byron Brown, mayor of the City of Buffalo; Honorable Mike Spano, mayor of the City of Yonkers; Honorable Malik Evans, mayor of the City of Rochester; Honorable Ben Walsh, mayor of the City of Syracuse; and Honorable Kathy Sheehan, mayor of the City of Albany.

And before we start the panel, I just want to add that we are joined by Assemblymember Otis and Assemblymember Conrad

for this panel.

And I think our plan is to have each of you make your presentation and reserve questions until the end. And who would like to begin?

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: I'll begin.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Okay.

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: Thank you for the opportunity today to deliver testimony to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee on the fiscal year 2025 Executive Budget. I would like to thank Senate Finance Committee Chair Liz Krueger, Assembly Ways and Means Chair Helene Weinstein. I would also like to thank Senate Local Government Committee Chair Monica Martinez and Assembly Local Government Committee Chair Fred Thiele for allowing all of us mayors to speak on behalf of the residents of our communities.

I'd also like to acknowledge Assemblyman Conrad and Assemblyman Rivera, who are from Western New York, and thank them for being here today.

You have my written testimony, but

I'll highlight some of my most pressing requests.

My first request is the need for AIM funding for the City of Buffalo. There has been no increase in AIM funding since 2012. I think when the state went away from revenue-sharing, it eliminated an amount of predictable revenue for local governments, particularly our cities, which has been very harmful to cities being able to balance their budgets and put sound budgets together.

So I want to make a major push for the restoration of AIM funding in this year's budget.

The City of Buffalo is at a crossroads. The world around us is rapidly changing, our economy has evolved in a way that was unimaginable before COVID-19. Climate change has created an entirely new reality of what a Buffalo winter looks like, and this requires more essential services from our municipal workers than ever before. Instead of responding to 50 or 60 inches of snow fallen over several months, it has been

more common that the snow falls in a couple of days, threatening the life and safety of our residents.

We've been forced to retain additional equipment and labor from private contractors at the cost of millions of dollars. For Buffalo storms this January, we've already paid outside contractors over $5 million, with a total overall cost approaching $7 million. These massive speedy responses drive hundreds of thousands of dollars for the municipal workforce in overtime, as they work to clear roads, respond to emergencies, and shelter our most vulnerable residents.

If Buffalo is to fulfill its obligation to its residents, many of which are the most vulnerable in the Western New York region, Buffalo must be climate-resilient.

I also have a request for resources for cultural assets that are regional in nature that are located physically in the City of Buffalo. And the present funding formula between county government and city

government doesn't adequately support the funding, the work, the maintenance that the city puts into these cultural assets that are located in the city and draw people to our region. We are requesting a fund for these cultural assets.

Finally -- and I'm not going to be too long -- there is an inequity in how county government is funded and how city government is funded. I'm asking the state to look at these many areas of inequity in the funding formula. It is different for communities outside New York City, which is its own county, but all of our cities don't have the same equity and fairness in terms of the funding formula for county governments.

And if we're concerned about equity, if we're concerned about segregation in communities, if we're concerned about poverty in communities, then we have to look at the funding formula of how cities are funded versus how counties are funded in New York State.

Because I'm here with fellow mayors

presenting today, I will end my comments there and be available for your questions.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Who would like to go next?

SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: I'll go.

Thank you, Chair Krueger, Chair Thiele -- please give my best to Chair Weinstein -- and members of the legislative fiscal committees for inviting me to these joint hearings to discuss the state budget. It is an honor to be here.

I am grateful to the Legislature for its support of the City of Syracuse. I am particularly appreciative of the members of our local delegation, including Senators May -- nice to see you, Senator -- and Mannion and Assemblymembers Magnarelli, Pam Hunter, and Stirpe. Through my six years as mayor, New York State has been a steady and impactful partner.

Syracuse is at the center of multiple national and world-leading initiatives in coordination with New York State.

Construction on the $2.25 billion Interstate 81 project is finally underway. Micron's $100 billion commitment to build a massive semiconductor chip fab in our community is advancing. The Syracuse Surge, our strategy for inclusive growth in the new economy, continues to draw investment. With the state's assistance, all of these major efforts are focused on creating equitable opportunity for people in the city and around the region.

These transformational initiatives create new and different challenges, particularly in the areas of housing, public infrastructure and workforce development. As such, I want to continue to work with New York on smart and strategic investments.

Syracuse strongly supports the efforts by this Legislature and Governor Hochul to increase affordable housing. In 2020 I introduced the Resurgent Neighborhoods Initiative in Syracuse, a program to increase housing and build stronger neighborhood

business corridors. We set a big goal for Syracuse -- hundreds of units of affordable new-construction single- and two-family homes at scattered sites all over the city. With New York State's help, we're more than halfway to our goal.

We're also working with the state and partners to advance multiple large-scale mixed-income housing projects. The financing and design plans for the first phase of the East Adams Neighborhood Transformation are actively underway, and construction will begin in 2025. This multiphase plan will include a one-to-one replacement of all Syracuse Housing Authority public housing units in that neighborhood and include some new mixed-income apartments, totaling 1,400 units of new housing on the southside. We're also reactivating the former state-owned Syracuse Developmental Center site on the westside, and the old Maria Regina campus on the northside, which will put two long-vacant properties back on the tax rolls and add hundreds of new units

of quality housing.

At my State of the City address last month, I announced a new "housing promise": Before I leave office at the end of 2025, Syracuse will have 2,500 new units of quality housing completed or underway in the city. It's an ambitious number, but based on our experience -- and with the help of New York State -- we will make it happen.

Restoring the city's existing housing stock is one of the most effective ways we can meet the housing needs of a growing region. Decades of job loss and population decline did severe damage to housing in Syracuse.

Earlier this year we completed the Syracuse Housing Study, one of the most in-depth housing analyses ever done by a city. The study finds the city is burdened with two separate but related problems -- we have both a market gap and an affordability gap. The market gap is the difference between what it costs to create and maintain housing and the market's willingness to pay

for it. The affordability gap is the difference between what it costs to create and maintain housing and the market's ability to pay for it.

We are now underway with a Syracuse housing strategy which will provide a roadmap for how to address the issues raised by the study in the coming years. It will require nontraditional strategies. We will need to bring new support and assistance to homeowners, especially in transitional or "bridge" neighborhoods. By bolstering these stable but moderately distressed neighborhoods, we will halt further decline and build more areas of strength faster.

With the state's help, we've taken a critical step with the formation of the Syracuse Housing Trust Fund. The fund will give us more tools and financial capacity to construct, renovate, repair and rehabilitate housing in the city. We will need the state's continued support going forward.

New York's quality, abundant water supply is a precious natural resource. About

200,000 people in the City of Syracuse and multiple surrounding communities get their drinking water from Skaneateles Lake, a pristine Finger Lake southwest of the city. In close coordination with the Health Department and DEC, we're making good progress on a plan to extend one of the two intake pipes that draw water from the lake to a deeper location that is less susceptible to turbidity due largely to climate change.

We're also working on a plan to switch to on-site chlorine generation for disinfection using salt, water and electricity. In partnership with the state, we can ensure clean drinking water and community protection long into the future.

The city's highly regarded workforce development initiatives in technology, advanced manufacturing and construction are drawing investment to Central New York. The Syracuse Surge has helped us upskill thousands of adults and young people to meet employers' tech workforce needs. Our

Syracuse Build initiative is putting city residents into union apprenticeships and good-paying careers in building and construction.

Syracuse strongly supports Governor Hochul's ON-RAMP proposal to build a network of innovative workforce development hubs across upstate. With the flagship hub in Syracuse, this project will help expand our successful Syracuse Surge and Syracuse Build programs.

I made a firm commitment to the city's financial well-being when I became mayor. Despite progress through careful fiscal management, the city still spends more on the vital services residents deserve than we take in from taxes, fees, and state aid, otherwise known as a structural deficit.

Clearly, that is not a sustainable position, which is why we launched a Revenue Enhancement Workgroup last year, with the goal of wiping out our structural deficit. The group identified multiple options, including instituting a hotel room

occupancy tax, similar to those enacted recently in the nearby Town of DeWitt and Village of Skaneateles. We will be asking the Legislature to authorize this same source of revenue for the city in this session.

As we institute new local measures to achieve fiscal sustainability, I also must address the negative impact of the state's 12-year freeze on AIM -- actually, it has not been increased in 15 years. AIM is the second-largest source of revenue for the City of Syracuse, and flat AIM is a major contributor to our fiscal plight, as you heard from Mayor Brown.

At the start of 2024, newly elected Syracuse City Auditor Alexander Marion issued a report on the impact of frozen AIM aid on city operations and the city's structural deficit. He made four recommendations, including adjusting the AIM formula considering factors such as the value of state-owned, tax-exempt properties in each municipality; meeting ambitious goals for affordable housing; and improvements to

municipal infrastructure. We ask the Legislature to work with the administration to update AIM in this year's budget.

In closing, I reiterate my appreciation to the members of the Syracuse delegation and the full Legislature for your steadfast backing. You share in Syracuse's resurgence. We welcome your continued partnership as we work to create equitable and sustainable prosperity for all of the people we serve.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Who's next?

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: I'll go.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Mayor Spano, welcome back.

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Good to see you, Assemblyman. And -- I'm assuming this is working?

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Yeah.

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Assemblyman and members of the Legislature, it's good to be back here. I feel like I was here just yesterday, and it's not. It's good to see

my -- certainly the chairs, my local delegation -- obviously, Senator Shelley Mayer, and the Senate Majority Leader I know has responsibilities, but certainly I know is probably listening from her office -- and is, as all you should know, very accessible to us -- as well as Assemblyman Nader Sayegh and Assemblyman Gary Pretlow.

I have a pretty lengthy speech I'm not going to share with you. I submitted an even longer one to you. But there are a couple of things I think that -- to talk about. I'm certain that there will be other questions that will offer some clarity to other issues.

So yeah, let's start off with AIM aid. And, you know, we all know that, you know, New York has kind of over the years tried to pay down the whole Medicaid cost -- that was a big deal -- to counties. And while counties, at least the counties around me, are somewhat flush with cash, the cities have the greatest responsibilities. You know, we're educating our kids, we're the urban center, we have our police, our fire, our

boards of education. There's so much there.

And yet AIM aid has -- the last time AIM aid was increased was spin-up money that I was able to achieve what I was -- in 2011. After that spin-up it went down and remained flat. And we all know that AIM aid is just that recognition. It's that recognition from all up here that you're partners with us in our efforts to do what we need to do to educate our kids, keep our communities safe, keep that quality of life, and of course educate our kids.

This being held at that line for all these years is literally devastating for us. It hurts. It hurts us, and again, you know, all the other costs continue to go up with it. You know, I don't know if anybody's really talked about it but, you know, health insurance. Health insurance costs for this year are going to go up to the tune of -- at least in Yonkers, to the tune of over $20 million. It will be 6 percent on the property tax levy just to cover the cost of the healthcare increase to the city. Six

percent.

Now remember, we have a property tax cap. So that's really not going to work, because I have to start with raising -- I'd have to bring the tax cap up to 6 percent, by the way, and that's a real issue for us.

So healthcare, the loss of federal funds, I know we're all suffering that. But I think that if we speak and we have another conversation later on, we could talk about ARPA funds and what the Big 5 cities have spent that money on, especially in dealing with COVID and dealing with the mental health issues that we have kind of taken on since COVID has gone, right? And so that 800 or $700 million statewide is a pretty significant number. If we don't get the feds to fill it, and you don't fill it, then we're going to have to fill it.

And if we don't fill it, the jobs are going to be cut for the kids and urban centers are going to lose psychologists. They're going to lose sports. They're going to lose music and art. These are the things

that they lose because we all know that, you know, it's -- it's social bankruptcy before it's anything else. And so we really need to talk about that.

We need to talk about the cost of healthcare and how it's affecting us. We need to talk about why we need more AIM aid. We need to talk about education aid, at least for me. And I have a number of places that I think we can go to in terms of helping a city like Yonkers. But it's more regional, so I'm probably not going to bring it up here. But I certainly will take it up with my delegation.

But think about this. The City of Yonkers, because we're in Westchester County and we have the highest cost of living, right, yet we are -- our kids, 75 percent of our kids live at or below the rate of poverty. We end up -- we're ranked 282 in the state in terms of per-pupil Foundation Aid. Think about that. Per-pupil Foundation Aid.

So our median income in Yonkers is

less than the state's average, so we have this huge cost of living, huge cost that's here. We have a median income that's lower than the state's median income. And we get more towards the end in terms of pupil aid.

As a matter of fact, just to throw this out there, if you take what Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse contribute to education, combined it, their local per-pupil share, the City of Yonkers spends $1400 more per pupil.

So that's something that at least -- you know, that's something that's kind of different than the conversation that we can all have, but it's certainly something that has to be talked about for us.

There's lots of things that we're doing that are good things. I could talk to you about our budget deficit, which is an annual event. But we do need to find ways through which we can help fill those gaps. One way, like I said, is to continue putting that bullet aid in, which will help Yonkers quite a bit. To maybe change the regional

cost index. Some of this can help us get out of our own way.

Despite the fact the money has always been an issue for us, we still have been able to do the things that you would expect us to do. We're graduating our kids at 90 percent, and that's a pretty big accomplishment for our schools, considering that they don't get the same level of funding. And we're the safest big city of our size in all New York State. We're the fastest-growing city -- next to New York City, obviously.

And when you look at housing, even though it costs a lot to build, we have actually put forth just in the past 10 years, 12,500 new units of housing. Ten percent of it -- actually, 22 percent of it is affordable.

And so we're doing the things you'd like us to do, and I think that's important. But you need to know that it's a struggle. And I think it's a struggle for all of our cities in an effort to kind of make it all work. Because we're the urban centers, we're

the ones that are going to educate our kids, we're the ones that take care of, you know, mostly Black and brown children. You want us to succeed. You know, you don't have a Congressman that says, you know, we should do restitution, put $14 trillion in -- you know what, take a trillion and put it into education in urban centers and then see how the world will change when our kids are given the same opportunities as anyone else.

My kids will not have the same educational experience as they'll have in Scarsdale just across the border, Bronxville across the border, or Hastings. But if you give us the funding that we need, we can kind of make it work.

But anyway, I kind of went off the beaten path, I apologize. But I will certainly be available for any questions you might have.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Okay, it's between Albany and Rochester. Who's --

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Ladies first.

(Laughter.)

ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: All right. Thank you so much for having us today, Chairs Krueger and Weinstein -- who's not here.

I also want to thank Assemblymember Thiele and Senator Martinez for coming and addressing the New York Conference of Mayors yesterday. We truly appreciated hearing from you, so thank you for taking the time out of your day to do that.

I come here every year talking about Capital City Funding, and I had said that if we could make it permanent, I won't have to come and talk about it ever again. I'm thrilled to see our Assemblymember, Pat Fahy, who has always fought for Capital City Funding for us.

And I want to give a shout out to Senate Vice President Pro Tem Neil Breslin, as well as John McDonald who, while he no longer represents the City of Albany, fights for us here in the Assembly.

And I'm grateful for the fact that this body -- for the support that we've

received from both the Senate and the Assembly over the years, and for the third year in a row now, Governor Hochul has built that aid directly into her budget.

The one thing that I do want to bring your attention to with respect to what we're asking for, though, is to really look at 19-A and make it permanent. We are sitting here in a place that used to be home to nearly 10,000 people. This was a neighborhood -- churches, businesses, schools, all taken by eminent domain, torn down, accelerating the flight from the City of Albany as people were displaced.

And so when we think about what it is going to take to replace that, in a city where 64 percent of our property is not taxable, and most of that property is owned by the state, we believe that what we're proposing for 19-A works. It provides a permanent amount of funding within 19-A that incorporates the Capital City Funding and a very small, small percentage of the value of all of that property that the state owns.

And then it's tied to the tax cap, so that we know that it's going to go up when the tax cap goes up.

That will build in for residents of the City of Albany, businesses, those who come here day in and day out, whether they work here or they're visitors here, the confidence to know that we will have the resources that we need to be able to run our city government. And I believe that the time has come for us to give that certainty so that we're not wringing our hands and wondering year to year whether or not we're going to be able to make ends meet.

I also want to join my other mayors in talking about AIM. You know, the one thing about AIM that we have to make sure that we're focused on is that AIM was a way of providing unrestricted funding to cities. It's tied to a formula. We may disagree about how that formula works, but it's tied to a formula that looks at the poverty rates in our city, the amount of home ownership in our city. It's tied to need in as close a

way as it can be.

But it also allows us to avoid having to raise a regressive tax, our property taxes, especially in cities where we have high numbers of seniors -- our populations are aging -- and high numbers of people who come to our cities because we are focused on providing affordable housing. We're focused on providing affordable homeownership opportunities. And so every time we raise the property taxes, we're impacting that affordability for our residents.

And so we would like to see an increase in AIM. It's actually gone down. Our AIM aid is down 9 percent from 2009. There were certain cities that were cut over these years. And so while some saw a slight increase and then a decrease back down, this is something that needs to be addressed. And the fairness piece of this for our residents really has to do with an issue that is impacting all of New York State, and that's affordability.

And that property tax bill is a huge

part of affordability. Whether you're renting an apartment or whether you're looking to achieve homeownership, you are paying those property taxes. And so AIM is a way for the state to take its more progressive income taxes and ensure that some of that is coming back to our cities and that there's an increase that we can rely upon, year in and year out, whether it's tied to inflation or another index.

And so we really think that the time has come. I know that there was a view that we had ARPA money. That money is gone. We saw increases in sales tax; that's flattening out. The cannabis tax, have to tell you -- it's a whopping $23,000, I think is what we're projecting.

So we need to get serious about ensuring that this revenue source is available for the cities in the state because, again, it allows us to avoid that regressive tax that can hurt our homeowners, the property tax, which is really the only other lever that we as mayors control.

So we are hopeful that our voices will be heard, that we will be able to get something in the budget this year and then tie that to an increase that we can rely on, especially during these inflationary times. We've all shown that we're great stewards of our taxpayer dollars. In the City of Albany we've kept growth at less than 2 percent every year that I've been mayor as you average it out over those years. We all saw that increase with the ARPA money. Wasn't really our money. And we're all going to have to grapple with ensuring that we're able to balance our budgets going forward.

And so we want to be partners with you, we want to demonstrate to you what good stewards we are of those taxpayer dollars. And allow us to ensure that we have the ability to fill those positions in our police departments, our fire departments, focus on public safety, focus on growing our cities, focus on making our cities communities of choice as our state grows and takes advantage of the incredible opportunities that are

coming our way.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

Mayor Evans.

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: (Mic off) -- absence Chairwoman Weinstein, and Chairman Thiele. And I also just want to also thank members of my delegation that are here: Senator Brouk, Assemblyman Meeks, Senator Cooney. Thank you all for being here.

You have my testimony, so I will not read it verbatim. I'll be brief, but I just want to make a couple of points.

When I took office in 2022 I immediately declared a gun violence emergency because Rochester had one of the highest per-capita murder rates in the country and we had seen our highest gun death rates that we had ever seen.

I declared a gun violence emergency, but I could have easily also declared a poverty emergency. Of the top five poorest zip codes in New York State, Rochester, a

medium-sized city in upstate New York, we have three of the top five poorest zip codes in New York State. That is not only something that we are not proud of or happy about, it's something that I think we have to come to you, as we go to all levels of government, and appeal to you to help in that situation.

And the dollars might come in AIM aid, or we could come up with a new name. I don't care what we call it. But we need more resources in Rochester because in the richest, most powerful nation in the world, in one of the richest states in the country, there should not be a city on the banks of the Genesee River that has a childhood poverty rate that is almost half and contains, of the top five poorest zip codes in New York State, the top three.

This is an issue not just for Rochester, but for us as a state, and I want to appeal to you to help make that the center of any decisions that we make as they relate to the allocation of resources. It is

critical.

It is also no mistake that if you look at the redlined areas in the City of Rochester, if you look at our Vacuum Oil site that we are working to clean up from an environmental justice perspective, all of those areas that have the highest poverty rates were also redlined areas that existed for many, many years. And we are bearing the brunt of that. Our children are bearing the brunt of that.

So an increase in AIM aid or whatever we want to call it is something that could have a major impact on our city and thereby I think also improve our state. You can't have a city that has that many children living in poverty.

The second point I wanted to make is gun violence. I said I declared a gun violence state of emergency. I've been in office -- this is going into my third year. We cut -- homicides last year were down by almost 34 percent. And one of the things that this body and the state helped us with

was GIVE money. I cannot stress enough the importance of the Gun Violence Elimination Program and the impact that that has had on us driving down gun violence.

There is no reason why a state like New York, with its pretty strict gun laws, should have people across the state dying of gun violence. My commitment is to try to do everything we can, from a prevention, intervention and suppression standpoint, to make sure that we drive down gun violence. We must make sure that we put investments in programs -- not just intervention or suppression, but also preventative programs that will stop young people in particular from picking up a gun, and encouraging them to make sure that they pick up a book or that they get into a workforce development program where they can get jobs. It is absolutely critical that we continue to invest in those programs.

Just a couple of things from the Governor's Executive Budget that I looked at that I want to highlight that I think that

are important for both Rochester and Monroe County. Our city and our county, we work together. Our legislative proposals are joint because we believe that we have more firepower if we're able to work together.

I want to highlight the investment in new public safety communications systems. That is extremely important for us.

The FAST NY Shovel-Ready Grant Program, a great program. As much as we can get shovel-ready sites to clean up these brownfields and other dilapidated areas that have been poisoned by individuals -- you know, what happens and what frustrates me as a mayor is these folks, they tear our cities up, leave it poisoned -- we have a Vacuum Oil site that we're working on cleaning up -- and then they leave the city, the poorest of the residents, to clean up this mess that they benefited from for like a hundred years.

And then by the time I become mayor, they say, Hey, congratulations, here you are. Any resources to clean up those sites is extremely important.

Equipment grants to support response to emergency weather events, as Mayor Brown mentioned.

Very happy to see the increased access to swimming and instruction for important life skills, and the creation of the Office of Workforce Development, which is needed because the sugar high of ARPA will be ending. And we have put millions of dollars into workforce development as a means, as a means of decreasing poverty.

We know that all these jobs are here, but without the skills and workforce, it doesn't matter. We can have all the jobs we want, but if we are not tying people to those jobs that are going to pay them a livable wage, none of it matters. But what do we do after ARPA runs out? So I'm happy to see that in the budget, and we need to make sure we do that.

A continued investment in clean water infrastructure and reduced lead exposure. Rochester has been a national model for this. We spoke at President Biden's Lead Summit

that he had last year where we talked about our commitment to accelerate the replacement of every single lead service line in Rochester by 2030.

We want them all replaced. We want them all gone, because we don't want to have our children bearing the contaminants that lead brings. We did it in paint, and now we're doing it in water. That is an expensive enterprise. So any dollars that the state can put our way is something that we would be extremely grateful for. And I'm happy that that is in this budget.

We are also happy about the continued investment in roadway infrastructure through CHIPS, Pave Our Potholes, and Extreme Winter Recovery.

And also the expanding of access to mental health services. That is up there with the opioid epidemic, the challenges around mental health. It all relates. It is all correlated, and I believe that it is all things that we should make sure that we invest in. And I am happy to see those in

this budget.

So I thank you for your time today, and look forward to answering any questions that I may be able to answer.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: I thank you all for your testimony.

I just want to add that we've been joined by Assemblymember Fahy and Assemblymember Pretlow. Thank you for being here.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm sorry, I just want to add Senator Shelley Mayer, Senator Samra Brouk, Senator Rachel May, who's back; she had to go.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Okay. And we're going to open the questioning with Assemblymember Shimsky.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Boy, that was fast.

We've been talking a lot about the challenges you all face in an operating budget scenario. But especially as climate change gets worse, I suspect your capital

needs are going to be exploding too.

Since one of my mayors is on the panel, I think I'd like to engage Mayor Mike a little bit on this issue. Now, the City of Yonkers has done some really good things that have helped with stormwater management. The most spectacular one is probably the multi-phase Saw Mill River daylighting downtown, which is great. But you still have a lot of challenges to go. Do you want to maybe list a few of them and talk about how you hope to be able to fund these one day?

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Yes. And thank you, Assemblywoman. Yeah, the story of infrastructure, the story of our schools, our police, fire infrastructure, the cleaning of our streets, the dealing with the effects of climate change, I think it's fair to say we could all probably give you price lists that's in the hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars, each and every one of us.

And, you know, Yonkers is a city of hills, you know, it's built on two mountain

ranges -- seven rivers, seven hills, seven lakes, seven valleys. And so when Hurricane Ida hit, you know, we were whacked pretty hard. It was probably worse than what Sandy had to do to us. In general, it was worse.

And so when you're looking at certain infrastructure projects, everything that we're going to come to you with is going to have a price tag of 50 million or more, in some cases. It's big stuff.

Now, we could try and prioritize and get us enough money to kind of do -- you know, take care of Troublesome Brook -- perfect name. That's the name, Troublesome Brook, right? And to do a couple of different things. But then we also have, you know, like the mayor said before, just the issue of lead. Right? So the federal government has put down certain things that we have to do. One of them is they say you have to create a list. Well, we have 30,000 people that we have to inspect their pipes. It's $10 million just to create their list, you know, for them before we even talk

about how we're going to solve the problem.

And so, again, we've built a -- you know, we just built a school with the help of New York State, and thank you for that. We -- you know, and that has been big for us. But just repairs of our schools -- you know, we're talking about, just to get to where we need to be, another half a billion dollars. I don't have that. Because if I raise -- if I borrow 30 million -- my budget person is sitting over there -- if I borrow 30 million, we have to raise taxes 1 percent. It's just -- there -- the money just isn't there.

And so any help we can get from the deep pockets, which I refer to the state and the federal government --

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Thank you, Assemblyman.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. And our first questioner is the chair, Senator May.

SENATOR MAY: Thank you. And thank

you all for your testimony.

The Cities 2 Committee partly exists because we have these -- some of these specific problems, like concentrated poverty in our small and medium cities. And I wanted to -- first of all, I hear you loud and clear about AIM aid. Every year you advocate for it; every year we in the Legislature advocate for it; every year the Governor shoots it down.

So I think the city auditor in Syracuse has a creative idea for how to propose it differently. I don't know, Mayor Brown, if you were suggesting a different way to kind of come at AIM aid in relation to like county versus city needs. If you have creative ways to do this that maybe are a little different from what we've done before that might get a different result, I am all ears. So that's just open-ended. I'm available anytime.

I did want to talk about the concentrated poverty issue. When we had a hearing in December about this issue after

Syracuse was listed No. 2 in the nation for child poverty, one of the things we heard was that the state tends to support and fund affordable housing projects that are supposed to be 100 percent affordable, understandably, but 100 percent affordable housing actually can serve to further concentrate poverty. And we need more mixed-income housing in our smaller cities.

So what tools do you need from the state to make it possible to support mixed-income, development of mixed-income neighborhoods? Is that something any of you have thoughts about?

ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: Well, if I could, I have a council that passed very restrictive inclusionary zoning. We had an inclusionary zoning ordinance. It was working. It required that 5 percent of the units within a new market-rate development be affordable. They raised the percentage and lowered the income level, and I have not had a single market-rate project proposed in my city. And that's because there is no tax

credit or other way of paying for those affordable units.

So while I support the spirit of it, the reality is that banks will not finance it unless it cash-flows. And even though we might hope that banks would be willing to make less money or take more risk, that's not how it's working. And so I think some sort of credit for developers who create a certain percentage of affordable units within market-rate housing will move some of those units out of the areas of concentrated poverty. But it requires some dollars, and they're dollars that we as local governments just simply don't have.

SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: (Mic off; inaudible.) It cuts both ways. So we know that left to its own devices, the market isn't going to finance or fund the gap for incorporating affordable units into market-rate projects. So again, to the mayor's point, we need flexible financing to assist with that.

On the flip side -- as, Senator, you

and I have talked about before -- the toolkit for affordable housing is very restrictive as well. So for low-income-housing tax credits, which is the biggest tool in the affordable housing toolkit, it doesn't allow for the inclusion of market-rate units in an otherwise affordable project. And what we all know is that concentrating any type of housing, whether it's low-income housing or luxury housing, isn't the best way to do it.

And so that's one of the reasons we created the Syracuse Housing Trust Fund, was to try to have a mechanism -- where we have to obviously find resources for -- where we can make strategic investments in different projects, whether they be like affordable projects or otherwise market-rate projects, to incorporate a mix of income levels into them.

So the short answer is some sort of flexible financing tool. You know, we have seen some limited use of economic development funds, state economic development funds to do that. I think we could see more of that.

But thank you for the question.

SENATOR MAY: Let me also ask if any of you --

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: May I answer that?

SENATOR MAY: Quickly.

(Mic difficulties.)

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: It takes real power to get this mic on.

(Laughter.)

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: I think flexible finances is critically important, but having the resources to provide incentives for housing development is critical.

And again, you know, when we look at what the Governor tried to do with affordable housing across the state last year, a lot of communities were resistant to that. In my community, the majority of the affordable housing is physically located in the City of Buffalo. Seventeen percent of city rental units are income-restricted. Almost 70 percent of affordable housing is in the city. Eighty percent -- 87 percent of public

housing is in the city.

We've built over 4,000 units of affordable housing during my tenure as mayor of the City of Buffalo. So having flexible financing is critically important, and recognizing that something -- there should be some incentive for communities that have invested in affordable housing. You know, some --

SENATOR MAY: Okay, I'm going to -- I'd like to move on to a couple of other topics, though.

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: Okay.

SENATOR MAY: But thank you.

One of them is about the role of my committee. Actually every time I come to Albany I am impressed with the public transportation here and I'm excited by the new FLEX system that's an on-demand system for getting out to the train station, for example.

What we heard from Mayor Evans about fighting gun violence -- how much do you share with each other things that are working

or things that you have tried and that have failed? And how can this -- the Cities 2 Committee be helpful in brokering some of those conversations and making sure we are learning from each other?

ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: Well, we just met for two days, a day and a half, with the New York Conference of Mayors, so we do share a lot of information.

And I think -- I'll be very quick, but a lot of us are investing our ARPA dollars in new programs that are really tests of theories of change with respect to mental health issues and how we address those issues, rapid rehousing. There's a lot of creativity that is going on with those ARPA dollars.

We plan on measuring the outcomes and then figuring out how to fund the things that work permanently. And so I imagine we will be back next year with very specific requests because we want to ensure that when we can demonstrate that something works, that we have a funding stream that's going to pay for

it.

SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

And just real quickly, are any of you looking at Detroit's example of using a land value tax to replace some or all of the property tax so that you can really get more land in production for housing or get rid of some of the surface parking lots that are blights on our cities?

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: (No audio.) -- just around the land value tax. But as you know, we would need this honorable body to have permission to be able to do that.

SENATOR MAY: I carry the bill.

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: But I think it's a discussion that's worth having, because we just can't keep doing the same thing that we've been doing. We know that's the definition of insanity.

SENATOR MAY: Mayor Evans, I have a kind of pointed question for you because one of my constituents died 11 months ago at a concert in Rochester. I know one of your constituents died, Mayor Brown's constituents

died there.

Have you taken any steps to make sure that doesn't ever happen again? Are there policy measures we can take at the state level to prevent that kind of tragedy?

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Well, you know, I mean it was a terrible tragedy, that concert. One of the things we did was do an assessment of these concert venues to see what their security plans were, and also to make sure that if you are doing an event like this, to make sure that you are hiring people who, number one, understand crowd control and also make sure that people aren't being packed into these locations.

And that's something that you have to do working through zoning and the fire department. That's something that we did. And we did ultimately end up closing down that location as a result of that tragedy that happened last March.

SENATOR MAY: I'm glad to hear that, honestly. We're working on some legislation to make sure -- whatever the state can do to

make sure that kind of tragedy doesn't happen again.

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Thank you.

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Senator, if I can -- can I just -- just on policing real quick. You know, in 2012 when I took office, Yonkers was under a Department of Justice investigation. They wanted to take over the police department, they wanted to institute a lot of different measures to change the department. It was under investigation for being aggressive and maybe even have systematic racism.

And we -- anyway, we went to work with the Department of Justice and made a hundred different changes. Like we banned chokeholds long before the murder of George Floyd. But my point is we made a hundred different changes working with community groups -- the clergy, community groups, working with legislators, working with the Department of Justice. And we did a bunch of things. Some of the things were kind of corny: "Coffee with a Cop," "Pizza with the Police" --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Mayor, I have to cut you off, I'm sorry.

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: I know, I'm sorry. I'm going off on a tangent. I apologize, Senator.

SENATOR MAY: Thank you. Thank you all.

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: But just so you know, there's ways we can do it, keep the crime low, and also keep complaints against our officers -- we've done it.

SENATOR MAY: Thank you. Thank you all.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Yes, Assemblymember Conrad, for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CONRAD: Thank you, Chairs.

I guess I would direct this question to Mayor Byron Brown, but it could be addressed to all of you as a panel.

We talked about AIM funding. I certainly support your efforts to get a higher rate of AIM funding. I've been in

local government, I know what that does for you, and CHIPS and so on. And I certainly can understand where you're coming from.

But one of the things I want to talk about is the cost of clean water. And I was interested by the testimony of the Syracuse mayor. But what I was experiencing at the local level of government was the cost of chemicals to actually clean drinking water to be able to get it out to our customers and to our residents. And I know we have the lead pipes, we have fluoride issues, we've got the gamut. And that's a very expensive thing.

But the question I have is, are you experiencing the same amount of increase of cost of chemicals? In my tenure in the local town board, the cost went up from 200 to 300 times more. And that expense is of course going back to the taxpayer. Are you experiencing that? And really my question is, I see that Syracuse is attempting to do something there. I'll go from there. So I'll leave it to you.

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: The cost of

every commodity has gone up, including the cost of chemicals that go into the water.

And in Buffalo, we are transferring, automating systems. And what we saw in other communities across the country, when they changed water sources, when they changed systems, water got contaminated. So you have to be very careful. In addition to costs, you have to do the research to make sure that when systems are changed, different chemicals are used, that it's going to work properly.

Lead is a major issue, I think, for all of us. As Mayor Spano said, the federal government is requiring lead pipes to be replaced by a certain period of time. Buffalo years ago started a program called ROLL, Replace Old Lead Lines. We have replaced thousands of lead lines, at a cost of a little over $30 million. But to do all of the lead lines in the City of Buffalo would be about half a billion dollars.

So costs are going up with chemicals, but to do the work that's being required by the federal government to address lead pipes,

that's going to be very expensive for all of us.

ASSEMBLYMAN CONRAD: I guess I'll leave it to the Syracuse mayor. You mentioned a program using electric and salt to kind of clean the water. Is this new tech? And how costly is it?

SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: So hopefully to reduce costs and increase public safety, rather than trucking in chlorine gas to the facility, we're using a process to create it. So that's the idea.

But again, to your point, part of that is -- aside from the public safety aspect, part of it is just cost savings.

ASSEMBLYMAN CONRAD: Thank you. Appreciate it.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Shelley Mayer.

SENATOR MAYER: Thank you very much.

And thank you for being here. A special thank you to my -- Mayor Mike Spano, thank you for your leadership in Yonkers and restoring confidence in our city.

One thing none of you mentioned -- and particularly you, Mayor Spano -- is that the Governor's proposal on school aid funding, even for the Big 5 and other districts, if you got more, you're still getting less more than you would have gotten before her proposals, because she reduced the inflationary index in the Foundation Aid formula. And for Yonkers, I think that's about 33 million or thereabouts.

So Yonkers, because they have a mayoral-control type of situation, but even in the others, your school funding is extremely important. So none of you spoke to that. I just wonder, Mayor Spano, if you have any comments on that.

And my other two comments are -- one on AIM, I like your idea, Mayor Evans, of coming up with a new name or a new thing, because every year we put in increased AIM in our one-house budget. Since I was in the Assemblymember, and Mayor Spano before me, we have been fighting for increased AIM. I think it's absolutely acknowledged that

cities can't make it without additional state funding. But somehow this word "AIM" seems to be a problem. And so maybe, working collectively, we can come up with a new idea.

And thirdly, Mayor Spano, you rightly pointed out that DOT investment in the City of Yonkers' aging roadways is inadequate. I wonder if you could address sort of the specifics of those -- any of those three things.

Last, I just want to say on the regional cost index, we hear you loud and clear. We know it would really make a difference for all of Westchester's schools. So that is top of mind.

But I just wondered, on the State Ed cuts, new name of AIM and DOT, whether you could address those.

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: (Mic off; inaudible.) Remember, you guys had a formula but we never fully funded it. And so the last couple of years you started fully funding the formula. So that meant that where we were not getting upwards of

$40 million that we should have gotten, we started getting it. Which has been great. But then the formula, at least under the Governor's proposed budget, has changed. And so I hope that you'll address that. That would be a significant help for us.

You know, because like I said, we have not decreased our contribution, nor will we decrease our contribution to education, even when we get huge increases from New York. So hopefully whatever you get, that would be great for us.

AIM aid, I think we talked about enough, and you guys know where we all stand on AIM. But infrastructure money, especially for paving -- you know, the weather is so severe these days. Our roads just -- they don't -- they don't last.

You know, it used to be you could pave a street and it would last 10 years or so. You pave a street, it's less than two years and it's just a mess. And so -- and that's something that really affects the quality of life. And so any type of dollars we can get

just for something as simple as paving would make our constituents very happy.

SENATOR MAYER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

Assemblymember Otis for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you, Chairs.

And thank you, Mayors. Appreciate the comments.

And we've heard a few of you talk about water costs in different ways. And so I'm going to assume all five of you would say the costs of water infrastructure repair are going up, not down. We'll get a group decision on that.

PANEL MEMBERS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Number two, in terms of drilling down more on stormwater problems, stormwater infrastructure has been revealed to be more pressing since recent storms. Is that something maybe some of you who have not spoken yet on water can talk about, things that you're seeing that you didn't think you were going to have to deal

with stormwater improvements but now have to, seeing storm damage. Would someone like to weigh in on that category?

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: I think the storm damage is something that is a major challenge, but just as equal as the storm damage is the massive water main breaks that are happening in cities across the state and across the country, really.

We had a major one that was a catastrophe two years ago that basically disrupted water throughout almost half of the city because of the aging infrastructure of the water mains. So that is also a major issue where you're starting to see more water main breaks than you've seen in previous years. Due to a couple of things -- the aging infrastructure, but also the extreme swings in weather that we're seeing.

We say in Rochester, you know, you can wear a fur coat and have a bathing suit underneath because the weather's just going to -- you never know what the weather's going to be. And that affects the critical

infrastructure as it relates to water mains.

But to your point, it costs dollars to be able to fix these things, and you're seeing these costs continue to accelerate over the years.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: So when you have a water main break, you're handling that on an emergency basis and just doing what you have to do. Where you're trying to hit those kinds of vulnerabilities ahead of time, how are each of you going about funding that? Some through state dollars, some through federal dollars? What's your strategy in terms of trying to cover some of those costs?

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: In Rochester it's an all-of-the-above strategy, trying to use multiple resources. But a lot of it is local share that we have to put forth in order to do that. And we are trying to be proactive in trying to address the ones that might be older and replacing them before they rupture, or those that are rupturing on a daily basis.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: And on the lead

pipe issue, where are you going to go for dollars? I think Mayor Brown, you said it's a half a billion dollars --

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: Half a billion.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Half a billion. I said B. I was there with B for Buffalo.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: How are you -- what's your game plan for funding that?

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: We're still working through that game plan. What we can do at a local share annually is just not enough right now.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Okay. Thank you all for what you do.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Samra Brouk.

SENATOR BROUK: Thank you so much.

And thank you all for all of your patience today, and being here.

I'm going to talk to my mayor here, Mayor Evans, and first of all just want to say thank you so much for your leadership. You talked about when you came into office --

I don't think anyone would say you came into an easy job coming off of the COVID pandemic and so many other things.

So I want to say back to you some of the things that I heard you talk about and make sure I heard them right and make sure they're on the record again.

You talked about obviously AIM funding. You talked about some of the concentrated poverty that we have in the City of Rochester. You talked about your gun violence emergency order. And you also talked about the fact that Rochester has not received the funding that we are owed for so many years, and that you clearly see a relationship between these two things. I too see that relationship. My office, as you know well, came out with a report last year really defining the fact that Rochester has received such little funding and our rising rates of violence, really differentiating us, unfortunately, from a lot of other cities in New York and even nationwide.

But you also talked about things that

are working. And I think that oftentimes that's not getting the headlines and we're not paying enough attention, especially at the state, to what's working. And so what I hear from you is you were able to make significant inroads of decreasing gun violence through preventative programs. And that if we're serious about that, we perhaps need to increase some of those line items.

So I would love for you to talk about what an increase in GIVE funding could do for the City of Rochester, but also what some of this anti-poverty funding -- and again, we won't call it AIM, I guess, because that's harder to get. So we'll call it whatever we want to call it. But essentially we need more unrestricted funding for you, as the mayor of the city, to decide where that goes so that it can best benefit your residents.

So if you could talk about those two things and what you could do with it, I would love to hear it.

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Yeah, and I think, you know, one of the things, you want

to give people hope but you've got to give them opportunity. And opportunity sometimes costs dollars. So that means investing in workforce development programs that will give people a pathway out of poverty, where you will be less likely to pick up a gun. Those type of things are absolutely critical for us.

Anything with workforce and job training, mental health supports. We've done pilots where we now offer mental health supports in our libraries and rec centers. If you would have told me that we had to do that 10 or 15 years ago, I would have said, No, that's not where -- the schools do that, or you go to a counselor's office to be able to do that. But we know that those things have paid dividends in terms of those types of things.

We've invested in a program where we actually go after individuals that are -- that have shotguns or have been shot, to redirect them into positive opportunities where they are now working and doing well.

But again, those types of interventions cost money. So that is where we will put those extra resources, and that will save the government so much money in other social service supports because it's an investment on the front end and not the back end.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Assembly.

SENATOR BROUK: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember Rivera, for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN RIVERA: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My two questions and comments are for my mayor, Mayor Brown. A couple of things. You know, we're here discussing the budget in a lot of different directions, and there's a lot of things in this budget that, you know, a lot of my colleagues are really having to review and assess and determine, you know, how hard we're going to have to fight for changes.

And you mentioned a few things, and I

just want to sort of touch on them. One of the things you mentioned was funding arts and culturals. And, you know, thankfully I've been appointed as the subcommittee chair of Regional Tourism, and I've been able to go across the state and see just how beautiful this state is, truthfully, and how unique our arts and cultural organizations are and what they can do and their capacity and the economic benefit from it. And we know that when we spend money there, that's money we're getting back.

So, you know, we have a big challenge in front of us with, you know, cutting NYCHA -- no, I'm sorry, not NYCHA -- the New York Council for the Arts almost in half. So there's a lot that's going to be done around that. So I applaud you for mentioning that.

I want to talk for a second on AIM. You know, there's been a lot of initiatives that predate certainly my time here that touch on AIM. One of the things that myself and Senator Cooney, who's right behind me,

pushed recently in the last few years was a bill that would call upon the state to assemble a new AIM task force to reassess the formula, to get down to really challenging ourselves and what it should look like and how it needs to change.

Unfortunately, that bill was vetoed. And I'm asking you and perhaps your -- the other mayors here, if you would support us in pushing for the Governor to reconsider that. We believe that maybe we change the name of it, maybe we call it something else. But at the end of the day, we need to change the formula. And creating a panel, a task force, assembled of people from all over the state, supported by NYCOM and NYSAC and other entities, is a first step in that.

So I'm asking sort of if you'd support us in that.

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: Thank you very much, Assemblyman Rivera. I would certainly be very supportive of that.

I think for all of us -- Buffalo, all of these cities -- we need AIM now. We don't

need it next year or the year after that, we need it right now. We have urgent, pressing financial concerns. So I definitely support that.

I mentioned arts and culturals. Again, I see an inequity between all of the services that are provided by the city to support the cultural jewels and gems that we have in Erie County and the City of Buffalo, but we don't get commensurate support to support those culturals. I just take one of the zip codes in your district, 14201, highest poverty rate in Erie County.

So we have to weigh supporting our arts and culture with trying to lift people out of poverty.

ASSEMBLYMAN RIVERA: Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Cooney.

SENATOR COONEY: Thank you, Chair.

Always wonderful to see all of our upstate mayors. And thank you for the incredible work and innovation that you do.

And Mayor Spano, I'll let your --

we're still sensitive about this third, fourth city thing, but I'll let it go today.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR COONEY: Mayor Evans, I know you've been a terrific advocate for public transportation, as have all of the mayors. And I'm wondering if you could comment specifically on our opportunity in Rochester to expand our long-distance bus service by kind of doing Phase 2 of the Louise Slaughter Intermodal Transportation System as it relates to this kind of Interloop North Transformation Project that you and your team have been working on. That would be of value to the City of Rochester?

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Yeah, the intermodal Phase 2 station is absolutely critical to the City of Rochester. I mean, a major city should have such a facility. I think it is long overdue.

And I think we should definitely do it not only because it's the right thing to do, but I think Louise would be very, very happy to see us making progress on this long-held

project that could transform Rochester as it relates to transportation.

SENATOR COONEY: Well, I completely agree with you. Moving and staying with you, Mayor Evans, something else that the former Congresswoman cared about was literacy. And you have been a wonderful advocate, both in your time as a school board member to now, as mayor, for child literacy.

The Imagination Library program -- this is part of the Dolly Parton Foundation -- has started in Rochester under the leadership of Dr. Matt Present. I know you delivered a milestone book to a family, this is where we give children under the age of five access to free children's books so that they can supplement their reading at home.

Could you talk to us about that program specifically for the City of Rochester?

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: It is absolutely critical. We know -- and I know that the Governor talked in her State of the

State about the importance of reading and education and making sure that our kids get back on track.

The Imagination Library is an amazing concept of any child under five can get a free book in the City of Rochester. In November I delivered their milestone book at a young -- Corduroy, I still remember the book, one of my kids' favorite books -- to continue to support literacy.

So I think it's absolutely a model for the state. Because if we're going to get to a level where kids are able to be strong adults, they need to become strong readers. And instilling that in them at a very early age is important, and the Imagination Library is one organization that I believe that helps to do that.

SENATOR COONEY: Well, we're going to try to expand that statewide with legislation, so more on that to come.

Finally, just an acknowledgment. As the city school district looks to consolidate school buildings for their use,

some of those buildings will come back to the City of Rochester for a purpose. Would you be open to considering housing options for some of those buildings as it makes sense within the city's plan?

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Absolutely. As they make sense, obviously we'll wait to get those back, put out RFPs and we see what we get. But housing is definitely an option.

SENATOR COONEY: Thank you, Mayors.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember Meeks, for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN MEEKS: Thank you, Chair.

I'll be addressing Mayor Evans.

So we've heard, you know, throughout the day about three of the top five poorest zip codes being in the City of Rochester. One of the things that I recognize is those same top three zip codes are part of the top 10 zip codes that represent 56 percent -- I'll repeat that, 56 percent of all child sexual and physical abuse cases in our

region. And there tends to be a correlation with the poverty and the challenges that our children experience.

The Governor has proposed 25 million of additional aid to attack poverty in the City of Rochester. How would you begin to tackle these type of challenges in our community?

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: I think one of the big challenges is that we have to make sure that we are focused on children and the issues that have been associated with poverty, be it lead poisoning or physical abuse. These are all things that are absolutely tied to poverty.

You mentioned it, we just had a horrific case yesterday that made the news that is a direct result of child abuse that someone that was living in poverty experienced. So I think that that's important.

But again, I always go back to this concept of hope and opportunity. If you're going to give people opportunity -- or hope,

you have to make sure that they have opportunity. That means making sure that you invest in workforce development programs, that you invest in mental health, that you invest in youth job programs, that you invest in strong mental health supports.

All these things I think are absolutely critical to get rid of the sting of poverty that exists in our community. And then good housing. I mean, good housing, there's a direct correlation to a kid's performance in school. In the City of Rochester you have people who sometimes throughout their career in school could move 20 times from dilapidated structure to dilapidated structure. Imagine if any of us had to be able to do that. You cannot talk about bringing someone out of poverty without making sure that you have a good housing policy to make sure that they are able to do that.

Homeownership, which we know is still one of the critical things that creates wealth, investing in those programs. And,

you know, in our testimony that we presented we talked about our By the Block program, which is a program to get people into homes.

These are all things that we can invest in to give people not a handout, but a hand up. And this is what these types of resources will be able to do for our community.

ASSEMBLYMAN MEEKS: Well, we definitely look forward to working in that space.

And just to share some other statistics, children who experience abuse are nine times more likely to be involved in criminal activity. Fourteen percent of all men and 36 percent of all women in prison were abused as children.

So there's a direct correlation with these challenges, and we must change these systems. Thanks.

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Martinez.

SENATOR MARTINEZ: Good afternoon.

Thank you, Mayors, for being here today.

And thank you for the invitation to be at your conference yesterday morning and allowing both my colleague and friend Assemblyman Fred Thiele to speak to you. And we heard you loud and clear regarding what your needs are, specifically when it pertains to AIM. And you've heard us loud and clear that we are committed to assisting you in this effort.

And I also want to thank every single one of you because you've all mentioned housing and the need to increase housing stock. Now, my question to you is the Governor has created this Pro-Housing Community initiative that she has funded for municipalities to apply. My question is, have you applied for this, to become a pro-housing community? And if you have, are you encountering difficulty in the process?

And I can tell you on Long Island we have three of our municipalities have received funding, they have applied. So she just came down recently and provided money to

these districts, and I just want to know if you're having difficulty or if the process has been difficult for you. And if it has, how can we assist?

And that goes to any one or all of you.

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: I'll just say we've applied. I haven't heard of any difficulty yet, but we definitely have applied and I'm hoping that we will be able to be recipients of some of those resources.

SENATOR MARTINEZ: Great.

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: At least for us, like I said, we're in Westchester County where for 20 percent of the population we have now 40 percent of the affordable housing in the entire county. And we -- if there's something that we can apply for, we do it, and we do it across the board.

It all depends on how restrictive it is or if there are local concerns. But for the most part, we're able to get access and the Governor has been very good with our offices in seeing a lot of these through.

SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: (Mic off; inaudible.) But just to tie it back to AIM, because I don't think we've talked enough about it --

(Laughter.)

SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: -- I think that it is relevant that the cities represented here bear a disproportionate burden of the affordable housing in any given region. As you've heard, some pretty significant statistics.

So, you know, as we are considering possible adjustments to AIM, I think the fact of the role that cities play in producing affordable housing, critical affordable housing, should be a factor in the resources we receive from Albany. Beyond just what's included within the Governor's current plan.

SENATOR MARTINEZ: And I know you've all mentioned you need AIM now. We get it. But we also need to hear from you in terms of what you're thinking in terms of dollars. Right? You say you need money, but yet we need an X amount. Right?

So I think that would be helpful when we're trying to re-figure out how to allocate additional monies. And that would just be helpful.

ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: I think one of the things -- (mic off; time clock sounding) -- is the increase but also then tying it to some, you know, inflation number so that we can count on it. So catch us up, and then keep us caught up.

SENATOR MARTINEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Well, thank you.

And on that AIM question, you know, to use a really bad pun, when you're picking a number, AIM high.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Yeah, that was bad. That was my dad joke for today, thank you very much.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Next up is our Local Governments ranker, Assemblymember

Brown, for five minutes.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: (Mic off; inaudible.) -- construction business for nearly 50 years, and current deputy mayor of my village, and I used to be the chairman of the Town of Hempstead Industrial Development Agency.

So my question is, why not use the best tool in your arsenal without having to go to the state? When I sat for many, many years on the IDA, we built some of the biggest projects in the state, market-rental housing, that were so successful. We had a past governor that tried to destroy all the IDAs, made it seem like a pariah of the area.

Let them do a 15-or-20-year PILOT. Why not use this tool that you already have instead of looking to some other tax-exempt incentives? This could be your best method of creating this housing.

ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: We wouldn't have built a single unit of market-rate housing if it were not for our IDA.

The challenge that we have with the

restrictive inclusionary zoning that our council has introduced is that it would require PILOTs that far exceed anything that I think would be acceptable to our residents going forward. And I think it's asking the municipalities to pay in lost tax dollars for creating affordable housing units that people want to see in creating mixed-income.

We don't have any problem with all market-rate. We don't have any problem with all affordable. The challenge is creating mixed-income housing that spreads beyond just the areas where we have high concentrations of poverty. And that's where we think that there are tools that if we do it through the IDA and we tax-exempt it out of it, we're actually ultimately going to be coming to you and saying, We need even more AIM because we've lost the opportunity.

So we are doing it. We have a formula. We provide tax incentives through our IDA for these market-rate units. They wouldn't happen without PILOTs.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: Thank you,

Mayor. And I think that's exactly my point. I think there's a misconception of how IDAs work. It's not a tax exemption. You would actually --

ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: No, understood.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: -- be spreading out the increase over many years. And as a builder, I know how valuable that could be. And the tool would be to try to sell this to your residents as a positive thing. So much bad press in the past --

SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: (Mic off; inaudible.) -- virtually every housing project in the city. And I would encourage the Legislature to look very closely at any proposed legislation that weakens the ability of the IDAs to do more of this, because it's needed. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: If I may ask the mayors -- and anyone could take this question also -- 10, 15 years ago our wonderful Governor Cuomo removed the aspect of doing retail through the IDAs. How did that affect your communities?

SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: I will say I think it's -- I previously served as the executive director of the Syracuse IDA. It presents a challenge. I think we all understand that, you know, we shouldn't be using an IDA to subsidize, you know, a corporate chain retail store that's going to go in there anyways. But using that but-for provision and doing your financial due diligence, ensuring that you're extracting a benefit from that public investment, I think as long as you apply the same tests, we should be more flexible in what types of projects we apply them to.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: Thank you.

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: (Mic off.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Turn your mic --

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: -- take -- can you hear me now?

So you take this 10 percent or this 20 percent, potentially, then you add project labor agreements, right? Now you go to the developers, they'll say, okay, you got project labor agreement, it will cost me 30

percent more whatever it costs for the affordable, and then they look at me cross-eyed and go, there is a tax incentive your IDA can give me that would make me want to build here. Right?

And so -- and then we take it all on the chin, because we all do, because when people say, Oh, you know those mayors and their IDAs, they're giving away the store.

No, we're not giving away anything. We're trying to find a sweet spot so that we can build the housing, bring people here. At the same time know that we have the police, fire and education, and we can't do it if we just give it away for free. So we're always trying to find that. And I think that every one of us does that.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: Thank you very much. And my last question, I'm wondering if you all have local development corporations in your arsenal also. Non-for-profits can certainly benefit, and maybe they'd be drawn to your municipality if that was in place.

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: I thank you, and I yield my other 14 seconds.

(Laughter.)

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Thanks, Assemblyman.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. I think I'm the last Senator. Thank you all.

So yes, we all keep talking about AIM, we never get it. And for the record, New York City hasn't gotten it, I don't know, a decade now, maybe? So it is -- it's a real issue for everyone out there.

And yes, any innovative ideas of how we call it something new or market it as something new so we can finally get the Governor's attention, that would be very helpful.

But you were also answering the question, and I forget which of my colleagues asked you now, about using the state funds that are under I think about eight different categories for different kinds of housing. And she's now sort of -- you know, at first

it was a stick and then it was a little bit of a carrot, and now it's you don't get any of it unless you do this. And yet I'm pretty sure all your cities are doing this and want to do more of it.

So you say you're working on things together. So in your discussions that you've been having about working together, perhaps we need to redefine the categories of those eight funding streams. Because it's $650 million, right, in the budget, and it's only going to be able to go to communities who are, quote unquote, affordable-housing-friendly, I think that's the terminology she's using. But if there aren't exactly the right fits for what you need to get affordable housing done in your cities, maybe one of the things we can work with you on during the budget process is some redefinition of some of these programs that have been out there forever but maybe really never were the square peg in the square hole, so to speak, for our upstate cities.

So I'm just curious whether any of you

have thought about that or might be willing to look at that in the context of us trying to help you be eligible for money that's there that you need, that you want to use the correct way, but for whatever reasons has not really jibed with what will work in your cities.

So it's more a suggestion of getting back to us, as opposed to you're going to automatically have that answer.

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Thank you, Senator.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Well, thank you.

I think Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Yes.

Assemblymember Reilly, Cities ranker, for five minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mayors.

I wanted to ask you about specifically grand larceny autos, car thefts. How is it impacting your cities? And I currently have legislation that would increase repeated offenders to make a crime of aggravated grand

larceny auto. What do the numbers look like in your cities? And do you see an increase in youth offenders, 16- and 17-year-olds?

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Well, I mean, sadly, I hate to say last year Rochester led the state in the number of auto thefts -- I think Buffalo was second.

But one of the things that we did was -- the second half of the year we saw a precipitous drop. We worked with our county and youth court to make sure that we launched a program called the JEDS program, which targeted -- exactly as you're mentioning -- youthful offenders to say if they are doing these things repeatedly, they have to do these things, they have to be monitored, sometimes on an ankle monitor. They have to go to school, they have to get counseling, they have to get those things.

And we saw a major decrease in repeat offenders. But it caused mayhem and havoc. I mean, this "Kia boys" phenomenon was something that was big. I remember seeing Mayor Walsh last year: "Hey, did it come to

your city yet?" And he said "Not yet."

SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: It has.

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: And now it has.

But now in Rochester we're seeing a precipitous decline because of the interventions that we put in working with the youthful -- the youthful offenders and really zeroing in on them. It's still an issue, but not as much of an issue as it was around this time -- the first six months of last year were absolutely bananas as it related to car thefts in our community. But luckily we're seeing a precipitous decrease now.

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: I remember years ago when I was a sergeant in Brooklyn with the NYPD, and the key fob incident was the old Toyota Camry key was the one that they used to take.

On the same line, staying on crime, how is organized retail theft in your cities, if anybody would --

SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: I'll weigh in on that one. It's been a real problem. I'm

really proud of the work that the Syracuse Police Department has done, in close cooperation with our Onondaga County district attorney, where we have reached out, we've run the numbers, we have identified the locations that have been hardest hit, and then have also identified the most frequent offenders and have really focused in on those repeat offenders, in partnership with some retailers -- I'll specifically give a shout out to Rite Aid, who we've worked closely with. We've been able to turn the tide. In those cases where we've been able to focus our efforts, we've been able to put some repeat offenders in jail. But it's a real problem. And again, it's a problem that disproportionately impacts our poorest communities that need these retail operations the most.

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: And just to be clear, I know we're on the same page with this. This isn't targeting those that are stealing because of poverty. This is about the organized retail thefts to resell.

SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: Absolutely.

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: And I want to make sure that everybody knows that we're on the same page with that.

And I have legislation also for that, that would help be able to compile the charges if you have a previous conviction in organized retail theft.

(Overtalk.)

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: You know, Assemblyman, this is how bad it got. You would go into a -- let's say Marshall's on Central Avenue in Yonkers, take a bag, take the bag, walk out the door. I would have our crime units sitting outside because that's what we were doing, because we were trying to protect our retail.

And they would say to us, Well, if it's less than a thousand dollars, we're not prosecuting. And that word got out quick in the community, and there were people walking in and taking a thousand dollars of stuff and walking out the door. I wanted to do it. You know, but we --

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: But we were --

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: He says that jokingly.

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: -- able to get them -- I did say that jokingly.

(Laughter.)

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: But they did get that -- they did change, they worked with us. We also did some things which I'm sure that the mayor was talking about, which is if you're a repeat offender, you know, after we get you the first time, we get you to sign -- you know, you have to sign a piece of paper saying you won't trespass. So it's a greater crime. And we then prosecute the person on the second time, and that has drastically reduced our numbers.

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: So we spoke earlier with the mayor in New York City and we talked about the migrant and asylum-seeker issue. And no way am I trying to transition from crime to that. This is just specifically I'm asking, how is -- and if it

is -- the migrant crisis impacting your cities fiscally and what support do you need?

ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: We've welcomed over 800 migrants from New York City, who have come in through New York City and are now in the City of Albany and in a couple of adjoining communities. And, you know, the challenge is work authorizations. You know, getting individuals the legal help that they need to get work authorizations as quickly as possible is a key to the success of these individuals in our communities.

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you.

(Off the record.)

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Go right ahead.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, thank you.

Senator May, chair, for her three-minute follow-up.

SENATOR MAY: Thank you so much.

I realized one of the things I was expecting to hear all of you talk about was lead service line replacement, and I didn't hear any of you talk about it --

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: I mentioned

it.

SENATOR MAY: Did you mention it?

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Yeah, I talked about it.

SENATOR MAY: Okay. How big a challenge is that for you? And do we need a separate funding stream for dealing with that challenge?

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Yeah, I mentioned it. I mean, our goal is to replace all of ours by 2030, I believe. And it's -- you know, the capital stack is important. I'll put on my hat -- I was a banker back in the day. How do you fund it all? And we're piecing it together with -- we've used ARPA funds, we're going to go after federal dollars. The state has funded some of it.

But it's just not enough to get to where you want to be to replace every -- (no audio) -- to get to that point. And I know Mayor Brown said the same thing as well.

ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: Yeah, and one of the things that we haven't talked about is that there's a portion of this lead line, at

least in our city, that is privately owned. And so we need to ensure that there are grant sources available for residents who are required to pay the cost of the replacement of that line. We have some grant programs that are in place, but that is a huge piece of this, is that, you know, getting rid of our lead is only part of the equation. And we cannot burden particularly, you know, homeowners who are seniors, who are on a fixed income, you know, people who are living in apartments, with that cost.

And so it's important to look at not just what we need, but that private funding source for that part of the lead service that is privately owned.

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: In Buffalo we're picking up that cost for the homeowner.

UNIDENTIFIED PANELIST: So are we.

SENATOR MAY: That's great.

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: It's a big cost. I mean, you talk about a system that's over 200 years old. I have portions of southwest Yonkers that they have wood mains that are

still in operation.

(Overtalk.)

SENATOR MAY: There's still some of that in Syracuse.

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: When we start tearing the system up, it's a real problem for us.

SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: The only thing I would add is that the bipartisan infrastructure law has been a significant boost in funding for that specific use. That's where we're getting our extra funding from. But it's still not enough.

SENATOR MAY: Okay, thanks.

And then I also wanted to mention I know the Mayor's Ball was a fundraiser for the Police Athletic League after-school programs in terms of both fighting crime, giving kids something to do after school. We're fighting for that in the Senate to make sure that there's funding for that. But I wanted to make sure you knew I see this as city issue that we really need to make sure we are providing funding for.

SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: Great. Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR MAY: Yup.

All right, thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember Braunstein, Cities chair, for 10 minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you. Hopefully I don't use all of the 10 minutes.

And thank you, all of you, for joining us again this year.

I'm just going to follow up on what my colleague said he was starting to ask about the asylum-seekers. We heard the mayor of the City of New York this morning, he says the city is caring for 66,000 asylum-seekers right now. If you could just go through -- we'll start with Mayor Sheehan -- how many asylum-seekers is your city caring for?

ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: So as I said, in the City of Albany we have 800 of those asylum-seekers. So through that funding that is being provided to New York City, that funding is then paying for individuals to be

staying in our community because of the space constraints that exist in New York City.

We also have a number of volunteer organizations that are then working with those individuals, providing legal services and ensuring that they are getting the assistance that they need if they're seeking asylum, if they have parole status.

You know, many of these individuals are coming to us, they don't even know their status. So, you know, this is an issue that -- you know, we've spoken to folks at the federal level, there is so much more that needs to be done to streamline these issues and create a pathway for these individuals. Overwhelmingly they want to work, overwhelmingly they're looking for a new home. And we need a workforce, but the challenge for us is finding enough people -- even if we had the funding, finding enough people who are qualified to represent them to get them to that point where they get that work authorization is what we're finding to be the largest hurdle.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay.

Mayor Brown?

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: We have a limited number of migrants, if you will, in the City of Buffalo.

There are migrants in some of the surrounding suburban communities -- Amherst, Cheektowaga -- and they have expressed concern about the cost of those individuals being in those suburban communities, particularly the cost of providing education for the children.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Mayor Walsh?

SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: In Syracuse, Onondaga County is currently in litigation with New York City, so there has not been any formal asylum-seeker relocations to Onondaga County. I'm sure we have some within the community, but none that we're formally aware of.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Mayor Evans?

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: And in Monroe County we've taken a couple of hundred asylum-seekers from New York City. You know,

Rochester has a large refugee resettlement organization in Rochester, and we've been able to take the number we have at a controlled pace.

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: In Yonkers we have one hotel capable of taking a hundred families. I believe it's full.

My -- you know, in Yonkers we have not had any issues with the migrants, asylum-seekers, whichever word you want to use. My bone of contention has been that, you know, New York City kind of sprung this on us without any plan, without any funding.

And when you're talking -- if you take 40 or 50 kids that could come out of this one hotel, it can be a real budget-buster for our board of education. From what I understand, we probably have about 20 students, so it's not that bad. I think we probably have more, let's say -- I would say undocumented that are in the system that we're dealing with as well. So ...

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. Thank you.

And then just one more question for Mayor Brown. You had said earlier -- you know, you were referencing the inequitable funding formula. You're referring to AIM? You feel that as AIM applies to cities versus counties that you feel maybe it should be more need-based?

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: No, I wasn't solely referring to AIM, I was referring to the county sales tax distribution formula. An additional percentage was added that did not follow the original formula that we believe put the city at a disadvantage.

So if the original formula had been followed from 1986 to 2022, that would have meant an additional $1.2 billion coming to the City of Buffalo. So that additional percentage that was added that was supposed to be temporary to help Erie County out of a financial --

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: What year was that?

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: 1985. It was implemented to help the county out of a

financial crisis. It was supposed to be temporary. It hasn't been temporary. And the formula has not been adjusted to reflect the needs of the City of Buffalo and other municipalities.

I think that formula has to be fixed and would certainly like the state to help do that, because the local county government itself is not going to do it. I think it's going to require the state to do it.

And there are many other examples in Erie County of financial inequity between the county and the city in the way things are funded and the way they are allowed to be funded under state law.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. Yeah, I just wanted you to expand on that. And, you know, we'll follow up offline just to get more details about what you're talking about, see if we can help you with that.

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Senator Rhoads.

SENATOR RHOADS: Thank you so much,

Chair Thiele. I doubt that I'll take the full five minutes.

I know that you gave answers with respect to the migrant crisis and how they're impacting your individual jurisdictions. Out of curiosity, of the five mayors that are here, did any of you declare yourselves to be sanctuary cities?

ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: We are a sanctuary city. Which simply means that our police department will not inquire as to legal status unless it is central to an investigation that they're conducting.

It is part of the chief of police -- the International Chief of Police's recommendations for police policy. We don't want people to be afraid to call the police because they're worried that they'll be asked about their immigration status.

SENATOR RHOADS: Sure. But if there's any kind of criminal activity, there's no bar to your police department actually communicating with Immigration and Customs Enforcement at that point.

ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: I mean, it's pretty rare that that happens. But if it is central to the investigation, then clearly we work with our partners in state and federal government to ensure that we're enforcing the law.

SENATOR RHOADS: Okay. Thank you for that answer.

And I know that some of you are dealing with -- and I believe in the City of Albany you said you had 800, if I'm not mistaken, migrants that are there. And I know a few of you mentioned a few different numbers.

In advance of receiving those migrants, was there any communication from the City of New York to let you know that they would be coming?

ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: There was some limited communication. The first buses arrived Memorial Day weekend, so it was a bit of a challenge. But we have a number of community-based organizations that I had already pulled together months in advance, in

anticipation of what we saw happening across the country with migrants just being dropped off, human beings being put on buses and dropped off in distant cities.

So we had pulled together our community-based organizations that work in this space. We're also a refugee resettlement city. Albany Law School has an Immigration Law Clinic, so we had as best we could be prepared to and looked at what we would do were we to be receiving asylum-seekers in our city.

That work really has not been funded, and that is one of the frustrations that we have. We think that we have people who are able to help, willing to help, but the funding is very -- you know, certain agencies get some funding and other agencies have not.

And so that's been -- I will say it's been a frustration. We're frustrated that there is not an immigration court in the City of Albany. So when somebody comes to the City of Albany from New York City, their case has to get transferred to Buffalo. Getting

from Albany to Buffalo is expensive.

There are a lot of barriers that have been put in place, I think unnecessarily, that are preventing people from being able to get their work authorizations, move forward through the system, and be able to work. Because if you can get a job here, we can help you find housing. If you have an income source and you're paying taxes, then it becomes a very different experience for the families that are seeking to come here.

SENATOR RHOADS: And with limited time -- I didn't want to cut off the ability of the other mayors to answer that question, but --

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Yeah, I'll -- two things. We found out about the asylum-seekers -- I found out from my police department because they I guess communicated with NYPD. And then of course after I inquired I found that they'd be coming probably within a day after that.

And as far as -- we're not a sanctuary city, but we had changed our policies and

regulations. Our police department, our police forces know that they are there to serve and protect everyone irregardless of their immigration status. It's not a question they ask unless of course it's an investigation that deals with that.

SENATOR RHOADS: The relevant question, though, in terms of you and your own budgets is the fact that while the City of New York received a billion dollars in funding last year and through the budget is seeking an additional -- well, seeking 2.4 billion total as part of this year's budget, have you received any funding from the City of New York to compensate you for --

(Overtalk.)

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: I like to talk -- you know, we have -- and Senator, that's such a good question. That was my bone of contention, which was, you know, you come here without a plan and then there's no additional dollars that are being associated with this to help us. All right? And so -- you know, in terms of whatever comes our way.

SENATOR RHOADS: The city's dropping these individuals on your doorstep and is not giving you --

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Well, you know, we have a sales tax and we have a hotel occupancy tax. New York City uses their loophole, they use that exemption not to pay the local government. So we've lost tens of thousands of dollars just on the hotel occupancy taxes. So they're paying the bill, but they're not paying the local government at least that. And --

SENATOR RHOADS: That's just housing. The other resources --

(Overtalk.)

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Yeah. Just the taxes that they owe us, we don't get.

SENATOR RHOADS: But education, social services, those are all being borne by your taxpayers.

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Are being borne by us and the county.

SENATOR RHOADS: Can you estimate what the cost has been?

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: I don't know. I can get back to you, though, Senator.

SENATOR RHOADS: Okay. I was going to ask you a question about unfunded mandates from the state. I've got seven seconds left. If you wouldn't mind getting back to me on that issue, I would appreciate it.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

Assemblymember Jacobson for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Good afternoon.

I'd like to follow up about the lead-contaminated lines. I mean, that's all over the state. Because most of the cities have state of the art -- unfortunately, the state of the art was about 1890. And so we have lead there.

And this year also, in the budget, the Clean Water Infrastructure Act funds got cut in half. We were getting, since 2019, $500 million a year. It's now cut to 250 a year. And what I'm proposing is that not only do we restore that, but add an extra

100 million for lead line replacement so there'd be a line item in the budget, which would make it easier.

Because right now all the state programs are piecemeal, right? You get about $10,000 a line, and you get it done. And it's so expensive to do it that way that if you can do neighborhoods together in one shot, you can really bring the cost down. I know in Troy, after doing nothing for years, they did it that way.

And I just want to know, have you been -- any of you been able to do neighborhoods in one shot and how it reduced the cost?

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Yeah. I mean, we absolutely -- we only do neighborhoods in one shot. We don't do a scattershot, we pick areas of the city and then we do those areas. And that has been very successful for us.

But again, the overall cost is just astronomical. And in order to really meet this 2030 date that I put out there, I mean, putting that out there, we -- it's just going

to cost more money.

But yeah, we do neighborhood by neighborhood in order to -- it makes it also more efficient and allows us to do what we need to do on it in the neighborhood and then move to the next one. So we do it quadrant by quadrant.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: What's your average cost?

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: I don't know the average cost off the top of my head, but we can get back to you on that.

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: Buffalo does it by need. So when a lead service line breaks, we replace it. We've replaced I think over 3,000 broken lead service lines across the city. It's estimated we have another 40,000 and that that would cost us about half a billion dollars.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: About 12,000 each, yeah.

And let me ask you this. One of the problems of all small cities and villages, when you want to repair the streets -- and

this is someone who has been on the Newburgh City Council, and I ran on -- with signs that said "Let's fix all the streets" -- is the cost of ADA compliance. That's more than the paving.

And I would like to set up a separate CHIPs fund for that. How much does the ADA compliance -- when you do it, compare to the cost of paving?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And you'll have to get back to him following, because he used up his time. Sorry.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Thank you, Senator.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember González-Rojas, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Thank you all for being here.

Specifically for Mayor Brown, Mayor Evans and Mayor Walsh, I know that your cities face high rates of poverty and food insecurity, and I'm working with members statewide -- I represent Queens, but working with members statewide to address some of

that, and specifically looking at universal school meals so that every child has a free breakfast and free lunch, as well as increasing the SNAP benefit for individuals.

Right now the minimum SNAP benefit is $23 a month. So as we all know, the price of eggs, you know, you can get a few dozen eggs with that $23, and that's about it. And we want to increase that to $100 a month. New Jersey did it.

So I would just love to hear from you about how these food security proposals would fare for your districts and your communities, and what else needs to be done to address poverty and food insecurity.

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: Just very quickly, Senator, I think your proposal is a sound one. We know that in the City of Buffalo the bulk of households in poverty are single female head of households, and we have a very large percentage of children living in households in poverty.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Thank you.

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Yeah, and that proposal I think will go a long way not only just in the City of Rochester, where you have childhood poverty, but throughout the state.

I'm a member of an alliance, Mayors Against Childhood Hunger, and, I mean, these are the type of innovative things that we need to be able to take care of.

Students do better in school when they're able to eat. And it's a major issue that many of us take for granted, but absolutely critical. And we absolutely should be doing universal meals. It works. I was a member of the school board and at one point, because people were embarrassed to hand in the form, we said, You know what we're going to do, we're going to make it universal for everyone. You don't have to hand in the form. You don't want to eat it, fine, but you have it for everyone.

Those are the types of things that we should do, and it's just common sense in my book.

SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: I would agree

with both my colleagues here. Certainly supportive of the proposal.

One additional note is just the challenge that we have in I would guess all of our cities relative to food deserts and the model of grocery store is not fitting into our communities. It's really hard to attract traditional grocery stores to many of our neighborhoods, and that's what our neighborhoods are crying out for, is walkable access to healthy, affordable groceries.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Thank you so much.

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: It's important to us too. I mean it really is. We thought it was so important that even now New York State fully funds it with federal funds, but we went out and funded it ourselves, just to make sure it happened.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Exactly. Well, we're committed to supporting you all. Thank you so much.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

And I have just a few questions.

First of all, not to beat AIM to death, but, you know, you heard me yesterday at NYCOM. Certainly we are committed to working with you on whatever it might take, or if we need to vary -- you know, come up with some changes or something that might entice the Governor to provide increased funding through AIM. So we certainly look forward to working with you on that.

Other than that, just a couple of questions. Mayor Brown, you had talked about city/county and the sales tax in Buffalo. I was just curious, from the other mayors, is that unique to Buffalo? Or is that something other cities are dealing with also?

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: I think the way the tax structure has evolved city to city in the state is different. I think it is unique to Buffalo. Syracuse has a greater share of its county sales tax than Buffalo does. Rochester has a greater share of its county sales tax than Buffalo does.

I think the formula doesn't work any longer. The formula was changed in 1985 to

address a fiscal crisis that the county was having, and it was never rationalized after that. And Buffalo, which is the city that has the greatest poverty, the greatest affordable housing, the greatest number of new Americans, is being shortchanged in an inequitable funding situation.

ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: Can I just -- on the AIM --

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Yes.

ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: To put it in context, one of the reasons we're hesitant to give you a number is we don't want to give you sticker shock.

(Laughter.)

ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: But if AIM had kept pace with inflation, it would be up 32 percent from where it is now. And so, you know, we have talked about 10 percent a year over three years, you know, a way of catching us up over time. You know, we understand that you have difficult decisions to make and lots of things that need to be funded. But I think that's why we've been bashful.

But 32 percent would be my number.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Yeah, that is the approach I think we took with -- I don't know if it was last year or the year before with the one-house was, you know, what would be the adjustment just for the cost of living. It is a substantial number.

ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: It's a big number.

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Assemblyman, just an even -- kind of easier point for us to swallow, right, is Governor Cuomo when he was here, right, he bragged about he'd only allow state spending to go up 2 percent. Right? And AIM aid is part of state spending. It stayed flat, stayed at zero. So he took that 2 percent and spent it on something else, whatever.

And if we just got 2 percent that we should have gotten every year as part of the state policy that was enacted here, yeah, we would have gotten another almost 25 million? Yeah, 25 million. And a year, to that.

ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: And I think

even when you think about 2 percent or whatever the dollars might be, the dollars might seem small but the impact to our cities are monumental. I mean, it just can't be understated what those dollars would be able to do for all of the things that we just mentioned for sure.

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: The crack researchers on my staff say that New York State has provided municipalities some sort of revenue sharing since 1789. That hasn't happened since 2012.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Who was the Governor?

(Laughter.)

BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: They didn't give me that name.

ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: And it's been longer for many of us, Mayor Brown.

(Laughter; overtalk.)

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: I kidded in our majority conference that AIM hadn't been increased since the Coolidge administration. You're actually going back a little further

than that.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: So just two different topics, if I could get a response. I mean, this was talked a little bit about at NYCOM yesterday, and that is Tier VI, which is a double-edged sword for you. The need to try to recruit and retain staffing is something that I think all levels of government are dealing with, and certainly the pension system is part of that. Of course any increase in cost of the pension system you are -- there's an employer contribution you have to be mindful of.

So how do you balance that, and what are your thoughts with regard to Tier VI and possible reform?

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: You know, the whole idea of these pensions, right, have all been based around what was happening economically -- Tier I, II, III, IV, V, VI. Right? So now we're at VI because of what was happening to us with Tier IV and the costs that were borne to us.

And so I will tell you that Tier VI has been -- has been saving at least my city a lot of money. But I will also tell you that my labor leaders aren't super thrilled about it either. So I'm going to stop short of endorsing it but say that it does provide us with some savings. And, you know, maybe it should be looked at sometime in the future, but right now it is helping stem the tide of the bleeding.

ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: Well, we'd like to see what the projections would look like. We want to be part of the conversation. It is -- we are having difficulty recruiting. Tier VI is less competitive than what a lot of private-sector employers require. I think where we got ourselves in trouble in the past was doing away for the lower tiers with the contributions that were supposed to continue throughout an employee's lifetime. I think if we can agree that having the employee continue to contribute that 3 percent or, you know, whatever that is, that has been a huge help. And so we could look at Tier VI

through that lens and ensure that we're able to be competitive in hiring people.

But we'd really love to see from the Comptroller's standpoint and from the standpoint -- you know, we're the ones that get the bill. So, you know, what are the projections of what that's going to look like. But we recognize we do have to be competitive in order to attract workforce. And we're not with Tier VI, I will say that. That's the -- what we're getting from people that we're trying to hire and the -- that's the input that we're getting, is that it's not competitive.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: And I have just one more subject area, the Open Meetings Law. The Open Meetings Law we have now, coming out of the pandemic we modified the Open Meetings Law to allow hybrid meetings, to allow the public to participate remotely, under certain circumstances to allow the public officials and public bodies to participate remotely. That expires. The Governor has proposed extending it I think as is. I don't think

she's proposing any changes.

Just your thoughts on that extender, whether there should be -- you know, in your implementation of this are there things you would like to see changed? Is it fine the way it is? Any suggestions with regard to that? (Pause.)

Don't all go at once.

(Laughter.)

YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: I'm always going to get myself in trouble. Honestly, you know, COVID is over, we can go back to work. For me, it's not an issue.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: I'll leave it at that. Thank you very much.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: That is our last question. So we're done. First of all, I want to thank you all for your testimony and for being here today.

You know, as a former town supervisor, I think you have the most difficult job in all of government. The way I used to describe being town supervisor when I was

there was that when I would go to the grocery store, the list I came out with was always longer than the list I went in with. So we appreciate all the great work you do on the frontlines, and we look forward to working with you to come up with a good budget.

So thank you so much.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Exactly the same from the Senate. Thank you very much.

Next panel, we're calling up the New York City Comptroller Brad Lander, and the New York City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams.

And we're asking everyone to take their conversations with the five mayors out in one hall or the other.

(Off the record.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: If everyone can take their conversations out in the hall. We don't want you to not talk to each other, just take it out to the hall to talk to each other.

Do we need more chairs at the table? You're okay? Okay.

Good afternoon. I just wanted to point out that I just got an alert that our friend Jumaane has couped everyone, since the Adams administration and the City Council and the Comptroller are here in Albany. So you have nowhere to go home. Sorry.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: That's only a New York City joke. Everyone else is going, what is she saying? So never mind.

It's the Assembly's day to run the hearings. I'd better let him do it.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Well, I live close enough to get the joke, unfortunately.

{No audio} -- New York City comptroller. You want to fight over it, that's fine with me, too. Flip a coin, whatever you'd like to do. You just happen to be first on the list here, that's all.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Good afternoon, Chair Thiele, Chair Krueger, members of the committee. Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify today to discuss the New York State Executive Budget

for fiscal year 2025, especially as it pertains to the City of New York.

First, the good news. The city continues its economic rebound. Jobs have recovered to pre-pandemic levels, inflation has moderated, and there's reason to be optimistic that the economy will see the soft landing that few economists believed likely a year or two ago. And fiscally, revenues have consistently come in above plan, and the outlook has improved since the Governor's midyear update and the city's November plan.

But of course significant challenges remain. Jobs are growing faster in lower-wage industries than higher ones. Housing affordability threatens the stability of families and discourages businesses from locating in the city. City expenses, including areas including uniformed overtime, Carter cases, and shelter for asylum-seekers are growing faster than revenues. Federal pandemic stimulus is expiring and, as a result, budget gaps increase in each subsequent outyear.

And we have many challenges as well building and maintaining the critical public infrastructure that we need -- our public schools, housing, transit, parks, hospitals and more -- especially in the face of aging infrastructure and more frequent climate disasters.

So as we work through the current budget cycle, I'll be pushing for stronger management from City Hall to help close outyear budget gaps without cuts to essential services, to address the affordability crisis, and to set New York City on a strong economic footing for the years ahead.

We do need help from the State Legislature by restoring funding reductions made in Foundation Aid and sales tax intercept; providing additional support focused on helping asylum-seekers obtain work authorization and jobs so they can move out of shelter; a thoughtful approach to increasing the city's debt limit; and especially reaching a deal on housing to address the affordability crisis.

I'll begin by talking about the work welcoming asylum-seekers, as you've been discussing.

New York City has received over 170,000 asylum-seekers. It's worth noting that during the pandemic we lost nearly half a million residents. So that is folks who are there to help do a lot of the jobs that New Yorkers need done in childcare, in home care, in construction, in restaurants. If we can help people get to work, they will continue to help drive our flourishing economy, as immigrants have done in New York City since Dutch refugees fled religious persecution and Irish and Italian immigrants fled hunger and Jews and Dominicans and Chinese folks all made their way to make New York City the greatest immigrant city that the world has ever seen.

And what we can do, rather than shutting our doors, is help that tradition continue to make sure people can get on their feet. To do that, we do need help and support. Of course we're going to keep

pushing for federal aid, but we know that not a lot more is coming, given this Congress.

It is fair that the city and the state would split the costs of meeting the goals of the city's -- the federal obligation to provide the state's opportunity to seek asylum. And it's worth remembering that the right to shelter is grounded in the State Constitution. The work that the city is doing is on behalf of the Constitution of the State of New York.

I am grateful that the state is investing the money for legal services that are helping new arrivals file their asylum applications, gain temporary protective status, and get work authorization that helps people move out of shelter and get on their feet.

We've actually helped several thousand folks move through those systems with state resources in city clinics co-operated with the federal government. I hope you'll come see it sometime. It's actually something that we should be doing a lot more of.

And we'd like to see the city actually emphasize that work even more strongly. I was struck by what Mayor Sheehan said about being eager to get people who have work authorization. The program that we'd like to have would use those resources together, help folks get that work authorization, and then I hope they would be welcomed in cities all across the state.

I also urge the Legislature to pass the Access to Representation Act, which will make sure that legal services are available to people throughout that process.

Probably I think the most important business I hope you will do this year is confronting the housing affordability crisis. Last year a deal eluded the Governor and the Legislature, and I really hope this year will be different. We need more housing production, stronger tenant protections and more housing vouchers.

First, such a deal should facilitate the creation of new housing across income levels, with a strong emphasis on

affordability. That will require a new approach to taxing multifamily housing development to replace the 421-a program.

My office has offered up a framework to reform the taxation of multifamily housing development, starting with tax parity between rentals and condos, with a better approach to matching costs and benefits in order to create truly affordable rental and cooperative rental and homeownership housing, including a 21st-century reboot of the Mitchell-Lama program.

A comprehensive strategy for growth would include office to residential conversions, a path to basement apartment legalization, and regional growth targets grounded in fairness and aligned with planning and infrastructure investments.

The second component of the deal we need is protecting tenants from displacement with good-cause eviction protections.

And third should be the creation and funding of the Housing Access Voucher

Program. We urgently need those vouchers to help homeless families who have long been stuck in shelter, and to help the most vulnerable, including some folks like in those New York Times articles on homeless mentally ill New Yorkers who are a danger to themselves and to others to get off the street in ways that would increase their safety and their neighbors' safety.

Finally, some New York City subsidized affordable housing stock is at risk due to a combination of unaddressed rent arrears accumulated during the pandemic and rising costs. The state should provide $250 million in emergency affordable housing preservation funds with priority for the most vulnerable portfolios, to put these buildings back on sound financial footing.

I was encouraged to see in the Governor's budget resources to strengthen our mental health infrastructure. We need those investments to provide the services necessary to keep people healthy and safe. The state should increase the Medicaid payment rate to

cover the full cost of hospital care, particularly for inpatient psychiatric beds, which are still not at pre-pandemic levels.

And I urge the Legislature to pass the Home Care Savings and Reinvestment Act to bring home care back under the direct management of the state and out from under costly for-profit managed care companies.

I ask the Legislature to continue to consider passing Senator Ramos and Assemblymember Reyes's Workplace Accountability and Greater Enforcement -- or WAGE -- Act, which would expand local labor enforcement in New York City to combat wage theft, retaliation against workers, and other violations of New York State labor law by strengthening the existing workers' rights enforcement authority of the Comptroller's office to complement the enforcement efforts of our government partners.

You may have seen Comptroller DiNapoli's audit out just this week which highlights some of the challenges of labor investigations in New York City. And we'd be

very happy to be able to step up and complement that enforcement if that legislation passes.

On education, while we're very grateful -- and I really mean this -- to the legislators for increases in the Foundation Aid in recent years -- that was really critical -- this year's budget would decrease that expected aid by $130 million by lengthening the reference period for inflation adjustment after the spike in prices we experienced over the past two years.

With federal COVID aid -- especially for our schools -- expiring, I hope the state will consider adding funding to help localities preserve some of the great programs we started, like Summer Rising and 3-K and student mental health programs, rather than take it away.

At the higher education level, while the Legislature has invested more in SUNY, I'm sad to say that CUNY has consistently faced cuts at the city level. That is not

the State Legislature's fault, but there is something that you could do to help us. While CUNY faces cut after cut, two of the city's largest private owners of real estate, Columbia and NYU, continue to benefit from property tax exemptions, $342 million in FY '24 alone. The CUNY Repair Act, introduced by Senator Liu and Assemblymember Mamdani, would help remedy that inequity. Private universities would pay something more like their fair share so CUNY could thrive as one of the greatest engines of upward social mobility we have anywhere.

If there's a common theme that ties all of those items together, it's that we need to combine strong fiscal management with wise public policy so we can avoid steep cuts, balance our budgets, and invest in the infrastructure to ensure a thriving, diverse city. I'll be pushing aggressively through the city budget process to make that a reality, but the state also has a part to play to help pave the road to that future.

So we ask, first, treat New York City

fairly and on par with other localities in the state. I mentioned already Foundation Aid, but also the extension of the sales tax intercept for distressed hospitals only in New York City reduces our revenue by $150 million each year for three more years, even as we have rising budget gaps.

And we're still the only school district in the state that doesn't receive transitional charter school aid.

The last issue that I have, I'm happy to do in response to a question, Chair, about the capital debt limit.

And I will turn it over to the Speaker.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Speaker Adams.

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you so much.

Good afternoon, Chair Krueger, Chair Thiele, Ranking Minority Members O'Mara and

Ra, and all members of the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means committees, and Assembly Cities Committee. And a special greeting to all of my colleagues from Queens today. Great to see you.

I am New York City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams, and I thank you so much for providing me the opportunity to discuss the Governor's Executive Budget for state fiscal year 2025 and its potential impact on New York City. I would also like to thank Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Heastie.

I have submitted my full written testimony with a more complete set of priorities. In my oral testimony, though, I will touch upon a select few.

Our governments share the goal to improve the lives of New Yorkers. One way we must do this is by building more housing, especially homes that are affordable to a range of New Yorkers. Housing is key to the safety and stability of our city, and confronting our housing crisis is one of the

top priorities we must address together.

The Governor's Executive Budget includes several welcome and important policies intended to increase housing production in our city and around the state, including legislation to eliminate the required floor-to-area ratio that's restricted housing development in key parts of New York City. Legislation to enable the conversion of commercial buildings to housing, accompanied by the financial incentives that facilitate these conversions for the creation of affordable housing, is also critical.

It is vital that state funding and a new financial incentive program for affordable housing production throughout our city are put into place this session to remove the barriers to housing development, in conjunction with tenant protections as part of our efforts to confront the housing crisis.

We appreciate the Governor's continued inclusion of funding for supportive housing

in her budget and encourage deeper investments in collaborative city and state efforts to develop even more. It is one of the most effective solutions to successfully tackle issues of mental health and reentry from the justice system.

At the same time, we cannot ignore the continued rent arrears facing our public housing system since the beginning of the pandemic that destabilized families. Last year's budget offered significant help through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, and additional support will be needed this year to help NYCHA reduce the outstanding balance of unpaid rent from over 70,000 households.

Homelessness remains at high levels. State funding to cover the cost of the rate increase of StateFHEPS rental vouchers is essential to avoid placing an additional $198.8 million of unfunded mandate on the city. Additional programs to combat homelessness, such as the Housing Access Voucher Program, or HAVP, and Rental

Supplement Program, RSP, should be adequately funded by the state. HAVP requires at least $250 million to provide aid to those most at risk of becoming homeless and already unhoused. RSP would provide New York City with the ability to provide housing vouchers for underserved residents, regardless of immigration status, helping those perpetually stuck in the shelter system without access to other pathways to stable, permanent housing.

The city appreciates the support in the Governor's budget for our efforts to provide shelter and support services to people seeking asylum who have arrived in our city, and urges that those funds remain in the adopted budget.

As a city with one of the highest costs of living, food insecurity remains a major issue. In fiscal year 2023, 1 million New Yorkers relied on SNAP benefits. But because benefit levels are not adjusted for cost of living, New Yorkers are at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts across the nation.

There was some reprieve for New Yorkers during the pandemic when SNAP benefit recipients were provided the maximum benefit, and we urge the state to continue with the higher benefit level to provide adequate nutrition for New Yorkers.

Education for young people at all levels is one of the best investments we can and should make. While the Governor's proposed budget continues fiscal support for New York City's funding for universal pre-K -- that we appreciate -- we urge the state to consider increasing its commitment towards early childhood education to protect our city's 3-K program that is facing challenges from the expiration of federal stimulus funds.

Our school system also needs greater support for students in temporary housing, after recently enrolling over 20,000 more students -- adding to the over 100,000 such students already in our schools. We urge that the school Foundation Aid formula reflect the prior year's inflation rate of

approximately 4 percent, rather than the 10-year average of 2.4 percent, which does not reflect the needs of our schools.

Supporting CUNY as an engine of opportunity that educates New Yorkers from all backgrounds will also require state funding for increased personnel costs once the current round of collective bargaining is settled. Without this help, CUNY would be forced to make cuts in other critical operating expenses, which will come at the expense of our students' education.

To protect New York City from cost shifting that has been overly relied upon to balance state budgets, we urge you to reverse the proposed extension of the Distressed Hospital Fund sales tax intercept -- that would take an additional $150 million from the city -- so we can adequately support our public hospitals.

New York City must also be granted greater local control over our tax expenditures as a necessary tool to safeguard the health of our own budget. Albany is a

critical partner in this process, but the city needs the authority and input on the tax programs that significantly affect us, to ensure our resources are used wisely. This will require the state to not authorize a city tax credit without a home-rule request, a provision giving the city local authority to determine tax credits and authorization to obtain data needed to evaluate tax breaks.

We support state bills to give IBO access to tax data and to alter or repeal real property tax exemptions for private institutions of higher education. All of this would allow the city greater local control and ability to conduct oversight.

At the center of our considerations are the working families and New Yorkers who comprise the backbone of our city and state. We look forward to working with you, our partners in the State Legislature, to enact a budget that equitably supports our city and state.

Thank you very much for your consideration and for your time.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: First up, our Cities chair, for 10 minutes, Assemblymember Braunstein.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you, Fred.

And thank you, all of you, for joining us today. It's good to see you up here.

The first question I have is for anybody who can answer it. I'm not expecting you have the answer, but you might. The mayor testified earlier that currently the city has around 67,000 migrants in their care. Those numbers, do they fluctuate? Does anybody know what the low number was? Has there been a higher number? I'm just trying to get a sense of how those numbers move.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: We put them out monthly in our monthly newsletter, and we've been tracking them from when they were, you know, essentially zero prior to July 2022, and they have been rising steadily

since then.

That current 67,000 is a high, but there's been somewhat of a tapering, mostly as the 30- and 60-day rules have gone into effect, so people have been pushed out of the H+H shelters, even as folks continue to come. I've got a little chart that shows -- yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Yeah, I mean that's what I was asking for. So you would say as a chart it would be a tapering --

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Oh, I'm sorry, the peak was 69,000, and it's now at 67,000, so it's a little lower than it's been.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Is there a projected increase, do you know?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: This is really the 40,000 -- you know, the $69,000 question.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: But if you don't know, I understand.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Well, we don't know. The impacts of the 60-day rule are just -- you know, what they said is that

for single adults, in response to the 30-day rule, about 80 percent of people wound up leaving and only 20 percent -- but of families, we think it's going to be a higher percentage that need shelter and wind up staying in shelter. And we'll be seeing that in the coming months, and we'll report on it.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay, thank you.

For the speaker or your team, you know, you reference -- and it's frustrating, we're seeing the potential loss of the 3-K program. You know, how much do we anticipate that program in particular will cost? I know the Mayor's office testified earlier that they expect they're going to lose, just for education alone, $700 million in stimulus funding year to year.

You know, you talked about us changing the formula slightly for Foundation Aid, which the comptroller estimates could be around 130 million. How much is the 3-K program cost?

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Do we have

a cost on that, Tanisha?

NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: (Mic off.)

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Your mic isn't on. There you go -- now you turned it off again. There you go.

NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: It's difficult in this --

(Laughter.)

NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: For FY '24 the cost level was $760 million. In FY '25 it's expected to be -- and this is because there was a sort of 5 percent peg to the program -- $509 million.

So that would be the general cost to efficiently run the 3-K program, or at least how much is currently budgeted now.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. I mean, I understand your coming to us -- we have increased education funding to the City of New York to historic levels over the last few years. So --

NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: Well, a lot of the money that the city has received from the state was from pre-K. And it's been

great, but with our level of funding coming in for 3-K, in order to get the amount of seats that we need across the city, where the needs are great -- in some areas there are waitlists for months and months and months.

And so we need additional money to fulfill the need where they're needed.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay, thank you.

For comptroller Lander, the city is requesting increasing the Transitional Finance Authority bond limit I believe the Governor has proposed -- was it the Governor or the mayor's office is asking for 6 billion this year, then another increase of 6 billion the year after that. You know, what's your thoughts on that?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yeah. So the mayor asked for 19.6 billion, and what's in the Governor's budget is, as you say, $12 billion over two years. And that's an increase in the city's overall debt limit, which is set by a very kind of imprecise formula that values the total city

real estate.

So, you know, what's key is keeping debt service below 15 percent of the city's total operating budget. We believe that the $12 billion over two years is a reasonable increase that would help us, you know, with big infrastructure investments we have in the BQE and our roads and bridges and building the borough-based jails and many other things that we need.

But there's a couple of critical things that are necessary. One is stronger local policy to make sure we stay below the 15 percent threshold. One is some better planning on what our infrastructure needs are. I know you've all been joking about AIM. AIM for us is the annual assessment of our infrastructure, and we think it's more like "aimless."

So there are some other -- and as you know, we're working hard with you, and thank you for chairing the recent hearing, Chair Braunstein and Chair Thiele, to help us have better access to alternative delivery

methods to bring down the cost of our capital projects.

But yes, broadly, we think the increase is needed with those provisos.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: So the current debt cap is tied to property tax revenue. Is there a concern about property tax revenue? I mean --

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: It's not tied to property tax revenue, it's tied to an estimate of the overall valuation of all real property in the city. And the valuation is done by a state board appointed by the Governor that has a lot of quirks to it, it won't surprise you, in the way it values our co-ops and condos.

So the short answer is no. Like what's critical -- right now we're at about 11 percent of our operating budget on debt service. We need to keep that below 15 percent, and we've got a lot of room to do so. Adding the 12 billion over two years to the TFA is essentially an adjustment to the formula of the assessment of real estate, and

we can do it consistent with keeping that service below 15 percent of our budget.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. When we talk about the assessment of real estate, there's been a change in behavior with -- after the pandemic with people working from home. We know there's vacancies in commercial real estate in Manhattan. Is there a projected concern about real estate property tax, I mean commercial real estate property tax, in the outyears?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Let me separate this. I don't think that what you're talking about is what is jeopardizing the debt limit.

But sure, on tax revenues, Class B and C real estate that we're seeing, you know, significant vacancies in, we're keeping a sharp eye. So far, overall real estate tax revenue in the city has continued to grow. But this is absolutely something that we're keeping a careful eye on.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. And the city counts -- or the city is projecting

deficits in the outyears. What are those attributable to?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Expenses rising faster than revenues. Revenues actually are rising. I just want to be clear, our revenues are rising, but expenses are rising faster. And that's, you know --

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: I mean, are there big expenses that you can -- that you point to that are driving that?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Well, look, we gave a much-needed increase to public-sector workers, and that was about $17 billion over the four-year financial plan.

I mentioned a few big growing costs like uniformed overtime, Carter cases for kids with special needs, and shelter and services for asylum-seekers, which we had not anticipated before last year.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. And then just my final point is, you know, we talk about this, Comptroller Lander -- I know Councilmember Brannan -- talk about doing

something about our broken property tax system. And while we ultimately have authority to make that change up here, we look to the city for guidance about what they would like that property tax system to look like.

Ideally, if there was a change requested, a resolution or something from the City Council would be helpful in, you know, moving us to take up that issue. So -- and I know, you know, we could talk offline about commissions and things of that nature.

But ultimately this is going -- you know, if we're going to get this done, we need something driven from the city up. It's going to be more challenging for us to do it from the top down.

And then, finally, you talked about the alternative delivery. We continue to have conversations. It does not have a state fiscal impact, so I anticipate, you know, we'll take up that conversation sometime after we're done on April 1st. So --

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: That would be

great. I wasn't pushing for it to be in the budget --

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Yeah, I know, I'm just --

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I'm just encouraging it to -- along.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay, thank you.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Our Cities chair, Senator Sepúlveda.

SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for being here today. Good seeing everyone.

So I first have a question for Comptroller Lander. I asked the mayor similar questions earlier. I have been on a mission to modify and change the property tax system in New York City. As the Cities 1 chair for the last two years, I have been hounding and harassing the mayor's office to provide a plan or something.

A couple of weeks ago I attended the -- at the Court of Appeals the hearing on

the appeal on a case on the New York City property tax system. Based on my experience as an attorney, I believe that the city is going to lose that case.

I believe you presented a plan, some kind of plan to modify the property tax system. What is that plan? Can you explain what you're doing to put it into effect? Because I think it's unconscionable that a resident in my community in the South Bronx is paying the same or more taxes than someone in affluent neighborhoods like Malba and Whitestone.

What are you going to do to make sure that we modify the property tax system?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Thank you, Senator. It's a good question, and I really agree. And I know the speaker does, and I know the finance chair does.

And it's work that we have to and can do together, because you are right, we know the effective tax rate for someone in your neighborhood is three to four times the effective tax rate for someone in my

neighborhood. It does not pass a basic fairness test. And there's a whole history of reasons why it evolved that way.

But, you know, the pathway to fixing it for homes, for one-to-four-family homes, co-ops and condos, I believe was largely set out by the commission that was, you know, appointed in the prior administration that came out the third-to-last day of the administration. But they actually got a lot of the basics right, and we need to move to a system that has a uniform tax rate for all homeowners.

So if -- let's call it 1 percent, it's 1 percent on the homes in your neighborhood and 1 percent on the homes in my neighborhood. And there are various ways to move to that over time while you protect, you know, seniors or folks on fixed incomes who might be at risk. But it can be done. That report actually outlines a lot of what's needed on -- for homes, for homeownership.

We've outlined a plan for multifamily development to replace 421-a that begins with

parity between rentals and condos for future development, and after that any tax incentives for affordability have to be underwritten to make sure you're actually getting the affordability that's promised. Glad to go into more details with you.

The challenge is just one of a lot of parties -- the legislature, the governor, the council, the mayor, the city all have to do this together. It's challenging. It has some, quote unquote, winners, people who over time would see a lower tax rate. But it has some, quote unquote, losers, people who will wind up paying a higher effective tax rate. And of course a change like that is hard because people resist it. I would love to work together with you and others to make it happen.

SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: We've been working with a couple of groups, including Jonathan Lippman's group, on this issue.

Now, we know that -- at least the research that I've done indicates that if you have a fair property tax system in New York

City you will spur affordable housing. So, Madam Speaker, can you tell us about the efforts the City Council is doing to -- in this measure, and compared vis-a-vis with the issue of affordable housing and how this can help develop it?

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Yeah. Thank you very much for the question.

I actually had legislation that passed recently, it was called -- it is called the Fair Housing Framework Law. And it is a law, I call it a law of housing equity, something that we haven't seen I don't think ever, in that every single district is responsible for doing their fair share of making affordable housing possible in each district.

As you know, we are the most diverse council, and it is noticeable that building has taken a different look across the board across the city. There have been but a few select districts that have actually had affordable housing built over the years compared to others. So what my legislation did was it advanced clear and set transparent

local targets for housing production and preservation and investments that serve as tools of accountability for every single district to equitably solve the housing crisis.

By setting these targets, though, we're letting all stakeholders, elected officials, land use applicants, our community members, know that the objective expectation is for every single district.

Our framework ensures that there is input by developers, by community boards, by elected officials. And it also -- people talk about member deference a lot. This actually gets us to where -- I always say we always want to get to a place of yes when it comes to affordable housing and building affordable housing equitably. By ensuring that everybody has a place at the table, particularly our community that has felt left out of the process for so long. They feel left out -- agencies can come to them, the city can come to them, and by the time they get to the community, the decision's already

made. It's already a done deal.

So communities have pretty much been, you know, kind of X'd out of the process. This legislation will ensure that communities are a part of the entire process from A to Z, and ensure equitability that has been lacking in the city actually does take place.

SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: I hope to get more into that with you and the comptroller about the issue of affordable housing and the property tax issue because, as I said, I've been on a mission to get this modified.

The -- back in December, Comptroller Lander, you had indicated that you took away the mayor's power to enter into contracts with private contractors that provide housing, food and other services for asylum-seekers without prior approval. Tell me about the pilot program that's been announced now for prepaid cards to purchase food, I believe it's about five -- it's a pilot program with 500 people.

But do you think the plan is effective? Is it going to save the city

money? Are you for or against it?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: So in July of 2022 when asylum-seekers started to arrive, City Hall requested and we granted essentially a blanket prior approval. We were going to move quickly into emergency procurement to find enough hotels and other contractors. And we granted that blanket prior approval.

And they've done, you know, 70 or so emergency procurements under that blanket prior approval, and a lot of them -- most of them were essentially for hotels. But some of them required more scrutiny. The biggest one that required more scrutiny was the $432 million contract to DocGo, a medical services staffing company with no experience in asylum seeker shelter or services that came through the door of that blanket prior approval.

And there were a lot of questions about that contract, so we revoked the blanket prior approval. They can still come to us on a contract-by-contract basis; they

did just this week, for some transportation services. And we very quickly, I think within two days, granted their prior approval.

On these prepaid cards, we also granted approval to use this contractor. The use of prepaid cards makes a lot of sense in different circumstances. But we didn't evaluate the program itself. We looked at the contractor: Is it an appropriate contractor? Do they provide the services at a reasonable procurement? Yes. Is the program a good idea? It's brand-new. We haven't yet evaluated it, and I'll have to get back to you when we have.

SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: Thank you.

One more question for Madam Speaker. Can you discuss the efforts in the City Council to help with the issue of the migrant crisis? What are some of the steps that you've taken? And what else we can do at the state level to help in that process.

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Well, as far as the migrant crisis is concerned, you

know, the council has been involved. We have continued to advocate that even though we got this literally -- it feels like overnight, but it's been two years. And we're still waiting for help from places in D.C. that seem to be kind of out of space, but we believe in that.

So we have actually continued to advocate for shelter for our asylum-seekers, for migrants that have come into the city looking for a place to live, just like people have looked for a place to live forever, it seems. We are -- we are glad the Governor has included the migrant situation in the budget, but we still need additional state funding to support and care for asylum-seekers.

Absent this federal aid we know is not promised -- and we don't see it anywhere coming around the corner to us, so any support or help that the state can give is completely welcome. It's going to help us manage the continued influx. And we spoke about it earlier with a question from

Assemblymember Braunstein, in speaking to the comptroller about the numbers and what are the numbers and when are we going to see a plateau and when are we going to see a peak. We just don't know.

So the council is going to continue to advocate for sheltering for migrants, not necessarily hotel sheltering, but through our CityPHEPS program. We want to move people into permanent housing.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember Simon for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you. Thank you very much.

I have a couple of questions that I wanted to ask the comptroller, in particular, and that is that we have a persistent problem in New York -- you mentioned the Carter cases -- with parents shelling out money for these schools because there is no appropriate

placement for them in New York City schools. Borrowing money, incurring costs, settling the case -- most of them settle -- and the city then taking 18 months to pay them back. They're already borrowing again for the following school year.

What can your -- and the check comes from the comptroller's office. What part of that can you fix to ensure that that stops happening? It's been a persistent problem for decades, as you know. That's one question.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yeah. No, this is really critical. And like you, I've talked to many families who wind up, you know, spending on the assessment, spending on the attorneys, spending on a year of tuition, and being out of pocket substantially just to get their kids the education they need.

There is a class-action lawsuit here, and there are settlement negotiations actively underway that are pushing the Department of Education. We're in dialogue with them. You know, I can't talk about the

settlement negotiations, but what I can tell you is we have given DOE some expanded authority to settle without having to come to us. We move very quickly when they do. But we are giving them some additional flexibility. Most of this is in changes that DOE needs to make, and I'm hopeful that the class-action settlement will make a lot of them.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: And then another question I have is about how the comptroller's office can help us figure out the costs of providing all this representation for people who have a right to representation in court.

You know, I have a bill that would actually provide greater loan forgiveness for people who are lawyers representing people in the indigent legal services, as well as the prosecutor's offices. But that's costing us money. That's costing the city money if we're not giving people the representation they need and they are evicted or they suffer other noxious consequences.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Let me -- let's follow up and see what information we have. We did a report earlier this year on special education services rather than on tuition, but we didn't look at the legal costs. So let me see what we might be able to do.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator John Liu.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Madam Speaker and Mr. Comptroller, for joining us today.

This is a question for both of you. There's -- you know, the last few years ever since the Democratic Majority took over the State Senate, the State Budget has always had more money for schools all across the state, including the City of New York. And yet there are these nagging reports that the city reduces funding for schools. Not necessarily either of you being responsible for that, but, you know, my question for both of you

is, is there some kind of violation of maintenance of effort? I mean, as the state increases funding for schools, the city shouldn't be using that increased funding to reduce what the city was putting into schools.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Parsing the Department of Education budget, as you know from your time as comptroller and now in the Senate, is --

SENATOR LIU: I was?

(Laughter; overtalk.)

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: I lived by your documents at one time.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: You know, a lot of the reductions to individual schools have been because the Fair Student Funding formula bases what your school is getting on how many students you have. And when we saw some pandemic school declines, that led to that formula leading to cuts and good advocacy to restore much of that money.

The adjustments to the Fair Student Funding formula that got made are quite good.

They put more money in for students in temporary housing.

But it is not so easy to evaluate the maintenance of effort question that you're asking, and I think it would be fair for the Legislature to insist on a real parsing out of what's coming from the state, what's coming from the city and others --

SENATOR LIU: Therefore for the State Legislature to demand maintenance of effort.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: You guys can demand, yes, that's true. We ask a lot in the comptroller's office.

SENATOR LIU: Okay. Defer to the comptroller?

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: I agree with everything the Comptroller said.

SENATOR LIU: You do, okay.

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: I do, imagine that.

SENATOR LIU: So I have one final question for the both of you. Who is the second-most powerful person in New York City?

(Laughter.)

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: John Liu. Senator John Liu.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: The chair already told us that the public advocate committed a coup while we were here.

SENATOR LIU: All right, whatever. Thank you, Madam Chair.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- budget-related question, John Liu? I don't think so.

Assembly.

SENATOR LIU: It's been a nagging question for eons.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR LIU: I figure everybody's collaborating so nicely. The speaker says she agrees with everything the comptroller says --

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: I did. I did.

SENATOR LIU: So you want to answer the question, Miss --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No, you don't.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: He's the

chair of the troublemakers committee in the New York State Senate, I see.

SENATOR LIU: Well, it's been a long day.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You had him all those years, but we now have him, so --

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember Reilly, Cities ranker, for five minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Madam Speaker, Mr. Comptroller.

So, Mr. Comptroller, I have a question about -- we had Island Shores on Staten Island, basically, as an example, was a senior residence that was closed months before, and then it became a migrant shelter with a contract roughly eight, 10 months later. They have a history, Homes for the Homeless, of doing this. Five years ago they did it in Manhattan, where they closed down a senior residence and then opened up within

days a homeless shelter.

How do we stop the incentives where the contracts are that lucrative that it's more beneficial for them to relocate our senior population for homelessness?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I mean, I'm not familiar with the Island Shores, but I think there are a number of places where we don't have the incentives in the right place. I mentioned Medicaid funding for inpatient psychiatric beds. Hospitals have been closing their inpatient psychiatric units because the Medicaid reimbursement rate is not good enough. And they close those units and do something else with the beds when we urgently need it.

So I guess I don't know the details here. You would want the senior program to have adequate reimbursement that it could provide the revenues that would be needed to operate that program. I mean --

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: It just seems like a pattern, especially -- you know, we talk -- when we relate this to like housing,

right, we talk about bad actors, like the bad landlords and bad tenants or whatever we call them. Right? What about the bad actors in the not-for-profit organizations that are truly driven by the high incentive of making money off of converting and moving from that senior center -- senior residence?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I mean, again, I don't -- I can't speak to this individual case. There's no doubt that one challenge of the surge of asylum-seekers is that the combination of the obligation to provide people the right to seek asylum with the city's right to shelter, like the city's facing a law here, you know --

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Well, the city had the opportunity -- I spoke to the mayor earlier today and I asked him a question. The city had the opportunity, because of the Staten Island case that was decided and right to shelter was addressed -- they immediately appealed, the city, and then filed a right to shelter case in Manhattan.

So it doesn't -- you know, they had

the opportunity to -- based on the judge's decision that revamped a little bit of right to shelter, gave them an out on it. They chose not to take it, the city. Are you aware of that?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: That's not how I understand the legal proceedings. So -- that's not how I understand them.

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Okay, fair enough. Fair enough.

Madam Speaker.

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Currently in the news with the assault on police officers and the incident that happened in Manhattan and over the next several days, one of the questions that I asked the mayor today was about the cooperation with federal immigration agencies and the New York City law. I actually specifically asked him about if he would do an executive order that would allow, when a asylum seeker is arrested for a violent crime, that they notify federal

authorities. And remember, this isn't targeting all migrants and asylum-seekers. This is for those that commit those serious crimes.

Would you be open to revisiting the sanctuary city law and the notification between law enforcement with federal agencies when it comes to those serious felonies.

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Well, thank you for the question. From what I understand, the sanctuary city laws -- sanctuary city just means welcoming to immigrants. It has no uniform definition in the law per se. So any crime committed by anyone should be adjudicated properly from A to Z, whether it's an immigrant or a non-immigrant.

In our estimation in the council, those that commit crimes should be held accountable for those crimes.

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: So would you -- so would the cooperation between the NYPD, Department of Corrections, the court system notifying federal agencies like ICE when

those individuals commit those serious crimes -- they're prevented right now. And that's been on the books for years, even when I was at the NYPD.

Would you be open to considering reopening that and looking at ways that we can streamline that communication for the most heinous crimes?

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: I think that the council would be open to conversations and collaborating when it comes to the safety of New Yorkers at any time.

ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Weik.

SENATOR WEIK: Thank you.

And thank you for being here today. I appreciate your testimony.

But I'm a little confused. I'm listening, and your testimony clearly states that you can't afford the migrant crisis, yet you continue to welcome them. And I've been listening to you have many, many financial asks on the state and the federal government,

yet you have $53 million in prepaid credit cards that you're giving migrants.

Who's paying that? Where's the money coming from?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I guess a few things I'll say here.

I think in the long-term it will be extremely beneficial for the City of New York. And I think if other municipalities and jurisdictions in New York State welcome people, it will be extremely economically beneficial for them. All the evidence shows that when immigrants come, your economy generally grows and flourishes.

We do have the short-term challenge of providing shelter and helping people --

SENATOR WEIK: So I'm sorry, just for the sake of time, because I have more questions --

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Where does the $53 million come from?

SENATOR WEIK: -- where is that money coming from?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: From the City

of New York. Because the mayor is asking the question -- rather than provide institutional food, a lot of which gets wasted, would it work to give people prepaid debit cards. It's a small pilot program to see if it works.

SENATOR WEIK: So it's coming out of the taxpayer's dollars, yes or no?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Of course.

SENATOR WEIK: Yes, of course.

Okay. And just a yes or no question, the congestion pricing. Do you support it?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I do.

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Do I support congestion pricing?

SENATOR WEIK: Uh-huh.

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: That's a loaded question for Queens.

SENATOR WEIK: It's just a yes or a no question.

(Laughter.)

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: It's a loaded question for Queens.

SENATOR WEIK: So I'll take that as a

yes?

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: You can take it as it's a loaded question for Queens. It's a -- it's a --

SENATOR WEIK: Okay.

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: We're still -- we're still checking it out and trying to figure it out.

SENATOR WEIK: So with that in mind, I'm just curious -- and the cost of trains of course increasing, how do you envision New York City residents getting around town?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Most -- the biggest way New York City residents get around town is by the subways and buses, which need investment, which is where the congestion pricing resources will go.

SENATOR WEIK: And how do you recommend they afford that? We're talking about not the millionaires or the migrants who are getting --

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Well, if you're taking the subways or the buses, you won't pay the congestion charge. And if your

subways and buses get where you're going faster, you'll be grateful for investment in them. We all want to keep the fares down. That money doesn't come from the --

SENATOR WEIK: The fares are rising, correct? Fares are rising?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: They rarely go down.

SENATOR WEIK: Right. So they're rising, we have congestion pricing. How do you suggest -- or what do you envision being the solution for the average New York City resident to get around town affordably?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Well, here's what I'd love, if Albany could reach an affordable housing deal to help bring down the cost of housing --

SENATOR WEIK: Is that how come you asked for more money?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: If Albany could provide the resources that help us have 3-K or reduced childcare for our kids, if Albany could help make sure we're able to reduce energy costs, then it would be a lot

easier for working New Yorkers to live in New York City.

SENATOR WEIK: It's like you want Albany to run New York City financially.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: The housing deal I don't think will cost you that much to enable us to build more housing and protect tenants.

SENATOR WEIK: But that doesn't answer any of my questions about commuting around New York City.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: No, I think I said it did. We'll put the congestion pricing dollars in the subways and buses, which is by far the most affordable way to get around, way less than driving.

SENATOR WEIK: Thank you.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman Ra.

(Reaction; general welcome.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Nobody noticed.

(Overtalk; laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Ways and Means Chair Helene Weinstein.

(Applause.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: The claps don't get you any more money, just so you know.

(Laughter.)

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: We only have paper cups. We don't have tin cups out here to ask, so --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman Ra.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you. And welcome back, Chair Weinstein. Good to have you.

Nothing against Fred; it was nice having Fred over here for a few hours.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Glad to have you back.

I want to go back, Comptroller, to the procurement issue that was raised earlier. I know you mentioned that particular contract, and I don't know exactly what the circumstances were. I know there was kind of a denial of that that was issued, but my

understanding was that the mayor was able to still follow through with the contract.

And since -- you know, last year we originally allocated a billion dollars; our financial plan now reflects that at about 1.9 billion. We have a proposal in this budget for another 2.4. So my question is, do we need to, as we're doing that, perhaps consider measures to ensure that there is oversight of these contracts when they're being given out?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: We take the contract oversight very seriously. That's part of why we revoked the blanket prior approval.

So we are doing more, you know, individual reviews on every emergency procurement, and we don't -- you know, sometimes we deny emergency procurement. That just means it has to go through the normal bidding method so that you make sure you're getting price competition and contractors with integrity. So that's why we did that, and I think it was, you know, kind

of a wise -- we're putting out now quarterly reports on what all the contracts were. We've got audits underway on several of those contracts in realtime. So we'll be glad to keep providing them to you.

You know, if the state believes additional oversight is needed on resources it provides to the city, we respect your authority to get it. But we're certainly in our office doing as much as we can to make sure you've got the transparency that you need.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: And as you're looking at these contracts, I think one of the things that -- I think there were a couple of things that were eye-opening about that particular contract, one of which was obviously the inexperience of the operator with regard to these types of services. But also just -- it seemed like the amount that they were seeking to benefit financially from it was kind of an eye-opening amount as well.

So I assume those are the types of things you're looking at as you're going

through these contracts?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yes.

And another example from that contract is that they get $170 a night per hotel room regardless of the cost of the actual hotel room. So if they can find hotel rooms that rent for less, they get to keep the difference. So is that an incentive for them to look everywhere in the state that they can to find the cheapest hotel rooms? I mean, financially it functions like that.

You know, do they need a percentage above what the cost of the hotel room is to provide that service? Sure. But we should structure our contracts in ways that, you know, are the most cost-effective and provide the wisest incentives.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: And then just going more generally to the city's budget, obviously we've had a lot of conversations around the impact of the migrant crisis and what it's costing the city and how that has impacted other services.

I think the city obviously has been

dealing with something not that unlike what we're dealing with at the state level in terms of, you know, we had all this pandemic-era aid and, you know, I would argue perhaps that we started spending above where our recurring revenues were going to ultimately end up, and there's a rightsizing that's going on.

Now, I know revenues have come in a little stronger, so some of those cuts have not been realized at this point. But what is the outlook now if, you know, the revenues look like we're seeing them now in terms of, you know, fire services, NYPD, the other types of things that were going to be impacted by those proposed cuts?

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Oh. He's the money guy.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Whichever. I mean, I'm happy to -- if you want me to.

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: The impact because of the proposed cuts, from the council's perspective, is going to be significant. We're going to continue, of

course, in our capacity in oversight to do whatever we can to get to the bottom of whatever the reasoning behind the cuts are.

But we are short-staffed when it comes to city agencies right now because of cuts. Services are not being delivered to New Yorkers because of cuts. We have had to restore significant amounts of funding back to places that have lost libraries, cultural arts systems, and a lot of other places that we actually put into the budget were taken out of the budget because of substantial cuts.

So as far as the council is concerned, we're going to continue to advocate for restoration of whatever we can -- NYPD, FDNY, all of it -- DSNY -- to the best of our ability as a council.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: All right. Thank you, Madam Speaker. And thank you, Mr. Comptroller.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Rhoads.

SENATOR RHOADS: Thank you so much, Chairwoman.

And just to follow up on Assemblyman Ra's point, where is the rightsizing in the city's budget? You have a $7 billion budget deficit that's coming up this year. We know about budget deficits here in Albany as well. And by the way, to Senator Weik's point, it's all taxpayer dollars. Right? No matter where it comes from. Whether it comes from Albany, whether it comes from the City of New York, it's all taxpayer dollars.

We hear about restoring services -- which we want to see happen, obviously. But at some point in time, where is the rightsizing of the city's budget to meet its anticipated revenue?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Well, first let me just correct the record. For this year, fiscal year '24, the budget's in balance and the preliminary budget that the mayor presented for fiscal year '25 is also in balance. So neither this year nor next

year's budget has any deficit, much less $7 billion --

SENATOR RHOADS: If I could, just for the sake of time, I'd like --

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: For the following fiscal year we project a $5 billion deficit.

SENATOR RHOADS: If I can ask --

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: And a whole bunch of cuts have been made. I was in the Flushing library on Saturday. It's now closed on Sundays. We've closed our libraries one weekend day when kids need them. Unfortunately, there are a whole bunch of places that we have made significant cuts to services for New Yorkers because we're required by law to have a balanced budget, and we do.

SENATOR RHOADS: But don't we see that there's an issue with respect to the fact that the city plans this year alone on spending $4 billion on migrants?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I'm sorry, can you ask the question again? I'm not sure

I understand.

SENATOR RHOADS: Sure. Not a problem.

Don't we see that part of the issue with having to cut services, part of the reason why they're talking about cuts in the FDNY, cuts in the NYPD, cuts in funding to our schools, the fact that the libraries have to be closed on Sunday -- is that not part of the reason for that the fact that we are spending $4 billion -- the City of New York will spend $4 billion providing free housing, thousand-dollar food cards, providing free medical care, providing free education for migrants?

NYC COUNCILMAN BRANNAN: Senator, I would just say that a lot of the outyear gaps that we were seeing were there with or without the migrant crisis.

So you have to also remember that the city is grappling as well with the final sunset of COVID relief funds. So that we had a lot of permanent programs that were set up by a prior administration that were built on temporary dollars. So you have permanent

programs with temporary dollars, we're grappling with that as well.

So the cuts to the police department, the fire, everything you mentioned, all that was restored, just as the council predicted, when the administration acknowledged the money that was already there. That the money that is sitting in the tax revenues right now for the City of New York, those -- the restorations that you saw towards the -- last month, I guess, that the mayor did was because the administration recognized money that was already there.

So all those cuts you're mentioning were never necessary in the first place, and they're not happening.

SENATOR RHOADS: I understand that for this year. But I guess my larger concern is that there seems to be a disconnect with reality. We're spending $4 billion on migrants. We talk about the fact that New York City has a housing crisis, for example, right?

Meanwhile, during your testimony,

Madam Speaker, NYCHA has difficulty collecting rents from 70,000 of its residents. Why would you want to be a landlord in the City of New York when it is impossible to evict a tenant who does not pay, when limits are placed on their ability to do all sorts of things as landlords? Who would want to make that investment in the city?

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Well, Senator, I don't disagree that there are several obstacles that make what you just said a reality as far as landlords and the difficulties these days.

I would also say that, just like my Finance chair, Councilman Brannan just said, we were under -- we were under this water because of the pandemic, largely, beforehand, before we got to now. So in seeing where we are right now, largely funding has come back for fiscal year 2024 and '25, and we're projecting out now deficits through '26.

So when we take a look at where we were and where we are, I think that the

outlook really is more positive than negative at this point.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: And I would just add -- I mean, if we didn't have a right to shelter, we would have some more money in the city's bank account, and we would have tens of thousands of people sleeping on the streets of our city, as they do in Los Angeles and Seattle and --

SENATOR RHOADS: You can always ask the Biden administration to do what they're supposed to do and take care of the problem they created.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: -- Chicago.

That wouldn't be better for New Yorkers.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, Senator. Thank you, Comptroller. Your time is up.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman Epstein.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you, Comptroller and Speaker.

Speaker Adams, just on the NYCHA piece, are you asking the state to try to pay additional rent arrears in this year's budget? I saw your $167 million that accrued the past several years, and 500 million -- you know, we did give money, like you said, last year. Do you feel like there's additional dollars that are needed this year for NYCHA tenants?

NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: Yes.

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Quick and easy.

NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: The money we -- the money --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: The 167, or the 500 are you asking for?

NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: The 167 was the amount of the current outstanding need. And with that, it's a little -- we have over 50,000 individuals, not households, that are in arrears. And this amount has been growing.

We do appreciate the funding that we were given last year, but we need more.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you. Thank you.

So in the last couple of years that we've been increasing funding to CUNY, and we've seen over the past couple of years on the city, even though we've been giving more money, there have been cuts on the city level to our CUNY program. So I ask the comptroller and the speaker, how do we guarantee CUNY the Foundation Aid that Senator Liu just raised earlier? If we're going to increase giving money to the city, how do we guarantee that those won't result in cuts to services to our communities or to our public schools?

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: I think that from a council perspective -- and thank you for the question. From a council perspective, we are going to continue to do whatever we can as a council to protect the funding that comes into CUNY. CUNY is a tremendous priority for the City Council.

Whatever cuts or whatever happens down the line as far as lessening what's done to

CUNY is never done at the hands of the City Council -- I never say never, but I just did, because CUNY is such a tremendous priority for us. I don't know if the comptroller wants to add to that, but the City Council would never advocate for cuts for CUNY. Many of us come from CUNY.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: You and me both. Thank you.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yes. I mean, you know, unfortunately, despite that leadership which the speaker has played during this administration, CUNY has seen, with the cuts that are now proposed in the preliminary budget, over $90 million in recurring annual cuts.

We I think would welcome a kind of maintenance of effort approach: If the state's going to put more money in, that the city doesn't cut.

And I urge folks to look at that REPAIR Act, which would provide so that, you know, Columbia and NYU, instead of receiving a $342 million annual property tax

exemption -- at least, let's say, for the dorms, which essentially function like residential property -- would be taxed, and those resources could be targeted to CUNY.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Well, thank you. I know I'm out of time, but -- (no audio).

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Good afternoon. I think I'm the last on the Senate side, just double-checking. Thank you all for attending.

And I was sort of joking about they're couping the city since you're all up here. But I did see a large number of people here. I was like, hmm, who's at home?

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So Brad, you already answered the explanation for the capital borrowing as far as the dollar amounts that you believe are reasonable within the context of real estate values of the City of New York.

Do you think we need to clarify with you and the City Council what that money is being spent for when we decide we're going to

support this ask? Or do you feel like you and the council have a legal role that ensures that the people of the City of New York agree with how $12 billion would be borrowed and then have to be paid back?

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yeah. I mean, the capital budgeting process, it moves through the same, you know, public transparent budget process. The council, you know, sees what's in it.

There is robust public debate. This year I've heard from people who are pushing to make our schools more accessible. You know, there's a whole range and -- that's not as much what people advocate for as the expense budget, but it is robust and transparent.

Some of what City Hall has put forward as saying here's the need for that increase are not yet in the capital budget. But the reality is we don't project actually hitting the limit till 2029, about five years out. So this is really paying attention to kind of that long-term outer limit. Every year we'll

make sure to -- you know, that there's good oversight on the capital budget.

As I said, I do think we need actually a better state of good repair assessment than the city has. We have an audit coming out soon that's going to recommend some changes at the city level to the way we do that. And I think we need some new city policies to make sure we stay below that 15 percent threshold.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So when Senator Sepúlveda was here, he was talking about the lawsuit against the city and the property tax inequities, and I agree with that. And you and I have had conversations about how perhaps we could improve the property tax formulas.

We all talk about, though -- and the Governor in her budget proposal, even though she's a little vague on the numbers -- about creating additional housing programs that will provide tax credits and abatements from the New York City property tax for real estate in return for some formula of an

X amount of affordable housing.

And then I know that the real estate industry is also lobbying us for a significant tax abatement for any kind of energy upgrades that they do. That is also, I think, an enormous number, potentially.

Who's looking at how much money from property tax you, the City of New York, can afford to give up for these things? Even though I think we would all agree affordable housing is on the top of our list, and improved green energy is on the top of our list. When does somebody go, Wait a second here, this will be 5 billion a year, can we actually afford to give that up?

I'm just wondering whether the council and the comptroller's office have those discussions or have a role in that kind of decision-making if and when the State of New York moves forward with some of these proposals that the Governor seems to be supporting.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: We do a lot of analysis. And Francesco Brindisi, who's

our executive deputy comptroller, is looking at these things on a really regular basis.

It's part of why we -- you know, we raised concerns about 421-a, that it was oversubsidizing without really attending on a kind of deal-by-deal basis to whether there's a good match between the affordability benefit we're getting and the tax benefit we're giving up. It's why one of the things in our proposal is that on larger deals each one get underwritten, to make sure we're giving the right amount away, and not more.

We don't have power over the decision-making there, and we have not taken a look at the energy tax break that you are referring to, which I have also heard could be quite, quite expensive.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Has the council taken a look at this from your perspective?

NYC COUNCILMAN BRANNAN: Thank you, Senator.

Yeah, I think it's important to -- not to divorce our housing crisis from our need for property tax reform. And, you know, the

council worked hard with the prior administration on the blueprint for property tax reform. But, you know, we ultimately need a dance partner.

But we are also -- we'd love to see the administration put this as a priority as well. We're ready to go. Many of, you know, our colleagues -- this is a huge issue for folks. And if you're seeing the housing crisis fixing -- solving for the housing crisis through the lens of justice and equity, the property tax system as it exists right now is inequity hidden in plain sight.

So something's got to get done, and we're ready to roll up our sleeves and work with you guys.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

So this will be a test, for those of us who are old enough to remember Senator Moynihan. Any hands up in the audience?

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, I see a few hands. Thank you.

So he used to put out almost an annual report on how much more money the State of New York gave to Washington, D.C., than it got back. And I believe that in various years comptrollers and others in the City of New York did the same thing on how much more we gave -- we as a New York City resident gave Albany, versus getting back.

Are there any new numbers to work off of? I'm just curious if anybody's looking at that.

NYC EX. DEP. COMPTROLLER BRINDISI: I am.

(Inaudible; off the record.)

NYC EX. DEP. COMPTROLLER BRINDISI: I think the general sense of the balance of payment between the city and the state where, you know, the city is the economic engine, it's got a lot of jobs that are -- as part of the general business district, right, that are located in the city -- those dynamics are still very much in play. They have not really changed significantly, even though there has been outmigration from the city to

the suburbs. Right?

So that, I think, you know, it's something that -- although we don't have numbers at our fingertips right now, it's something that is still very much in play, where the city sort of contributes to the state budget more than it receives.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So thank you. I think most of us in the Legislature believe we are elected to represent all 19.5 million New Yorkers even if our home base might or might not be New York City. But sometimes when you sit up here in budget hearings enough time, you start to internalize, boy, all the money's going to New York City, it's always all about New York City.

And I just really wanted to remind everyone that's not really true. And in fact as you all heard, because you were all sitting here for the previous panel of upstate cities and the fact that they need more AIM -- and they do -- but we haven't given New York City AIM in years and years and years, even though we promised to put it

back. I remember, I was here. We've cut the formulas for administration of government benefits and social services.

As you talked about, I think, both the tax intercept in relation to distressed hospitals, does anybody have a sense of just how much more you'd be getting from Albany if we just hadn't done all of these inequitable cuts to you that we didn't apply to anyone else?

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: It's a lot. A lot.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: We can get back to you with the details, for sure.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I just think it's important to put all of that in perspective whenever we're talking about the needs of localities and what we're going to do in the state budget or not do in the state budget.

And I think people haven't like added those numbers up in a while. So I didn't really -- I wasn't trying to go stump you, I just think that would actually be good information for us to all have as we're

negotiating a budget over the next month or so.

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you, Senator.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So I'm going to cede back my time, and I really appreciate your all being here today.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Assemblywoman Hyndman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you, Chair Weinstein.

Good afternoon. Thank you for coming here today, all the way to Albany.

I have a couple of questions. I'm going to ask the comptroller first, and then Speaker Adams.

I know -- I think -- I believe you support the increase of basement apartments around the City of New York. Do you also support the -- raising the FAR ratio cap? I know City Council supports it.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yes. That would let the city then decide -- you know, I mean, it still is a city decision on where to

map FAR, but that would enable the city to have a higher one as it maps, yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I just also wonder -- I know a lot of -- both of you, from your testimony -- we've talked a lot about the low-income in supports for the City of New York. But in the Governor's budget she's zeroed out the HOPP program, the housing opportunity program that helps homeowners maintain housing. I don't know if you know that, but I would hope we could get some support in making sure that we get that back in.

We haven't talked a lot about maintaining homeowners in the City of New York, because that is the population that is leaving. I know Councilman Brannan and our districts really mirror each other, and these are the individuals that are paying the bulk of the property taxes that we use for everything in the city and the state of New York.

NYC COUNCILMAN BRANNAN: Absolutely.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: So please, I

would really like your support on the HOPP program.

And my last question is about mayoral accountability. I remember previous comptrollers -- Betsy Gotbaum did a lot of work and working groups and had a report when it came to mayoral accountability. And as you know, that's also in the Governor's budget where she's asked for four years.

That's one policy I think the Assembly likes to remove from the budget and make it policy, standalone. I just wanted to know where both of you stood on that.

Thank you.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: You know, when I was in the council I was a long-time supporter of what we called municipal control. You know, in which the mayor still has a lot of authority over the school system, but in which the council is a full partner. And broadly, that is what I would like to -- what I would like to see.

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: For us right now, our focus hasn't been so much on

that issue, it's more on maintaining and the provision of keeping our programs together -- our school aid, our 3-K. That's been the primary focus, you know, of the council.

And the other part, we're waiting to see what the state has to say.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So there are no more Senators, so we'll go to Assemblyman Weprin next.

ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: These are new mics, so we still have to get used to them by pushing harder.

But it's great to see you all here. I remember when I chaired the Finance Committee of the City Council and Tanisha Edwards was my counsel, I used to come up to Albany. And one of the things that -- when Mayor Bloomberg was there, that we would come up on is making sure that we got our AIM and increased AIM a number of times.

Senator Jackson brought up with the mayor about restoring AIM. It was only supposed to be zeroed out for one year only,

I think it was during Governor Cuomo's first term, maybe it was. And for some reason people forgot that. There was a commitment it was only going to be eliminated for one year.

And that of course is unrestricted funds, so even though the dollar amount might not be as large as other dollar amounts of aid to the city, that was a tremendous resource because it, you know, didn't have the restrictions that other aid has.

And I know Senator Jackson brought it up with the mayor, and the mayor said he would support that. Is there any talk about, you know, lobbying to restore AIM, which was only supposed to be eliminated for one year only?

NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: You raised a really good point. We have, just like with the sales tax intercept, just like with the MTA cuts, just like with FMAP, which are generally recent cuts, AIM, that's still generally a high priority of the council because we would like that money back.

Because as you've said, it's allowed us to do whatever we want.

But oftentimes -- you know, it happened over a decade ago, so not that it's less important, but just --

ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: But it would be a lot more money now. It would have been, you know, in the billions by now.

NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: It's in the -- well, I think it was a little less than a billion by maybe $700 million. But we had a lot of money.

So we're still -- that's something that we have not forgotten about. But there are sort of other recent priorities that we continue to fight for, and AIM will be one of them that we now will have a loud voice on. But unrestricted aid was huge then, and it should be now also.

ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Well, I would like to support a campaign to bring it back, along with Senator Jackson, who raised it with the mayor. So if you want to strategize on that, I'm willing to get

involved.

And I have 30 seconds left. I just want to put on Comptroller Lander's radar when he mentioned the NYU tax exemption and the Columbia tax exemption, I've had a bill for many years, along with Senator Kavanagh in the Senate, to eliminate Madison Square Garden's tax exemption --

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Amen.

ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: -- which is a huge amount, and that's certainly much more private in their use than NYU and Columbia.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I support it.

ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Okay. I have one second left.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Assemblywoman González-Rojas.

(Pause.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: She stepped out, so we'll go to Assemblyman Otis.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you. Welcome back, Helene.

So thank you all for your testimony.

I want to talk about affordable housing. And two years ago, Comptroller Lander, you put out a good report about the 421-a program sort of detailing how it really wasn't providing affordable housing to the income ranges that we would call people in need of affordable housing.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yup.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: And so more broadly -- and this is a problem actually not just with 421-a, but with other kinds of affordable housing programs outside of New York City as well, where we're having programs that are dealing with folks who are sort of upper-middle-class incomes, and we're leaving out a lot of people at AMIs that are much lower.

So comments about where you see that issue going. And Madam Speaker, if you have comments on the same issue as well, you can both feed into that real dynamic. Because we need to be providing affordable housing for a wider range of people who are working but have more moderate incomes.

NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Absolutely. As you say -- and, you know, when we looked at 421-a, the bulk of the units that have been created in the last four years of the program were in the outer borough, 130 percent AMI programs. So still rental housing, it wasn't even like a homeownership -- it was rental housing, but it was only affordable to the wealthiest 25 percent of New York City residents. And I just -- that didn't pass the smell test as affordable housing. But we were still giving full tax -- 35-year tax exemptions for those developments.

And this is the kind of scrutiny we need of our affordable housing programs. You know, I don't mind scaled incentives. There certainly are middle-class families who, you know, can't afford to live in New York City. But we've got to focus our energy on kind of hardworking folks and really target -- I gave the example in my testimony on vouchers. You know, the mayor actually talks often about how there's just a few hundred people who

cycle through, are homeless and mentally ill, cycle through Rikers, cycle through the hospitals.

So let's focus, you know, our vouchers to make sure those folks get off the street, stop spending so much money on jails and hospitals -- and target our affordability programs to the working families who really need them.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you.

Madam Speaker?

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Yes, and thank you. I just believe that a program to incentivize affordable housing is absolutely imperative. Anything that we can do to get there, we need to use all available tools that we can possibly have to help deliver affordable housing at all of the levels that New Yorkers need -- I think that we need to do that and do it together.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you very much. Thank you both for your good work.

NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Thank you all for being here. Sorry I missed the beginning of your presentations, but I did see the written remarks. So thank you all for being up here today, and we're going to move on to our panels of -- Panel C. I'll just give you a few minutes to gather your belongings.

Thank you, Brad.

So our Panel C is going to be the New York State Conference of Mayors, Executive Director Barbara Van Epps; New York State Association of Counties, NYSAC, Executive Director Steven Acquario; and Association of Towns of the State of New York, Gerry Geist, executive director.

We'll just take a few minutes as people stretch their legs and say hello and goodbye.

(Pause.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we are ready to begin, thank you. We can go in the order that we announced, Barbara first.

MS. VAN EPPS: Sure. Can you hear me?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: The ring needs

to turn green. Now -- you're green now, so you should be okay.

MS. VAN EPPS: Okay, great. Yes, there it is.

Assemblymember Weinstein, Senator Krueger -- wherever she is -- and distinguished members of the State Legislature, thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to testify in front of you on behalf of the 575 cities and villages that are members of NYCOM.

This is my first time testifying before you as the executive director, but I have worked with many of you over the years on a variety of issues, and I look forward to continuing to do that with those I have previously worked with and the rest of you going forward.

So you have my written testimony. I'm not going to read from that. I just want to highlight a few issues.

I'm sure you'll be shocked to see that the first issue in our testimony was AIM funding. And I know you've spent a lot of

time talking about AIM funding. You've already heard from all of the city mayors earlier about AIM funding, but I just want to echo some of their remarks. As I think many of them stated, we as mayors have the same goals as the Governor in terms of both -- two of the biggest goals being affordability and public safety.

We are on the frontlines of doing that. But as the costs of everything continue to go up, particularly public safety, and every single one of our communities have -- that's our largest cost driver. Whether it's EMS, whether it's police, whether it's fire, every single one of our communities are feeling the pressure of the rising costs as a result of public safety.

And we also have a tax cap to contend with. But the only way we can address these issues, particularly the public safety issues, are by raising taxes. We don't have AIM funding to help us fill those gaps. It translates directly into property tax

increases and putting an increasing burden on our taxpayers.

So I know we talked a lot about this today, and I will say I don't know what the answer is either. We talked to Assemblymember Thiele and Senator Martinez, who were both at our conference yesterday, about -- you have always been very generous to us in your one-house budgets when it comes to AIM funding. And one of the questions we had asked the two who came to our meeting yesterday was how do we -- what do we do to help you get this over the finish line?

We've talked about changing the name. We actually did change the name a couple of years ago; we called it the Municipal Investment Initiative, the MII. We've talked about different criteria to put into the formula, which has been not withstood for several years. We even talked about tying strings to how we use the money. And maybe that's public safety, and maybe that's housing, but we are open to any and all suggestions.

We don't have to call it AIM anymore, we just want to try to get something for our communities. Since it has been 15 years, our costs are rising -- you know, the cost of everything is going up. We just need some way to figure out how we plug this hole and how we get this across the finish line.

Mayor Sheehan pointed out that the cost of living, she said, was in the 30 percent range. I think we did the adjustment. It's closer to like 43 percent, based on the numbers we have. That would call for a much bigger number than you are probably able to -- or the state is able to provide for us.

But as Mayor Sheehan and the other mayors said, we aren't looking for the full $309 million. We'll take a 10 to 15 percent increase and maybe tie it to something so we can have something that we can rely on going forward.

Infrastructure obviously continues to be a huge issue -- even more so recently with the increased focus on housing, especially

after last year. Generally speaking, the state has been good to us in terms of infrastructure. We've gotten the increases in transportation funding over the years. But unfortunately, our needs continue to far outpace the resources we have available. It was already raised before.

We also have these ADA requirements for curb ramps that we talked about earlier. That is eating up more and more of our CHIPS allocations. We have some communities that say those requirements alone are eating up their entire CHIPS allocation.

So we have concerns about needing more transportation funding, but even greater concerns about the cuts that are in the Governor's budget, the 60 million reduction to the CHIPS program and the 40 million to the Touring Routes program. We have concerns about that, obviously. We're hoping that we can get the Legislature to restore those cuts, but also increase those funding streams. Because other than the Touring Routes, all of those other transportation

programs that you've been funding go to every single community. We all benefit from that.

In terms of water and sewer infrastructure, that's another area where you have been very generous to us. Again, our members find that money difficult to get their hands on because most of it comes through grants and loans and you have to apply for those. So we have asked for the last several years for a dedicated funding stream similar to CHIPS.

CHIPS is popular because it's reliable, it's based on a formula. So we'd like to see a funding stream similar to that to go to communities that have public water and sewer systems so they can count on that money for maintenance and upgrades, so they don't have to wait for an emergency to try to get their hands on grant money. So that's been something that's been very important to us.

We also think with, again, the increased pressure on housing, that will help in that regard as well, because

infrastructure is a big issue. It's a big barrier when it comes to expanding housing. So if we have the money to maintain and upkeep that infrastructure, that would be very helpful to us.

And I just have to say, in speaking of housing, we have come a long, long way in a year. I'm very glad I wasn't the executive director last year when we were dealing with the housing compact, because you may recall some of our members were a little upset by that. So we appreciate all the efforts you did to recognize that, you know, zoning needs to be a local issue, a local choice.

We think the pro-housing communities were happy to see that the Governor has turned her attention to a more incentive-based, roundup, you know, local option program when it comes to housing. We have a lot of mayors who are out there and really want to do the right thing, and we think with some, you know, more enticements -- more money for infrastructure, more flexibility, removing some of those

barriers -- that we are definitely heading in the right direction.

Illegal cannabis sales. We have some real concerns about that. With the rollout taking as long as it did at the state level, there's obviously a lot more illegal cannabis and illegal cannabis shops popping up around in our communities.

We were happy to see that the Governor put language in there that would not only strengthen the state's ability to combat those illegal sales, but also give local government the tools to do that. We think that's very important. That's something I know a lot of our mayors are going to be interested in taking advantage of.

And then the last thing I'll say is on the issues of mental health, homelessness, and substance use issues. That has obviously become a much, much bigger issue for our communities, mostly as a result -- it was always an issue, but it's gotten 10 times worse, a lot worse since the pandemic.

From our perspective, one of the

biggest challenges is a lot of these issues are concentrated in cities, but a lot of the resources are concentrated in the counties. And that's just by function of the fact that the counties are the social services arm of the state.

So we just want to see a little more coordination there -- more of the money flowing to cities; more, you know, creative ways of responding to this. A lot of times it's our police officers that are responding at 2:00 in the morning because the county offices closed at 5:00, and how can we work together to make it so that the right people are there to deal with these folks and get them the right services and the right shelters that they need.

So we just want to have more of a collaboration, a seat at the table to talk about how we best deal with these issues.

So with that, I will cede my last two minutes to my colleagues.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Steve?

MR. ACQUARIO: Thank you. Just

waiting for the green light to come on.

Thank you. My name is Steven Acquario. I'm the executive director of the New York Association of Counties, or NYSAC, as it's known.

NYSAC is a 100-year municipal association. It was formed in 1925 by county officials for county officials and provides education, research, advocacy in a government-to-government collaboration with the state.

And it's wonderful to be with you here. Thank you for the invitation to come here to report on the counties of New York -- the 57 counties and the City of New York, with its five boroughs, our members of the association.

I want to thank our Local Government chairs, Monica Martinez in the Senate, Fred Thiele in the Assembly; the ranking members, Senator Rhoads and Ari Brown. I extend birthday wishes to Ari Brown. There's nothing better than sitting through fiscal testimony on our birthday. So happy

birthday.

(Laughter; inaudible response from Assemblyman Brown.)

MR. ACQUARIO: Happy birthday.

And thank you to the fiscal chairs, Senator Krueger, Assemblywoman Weinstein. It's wonderful to be with you here again.

The counties of New York are evolving. We've been here since the 1600s. The late 1600s, specifically, the counties were formed; there were 12 of them. And they were a product of the King of England, and the names of those counties -- Rockland, Suffolk, and Nassau, the Boroughs of the City of New York, Dutchess, Ulster -- regal counties. They all come from the King of England.

But we've evolved and have different functions over the years as we've come into 2024.

We are a general-purpose local government. That's why you hear counties complaining all the time. They want to use local resources for local programs and to address the needs in their community -- like

the towns, the cities, and the villages.

But we've become the administrative arm of the State of New York since the 1960s, providing every single service that the State of New York pays for or partially pays for, we have to deliver. So we are your service delivery agent. Whether you're in the City of New York, the County of Westchester, the County of Suffolk, the County of Warren, we are delivering the state services.

So that's why there's a lot of tension going back and forth between counties and the state, because we want to use local resources for local purposes.

A couple of items -- as Barb mentioned, I won't go through our testimony. We have submitted it for you. I just want to flag a few things.

One is on the short-term rentals: Airbnbs, your VRBOs. This has taken us many, many, many years to work with governors to convince the state to allow sales tax to be collected. What's collected now on a voluntary basis through certain companies is

an occupancy tax.

So this legislation that Governor Hochul has introduced in this budget would modernize the state sales tax code to include the vacation rental industry. These changes would ensure short-term rentals are treated the same as any other temporary lodging, such as a hotel or an inn.

So we're very supportive of that. We thank the Governor. We ask for your consideration in modernizing these short-term-rental sales tax laws.

In rem foreclosure, the United States Supreme Court ruled last year that surplus -- any surplus from a foreclosed property must be returned to the homeowner. Okay. That's the law of the land. The Legislature introduced a bill that you passed last year to do a moratorium. The Governor has now introduced language in the budget this year that we do strongly support.

It's a very complex issue on foreclosure. Nobody wants to foreclose on anyone's property for failure to pay taxes.

And the surplus that's generated on any tax foreclosure will be returned to any prior owner.

It's very complicated to find that owner and make sure legally it goes to the proper owner and that there's no disputes amongst family members or things of that nature. But administrative costs, the penalties, all of these things are factored into the Governor's language. So we very much support how the Governor is treating this issue and ask for your consideration on in rem foreclosure.

I'd like to ask you for $625 million, because that's the amount of money that was intercepted by the federal Medicaid program last year in 2023. This was funds that we worked with United States Senate Majority Leader Schumer, dedicated for county governments -- it was intercepted by the state. That's $625 million that we received in 2023, including the City of New York, that we do not receive today.

So I would like that to be discussed

and considered in your deliberations. These are fundings that go for our most vulnerable populations such as older Americans, our workforce housing, children and special healthcare needs, disabled veterans, and counsel for disadvantaged communities. We urge the Legislature to continue those discussions on the lost Medicaid monies.

Rescuing EMS. We continue to have a crisis in our volunteer fire, emergency medical system, advanced lifesaving systems, basic life systems in our ambulance systems, the amount of time it takes to get an ambulance to pick somebody up, whether you're in rural Warren County or urban Suffolk County. There's an issue with recruitment, retention, how do we keep these systems running.

EMS is not traditionally a county function, and we do not want it to become a county function. But in certain circumstances some counties have come forward -- Wayne County, Wyoming County, Greene County, Niagara County,

Montgomery County, and a growing list of others -- that need some reform, that need a taxing district to help offset a property tax impact to provide these services, working in conjunction with our towns.

So working very closely with the EMS community, our towns, villages, and cities, we think the package of legislation that's been introduced by the Governor is a good start to have this discussion. So we ask for your support in that regard.

Under some judicial-related issues, under indigent legal services -- again, a program that is the state's constitutional responsibility that they mandate the counties of New York and the City of New York provide. The state is sweeping 120 million out of the Office of Indigent Legal Services and depositing that into the General Fund.

We would ask that you use those funds to pay for the increases to the counties last year of 90 million for the increased hourly rates.

We also urge caution on the expansion

of Supreme Court judges. We oppose this issue of expanding the number of Supreme Court judges unless there's a fiscal note tied to it. The counties are responsible for the capital costs of the chambers and the courts to house the Supreme Court judges. We estimate it to be a $240 million cost shift to the counties.

So we would ask that that not be approved unless there's a fiscal tie to that and a plan, through the Office of Court Administration, on how to house these judges.

We support, as Barbara mentioned, the CHIPS funding for our local governments. It's a program that works very well amongst the towns, cities, counties, and villages. You have increased that; last year you added an extra 100 million. We strongly support the restoration of those funds for our towns, counties, cities and villages in the CHIPS program.

Lastly, many counties have submitted shared-services programs in 2023. The Governor is eliminating this program in this

year's budget. We would ask that -- we do support the sunset of the program, but we ask for your consideration: 18 counties submitted a shared services with towns, cities, villages and counties last year in 2023, and we would ask that those projects that were previously submitted be given an opportunity to receive funding.

Thank you very much again for the invitation to be here today.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Who is next?

MR. GEIST: Yes, good afternoon, Chairwoman Krueger and chairs of the local finance committee Fred Thiele and Senator Martinez. Thank you. And all the other members of the Legislature who are here, thank you on behalf of the Association of Towns, 933 towns across the state. Thank you for allowing us to comment on the Governor's budget and how towns are fixed this year in 2024.

You know, this is going to be my last experience before you; I'm retiring on

May 1st. And nothing would please me better than to tell my members, all 933, that we're getting an AIM increase for the first time since I've been in this chair.

As my colleagues have mentioned, AIM is so significant. It represents a true partnership with the State of New York and its towns, villages, and cities. And we don't quite understand why the Governor's office has resisted.

We've tried -- as my colleague Barbara Van Epps has mentioned -- we tried to rename it, we tried to come up with different alternatives, we tried to do anything to make it more appealable.

You know, the thing is, in the state of the entire budget it's not a lot of dollars. However, it's so significant to my members. You know, we're all dealing with living under the construct of the tax cap. We have increased costs, increased service costs, salaries, pension, insurance, cost of fuel. The cost of everything is going up, and we don't have an increase in 15 years.

And we do so much every day in terms of public safety, public resources, libraries, recreation. We do so much every day for our constituents. This extra money would make a significant difference.

Everyone always says, Well, what would an extra $20,000 mean to a town? It could mean a lot of things. It could mean hiring a grant writer so they could become, you know, part of the housing, the pro-housing community. It could be a grant writer to get more funding for highway equipment. It could be adding some more kids for the summer in the rec programs, or it could be doing more services in a library.

Money like this, to be given to our towns, makes a significant difference. And I have to thank the two houses here, the Assembly and the Senate, for everything they've done for towns and continue to do so. You've been a tremendous advocate for us, and I hope that you can do something in your discussions with the second floor later this year to push this across. It would mean a

lot to me and my towns.

Secondly, we've all heard about CHIPS. And even though the Governor says it's flat, it's really a reduction from last year because she's cut out the monies that you appropriated last year. All you have to do is travel the state from Eastern Long Island to the top of the Adirondacks to Western New York, and you'll see the roads need help.

And, you know, this is an interesting fact. In our state, 85 percent of the roads throughout the towns are controlled by the towns. And it's an incredible amount of roads and maintenance. When I served as a town board member, what I learned was that the road maintenance review, they said the roads had to be maintained every 10 years. Well, I can tell you now it's every 20 years, because the monies have dried up.

And, you know, the school buses travel on the roads every day. People need to get to work, to travel on the roads every day. Commerce, every day you see an Amazon truck go by. So we need more help in roads, and we

hope that you will restore those cuts and do more. And once again, we always appreciate what you do for our roads and our members.

And now I want to talk about water and sewer infrastructure. As was mentioned earlier, a lot of the money through grant programs is not good -- or able to be easily obtained by a lot of the towns that are smaller in size. And my towns represent a range of difference: There's a town of 38 people -- it's the smallest one in the state -- up to almost 800,000 in Long Island. So we're all over the place geographically.

But what I can tell you is water and sewer, like a dedicated program for CHIPS, is so meaningful. And all you have to do is pick up the newspaper or read what happened yesterday in the City of Los Angeles to know what's coming.

I have two children who live in Los Angeles. Eight inches of rain in 24 hours in downtown L.A. Now, we all know the song "It Never Rains in Southern California," but try telling all of them

yesterday what it was like out there.

Climate change is real. It's coming. And there's no greater urgency for water and sewer infrastructure and dedicated funding for our efforts than what we saw last night on the news. We really need to do it, and I urge you all to do that.

Now, on a couple of other things. Justice Court. You know, the towns have been taking care of the Justice Court for years. When Governor Spitzer was governor, he did away with State Troopers prosecuting vehicle and traffic tickets, so the towns had to go out and hire prosecutors, for the most part.

They have not raised the fine money for local governments since 1997, that small portion of the V&T tickets. So we're asking your permission to allow the Justice Court fees for small -- you know, for towns to be raised. It doesn't come out of the state budget. It would only be paid by the offending person. And I think it's $12, which is the local portion. I think we can -- let's raise it to 20 and help out the

cost of running our court system so importantly.

We've heard about the EMS program. The only thing -- we support the Governor's proposal, but we don't want it to override existing town or village EMS programs that are already providing ambulance districts.

In my town, because we didn't have one, we created our own ambulance district. It works great. So we're supportive of the new legislation, but let's not override or supersede what's already been done. Let them work in harmony.

(Inaudible remark from Mr. Acquario.)

MR. GEIST: And I've spoken to the counties and NYCOM, we all agree on that part.

Now, the other thing we also support is on the vacation rentals. We believe that that money should be allocated to the counties through the towns as well, the -- you know, for the legislation. That's really important.

Interest rates on judgments. We talk

about this a lot. It's 9 percent on a judgment against a municipality. We think that should be modified and changed to be consistent with the current market conditions, whether it's the 1-Year Treasury or some other reasonable Wall Street Journal indices. Because what happens is the longer it takes for a matter to go on in litigation, interest rate gets accrued from the beginning of the action. At 9 percent, it's very costly for municipalities. That's a real -- it's a real headache.

The other thing we would like to mention is that towns don't have the authority to regulate speeds on local roads. And where villages and cities have that authority, towns do not.

So in a best case example, in my town there's a road that's 30 miles an hour. The road has the same name, it crosses over into the next governing entity, and it's 25. But we can't change it without getting a report from the Department of Transportation and an act of the State Legislature. So we would

like your assistance in trying to get that -- to get that fixed.

And the last thing I'll say, in wrapping up, is I want to thank each and every one of you for your dedication and your hard work for everybody in the State of New York. It's clear that what you do is not just about your communities or who you represent. Each of you -- over the years I've spoken with many of you -- have always understood that you're responsible for everybody in this great state. And I thank you for your support of towns throughout the years, and I look forward to working with you until I retire.

Thanks so much.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to the chair of our Local Governments, Assemblyman Thiele.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Good afternoon to all of you. It's a pleasure to see you all, and it's been, you know, great to work with all of you through the last many years.

And Barbara, we've gotten to know each other but it's your first time in the actual seat there, so you did a great job and it was a pleasure to hear from all of you.

I'm going to ask you all a question that I couldn't get the mayors to answer earlier, and that had to do with -- not very much, anyway. And I couldn't get them to really talk about the changes post-pandemic that we made in the Open Meetings Law that allows for hybrid meetings and remote participation by the public but also, in limited circumstances, also by members of public bodies.

When we did that, it was new, it was different. You know, we were still getting used to the technology, and that's why it has a sunset date in it that comes up this year. The Governor has proposed to extend it. You know, my question is really how has that worked out so far? Are there any changes that you would recommend based on the experience that your members have had in this particular area?

MR. GEIST: Thank you for that question.

We support the extension of the video conferencing. Our data and our information, from what we gather, is that people don't abuse it and that it's an opportunity to continue government in a modern way and that it does not violate the principles of good government. And we support that proposition.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

Barbara?

(Pause.)

MS. VAN EPPS: I'm having trouble with the microphone, folks, I'm sorry.

I echo Gerry's remarks. We certainly -- what we're hearing from our members, it's increasing public participation, it's increasing access. I certainly would say that we support an extender, if not making it permanent, because I think this is the way of the world now. I think they're going to continue to have, you know, people who want to just be in their homes and participate that way.

The only thing I will raise -- and we've heard this from our members -- is that there's some confusion over whether the recordings suffice for minutes, if it's sufficient for being minutes. And I know that's --

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: I've heard that question also.

MS. VAN EPPS: I think we've raised that with some of the legislators in the past, is that there's still -- according to our attorneys, there's still a requirement that minutes be produced and you can't just use the video recording. But the language is a little confusing.

And so, if anything, we would ask that maybe you could clarify that language. But in terms of, you know, having the ability to do that, I think we would fully support the extension or making it permanent.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

Steve?

MR. ACQUARIO: Like the cities and villages and towns, we would also support the

extension.

We have the clerks of the legislative boards in the LOB in two weeks; I'd like to bring them to meet with you --

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Sure.

MR. ACQUARIO: -- and go over the very technical specifics of how the bodies are operating right now.

The preference is in-person governance at the county level. That's the preference right now.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: By members of public bodies.

MR. ACQUARIO: Yeah. Yes.

And we would support the continuation of this if not, as Barb mentioned, making it permanent.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Okay, thank you.

MR. ACQUARIO: But we'll see you in two weeks.

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Okay.

You know, with regard to AIM, obviously the topic of the day from the electeds as well as from the associations.

And, you know, Senator Martinez and I, you know, are both committed in our respective houses to continue to push this, you know, in our one-house budget bills. And I know there's a lot of support among my colleagues in local -- who, you know, represent towns, villages, cities, for this.

You know, we'll try to be creative and see if we can come up with something that breaks through this -- you know, climate change is real, but it hasn't been able to unfreeze AIM funding, right?

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: So we'll see what we can do this year with regard to that. maybe, you know, phase something in over a period of years like what happened with Foundation Aid. So we look forward to continuing to work with you on that.

You know, on the issue of speed limits, Gerry, one of the things that I always find it very hard to explain to the local governments that I work with in my district is why the rules for speed limits

are different for different levels of government. Why do villages get to do something that towns can't do? And, you know, cities, it's something different. And it gets very confusing and, you know, we're trying to protect public safety with having the right level of speed limits.

So maybe we can talk with our -- in our house with our Transportation chair, Bill Magnarelli, and talk about at least uniformity among all the levels of government as to how they can regulate speed limits.

And my last point here is -- and I'm going to cede back a fair amount of time -- is the point that, you know, Steve made with regard to the shared-services program. We've flagged this also in the Assembly. You know, those that are in the pipeline already, we should keep our commitment to. It's fine going forward. I think there may be consensus that, you know, the time for this program has come to an end.

But those that are in process, I think that is something we in the Legislature

should meet that commitment to the counties and all the local governments that have worked together on these shared-services plans.

So again, thank you for all your efforts, and look forward to working with you in the coming weeks as we try to get to a final budget. Thank you.

MULTIPLE PANELISTS: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

And our questioner is Chair Rachel May.

SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

And thank you all for your testimony and your good work.

Last year your organizations worked hard and were very successful in making sure that zoning would be kept as a purely local issue.

Also last year Syracuse, my city of Syracuse clocked in at number two in the country for concentrated poverty -- for child poverty, that is.

Also last year my committee on small

and medium cities held a hearing about concentrated poverty, and one of the things we learned was that in Onondaga County outside of Syracuse, only 1 percent of buildable land is zoned for multifamily housing. Which says to me that the municipalities outside of Syracuse are working very hard to prevent low-income families from settling there.

And we also learned that concentrated poverty leads to profoundly differential outcomes in school success, in generational wealth, in life expectancy, in just every measure you can think of.

So if zoning is off the table as a policy that the state can have any influence on, what is your solution to addressing concentrated poverty in our upstate cities?

MR. GEIST: Thank you very much for that question. It's very thought-provoking, and I can tell you've spent a lot of time trying to analyze where we're going here.

As a former town official, and now running the Towns organization, there are so

many different ways that haven't been utilized to incentivize local governments to do more. And when I was a town official, what we decided to do locally to increase housing and attract a different type of population to our community was to tell all developers that anytime they wanted to develop in our town, they had to put a set-aside for moderate- or low-income housing in the community.

So -- and that worked in my town. It really has. And I think what's been missing from this whole top-down approach is no one has really spoken to us or asked us what ideas we have to incentivize, to fix some of these problems. Because the reality is -- and you know this well, Senator -- that it's not just the zoning and the housing, it's the infrastructure. But more important than that, it's also the education, it's the transportation. It's whether we have water and sewer infrastructure to handle new housing.

I've dealt with all those matters on a

local level. I think they all can be overcome. But we all need to work together. And what I said last year, and I'll repeat it today, we need to have some type of comprehensive plan to get input from all the locals to come up with new ideas that would be incentivizing local governments to do more on all these levels.

SENATOR MAY: I will say one thing that I worked on very hard my first year in office was getting funding for a school in Syracuse that will be open to kids from the entire county that's kind of a magnet school for the arts and STEM. And it's going to open next year. I'm very excited about that.

But are other counties doing that type of thing to try to get over the barriers that -- you know, between our school districts? Because the differentials are so enormous between school districts within counties.

MR. GEIST: You know, Senator, in my earlier career I did a lot of work in childcare in Westchester County. And

childcare was so important then, but it's so much more important now. And the fights that we did 30, 40 years ago in childcare -- they're still there, but they've dwarfed every -- it's so much more now.

And that's why I say we need to incorporate all these things: Childcare, education. You know, zoning incentives. Funding from the state. Water and sewer infrastructure. Because we're all a big tent and we've got to get everybody working on it together.

And I think that if given the opportunity, we have a lot of information to give and a lot of good examples of what's worked well around the state.

MS. VAN EPPS: If I can just jump in, I just want to echo a couple of things Gerry said. And I appreciate where you're coming from, Senator. In fact, we came and talked to you soon after the housing compact was introduced and sort of had to disagree on some of the is it just NIMBY or is it really that these communities don't have the

infrastructure, don't have the space to build housing? And I think for a lot of our members that was truly the case.

But two things I would say, is the resources. We have to have resources there for infrastructure. Because the ones that do want to do it, that's their biggest concern; they just don't have the infrastructure to support it.

I also think, to Gerry's point, there's an educational component to this as well. I think some of our smaller communities that were threatened by this fact that the state was going to come in and override their zoning -- they just need help in developing a comprehensive plan, seeing where that development can happen and still, you know, not put a strain on their communities or upset the character of their communities.

I think there's a way to do that. But we're dealing with villages that, you know, have two and three staff and just don't have the capability of doing that. So I think

that's a very important component as well.

And then the two other things we heard from some of the places that are trying to do it are that the tax credits, we need -- we need to take a look at the tax credits and revise them a little to make them a little more flexible and popular among developers.

But also the fact that the process at the state level -- and we did talk to the Budget Director and HCR about this -- the process of getting some of these approvals through is taking way, way too long. We've had things in the pipeline for, you know, six months to a year, two years. And they just thought if there's things they can do at the state level to keep things moving, that will help us get the results we need.

SENATOR MAY: So let me ask you, because I have a bill to streamline the Environmental Quality Review process so that it wouldn't be -- it would really focus on the environmental impacts of the buildings and would be less open to kind of frivolous lawsuits.

Which is something that holds back a lot of multifamily housing development, is people bringing lawsuits because they think, you know, the traffic is going to get worse or something like that. You know, not totally frivolous, necessarily, but used to block those kinds of projects.

Would you be supportive of that kind of legislation to make it easier to build this housing and --

MS. VAN EPPS: Yes, we would. NYCOM would. Streamlining it. Not doing away with it, but certainly streamlining it, we would be supportive of.

MR. GEIST: And on behalf of Towns, you know, we would have to look at the legislation to see the wording. But as long as it doesn't override but, you know, modernizes and makes things more efficient, with local input, you know, depending on the language, is something we could consider.

SENATOR MAY: It's designed to incentivize infill housing so that you don't get as much sprawl development, which has all

kinds of environmental impacts of its own. So trying to make sure that we're looking globally at the environmental impacts of building housing.

Yeah, okay. Thank you very much.

MS. VAN EPPS: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman Otis.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you all. And like Fred Thiele, I know all of you and have worked with all of you on different issues and thank you for your good advocacy here.

Steve and Gerry spoke about the EMS issue, but I want to give Barbara an opportunity to feed in on that. And it is a complicated issue around the state, but one that has gotten to crisis proportions, and so want to make sure NYCOM is heard as well.

MS. VAN EPPS: I would love to chime in. I should have, because it is in my testimony and I ceded my last two minutes and I could have covered EMS.

So we are supportive of the Governor's proposal. Actually, this -- declaring EMS as an essential service is actually part of our legislative program this year. We think it deserves that recognition. We think, you know, it has to be taken seriously. People have to be able to get EMS services when they need them.

In terms of working with the counties, I know the counties are required, I believe, under this legislation to put plans together. We are more than happy to work with them on that because, again, you know, we have these smaller villages that are having a terrible time recruiting and retaining EMS, firefighters, everything.

So that the last thing I'll say on that is the funding stream is something we're also concerned about. If there's more funding -- you know, we've declared it an essential service, so now what are we going to do to help fund it?

Because while we were able to do some fees, those fees that you put in place two

years ago under 207-b, I guess it was, of the General Municipal Law that allows volunteer fire departments to try to offset those costs with fees, that legislation does sunset. So if that stream goes away, we're going to be very concerned about being able to maintain both our firefighters and our EMS services.

But generally speaking we support what is in the Governor's proposal.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you, Barbara.

And I'd say to Steve's comment, one of the things is -- the comment that you made, it's different in different ways. We don't want to wipe away the things that are working. So that is, I think, something we all subscribe to as well.

But thank you. I'll yield back the rest of my time.

Gerry, you want to comment more?

MR. GEIST: The only thing I want to say is that in my town we created the ambulance EMS districts years ago, and what we did was we created the districts so the residents who are in that district pay a tax

to do it.

And we think that we could work definitely in concert with the counties and the villages and the cities to have a unified system, because there's too many gaps now. And we think that this should be addressed in this year's budget.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you. Thank you all.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Rolison.

SENATOR ROLISON: Thank you, Madam Chair.

First question, for NYCOM. And I -- we can talk about AIM. We can all talk about AIM. This is my first time talking about it. But I remember when I became a mayor in 2016 and AIM was -- there was this sort of AIM being -- padding fund balances. And then I think it was last year I heard that we got ARPA money we didn't need, an AIM increase.

Do you have any sense of where that is today through whatever means you have of hearing why there's no AIM increase in the

Governor's budget?

MS. VAN EPPS: So first let me say it's very nice to see you. We miss you at NYCOM.

I wish I had the answer to that question. But, you know, obviously when we met with the administration prior to the budget being -- the Executive Budget being released, you know, we were warned it was going to be a tough budget year, there's a lot of difficult choices, and we certainly appreciate that.

I will say that in the briefing book for the Executive Budget there's commentary saying how local governments are on very strong financial footing, something to that effect. And to your point, Senator, that has to do with the fact that, you know, sales tax has increased, and ARPA money, and the fact that so few local governments are on the Comptroller's fiscal distress or fiscally stressed list.

And I just -- the fact is that sales tax, yes, they've gone up, but they're

starting to flatten. The ARPA money has gone away. And I'm thrilled that there's only 14 local governments on the Comptroller's list. And I don't want us to be penalized for trying to do the right thing.

And so that concerns me that, you know, they're saying because you're not in fiscal stress, you know, maybe you don't need AIM funding. And I don't want that to be the rationale. I want them to -- you know, I want to be in a partnership with them -- with all of you. I want to partner. I want to continue to allow us to do what we need to do without having to pass it along to our taxpayers.

So while I don't have a definitive answer, I mean, the fact that they see us as on strong financial footing I think has something to do with it.

SENATOR ROLISON: So I guess I should have asked for a carveout for the City of Poughkeepsie, then? Because we were on the fiscal distress list.

MS. VAN EPPS: I'm sorry, I wasn't

going to flag that you were one of the 14.

SENATOR ROLISON: But it's gotten better. It's gotten better.

MS. VAN EPPS: Yes.

SENATOR ROLISON: And I just wanted to, you know, end with this. I like the idea of specific targeted areas within a municipal budget for that AIM funding. It's going to public safety. It's going, say, to road repairs or infrastructure, whatever it may be. But clearly I think the open-ended -- and not that there's anything wrong with that -- it does lend itself for people to say "Well, you really don't need it." Well, yeah, yeah, we do.

Oh, go ahead.

MR. GEIST: Senator, there's one component of towns revenue that we haven't spoke about. We've talked about sales tax, we've talked about AIM. We haven't talked about the mortgage tax.

And once again, if you read the newspapers, with mortgage rates over 7 percent and inflation sky-high still, the

Fed holding on to policies, the money that we're going to receive this year from mortgage tax revenue, I've spoken to our members, is -- they've cut back on it because it's too expensive. So there's another reason why AIM funding needs to be increased, to make sure public services and public safety in our towns is there.

SENATOR ROLISON: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Okay, the next up is Assemblywoman Shimsky.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Thank you, everyone.

I just want to address the topic of infrastructure, especially with regard to climate change and climate resiliency. You know, Gerry, it's not coming to us, it's already here. We've had plenty of counties with washed-out roads and all kinds of things already. And flooding is getting worse in an awfully large number of places.

I have a three-part question. And since I mentioned your name, it's the

Marty Rogowsky Rule: You get the right to speak first. But if anyone else wants to jump in, that would be great.

Number one, what do you see as the scope of need? I mean, people may not have thought about roads, while they might have thought about sewers. What kinds of work are we going to have to do?

What do you see the financial aid -- the financial need being as we move forward?

And third of all, would there be a need for at least some of our municipalities or counties to have a planning process to determine what choices are best for certain problems, what problems we prioritize and, God forbid, what we're going to have to let go?

MR. GEIST: So thank you for that question. I know full well the Town and Village of Mamaroneck has always had flooding issues, as we all know. And any parkway in Westchester County that has the word "River" -- the Hutch, the Saw Mill, or the Bronx River -- is always flooded. So we all

know those stories.

To answer your question is a lot, because let's start with water and sewer. And I talk about my town because I served there for 24 years; I have a lot of -- I've learned things like the word "tuberculated" when I talk about the water system.

You know, one thing about being from Westchester, we did a lot of infrastructure improvements in the early 1900s because we had the need. But these systems are antiquated. They're not modernized. They're not state of the art. So we're punished for being first. And we can't do anything to expand opportunities for development because there's no capacity.

So I think that's the first thing. We need to have a real dedicated fund to allow people with existing systems or improvements to systems to expand. That's smart growth opportunities.

There's so many issues with roads and elevations. And I know it probably was your district when you were in the county when you

fixed the Saw Mill River Parkway and the exit on Marble Avenue --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: That's just north of me.

MR. GEIST: But pretty close.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Yes.

MR. GEIST: But there's a great example. There's so many things that need to be done in roads to elevate the roads, creating curbing, to make it safe for our seniors and our young.

And then the last thing is we just really have a comprehensive opportunity to present ideas on how we could get more funding to get to do the things to attack the infrastructure issue.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

The Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Ranker Rhoads.

SENATOR RHOADS: Thank you, Chairwoman.

First off, Ms. Van Epps, I want to thank you for raising -- as a volunteer

firefighter myself, I want to thank you for raising the issue of making permanent the ability for fire departments and ambulance services to be able to charge for the services they provide to nonresidents. It's critical.

And since EMS particularly is so unbelievably expensive to fully equip and operate an ambulance, you know, being able to recoup a part of those costs makes it possible for those companies to be able to provide that service to our residents.

And in light of the fact -- I'm from Nassau, and we have a fairly robust EMS program. But I understand in more rural parts of the state it's a real challenge to fill those gaps in coverage. So that I want to thank you for mentioning that.

And that does have to be made permanent. We can't permit that to sunset.

I do want to ask a fairly loaded question. And we did actually get into it a little bit. But I would love each of you to be able to tell me, what do you believe are

the three most significant unfunded mandates that you find most challenging for your members?

I know as a former county legislator I have my own list. Any thoughts?

MR. ACQUARIO: Well, for us it would be obviously Medicaid. We send -- which is not factored into the State Budget -- $6 billion a year to the State of New York from local taxes.

If you aggregate all of the mandates on the counties, and this evolution or devolution of government in New York State, we spend $14 billion to Albany for state programs and services. Child welfare, preschool special education, Early Intervention and Medicaid would be the top ones. Indigent defense would be another one, which is a growing cost to us. And lastly, the safety net, which is a program that's provided after the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program, the five years of federal funding expires, they come on to a safety net program which the counties pay

two-thirds of.

SENATOR RHOADS: Any other thoughts?

MS. VAN EPPS: I'm going to let you go next.

MR. GEIST: It's a great question. I can tell you that running the Justice Courts is very -- it's really, truly an unfunded mandate because we don't get a lot of money to basically represent the state in running those court systems for the vehicle and traffic laws. So that's one.

Town clerk's office handles an array of requirements from the state for processing birth certificates, death certificates, all sorts of permits and fees. And even though our costs have gone up, our state portion of it hasn't been increased.

And the same thing in our building department, with all the requirement of, you know, the building code, the fire codes, the training that's going in. We don't get enough back from the state -- you know, we have to cover a lot of those essential services.

MS. VAN EPPS: All right, I'm going to throw out there the ones that I think my members -- I hear most from my members.

Prevailing wage, because they keep expanding it. And I think we'd like to see, you know, it tied to something -- you know, we think there's got to be a better way of determining what the prevailing wage actually is. Not just the union wage, but also, you know, the expansion of it needs to be looked at.

But I would also say the procurement thresholds just need to be adjusted. You know, the fact that we have to go out to bid under procurement thresholds that are so low and haven't been looked at in some time, I think that's something that they would say is probably burdening themselves in terms of an unfunded mandate.

SENATOR RHOADS: Okay. And just with the quick remaining time that I have left, just -- have you seen -- the prior administration's treatment of local governments wasn't exactly perfect in many

assessments.

What recent programs have you advocated for on behalf of your members that you feel are working -- and it's really not fair to ask you this question with so little time left, because you're not going to be able to answer it. So I'm just going to drop it at that point.

So thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Assemblywoman Levenberg.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEVENBERG: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I wanted to follow up on one of the statements that was made by the counties with Gerry. We heard about the in rem foreclosures, and I had gotten some feedback from a tax receiver that what was in the budget was not adequate to cover the costs that many towns will, you know, be on the line for.

And I just wanted to see if you could offer some feedback on that.

MR. GEIST: Yeah. So we do support

the Governor's proposal because it's consistent with the Supreme Court decision.

And that's -- you know, offhand I would say that your people's observations about the inequities of this situation are accurate. But we're hamstrung because we have a court decision by the Supreme Court of the United States that has set limits. So the Governor's proposal is consistent with that. And we're hamstrung by that.

So we do support the Governor.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEVENBERG: Okay.

And also I appreciated my Senate colleague's questions about housing and some of the feedback about -- I know that we recently met with Westchester municipal officials, and they have like a subgroup on housing, and they had actually said that they did support the streamlined SEQR review -- which I think is your bill, Senator.

And I would also just mention that my colleague Assemblyman Burdick and I are working on some bills, having met with a number of municipal leadership and housing,

that would, you know, start to give -- it's similar to the pro -- what's it called, the Governor's pro --

MS. VAN EPPS: Pro-housing communities.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEVENBERG: What is that?

MS. VAN EPPS: Pro-housing communities.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEVENBERG: Yeah, pro-housing communities, but kind of expand it. So would sort of require comprehensive plans or require an analysis to establish comprehensive plans statewide in all municipalities and decide, you know, case by case in municipalities if they needed to have them -- housing action plans similar to what was done for police reform.

And then smart growth, with an emphasis on climate-sensitive smart growth. So thinking about all of those things.

So I'm hoping that you all have an opportunity to take a look at those and share them with your members when they're ready,

ready for prime time. Because I do think that, you know, housing is certainly very critical for all of our municipalities to be considering and take responsibility for.

Thanks.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

To the -- six seconds isn't enough to respond, so we'll send it to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, thank you.

I think to close for the Senate, Senator Tom O'Mara.

SENATOR O'MARA: All right, great. Thank you, Chair Krueger.

Just to -- briefly here, with all of you, thank you for being here and your testimony.

CHIPS is always a hot topic of mine on this, and the cuts to CHIPS this year are very concerning. If you could, you know, just maybe elaborate a little bit more on the impacts of what you see with these cuts to CHIPS to local roads' budgets, which is so critical.

And particularly Gerry, with the

number of towns in -- I mean, your organization represents towns larger than most cities in this state, but also towns that are vast and lightly populated. And some towns, a lot of which I represent in the seven counties of the 58th Senate District, the only budget they have for their roads is the CHIPS money they get.

So if you could just elaborate for everybody here just how important that CHIPS funding is.

MR. GEIST: You know, thank you for that question, Senator. CHIPS is so critical for our communities, our towns. And as you stated -- your facts are correct -- towns are responsible for a great majority of the center-line highways throughout the state. You know, over half the state's population lives in towns. And these roadways have to be maintained for the delivery of service and getting people to school.

And the need is critical because the roads haven't been maintained. And what happens is when the roads aren't maintained

properly, there's more accidents, more delays. And most times when I was a member of the town board, the people who would come up to me and talk to me about town issues, nine times out of 10 it was always about "Thanks for making that highway improvement," "Thanks for, you know, painting the lines," "Thanks for repaving that road."

It's essential. It's not just a request, it's essential that we protect our roads and protect our communities.

Thank you for that question.

SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you.

Would either of you two like to add on to that?

MS. VAN EPPS: I'll just reiterate the concerns I've heard among our membership is really the fact that because of the ADA requirements -- which everyone wants to abide by. We have nothing against curb ramps. We want to do that. But the fact that these requirements have ramped up, the CHIPS funding is just not enough.

I mean, we had our conference

yesterday and actually asked the question, you know, how much can you actually do with your CHIPS? And they were like "Oh, a quarter of our Main Street," in some of these smaller villages, because everything's just so expensive.

So I know for our members, you know, any reductions are going to be devastating. But what we'd really like to see is an increase.

SENATOR O'MARA: Yeah, I think particularly with the inflation and costs of supplies, for sure.

Steve, do you want to add anything on that?

MR. ACQUARIO: Well, you have been, Senator, a champion of CHIPS. And I want to thank you and the Legislature, the Assembly and the Senate, for always advocating for local governments. That's often the only revenue stream that we have to fix our roads and bridges.

Counties are responsible for about 9,000 bridges in the state. And like the

roads, the bridges are in constant need of structural repair.

The CHIPS program is the only program that I can think of that is the most successful program that encompasses the 1605 local governments in the history of the state. There's no other program that works and unites us together and treats us fairly.

And it should be doubled in size because of its benefit in the communities of fixing the roads and bridges. And it also helps the private sector, with all of the industry that's jobs that are created for this, for the men and women working out there on the roads and fixing the bridges. It has an exponential effect in the engineering community, and our products and materials.

So we greatly appreciate your being a constant champion on that. It needs to be increased. You could take water and sewer -- Assemblywoman Lupardo and Senator Hinchey have a bill to do a CHIPS program for drinking water and wastewater. It makes sense. The formula works. And I would ask

that you continue to put an emphasis on it.

SENATOR O'MARA: We're certainly looking into that. And I know Senator Tedisco had sponsored something like that a few years ago as well. And certainly very supportive.

But I agree with you that the CHIPS is really one of the most fundamentally fairly distributed programs in the state because it's per lane mile it gets distributed. No matter whether you're a county, a town, a city, you get a pro rate share based on the number of miles you have. So I don't see any more fairly distributed program in the state.

Thank you.

MR. ACQUARIO: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: The last questioner on the Assembly side, Assemblyman Ari Brown.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: Thank you, Chairperson Weinstein.

This is going to be the quickest

question. Having served for a quarter of a century in my own village and town, I understand thoroughly what you're going through.

So I ask the following question. Would it be of assistance to your legal residents -- your hardworking people of your towns, villages, counties -- would it help balance your budget and take care of infrastructure if we took $2.4 billion of improperly proposed state funding and distributed it to the 533 villages, 933 towns, 62 counties? Would that help at all in any way, shape or form?

MS. VAN EPPS: You can't say no to that.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: Beautiful.

MR. GEIST: I don't know where the 2.4 -- did you say where it was coming from?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: It's being allocated to people who didn't work hard, didn't put in the effort, and don't understand the first thing about our infrastructure.

MS. VAN EPPS: Well, I wouldn't -- I take that back. I would love to see any more money come to my communities, my cities, my villages. I don't know that I want to take the money that has been spoken for for the asylum-seekers and the migrants.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: Oh, I guess it's going to the counties, maybe.

MR. ACQUARIO: We need the resources. Thank you.

MR. GEIST: Towns always welcomes additional revenue from the state, but we're not here to comment on that portion of the Executive's budget if it doesn't affect towns directly.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: Thank you.

See, made it quick.

MR. ACQUARIO: Happy birthday.

MR. GEIST: And happy birthday.

MR. ACQUARIO: Thank you for inviting us and listening to us. Thank you.

MR. GEIST: Thank you very much.

MS. VAN EPPS: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Thank you all for being here.

And we're going to go to our last panel, Panel D: New York State Election Commissioners Association, Dustin Czarny, the Democratic Caucus chair; Fair Elections for New York, Karen Wharton, democracy coalition coordinator; League of Women Voters, Erica Smitka, deputy director; and Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, Joanna Zdanys, senior counsel.

(Pause.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So if you can go in that order, starting with the Democratic Caucus chair.

MR. CZARNY: Thank you for letting me testify. My name is Dustin Czarny, and I'm the Democratic Caucus chair of the New York State Election Commissioners Association. In my --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Can the people leaving please -- I'm sorry.

MR. CZARNY: Happy to wait.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: The voices carry. If people can just leave quietly.

MR. CZARNY: They're very excited for my testimony today, is what I believe.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I think they're excited because this is the last panel.

MR. CZARNY: Well, that might be it.

(Laughter.)

MR. CZARNY: I'll start again, if that's okay.

My name's Dustin Czarny. I'm the Democratic Caucus chair for the New York State Election Commissioners Association. However, today I'm testifying on behalf of the entire association as everything that I'm testifying for today is approved by both the Republican and Democratic caucuses.

Our association represents all 62 counties in New York State and the bipartisan election commissioners that run the Board of Elections.

We enter a very hectic and challenging year in 2024. And let me set the stage for some of the requests that we're going to ask for. In 2024, this presidential election, we are going to see a significant amount of

voters that have not voted in person since 2016. As we know, in presidential elections there are presidential-only voters, and many of those voters voted in 2020 via mail ballots who will now be going back to voting in person.

This presents an enormous challenge for boards of elections, as we are also dealing with a lot of new reforms that we have to inform these voters of and prepare our offices for.

We want to applaud Governor Hochul for including in her Executive Budget $14 million for replacement of electronic poll books. This is vital. In 2019 when we went to electronic poll books, those fifth-generation or sixth-generation iPads, those are now starting to age out. And in fact Apple has told us that the next version of IOS, IOS 18, will not support the fifth- or sixth-generation iPads. In laymen's terms, they're too old. They need to be replaced.

So the $14 million that Governor Hochul put in her budget will help replace

those before the 2025 June primary, and that is why it's needed in this year's budget.

However, NYSECA would like to ask for an additional $10 million that is left out of Governor Hochul's budget in Aid to Localities funding that will aid county boards of elections. This money will be used for temporary workers for the 2024 election to be able to address that surge in voting that we are going to have and especially have this presidential election as opposed to the last couple of presidential elections.

With early voting by mail, expanded early voting hours, and also a 10-day registration limit, these are all things that we are going to address in a presidential election for the first time. And this $10 million in extra funding that we are requesting, distributed by the State Board of Elections based on voter population, will allow the counties to have the flexibility they need to meet the needs that you, the Legislature, have asked us to do in this upcoming presidential election.

So thank you.

(Pause.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Karen? Yeah.

(Laughter.)

MS. WHARTON: Chairs Krueger and Weinstein, my Assemblymember --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Please pull the mic toward you.

MS. WHARTON: Sure.

-- and members of the Legislature, good evening. My name is Karen Wharton, and I thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Fair Elections for New York Coalition.

In her Executive Budget this year, Governor Kathy Hochul allocated $114.5 million to the Public Campaign Finance Program, the PCFP. Now, as budget negotiations get underway, we urge you to ensure the state's final budget matches the Governor's allocation for the PCFP. This investment will help ensure that the program fulfills its promise to strengthen our democracy by elevating the voices of everyday

New Yorkers in our political process and delivering on issues that matter most.

Take housing. Albany's failure to address the housing crisis is largely due to the corporate real estate interests that rule the day -- interests that spent over $8 million last year to defeat good cause that would have protected tenants from discrimination and helped keep New Yorkers housed.

Corporate interests and the wealthy continue to spend huge sums on state elections, translating into disproportionate influence on our political process. According to the Brennan Center, 200 of New York's wealthiest residents contributed $16 million to the 2022 state elections. Meanwhile, over 200,000 New Yorkers who could only afford donations of $250 or less, donated $13 million. So 200 gave much more than over 200,000.

Now, if political contributions are a form of free speech, how can the poor and the working class be heard if the wealthiest big

money drums out their voices? Every voice should have an equal say.

And while we cannot stop big money from putting its thumb on the scale, the way to counteract its corrosive influence is by having robust a system where small amounts of money from regular people count as much and are valued as much as the big checks.

The PCFP does that. Candidates who rely on public funding may be more inclined to create more room in the budget for childcare workforce investment, and less room for special-interest spending and tax loopholes. Combined with voting reforms, the PCFP brings more people into the democratic process and protects our democracy from bad actors.

Thank you for the opportunity today.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

MS. SMITKA: Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Erica Smitka, and I'm the deputy director of the League of Women Voters of New York State.

The League is a nonprofit grassroots organization with a mission to educate voters.

The League is greatly appreciative of the improvements that the Legislature and the Governor have made to New York elections in recent years. We applaud the Governor's Executive Budget for including adequate funding for the State Board of Elections and the Public Campaign Finance Board. However, many reforms have still not been sufficiently funded at the local level -- especially in light of the fact that the 2024 presidential election will add additional stress on local boards of elections.

Since the 2020 election we've seen misinformation, disinformation and denialism around our election process soar, while trust in our electoral process has only declined.

In New York State we have seen the proliferation of actions by bad actors looking to sow distrust in our election process, such as individuals falsely claiming to be representatives from the Board of

Elections and intimidating voters, going door to door. Or the increase in threats to election workers, making it difficult to retain staff and recruit poll workers.

Our local boards are on the frontlines of organizing and conducting our elections, educating voters, and addressing any logistical challenges. Investing in local boards of elections not only strengthens the democratic foundation of New York State, but it also reinforces public confidence in our electoral system.

The funding proposed in this year's Executive Budget for boards of elections is quite similar to last year, with funds set aside to invest in new electronic poll books, cover the cost of absentee and early vote-by-mail ballot postage.

And while the cost to run elections varies county to county, it would be unreasonable to assume that counties can run almost twice as many races this year with similar amounts of funding from the state -- especially when a portion of those races will

be state elected positions.

Elections are often the last item on the list when it comes to county budgets, and many county boards operate with limited resources. The League urges the Legislature to seriously consider the cost of new election improvements when introducing your proposed budgets, and to consider setting up a yearly fund specifically dedicated to enhancing and supporting election reforms at the local level.

We ask that a minimum of an additional $10 million in funding be allocated to county boards of elections so that they may make the upgrades necessary and hire the staff necessary to effectively run our elections in 2024.

Lastly, we'd like to note our strong support for the $114.5 million allocated for the Public Campaign Finance Board. The funding for this program would ensure that it can level the playing field, amplify the voices of small donors, and reduce the impact of wealthy special-interest groups in

New York State. We urge you to include the full 114.5 million in your one-house budgets, and we urge you not to make changes to the program.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Joanna?

MS. ZDANYS: Good afternoon to the chairs, ranking members, and members of the Legislature. My name is Joanna Zdanys, and I am senior counsel at the Brennan Center for Justice.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of funding for the state's Public Campaign Finance Program and other voting and elections infrastructure needs in this year's budget.

We are grateful to this body for championing policies that break down barriers to the political process and expand access to the vote. New York's leadership in fostering a stronger and more inclusive democracy has never been more urgent. That's why the Brennan Center enthusiastically supports the Executive Budget's provision of

$114.5 million for the Public Campaign Finance Program.

This program is the strongest response we've seen enacted anywhere in the country to counter the distorting influence of unlimited wealth in our politics. You passed this law with the promise of ensuring, quote, a government that is accountable to all of the people of the state regardless of wealth or position. Now you are delivering on that promise, and that is to be commended.

This program promises to dramatically increase the importance of everyday New Yorkers in our elections. Data shows that if the program had been in place in 2022, small donors' share of funding in legislative races would have increased sixfold.

Preliminary analyses of the current cycle show the trend of greater inclusion in our democracy that this Legislature envisioned when it passed this law. To date, publicly financed candidates have raised a greater share of their campaign funds from

small donors than at this point in the 2022 cycle. This is consistent with research that shows that public financing enables candidates to raise competitive sums while relying on small donors, and to spend more time campaigning for support in their districts than fundraising from big donors. To date, more than 200 candidates from across the state and the political spectrum have enrolled in the program.

As nonpartisan policy advisors to lawmakers nationwide, we know that other states are watching closely and looking to model their own pro-democracy reforms on New York's program. Fully funding this program is important to secure candidate and public confidence and ensure that this first run is successful. We ask you to reaffirm the commitment that you made to New Yorkers when you created this program by making sure that it's fully funded in this fiscal year.

We also urge you to ensure sufficient funding to support the implementation of the important voting reforms that you've secured

in recent years and make sure that boards of elections and the workers who are serving on the frontlines of our democracy have the resources that they need to provide excellent voter service in this critical year.

Thank you for your continued leadership in strengthening our democracy. We stand ready to help, and thank you for the opportunity.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

So for questions, we go first to Assemblywoman Walker, chair of the Assembly's Election Law Committee, for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALKER: Thank you. thank you, Madam Chairwoman, -women.

And thank you so much for your testimony today.

The New York Early Mail Voter Act went into effect on January 1st of this year. The Executive has proposed an additional funding of $7.7 million for prepaid return postage for this program.

The funding also includes the prepaid

postage for absentee ballots. In your estimation, is this funding adequate to fund prepaid return postage for both mail-in-voting programs?

MS. ZDANYS: (Mic issues.) Oh, there we go.

Yes, I believe that this is a good faith estimate for covering both of those mail programs. It is really hard to estimate what the populace is going to do in this presidential election. Obviously we saw extensive use of mail voting in 2020. The early vote-by-mail program with its universal approach should be well used by the public.

And I do note that yesterday's court ruling making it constitutional should ensure us to be able to promote that new feature to the public and use it.

I believe it's a good estimate. We just probably won't know until we get done with this in November, around Thanksgiving-time, how many people took advantage of this program. But we'll get a good idea over the first two primaries and

comparing to previous primaries as well.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALKER: Awesome.

Mandatory training of poll workers and train-the-trainer programs will be implemented this year. The Executive has provided funds to support the staff for these programs.

In your estimation, are the funds provided to support the new employees sufficient, and have local boards of elections voiced any concerns regarding their ability to accomplish this new training?

MR. CZARNY: So it is my understanding that this training is going to be handled by the State Board of Elections. The funds are there for them to do that training.

And we are going to send two representatives from each county to learn from them, get this train-the-trainer training, and then implement them into our current existing training programs, which should not add any cost to those programs. It's just making sure that the best practices are put forward in the training that we

already do.

So I do believe that the funding is adequate at this time.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALKER: Awesome.

And the last question I have is the New York State Public Campaign Finance Program has recently been implemented. To date, are you aware of how many candidates have applied to participate in the program?

And do you believe the program -- how do you believe the program has fared so far?

MR. CZARNY: I'm going to defer to my colleagues on that.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Just a quick answer. And perhaps you'd like to follow up in writing to both the Assemblywoman and the committees.

MS. WHARTON: Sure.

Based on the publicly available information, over 205 have -- last I looked, had signed up for the program.

And so we're encouraged. We're pleased with the rate and -- as well as the demographics. It's upstate, downstate,

incumbents, challengers, Republicans, Democrats, everyone. So we're pleased at this point.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to the Senate. Senator May?

SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

And thank you all for your testimony and your good work.

Petitioning is about to start, and I represent a number of rural communities where the weather can be terrible in March, and a lot of the petitioners are senior citizens, and it can be dangerous work. I've got some proposals to reduce the thresholds or to have online petitioning. I've heard other proposals for just a fee to get on the ballot or allowing local county committees to designate candidates.

What is the best way to deal with petitioning, in your view?

MR. CZARNY: So the association hasn't taken an official position. So anything that I say is for my personal position on this.

I think we do need to take a hard look

at petitioning as our only ballot access method. It is becoming harder and harder to go to doors. Ring cameras are making it harder for volunteers to actually receive those signatures.

You know, other states do a variety of different things. They have petitions available, but they also have filing fees available, they also have versions of online petitioning available. I think we should look at all of these methods to provide as many pathways to getting on the ballot so the voters can have their choice in the primary and fall elections.

SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

Okay, then I have another question that maybe Dustin can't answer. But --

MR. CZARNY: Okay, fine.

SENATOR MAY: -- in my county, the county legislature is talking about spending six figures to challenge the law that moved county and town elections to even years.

Is that a good use of taxpayer money? Does that -- will that promote more democracy

or less democracy?

MR. CZARNY: I'll -- I'm happy to answer this. It is my county, and it is my legislature. And as you may know, that the legislature actually shorted the --

SENATOR MAY: It's your taxpayer dollars too.

MR. CZARNY: It's my taxpayer dollars.

And the legislature also shorted the board of elections a million dollars off our bipartisan request for funding this election. Yet they are putting in $100,000 of taxpayer money -- at least, is what they're saying -- to -- and they passed this today, to start a lawsuit.

These lawsuits are usually brought by political parties and not taxpayer-funded lawsuits. And I'm -- I would love to see that money spent elsewhere. I have a lot of holes in my budget that I could fill with that.

SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to the Assembly, Assemblyman

Jacobson.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Thank you all for your testimony.

I represent parts of three counties: Orange, Dutchess and Ulster. The big difference is not the population; you have 400,000, 300,000 and about 200,000. The problem is, is that the county boards of elections do not support the boards of elections in the same way.

And so it's so important that we get the money from the state, because as you mentioned -- because it was great -- we're curing ballots. So once the boards got used to that and were able to get some people, now we're finally counting most of the votes before Election Day. That means they had to take people off that and get more people.

I'm proposing another 20 million that half would be for staff and half would be for equipment. Because most of the equipment was bought in about 2019, and then -- and since then you have all these updates. And I think that would be necessary.

And just real quick, you want to answer that, what you think? I'll give you 15 -- just say -- yes is fine, and that's good.

MS. ZDANYS: The Brennan Center certainly supports greater funding for county boards of elections for personnel and for infrastructure costs.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Yeah. I mean, that's the problem. And it's hard to get inspectors. It seemed like, when I was growing up, it was easier to get them at $35 a day. But at any rate, I think we have to consider raising that and getting the state to supply.

And I just want to get my personal opinion in concerning online petitioning. I think it would line us up for fraud so much -- so easily. And I would -- I don't want us to be like New Hampshire and the other states where you pay $100 and you're on the ballot, because then I think that by petitioning it shows support in the community and it means something.

Because to have 20 people running for any office is not really a choice either. And, you know, you get so many people you don't know what's going on.

So I would hope that all of you would consider that. And of course my friend Senator May and I will have a discussion later.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: But it's not to get into a debate, it's just that I know what would happen. And I think it's important that we're -- in New York, we're different. You have to show support. And we made it easy enough. And I really think that that would be the way to go.

If you want to comment on that, you may. If you don't want to comment, that's fine.

MR. CZARNY: Well, I think like with any process that we put in place, sufficient fraud protections have to be put in place as well.

I believe that we have really great

minds here in the New York State Legislature. We could find a way to do this without having fraud --

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: You're getting diplomatic in your old age.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: That's all I have. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Our last questioner, Assemblyman Eachus.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you, Chairwoman.

Thank you for your testimony today.

First of all, I agree we should do petitioning. I just think it's the wrong time of the year to be doing petitioning. But that's another issue.

Dustin, this is for you. And correct me if I'm wrong. But you can register to vote up to 10 days before the general election.

MR. CZARNY: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Okay. We have

nine days of early voting and one day off. That makes 10 days.

So I have been approached by an election inspector saying we should restrict the election to 11 days before, because those who come in on the 10th day to register then must register -- or vote, rather, via affidavit.

MR. CZARNY: Only if they're not registered to vote and not in the poll books.

So this is what's referred to as "Golden Day." I actually think it went off with a pretty good success in 2023. The Legislature also codified Golden Day as well, that the preferred method for this would be affidavit-ballot voting.

And let's be clear. Whether it was 11 days or 12 days or any amount of days before the election that are right before the early voting, there's going to be a significant amount of people that have to vote by affidavit if they register at the last minute, because it takes time for the boards of elections to process those registrations

and then push them out to the poll books. It's not instant registration.

That's why --

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: No, I realize that. But the election inspectors -- and it's only been a few -- have said to me they could do it within 24 hours and would save them a lot of work --

MR. CZARNY: I don't believe any board of elections could register voters within 24 hours that late to the election. We're always running two to three days behind.

And that affidavit ballot is a proper use, because those are inspected and opened after Election Day under bipartisan review. And so --

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: I would agree with that. I don't have a problem with that. It was just trying to get them on the polls -- in the books beforehand.

MR. CZARNY: I understand that.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Erica, I've got a question for you. One of the main functions -- first of all, I have a very

active League of Women Voters group in my district, and I'm very proud of that. One of their main functions they consider is election registration. Okay? But what they're doing is having trouble getting into some schools to actually do that. Some schools allow them in; some schools do not.

Are you, as the deputy director or as the head group here in New York State, doing anything to help them with access in schools?

MS. SMITKA: Yes, we are. That's a great question.

And we're actually working with Senator Mayer's office to work on the bill that was passed last year to create programs to work with students on preregistration in schools.

And so we've been working a lot with our local leagues on how we can work to move that program forward and make it that much easier for younger voters to get registered and preregistered.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Great. Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Don't leave just yet. Assemblyman -- our ranker, Assemblyman Ra.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

Just a quick question. I know we talked about, you know, faith in elections, which I think is very important. There's been a lot of discussion and controversy about these ExpressVote XL machines that were authorized by the state board.

I don't know if -- on the election side, I don't know if any counties have actually purchased them yet. But if you -- I was just interested in your thoughts with regard to those machines.

MR. CZARNY: So I'm going to defer, only because they are certified machines by the State Board of Elections, certified to run in New York State Board of Elections.

I don't know of any county in New York that has put those into the field yet, but I know many are planning to -- or not many, but some are planning to. And it's certified by the State Board of Elections, so I'm going to

leave it at that.

But I'll give it to the advocates on that.

MS. SMITKA: The League currently doesn't have a position that would allow us to support or oppose the machines. I don't know if the Brennan Center or --

MS. WHARTON: We -- Fair Elections, we're primarily -- or exclusively public campaign financing, and so we don't have a position on that.

MS. ZDANYS: And the Brennan Center, similarly, does not have a position in support or against these specific machines.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay, thanks.

And then Ms. Wharton, you may have mentioned this, but what do you think is the appropriate amount that we will need to cover the public campaign finance? Because I would agree that -- you know, regardless of how you feel or anybody feels about the program, that the amount that has been appropriated, you know, last year and this year isn't -- if we get the participation that we're looking like

we're on our way to getting, it's not going to be sufficient.

MS. WHARTON: Well, we think that the amount that has been appropriated in the Governor's budget is a good start. And we -- of course if you'd like to increase that, feel free. But we think this is a good start for this cycle.

And at the end of the cycle we'll have data that will inform our decisions going forward. But based on all of the studies that the Brennan Center has done, and experts around the country, we're pleased with this amount.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for all of your testimony today. I want to thank my colleagues for being here.

This is going to conclude the Local Governments hearing. Tomorrow at 9:30 we will be having the Environmental Conservation hearing, which will be starting first with agriculture and then moving to environmental conservation and energy. So see you all

tomorrow.

Thank you all for being here today.

(Whereupon, at 5:35 p.m., the budget hearing concluded.)