NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
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COMMISSIONERS: CHAIR CESAR PERALES COMMISSIONER MARCO A. CARRIÓN COMMISSIONER UNA CLARKE COMMISSIONER MENDY MIROCZNIK COMMISSIONER JOHN SIEGAL COMMISSIONER ANNETTA SEECHARRAN COMMISSIONER WENDY WEISER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MATT GEWOLB

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CHAIR PERALES: If I could get folks seated. My name is Cesar Perales, and I have the honor of serving as Chair of the 2018 New York City Charter Revision Commission. Even though all of the Commissioners are not here yet, I'm going to start. I ask those folks that are here to introduce themselves.

Let me begin with the gentleman on my left.
COMMISSIONER SIEGAL: Good afternoon. My name is John Siegel, and I'm obviously a member of the Charter Revision Commission. I'm glad to say I'm a graduate of this law school, and I practice law in New York with the firm Baker Hostetler.

CHAIR PERALES: As I indicated, my name is Cesar Perales. But in terms of my own background. I am a former deputy mayor of New York City. Mostly recently I served as Secretary of the State of New York. I have a long history in government. In my other half I served as president and general counsel of Latino Justice, Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund.

COMISSIONER SEECHARRAN: Good afternoon. My name is Annetta Seecharran, and I am the Executive Director of Chhaya Community Development Corporation.

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COMMISSIONER CARRION: Good afternoon. My name is Marco Carrion. I currently serve as the Commissioner for the Mayor's Office of Community Affairs.

COMMISSIONER CLARKE: Good after -- good afternoon. My name is Una Clarke. I'm a former member of the New York City Council and trustee for the City University of New York. I'm honored to be here and to serve.

COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon. My name is Wendy Weiser. I direct the Democracy Program at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law School, and thank you for coming here today.

CHAIR PERALES: Let me just make a few opening remarks. Today's meeting is open to the public, although we will not be taking questions or comments from the public. This is a meeting that the Commission requested so that we could hear from experts on some of the particular issues that have arisen in our programs and through e-mail and through other ways in which we have sought from the citizens of New York of what they would like to see changed in the New York City Charter. So it's being live streamed. Folks can see us now, or they could tune in later and

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watch us at any time, so that we are very cognizant of that. We have a deaf interpreter. We think we are ready to roll, as they say.

Let me tell you about today's forum. This is the last of our issue forums. The -- today in this particular panel I think we'll talk more generally about the issue that seems to underlie much of what we heard, and that has to do with civic engagement in its broadest sense. While much of it has been focused on the elections and encouraging people to vote, much of it has to do with getting people involved in the civic life of New York City, so we are especially interested in hearing from you about what you do today. What is New York City doing in terms of trying to encourage civic engagement and perhaps more importantly, what do you think we can change in the City Charter that will increase civic engagement, and civic life of our city.

Why don't I -- well, I should have done this already. Let me just introduce the members of the panel. Naomi Zauderer, who is the Chair of the New York City Voter Assistance Advisory Committee. She's accompanied by Amy Loprest, Executive Director, and we will also hear from

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION Paula Gavin, who is the Chief Service Officer of NYC.

Mat, do you have some ground rules, opening remarks you'd like to make? Matt is our Executive Director.

MR. GEWOLB: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Very, just very briefly I have the format for the Commissioners on questions. So we have quite a few panelists today, panelists, and to facilitate the process the way we've designed the session is for the panelists to just speak for five minutes. I'll give you a one-minute warning at the microphone. And after each panelist has spoken, the Commissioners, feel free to ask questions but try to confine those questions to ones relating to --

CHAIR PERALES: We're going to try to see if we can hold the questions so the panelists have spoken and ask questions of all of them.

MR. GEWOLB: So there you have it.
That's all for me, Mr. Chair. Thanks very much.

CHAIR PERALES: With that --
COMMISSIONER CLARKE: Mr. Chair, may I just be allowed to identify somebody in the room who

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION I've worked with a long time, especially around voter community involvement, and who also works for the City of New York, Anita Meyers. Her husband is one of my dearest friends. I mentored him at Medgar Evers College. He's a distinguished lawyer and a former student trustee for the City University of New York. So Anita, she does great work with voter assistance also.

CHAIR PERALES: Nice of you to join us. We appreciate it. (Indiscernible commentary.) CHAIR PERALES: Let's get right to it. MS. LAUDERER: Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony about how the Campaign Finance Board fosters civic engagement by encouraging New Yorkers to participate in their Democracy. We believe that participating in elections is essential to being an active citizen whether that is through registration and voting, contributing to a candidate, volunteering, or running for office. Our government has a public interest in engaging its citizens so New Yorkers can elect those who truly represent them. It is, therefore, critical that government play a role in conducting outreach to voters regardless of

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political party. Particularly in an age where campaigns can more narrowly target prime voters and when local media coverage of neighborhood politics is shrinking, the CFB is ideally situated to fill this role because we are an independent non-partisan agency. Voter engagement is a key element of our agency mission, and it is written into the Charter that the CFB quote "encourage, promote and facilitate voter registration and voting by all residents of New York City who are eligible to vote" unquote. We conduct this work through our NYC Votes initiative.

Prior to a 2010 Charter Revision, the Voter Assistance Commission was a sixteen-member body with a small staff located within the Mayor's office. The 2010 Charter Revision Commission recommended that that be dissolved and reformed as the Voter Assistance Advisory Committee within the Campaign Finance Board.

VAAC (indiscernible) covered in two ways, which is a nine-member advisory board, appointed by the city's elected officials, advises the CFB on several mandates outlined in the City Charter. VAAC's responsibility is to encourage voter

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registration and voting by all eligible New York City residents and recommend methods to increase the rate of registration and voting. More specifically, we identify and represented groups throughout the city and undertake activities to encourage voter registration and voting by all residents, including limited English proficient voters. The work of NYC Votes is outlined in detail in our written testimony and in the 2018 annual report.

I want to highlight a few items. There are 715,000 New Yorkers who are eligible but not registered to vote. Each year we registered thousands of voters at voter registration drives. We recently worked with City Hall in the Department of Education to coordinate Student Voter Registration Day in city high schools where we collected over 10,000 voter registration forms. We trained frontline staff at city agencies covered by Local Law 29, which requires staff at 25 city agencies in all 59 Community Boards to assist voters with completing their voter registration forms.

In 2016 we worked with the Mayor's office of Immigrant Affairs to translate voter registration

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forms into eleven new languages.
As we worked to make sure every eligible voter can register to vote, the real challenge in New York City is getting people to turn out to the polls. In the 2017 citywide elections 3.45 million registered voters stayed home in the general election. Last year we conducted public opinion research into why voters participate in presidential elections but sit out for local elections. Our major finding was that voters care deeply about the issues that affect their communities but lack the information they need about upcoming elections and the candidates who are running for office. Our priority each election is connecting voters with that information.

For city elections we produce a print online and video voter guide with candidate profiles. The print guide is sent to every registered voter. We also publish a guide online for state and federal elections. The primary election guide had over 225,000 online visitors while the general guide had over 303,000 visitors. In 2017 we widely advertised the guide, and our voting information platform, voting.NYC, in public

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transit and outdoor locations in print and on TV and on social media. The CFB administers the debate program for candidates running for Mayor, Public Advocate and Comptroller. In the 2017 election we also ran a pilot in open City Council districts where we partnered with community organizations, put out candidate forms. We anticipate scaling this program up in 2021, where we anticipate up to 40 open Council seats.

In addition to sharing information with voters through NYU Votes on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, last year we implemented a new text and e-mail outreach program. Over 2,300 voters signed up to receive election alerts in advance of the 2017 election, and we are working to expand this to more voters. We also conduct GOTV phone banking before each election and call thousands of new voters with our volunteers and partner organizations.

MR. GEWOLB: One minute.
MS. ZAUDERER: These are just brief highlights of the work we do with voters each year. There is greater detail in our full testimony, which has been provided to the Commission, along with our most recent Voter

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Assistance report. We're happy to answer any questions that you may have.

CHAIR PERALES: Thank you.
You're just here in support, Amy?
MS. LOPREST: Yes. Just to answer questions.

CHAIR PERALES: We'll turn to Paula Gavin.
MS. GAVIN: Thank you so very much. I appreciate the opportunity to speak about something near and dear to my heart. I will say I was told I have eight minutes. I'm going to talk really, really fast. So, I want to cover a couple of key points. So, first of all --

CHAIR PERALES: Let me assure you that we have read your submission, including the results of your survey. We're very familiar, so don't repeat anything you've given us already.

MS. GAVIN: Super. So, let me just start presenting to you how we define civic engagement. We believe that civic engagement is the empowerment of constructive residents' voice to vote, influence and connect individually to city issues and city services. We believe that that can be done through community outreach, organizing, volunteering, voting and civic

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leadership. And as a result that enhances government's public value and the quality of life for all.

NYC Service is a division of the Mayor's office. It was created in 2009 by Mayor Bloomberg in part and in response to Barack Obama, President Barack Obama's increased emphasis on service. Mayor de Blasio affirmed and really amplified the work of NYC Service starting in 2014.

Our mission is pretty simple. We promote, we engage New Yorkers to volunteer service, build a capacity for volunteers and seek to mobilize volunteers for this city's greater issue. Our mission is that we would like to inspire every New Yorker to volunteer for their city and each other. We do this through five major goals: by promoting volunteerism through traditional methodologies, Web sites, media, but also being in neighborhoods.

Secondly, we actually grow and develop volunteer programs with the city agencies and CBO's, and we have a specific focus on youth leadership.

We also have national service programs which

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION are in the communities, both with CBO's and city agencies providing service.

Public/private partnerships is our fourth goal. We engage about 250 corporations in our work, and finally we're building capacity working with city agencies and CBO's, so we have indeed a portfolio of activities that's all about enhancing and increasing volunteerism.

We know through the census and the U.S. Household Survey that the national average of volunteering is 25 percent. We rank as a city quite low. We have been 14 percent, metro area is 18 percent. So we've done a number of things. One is to analyze that data and understand it.

The second is to get out into the community. We did a pilot in Western Queens and we found that in this pilot, door to door, 48 percent of those residents said they volunteered. A distinct difference. We initiated volunteer work in neighborhoods -- five this year -- spanning the fifteen, where we're bringing the neighborhoods together to communicate better about volunteerism to build the capacity and to track the volunteers.

We do a report every year called Volunteers

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION Count, $I$ think it's an exhibit here, which basically asks city agencies and neighborhood organizations to talk about volunteering. It's a total of about 550,000 are reported, and that has really enabled us to engage over 800 non-profits as well as our city agencies and volunteer work. We also do a Mayoral Service Recognition Program. This year we recognized 4,600 residents for a hundred hours or more of service.

And finally, we are about to issue a survey which will mirror the National Survey, Census Survey, and we'll go out to New Yorkers asking do they volunteer, how are they civically engaged, which is going to give us a tremendous amount of neighborhood data on why people are volunteering, why they're not, and really enable us to compare to this national data.

So, I want to just comment very briefly on a continuum of civic engagement. A couple of years ago we really embraced the notion that multiple agencies needed to come together, NYC Service, the Community Affairs Unit, the Public Engagement Unit. And we've been doing a lot of work with them as a group to really connect our work. Public Engagement Unit out in the community

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making people aware of services. Community Affairs Unit connecting communities to the work and the services of our city.

Certainly volunteering through NYC Service and really civic leadership being a major part of what we've done both with CAU but also within NYC Service. So we've tried to create the continuum of civic engagement by cooperating and working together.

I will comment that Democracy NYC, which was announced at the State of the City, is really a framework to bring all this work together. I deeply believe that by connecting the work of both City agencies, City Council, borough presidents, community boards, we can indeed enhance not only civic engagement but the rate of volunteerism and the rate of voting. It is shown that those who volunteer more vote more. Those who vote more volunteer more. So, the tide will rise, and we really want to engage more people in the work of volunteering as well as voting.

And finally, $I$ just will end with the fact that as 8.6 million New Yorkers together serving each other we try to work at the individual level, the neighborhood level, the organizational

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level as well as the City level as well as the corporate level to really address the opportunities for volunteering as well as the benefits of volunteering.

There is research that you live longer, you're happier, and you're healthier if you volunteer, so there's a good reason to do it on both sides.

CHAIR PERALES: That means the members of this Commission will live longer. We're all volunteering.

Given that, Mendy, would you introduce yourself.

COMMISSIONER MIROCZNIK: Yes. My name is Mendy Mirocznik. I'm the president of the Council Of Jewish Organizations. I wanted to be a member of this great Commission, humbled to be here this afternoon to hear this testimony.

CHAIR PERALES: Let me just exercise the prerogative of the Chair and ask the first question. How closely do both of you work?

MS. GAVIN: There are volunteers, I know that, but we have not had a formal collaboration.

MS. LOPREST: We work with a lot of different city agencies, but we take volunteers

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from NYC Service, volunteers for different programs.

CHAIR PERALES: Well, let me ask one other question I've had on my mind for some time, has to do with registration, voter registration.

When I was with the city government we took great pride with the fact that the Department of Motor Vehicles was registering an enormous number of people. They actually do the registration themselves, I understand, and send the material to the Board of Elections. That's the way it works here?

MS. LOPREST: Yes.
CHAIR PERALES: Do you guys do that? What agency of the City of New York does something similar to DMV?

MS. LOPREST: Well, the DMV is one of the few agencies that's actually allowed to collect registration data and transmit it directly to as part of the voter registration process. But there are a number of city agencies that are charged with the -- under the Charter is charged with the responsibility of encouraging and getting people to register to vote as part of their work. So those people basically fill out

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paper forms. So one of the agencies is the Department of Social Services. They would -- or the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, a lot of different agencies. But they fill out a paper form and then, you know, that's part of the -- one of their forms that people fill out, and that form gets mailed back to the Board of Elections. It's not direct.

CHAIR PERALES: I understand. Is there a reason why city agencies are precluded from doing what the DMV does? Is there a legal reason?

MS. LOPREST: There's a complicated legal reason. We actually -- the City Council passed a law earlier this year that directs the campaign fund to build an online registration portal, and the online registration portal will be available to all New York City residents for people to register online. You can also register online or change your registration online with the Department of Motor Vehicles right now.

The Board of Elections in their
interpretation of the state law have said that they -- and they haven't made a definitive decision, so they're still investigating this -that they require a wet signature to process the

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voter registration form. So, someone would have to print the form and sign it and then in order for them to be able to legally under state election law process that registration form.

The state attorney general issued a informal opinion, saying that they thought that the state election law would allow an electronic version of a signature. So, as we're building our online voter registration portal we are working out the issues related to that.

CHAIR PERALES: Thank you. Who else has a question?

COMMISSIONER WISE: I have a few questions. So, thank you, this is very helpful, and I very much appreciate the valuable work being done by both of your agencies.

One of the proposals that have been put forward for this Commission is to create a new Office of Civic Engagement somewhere housed within the City. I was interested in hearing your guys' thoughts on the benefits of such a proposal, and where you think that that would best be housed, and how you think -- and whether you think that that should encompass or collaborate with your offices, you know, how you

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think. It's really for both of you.
MS. ZAUDERER: Sure. So, we actually -- I think, you know, the idea of increasing and with the civic engagement work of the City is a great idea and coordinating it better. But we do recommend keeping VAAC at the CFB. The CFB has added resources and built expertise to expand the work since it was moved to the agency in 2010, and we take a really comprehensive approach to educating voters, encouraging democratic participation, volunteering, running for office. Our research shows that voters feel that they do not have the information they need to participate in elections. We've developed a very comprehensive system for providing that information and are continuing to improve on that. For instance, the debates for open City Council races that I referred to earlier. So, one of our main focuses is providing voters with information. Because of our existing relationship with the candidates on the campaign finance side, we're able to work with them to submit profiles and video statements for the voter guide so that voters get the information they need from all of the candidates. So, it

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really makes sense to keep that out -- the voter outreach and the voter information housed with the Campaign Finance Board.

COMMISSIONER WISE: And what do you think, just to follow up, what do you think about how you would work with -- if there were such an office, how would your office work with that office and where would you like to see that office housed if it existed? Would you or do you have a thought on that?

MS. ZAUDERER: Since I'm a volunteer myself, I'm going to ask Amy to answer that question.

MS. LOPREST: Yeah. So, I think we would support the idea that it would be independent, non-partisan, that any organization that's called an Office of Civic Engagement be a non-partisan, independent agency because I think that insulates it from any kind of political pressures, or the desire to follow any particular person's priorities, and at least give the appearance given if the, you know, the elected official was not pushing it, as it says here in the VAAC. So, and as Naomi said, we feel that the work really dovetails very well with the voter engagement work that we do fits very comprehensively in the

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION campaign finance work that we spoke about last week, you know, as part of our mission.

I think that what would happen if it was a separate organization is that we would work very hard. I mean, they would -- there are many, many aspects of civic engagement, as you just heard, as we've heard from other proposals, and that if we worked on the voter engagement and outreach work that we're doing that we work very closely with that Office of Service to really collaborate and build a collaborative relationship so that it would support each other, as you know, bring both voter registration and overall civic participation up.

MS. GAVIN: I do feel strongly that a
framework that brings together the various aspects of civic engagement would be very important. I think that the elements feed each other. In knowledge of the community feeds involvement in the community, the involvement in the community feeds one improvement in your community, and eventually also voting for people who match your values, so I do think a framework would be very valuable. I don't know that it has to be everything working within the one
framework. I think it's more of a coordinating effort that would be valuable. The many city agencies that are doing community outreach, to try to put them all in one place is just not realistic. But I know from my four years of doing this work if there was an interagency vehicle to bring together those elements that were working on it and sharing what they were doing and being held accountable for different metrics it could be very valuable.

I think Democracy NYC was described as one of those frameworks, and the Office Of Civic Engagement kind of might be another name for the same thing. You know, I do work for the Mayor, so I'd love that it would be in the Mayor's office, but $I$ think it's more important that we think about what's the most effective way to get these various elements to work together.

COMMISSIONER WISE: Thank you.
CHAIR PERALES: Una Clarke.
COMMISSIONER CLARKE: Yes. I just wanted to take a fresh look of what are we calling civic engagement, and whether in fact a community of the one from which I come if one would say my role in society so that people understand that

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Do you have a recommendation as to what that would look like? I propose -- you know, where I come from you have to learn what it is to be a good citizen in school, so it's a whole different atmosphere. So I wanted to ask you. If we were to look at what children learn early so that by the time they get to be of age to vote that they would know that it's a responsibility where would we put that?

MS. GAVIN: So I would first say when what we

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learned when we were at community levels and neighborhood levels it starts with communication. People want to know what's going on, and then they want to know what opportunities to address what's going on for something they care about. We have seen in this study that we did in the neighborhood people want to get engaged. They often don't know how to. They often don't know where their own interests matches what the opportunities are. So, I think it does start with vehicles. Community at the neighborhood level. Let people know what can be done at the neighborhood level, how you can use your talent. So, it may not be a fresh start but I think it has to be a comprehensive start. It has to be in multiple languages, it has to speak to people in the culture they come from. But I think we've seen that once you do that people do want to be a part of their community.

CHAIR PERALES: I'll turn to -- I just want clarification. I think what -- let me rephrase the question. Do any of you work with the school system and how?

MS. GAVIN: So, we work extensively with the school system.

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CHAIR PERALES: And teach civics to students to learn civics?

MS. GAVIN: Yes. Civics, there's two ways. One is to work with the Department of Economics called Service in Schools, which is an opportunity for young people early in their life to learn about how they can contribute to their community. The other is a huge initiative that we've started, which is to get teenagers at high school level and youth leadership counsel learning about the issues and being a part of solving them at precincts, at schools, at city agencies. So, we have focused on the volunteer aspect of --

CHAIR PERALES: That's a little different than making sure that civics is taught in schools. Amy?

MS. LOPREST: Well, every agency, you know, we've been involved in and just finished a project called the Student Voter Registration Day. Now, that is a one-day program and it does teach civics and encourage people to get students to register. But as part of the daily program, while it varied, it was across all high schools in New York City this year. The program varied

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slightly in each high school, but in each uses a component of what civic participation looks like, you know, what it means to vote, what, you know, are the rights and responsibilities involved in voting as part of encouraging young people to register to vote. But again $I$ don't think that there is any civics education per se. That's part of the social studies curriculum in New York City , but I don't think there's any particular program that, you know, goes from young children up through high school.

CHAIR PERALES: Annetta.
COMMISSIONER SEECHARRAN: Yes. So, I just wanted to see if we can agree on a common definition for civic engagement as well as some indicators for success because I think depending where we sit we all have a different perspective.

I hear you talk about voter participation. I hear you talk about volunteerism. Though they do feed each other, as you all said, so that what might be some other indicators and for success if we were to really take this on? It just seems sort of like a very broadly defined, all over the place. What would be different? What would it look like? What would success look like?

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MS. GAVIN: You know, the definition that we put forward really starts with giving residents a voice. So, part of the metrics is seeing how they are using that voice. So, it can be town halls. It can be community problem solving. It can be community boards. You can look at the organizing mechanisms and measure how much individuals get involved, which I think is one thing that is an opportunity for us.

The second is volunteering. It definitely is an element of that.

The third is voter both registration but engagement. You know, those are the kind of hard things that you could look at. There are certainly studies that say public safety demonstrates when a community comes together that there are results in public safety. There's been data around employment statistics, too, so those are kind of the result of all those other things.

But I would like to just put forth that I think the key definition is really that we're giving residents voices so individuals can both influence and be connected to the city in new ways around, then measuring how those ways show up.

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COMMISSIONER WISE: May I ask? So I'm sort of personally very involved, civically involved, and I've had -- I have the privilege of running two organizations that emphasize civic engagement. And I think that really the reality is that even if we do have the -- this new office of, this proposed Office of Civic Engagement, not quite a new office yet, that it seems to me that something else needs to happen in communities, in neighborhoods to make any real effort successful, which is additional infrastructure because there could be all the great outreach and all the education but unless there's real partnership and infrastructure and real entry points and places for connection, then I'm not really sure where it all lands. And I wonder if you could speak to that, maybe some thoughts you may have around that.

MS. GAVIN: Communication infrastructure quite honestly because as we went into Western Queens and then four additional neighborhoods, it is about people knowing how do I take my interest in the environment? How do I learn more? So I think there is a communications infrastructure that would and is necessary for people to know

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MS. ZAUDERER: Can I?
CHAIR PERALES: Yes. Go ahead because I'm about to check the time.

MS. ZAUDERER: I could -- this is just speaking for myself, okay? But I could imagine having, you know, resource centers, communitybased resource centers where people, you know, access information about organizations that are active in their communities. The candidates represent, you know, and they should be really beautiful public spaces, too. I think it's so unfortunate that, you know, we have, like, people often end up voting in the most dingy public spaces that we have, and it's, you know -- we need to -- I think you make a good point. We need to take the opposite of civic engagement into the entire city.

MS. LOPREST: I'm going to add something that's brought up. As we're thinking about this

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it's important. There are -- part of our work is to look at populations that are underrepresented and figure out what barriers those people, those communities have. And I think you're eliminating the proficiency, people who are homeless, people who are, you know, in the -- involved with the Department of Corrections, all of those populations are underrepresented in civic engagement and as we think about this, thinking of ways that, you know make sure that you reach people both culturally but in the languages that they can access and even, you know, from agencies, in coordination with agencies that are already working with them. There are many city agencies that already are working with these populations to make sure that there's coordination with those agencies. It's very important.

CHAIR PERALES: My thanks to all three of you. This has been very, very helpful.

I'd ask the members of the next panel to get ready and take their seats.

CHAIR PERALES: Our forth panelist is joining us. All right. I don't know if all of you were here when Matt Gewolb, our Executive

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION Director, was laying down the ground rules. But what we would like to do is to have each of you speak for no more than five minutes, and then we will hold questions till all four of you have had an opportunity to speak, and then we will ask questions. It's his job to be the bad guy and let you know you've got one minute remaining because the Commissioners are too nice to do that.

So, with that let me turn to the panel that will be discussing engaging communities. And I will first introduce Elizabeth Ouyang, DeNora Getachew, Ifeoma Ike, and Susan Dooha. So let me begin in the order in which I introduced them with Elizabeth Ouyang.

MS. OU YANG: Thank so much for letting me speak on this very critical and timely issue. The one thing that $I$ want to talk about as far as engaging immigrant communities is that it's important, as I think was emphasized in the previous panel, that if known about the opportunities immigrant communities want to help. They understand what this is, their neighborhood, this is their town, this is their city, this is their state. They want to help. But the avenue as which Commissioner Seecharran alluded to, to

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION enable immigrant communities to know about it, is to build the infrastructure with the very groups that these immigrants communities have trust in. And so the community-based organizations are essential to build the capacity of these community-based organizations to do the education outreach and coordination with city volunteer opportunities and efforts for civic engagement. Another very key important trusted community base are essential service organizations within in the communities as well as churches, mosques and other religious entities. And we've seen that play out the way that these established trusted community organizations have led to volunteerism in the immigrant communities in a number of instances, 9/11, post-9/11 most importantly, in rescue efforts, in relief efforts, and, you know, rebounding efforts in the communities. We've seen that play out in Asian-American communities and Latino communities and African communities coming together on issues that impact all of us like breast cancer, and coming out and strong at the March Against Breast Cancer in October over the years. We see that with the Arab-American Association in New York

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION and partnering with Shore Road Park Conservation to clean up and beautify Shore Road. We see that in Chinese Mountain Club of New York cleaning up the New York-New Jersey trail maintenance, and the list goes on and on.

But I think it's important to -- when you engage communities to understand that their contribution is not only if they can speak English but if they don't speak English at all that there are so many opportunities for volunteerism in the Asian community, with immigrant communities with children, et cetera, et cetera.

But it's a two-way street. If you are to encourage volunteerism in the immigrant community it has to be, you know, a comprehensive strategy. That also includes their involvement in democratic policy in decision-making. For instance, I remember wearing my other hat as a former president of OCA-New York. This was the special election in Congressional District 11, former Michael Grimm's District, and there was a special election, and if it weren't for the community-based groups mobilizing communities to come out and vote you would never have known

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there was a special election going on. You know, you saw very little to no effort by the Board of Elections, you know, putting out news about the special election, and it was most definitely the community-based groups knocking on doors to get people out there to vote.

Similarly, that, you know, as we've seen with the Shazam Test (phonetic) and all the controversy around that I think it's really important to involve immigrant communities in that debate.

Immigrant communities just like the Caucasian community are not monolithic. There are different views. I, for instance, am very much for Affirmative Action. And yet, the various voices of the community were not involved in the formation of certain decisions, and I think that that's very important.

MR. GEWOLB: One minute remaining.
MS. OU YANG: Similarly, I think there is an opportunity for the Census. I know Ms. Gavin's offices has reached out to the New York Immigration Coalition. Wearing my hat as the coordinator of New York Counts 20/20, over 50 organizations across the state advocating for

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fair and accurate census. I think that's a good first start. And if you combine efforts to include all the ways, not just in volunteerism in the local communities, but volunteerism that's also tied with democratic policies and decisionmaking that leads to increased importance and knowledge of civic engagement in the area of voting and particularly naturalization and exercising registering to vote and exercising their right to vote. Thank you.

CHAIR PERALES: Thank you.
Miss Getachew.
MS. GETACHEW: Good afternoon Members of the of Charter Revision Commission. My name is DeNora Getachew. I am the New York City Executive Director of Generation Citizen. We are a nine-year-old national non-profit focused on educating and empowering the next generation of civically engaged leaders.

America is experiencing a civic reckoning, partly as a result of the aftermath of the tragic events in Parkland, Florida and the incredible leadership and vision shown by those young leaders in the face of their tragedy, but also due to the particularly politically divisive

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climate we are living in right now. Society is finally realizing what many academics and advocates, those of you who have been in this room for a very long time already know. Political disengagement and illiteracy are rampant, especially in our cities, but also is in our most underserved communities.

Generation Citizen lays the civic foundation for our Action Civics program. We partner with middle and high schools (indiscernible) pedagogy that we call Action Civics where we are helping the students learn about how government works by directly working with government to solve local problems facing our communities. So, it's not just the theory of democracy or civics, it is not rote memorization or School House Rocks. It is young people coming up with concrete and systemic plans to address pressing issues like affordable housing or the lack thereof, sexual assault, gun violence and bullying in their communities.

In my testimony you see here the fundamental components of the Action Civics, so I won't read that to you.
(Indiscernible) democratic structure processes by directly engaging with government,
calling their elected officials in proposing legislative, budgetary policy, or youth advisory decision-making as a concrete way to address the root cause of the problem.

We know that, as I said already, the civic engagement gap especially plagues our most underserved communities, and so communities of color or those where there are fewer resources are 50 percent less likely to have a civics class in their classroom or have a debate around the dinner table about the whole process in government. So, through our work here in New York City but also in five other states nationwide we are trying to address that specific engagement gap and make sure that all Americans get the civic knowledge and skills they need to actively participate in democracy, because we know that is one of the root causes in addition to all the structural barriers to participation that we need to address to remedy our current problems.

We are the largest Action Civics provider here in New York City. Since founding our site in New York City in 2011, we educated and empowered over 18,000 students citywide. We are excited by the de Blasio administration's Civics

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for All initiative through the effort of Equity and Excellence umbrella and look forward to working with them to think about the scale and bring Action Civics to all young people citywide.

That said, we know that Action Civics in the classroom alone will not strengthen our democracy and bring us back to a healthier place. We know that too much emphasis is placed on voting as a way to be civically engaged and rather, there is a spectrum of civic engagement opportunity that needs to be presented to young people but also to adults. And so included in my testimony is our Go Beyond the Ballot toolkit, which includes some common sense ways that we provide to young people but also adults to be able to stay civically engaged.

Thinking about some of those civic pathways beyond the classroom, the city is already doing a great job in that regard, as you heard from the first panel. We have -- we support the expansion of the Participatory Budget and Voter Registration Day to ensure that all students citywide can participate. We support the existing Leadership Councils. We think that the City can go a step further and ensure that those are

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vehicles for students to advocate for systemic policy change and not just awareness during campaigns. We recommend that the City appoint newer young leaders on community boards because under State Law 16- and 17-year-olds can serve, and there are not many of them on local boards.

My colleague Andrea Wilson (phonetic) testified before the Commission last week about some of the voting reforms that we'd love to see implemented, and the Commission's already given my own work in structural areas of civic engagement and voter (indiscernible).

I would be remiss if $I$ didn't mention the Commission should consider allowing 16-year-olds to vote and 17 -year-olds to vote in school elections thinking about the City's jurisdiction to allow for preregistration, online registration, and noncitizen voting.

One of the things that $I$ want to raise to the Commission's attention this notion of young people -- cultivating young people to be the future civic workforce, right? And so we have a summer youth employment program here in New York City, which is very robust, but many of those careers are not in government. And so how do we

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION expect young people to understand how government works if we're not training them to be in leadership and government decision-making while sitting at that table?

Generation Citizen runs a program where we (indiscernible) in government offices and local official's offices to do that work, and I would encourage the City to examine that.

MR. GEWOLB: One minute.
MS. GETACHEW: I applaud Councilmember Lander for his vision in proposing the creation of an Office of Civic Engagement. As we all grapple with how to respond to the increased demand for an appreciation for the importance of civic engagement, this is a proposal that merits further consideration.

I would note that I'm excited by the Mayor's proposal for Democracy NYC, and particularly an appointment of a Chief Democracy Officer. I would also note that as you consider this proposal there are many government agencies that already exist that are touching this work like the Campaign Finance Board, the Community Affairs Unit, the Department of the Education, the Department of Information Technology and

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Telecommunications, Department of Youth Community Development and the Office of Service among other agencies. And so the commission should consider whether we want to create a new office or think about how a Chief Democracy Officer to better integrate all of those offices in their work, city engagement citywide, and for that I thank you for the opportunity to testify.

CHAIR PERALES: Thank you. Let us now move on to Ifeoma Ike.

MS. IKE: Good afternoon everyone.
CHAIR PERALES: I mispronounced your name. Would you pronounce your name?

Ms. IKE: Sure. My parents would pronounce E-foe-ma E-kay. Please don't count that against my 5 minutes. But feel free to call me Iffy.

So, I am here as principal of Think Rubix. We are a team that has really been coming together for awhile and in the civic space. Our first formal project was Black and Brown People Vote. We were created a week before Mike Brown was killed and, therefore, we were on the ground in spaces like Ferguson, Baltimore, and other areas that were grappling with the realities on the ground and also trying to seek civic

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION solutions as a possibility to raise both power and voice of the issues that young people are experiencing.

We also in 2016 created a space called Black and Engaged. Due to funding, we would have loved for it not to coincide with the election because part of the space of Black and Engaged was to engage communities outside of quote/unquote private time or every four-year elections, but to really connect, especially skeptical communities, with power mapping their way using civic tools to actually create change in their spaces. Most recently our team developed a successful grassroots campaign called Roll Vote (phonetic), which was part of the coalition that was successful in the Roy Moore-Doug Jones race in Alabama.

So, what I want to really center this conversation about is how we actively engage communities through a culturally relevant lens. While I'm very excited about the creation of another office, I am a former government employee. I was the Deputy Executive Director for the Young Men's Initiative. So, what I am nervous about is if we create another government

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION space, and it is perceived and seen as another government space by the community we're trying to serve if -- with all the best intentions if we're actually going to accomplish what we need to accomplish. And I argue that if it's not within equity and cultural relevancy from the beginning then we may miss the mark.

Elections in New York City and New York State as a whole continue to experience a decline in participation with only 23 percent of registered voters voting in the 2017 mayoral election. So, passing 2013's record low 24 percent the city is collectively experiencing civic depression, which contributes to a lack of diversity severely needed in representation, policy and thought.

Our city has over 5 million registered voters but what do we really know about these voters? What motivates them and what about the roughly 800,000 eligible unregistered potential voters? Is this apathy or is it (indiscernible) unforgiving cycle people get elected, people's lives don't immediately change, people get discouraged, people don't believe in the system. As a close friend in Alabama simply put it as I

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was preparing for today's hearing quote, "If you in the hood, even if you vote you still in the hood." As a proud graduate of the hood, I want to take a moment to understand some things about how the hood can inform your engagement. The 2017 report titled "Focus on Poverty" by the NYU Furman Center finds that roughly 1.7 million New Yorkers are living in poverty. The report also highlights not all poverty is equal, that conditions in -- conditions between high poverty areas are starkly different from those of low poverty areas. To no surprise, poor black and Latino New Yorkers and poor children are much more likely to live in high poverty neighborhoods, meaning they experience insecurity through violence, poor-performing schools, and less exposure to adults with college education and employment.

While crime is at an all time low and certain practices like "stop and frisk" are reportedly protocols of the past, communities of color, and especially black and Latino groups in the city not only continue to be profiled, but recently quoting so-called gang databases have expanded with increased surveillance resulting in

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a 70 percent expansion juvenile -- justice involved persons. And in between gentrifying high-rises and skyscrapers while coping with generational breakdown in the basics, including shelter and transportation.

So, according to Maslow's Theory of Needs, there's virtually no way to get to enduring self-determination at the top of the pyramid if the foundational basics is mediocre at best. Yes, every four years these same communities are coaxed into voting or guilted for not participating. And after the outcome is sought and achieved, these communities are civically neglected and placed on the shelf until the next electoral season. (Indiscernible) relationship that they have with civic engagement. Candidates speeches have changed (indiscernible) at best, resulting in the often transactional act of voting and at worst a disconnected message falling flat on an already skeptical community. But we must not dismiss these communities as apathetic. Our city is not an episode of The Walking Dead. Key moments in recent years reveal the city is extremely engaged and has as an active political pulse for Black Lives Matter, to

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the Women's March to Close Rikers, from resisting a Muslim travel ban, to advocating against family separation at the border, from Occupy NYC community strikes. The people of New York City on a regular basis prove that they are willing to miss work, march with their babies and join a line of strangers in the street for righteous disruption. They don't need permission to exercise their right to protest, and protest has resulted in change.

MR. GEWOLB: One minute remaining.
MS. IKE: The battery pack behind these movements are simply other people. People who know their neighborhood struggles, languages and history. People who come to read out loud and vote assure for those who are illiterate, visually impaired or getting their hair and nails done. People willing to organize with other organizers for child care, bail and legal support. People willing to urge their fraternity bothers and sisters and clergy to get engaged.

So, I offer the following recommendations that aim to embed culture within our Charter. If I don't get through all of these feel free to ask questions and I will submit this at the end.

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One is to incorporate a low-tech component to the voter guides outlined in Chapter 46, Section 1053. Another is to broaden the Voter Assistance Advisory Committee and really look at how we include members of the community, especially as it relates to recommended methods aimed at increasing the rate of the voter registration and participation. I'm a strong advocate of early voting and for that to seriously be looked upon as a way to engage communities that are underrepresented. And I do think that we should look at maybe including a separate section called Civic Participation and Education that extends beyond voting for just those who are registered but we need to start looking at how we look at participation for those a that are either undocumented, for individuals that are underage, and for other forms of communities that may not be technically or formally part of the civic process.

I think there are ranges of possibilities for the Office of Civic Engagement. I echo colleagues that believe that we can also do these things by integrating spaces that already have civic engagement tools.

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One of the things that $I$ think we need to focus on is creating something that EPPV (phonetic) call the Future Voters Program, which is to work with young people before they reach voting age and find ways to cultivate a practice of civics whether through mock debates, mock elections, build that muscle of civic engagement so that it's not something that's new when they turn 18.

And at that $I$ will also yield, but I do want to just end by quickly saying that $I$ do think that part of what also needs to happen is how we look at cultural messaging and really look at the community on the ground, not dismissing their issues, but finding effective spaces for them to be able to talk about their issues that serve as motivation to their communities and for that to be the organic starting point for how they can look at civic engagement as a part of their daily lives, not the other way around. Thank you.

CHAIR PERALES: Thank you, miss Ike. With that let me turn to Susan Dooha. MS. DOOHA: Thank you very much for this opportunity to be heard. I also want to applaud you for holding the hearings in a place that is

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION accessible. I congratulate you for this decision.

Based on our 40 years of experience in the disability community and of activism because we are very much an advocacy organization, we do believe that people with disabilities face enormous barriers to civic participation at absolutely every level and yet, we believe that those barriers can be removed and that civic engagement can be encouraged, including voting.

The people with disabilities that we work with at Center For Independence of the Disabled in New York are overwhelmingly living in deep poverty on a long-term basis. The board and staff of CIDNY are a majority of people with disabilities. I have disabilities. The majority of our staff and of the people we serve are black, brown, Asian-American, Latino, Latina, black, and we serve newcomers who do or do not have documented status. And we believe very strongly in inclusion, and we find that people across all disabilities have the same kinds of issues in the public space. We work with individuals not only to reach their individual goals but to help them understand how they can become empowered and act on the issues that

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We rely on having teachers who are people with disabilities, help people understand their rights. We teach people their civil rights. People with disabilities teach people with disabilities civil rights. We go into schools, public schools, to work with students with disabilities to teach them their rights.

We also lead efforts to educate people about working with public agencies about public bodies, about opportunities to become engaged, to provide testimony, to provide assistance in communitybased projects that can lead to policy change.

We believe that civic engagement has to start where people are and come from the grassroots up. We often are engaged around the things that are most important to people, which are employment. The rate of employment for people with disabilities is 29 percent in New York City. That should be outrageous to everyone. We have a much higher housing or rent burden than people with no disabilities. We are more likely to be among the homeless. Some estimates suggest that as much as 61 percent of people in homeless shelters are people with disabilities. And our

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION experience is that that rate is very high because we work with many people who are homeless.

We find that transportation is inaccessible. Getting to a public hearing or a public meeting can be fraught with difficulty if you cannot take the subway because only 18 percent of the subway is accessible for people with disabilities. Para transit is a joke. Taxis are not accessible, not that anyone can afford them.

These are just a few of the issues. Health facilities are inaccessible. Public schools are inaccessible, and public schools are being used as places to teach civic engagement theoretically, and to involve people in preparing for adult life. For that matter, police stations in our communities, two-thirds of them are inaccessible to people with disabilities. So, if you have been a victim of domestic violence, if you even want to come to a meeting on public safety in the community and talk about your experiences, you may not be able to get in the door.

So, we teach people about government agencies, we teach people about the courts, we teach people about their rights throughout their
lives in every issue, in every area that touches them.

MR. GEWOLB: One minute remaining.
MS. DOOHA: We involve people in participating in public bodies. We teach people about how to go out and document civil rights law violations and barriers and create reports that go to public officials. We teach people how to tell their stories to public officials at city hearings. We work with people to be able to be heard, including engaging in civil disobedience. We also engage people in surfacing issues, engaging in issues, finding people who are experiencing difficulties or illegalities, violations of their rights, and we help them to become Plaintiffs in class action lawsuits to bring about implementation of civil rights law the city.

We have had to have the experience of polling sites not being accessible for people with disabilities, and after submitting surveys done by people with disabilities all across the community on every Election Day for more than a decade, we were forced to become an expert in litigation against the New York City Board of

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION Elections for failing to make polling sites accessible. That's only the tip of the iceberg.

Materials for voters are not available in large print. They're not available in Braille or audio. There are no ASL interpreters at polling sites to assist if things are problematic.

These are just a few of the barriers that we engage around that are part of people's lives, and where they become engaged in speaking out on their own behalf. We think that building an accessibility to civil engagement efforts is critical. We find that retrofitting efforts with accessibility concerns after the fact is a poor way of accomplishing inclusion.

We consider that disability literacy training is necessary for people who are working in civic engagement, and we would encourage consideration of people with disabilities as facilitators of projects of civil engagement. We believe in consultation with disability community leaders during early phases and working with disability community-led organizations to get the word out.

We believe in including people with disabilities in leadership of efforts to signal

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION inclusion. We believe that including issues of concern for people with disabilities on the agenda, such as implementation of civil rights law, is critical.

CHAIR PERALES: Can you wrap up, Miss Dooha? MS. DOOHA: Yes. We believe that public bodies like community boards should define diversity as including disability as well as other factors. Thank you very much.

CHAIR PERALES: Thank you. We're going to move immediately to some questioning. Let me ask first this question. Miss Getachew, I'm very interested in youth participating in civil engagement. I'm particularly disappointed when I run into young people who don't know the difference between voting in a municipal election and voting for president. You can only reach some percentage of the students through your programs. Do you have believe, first of all, that civics education ought to be required in every school? And do you have any other thoughts about how we might reach the broad base of young people in our city?

MS. GETACHEW: Thank you for the correct pronunciation of my last name and for the

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question. Yes, I emphatically believe that we need civics education for all. I'm excited that Mayor de Blasio is prioritizing that and really thinking about how to implement a K to 12
interdisciplinary at the start of the 2018/19 school year. We definitely want to partner with him in the Department of the Education and do that effectively and make sure it is action oriented and not just memorization of random government facts, because in a 21st Century democracy where young people can like and hug and re-Tweet things on the Internet we don't want them to think memorizing those facts have nothing to do with their real lives, and so I think that is the best way to accomplish that is working within the government system, (indiscernible) Generation Citizen and others to be able to help the administration do that effectively and ultimately do that statewide, which is the priority of this mission.

CHAIR PERALES: Thank you. John.
COMMISSIONER SIEGAL: I want to thank you, Miss Ike. That was a very eloquent statement. To me what is the underlying basic problem that this Commission is grappling with, which is the

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION profoundly low rate of voter participation across the city and the fact that if current trends continue, we will have a mayoral election with less than a million voters in a city of eight and a half-plus million people. There's a paradox here, which is that all the things that the city has done over the last 30 years to try to democratize the process and the tens of millions of dollars that the city spends through, among other things, a matching funds program, we nonetheless have a continuing, continuation of the decades-long plunge in voter participation. And I recognize there are all many other important forms of civic engagement, but to me that's the most basic.

A long time ago, when I was involved in politics and on those rare occasions when I actually went out to communities and talked to voters, what I was always struck by was that our grandparents' and parents' generations who had lived through the Depression, who had lived through World War II, who had lived through the civil rights era, when you asked them if they voted they would say, "Of course. I did my duty." There seems to be no sense now of duty

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that it's a citizen's obligation to vote. We've never done some of the things that frankly could be done to make it mandatory or to tie other things to voting, but we don't do that in this country. So, I guess that's the underlying concern to me on campaign finance, on ballot issues, on civic engagement, et cetera.

And what I would like to ask each of you is in your opinion, in your experience, or based on your work what is this one single most important thing in your area that this Commission could do in terms of revising the Charter that might help reverse that plunge in participation and might help restore the sense that voting is actually a duty and an obligation?

MS. IKE: One thing. So, before I say the one thing I will say I think that there is a difference between what can be done in the Charter that has the broadest form of engagement/participation that is not cumbersome, and then there's a separate conversation about duty.

And without getting too torts-y there's something about duty that is also a two-way street. So, there's a duty from government to

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION the community, right? So, as much as it was kind of funny to say if I vote and I'm still in the hood then what's the point of voting? The reality is that if we talk about it from an equity standpoint a lot of people that did participate generations ago -- and especially that were veterans, right? -- the reality is that we have a schism between those who participated in the war and then therefore received benefits from the United States that allowed them to see the commitment of being engaged, and then communities largely black and brown and differently abled that didn't see the same type of return for their duty and therefor that generational track also has an impact in communities that have a different understanding about what duty means even after you've served.

So, that has -- I do think that in addition to engagement education, equity education is important because it's important to validate the reality that communities are experiencing and not make them seem like they're crazy. It's okay to be like your reality is actually rooted in history and these are ways to reverse that. So, that's my duty piece.

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As far as engagement, I'm sure you all have been very well-versed in what some other spaces are doing, especially out in the west, as relates to automatic opting in of individuals who are eligible to vote. Also, there is a movement -- I mean, I'm very skeptical of absentee ballots for a lot of reasons, but there are a lot of movements that do call for individuals to either drop off to vote at home. National Voter Home Voting Institute I believe is one of the organizations that is implementing this in several localities as to how which kind of spaces to some of the access issues we're talking about, how making voting easy for people to do at home, in the privacy of their home, and then working with the Board of Elections on the back end to make sure that, you know, all the other things that we know don't exist, such as voter fraud. But sure, we could look for it, if we want to, don't happen; that I think that we actually need to make people feel that voting is your duty but it doesn't have to be cumbersome. You don't have to go through extra hoops to do it.

So there was one thing I would say that the Commission could look at what's the broadest net

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION that we can put out there to get the number, first of all, registrants to almost close to 100 percent as possible, and then try to figure out on a culturally relevant basis what then are the biggest swaths of communication, engagement, and I guess opportunities that exist within the Charter. And I think one of the areas that we've mentioned is this advisory board or, like, what are the spaces that we can input more people that are just underrepresented. I think if people see more of themselves in spaces that they typically haven't been invited to that could drastically change how the people see the city's commitment and the city's duty to their needs. MS. DOOHA: To pick up on what you're saying. People with disabilities feel they're made invisible. We want to go out and vote in a public space like our neighbors because we want to be seen. Because we are too our concerns are not even on the radar screen of most public bodies.

The thing that $I$ would say is most critical is to ensure that all civic engagement efforts are accessible, that people are included who are people with disabilities, that people with

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION disabilities are visible in civic engagement efforts and honestly please make voting accessible. It's terrible to tell people they have a duty to do something you then prevent them from doing. Honestly. Thank you.

MS. GETACHEW: Although that's not small, the equity lines of civic participation and how do you digitize and bring into the 21st Century the way the city is doing the work it's already doing, right? So, we heard the prior panel talk about all the agencies that have a hand in civic participation. We know that it's not integrated not for lack of effort, but not for lack of parity. It's a big bureaucracy. How do we make sure they're doing that work in a 21st Century way on the issues they care about? Because we all become much more, for better lack of a better word, selfish. We care about issues and we want to figure out how we can solve those issues. Let's meet the New Yorkers where they are.

MS. OU YANG: I would ditto everything everyone said on this panel. I would just add same-day voting I think would alleviate a lot of barriers as well as employers buying time off to show that you have voted, and I am there.

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CHAIR PERALES: Wendy, you get the last question.

COMMISSIONER WISE: So thank you for these really tremendous contributions, and it's really nice to see you all here. I fully support the effort to expand voting, accessibility and participation. I wanted to ask the related question. I think all of you in some ways have talked about that civic engagement depends on meeting communities where they are, and I was hoping in addition to thinking about how to expand voting access what might be the kinds of forums that would exist that would give people a better perception that the government is responsive to them, and that they have access to get their issues on the table and, you know, would feel like it's sort of cutting through some of the obstacles that are there and might some of the proposals that are already on the table would be able to be used to accomplish what some of you have all suggested is an important barrier. MS. DOOHA: Housing. COMMISSIONER WISE: This is for everybody. MS. DOOHA: People with disabilities are overwhelmingly living in poverty on a long-term

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION basis. Poverty is an immense issue. Talking about how to address poverty is critical. It is essential to address housing for extremely low income people. Housing for people with moderate incomes is just not cutting it for people who are on SSI-level income and certainly not for others also on forms of public assistance.

It is actually essential our transportation system be made a system for everyone because lack of transportation impedes employment, and not serving communities with the transportation that they need cuts people out of the community. Similarly, health care that is accessible.

Being able to go around and everywhere you encounter is inclusive, is accessible, and cares about the concerns that you're bringing in.

MS. GETACHEW: I would say (indiscernible) habits early that is not reactive. So, in Generation Citizen classrooms we encourage our students to call their elected official during class time into the classroom and actually have that time to engage directly with decision-makers so that it doesn't feel reactive, so they are actually leading policy change and it's meeting them where they are in the classroom. Think about

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civic (indiscernible) opportunities and exposure early in this pipeline so they understand that government is relevant and accessible to them, and, you know, make sure it's led by the constituents trying to engage.

MS. IKE: Yeah. I would say first it would be interesting to hear a little bit more as this develops as to a level of independence you all feel this office can hold. While I do think we have spaces in agencies that have this information, part of what $I$ think is difficult, and we've also been there, that government, all governments, not just New York City, are uncomfortable holding forums, to use your word, that could potentially open up the door to hearing things that they don't want to hear. Or maybe I just made that up. So one of the things that I think we should think about is what are the independent spaces that allow people to feel like there's some type of ownership over what they're doing, right? So one of the things that $I$ will share with you all I didn't have time to talk about in my five minutes was this concept of like a civil core, right? Something that happens throughout the year that allows people from the

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION community, however they identify themselves, to speak to other people that identify with them to allow for a continuous loop, if you will, of just conversation with communities. That's just outside of just the election process. Something that just allows for feedback but also something that's not a forum created by or even the responsibility of just the Mayor or City Council, that allows people to feel free to share both their frustrations but also their problem solving solutions and that it's value, not just Kabuki theater, but actually valued, and there's a way we can formalize those concerns to whatever entity or body that we have. So, I do think that the forums would have to be creative, and I think that's actually a space that communities would be extremely excited about, and to the point about language and what have you, allows people to express the way they need to express and not necessarily have to be politically correct or judged for how they are communicating.

MS. OU YANG: To underscore that I think it's really important that meetings be systemized, not just once in a blue moon. You know, too many of our immigrant communities don't even know who

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their contact community affairs person is in the Police Department. And so regularized, institutionalized meetings in safe spaces as in cultural settings that people really mean it. And the use of simultaneous translation equipment to go through that accurate information to make sure that people's views, no matter what language they speak, are important; and then lastly, I think it's really critical for the city to engage in active highlighting of immigrant contributions to the city. There's too much divisiveness between different groups. And to highlight how immigrant communities have helped mainstream America and other groups with issues that are of common concern to them would go a long way.

CHAIR PERALES: Thanks. My thanks to all of you. You've been helpful and we will be certainly considering your thoughts as we do our work. MS. DOOHA: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER WISE: Thank you.
CHAIR PERALES: We've got our next panel?
We've temporarily lost a couple of Commissioners, but I'm sure they'll be here in a moment, but I'm anxious to hear what you have to say. So we will commence, and you will forgive

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION the Commissioners who will walk in, in a minute or two.

The panel deals with new tools and models in civic engagement. We've heard already what the city is already doing. At the same time we share your thoughts as to what we ought to be thinking about doing in the future. I want to talk to these two gentlemen about how we do that. That's very important to us.

The two members of this panel are Noel Hidalgo, the Executive Director of BetaNYC. And you have some slides?

MR. HILDAGO: No.
CHAIR PERALES: You don't have slides?
MR. HILDAGO: I wish I could have Brad's slides --

CHAIR PERALES: We forgive you.
MR. HILDAGO: -- in front so we could contextualize. I'm happy to go in front without slides.

CHAIR PERALES: Councilman Lander, you have slides?

COUNCILMEMBER LANDER: I have slides. CHAIR PERALES: So I am prepared to begin. Let's begin with Noel Hildago.

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MR. HILDAGO: Thank you. It's an honor to be in front of you, and it's an honor to come back and be considered an expert in technology and tools in civic engagement.

I'm going to be off the cuff, and thank goodness there's a someone who is going to be taking transcription. I really have to commend everyone who has presented beforehand. The issues that they brought up are, that I've seen, are (a) building trust in government, particularly this last panel ended with the idea of some type of civic core, and then also speaking about how do you get people aware of public information, and ultimately how do people feel that they have a voice in traction within government proceedings.

And so how do they find a particular problem and then how do they address it? And in my first testimony in front of this panel $I$ focused on that there are three particular issues. The first one is that government should be digital because it provides the greatest amount of flexibility and accessibility across languages and platforms and devices. Digital and data literacy are core elements of a 21st Century democracy, and then ultimately we need civic participation beyond the

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION ballot box.

There have been a number of Charter Revision Commissions that have attempted to address these things. The first one is COPIC. So there's actually a provision right now that sits under the Public Advocate's office that allows for this Commission on Public Information and Communication, and in 1989 this was a very virtuous Commission, but sadly nearly 30 years after its creation resources have been scarce. This particular Commission hardly even met its chartered mandated requirements once per year. It's no longer even advocated on the Public Advocate's website, and technology has kind of outstripped many of the components within COPIC.

The City's Open Data laws is an excellent example of that. COPIC was designed to essentially open data and now we have legislation that sits around that. And so there are a few core elements within what I would like to see as recommendations for moving forward.

The first is that there's this thing called Civic Service Design or Service Design, which speaks to many of the issues that previous panelists were talking about, and I have a

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION pamphlet here which is actually from NYC Opportunity on Tools and Tactics. And it's essentially how do we build government services with people, not for people. This is the very first mayoral office that's dedicated to thinking about how services are designed in a codesign process. This is policy Web sites, tools, documents, all of these things are co-designed for practice. We're pioneering it here in New York City, and this is one of those particular tools that I think it's fundamental that should be part of the Office of Civic Engagement. The second thing is that content on municipal Web sites is absolutely at its core. It is how we find out what is going on within our municipal government. And we continue to underfund and under resource that at the community board level. We are at a point where community board Web sites are using content management systems that are 20 years old, that are very clunky. My organization, BetaNYC, is trying to get the city to adopt more open source tools that are secure and flexible so that way we can have technology, 21st Century technology in the 21st Century, and we're not using 20th

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Century technology in the 21st Century.
Second to that, there's an excellent department inside of New York City Planning. It's called NYC Planning Labs, and with a core team of four people they've been able to redesign eight urban planning tools using open source practices. This is a way how agencies can be working efficiently, securely, and in the open.

Lastly, we fundamentally believe that New Yorkers need an essential touch point of how they can engage within their municipal government, and while NYC 311 has a great service and NYC Service does a great service, we want to figure out how do we petition government in a 21st Century matter that essentially points out there's a bug within our operating system. And we want this operating system improved.

And to that point, several years ago we wrote for and called for a We The People of New York City, which is essentially a petitioning tool that would allow New Yorkers to identify a particular problem that's in the city and work with their neighbors to get that articulated and kind of figure out what is the traction and what's the process to identify these problems,

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION work with their neighbors to express that this problem exists, and then figure out resources within that.

Participatory budgeting has done a great job of building out that as a scaffolding and as a framework to address those particular issues, but participatory budgeting really only focuses on capital projects, not necessarily discretionary projects.

MR. GEWOLB: One minute remaining.
MR. HILDAGO: Thank you. So what we're looking for, at least within the Office of Civic Engagement, we feel the Office of Civic Engagement can actually be a digital steward that focuses on amazing things that exists in Taiwan, where they have participation officers, and these individuals help foster online/offline best practices to essentially identify these very particular sour points or for bugs within our ecosystem, our software system.

We want to see participatory budgeting grow to be actually 1 percent of the discretionary and capital budget so that way our people are actually determining what are the problems that need to be fixed, and there's actually money

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION behind that. And ultimately we want to see a civics service studio and technology lab that's based right now in NYC Opportunity to grow their practice so that way they can help all government agencies and nonprofit services that are providing essential services to New Yorkers as well as community groups to figure out how to address all of the issues that are crossgenerational, cross communities that are -- can, I'm sorry, to ensure that there is systems and policy and design and technology that all work in conjunction with each other. Thank you.

CHAIR PERALES: Thank you. We're going to hold our questions till after we hear from Councilman Lander. Just be prepared to answer my question, which is how do folks learn who are not particularly literate in our technology take advantage of all that you're talking about? But don't answer it now.

Mr. Councilman.
COUNCILMEMBER LANDER: Thank you very much, Chair Perales and the Commissioners. It's good to see you again. I was grateful for the opportunity to come testify before you in Brooklyn on a broader set of matters, and I've

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION been following your work since then, and especially, as you know, I'm a strong supporter of (indiscernible) voting, and I watched the hearing you had on that. I thought your questions were good. I remained a big believer that will help strengthen our elections and democracy. But today, I'm here to talk to you about especially two tools for strengthening civic engagement in New York City.

The establishment of an independent nonpartisan Office of Civic Engagement and to make participatory budgeting part of the New York City Charter and would be operating out of the Office of Civic Engagement.

You focused on these things, so I won't go long on these issues. As you know, we're really facing a crisis of democracy in New York City with extremely low levels of turnout in the elections that matter and voters wondering why it is they would want to participate. But it's not only an issue of, obviously, not only an issue of elections. Low voting rate is part of the broader issue of decline in civil trust in all our institutions, in government especially but across the board. People just don't think of

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government, reaching out to government as a way of getting issues resolved even where those issues are government issues and, in addition, we really have even though some extraordinary examples of volunteerism in civic service very low levels of people actually participating that way.

As I mentioned, this exists across the board. We've really seen, and we go to the next slide actually because it has the decline in numbers. There's really just a trust crash. You see in government in the third column has the biggest decline from even just year to year 2017 to 18 , a 30 point drop in the informed public in trusting government. But it's also true across our nonprofit organizations, business, and the media. That's much broader than New York City, of course, and even broader than the U.S., it's the whole planet, but we try to take a lead here and say what are the things we could be doing to confront this decline in civil trust? So that's why we are here today. What things could we be doing, not only increasing the voter turnout that is surely important, but strengthen people's belief that the idea of democracy as a space to

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION come together with their neighbors to solve problems, to take care of our common institutions, and move us forward in a sense of broad opportunity is real.

And participation is one of those key goals. It's not the only one. I included this slide because, obviously, transparency and accountability are critical if people are going to have trust in government. So thinking about efficiency and transparency is critical, but more participation in places that go beyond just voting and jury duty that people associate with government is really critical and, of course, we actually have a lot of that already. People are engaged in their PTA's, in Friends of their parks and parks conservancies and Friends of their libraries and organizations advocating to make our streets safer. There are all these places where people have what the social scientists are calling "thick engagement," not just showing up one time to, you know, paint an affordable housing unit -- although that is great -- but in these deeper ways that are about being stewards together of our common ground. And I'm not kind of going to go through all of these, but the

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION examples you heard from the prior panel are places where people are active again in spaces that are really partnerships between civic nonprofit organizations and government in deep ways, whether that's creating the new library reading garden that the neighborhood library grants through participatory budgeting, whether that's through some of these extraordinary immigrant organizations that are doing programming in the plazas, and their senior centers, and their community centers, and not only making their neighborhood sort of work better, but building out a sense of kind of who they are, and their stories and their community with both offline tools and online tools. It really is something that we want to do. (Indiscernible) questions talk about more of this idea of "thick engagement" but we found it in the literature to be how do you go beyond the voting lever and the jury duty to a sense of yourself as a citizen that's got a set of responsibilities and opportunities that is more deeply about who you are and who your neighbors are?

So, that's how we came to this idea. How could we create a space to organize that work? It

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will be a lot of different things but we need somewhere in government that has that set, that responsibility to deepen and strengthen New Yorkers' sense of civic duty to build trust in our institutions, to try out new programs, some of which will work and some of which don't work. Two ideas we have so far are that civic core, some kind of year-long civic service that people would have either a responsibility or opportunity to do and broader participatory budgeting, but there's many other places as well.

Helping New Yorkers in existing spaces like community boards and all those Friends groups I mentioned build and develop their leadership skills we believe all could happen under the idea of this office. So, as I mentioned I introduced legislation last year that would create the office, but for reasons I'll get to in just a minute it would actually be better to do in the Charter so it can be done in an independent, nonpartisan way, which we can't just do by local law. Coming off the legislation we can meet a great round table with some of the organizations that were on the panel you just had, but a whole bunch of others as well and one thing that is

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really critical here is there are all these groups, of course, doing good civic engagement work as civic or nonprofit organizations, and we want to make sure they can be partners in their effort. You can't just do this through government institutions, but you can't just do it through non-profits either if the goal is to organize people in different ways and strengthen their connection to a capacity to make change in government. We've got to do it in a partnership. So, what would the office do? It would strengthen collaborations between existing city programs of which you already heard several. You've got the Voter Assistance Commission, you've got NYC Service. You've got the Community Affairs Unit, you've got community boards, you've got all those Friends groups. There's nobody that works to kind of coordinate, network and organize them. There would be all kinds of new programs that could develop. We're seeing, and we just saw this great new Student Voter Registration Day, so some innovation is happening. But having a team dedicated to coming up with new ideas could do more things like the idea of a service year, or I will speak to in a second, expanding

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION participatory budgeting. And I mentioned all these places where people access stewards (indiscernible). But if you add up the parks Friends groups, the plaza organizations, those are all public, government-owned spaces that New Yorkers are actually programming, filling up fundraising for taking care of, and I don't think we see those as deeply connected to taking care of and having a healthy democracy in ways that we might. As Noel mentioned, helping people just find all of those things, get to the information about how to participate. Another real opportunity here, providing uniform support, training and technical assistance.

I know you've been thinking about community boards, and certainly some of that happens through the Community Assistance Unit, but this could be a place that developed a set of leadership training that helped folks across those different kinds of organizations to build the skills they need for leadership in civic space, to mobilize new technology tools and, of course, to track and evaluate all of this we have to see are actually, if we take these steps, strengthening civic trust, are more people

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION participating, are more people voting, so we want to have good evaluation as well.

Sorry for the formatting. On this question of how it should be structured, we have to think about three kinds of different options and one of them, for two of them for sure, would take a Charter Revision Commission proposal. One could theoretically be done by local law. What we could do is direct the administration to establish a mayoral office that would have some benefits because networking and coordinating with mayoral agencies would be easier but would have some downsides as well because any mayor is going to have their agenda, and if they've got an organizing shop then that person and any elected official would most likely use it to advance the goals that they already have as opposed to create a space where people can organize based on their own goal. So that's the main risk of having it be a mayoral agency.

A second option there also is, as you know, NYC Votes housed at the Campaign Finance Board with the independent, nonpartisan board and that would have some advantages because you could connect to NYC Votes. It would be independent

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION and nonpartisan. The downside there is that the critical regulatory function of the Campaign Finance Board is different from the more social entrepreneurial function that we're imagining in this office, so you have some positives there and some downsides as well.

The third option would be to create a new entity with an appointed nonpartisan board. I think it would be best in that case if NYC Votes went there because if the goal is to strengthen voter participation and link that to the set of activities that we talked about here, you get a new nonpartisan, independent board. They coordinate all of this work and are really focused on that as their mission. That has some downsides for sure. You've got to create a new entity instead of build on a solid structure that the CFB has already put in place. And in both of the two latter cases, harder to get coordination with mayoral agencies who report to the mayor.

So those are the three options. I'm happy to talk more about which ones seem to make more sense. I lien to this third one, but I think there's good arguments for the others as well. In any case, we want to make sure it can be

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION independent and nonpartisan. So, the goal of helping people organize to do the things they want to do and not the things we want them to do is critical. It needs an advisory board of those civic and nonprofit organizations who are doing so much of the civic engagement work in the city. It needs dedicated resources, of course, outside of the annual allocating process so that it can't be punished for activities people do by organizing by an angry city council or an angry mayor. And, of course, its goal is not to reinvent the wheel but to network and streamline and pilot new programs. So that's the idea. I'll just in the final minutes talk specifically about participatory budgeting, which would be a great program to have under this Office of Civic Engagement, but I think it's worth thinking about you putting a specific ballot proposal on as well. I think this idea that 1 percent of the capital budget and perhaps a dedicated percent of the expense budget as well would be spent through participatory budgeting is a really exciting opportunity to deepen civic engagement. I know it sounds a little crazy. It sounded crazy when we started participatory

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION budgeting years ago at all, but it's happening now in Paris, in Madrid, in other cities around the world, and around the U.S. where they have a centralized participatory budgeting program organized either through an office like this or the mayor's office. It's a small percentage of the budget but the difference it makes in waking people up to thinking about how we make budget decisions together is really profound. We started seven years ago in the City Council with just four of us trying this out. And that year 8,000 New Yorkers voted. Last year it was done in more than half the council districts citywide. Over a hundred thousand people participated and they spent over \$41 million. It's now expanding into our high schools as a result of a program proposed by the Mayor. And what we have just found time and again is that it really brings out people's both most creative and most generous democratic selves. Of course, some people show up and say, "Fix my playground," or "Fix my kid's public school." But they also show up and say, "Hey, that stitch of grass in the library, that could be a new children's reading garden," and a whole new creative space is created. Or, one of

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION the things I'm most proud of in my district last year, the winning project was a mobile shower unit proposed by the local soup kitchen that wanted its patrons to have an opportunity to shower and get some dignity. It went on the ballot and it got the most votes of any project in my district has ever had. So that says at least sometimes under the right conditions the opportunity to leap forward and participate together can bring out instead of our most tribal angry selves, as we see so often these days, our most generous selves, our most democratic selves, and we've really seen that.

So I think here that you can put a proposal on the ballot to establish participatory budgeting as 1 percent of the city capital and expense budgets and move it forward through the Office of Civic Engagement.

The last -- so, I'm done with my testimony. I don't know if you have -CHAIR PERALES: Good. COUNCILMAN LANDER: But is this, like, a twoor three-minute video? UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Yeah, two or three minutes.

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COUNCELMEMBER LANDER: If you have time in questions, and you ask the question are there out there around the world some innovative new technology tools through which people are engaging I'll hit Play.

CHAIR PERALES: We'll give you a chance to do the video because I'm now curious. It's not fair to throw out these questions to Noel (indiscernible). But it's also, I think, relates to your suggestion. We had a panel representing in essence different groups, the immigrants, the disabled in terms of civic engagement. One of the groups I don't think New York City taps well are retired folks, although I know there's an agency that's supposed to be working with them, but, you know, many of them are basically technologically illiterate. How would you address them, Mr. Hildago?

MR. HILDAGO: So my organization works with the Manhattan Borough President's office to get community boards digitally literate, and as you have probably engaged with community boards, they span gamuts of literacy. My mom's in her 70s, is a very savvy Facebook user, but trying to get her to use some of the dashboards that we're creating

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may be a little bit of a stretch. So, how do we go about it? I mean, it's the same way you go about building any other type of literacy. It is a concentrated effort. You have to be able to link the tool that you're using, right? Pen and paper with the process or the purpose of what is it good for? Taking notes. Well, these dashboards that we're creating visualizes (indiscernible) one data and links that to decision-making process within the community board. So, you always have to contextualize information, contextualize the tool and the purpose and the result that your looking for. It's not easy because these tools advance, they sometimes are done in ways that are complicated, or they were designed years ago and then forgotten and never to be updated again.

Our City's rules website has to be one of those things where you can actually comment on the City's rules, but you can't actually access that rules's Web sites through your mobile phone. You can't access it decently on a tablet. You can only access it on one of these big machines.

The same thing goes for community board Web sites. The majority of them are accessible on

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION desktop. They're not accessible on your mobile phones. They're not accessible on tablets. So, the idea is how do we get technology working for everyone is by bringing them into the room, engaging with them on the platforms that we have either in their pockets or in their bags, understanding that those interfaces need to be rewritten for the users that are out there and having direct dialogue with them.

That is what civic service design is about. That's what human-centered design is about. That's the work that we're trying to do at BetaNYC is about. That's what we want to see embedded in New York, human-centered government. Right now, we have this process where essentially we're electing officials to represent us but yet when issues come up that we want to be represented it is hard pressed to find them to represent us. That's what the last two panelists were talking about, and in this particular process I'd like to point out what Taiwan does. And Taiwan has a multi platform petitioning process. It is paper and it is digital and you have the ability to bring up issues. If you write in a paper petition that will be digitized and

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put online so everybody else can see it. Everybody who is on the website can see these petitions. Once it does a certain threshold, there is a government body -- hopefully the Office of Civic Engagement here in the future in New York City -- that would be chartered to either figure out is it a participatory budget issue? Is it a financial issue? Like doors on bathrooms in the elementary school that I live across the street from, or is it a systematic policy issue like how Uber should exist within New York City, or how for-hire vehicles should be regulated in the future. If it is part of this regulatory process, the V-Taiwan Process identifies the stakeholders, public, academic and government, brings them into the room and then goes through a multi iterative process to identify what are those issues.

So, to answer your question how do you get people using modern technology? Well, you have to use the human-centered design approach. You have to actually bring those people into the room, and thank goodness we have entities in New York City like NYC Opportunity, like NYC Planning Labs that understand that they're building technology with

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION their users and not for the users.

CHAIR PERALES: Thank you. Do you have any response to the idea I'm concerned about, reaching everybody, bringing everybody into volunteerism and civic engagement, including folks that are retired and sitting home figuring out what to do next?

COUNCILMEMBER LANDER: Absolutely. We have a wonderful organization in our neighborhood, Neighbors Of Park Slope, which is designed to do exactly this. It's not a service organization for seniors. It's a civic organization for seniors, and I've been very encouraged by what they do.

First, obviously, all the opportunities that we provide need to be both online and offline. In participatory budgeting you can give an idea at a neighborhood assembly in person or you can go online and give an idea. They're all equal. You can vote online or you can vote in person. Then you have to do it in enough languages and the languages that the people speak and go out there in the ways that they -- where they are. I will say in terms bringing people further along than you might think we're working with two organizations, Older Adult Technology Services

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION and Bengali Language South Asian Group. So, that next week there's going to be a graduation, actually it's in the computer lab that's in the basement of a New York City homeless shelter, they've got this great computer lab. And a group of Bangladeshi senior citizens have gone through a 10 -week training class in technology, and the reports I've gotten -- I'm going to join them for the graduation -- not only have they learned tech, but in many ways what they have done more than anything else, build community. It's kind of people in their homes otherwise. So, I think with some creativity there are some great opportunities to (indiscernible) what you're talking.

CHAIR PERALES: You have a question, John? COMMISSIONER SIEGAL: I have two questions for Councilman Lander. When you read the city Charter what you see is obviously a large and far flung government but a real tendency to try to solve, identify problems by creating offices within the Office of the Mayor on substantive areas or interagency coordination, a vital thing. They never go away. Mayors often don't care about them. First deputy mayors in particular never

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like them. And I'm worried that if we do this that will happen. I didn't really see on your (indiscernible) list in a mayoral office that it won't just atrophy and be in a back office, 51, 52 Chambers, 250 Broadway, it will just sort of -- but your creative number goes away. So how do you respond to that?

COUNCILMEMBER LANDER: I think you're right. I'll say guilty as charged. Some of those offices are created because a particular mayor is interested in a problem, creates a new agency, actually invests in it, but the next mayor is trying to do something else, so doesn't continue to do that. Or, an office gets cited through law because the Council is interested in an issue and pushes something forward.

I'll give an interesting example. We wanted to get universal access to counsel for low-income tenants facing eviction in Housing Court or right to counsel. We couldn't quite win that. At first we thought, you know what? We'll create an Office of Civil Justice and they'll be charged with looking at this question, and now that we do have universal access and -- but we also still have this office and you're right. I think for

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION now it's got a good person and some mayoral support. Who knows what will happen in the next term? I think you're right here, which is why, you know, I think the best proposal is to stand something up that's more independent and has dedicated resources so you're getting someone as the leader who signs on for that mission. It has the downsides, it's hard to coordinate with the mayoral agencies but $I$ think it's (indiscernible).

COMMISSIONER SIEGAL: Second question. It's not really a question, it's comment, it's not criticism of your work, but you're the guy sitting here. I'm disappointed with something in this forum today. We're talking about civic engagement, we're talking about volunteerism. There's been not one mention of the extensive civic engagement volunteerism work done throughout private sector in New York City. There appears to be a large disconnect between the way this issue's being talked about and where most, much of this work is being done. I certainly know in my own industry the amount of civic engagement, volunteerism and contributions by law firms in this city, including supporting all of

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION the non-profits with legal services that are here advocating civic engagement, and there just seems to be a disconnect. I can't imagine we're going to cite an advisory board on Office of Civic Engagement without mandating private sector participation for example, or in your roster of the community planning things going on there's no mention of the Business Improvement Districts, which are and have been one of the most vital community planning vehicles. So I just raise that, that I think we need to think about that and integrate the public and private sector to a degree that seems to be missing in this discussion.

COUNCILMEMBER LANDER: I think you're right. We did point out, I have it on the slide here even though I didn't talk about it, about partnering -- no, it's a good point. I didn't say. I think not including BID's in that list of Friends groups and PTA's absolutely, that's another place where folks who are volunteers, they have a financial stake in the commercial strip, but they're still volunteers as members of those boards and putting in time to act as stewards of a public space in a public-private

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION partnership. So I absolutely agree that there's in that stewardship lift. And, yes, I think partnering with an enormous amount of civic volunteerism in the private sector is an important goal of the office.

MR. HILDAGO: Could I just ask one quick thing to Commission Siegel? The point I've identified a problem you actually use this multistate state core engagement that includes government, academic, private sector, as well as nonprofit organizations, and so one of our recommendations is that this Office of Civic Engagement have these participation officers that are able to bring in this diversity, these four particular channels to address those particular problems. So I would love to see the opportunity.

COMMISSIONER SIEGAL: In the tech sector (indiscernible) able to do it and you see the situation like in Seattle with Amazon and this tax proposal when you get these disconnects between the public sector and the private sector all sorts of negative consequences occur.

COUNCILMEMBER LANDER: On tech I heard a wonderful podcast with a woman whose name I'm going to forget who was a leader first on

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immigration in the Obama White House and is now at maybe New America Foundation working to create the equivalent in the tech sector of what exists in the legal community a strong pro bono network and try to get folks into tech sector who are available to provide some of the same kind of pro bono assistance to civic and private. I'll get her name and the podcast you can check.

CHAIR PERALES: Una.
COMMISSIONER CLARKE: I think we have to look at the broad spectrum of what it is we're trying to do, and in trying to talk about civic engagement. I know last night $I$ was in with the Youth Forum, although I was probably the only Commissioner there, but it was good to engage the young people after their basketball game and just start -- the educator in me came out, you know I'm a teacher, so I was glad to talk to the young people, and they came up with some very, very interesting ideas. One -- but when we first started they had no idea that as young people they had any effect on anything. They were able to give us all of what they thought was missed education in the high schools where they go, that there was not labs for them, and that they

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION thought that many of them were given up on, so they were just in school for being in school sake. And then talking about brain power, being able to analyze and understand their own development, and that's where I come in. I think that we've missed the chance to educate our young people what their role and their responsibility in the society is. We can't keep bashing elected officials and think that the larger society won't feel that we're all no good if we're politicians and that we're not there for the public good. So then we have to look at the way in which we send the message out and what we receive in return, because somebody will say, "So why should I go and vote for Una Clarke? Because she's not gonna do whatever it is I'm going to be voting for." So we have to make sure that people understand the importance of the vote and the power of the vote. And I think it begins, I think in my mind, we should talk about our role in society so that young people understand that they have a role to play, and that role, that voting is probably going to be one of those roles that they have to play. I think both in junior high school as well as in high school first year, young people, we

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION need to put back in the curriculum in some way where young people have a sense of pride, have a sense of ownership, so that when they get to be of the age where they vote that they know that that's a responsibility.

Do you have -- in your research have you done thinking that would link our youth to their development and then into the full civic engagement?

COUNCILMEMBER LANDER: Absolutely. First I will say it's such an inspiring time on the level of young people stepping up and taking more responsibility for things mostly that we have screwed up. So, I've been inspired by watching junior high and high school students especially around gun violence, but especially on so many other issues as well. We at Participatory Budgeting have been engaging young people both the school-based programs we're now starting but we also allow middle and high school students to propose ideas, meet budget delegates, and vote in participatory budgeting. And the projects that young people propose have won in many cases, and what I think the data, the evidence, shows when can you combine civics education with something

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION that actually shows people to actually make a change or make a difference it works much more effectively than just textbooks, like anything else, just textbook education. Participatory education is a great way of doing that. You put it in a broader civics education curriculum and not every decision gets made that way but some do, and people get a real sense of how they can make a difference. There's other programs like that that involve people, young people in philanthropy where they're doing as well as learning.

And the last thing I'll say about the role of participatory budgeting get out some of the issues of helping to understand what government really is. One thing I love about it is that the budget delegates have to engage in the bureaucracy and though you don't just get to say I want this new park, I want the bathrooms fixed up, I want air-conditioning in our schools. You then have to go engage in the agencies, understand how much it would cost, why it's a challenge. And people really for the most part, some people get angry and say, "I'm sick of this. I'm walking away. I can't do it I'm so mad."

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More often they say, "All right. I see why it's harder to do this thing than I thought it would. We're going to have to work harder and get more people involved." And so at least some of that cynicism that I think can grow otherwise --

CHAIR PERALES: You get the last word.
MR. HILDAGO: Wow. I thought there were more questions.

MS. SEECHARRAN: I have a question.
MR. HILDAGO: We have actually civics -civics technology and open data curriculum that we partner with CUNY undergraduate that we now give to community board members that we're now looking to do with middle school and high school students. Partnering government information and partnering community members express and pointing out that students have an opportunity to use that information power to then lobby government to address those particular issues. And I hope this type of curriculum would be embodied within the Office of Civic Engagement.

COMMISSIONER SEECHARRAN: I think my question is quick and the answer will be quick. So my question -- two questions for Councilmember Lander, sorry, regarding your participatory

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION budgeting proposal. Would you recommend that you require all council districts and all councilmembers to participate? Because right now --

COUNCILMEMBER LANDER: Yes. (Indiscernible) if it was done by the Charter Revision Commission it would be a citywide program. Whether it would be the local -- in Paris there's citywide projects and local projects. Whether the local projects are done through the Community District or the Council District you'd have to decide. I don't think it matters that much one way or the other but, yes, it would be a citywide program for all New Yorkers rather than at the discretion of individual Councilmembers.

COMMISSIONER SEECHARRAN: Rather quickly my second question, $I$ think I've been convinced about your proposal around the Office of Civic Engagement. The one piece that's missing for me, and I asked this question of the previous panel is what needs to happen on the ground to ensure its success? I think John hinted sentiment of like, you know, creating another offices that potentially a bureaucracy that's disconnected or not even able to be truly successful because

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION nothing's really changed in terms of the infrastructure in neighborhoods and communities. And we know that also the infrastructure in neighborhoods is uneven depending where you are the city; so.

COUNCILMEMBER LANDER: Yeah, it's hard to guaranty success. I think the elements needed are a good board, a set of people who are appointed in a way that gives them independence and collectively sort of sets them apart so that they're hiring a director, leader, who is a person that can really do that job and is excited about it. Enough resources dedicated to make sure that they can hire the outreach workers and the language capacity and the tech capacity that they need. And an advisory structure that brings the partners into the design as well. And that definitely includes business but also many of the organizations you had here who are doing that work and especially who are doing it in more disenfranchised communities so that folks are really tied and bought it in. I think that setup together would be very likely to design a set of programs that were inspirational.

CHAIR PERALES: The transcriptionist needs a

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION break as do the Commissioner, but this will give us a chance to watch our movie. Thank you both, very much.
(Brief recess while a video presentation played.)

CHAIR PERALES: We are running a little late. I'll ask everyone to take their seat, including Commission members. Wendy?

We're now going to our last panel. This panel is devoted to the question of independent redistricting and whether or not we ought to amend the New York City system for redistricting, the redistricting scheme that is embodied in our City Charter, and which is actually a result of an earlier City Charter Commission.

This is the first time we're going to have a panelist by the name of Kathay Feng, who is the Executive Director of California Common Cause and the National Redistricting Director. First time we have somebody on Skype.

Can you hear me, Kathay?
MS. FENG: We can hear you.
CHAIR PERALES: Very good. Okay. In person we have Dr. John Flateau, a professor at Medgar Evers College and own loan local expert on

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redistricting who gets invited to sit on every redistricting commission every few years. He may look young but he's been on redistricting commissions since my childhood.

With that I will invite Dr. Flateau to deliver his remarks and he will have no more than eight minutes.

DR. FLATEAU: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and distinguished Commissioners for this opportunity to address a very important topic. I'm going to give a brief overview of what I think are some operating principles of frameworks and then give a few details on some of these items and hopefully some may come up during Q and A .

An independent redistricting commission as a concept. In terms of city council districts, I believe they should be smaller in size, more districts, more Council Districts for the City of New York, and a smaller population deviation in drawing those districts.

Secondly, the current Commission is actually it's Chapter 2 A of the current Charter and by the way, it is available on Smartphone. The entire City Charter is accessible. I was on it last night preparing for it today. The current Commission is fifteen members, seven appointed by the Mayor, eight by the Speaker, and three by the minority of the City Council, so it's -- I'm recommending that it be more diverse and larger in size.

CHAIR PERALES: Let me interrupt you. We're getting some background noise. I guess from California. So people around you cannot make any noise. Okay? Thank you.

DR. FLATEAU: A third principle, a commission whose membership is free of any conflict of interest and some qualifications that help ensure that principle and borrowing from that California model as a matter of fact.

Four: Terms of office, key items like a quorum and a super majority to approve the mapping of that comes out of the redistricting process.

Five: In terms of meetings and public hearings, making sure that there is more diversity and accessibility to the public for these hearings.

Six: Redistricting criteria. Things like continuity, compactness, adherence to voting rights requirements, et cetera.

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Number seven: A selection process for future redistricting commissioners that is nongovernmental, and again California has taken that concept a long ways, and I can speak with a little more detail to that.

Eight: A plan approval process. Right now the map is approved by the City Council, and up until -- oh and up until the last round with preclearance by the Justice Department. That preclearance mechanism no longer exists, so New York City should seriously consider having its own procedure clearance review mechanism in place.

So those are the overall operating principles suggested for your consideration. And now to drill down on some of these ideas.

Size of a District. When the current districts were in, were drawn after the 2010 Census there were 51 Districts and they average 160,000 in size. And there's something called a 10 percent deviation. I'm suggesting smaller districts. The size of the current assembly districts, which is about 120,000 and a smaller deviation of varied, which would mean variation in population from district to district.

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CHAIR PERALES: From 10 percent to what?
DR. FLATEAU: 5 percent. You have a blue sheet in front of you which has details on each one of these. So those, the numbers I'm skimming through are there. It would mean about somewhere in the range of about 70 City Council Districts going forward assuming New York City's population is already at 8.6 million right now, according to the Census Bureau, about 8.7 million. So, assuming we don't have another massive undercount in New York City for the 2020 Census we will have very close to 9 million New Yorkers, so if you can anticipate that number and you don't change in number 51, that means those districts are going to have even more people in them. And the basic concept is the smaller the district the closer the government will be to the people. So that's the basis for that.

The Commission, there are current negotiations about diversity in the current Chapter 2A, but I think, and I'll grant a number of items that could bring more specificity to the process. For example, the second largest voter registration, others I mentioned there were 5 million registered voters in New York. The

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 second largest registration is not the Republican party. There are over 3 million Democrats. The second largest is blank enrollment, but there's no provision for someone, a registered voter in the City of New York who by choice does not enroll in a political party. There's nothing in the Charter that says that they could have a single voice on a redistricting commission when they are in fact the second largest constituency among registered voters, so there are some details there.Balancing, making sure the boroughs there's some parity or equity in terms of borough representation and with -- well, unapologetically as a Brooklyn chauvinist we're now closing on 3 million people, so we should, Brooklyn, you should look at the population of the boroughs when you're figuring out well, how many members of this Commission, whether you go to 21, 25, you know, should come from each of the boroughs as well as other balancing matters such as age, race, religion gender, sexual orientation et cetera. I also recommend that we've been talking a lot about millenials basically and our younger voters, or nonvoters, and we should ensure that

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millenials are represented on the redistricting commission going forward. You could just define that as an age bracket. That's the last item under two.

California has stipulations that no, no person on their commission can be an elected official, and there are some lawyers. The next people I'm sure are going to explain but they have several gates that an applicant to become a member of the Commission has to go through, and no relative or elected official should be a member. I'm also recommending that a permanent resident category also be included. I'm an advocate that permanent residents should be allowed to vote in municipal elections. This might be a little -- this isn't quite independent redistricting but it's a part of this whole question we're discussing here. And there was a time when residents could vote. They voted in school board elections and prior to that they voted in city elections in the last century, and we need to consider that again.

A super majority for approval process also in terms of approval process, I think we should think about if you want to talk about civic

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION engagement. Could you imagine if the voters in the City of New York had the opportunity to vote on districting, not just the 51 members of the Council. By the way, there was a little known statewide referendum in November 2014 that changed the City of New York state redistricting process, so that in the next round there will be no elected officials on there, on the statewide redistricting body.

So, thinking about a tool for civic engagement, having the voters of New York approve a redistricting map is a recommendation. A common governmental process again which they have -almost have in California. In California, and I may be corrected, the elected officials still have a role in paring down the applicants who wish to become members. They had tens of thousands of California residents apply to become members of their redistricting commission. You could have a similar process in New York City, and if you want to take the politics out of it I'm suggesting in item seven they -- in California it's called ARP, Applicant Review Panel. And the persons on that panel would not be elected officials. They might be members of civic

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION groups, bar associations, community activists, anyone you choose but politicians. And that's one way. As I pointed out the current system, actually three politicians is appointed, the current 15 members, the mayor, the speaker, and the minority leader.

I think I'm almost out of time, so let me mention. Community access to -- notice I have part one on their because there's more to be said. So in part two, that's the next round, I do want to mention though, community access to census data and mapping technology should be an important part of -- it was used, it's been utilized in previous redistricting rounds, where citizens could go to certain locations, have access to computers and mapping technology. That should be a part of the process.

And think of redistricting, we just finished talking about civic engagement. That could be one of those triggers, one of those largest massive civic engagement exercises, figuring out how to set up this process going forward so that individuals, communities, neighborhoods, real ownership for wanting to participate in this process and learn more about their government.

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And also, finally, I'll mention the 2020 Census, which is the predicate for the redistricting process. That process is upon us, and if New York City does not massively engage and get counted in the 2020 Census our whole redistricting process is going to be in a shambles and will not adequately represent the people of New York, so I'll stop at that point.

CHAIR PERALES: Thank you very much. Dr. Flateau, thank you very much. We'll immediately turn to Kathay Feng.

MS. FANG: Hi, everybody. I'm just checking the voice level. Can you hear me? Right. Currently I'm going to talk about what other states do and then talk through some considerations that you'll want to think about. I did want to thank Susan Lerner who is with Common Cause/New York, who I think will be giving more specific recommendations (indiscernible) maybe an overview of things that people have thought about in creating commissions around the country.

Currently, the default way of thinking about drawing district lines in the United States is to have incumbent and elected officials draw their lines. However, in 13 states and in several

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In the early days, the states who moved commissions often adopted a model where commissions were made up of groups of elected officials. So, for instance, your minority and majority leader of the legislature, the governor, attorney general, councils might be, council presidents, the mayor, and the city attorney. Starting in the 1970s commissions that were created started to move more towards being made up of citizens but where the citizens were directly appointed by those city politicians.

More recently we've really been moving to a model where citizen commissioners are chosen for a process that's independent of elected officials, specifically those who are going to be running for the very district the commission is drawing. And so I'm going to be focussing a lot of the conversation on those commissions, including California's commission but also the city of Boston, Sacramento and San Diego. There

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are enough variations that it could be useful to look at any one of those for some guidance on what is possible in New York. I'll just note that in Los Angeles we have appointed a commission that is made up of citizens but are appointed directly by our city council and some of our other elected offices, and so I'll probably be referring to that as an example that something New York doesn't want to flow. So to the extent any of these recommendation are good examples of things you want to distinguish from and you can do better than L.A. please feel free to do that.

As you look at how you might change New York City's commission, I think one of the starting points is to figure out what the problems that your solving for are, and I think that guides them what the reforms that you're going to seek will be. The problem number one is that the way lines are drawn might disregard (indiscernible) testimony in favor of incumbent interests or special interests or partisan interests. So one of the things that we tend to look at is who those commissioners are. Are the people who are appointed to the commission, are they candidates

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION or likely candidates? Are they politician staff? They're family. They're major donors, they're campaign team members. And do you want to create a list of robust conflict of interests that might exclude certain categories of people who have a direct interest in how the lines are drawn, or who might be seen to have a conflict of interest with how the lines are drawn.

One of the most important things to do in creating a commission is to think about how you can increase public confidence in the maps that are ultimately drawn, and one of those ways is to remove people who might have conflicts of interests. Are there a set of qualifications you want to incorporate into selection? Professor Flateau talked a little about this, but in California this includes (1) an ability to be impartial; (2) having an appreciation for the diversity of the state's population; (3) having relevant skills and experience. California has created an application process for applicants actually ask -- answer those questions, and where there's a separate screening body that narrows the full reading of all of those applications. And there were some 30,000 people who put their

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION names into the hat for consideration and ultimately 6,000 who filled out all of the questions in a kind of college essay form. While it might be an arduous process of application, one of the key things that it does is that it identifies who is ready to take on this fairly time intensive and emotionally intensive process. If you're willing to fill out a form that involves answering some questions and doing some introspection you might be a little ready for the whole process.

Related to this is how the commissioners were checked. Are the commissioners directly appointed by incumbent politicians? Is there a relatively independent body that can help you screen those applicants or possibly be involved in this selection? So again I think you have a handout that describes the California process but moving from a place where incumbent politicians are directly appointing might help to cut the strings of -- from commissioners to elected officials, and additionally finding an entity that might be able to be your first screening, rather first screening of applicants to create a pool can help again to kind of get people who are

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extremely qualified, who are not experiencing conflicts of interest, and who then can be narrowed down to your finalists.

In California we have legislative -- we have state auditors who screen applicants. You have entities like Campaign Finance Board that might do the same. And then our legislators actually only play a role in striking the smaller pool, like jury selection but not picking directly. The final commission is actually picked in two parts. So once we've got the pool narrowed down to 60 applicants who have been screened and interviewed and then have legislative strikes, the first eight are randomly picked, using a veto ball type of machine, and then the last six are selected by the (indiscernible). In order to make sure there's a balance of diversity in race, ethnicity, gender, and geography, and that's pretty significant in California because we really wanted to make sure that our commissioners were as representative of all of the different diversity in the state, and I think that's a priority certainly for the City of New York.

MR. GEWOLB: One minute remaining.
MS. FENG: How to make the hearing process

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transparent to the citizens and meaningful. So the questions to ask are how can we make the hearings or public meetings the only place where commissioners are discussing the maps? Do you want to have for instance a ban on ex parte communications? That is off-the-record communications between the commission of staff and the public, including elected officials and staff? If there's ultimately conversations that are happening between the commissioners and elected officials you are essentially creating a back door that undermines public trust and certainly can have a very negative impact on the maps as drawn.

The next is are there requirements that the hearings happen in all parts of the city?

Third, are there requirement that the people attending the hearings can be offered translation, translation services, or offer (undiscernible) speak.

Fourth, is there a budget for the commission to be able to conduct outreach to reach those pockets of population?

And then fifth, are all conversations subject to discovery if someone or some

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION organization wants to challenge the maps? Oftentimes conversations are protected by legislative privilege, and creating a role that can be incredibly important to making sure that everything is up and up.

Finally, you should consider how the commission staff are hired and who controls the commission budget. Oftentimes staff of the mayor or council president are conveniently loaned to the commission, and it could be more thinking about giving the commission the budget as well as the authority to hire their executive staff, their voting rights council, their experts directly rather than through the city council or the mayor's office.

I can speak a little bit more how to ensure that hearings and the criteria that the commission is drawing by are protected both communities of color. What I'll just say that generally speaking, criteria should be prioritizing the Voting Rights Act and that there should also be consideration in the community of interest's testimony. Additionally, making sure that there's a budget for hiring experts who can conduct racial polarized analysis early in the

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION process can be incredibly helpful to just making sure that that priority is first before you think about all the other things that you need to do.

CHAIR PERALES: Thank you very much. This is very good. We've got one more panelist, James Hong. Former Co-Director at the MinKwon Center for Community Action. James?

MR. HONG: Good afternoon, everyone. Good to see you again. I had the pleasure of speaking before you, you know, a few weeks ago in Flushing about the concerns that I had, and I think Kathay and John here have just raised so many great things, you know, that we would support in terms of -- I would support in terms of my concerns. So, I think I can just bring some, like, some just concrete examples of what happened in back in 2011 with the city's redistricting process and just from there $I$ can make my recommendation. So, I referred to this before in 2009 there was a candidate who -- a candidate who won a very racially charged election against an AsianAmerican, and this person happened to be a protege of a longtime State Senator in Eastern Queens. That State Senator the next year lost his election bid but then in 2012 was appointed

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to the Districting Commission. And despite many comments saying to keep a neighborhood in that district together, it seemed like there was a lot of pressure to divide that neighborhood even more deeply then and it was. And so it diluted the Asian-American vote in that neighborhood in Queens.

And another example was about the influence of partisan political operatives. There was a State Assembly member, if you remember, who was at the time under fire for multiple counts of sexual harassment in the process of being disciplined in his Assembly post for his misconduct. He was somehow thrown a lifeline by being drawn into a neighboring district in Brooklyn sort of at the very eleventh hour, under the dark of night, and this became like this huge thing that, you know, the Speaker then had to deal with. And he -- I believe the Districting Commission and the City Council at the time did not even follow the process was laid out in the Charter. They went against the Charter pretty obviously because this had happened and they needed to correct it. There was a public outcry. So, so we saw that. And there was also

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION consistent backroom resistance to keeping Asian-American communities in Southwest Brooklyn together as well, you know, and we saw this in multiple parts of the city, you know, Central Queens as well. But the thing is that we just constantly saw in the Commission an influence of people that were either connected to incumbents or interested in party politics.

So, the concern or the recommendation that I had was that past elected officials should not be allowed in decision-making process in the maps, most obviously not to sit on the Districting Commission, and redistricting from start to finish needs to be protected from influence of partisan operatives.

You know, I think Kathay has given a much broader sort of, like, vision of what is good redistricting, you know. The way that the Mayor right now chooses seven and the City Council choose eight of the Commissioners, I think this is problematic. Direct political appointees, we can't really expect them to be that independent, and so there needs to be a different way of choosing Commission members in a process that itself free from influence of past or present

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION elected officials and disconnected with them. Personally, I think academics demographers, people who are really into data and really connected with their community and, oh yeah, community members who are really connected with their localities, I think these are the kind of people we want on the Commission, and a robust way for screening for them is something I brought up in the last, in the last hearing and actually referred to the California process, so I'm very glad that Kathay is here to talk about that. So, yeah, that's it for my comments.

CHAIR PERALES: Thank you very much. Are there questions from the Commissioners? Wendy?

COMMISSIONER WISE: I just wanted to ask Mr. Flateau about the if there were particular problems with the way the current Commission is functioning that sort of led you to propose these particular changes? And I heard you speak at length about the districts from sizes and changing the numbers of districts and more about the recommendations about how the Commission is functioning and how to improve it. Maybe if you could speak to that.

DR. FLATEAU: Problems. I think --

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COMMISSIONER WISE: Or imperfections.
DR. FLATEAU: Okay. I think a number of the imperfections were counterbalanced by the fact that in New York City you have a very robust constituency of Voting Rights Act advocates, civic organizations that kept a lot of outside pressure and eyes, keep eyes on the process and, additionally, that Commission, knowing that if they did not do the right thing inevitably their work was going to wind up in the federal court. And the City of New York has lost several of those lawsuits, City and State of New York, in the past. So, I think those to an extent there aren't imperfections in the process, you had those counterweights that helped to correct, correct the process.

CHAIR PERALES: The Voting Rights Act was a counterweight?

DR. FLATEAU: Absolutely. Absolutely. The -so there was a Supreme Court, U.S. Supreme Court decision that didn't hit the table until 2013, after the last City Council and State and Congressional redistricting. Up until that time three of the five county boroughs in New York City are required to preclear any of their

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political map drawing, polling place changes. Any laws, policies, practices and procedures would have to be first submitted to be reviewed by the Justice Department, and that then opened the door for any members of the public to comment during that open process as well. So I think the Voting Rights Act had a major chastening effect on imperfections and any other types of activity that they would otherwise. And my concern is that the next redistricting round that we're moving into right now there's no such preclearance mechanism in place at the federal, state or city level, and we're about to go into another redistricting round.

COMMISSIONER WISE: So a thought for you and also for Kathay Feng. Is it your testimony that these changes might make it -- might compensate for the loss of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act and make it that the next round of redistricting will be more inclusive of community members and then more respectful of the values that the of representation that the Voting Right Acts is trying to further? And then for Kathay, the question is, is it your experience that in California that the model used there was

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION consistent with also advancing more unfair representation consistent with the Voting Rights Act?

DR. FLATEAU: My answer would be it's not a question of either/or. We need both. I think that we can improve upon the current redistricting process that is imbedded in the current City Charter, and we still need some type of preclearance mechanism to arrive on the scene as a second clearinghouse for whatever product comes out of the next redistricting.

COMMISSIONER WISE: So a two part?
DR. FLATEAU: Yes.
COMMISSIONER WISE: Thank you.
DR. FLATEAU: Could we roll up slide two, if you don't mind? We'll see -- oh.

MS. FENG: (Indiscernible) In California specifically because we had gone through a number of rounds where there was some fairly egregious Voting Rights Act claims that were raised by civil rights activities, including (indiscernible) but where the court specifically said that if the justification was protecting incumbent electives that communities were not being divided for racial reasons but rather to

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION protect political interests, which was a perfectly acceptable explanation, and even a traditional redistricting criteria.

So one of the reasons we went down that road upgrading the commission and these very strong protections to ensure that the communities' voice was listened to vis-a-vis or maybe in parallel to what had always been the case, which is the powerful interests had their seat at the table was because we knew that the courts had slowly been eroding voting rights protections and also even eroding traditional sections under Voting Rights Act like Section 2. So, I would say a lot of times what happens is that in minority communities experience getting cut off or passed because they're running into another interest. Oftentimes it's the self-interest of the incumbent trying to draw a safe seat for themselves, or somebody who's their successor, right, or friend. And so to the extent that we can kind of recalibrate that so that the balance is to listen to community interests and community (indiscernible) it allows for the lifting up of those concerns rather than always first and foremost put in an incumbent or partisan interest

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first. So, I would concur in California how we ended with up getting I would say fairly responsive districts both at the state and certain cities that have adopted it as well, is looking at these twin questions, right? How do we protect communities, lift them up? And then also how do we make sure that incumbent voices or interests, political insider interests that usually have an inside line to how these lines are drawn don't have that special access pass? I'd like to turn this to my colleague if there are any additional questions, Juanita Brown, Dan Acuna, also knows quite a bit, even more than I do, about redistricting, and so if there are any additional questions for us. Thank you so much for allowing us to present today. CHAIR PERALES: Thank you, Ms. Feng. MS. FENG: And good luck. COMMISSIONER SIEGAL: I have a followup questions for Dr. Flateau. What is your suggestion for how to implement a local substitute for the Voting Rights Act, clearance process?

DR. FLATEAU: One, one thought that immediately comes to mind is modeled off of the

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Justice Department and the State Attorney General's office. They all have civil rights divisions already in place. So, a quick approach would be to let that civil rights division, I believe, it exists within the Corporation Council's office. And they have experts. They've been defending the City of New York on civil rights cases for decades now, so they have the in-house expertise. They're familiar with voting rights, civil rights, very familiar with voting rights, civil rights laws, they're one of the largest law firms in the country, so that could be one place that we could very quickly house the preclearance function for the city, for municipal redistricting.

CHAIR PERALES: Before $I$ turn it over to Dr. Clarke, obviously the Mayor appoints Corporation Council, and they don't have the tradition that exists in the federal government. They're a very independent Civil Rights Commission. You yourself have some questions about the independence of the U.S. civil rights division as we all have seen over the last few years, so I'm not so sure we've got a perfect solution, but I appreciate your thoughts.

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DR. FLATEAU: It's quick. The bureaucracy is already in place, the expertise is there. It beats a blank, which is where we stand right now. COMMISSIONER CLARKE: I just want to ask for those of us who come from immigrant communities with all of what's happening in Washington how do you see a census reflecting the true numbers within communities? And I know in the CaribbeanAmerican community it's going to be hard pressed to get a lot of folks who live in the attic, who live in the basement, to fill a form out and say, "I am here" and after that is afraid ICE is going to come. So just tell me what is in your mind for communities like mine would want to focus on in order to get a true count in order to draw a district's line?

DR. FLATEAU: We're in a very critical period right now, because the federal government just decided to add a citizenship question to the 2020 Census, and the feedback $I$ have is that it's sending shock waves through, throughout immigrant New York and far beyond. So if we don't do something by way of education, outreach, assurance to New Yorkers that when, if and when they respond to that question there won't be

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repercussions, we're in for a massive undercount, which means a further decline in our congressional representation, state legislative representation, our City Council districts are going to be skewed because we'll have so many people in those districts that aren't being counted, that's going to affect our ability to -government's ability to adequately deliver goods and services to its residents. So, there are massive repercussions if New York City does not now, I believe, begin working on this question of 2020 Census, education, and outreach, because that's the predicate to redistricting.

The numbers from that census are going to be used to redistrict. That also has ill effect on New York City's congressional representation and those are our counts in the electoral college. It will also diminish New York's voice in national politics as well and in the national legislature.

COMMISSIONER SEECHARRAN: To continue that line of discussion. So this is a concern of mine as well, and I hear you on the need to educate folks. Though can you not assure them that ICE won't come after them? But I wonder if you have
a specific recommendation that could be in the form of a proposal that goes to the ballot that helps to mitigate for anticipated undercount that will likely occur? I don't know what that is, but I just wonder if you, if any of you have any thoughts around that.

COMMISSIONER WISE: Can I ask a question related to that? Under existing law, does New York City have the ability to supplement the census count in drawing its local districts already?

DR. FLATEAU: The answer is no. But New York can challenge the census count. There is a process in place nationally. New York has always lost those challenges when it challenged its count.

And to your question, I'm sorry.
COMMISSIONER WISE: What is the limitation on supplementary -- I understand you can't for federal --

DR. FLATEAU: There's only one authorized the census counter in America and that's the U.S. Census Bureau. Nobody -- no other governmental jurisdiction could come along and say -- what you can do is come up with an alternative set of

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numbers. This is what happened in the last census. New York City challenged its undercount because it claimed the Census Bureau missed some of the new housing units. Now think back ten years compared to how many housing units are exploding all over New York City right now. New York City lost that argument before the Justice Department and on the courts ten years ago, when we tried to argue that they missed housing units with people in them. The bottom line was, "Too bad. So what?" That was fed's response. So you come up with alternative analysis. What we need to do is get ahead of the process. The key agency right now is our New York City Department of City Planning. They're compiling all the data and feeding it to the Census Bureau, who then creates these -- it's called the Master Address File. That's where they get -- the addresses are coming from us right now, and then they're gonna mail out a postcard for 2020 with a pass code on it. This will be the first digital census in U.S. history.

The push is for -- and that's another problem. We have a digital divide here in New York City. It ties into our education process, it

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MR. HONG: If the inclusion of the citizen question is the part of a larger effort by some people in this country to eventually draw districts based on citizens alone, which would have a disastrous impact, you know, on any level of government, on any jurisdiction, definitely disenfranchising minority and immigrant communities. It may be something the Commission considers whether to codify drawing districts based on residents and by people rather than citizens.

CHAIR PERALES: I don't know it will make any difference.

I think the hour draws late. I want to thank the panelists, including those who were remotely participating. This has been very, very helpful. These last comments have brought it all together.

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION Getting people engaged in the Census is something that the volunteer office would do. It's all melding in, in the minds of this Commission, so that I do very much appreciate your comments and your testimony. Thank you very, very much. And I think we have -- the meeting is adjourned. Thank you.
(Whereupon, at 4:18 P.M., the above matter concluded.)

# NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION 

CERTIFICATE

STATE OF NEW YORK )
COUNTY OF NEW YORK
)
: SS.:

I, NORAH COLTON, CM, a Notary Public for and within the State of New York, do hereby certify:

That the above is a correct transcription of my stenographic notes.

I further certify that $I$ am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or by marriage and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 23 rd day of June 2018.




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