

**Tenth Public Hearing of the
Charter Revision Commission**

**Moderated by Patrick Gaspard
Monday, July 13, 2026
5:13 p.m.**

**Queens Borough Hall
120-55 Queens Boulevard
Helen Marshall Cultural Center
Jamaica, NY 11415**

Reported by: Paul Grasso

JOB NO: 8292825

A P P E A R A N C E S

List of Attendees:

Patrick Gaspard, Chair

Emma Wolfe, Vice Chair

Susan Kang, Secretary

Henry Garrido, Commissioner

Kathy Wylde, Commissioner

Carlina Rivera, Commissioner

Marc Shaw, Commissioner

Esther Rosario, Commissioner

Kapil Longani, Commissioner

Ana Oliveira, Commissioner

Marco Carrion, Commissioner

Theodore Moore, Commissioner

Ruth Messenger, Commissioner

Barika Williams, Commissioner

Rebecca Nice, ASL Interpreter

Sarah Campbell, ASL Interpreter

Christian Cabrera, Spanish Interpreter

Kenny Minayo, Small Businesses Commissioner

Lincoln Restler, Member of New York City Council

Frank Morano, Member of New York City Council

Phil Wong, Member of New York City Council

Selvena Brooks-Powers, Member of New York City Council

Nwamaka Ejebe, Member of New York City Council

A P P E A R A N C E S (Cont'd)

Gail Brewer, Member of New York City Council

Judy Wessler, Public Attendee Testimony

Edgar Alfonseca, Public Attendee Testimony

Najee Rayne, Public Attendee Testimony

Naila Caicedo-Rosario, Public Attendee Testimony

Geoffrey Brown, Public Attendee Testimony

Mae Francke, Public Attendee Testimony

Eric McClure, Public Attendee Testimony

Steve Flack, Public Attendee Testimony

Xavier Pu-Folkes, Public Attendee Testimony

Laura Shepard, Public Attendee Testimony

Misha Nonan, Public Attendee Testimony

Michelle Yanche, Public Attendee Testimony

Meryl Laborde, Public Attendee Testimony

Rex Tai, Public Attendee Testimony

Karen Wharton, Public Attendee Testimony

Ryan Shanahan, Public Attendee Testimony

Alex Camarda, Public Attendee Testimony

Sara Catalinotto, Public Attendee Testimony

Lee Drutman, Public Attendee Testimony

Briana Strong, Public Attendee Testimony

Eric Huntley, Public Attendee Testimony

Alex Morano, Public Attendee Testimony

Pedro Rodriguez, Public Attendee Testimony

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A P P E A R A N C E S (Cont'd)
Lourdes Blanco, Public Attendee Testimony
Alvin Carter, Public Attendee Testimony
Michelle Jackson, Public Attendee Testimony

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 THE CHAIR: Good evening, everyone. My
3 name is Patrick Gaspard, and I'm honored to serve as
4 Chair of the Commission on Government Efficiency.
5 This is the tenth and final public hearing of this
6 Commission.

7 Over the course of the last many weeks,
8 my fellow commissioners and I have heard from a
9 cross-section of New Yorkers in all five boroughs.
10 We've received in-person testimony, written or
11 in-person testimony from 650 New Yorkers.

12 Counting you, we are at over 1,000
13 participants in these hearings. And after tonight, we
14 will have engaged in over 30 hours of direct
15 engagement with this -- this extraordinary city of
16 ours on these pressing issues.

17 Our mission, our mandate is to do a top
18 to bottom review of the New York City Charter to
19 determine how we work with everyday New Yorkers to
20 create the 21st century government that you all
21 deserve, one that's so much more efficient, impactful.

22 It manages to bring costs down for all
23 New Yorkers, makes it possible for us to have more
24 affordable housing in this city, more affordable
25 groceries, transit that is faster and more accessible,

1 and that creates the public infrastructure that we are
2 deserving of.

3 After we've reviewed all this
4 testimony, we will, as a commission, make a set of
5 recommendations to the mayor and this administration,
6 to the agency commissioners, and they will in turn
7 work to craft questions that will be taken up on the
8 ballot in November.

9 If all of New York or the majority of
10 New Yorkers who participate in the November elections
11 agree with those recommendations and those ballot
12 initiatives, they then have the full force of law.

13 I can -- I'm confident that I speak for
14 my fellow commissioners when I say that this is
15 independent, nonpartisan commission that is receiving
16 all of your testimony with -- without favor or bias.
17 We're relying on our good judgment and our collective
18 shared values.

19 Joining me in this inspiring task are
20 14 other commissioners: Vice Chair Emma Wolfe,
21 Secretary Susan Kang, Marco Carrion, Henry Garrido,
22 Kapil Longani, Theodore Moore, Anna Oliveira, Carlina
23 Rivera, Esther Rosario, Marc Shaw, Kathy Wylde.

24 Attending virtually tonight are
25 Commissioners Ruth Messenger and Barika Williams. And

1 absent from tonight's proceedings is Commissioner Dawn
2 Pinnock.

3 Although, as I said, we are conducting
4 a top-to-bottom review of the entire City Charter, we
5 are looking in particular at processes and procedures
6 built into our charter that could be updated to
7 deliver the government that you are all deserving of.

8 Today we are focused on outdoor dining
9 and street safety. Outdoor dining and street safety
10 projects are essential features of our public spaces.
11 Public space in New York City is our collective
12 connective tissue. If we did not understand that many
13 years ago, that came home hard for all of us in stark
14 relief during the pandemic.

15 The places where we see each other,
16 places where we hear each other, places that should be
17 democratizing forces for all of us. We spend so much
18 time navigating our streets together, and their
19 functionality, their safety, their cleanliness have to
20 contribute to livability in this city.

21 Tonight we'll hear from New Yorkers,
22 New Yorkers who are experts and New Yorkers who are
23 expert because of the experiences that they have in
24 our streets, for their very best ideas on how we
25 improve outdoor dining and street safety.

1 That being said, even though I'm, you
2 know, stressing that particular focus of this hearing,
3 we are welcoming testimony from all New Yorkers who
4 have ideas about efficiencies, innovations, reforms
5 that are charter specific.

6 So I'm very much looking forward to all
7 of the contributions that we'll hear in this room and
8 from our friends and neighbors online.

9 I just want to give you a sense of how
10 this particular hearing will unfold.

11 Tonight we're privileged to hear from
12 Small Business Services Commissioner Kenny Minaya, who
13 is going to share his expert testimony on the
14 experiences that small business owners are having with
15 the outdoor dining system. He'll have five minutes to
16 present his testimony followed by questions from this
17 Commission.

18 We also will hear from elected
19 officials who are present in the room or who attend
20 online.

21 I know that my good friend City Council
22 Member Lincoln Restler is online, and he'll be a
23 virtual participant. So as soon as we begin the
24 hearing, I'll probably turn to the council member
25 first.

1 For all members of public who are
2 joining us and who would love to be able to testify
3 tonight, please know that you have three minutes to
4 make your presentation. I'll call you up in pairs,
5 whether it's in the room or virtually.

6 There's a clock here that gives you a
7 sense of how long you've been speaking, and we're
8 going to be really strict in adhering to those three
9 minutes. And I'll stress to you that if -- if the
10 thing you want to say has already been said, you might
11 decide to abbreviate some of your testimony. The
12 three minutes are not a requirement. That's a
13 ceiling.

14 So we'll call you two at a time. If
15 you wish to testify virtually, please complete the
16 RSVP form that's on our website, which we'll share in
17 the chat room right now. Once you're ready to speak,
18 please raise your hands in Zoom, and we'll call on you
19 when it's your turn.

20 We're going to do everything that we
21 can to hear from everyone who signs up to testify, but
22 we have to leave this space at 8 p.m. tonight. So
23 work with me. If we're efficient, then everybody will
24 have their fair -- fair turn.

25 Before we proceed any further and

1 launch into the formal public hearing, I would just
2 like to ask my commissioners for a motion to approve
3 the minutes from our July 6th Staten Island hearing
4 and our July 8th Manhattan hearing.

5 Is there a motion?

6 MR. GARRIDO: So moved.

7 THE CHAIR: Is there a second?

8 MR. LONGANI: Second.

9 THE CHAIR: Any discussion on the
10 motion? All those in favor say aye.

11 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Aye.

12 THE CHAIR: Any opposed? Abstentions?

13 Great. The minutes have been approved.

14 So as I noted, we have expert testimony
15 that we will receive from the Commissioner of Small
16 Businesses, but I -- I want to turn to the virtual
17 room and ask our friend Council Member Lincoln Restler
18 to please join us and -- and participate and -- and to
19 give us his -- his best three to four minutes of
20 thinking on our business of charter reform.

21 MR. RESTLER: Well, thank you so much,
22 Chair Gaspard and Vice Chair Wolfe and all the
23 distinguished members of this Commission. You guys
24 have really put together an exceptional blue ribbon
25 panel, and it is a privilege to join you this evening.

1 Thank you for the opportunity to offer some testimony.

2 You know, our last major charter review
3 was in '89 on the heels of one of the worst corruption
4 scandals in our city's history during the Koch -- the
5 third term of the Koch Administration.

6 And the '89 Charter Revision Commission
7 fundamentally reshaped city government, strengthened
8 the powers of the Council. And over the past 35
9 years, we have seen the powers of the Council slowly
10 shrink.

11 This became more apparent during the
12 corruption of the Adam -- Eric Adams Administration.
13 This scandal-ridden administration led to unending
14 investigations that still continue to this very day
15 and an unprecedented exodus of senior officials
16 following allegations of impropriety.

17 Beyond the documented corruption, the
18 administration was plagued by a pervasive view that
19 they were above the law. They refused to implement
20 local laws, passed endless emergency executive orders,
21 restricted elected officials from meeting with City
22 agencies, and so much more.

23 We are deeply grateful that the Mamdani
24 Administration is committed to ethical good governance
25 and has appointed such an impressive group of

1 commissioners to lead this charter review.

2 And while I trust and respect the
3 leadership of the Mamdani Administration, our charter
4 must be designed to withstand the next corrupt
5 administration. And I'm concerned that some of the
6 proposals, while practical on paper, could limit the
7 ability of the Council to prevent future corruption in
8 the years to come.

9 For example, I'm concerned that the
10 proposal to remove the Council's -- about the proposal
11 to remove the Council's authority over the building
12 code. DOB has an unfortunate history with corruption
13 under many past mayors, and the City Council is
14 committed to working closely with the -- with DOB to
15 efficiently review any needed code changes.

16 I'm also concerned that the proposal on
17 disposition and rental of city properties could be
18 abused in the future. The real estate division at
19 DCAS, as we all know, has wide latitude and authority
20 to implement its policies and was deeply corrupt under
21 Eric Adams, including steering leases to Merrill
22 donors.

23 I do not believe it would be wise to
24 entirely remove outside reviews and approvals of
25 DCAS's work by the Council unless other independent

1 oversight is embedded to restore trust in the
2 decision-making of the DCAS real estate team.

3 And lastly, I'm concerned about the
4 proposals regarding the Rainy Day Fund. The Council
5 received testimony at a hearing on the Charter -- on
6 Charter Commissions in October '24, which I chaired
7 actually, that emphasized the need to strengthen, not
8 weaken the Council's role in the budget process.

9 Charter commissions have become
10 increasingly common the past few years, largely driven
11 by political agendas. But it's important to remember
12 that their intended purpose is to address fundamental
13 issues in the balance of power as set out by the
14 Charter that actually require a referendum and not to
15 replace the legislative or executive functions of the
16 City.

17 Reflecting on the '89 Charter Revision
18 Commission, Fritz Schwarz noted, "A charter
19 commission's job is to provide a structure and process
20 for governmental decision-making, not to make the
21 decisions itself. A commission is not a legislature,
22 nor should it act as one."

23 Now, there are several proposals in the
24 draft report that I believe would be best addressed
25 through legislative action and rule-making. And I'd

1 like to highlight a few of them if -- until you tell
2 me to -- that I need to stop talking.

3 So firstly, the Council is actively
4 working on legislation --

5 THE CHAIR: I think you have about 45
6 seconds, Council Member.

7 MR. RESTLER: Okay. All right. Then
8 I'll go fast, and -- and I appreciate it very much.

9 The -- the Council is actively working
10 on legislation to restore outdoor -- to restore open
11 dining to year round. We're hoping to vote on it in
12 weeks, not months. And we are eager to work with DOT
13 to improve their administration of the program and
14 timely processing of applications.

15 While I am supportive of amending
16 notification methods to modernize the process, I am
17 concerned that changes to the current approval process
18 could jeopardize the restoration of year-round outdoor
19 dining and our ability to pass legislation on a very
20 aggressive timeline.

21 The Commission has rightly pointed out
22 some flaws in the City's revocable consent process,
23 and I hope that a future Commission can conduct a more
24 in-depth study of this process and develop more
25 holistic recommendations to reform the system instead

1 of ad hoc changes.

2 The Council has also worked to amend
3 the approval process for major transportation
4 projects, including legislation that I passed to
5 streamline the approval of bike lanes.

6 Community feedback on transportation
7 projects is critical, and I'd be happy to work with
8 the administration to further amend this process
9 legislatively while ensuring robust and timely
10 community notifications remain.

11 I have urged the FDNY to commit to a
12 30-day time frame to provide feedback to DOT on bike
13 lane proposals, but they have refused. I hope that
14 City Hall will work this out with their agencies.

15 I -- I do just want to note in
16 conclusion, because I know time is tight, that the
17 work of the RABRC Commission has been effective at
18 eliminating outdated reports. I would be really
19 concerned about automating a sunset provision for
20 important reports that the Council receives.

21 And as chair of the Contracts
22 Committee, I'm committed to improving our procurement
23 process and would welcome further information or
24 details on the Commission's procurement proposals.

25 I would really encourage that the

1 Mamdani Administration actually implement Local Law
2 169, which is intended to set crisp timelines and
3 benchmarks for every single stage in the procurement
4 process to ensure timely registration of contracts.

5 I really appreciate the hard work of
6 this Commission and the ability to share a few
7 thoughts with you this evening.

8 Our charter must be strong enough to
9 withstand the next corrupt administration. And I -- I
10 hope that the recommendations we make keep that in
11 mind.

12 Thanks so much for your consideration
13 and appreciate the chance to say hello.

14 THE CHAIR: We appreciate you, Council
15 Member. My apologies for having to cut your time
16 short. It's only because we're doing all we can to
17 advantage public participation tonight.

18 Council Member, please stay with us,
19 because I -- I see that we've been joined by Council
20 Member Frank Morano. And I hope that after we hear
21 from -- from him, you can be available in case our
22 commissioners have any questions for both of you.

23 Council Member, thank you for joining
24 us from Staten Island.

25 MR. F. MORANO: Thank you, Chair

1 Gaspard. And one day I hope our relationship matures
2 to the point where I get introduced, as my colleague
3 from Brooklyn did, as my good friend and our good
4 friend, but I'll continue to strive for that.

5 THE CHAIR: Lincoln -- Lincoln and I go
6 way back. That's all. But we're -- we're working on
7 this.

8 MR. F. MORANO: I hope we get there.
9 I'm hoping we get there.

10 Thank you, everybody. And as -- as
11 many of you know, my name's Frank Morano, and I have
12 the privilege of representing the 51st Council
13 District on Staten Island and the New York City
14 Council.

15 Before I begin, I want to thank you
16 sincerely for all the time and effort and all the time
17 and effort that the staff has devoted to this entire
18 process.

19 I've been attending Charter Revision
20 Commission hearings for more than 20 years. I suppose
21 that either makes me deeply committed to good
22 government or someone who's in desperate need of a
23 hobby.

24 I had hoped to testify at your last
25 Staten Island hearing, and I did have Ralph's Ices, as

1 promised, ready to go. But my wife, with her
2 impeccable timing, gave birth to our daughter that
3 day. So I submitted written testimony instead, which
4 I hope you'll review.

5 And in consideration of your time and
6 the public's, I am going to significantly abridge my
7 remarks, but I do hope you'll review the -- the
8 written testimony.

9 Tonight's my first opportunity to offer
10 my thoughts on the preliminary report that you guys
11 have put together. After reading it closely, my
12 honest reaction is that I have mixed feelings.

13 And first, let me say that I
14 think -- what I think the report gets right, which I
15 think is substantial. I appreciate that the
16 Commission isn't pretending City government is
17 perfect, which is a glaring omission that a lot of
18 previous Commissions have made. It identifies real
19 problems that New Yorkers deal with every day.

20 I think you're exactly right that
21 permitting often takes too long. You're right that
22 procurement is cumbersome. You're right that City
23 agencies still operate with outdated technology that
24 doesn't communicate well across government. And
25 you're right that some administrative requirements

1 have become seriously outdated over time.

2 I think those are real problems, and I
3 appreciate that you're trying to solve them.

4 Where we differ is less about the
5 diagnosis than about some of the proposed cures. One
6 thing that struck me as I read the report is that it
7 often reads more like a menu of possibilities than a
8 set of concrete recommendations.

9 Throughout the report, the Commission
10 says it may consider various actions, but the public
11 still doesn't know exactly what many of the proposed
12 charter changes will look like. I imagine that'll
13 come out as we get closer to you guys putting
14 questions on the ballot. That's one reason I've
15 encouraged this Commission to become a two-year
16 commission.

17 And the City Charter is, in many
18 respects, New York City's Constitution. It deserves
19 careful consideration, not an accelerated timetable
20 that leaves important questions unresolved.

21 Councilman Restler referenced that '89
22 Commission. And I think part of the work it did --
23 part of the reason it did such great work is because
24 it was a two-year commission.

25 I also believe we should be careful not

1 to frame this as a choice between efficiency and
2 democracy, because it doesn't have to be. We ought to
3 be able to build a government that's faster and more
4 responsive without making it less transparent or less
5 accountable.

6 I totally support genuine efficiency.
7 I support cutting red tape, making it easier for
8 homeowners and small businesses to navigate City
9 government, which can make you dizzy. But efficiency
10 shouldn't become a substitute for accountability.

11 When government hears fewer voices,
12 publishes less information, or reduces meaningful
13 public review, that isn't necessarily efficiency.
14 Sometimes it's simply just less democracy.

15 That's why I'm concerned about
16 suggestions that could weaken review of major
17 transportation projects. If the City believes those
18 laws need updating, that's a conversation worth
19 having, as Councilman Restler stated, through the
20 normal legislative process.

21 But charter revision shouldn't become a
22 backdoor for making it easier to implement major
23 street redesigns or busways or bike lane projects
24 while reducing meaningful neighborhood input.

25 Likewise, I'm skeptical --

1 THE CHAIR: Council Member, forgive me
2 for noting that you're -- you're close to at time.

3 MR. F. MORANO: Got it, got it. I hope
4 you'll review my written testimony. I do also want to
5 make a plea with you to please put my community board
6 reform question on the ballot.

7 As I've testified before, I believe
8 council members should appoint up to one-half of the
9 members of their community boards. Reasonable people
10 can disagree with that proposal, but some of you may
11 think it's a great idea. Some of you may disagree.
12 That's okay.

13 What I'm asking you is not that you
14 agree with me. I'm asking you to trust the voters
15 enough to let them decide.

16 Community boards are supposed to be the
17 public's front door to local government. How they're
18 appointed is an important question. Let them make it.
19 And if you put any other questions on the ballot, that
20 prevents us in the Council from putting this question
21 on the ballot this year.

22 Please don't let that happen. I
23 believe community board reform is one of those
24 questions that the public really needs to weigh in on.

25 Thank you again for your work.

1 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

2 MR. F. MORANO: Thank you for your
3 patience with me, for your willingness to listen, and
4 for the opportunity to testify. Please read my
5 written remarks.

6 THE CHAIR: Thank you so very much,
7 Council Member, for participating, for submitting
8 written remarks. And thank you for accompanying us on
9 this journey with the public.

10 This is the third time that we've been
11 able to engage with you. I would be calling you old
12 friend now if you had delivered those ices, but
13 congratulations for the -- (Speaking in Italian).
14 Really, congrats, congrats.

15 All right. So Commissioners, any
16 questions for our two members of the City Council?

17 Theo, please.

18 MR. MOORE: Good evening. Thank you
19 both for testifying. And Council Member, well,
20 congratulations.

21 And I'm -- and I'm working my way
22 through the list of recommended restaurants on Staten
23 Island. I'm considering you, like, my personal, like,
24 Zagat's from now on.

25 Just was wondering in -- in the area of

1 just removing some of the powers of -- from -- from
2 the Council, do you have any alternatives or addendums
3 to our suggestions specifically around oversight of
4 DCAS proposals that -- that you would recommend, or is
5 it just leave it as it currently is?

6 MR. F. MORANO: Sorry. Okay. Am I
7 mute? I'll defer to Lincoln first if he wants to
8 answer. He's a little smarter than me. Otherwise,
9 if --

10 MR. RESTLER: That's -- that's untrue,
11 but I'm happy -- go ahead, Frank. After you.

12 MR. F. MORANO: All right. So I -- I
13 think there are alternatives that accomplish the some
14 of the same goals without simply removing the Council
15 from the process.

16 One would be creating a tiered review
17 system. A routine office lease renewal or a minor
18 property disposition shouldn't necessarily go through
19 the same level of scrutiny as a major land transaction
20 with significant neighborhood impacts. The process
21 should be proportional to the decision being made.

22 I think another option would be
23 establishing statutory deadlines. If the concern is
24 that Council review adds unnecessary delay, then
25 require the Council to act within a defined period or

1 the item moves automatically. That preserves
2 democratic accountability while addressing the
3 concerns about timing.

4 I also think technology can replace
5 some bureaucracy without replacing public input.
6 Better electronic notice, online tracking, greater
7 transparency, that would all improve efficiency while
8 actually increasing public participation.

9 So my concern isn't that every existing
10 review process, it's perfect. Far from it. It's that
11 we shouldn't equate efficiency with eliminating checks
12 and balances. I think we can modernize government
13 while preserving meaningful oversight.

14 MR. RESTLER: Great. And I -- I really
15 appreciate that question, Commissioner Moore. Always
16 good to see you. And -- and echo many of Council
17 Member Morano's sentiments.

18 I -- I would say broadly that if the
19 Council had a lesser role or was not as involved in
20 the lease agreement process, I think that would be
21 pretty reasonable. We're brought in at the very end
22 of a process that's already baked, and we're put in a
23 very funky position where an agency needs space and we
24 basically have to just sign off on it, and it's too
25 late to do much of anything about it.

1 I -- I would be concerned about changes
2 to dispositions, which is a permanent decision and one
3 that we want to make sure is done right.

4 If there's an issue with a lease
5 agreement that -- that DCAS signs, it could be
6 expensive, but the City can break a lease. You can't
7 go back on a disposition.

8 And we have an opportunity with
9 dispositions to make sure that public land is fully
10 benefiting our communities in the best possible ways.
11 And I think that our input there is really important
12 and our community's input there is really important.

13 Whereas I think the lease --
14 streamlining the lease process makes a lot of sense.
15 You could do an expedited ULURP on dispositions that
16 still has the Council involved at -- at the
17 conclusion. And -- and I would recommend something
18 along those lines if you're looking to -- to
19 streamline that process.

20 THE CHAIR: Great. Thank you both,
21 Council Members. We've -- we've, of course, received
22 your testimony. We'll review it.

23 And to my good friend in Staten Island,
24 please know, as we say in the old world, the carrot --
25 the carrot is not cooked here.

1 We've received a set of
2 recommendations, a memorandum from the staff. There's
3 been public transparency, but this is still a work in
4 progress, and we appreciate both your inputs and your
5 insistence on continued engagement. So thank you.

6 MR. F. MORANO: Thank you very much.

7 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Thank you so
8 much.

9 It appears that our SBS commissioner
10 has not yet arrived, and so I'm going to move directly
11 to hearing from the public.

12 I'd like to invite Edgar Alfonseca and
13 Najee Rayne to join us at the front of the room.

14 Hello.

15 MR. ALFONSECA: Hi.

16 THE CHAIR: Edgar and --

17 MS. DOBREV: What was the second name?
18 What was the second name?

19 THE CHAIR: Najee or Najee Rayne.

20 MS. DOBREV: It sounds like mine, but I
21 can't tell.

22 THE CHAIR: What -- what is your name?

23 MS. DOBREV: Nadaig Dobrev [ph].
24 Nadaig, N-A-D-A-I-G.

25 THE CHAIR: And the last name?

1 MS. DOBREV: Dobrev [ph].

2 THE CHAIR: No, that's not the name.

3 But -- but I will -- I'll call in Najee Rayne's place
4 Naila Caicedo-Rosario.

5 Thank you.

6 Please, Edgar.

7 MR. ALFONSECA: Hi. Good evening,
8 Commissioners. My name is Edgar Alfonseca. I'm the
9 Chair of Transportation Public Transit Street Safety
10 for Queens Community Board 6, which is covering Forest
11 Hills Regal Park.

12 But I'm just testifying tonight
13 expressing my own personal views, not the views of the
14 community board. Pleased to be here.

15 And I -- I'm here to basically ask the
16 Commission to seriously take into consideration
17 getting -- doing whatever you can or -- to get rid of
18 the red tape that stands in the way for communities
19 like mine to expand bike lane infrastructure and also
20 street safety design in our communities.

21 When it comes to bike lanes, so this
22 community just recently got Citi Bike. And even
23 though New York City DOT did not seed a single dock
24 that was installed here over the last few months,
25 every dock I passed by was fully seated or, like, they

1 had bikes in them.

2 And that's because people from our --
3 that live in the community were bringing bikes back
4 into the community, which is, for me, a clear
5 demonstration that people are really using bikes in
6 our community and that there's a demand for expanding
7 our bike lane infrastructure here.

8 And lastly, I'm a parent of a
9 four-year-old and I'm raising my kid here, and street
10 safety is really important to me. You know, I -- I
11 really care about people feeling safe when they cross
12 the street.

13 And I -- only recently, a few months
14 ago, I was at a rally here at Fleet -- at Fleet and
15 Alderton Street in Rego Park. And parents and even
16 representatives of elected officials were there to
17 support the idea of implementing street safety design
18 measures in that intersection.

19 And there are a lot of daycares in that
20 intersection, 3Ks and 4Ks. And unfortunately, even
21 though the DOT is milling that area right now as we
22 speak, there's no indication they're going to install
23 any street safety design measures in that
24 intersection.

25 So we're putting families at risk

1 unnecessarily. And I have to believe that it has to
2 do with the major transportation infrastructure laws
3 that are in place that were put in place during the
4 Bloomberg Era Administration.

5 So I really kindly ask all of you to
6 take into consideration communities like mine, which
7 are fighting for, you know, these infrastructure
8 improvements, but we just have a lot of red tape and
9 laws getting in the way of allowing us to do so.

10 So thank you all for your time today.

11 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

12 MR. ALFONSECA: That's all I have.

13 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

14 Naila?

15 MS. CAICEDO-ROSARIO: Hi. Naila

16 Caicedo --

17 THE CHAIR: Please --

18 Sorry.

19 Please stay with us, Edgar. There may
20 be questions from the Commission.

21 MR. ALFONSECA: Of course. Sorry.

22 Didn't know that part.

23 MS. CAICEDO-ROSARIO: No problem.

24 Hi, my name is Naila Caicedo-Rosario.

25 I am the National Policy Director and New York State

1 Director for One Fair Wage.

2 Thank you so much for the opportunity
3 to testify today. I prepared testimony, so I just
4 want to make sure I hit all my points, so I'll read
5 from it.

6 So One Fair Wage is a national
7 organization that is working to ensure that every
8 worker earns a full living wage with tips on top
9 instead of just, you know -- just, you know, poverty
10 wages.

11 Every day we hear from restaurant
12 workers, from salon workers, from car wash workers,
13 from delivery workers, from retail workers, and from
14 other low wage workers in New York, and they're doing
15 everything right. They're working hard, often
16 multiple jobs, and they still cannot afford to live in
17 a city which they help to power.

18 As you've reviewed the New York City
19 Charter, we really urge you to recommend a charter
20 amendment that would establish a clear principle that
21 New York City should not issue outdoor business
22 licenses for businesses that do not pay a fair wage.

23 The charter is a City's government
24 document and it should reflect the values of New
25 Yorkers that spike from the government.

1 We already require businesses to comply
2 with health codes, with fire codes, with zoning
3 regulations, and labor laws in order to operate.
4 Ensuring that businesses pay a living wage should be
5 viewed as another basic condition for doing business
6 in the City of New York.

7 As -- an outdoor business license is
8 more than just an -- an administrative permit. It's a
9 City's authorization to participate in our economy.
10 The City should not extend that privilege to employers
11 whose business models depend on wages that leave
12 workers unable to afford housing, food,
13 transportation, or childcare.

14 Access -- across the country, we've
15 seen that employers invest in fair wages and
16 experience lower turnover. They improve recruitment.
17 They have higher productivity and they have stronger
18 customer satisfaction.

19 New York City has been a national
20 leader for advancing policies to promote public
21 health, worker protection, and economy, economic
22 opportunities.

23 The Commission has the opportunity
24 right now to continue that legacy by recommending that
25 the Charter Amendment make it that the privilege of

1 having an outdoor business license in our city is the
2 responsibility of -- you know, people should be -- get
3 paid enough to live in the city that they work for.

4 On behalf of -- of One Fair Wage and
5 the thousands of workers where -- the thousands of
6 workers that are responsible and the responsible
7 employers that we represent across New York State, I
8 respectfully urge the Commission to place this
9 proposal before the voters.

10 New York City deserves the opportunity
11 to decide whether businesses seeking the privilege to
12 operate outdoor license should really meet the
13 responsibility of paying a living wage.

14 Thank you for your time and your
15 leadership and your commitment to building a City
16 government that works for all New Yorkers.

17 THE CHAIR: Thank you so very much for
18 your testimony.

19 Commissioners, questions? Please do.

20 MR. MOORE: Good evening. Naila, just
21 a quick question. We've had the opportunity to hear
22 from a lot of restaurant owners and small businesses
23 about the -- the process of obtaining these licenses
24 and how they're really operating very much in
25 the -- in the margin.

1 So I would love to hear how you -- or
2 if you have information of how specifically a living
3 wage would affect these small business owners.

4 MS. CAICEDO-ROSARIO: Yep. For sure.
5 So as you know, we're a national organization and, you
6 know, California small businesses have been paying a
7 fair wage for years. They've been paying right
8 now -- they do \$20 an hour plus tips on top, and
9 businesses in California have been thriving.

10 You know, in Chicago, we've just
11 recently passed it as well, and the businesses in
12 Chicago are thriving.

13 You know, the -- the restaurant
14 industry is already moving to voluntarily do full
15 wages with tips at top across the country. And we
16 really do feel that in New York, it's definitely
17 possible and doable.

18 We have a study that I could share via
19 e-mail with -- with the Commission so you guys can see
20 it, but this is something that it's -- you know, the
21 time is due right now.

22 We just passed -- in Alameda County,
23 we're about to pass \$30 an hour plus tips on top. So
24 the fact that New York is only \$17 is really a shame.
25 So anything that we could do to help, and we're more

1 than glad to share the report with the Commission.

2 THE CHAIR: Other questions? Please,
3 Henry.

4 MR. GARRIDO: Do you have a suggested
5 amount since you've mentioned the \$30 an hour?

6 MS. CAICEDO-ROSARIO: So we are
7 supporting the -- the 30 in our city, but across the
8 country, the number that we're looking at is 25 an
9 hour.

10 MR. GARRIDO: \$25?

11 MS. CAICEDO-ROSARIO: Twenty-five, yes.

12 MR. GARRIDO: Thank you.

13 THE CHAIR: Thank you both for your
14 testimony. Thank you.

15 Geoffrey Brown and Mae Francke.

16 Geoffrey and Mae.

17 Thank you. Geoffrey, the mic is yours.

18 MR. BROWN: Thank you.

19 Good evening, Chair Gaspard, Vice Chair
20 Wolfe, Secretary Kang, and Commissioners.

21 My name is Geoff Brown. From 2016 to
22 2022, I was Chief Information Security Officer for the
23 City of New York and the founding head of New York
24 City Cyber Command. I'm here tonight as a person who
25 helped build the City's cyber defense and to ask you

1 to protect it.

2 In 2017 New York did something the rest
3 of the world was still figuring out. We built New
4 York City Cyber Command with a real authority and a
5 direct line to the City's most senior leaders.

6 The official who owns cyber risk must
7 be able to say no. The official needs to mandate
8 fixes to slow a project down to escalate over any
9 objection when the City's safety is at stake. You
10 cannot do that job from underneath the people you are
11 meant to be holding to account.

12 New York even wrote the office into the
13 charter in 2020, but the charter only requires that
14 the office exist. It has nothing to stop that office
15 from being buried inside another department or to
16 guarantee the city's cybersecurity chief has a direct
17 line to the top.

18 So in 2022 the office was moved inside
19 the technology department and the City's cybersecurity
20 chief was told to report to the technology chief. The
21 safeguard was placed under the very operation it
22 exists to check. The charter did not prevent that.

23 I know this Commission's job is
24 efficiency, so let me meet you there. Cybersecurity
25 is not an IT service. It is an enterprise risk and is

1 as serious as the City's financial or physical safety.

2 And in the moment that decides
3 everything, such as a live attack that could halt City
4 services, the most expensive thing you can have is
5 confusion about who is in charge. Independence of
6 authority is not inefficiency.

7 My ask is concrete, and it needs no new
8 agency. The office is already in the charter.
9 Strengthen the language to protect what matters.

10 Name a commissioner level, commissioner
11 titled official to own cyber risk. Guarantee that
12 official a reporting line independent of IT delivery
13 and require public audible reporting on the City's
14 cyber posture.

15 New York led the world on this once.
16 Other municipalities and states recognize New York
17 City's leadership. Governments abroad studied what we
18 built.

19 I would ask you to not let New York
20 quietly dismantle the very model that others copied.
21 Secure New York City Cybersecurity Agency's
22 independence in the charter where it belongs.

23 Thank you.

24 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

25 Mae.

1 MS. FRANCKE: Hi. Good evening. Thank
2 you for the opportunity to testify today.

3 My name is Mae Francke. I'm the Queens
4 organizer with Transportation Alternatives. We are
5 the organization that helped bring Vision Zero to New
6 York, because we know that every traffic fatality or a
7 serious injury is a design infrastructure or policy
8 failure.

9 I am here to talk about the need for
10 New York City to speed up safety redesigns on our
11 streets.

12 Every year, more than 200 New Yorkers
13 are killed in preventable traffic crashes. This
14 statistic should be unacceptable. And in other
15 cities, it is.

16 In London, for example, it has a
17 traffic death rate that's half of what we have here.
18 If New York City could manage the streets as
19 efficiently as they do, we could be saving a hundred
20 lives a year by only halving it, not even reducing it
21 to zero.

22 Right now the Department of
23 Transportation is unable to effectively address this
24 public health crisis for an entirely avoidable reason,
25 because street redesigned projects that should take

1 only a few months end up taking many years thanks to
2 mountains of red tape.

3 As a Queens resident, we've seen
4 countless examples of these delays. The redesign of
5 Queens Boulevard, for example, a capital project that
6 was presented to community boards all the way back in
7 2018, was meant to break ground in 2022. That
8 timeline got pushed back to 2025.

9 Now we're halfway through 2026 and we
10 still haven't seen any progress on the project. We
11 are four years past when this capital project was
12 supposed to reground, which was already four years
13 behind when the plan was first presented to the
14 community.

15 Meanwhile, New Yorkers and Queens
16 residents wait and put their lives at risk while we
17 wait for the DOT to implement these projects, projects
18 that we can wait eight, ten years, over decades.

19 In the greatest city in the world, it
20 should not take -- take almost a decade to begin
21 construction and a street redesign.

22 There's countless of examples of this.
23 Queens Boulevard, Northern Boulevard, 31st Street,
24 Queensboro Bridge, Triborough Bridge. The list goes
25 on and on. In the greatest city in the world, it

1 should not take this long.

2 The Department of Transportation must
3 be freed up so that they can actually implement
4 upgrades in a timely fashion.

5 This new administration has an enormous
6 opportunity to transform our streets. DOT has the
7 power to save lives, to speed up bus commutes, and to
8 create a city where people feel safe enough to choose
9 to bike to work or walk to school and save thousands
10 of dollars a year that it costs to own a car.

11 In order to fulfill these goals, the
12 City needs to greatly shorten these timelines for
13 implemented tested standard redesigns of our streets.

14 We are not reinventing the wheel,
15 folks. We just need to make -- need to make it turn
16 faster.

17 I strongly recommend that the City
18 reform the major transportation projects process.
19 New -- New York City must meet the legal requirements
20 of the Streets Plan and renew its dedication to
21 achieving Vision Zero, the future when zero New
22 Yorkers will die preventable deaths on our streets.

23 In order to actually reach these goals,
24 we cannot wait years for -- to get commonsense
25 projects in the ground.

1 Thank you.

2 THE CHAIR: Thank you both.

3 Commissioners, questions?

4 MR. LONGANI: Can I ask?

5 THE CHAIR: Please.

6 MR. LONGANI: Yeah. I just had a quick
7 question. Could you give some examples, something we
8 could think of to actually implement in the charter to
9 get at some of the things you've talked about?

10 MS. FRANCKE: The DOT takes a long
11 time, and some of these processes aren't entirely
12 transparent. It's unclear why some dines projects
13 like Queensboro Bridge, which had been approved to go
14 down on the ground, can take eight to nine months
15 to -- to update street markings.

16 These are processes that are not
17 necessarily known to communities, to community boards.
18 Sometimes it'll have backing by the community boards
19 and we will not know why they're not implemented. So
20 I think transparency is a major issue as well.

21 THE CHAIR: Additional questions,
22 comments?

23 Thank you both for your testimony.

24 Thank you.

25 MS. FRANCKE: Thank you.

1 THE CHAIR: In addition to the
2 Commissioner of Small Business Services, Kenny Minaya,
3 we've also been joined by Council Member Phil Wong.
4 I'd like to invite both the commissioner and the
5 council member to join us at the front of the room.

6 Good evening, Commissioner. How are
7 you?

8 MR. MINAYA: Good evening.

9 THE CHAIR: We'll hear first from the
10 commissioner and then the councilman.

11 MR. MINAYA: Thank you, everybody.

12 Good evening, Chair, Executive
13 Director, and distinguished members of the Commission.
14 My name is Kenny Minaya, and I serve as Commissioner
15 of the New York City Department of Small Business
16 Services.

17 At SBS, we aim to deliver economic
18 security for all New Yorkers by connecting them to
19 good jobs, supporting small businesses, and investing
20 in our neighborhoods.

21 I'm pleased to join today to show -- to
22 share how this Commission's work can usher us into a
23 new era for small businesses in New York City.

24 Before I start, I want to express my
25 gratitude for the members of the public who carved out

1 time from their busy schedules and testified today in
2 Queens and earlier in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Staten
3 Island, and Manhattan.

4 My focus before this Commission today
5 is on streamlining the City's outdoor dining program,
6 Dining Out NYC. And I want to thank the Commission
7 for including Dining Out within their preliminary
8 report.

9 The promise of outdoor dining is
10 simple. Ample seating for restaurant goers, expanded
11 revenue opportunities for restaurants, and new third
12 spaces beautifying our public realm and activating our
13 streets.

14 Outdoor dining has a positive economic
15 impact on neighborhoods with more capacity to serve
16 customers, small businesses, staff up to meet demand
17 and create new jobs. However, as you may well know,
18 administrative and bureaucratic bottlenecks enshrined
19 in the law impede the program's success.

20 This past April, I joined a round table
21 with Deputy Mayor Julie Su, which convened New York
22 City restaurateurs to discuss their pain points.

23 In addition to the larger affordability
24 crisis faced by small businesses, several businesses
25 pointed out the complex and arduous permitting process

1 for outdoor dining. Businesses raise concerns around
2 roadway and sidewalk cafes having different processes
3 and the lengthy community review periods.

4 Any delay carries real consequences for
5 participating restaurants, who may miss peak seasons
6 during warmer months and lose revenue from not being
7 able to add seating capacity while waiting for
8 mandated review periods to lapse.

9 The City and SBS's programming attempts
10 to mitigate the confusion within this process.
11 Alongside the Department of Transportation, SBS
12 provides application support through our NYC Business
13 Express Service Team or NYC BEST.

14 We also develop tools to help
15 business -- businesses understand the material costs
16 of outdoor dining and if the program -- and whether
17 the program's right for them.

18 However, even with assistance, the
19 promises itself is complex with dual processes for
20 revocable consents for roadway and sidewalk cafes.

21 Any small business interested in
22 participating as a sidewalk cafe must first submit an
23 extensive application with DOT. After small
24 businesses submit their materials, DOT reviews and
25 disseminates the complete applications to the relevant

1 community board, borough president, and City Council
2 for additional review.

3 Community boards then have 40 days to
4 conduct or waive a hearing and submit recommendations
5 to DOT. DOT holds a hearing for each application
6 where DOT approves, approves with modifications, or
7 denies the application.

8 Upon DOT's approval, the City Council
9 has the authority to call up the application, meaning
10 it can resolve to review the application. Upon doing
11 so, the Council has 45 days to approve or disapprove
12 the application.

13 The Council rarely uses its authority,
14 which applies only to sidewalk cafes, but the
15 obligation to file with the Council while it
16 determines whether to review delays the application.
17 Should the business be approved, they then require
18 City Comptroller registration.

19 For businesses interested in
20 participating as a roadway cafe, the process differs.
21 Community boards and the City Council are provided
22 with notification and are not -- not tasked with
23 conducting a hearing or voting on the matter.

24 We strongly support a City Charter
25 amendment to streamline the outdoor dining permitting

1 process. The current process generates confusion,
2 discourages participation, and hinders the success of
3 small businesses.

4 Thank you for the opportunity to
5 testify. I'm happy to answer any questions the
6 Commission may have.

7 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner.
8 Council Member.

9 MR. WONG: Okay. Thank you. Thank
10 you, Commissioners. My name is Phil Wong. I
11 represent the 30th Council District in Queens, which
12 includes all of Maspeth and Middle Village, and parts
13 of Elmhurst, Ridgewood, Glendale, and Rego Park.

14 I am submitting this supplementary
15 testimony because the Commission's preliminary report
16 released on July 2, 2026, raises new proposals that
17 demand a direct response.

18 There are proposals in the preliminary
19 report that deserve genuine support. Maximizing the
20 use of technology across City agencies, reducing paper
21 filings, modernizing procurement, and speeding up
22 inspections are common sense. I support these
23 directions and urge the Commission to develop
24 concrete, actionable proposals.

25 I also continue to stand by the 12

1 recommendations I submitted in June: honest
2 multi-year budget baselines, school consolidation for
3 campuses with fewer than a hundred students, ending
4 the hold-harmless phantom funding policy, reforming
5 homeless shelter spending to require cost
6 effectiveness reviews and outcome benchmarks, ending
7 the backdoor water bill tax, property tax equity for
8 Queens homeowners, and putting sanctuary city law
9 reform on the ballot for New Yorkers to decide.

10 Those recommendations stand. This
11 supplemental testimony addresses what the preliminary
12 report got wrong. And due to time limits, I'll name
13 one topic.

14 Department of Buildings permit reform
15 requires a critical distinction. The preliminary
16 report identifies streamlining Department of Buildings
17 permitting as a goal.

18 I understand the frustration. Small
19 businesses in Maspeth and Ridgewood wait months for
20 permits that should take weeks. That backlog is real,
21 and it costs jobs and investments and many empty
22 storefronts.

23 I support targeted reforms to speed up
24 routine commercial and residential permitting, but
25 streamlining must not become a shortcut that bypasses

1 its environmental and community protections for
2 larger, higher impact projects. My district is living
3 through exactly what happens when that line is
4 crossed.

5 9DOT Energy is constructing a lithium
6 ion battery energy storage system at 6430 69th Place
7 Middle Village directly across the street from PS128
8 next to a daycare center, a preschool, and a
9 residential neighborhood.

10 The community received no notification
11 when permits were being processed. There were no
12 public hearings, no community board notifications, no
13 transparency from the company or City agencies.

14 The project proceeded as of right under
15 City of Yes for carbon neutrality zoning changes,
16 which removed the community voice entirely.

17 This is not a permitting efficiency
18 problem. This is a DOB oversight failure and is
19 exactly the kind of failure that gets worse, not
20 better if we reduce DOB's review obligations in the
21 name of speed.

22 The Charter and any DOB reform must
23 draw a clear and enforceable distinction between two
24 categories of projects.

25 The first is a small business opening,

1 a routine renovation, or a standard residential
2 project, where the City's goal should be to cut red
3 tape aggressively and get permits processed in days,
4 not months.

5 The second is a large-scale facility
6 that poses potentially environmental safety or
7 community impact concerns, particularly those cited
8 near schools, residential areas, or locations with
9 prior environmental contaminations.

10 For those projects, the permitting
11 process must include mandatory phase two environmental
12 review before any construction permit is issued when a
13 phase one has identified, recognized environmental
14 conditions.

15 It must report --

16 THE CHAIR: Council Member.

17 MR. WONG: Yes.

18 THE CHAIR: I'd like to just encourage
19 you to wrap up, because it's --

20 MR. WONG: I will wrap up. Yes. My --
21 I'll wrap up. And the rest, it's in the -- on the
22 written statement I submitted.

23 Giving DOB a blanket mandate to process
24 permits faster without this distinction building will
25 produce more 9DOT situations, not fewer. I urge the

1 Commission to be specific about what it is
2 streamlining and for whom.

3 Thank you.

4 THE CHAIR: Thank you so very much,
5 Councilman.

6 Thank you, Commissioner.

7 Commissioners, questions? Please
8 unmute.

9 MR. GARRIDO: Thank you both for your
10 testimony.

11 Commissioner Minaya, I -- I -- this
12 Commission has heard ample testimony from business
13 owners expressing frustration after frustration, money
14 spent, unit permitting processes that we heard from
15 multiple places in -- in different locations.

16 You said you supported some charter
17 amendment to speed up the process. My question to you
18 is what -- what are the specific recommendations you
19 have for charter amendment in order to, you know, lead
20 with that frustration that we heard during the
21 testimony?

22 MR. MINAYA: Thank you for the
23 question. I think a good place to start, in -- in my
24 testimony I outline the successive reviews that are
25 required under the current process.

1 And -- and I think a public input
2 is -- is important, but -- but that a public hearing
3 should suffice; right? That we don't -- we don't need
4 as many successive reviews from multiple levels of
5 government.

6 You know, a goal of -- of permitting
7 should always be to set a strong foundation for what
8 the rules are and what an acceptable application is
9 and standardize things as much as possible so that
10 they can be processed as quickly as possible.

11 THE CHAIR: Additional questions?

12 Please, Marco.

13 MR. CARRION: Hey, Commissioner, I know
14 the City Council's actively pushing and considering
15 legislation to eliminate the tear-down requirements.
16 So how would your suggestions impact that legislation?
17 How would they speak to each other?

18 MR. MINAYA: I missed the first part of
19 your question. Eliminate?

20 MR. CARRION: So the City Council, I
21 know, is considering legislation to eliminate the
22 tear-down requirements for roadway structures. How
23 would your suggestions, what you've testified on
24 today, how would that impact that legislation?

25 MR. MINAYA: I'm not familiar with that

1 specific legislation. I know there's a separate
2 package that's moving through City Council that we are
3 supportive of, but that specific bill, I'm not
4 familiar with.

5 MR. WONG: Cut -- Cut Red Tape bill.

6 MR. MINAYA: Cut Red Tape. I like I
7 like cutting red tape. Yes.

8 MR. WONG: Speaker -- Speaker Menin
9 just had a press conference about that today. Yeah.

10 MR. MINAYA: That was today.

11 MR. WONG: Yes.

12 MR. MINAYA: I had not had a chance to
13 review that bill, unfortunately.

14 MR. WONG: Yeah, yeah.

15 THE CHAIR: Additional questions?

16 Hearing none, I want to just express
17 appreciation, gratitude, Council Member and
18 Commissioner, for this testimony. Thank you.

19 MR. CARRION: Thank you.

20 MR. WONG: Thank you, thank you.

21 THE CHAIR: Brendan Griffith, Kevin
22 LaCherra. Brendan Griffith, Kevin LaCherra.

23 President Griffith, the mic is yours.

24 MR. GRIFFITH: Thank you very much.

25 THE CHAIR: It's great to see you.

1 MR. GRIFFITH: You as well.

2 Good evening. My name is Brendan
3 Griffith, and I'm the president of the New York City
4 Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO, the largest local
5 labor federation in the U.S., representing over one
6 million workers and over 300 unions in the five
7 boroughs. And we are proud to be here today engaging
8 on this topic and offering a holistic point of view on
9 these efforts.

10 "Government efficiency" can be a loaded
11 term, and it can be a euphemism for austerity.
12 Efficiency can't simply mean fewer workers, fewer
13 services, and a privatization of our public resources.
14 Efficiency should measure the city's ability to
15 deliver services, to protect public money, and to
16 maintain a qualified professional workforce that
17 delivers for working families.

18 First, we would encourage the City to
19 make partnerships with the workers and the unions and
20 government a cornerstone of its approach. If the City
21 consults unions when thinking about contracts, agency
22 reorganization, or tech implementation, it can get a
23 strong value-added perspective.

24 Workers understand when systems break
25 down and where unnecessary duplicative processes

1 exist. Their insight can help ensure that reforms are
2 successful.

3 Early engagement with the unionized
4 workforce will reduce disruption and strengthen
5 accountability. The City can demonstrate such
6 cooperation by standardizing labor impact reviews,
7 co-developing agency restructuring protocols, and
8 providing clear written explanations of how workforce
9 concerns are not only taken into consideration, but
10 addressed.

11 Second, stabilizing the public
12 workforce is critical because of what our members have
13 to offer. If the City requires agencies to
14 incorporate staffing retention, training, and morale
15 into operational and capital planning, the impact of
16 what those agencies can accomplish will improve.

17 On the other hand, understaffing can
18 hurt the most vulnerable, including those in public
19 housing and those relying on healthcare,
20 transportation, and consumer and worker protections.
21 The civil service was designed to maintain
22 institutional knowledge, and that should transcend
23 government reorganization.

24 Third, encourage strengthening
25 procurement and contract oversight. Too often,

1 vendors use scope, cost, duration, and funding sources
2 to find ways to charge our government and our
3 taxpayers more while padding profits.

4 The City could review contracts for
5 duplicative work, overlapping deliverables, and
6 unnecessary outside consulting. Savings could be
7 redirected towards services and enforcement of the
8 laws already on the books that could put money back
9 into the City's coffers. It should also be said that
10 fiscal stewardship must take job quality into
11 consideration.

12 Finally, we know there are many
13 questions concerning open primaries. However, I would
14 encourage the commission to maintain its focus. Any
15 discussions about open primaries should proceed
16 carefully with transparency and with full
17 consideration of how change would affect marginalized
18 communities.

19 Economic development, procurement,
20 capital investment all involve wages and jobs. If
21 working people can't afford to live and work safely in
22 New York City, if efficiency efforts don't provide
23 pathways to apprenticeships, strong workplace safety
24 standards, if high road procurement and standards are
25 not being followed by the government, isn't more

1 efficiency only providing substandard cheap services?
2 And New Yorkers deserve better than that.

3 We should take a strong stance against
4 public dollars subsidizing low road employment or
5 undermining the public unionized workforce.

6 Thank you.

7 THE CHAIR: Thank you so very much.
8 Kevin?

9 MR. LACHERRA: Thank you.

10 Hello. My name is Kevin LaCherra. I'm
11 a fourth generation Greenpointer and a street safety
12 advocate with the Make McGuinness Safe organization.
13 And I'd like to begin by thanking the board for the
14 opportunity to testify today.

15 I'm here to encourage the City of New
16 York to streamline how we get street safety
17 infrastructure work done throughout the five boroughs
18 and especially in my neighborhood of Greenpoint.

19 For 70 years, McGuinness Boulevard has
20 divided my community, an arterial highway constructed
21 by Robert Moses to connect two highways.

22 My great-grandmother's home and many
23 others were demolished to prioritize speeding cut
24 through traffic. In the years since, over 200 people
25 have been killed on this street and thousands have

1 been injured.

2 Some of you in this room may be
3 familiar with McGuinness and the advocacy around it.
4 During the last mayoral administration after the death
5 of a local school teacher, the Adams Administration
6 abandoned plans to safely redesign the roadway
7 allegedly at the whim of wealthy donors.

8 Mayor Zohran Mamdani entered office
9 promising to turn the page on that corruption, and
10 work is happening right now to safely complete our
11 community plan.

12 And though we are grateful that this
13 historic wrong is finally being righted, it's been
14 more than five years since our neighbor Matthew Jensen
15 was killed on McGuinness Boulevard.

16 After his death, DOT spent over a year
17 studying how to make the roadway safer, only to come
18 to us with three different plans, which the community
19 proceeded to fight over. It took another full year
20 for a final plan to be assessed, completed, and
21 presented.

22 I don't blame the hardworking people at
23 DOT for those delays. I blame a system that
24 prioritizes inertia over action.

25 There are roads like McGuinness all

1 over the city, and every year New Yorkers are losing
2 their lives. It doesn't need to be this way.
3 Communities like Greenpoint will always organize, no
4 matter how difficult the task at hand, but we
5 shouldn't have to.

6 Streamlining the way street safety
7 infrastructure projects for bus lanes and bike lanes
8 and comprehensive redesigns happen is a necessity.
9 And it is my hope that the board recommends moving it
10 forward as a way to make our city better for all.

11 Thank you very much for your time.

12 THE CHAIR: Thank you so much for your
13 time.

14 Just want to welcome questions from the
15 Commission for President Griffith and for Kevin.

16 But as you marshal your questions, I
17 want to just thank President Griffith for your -- your
18 urgent response to the correspondence that this
19 Commission sent you at the very start of our process.

20 We sent you a note asking you to invite
21 your members to participate. You circulated that to
22 all of your constituent members, and you also placed a
23 notice in the chief. And we've been pleased that
24 we've, as a consequence of that, received direct input
25 from -- from City workers. So I'm just really

1 grateful for your partnership.

2 Questions? Thoughts? Comments?

3 Councilman Henry?

4 MR. GARRIDO: Again, thank you for
5 testimony.

6 Brendan, I -- I think in your
7 testimony, you talked about something that has been
8 mentioned here before, which is -- has to do with the
9 undermining of labor.

10 Obviously I've come from a perspective
11 that's a little different. But we've heard here
12 testimonies about the benefit and in some cases, the
13 people against project labor agreements specifically
14 in order to speed up projects.

15 What's your perspective and your
16 experience on project labor agreements as it applies
17 to construction, specifically to affordable housing,
18 which is one of the issues that have been one of our
19 subject here? If you can opine on that and give us
20 your perspective and the experience there?

21 MR. GRIFFITH: Sure. Yeah. I -- I
22 think project labor agreements have -- have done a
23 great job of streamlining processes and bringing
24 together some of the various rules and -- and
25 collective bargaining agreements that different unions

1 have to make it more efficient in terms of building.

2 So there are clear expectations both
3 from the workers and from the developers as to that
4 construction. They are a really important tool also
5 to maintain standards as we're looking for
6 efficiencies.

7 You know, as I mentioned in my
8 testimony, the -- the term "efficiency" can be very
9 loaded. And often when we talk about more efficient,
10 we're talking about quicker. Sometimes we're talking
11 about cheaper, but we're not necessarily talking about
12 better. And we want to make sure that those standards
13 are maintained, and project labor agreements are one
14 way to do just that.

15 MR. GARRIDO: Is -- is there a way that
16 project labor agreements can be improved to
17 this -- some of the concerns was that they tend to
18 delay projects. I'm not saying that that's the case,
19 but that was the -- some of the concerns that were
20 expressed to this Commission before, that some of the
21 affordable, I mean, housing projects that needed to be
22 built quicker could be delayed as a result of it.

23 MR. GRIFFITH: I -- I think, Henry,
24 the -- the greatest example of the lack of a project
25 to labor agreement that we have seen over the last

1 week was on 42nd Street, where I would say that that
2 project is not more efficient, is not moving quicker,
3 and will be significantly delayed.

4 And perhaps a unionized workforce
5 throughout that construction may have prevented what
6 thankfully did not mean the loss of life, but
7 certainly is going to be a delay and was a tremendous
8 risk and an unnecessary one.

9 THE CHAIR: Additional questions?
10 Great.

11 Thank you both for your testimony.

12 MR. GRIFFITH: Thank you.

13 THE CHAIR: We've been -- we've been
14 joined online by Council Member Selvena Brooks-Powers.
15 And I'd like to invite the council member to share
16 thoughts, provide testimony.

17 And then I will invite two participants
18 online as -- as their own panel.

19 MS. BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Can you
20 hear me?

21 THE CHAIR: We can.

22 MS. BROOKS-POWERS: Perfect.

23 And good evening, everyone. Thank you
24 for the opportunity to testify on the Commission's
25 preliminary report and its consideration of changes to

1 New York City's Charter.

2 As the council member representing
3 parts of Southeast Queens and the eastern part of the
4 Rockaway Peninsula, I know firsthand what happens when
5 decisions are made without meaningful engagement from
6 the communities they affect.

7 My constituents deserve faster service,
8 delivery, streamlined permitting, and a government
9 that works better. And we should absolutely pursue
10 reforms that eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy and
11 modernize how our city operates.

12 Whether it's a major transportation
13 project, land use decisions, or quality of life
14 issues, the best outcomes come when residents,
15 community boards, and elected representatives are
16 brought into the process early, not after decisions
17 have already been made.

18 Efficiency cannot come at the expense
19 of accountability, transparency, or the balance of
20 powers established in our charter.

21 Several of the concepts outlined in the
22 preliminary report appear to do more than streamline
23 government. They would shift authority away from the
24 elected City Council and concentrate greater power
25 within the executive branch.

1 The Council's role is not simply
2 procedural. We legislate, conduct oversight, ensure
3 transparency, and serve as the public's voice in
4 government. Those responsibilities exist to provide
5 checks and balances, not obstacles.

6 For example, the report contemplates
7 making recommendations to eliminate reporting
8 requirements without Council approval and giving
9 executive agencies greater authority over matters that
10 have traditionally required legislative action,
11 including amendments to the building code.

12 Yet the records show the Council has
13 consistently acted to repeal outdated reporting
14 requirements and has moved expeditiously when building
15 code updates have been transmitted for consideration.

16 The report also raises concerns about
17 reducing notice and engagement requirements for major
18 transportation projects and limiting the Council's
19 role in reviewing City office leases.

20 These are not unnecessary layers of
21 government. They are safeguards that promote
22 transparency, accountability, and public confidence in
23 decisions that directly affect New Yorkers.

24 Equally concerning is the process
25 itself. The preliminary report repeatedly states that

1 the commission, quote unquote, "may consider various
2 proposals," but provides few specifics about what will
3 ultimately appear on the ballot.

4 The Commission must submit ballot
5 proposals by August 3rd, yet the public stakeholders
6 and the Council still do not know the full scope of
7 the proposed charter amendments.

8 Hearing transcripts that were promised
9 in the interest of transparency remain incomplete, and
10 it is unclear whose input has shaped these
11 recommendations.

12 Charter amendments are not temporary
13 policy changes. They can permanently reshape how our
14 city is governed. And before New Yorkers are asked to
15 vote on these changes, they deserve a transparent
16 process, clearly defined proposals, and meaningful
17 opportunities for public engagement.

18 The Council, as the legislative body
19 most directly affected, should also have the
20 opportunity to fully evaluate and provide input on any
21 proposal that would alter its constitutional role.

22 I stand ready to work with this
23 commission and the administration on reforms that make
24 government more effective. But those reforms should
25 strengthen, not weaken transparency accountability in

1 the voice of public -- of the -- excuse me -- of the
2 public and their elected representatives.

3 And I'll just end with saying that
4 recently, the administration and its new division that
5 it has created in terms of mass public engagement went
6 above and beyond to engage the public in terms of
7 testifying regarding freezing the rent.

8 And I will say in this process, I have
9 not seen much, if any, advertising for the public to
10 take part in public testimony.

11 So again, if we are really pushing for
12 transparency in a government that works for everyone,
13 we need to open up this process. We need to be
14 transparent and clear on it and work together.

15 I thank you for the opportunity to
16 testify today.

17 THE CHAIR: Thank you so very much,
18 Council Member. Appreciate your testimony.
19 Appreciate you taking this time and grateful for the
20 opportunity to engage with you on -- on questions of
21 shared power and authority in the city and -- and
22 certainly on transparency as well.

23 I would just suggest that your staff
24 might want to go back online to our site, because in
25 your -- in your testimony, you said that public

1 transcripts -- you said that transcripts that were
2 promised of our public hearings have not been posted.
3 That's actually not the case. We --

4 MS. BROOKS-POWERS: I said incomplete.
5 I didn't say not posted.

6 THE CHAIR: We -- no, we -- we post
7 them in full. We -- we post the transcripts in full
8 on our site.

9 One of the things that I've appreciated
10 as a commissioner is the ability to go on our site and
11 to, like, review everything that we've heard from the
12 several hundred New Yorkers that have testified before
13 us thus far and to, like, take that up as we shape the
14 recommendations that we -- that we consider and that
15 we make to this administration.

16 So those are posted as soon as they are
17 available to the Commission.

18 And we also -- in addition to the
19 transcripts, we also post all the video recordings
20 from all of our public hearings as well. We are hyper
21 transparent about all of this. So appreciate the
22 testimony.

23 Questions, comments for the council
24 member?

25 MS. BROOKS-POWERS: And when we talk

1 about transparency, can you speak to how it's been
2 publicized and the outreach that has gone into it as
3 well?

4 MS. WOLFE: Council Member,
5 I'll -- I'll -- Emma Wolfe here. Great to see you.
6 And thank you.

7 MS. BROOKS-POWERS: Hi, Emma.

8 MS. WOLFE: I was just going to -- hi.
9 Hi, there.

10 I will just add my two pennies and pick
11 up a little bit on the question you asked, but then
12 I'll defer to the chair and other commissioners. I
13 was just going to --

14 MS. BROOKS-POWERS: Sure.

15 MS. WOLFE: -- make sure you were aware
16 that as the transcripts are finalized, they go online.
17 But in almost real time, staff or the public can look
18 at the recordings online.

19 So happy to -- I -- I would assume
20 staff are happy to talk to yours offline, but it's all
21 there on the COGE website.

22 In terms of the public engagement, I
23 know many of the commissioners have been talking to
24 the staff in City Hall, who've done a really
25 impressive job of engaging the public in a short

1 amount of time.

2 They've reached out to every member of
3 the City's workforce in addition to social media,
4 including by the mayor himself. And -- and I'm -- I'm
5 sure they'll speak to a lot more of the granular, but
6 they've probably reached, in that case, hundreds of
7 thousands of folks in different forms.

8 THE CHAIR: Any additional --

9 MS. BROOKS-POWERS: I hear you, but --
10 Go ahead. Sorry.

11 THE CHAIR: Oh, go ahead, Council
12 Member.

13 MS. BROOKS-POWERS: No, you can say
14 what you're going to say.

15 THE CHAIR: No, no. It's okay.
16 Just --

17 MS. BROOKS-POWERS: So yeah. So what I
18 was going to say is I have not -- and we have shared
19 information as well locally to try to make sure folks
20 are aware of this as well, but I have not seen as
21 intense of the outreach that I've seen on other
22 campaign.

23 But what were you going to say?

24 THE CHAIR: No, we -- well, we note
25 that, Council Member. And if there are specific ideas

1 that your staff has about how we can continue to get
2 the information to your community, we are more than
3 happy to engage with those ideas.

4 As Emma said, this information has been
5 spread far and wide and we've really been impressed by
6 the robust turnout that we've had for our hearings
7 across the city, including, you know, on -- on rainy
8 nights and when we competed against World Cup matches
9 and other things going on in this city.

10 But we -- we take all --

11 MS. BROOKS-POWERS: And then also one
12 last thing to clarify.

13 THE CHAIR: -- any and all ideas that
14 are available to us, Council Member. And again, I
15 will say that in real time, we post the transcripts,
16 we post the video, and we make all the information as
17 available as possible.

18 MS. BROOKS-POWERS: So just really
19 quickly on that. So my understanding is the
20 transcripts missing are for June 22nd, 23rd --

21 THE CHAIR: Yes.

22 MS. BROOKS-POWERS: -- 30th, July 1st,
23 July 6th, July 8th.

24 THE CHAIR: Yeah, it's --

25 MS. BROOKS-POWERS: Are those

1 hearings -- they're not up yet.

2 THE CHAIR: No, as soon as -- as soon
3 as the transcripts are available, we post them in
4 full. You said that the postings are incomplete. As
5 soon as the transcripts are ready, we post them. But
6 the video from all the hearings are posted immediately
7 in real time and -- and available and transparent
8 to -- to all.

9 Are there --

10 MS. BROOKS-POWERS: But those
11 transcripts are -- but those transcripts are not up.
12 I understand the video is up, but the transcripts --

13 THE CHAIR: As soon as -- again,
14 I -- I'll say as soon as the transcripts -- as soon as
15 the transcription service delivers the -- the material
16 to the staff, it's immediately posted in full and --
17 and joined to the videos that are already up and
18 available to the entire public.

19 Are there any additional --

20 MS. BROOKS-POWERS: So I just listed
21 about six -- I just -- I just --

22 THE CHAIR: -- substantive questions
23 for the Councilman -- Council Member? I just want to
24 be able to move forward.

25 MS. BROOKS-POWERS: I'm sorry. I feel

1 like you're trying to silence me now. There are six
2 hearings that I'm asking about with the transcripts,
3 and you just said that it's all the --

4 THE CHAIR: I'm not trying to silence
5 you at all, Council Member, but I will say yet again
6 that as soon as the hearings are transcribed and are
7 made -- and are made available to the staff, they are
8 posted in full. But in real time, we post the videos
9 from every single hearing immediately at the
10 conclusion of the hearing.

11 MS. BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. So I just
12 want to be clear. I stand by my statement that I said
13 before.

14 Also, we do not know who the staff
15 consists of for the Commission. So again, in terms of
16 transparency, the Council has no knowledge of who the
17 staff is for the Commission as well.

18 THE CHAIR: We are happy to share that
19 as well. The staff or the -- the members of the
20 staff, that information is posted on the COGE website,
21 but we'll happily share that with you and your staff
22 as well, Council Member.

23 Are there any questions on substance of
24 the Council Member's testimony? Great.

25 Council Member, thank you so very much

1 for your participation.

2 MS. BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I look
3 forward to the transparency, and thank you for holding
4 today's discussion.

5 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Council Member.
6 We will continue in the spirit of full transparency
7 with you and everybody else in the city on this -- on
8 these issues.

9 I'd like to please ask on Zoom, Eric
10 McClure and Steve Flack to join us.

11 MR. MCCLURE: Good evening. Thank you,
12 Chair Gaspard, Vice Chair Wolfe, and all the members
13 of the Commission for your service and for the
14 opportunity to testify this evening regarding
15 potential revisions to the City Charter.

16 My name is Eric McClure, and I am the
17 executive director of StreetsPAC, a political action
18 committee and advocacy organization whose work is
19 focused on improving street safety and public
20 transportation.

21 I'm here to testify in that capacity to
22 offer StreetsPAC support for the pressing need to
23 streamline the process for approving and implementing
24 street infrastructure projects in order to make our
25 city's streets safer for all New Yorkers.

1 Legislation rooted in the bike lash of
2 2009 created a two-tiered system that holds
3 bike -- bike lane and bus lane projects to a different
4 standard than any other street infrastructure work,
5 adding needless red tape to the review process for
6 these projects that was clearly intended solely to
7 slow them down, despite irrefutable evidence that
8 complete street treatments improve safety for
9 everyone.

10 Treating the implementation of bike
11 lanes or bus lanes that are less than a quarter mile
12 long as "major transportation projects" and subjecting
13 them to lengthy review by the police department, fire
14 department, Department of Small Business Services, and
15 the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, not
16 to mention community board review, is the polar
17 opposite of efficient government.

18 Furthermore, the City has implemented
19 subsequent regulations that further slow up the
20 process, such as a 2025 law that requires consultation
21 with individual firehouses.

22 These entities possess little expertise
23 in street design or engineering, and we don't require
24 this level of review for any other type of
25 infrastructure project in New York City. Community

1 boards don't vote on whether we upgrade a sewer or
2 water main, and they shouldn't be hamstringing
3 implementation of projects that we know will save
4 lives.

5 I'll note here, too, that for the past
6 three and a half years, I have chaired Brooklyn
7 Community Board 6.

8 I very much believe that public
9 consultation and constructive input have great value,
10 but shouldn't serve as excuses for delay and dilution.

11 Since the Streets Plan went into effect
12 in 2021, the City has failed to meet the mandates for
13 implementation of protected bike and bus lanes due in
14 significant part to the required and painfully slow
15 review process.

16 To meet the benchmarks of the Streets
17 Plan and to ensure that we can deliver proven
18 standardized safety designs to all the city's
19 neighborhoods and citizens, we must remove unnecessary
20 obstacles to progress.

21 I strongly urge this Commission to help
22 put street safety on the ballot in November by
23 supporting revision to the City Charter that will
24 reform the process around major transportation
25 projects.

1 However much some people may oppose it
2 or attempt to obstruct it, the City's future success
3 will be rooted in making it easier and safer for all
4 New Yorkers to get around by walking, biking, using
5 micromobility, and riding public transit.

6 Please help us to realize that future.
7 Thank you.

8 THE CHAIR: Thank you.
9 Steve.

10 MR. FLACK: Hello. Thanks to the board
11 for this opportunity.

12 My name is Steve Flack. As a fourth
13 generation native New Yorker and lifelong resident of
14 Brooklyn, I am aware of how New York streetscape is an
15 unsafe disaster. And the only way we can fix this is
16 by fast-tracking streetscape changes.

17 The City should consider ways to reform
18 the major transportation project's process to speed up
19 standard safety redesigns in order to better meet and
20 exceed the goals of the Streets Plan.

21 As it currently stands, the only thing
22 slower than making these changes is the M42 bus,
23 something Zohran Mamdani was aware of when he ran and
24 overwhelmingly won the mayoralty last November.

25 When he won with an overwhelming

1 mandate, it was clear that every New Yorker deserves
2 safe streets. Every New Yorker deserves fast buses.

3 Currently rolling out these
4 infrastructure designs is slow and onerous, getting
5 sidetracked by every NIMBY who wants to preserve NYC
6 in amber.

7 Every delay is one more bus rider
8 getting to work late. Every delay is one more cyclist
9 getting doored by an out-of-state driver. Every delay
10 is one more child getting -- dying at an unlit --
11 un-daylit street corner.

12 New Yorkers deserve better than that.
13 They deserve safe streets. They deserve a bike lane
14 network that connects citywide and they deserve faster
15 buses and they deserve them now.

16 In every year of the Streets Plan, DOT
17 has been unable to implement projects fast enough to
18 hit their protected bike lane and bus lane benchmarks.

19 To reach every -- every neighborhood
20 and protect every New Yorker, the City needs to
21 shorten its timelines for implementing testing
22 standard -- tested standard redesigns. If and when we
23 do this, New York can finally excise the ghost of
24 Robert Moses and become the world-class transit city
25 people believe it can be.

1 Thanks, everybody.

2 THE CHAIR: Thank you so much.

3 Questions? Comments?

4 Thank you both for your testimony.

5 Now we'll return to the room. Xavier

6 Pu-Folkes or Xavier Pu-Folkes and Laura Shepard.

7 Laura Shepard. Is Laura --

8 Oh, great. Thank you, Laura.

9 Please, and -- and please correct my
10 mispronunciation.

11 Yeah.

12 MR. PU-FOLKES: Good evening,
13 Commissioners. My name is Xavier Pu-Folkes, and I am
14 a young worker in New York City. Thank you for giving
15 me the opportunity to testify today.

16 Like so many -- like so many young
17 people, I entered the workforce believing that if I
18 worked hard, I would be able to afford the basics.
19 Instead, I learned that many jobs in our city don't
20 pay enough to cover rent, groceries, transportation,
21 or even my phone bill.

22 As the Commission considers changes to
23 the City Charter, I urge you to place before voters a
24 simple but transformative principle.

25 New York City should not issue or renew

1 outdoor eating licenses for businesses that refuse to
2 pay a living wage. An outdoor eating license is a
3 privilege granted by the City.

4 Just as businesses must meet health,
5 safety, and legal standards to operate, they should
6 also meet a basic standard of treating workers with
7 dignity.

8 No business should receive the benefit
9 of operating in New York City while paying wages that
10 leave workers dependent on public assistance or unable
11 to afford the city they help keep running.

12 Young workers are often told that
13 low-paying jobs are just stepping stones. But for
14 many of us, these jobs are how we support ourselves,
15 help our families, and build our futures.

16 Poverty wages don't teach
17 responsibility. They create instability. They make
18 it harder to stay in school, afford transportation,
19 pay rent, and plan for the future.

20 The charter exists to shape how our
21 city governs and serves New Yorkers. If we truly want
22 a government that works efficiently and serves
23 everyone, then we must ensure that City policies do
24 not reward businesses that rely on poverty wages.

25 The Commission has been asked to

1 consider reforms that improve government and better
2 serve New Yorkers. Ensuring that City-issued outdoor
3 eating licenses are tied to paying a living wage is
4 one way to make the government more accountable and
5 ensure public resources support responsible employers.

6 Businesses that pay living wages invest
7 in their workers, strengthen neighborhoods, and
8 contribute to a healthier local economy. Businesses
9 that refuse to pay enough to live should not receive
10 the City seal of approval through an outdoor eating
11 license.

12 As a high school student at Brooklyn
13 Technical High School, I want a future where hard work
14 means stability, not constant struggle.

15 I ask you to give voters the
16 opportunity to make the future possible by advancing a
17 charter amendment that says clearly, "If you want the
18 privilege of doing business in New York City, you must
19 pay a living wage."

20 Thank you for your time and
21 consideration.

22 THE CHAIR: Thank you from this
23 Brooklyn Tech alum. Thank you. Appreciate it.

24 MS. SHEPARD: Hi, everyone.

25 THE CHAIR: Please, Laura.

1 MS. SHEPARD: Laura Shepard, Queens
2 resident. I'm going to begin by talking about the
3 outdoor dining process, which as it is, it's
4 burdensome and costly and has resulted in an
5 inequitable distribution across the city, especially
6 shutting out many Queens businesses.

7 The publishing requirement
8 specifically, which requires a printed ad in print
9 media, which costs upwards of \$800, truly discouraged
10 a lot of businesses from pursuing the process on top
11 of the permits and the \$1,000 upfront cost. This
12 should be addressed going forward.

13 With regard to street safety and the
14 major transportation law, too many communities are
15 waiting. An incontrovertible body of evidence shows
16 that protected bike lanes and other street safety
17 treatments save lives across all categories of road
18 users. And these designs should be in the hands of
19 experts and professionals who know what they're doing.

20 And the -- and everyone across the city
21 should equitably be -- be able to access all of the
22 benefits, including the safety, convenience, and
23 affordability that come with having safe streets.

24 Too many people are limited in their
25 options at the moment and just left in danger or

1 forced to make choices that are between poor options.

2 And also, I would be remiss not to talk
3 about sidewalks in a -- in a pedestrian city. I think
4 there is almost no greater example of government
5 inefficiency than the fact that while technically the
6 City owns the property -- owns the sidewalks, property
7 owners are responsible for their maintenance and care.

8 We see this every time it snows, and
9 too many people with disabilities and mobility
10 challenges are left struggling across too much public
11 infrastructure.

12 The public is left waiting while people
13 are trying to detangle the jurisdictional web to
14 determine who owns what property and who's
15 responsible. This really needs to be streamlined
16 because it's not right.

17 They're also -- also the Department of
18 Design and Construction can take upwards to -- of 15
19 to 20 years to address basic violations while
20 homeowners have liens on their houses and their
21 neighbors are left with trip hazards and other
22 struggles that limit their mobility.

23 Too many capital projects, which need
24 to happen faster to begin with, leave communities
25 waiting and in limbo. Sometimes the projects that go

1 in are obsolete by that point, such as the mountable
2 curbs on -- on the Queens Boulevard protected bike
3 lane, which is yet to be installed or --

4 THE CHAIR: You're at time, if -- if
5 you just --

6 MS. SHEPARD: Okay. I could go on.
7 Thank you.

8 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Thank you so
9 much.

10 Commissioners, any comments, questions?
11 Thank you both for your testimony.
12 Really appreciate it.

13 Misha Nonan and Michelle Yanche? Yeah.

14 MS. YANCHE: Michelle Yanche.

15 THE CHAIR: Yanche, Yanche. You know
16 who you are. Welcome.

17 MS. NONAN: Good evening, Chairs and
18 Commissioners. My name is Misha Nonan, and I am the
19 chief program officer at the New York City Criminal
20 Justice Agency. Thank you for your the opportunity
21 to -- to testify.

22 CJA is New York City's long --
23 long-standing pretrial services provider working
24 within the criminal justice system for decades to
25 promote fair, effective, and humane practices for

1 people navigating the pretrial process.

2 For the past 17 years, we have served
3 as the supervised release provider in Queens working
4 directly with thousands of New Yorkers as they move
5 through the system while remaining in their
6 communities, in their homes, and their jobs, and with
7 their families.

8 That direct service work gives CJA a
9 unique vantage point. We see the extraordinary
10 resilience of New York's close-knit neighborhoods
11 every day.

12 The family member who shows up for a
13 court date, the neighbor who helps someone get to a
14 medical appointment, the local partner who agrees to
15 help a client on short notice. New York's communities
16 carry people through crisis in ways no government
17 program can replicate.

18 But we also see just as clearly how
19 slow-moving bureaucracy undermines that community
20 strength.

21 When a client in crisis cannot get a
22 timely doctor's appointment or waits months for a
23 supportive housing unit to open, the moment for
24 stabilization often passes, and -- and contact with
25 the criminal legal system deepens instead of ending.

1 This Commission's own preliminary
2 report documents the institutional fraction we
3 encounter on the ground. It finds that human services
4 contractors, the community-based organizations
5 delivering housing, health, and stabilization services
6 our clients depend on, can wait over a year to be paid
7 for services already rendered and that standard human
8 services procurement can take well over a year to
9 complete, start to finish.

10 The report also notes that a single
11 affordable housing project can require 40 separate
12 permits across 15 different agencies and that new
13 housing construction can take more than four years
14 from initial filing to completion.

15 Every one of these delays is a delay in
16 a bed, a service, or a provider that one of our -- one
17 of our clients needs today.

18 CJA urges the Commission to treat
19 streamlining as a public safety and justice issue, not
20 only a fiscal one.

21 Faster procurement means the community
22 organizations we refer clients to can open their doors
23 sooner and stay open. Faster permitting means
24 transitional and supportive housing comes online
25 faster, and faster access to healthcare and housing

1 means fewer people cycling back through arrest,
2 detention, and court.

3 We ask the Commission to pursue the
4 procurement and permitting reforms outlined in this
5 report with real urgency and to consider human service
6 delivery specifically as it does so.

7 Reducing these barriers will help not
8 just make government more efficient. It will make our
9 neighborhood stronger and our city fairer and safer
10 for everyone who -- everyone who calls at home.

11 Thank you for your time and
12 consideration.

13 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Misha.
14 Michelle.

15 MS. YANCHE: Good evening. Thank you
16 to the Commission, Chair Gaspard, all of the members
17 and staff for the opportunity to testify this evening.

18 My name is Michelle Yanche. I'm CEO of
19 Good Shepherd Services, a youth development education
20 and family service organization serving over 30,000
21 New Yorkers.

22 Personally, I've served in the
23 nonprofit human service sector of New York City for
24 more than 30 years, during which I've known many of
25 you.

1 Good Shepherd urges the Commission to
2 consider changes to the charter that would address
3 some of the most economically inefficient and daunting
4 challenges facing nonprofit human service
5 organizations that contract with the City of New York
6 to provide essential services to our fellow New
7 Yorkers.

8 And not because of how they impact on
9 our organizations, but because of how they impact on
10 our fellow New Yorkers, including our staff who are
11 themselves our fellow -- fellow New York residents.

12 Chief among these, which are those that
13 are addressed in this testimony, include, one,
14 procurement and contract payment delays that undermine
15 effective service delivery jeopardize the financial
16 stability of service providing organizations,
17 especially smaller and mid-sized nonprofits, and ad
18 millions of dollars in un-reimbursable interest costs
19 to the already unsustainable costs of -- and rising
20 costs of doing business.

21 This includes, for example, for -- for
22 Good Shepherd Services alone. Approximately up to
23 this past year, we paid almost \$400,000 in interest
24 costs just to maintain our line of credit, which
25 allows us to deal with the cash flow problems caused

1 by contract delays.

2 And number two, insufficient rates and
3 lack of automatic cost escalators and contracts that
4 work directly against the provision of high quality
5 services and the ability to pay workers providing
6 those services a wage that aligns with the actual cost
7 of living in New York City.

8 On -- on the second point, Charter
9 Section 16 requires the mayor to annually report on
10 the budgetary resources allocated to reduce poverty.
11 Government, in -- in under-allocating budgetary
12 resources to human service contracts, is directly and
13 indirectly paying wages that are poverty inducing and
14 not poverty reducing.

15 And the people that it impacts the most
16 are both those individuals who hold -- hold these
17 jobs, in particular those jobs that are under the true
18 cost of living. That includes approximately 425,000
19 human services workers who are overwhelmingly
20 New -- New York City residents, and most importantly,
21 the recipients of those services that they provide.

22 New York City has set what the bar is
23 for paying fair wages, which is the true cost of
24 living, and should now hold itself to paying
25 that -- that -- at least that wage to its own direct

1 workers and those working under City contracts.

2 Thank you.

3 THE CHAIR: Thank you so much,
4 Michelle.

5 Please, Kapil.

6 MR. LONGANI: Hi, Michelle.

7 MS. YANCHE: Hello.

8 MR. LONGANI: A few questions or a
9 couple questions. Can you repeat how much -- again,
10 how much does the delay in payment cost Good Shepherd
11 annually through line of credit, interest, et cetera?
12 What was that number?

13 MS. YANCHE: Well, the direct cost
14 to -- that I'm referring to is almost \$400,000, for
15 example, last year to maintain or -- and pay the
16 interest on our line of credit, which is interest, by
17 the way, not a reimbursable expense.

18 And that is only specifically related
19 to maintaining cash flow caused by payment delays. So
20 at the end of the fiscal year, which is prior to the
21 advances for the new fiscal year kicking in,
22 currently, New York City owes us approximately \$5
23 million from -- from contracts of previous years.

24 MR. LONGANI: Five million?

25 MS. YANCHE: Five million.

1 MR. LONGANI: Over how many years?

2 MS. YANCHE: I think right now that
3 represents invoices and contract payments that we are
4 owed from at least two, possibly three past fiscal
5 years.

6 MR. LONGANI: And are the -- are the 50
7 percent contract advances the right solution to the
8 contracting delay problem?

9 MS. YANCHE: I'm so glad you asked
10 that. This is a complicated answer, because first let
11 me say that the -- having a 50 percent advance, which
12 is now City law passed last October, is a band-aid on
13 really what is the underlying problem.

14 I will say that in the -- in this
15 moment is -- it's absolutely essential, because it's
16 really, truly the only thing that is enabling
17 especially small and mid-sized organizations to get
18 through dealing with the challenges that I'm talking
19 about.

20 Good Shepard Services is not one of
21 those small and mid-sized organizations. And because
22 we have, for example, now what we have increased over
23 the past few years from an \$8 million to now a \$15
24 million line of credit just to make this whole thing
25 work. Small and mid-size organizations don't have

1 that.

2 And so for example, this time last
3 year, prior to the 50 percent law for -- that is now
4 in place for the advances, I had every single week
5 small organizations that we subcontract with, that we
6 partner with, that also serve -- provide essential
7 services in the same communities that we work, calling
8 me in desperation, asking if Good Shepherd Services
9 could provide them with a loan to be able to make
10 payroll.

11 And fortunately -- well, we can't -- we
12 are not able to do that personally, but I was able to
13 connect them with the Fund for the City of New York,
14 SeaChange, individual donors to be able to, you know,
15 help them make payroll until the advances started to
16 kick in, in July.

17 Just this past month, one of our -- one
18 of our partners in one of the communities that we
19 serve, there's -- prior to even the announcement about
20 the 50 percent advances potentially being not -- not
21 going forward had -- their staff had already
22 not -- missed two payroll cycles, because they had run
23 out of money at the end of the year.

24 So the 50 percent advances is really
25 not the solution, because it causes other problems.

1 For example, a cash flow problem for New York City.

2 But for the organizations that get
3 that, it really requires an enormous amount of fiscal
4 responsibility to have those resources and budget them
5 out to make sure that they are going to stretch over
6 the course of the year that you need them to.

7 When you're being -- you know, you have
8 insurance payments that are -- are rising, you know,
9 all kinds of rent and electric utility bill costs,
10 there's a huge temptation to use those resources to
11 pay the people that are, you know, on you in the
12 moment rather than save them to pay -- to make
13 payroll, like, in March. So it's very complicated.

14 In the short term, it's absolutely
15 necessary. Organizations will absolutely close. Not
16 Good Shepherd, but small and mid-sized organizations.
17 Those organizations calling me in desperation for a
18 loan, they won't make it.

19 But we need to solve the underlying
20 problem that is why that's happening. And that's --
21 you know, I've given a lot of specific recommendations
22 in my testimony, which I'll submit online. And after
23 30 years of habit, I have 30 copies here for you that
24 I can leave behind.

25 We know how to do it.

1 MR. LONGANI: Yep.

2 MS. YANCHE: We just have to have the
3 political will to fix the problem.

4 THE CHAIR: Thank you so much.

5 I -- Michelle and Misha, I don't believe that there
6 are additional questions from commissioners, but just
7 know that we hear you on this. We're actually pretty
8 outraged about it and intend to make sure that it is
9 appropriately addressed.

10 Michelle, you should know that in
11 addition to the commissioners that are present here,
12 we have a commissioner who's out of town and online.
13 But want you to be aware of her presence because she's
14 had such a long and rich relationship with Good
15 Shepherd. And that's, of course, Commissioner Ruth
16 Messenger, who just loves Good Shepherd and used to
17 work closely with the nuns who ran Good Shepherd back
18 in her day in office. So just wanted to note that.

19 MS. YANCHE: I love Ruth, but I'm not a
20 nun.

21 THE CHAIR: Thank you both.

22 MS. NONAN: Thank you.

23 THE CHAIR: Meryl Laborde and Rex Tai.

24 Meryl and Rex. And Meryl and Rex, please join us.

25 And as they join us, I just want to

1 clarify something about the exchange that I had with
2 our -- our council member about the transcripts from
3 these meetings.

4 As I noted, each hearing is immediately
5 posted on YouTube. And -- and as has become customary
6 on YouTube, there's a real-time transcript that's
7 auto-generated on the site. And we are going to add
8 instructions on our website just to help -- just to
9 better direct New Yorkers to that real-time
10 auto-generated transcript.

11 The formal transcript for our hearings
12 are being prepared by the excellent stenographer that
13 we have on site.

14 And of course, those have to be checked
15 for accuracy, complete accuracy before they're posted.
16 But the informal transcripts are available in real
17 time immediately after these hearings.

18 So please, Meryl and -- and Rex.

19 MS. LABORDE: Hi. My name is Merrill
20 Laborde, and I am a resident of Greenpoint, Brooklyn
21 and a longtime street safety advocate in North
22 Brooklyn.

23 I first want to thank the Commission
24 for convening this hearing and allowing New Yorkers to
25 testify.

1 I'm here to ask that the Commission
2 streamline the process for redesigning our streets to
3 make them safer for everyone and more efficient for
4 transit riders.

5 The current laws do not allow DOT to
6 meet the goals of the 2019 Streets Plan because of the
7 burdensome -- burdensome paperwork and notification
8 requirements around major transportation projects,
9 which includes bike lanes and bus lanes over 1,000
10 feet or three city blocks.

11 I know the folks at DOT are trying to
12 do their jobs, but the current rules make it
13 impossible for them to deliver projects in a timely
14 manner -- manner, and they are often years behind on
15 these projects.

16 I want to give you a few examples in
17 from my neighborhood that have been delayed for years
18 by the current rules.

19 The redesigns of Metropolitan Avenue
20 and Grand Street, roadways that local businesses,
21 residents, bus riders, pedestrians, and cyclists all
22 agree do not work as designed.

23 It has been three years since DOT and
24 Council Member Gutierrez hosted a community visioning
25 session and promised a plan. We are still waiting.

1 DOT says it's a complicated project and
2 needs more community input and more traffic studies
3 before they can share even the first iteration of a
4 plan. And that will still have to go through
5 additional community review and notification under our
6 current rules.

7 Similarly, the Make Morgan Safe
8 Campaign began in 2021 after another cyclist's death
9 on Morgan Avenue, a road connecting Bushwick, East
10 Williamsburg, and Greenpoint.

11 We have repeatedly asked DOT for safety
12 improvements and been met with inaction and excuses
13 about how complicated it is.

14 Last year, DOT named Morgan Avenue the
15 most dangerous trucking corridor in the entire city,
16 but they still cannot answer the question of what they
17 will do to make it safer.

18 Nearby on Meeker Avenue, DOT started a
19 pedestrian and cyclist improvement project in 2021
20 with an expected completion date in 2023. The -- the
21 project remains half complete.

22 They were able to put in metered
23 parking without the burdens of a major transportation
24 project, but they still cannot deliver the completed
25 bike lane and pedestrian improvements or the

1 maintenance of the corridor that they promised with
2 the addition of metered parking.

3 These are just a few of many projects
4 across the city that are delayed by the overly
5 burdensome notification, input, and review
6 requirements for bike lane and bus lane projects.

7 For every project delay, more New
8 Yorkers are killed by traffic violence, more bus
9 riders are delayed, and DOT spends more resources on
10 paperwork instead of making our streets the envy of
11 the world.

12 These projects aren't just for cyclists
13 and bus riders. They've been shown in study after
14 study to make streets safer for everyone, and the
15 Commission should act to make these projects easier to
16 implement.

17 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Meryl.

18 Rex.

19 MR. TAI: Hello. Quick personal point
20 of order. I registered to speak on two subjects, but
21 I imagine I only get one speaking opportunity; right?

22 THE CHAIR: You don't get to for the
23 price of one. Sorry.

24 MR. TAI: All good. I am -- so my name
25 is Rex. I am a member of the Democratic Socialists of

1 America. I wear multiple hats.

2 THE CHAIR: Can you -- can you bring
3 the microphone closer to you?

4 MR. TAI: Yeah. So sorry.

5 My name is Rex. I'm a member of New
6 York City DSA. I wear multiple hats.

7 I do want to just first highlight as a
8 representative of the -- of the Afrosocialist and
9 Socialists of Color Caucus, the -- the issue around
10 the Department of Community Safety.

11 There's a proposal for the charter
12 revision to move from the office, the mayor's office,
13 into a department. My esteemed colleague, Christina
14 Sparrock, is a subject matter expert. I hope you take
15 her consideration into -- into -- yeah, into
16 consideration.

17 So recognizing that tonight's focus is
18 on street safety projects, in my day job, I'm a
19 internal medicine physician working in New York City
20 Health and hospitals. I work in post-acute and
21 long-term care, where a lot of my patients are from
22 low-income communities of color and are often victims
23 of traffic violence disproportionately.

24 These are patients that will -- I -- I
25 just want to add to the course just saying that a lot

1 of these patients are -- we -- we talked about deaths
2 from traffic violence, but there are many, many
3 patients that survive, and then they have continued
4 care needs for the rest of their lives. I'm talking
5 about skilled nursing needs with toileting, cleaning,
6 like, respiratory care, speech language care.

7 These are patients that are -- are not
8 a constituency, because they will never get out of
9 bed. They will never vote. They will never speak
10 again. So I want to represent their -- their
11 interests.

12 The data from New York City and
13 globally is clear about the value of street safety
14 projects, and they should be able to move with all due
15 haste. I want to -- I want to support the proposal
16 for streamlining the street safety projects.

17 And just recognizing that in -- as a
18 matter of institutional efficiency, we already know in
19 healthcare that preventive health is extremely
20 impactful for patients avoiding expensive and
21 debilitating hospitalization in the future.

22 And similarly, I want to urge you to
23 consider that preventive street safety infrastructure
24 keeps neighborhood residents alive, independent,
25 participating in city life, rather than being struck

1 by automobiles and then being a burden on our already
2 critically understaffed New York City healthcare
3 system.

4 So let's please embrace 21st century
5 global standards of city wellness to promote
6 high-quality living for all New Yorkers in all
7 neighborhoods.

8 Thank you.

9 THE CHAIR: Thank you for your
10 testimony. Thank you for your advocacy and the care
11 that you provide.

12 Questions, comments, Commissioners?

13 None.

14 Thank you both.

15 Alex Morano and Pedro Rodriguez, both
16 online participants. Alex and Pedro, can you hear us?

17 MR. A. MORANO: Yes.

18 THE CHAIR: Please -- please start,
19 Alex.

20 MR. A. MORANO: Good evening, Chair.
21 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

22 My name is Alex Morano. I'm a Brooklyn
23 resident, a street safety activist. And like far too
24 many New Yorkers, I'm someone who's both been the
25 victim of a traffic crash and has a close family

1 member who's been seriously injured in a crash as
2 well.

3 I'm here to speak in favor of charter
4 revisions to streamline the process for implementing
5 street redesigns. I'm very encouraged by the many New
6 Yorkers who testified about this, about the need for
7 adjustments in the current street redesign process
8 already.

9 This process is unnecessarily
10 burdensome. It leads to delays in implementation that
11 leave New Yorkers in danger.

12 This extensive review for street
13 redesigns, designs that are already widely in use all
14 over the city, is essentially the equivalent of
15 requiring an intense multi-agency review for regular
16 street operations like milling and paving.

17 It doesn't make sense to do such an
18 extensive review for treatments that they -- are
19 already in use across the city and the agency, DOT, is
20 already implementing widely every single day
21 during -- during striping season.

22 So this is an area where we really need
23 to center policy and outcomes.

24 With regard to some of the remarks made
25 by the -- the council members this evening, I also

1 really want to emphasize that with regard to these
2 projects, the council members have serious political
3 considerations that are tied to them, which might be a
4 reason that they -- they speak against charter
5 revisions in this area.

6 Under the three previous mayors, we've
7 seen council members leverage public support for
8 street projects to create political pressure on the
9 executive branch.

10 This is something that happened
11 under -- under Bloomberg. It happened under DeBlasio.
12 It happened under Adams. And I'm sure if the council
13 members are given the opportunity to do -- to do this,
14 they'll do it under the current administration as
15 well.

16 Just a few other notes. For decades,
17 DOT has been implementing the -- the same bike
18 infrastructure and street redesigns that we know work.
19 There's -- there's lots of data to -- to support the
20 use of these designs. We don't need to check them and
21 go through an extensive review every time.

22 And when they're delayed, this exposes
23 New Yorkers to possible injury or death. And it's New
24 Yorkers of color and poor New Yorkers who
25 disproportionately bear these impacts.

1 I'll emphasize a note that Eric McClure
2 also raised from StreetsPAC. The over-involvement of
3 local firehouses in bike and bus projects is
4 incredibly burdensome. And it essentially allows
5 individual FDNY members to veto or obstruct projects
6 based on their -- their personal opinions of them;
7 right? They have no subject matter expertise.

8 So this is a an area where we really
9 need -- we -- we really need some changes, and New
10 Yorkers need government that works for them to deliver
11 immediate results.

12 But again, in order for that to happen,
13 we need to remove some of the unnecessary and
14 obstructive hurdles like these intense multi-agency
15 reviews for what are essentially basic projects.

16 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Alex. Thank
17 you.

18 Pedro.

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Hello. Thank you so
20 much for the Commission to -- for hearing our -- our
21 testimony.

22 Many members already spoke about the
23 notification laws, and I definitely want to add --
24 I -- I definitely want to double what they said on
25 that, but I want to focus on something more specific,

1 which I don't think has been mentioned.

2 At the moment, DOT has kind of a
3 perverse incentive to not make our streets safer by a
4 simple fact. The agency actually has no skin in the
5 game.

6 And what I mean by that is that while I
7 100 percent have a lot of admiration for the workers
8 of DOT, and I understand that they definitely do want
9 to make our street safer. But at the end of the day,
10 as an organization, there is not really anything
11 pushing for this, because there's no incentive for the
12 organization to actually act except for political
13 incentive.

14 Now, what do I mean by that is -- well,
15 to put it simply, is that there's no mechanism that
16 forces the City to implement street safety projects at
17 the moment, while there are mechanisms to actually
18 stop the City from making street safety projects,
19 namely lawsuits.

20 DOT, for example, is more likely to get
21 sued for implementing a street safety project than it
22 is to not do so. So if you think about it, if DOT
23 doesn't implement a street safety project on -- on a
24 street that is known to be dangerous, it is unlikely
25 that they're going to get sued. That just doesn't

1 happen very often. Meanwhile, we just saw the loss
2 that happened in Astoria on 31st -- 31st Street.

3 So this essentially means that the
4 driving force on whether a street safety program
5 happens is usually just political whims, whether the
6 mayor wants it, whether it's the local -- it's local
7 team that wants it, et cetera.

8 But this is not something that our
9 street safety should be dependent on. We should not
10 be dependent on the political whims on who the mayor
11 is or who our council member is.

12 For that reason, I urge the -- the
13 Committee -- the -- the Commission -- sorry -- to look
14 into ways to make Vision Zero bite. It needs to bite
15 back.

16 There needs to be an incentive and a
17 real consequence for the City to simply ignore the
18 fact that over 200 people are getting killed every
19 single year and tens of thousands of people are
20 getting injured every single year. This is not okay.

21 And now there are -- one of the other
22 I -- I would -- I think that we -- that -- that we
23 could look into is, for example, making the City
24 legally liable for damages on the street. If you get
25 hurt on the street, there should be -- it should be

1 easy for you to sue the City if the City knew that it
2 was dangerous.

3 That will kick the political programs
4 into place. That will make the budget realize that
5 this is an actual crisis. And this is something that
6 has been done in other cities.

7 So -- so for example, in the
8 Netherlands, which is a place that a lot of people
9 talk about when it comes to street safety, this is
10 something that's actually a common liability for the
11 street managers.

12 So that is my comment on that. I would
13 like to -- to thank the Commission. And again, thank
14 you. Thank you for letting me speak.

15 THE CHAIR: Thank you both.

16 Thank you, Alex.

17 Thank you, Pedro.

18 I see no questions from -- from the
19 commissioners. Grateful for your testimony.

20 Karen Wharton, Ryan Shanahan.

21 Karen.

22 MS. WHARTON: Hi.

23 THE CHAIR: Hello.

24 MS. WHARTON: Good evening,
25 Commissioners, and thank you for the opportunity to

1 testify.

2 My name is Karen Wharton. I'm the
3 legislative director at Citizen Action of New York and
4 a convener of the statewide New York BIPOC Democracy
5 Table.

6 I worked to expand democracy in New
7 York. I helped lead the campaign for our state's
8 public campaign finance program, the largest in the
9 nation. I organized in Brooklyn for ranked choice
10 voting and helped make it work in this city.

11 So when I say I oppose the proposal to
12 bring open primaries to New York City, it is not
13 because I'm opposed to reform. Quite the opposite.

14 I have fought similar proposals in
15 Buffalo and Albany. Different cities, same promise,
16 same playbook, a sweeping irreversible change. And
17 now the same conversation has arrived in New York
18 City.

19 We had a group that voted after hearing
20 from five witnesses. And then just last year, another
21 commission looked at open primaries and declined to
22 put it to voters. Nothing has changed since except
23 who won the last mayoral election.

24 Proponents say one million unaffiliated
25 New Yorkers are shut out, but more than three million

1 New Yorkers are active registered Democrats. Yet in
2 last year's record breaking primary, over two million
3 of those Democrats didn't vote. Twice the entire
4 unaffiliated block.

5 Open primaries does nothing for them.
6 Do they not matter?

7 Notably, the CFB declined to endorse
8 primaries, recommending we fix the enrollment deadline
9 instead. We agree.

10 My greatest concern, however, is this
11 moment in our history. Louisiana v. Callais gutted
12 Section 2 of the Federal Voting Rights Act. The
13 guardrails that protected Black and Brown New Yorkers
14 for 60 years are coming down.

15 This is not the moment to be
16 experimenting with our electoral system. This is the
17 moment that we should be strengthening our system, the
18 one that enabled communities of color to finally build
19 real power.

20 The problem our -- that our proponents
21 name is real. The system is broken. But recognizing
22 a problem does not mean rushing to the first proposed
23 solution. So here is our ask.

24 THE CHAIR: You're right at time, if
25 you can be succinct.

1 MS. WHARTON: Very.

2 Recommend that New York City create a
3 broad-based task force to study the full range of
4 reforms: proportional representation, ballot access,
5 enrollment reforms, civic engagement, and evaluate
6 those through the lens of participation, racial
7 equity, and representation.

8 I know I'm out of time, so thank you
9 very much for indulging.

10 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Thank you so
11 very much, Karen. Thank you.

12 Ryan.

13 MS. SHANAHAN: Hi, Ryan Shanahan from
14 the Vera Institute of Justice.

15 And I am here to urge the Commission to
16 add to the New York City Charter a mandate that the
17 New York City DOC is responsible for protecting the
18 human dignity of all the people that work there or in
19 their care.

20 I'm not going to be able to connect
21 that to outdoor dining, but I will try to connect it
22 to the efficiency mandate that you have in front of
23 you.

24 And that is a jail system that has
25 human dignity at the core of its operations and

1 culture, makes facilities safer for everyone,
2 increases staff morale for staff and improves outcomes
3 for incarcerated people, which I am going to bundle
4 together to show how it improves overall efficiency.

5 But first, I want to connect human
6 dignity to these outcomes, which is that I am the
7 chief research officer at Vera.

8 And I conducted a randomized control
9 trial of a housing unit in a South Carolina prison
10 that was organized around human dignity where people
11 were by lottery assigned to that unit and had a 73
12 percent reduction in violence and an 83 percent
13 reduction in chance of that they would go to solitary
14 confinement. Staff were safer and they talked a lot
15 about their increased well-being when working on that
16 housing unit.

17 So how do we take these ideals and turn
18 them into --

19 THE CHAIR: Karen, can I just --
20 just --

21 MS. SHANAHAN: It's fine.

22 THE CHAIR: And -- and don't worry.
23 This will not subtract from your time at all.

24 But on -- on that study, this was just
25 a random controlled group? Nothing -- there was

1 nothing that distinguished that population from the
2 rest of the prison population?

3 MS. SHANAHAN: That's a great question.
4 So all of the people in the study applied to be on the
5 unit, but we did a separate comparison of that group
6 of people to see if they were similar to the
7 population that did not apply to live on that unit,
8 and we found that they were the exact same.

9 THE CHAIR: Great. Thank you.

10 MS. SHANAHAN: Okay. And so in New
11 York City, if we believe that if you create a clear
12 commitment that's prescriptive to human dignity for
13 the jail, you'll have an increase in staff morale,
14 which should reduce the \$334 million that you're
15 currently spending on overtime, which is linked to
16 staff shortages.

17 It'll also increase outcomes for
18 incarcerated people, which will reduce the \$127
19 million that you spend on claims against the DOC.

20 Government efficiency isn't just about
21 processes. It's about a clarity of purpose and an
22 alignment of values.

23 Revising the charter to include that
24 the DOC is responsible for protecting human dignity
25 for people that work for them or in their care will

1 unite us under a common principle and will help us
2 strengthen communities and deliver on safety.

3 THE CHAIR: Even with my interruption,
4 you came in under time. I'm impressed.

5 MS. SHANAHAN: Under time, people. I
6 was nervous.

7 THE CHAIR: Questions for Karen and
8 Ryan?

9 Please, Theo.

10 MR. MOORE: It's for Karen.

11 So we've heard a lot of -- about open
12 primaries as a commission.

13 THE CHAIR: Microphone a little closer,
14 Theo.

15 MR. MOORE: There we go.

16 THE CHAIR: Yeah.

17 MR. MOORE: Now -- now I'm going full
18 Barry White on you.

19 MS. WHARTON: I love it.

20 MR. MOORE: So we've heard a lot about
21 open primaries. And I was wondering, can you just
22 expand a little bit and tell us, one, are there other
23 large jurisdictions that have implemented this,
24 specifically this -- this jungle primary format? And
25 are there lessons learned from those jurisdictions

1 and, like, cons that we've seen coming out of them?

2 MS. WHARTON: Absolutely, Commissioner
3 Moore. Thank you so much for that question.

4 Well, proponents generally point to a
5 few -- like, two major states, I guess. California
6 because of its size. And the California -- California
7 does have pretty much the exact model that our
8 proponents are proposing, the top two open primaries.
9 They've had it for some 14 years or thereabout.

10 We have not seen the studies. Numerous
11 studies have been done, and there's not a consistent
12 improvement in turnout in California. Turnout ebbs
13 and flows just like it does in New York.

14 What we've also seen is that in
15 minority communities or communities of color, they
16 haven't been turning out as much in the primaries,
17 Ryan. And perhaps that's the same in other
18 states -- in New York.

19 And then the -- the other state that is
20 generally pointed to is Alaska. Alaska is wonderful.
21 Alaska is pretty homogenous. Alaska doesn't have a
22 million people. And Alaska has only had open
23 primaries for a few years -- I -- maybe the last four
24 or five, six years.

25 So I don't think that we should be

1 changing our system here in New York in this moment in
2 history, based on something that occur -- has been
3 happening for a few years in Alaska, a homogenous
4 state, and in California.

5 And California's -- someone has
6 actually filed paper to reverse -- repeal what's
7 happening in California because it hasn't been
8 working. And if you've been paying attention, they
9 almost had two Republican candidates for governor.

10 So in our opinion, California is not a
11 good model. Alaska is not a good model. And rather
12 than play around with the people of New York, we need
13 to have a really solid study before we make changes.

14 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

15 MS. WHARTON: It's just too important.
16 Thank you.

17 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Karen.

18 Additional questions? Comments?

19 Thank you. Thank you both.

20 Ryan, I'll assume that the details from
21 the North Carolina study are included in the testimony
22 that you're submitting?

23 MS. SHANAHAN: Yes.

24 THE CHAIR: Great. Thank you so much.

25 MS. WHARTON: Thank you.

1 THE CHAIR: Sara -- Sara Catalinotto
2 and Alex Camarda. Sarah and Alex.

3 Thank you, Sara.

4 MS. CATALINOTTO: Testing. From
5 Parents to Improve School Transportation. Since 2010
6 we strive for better conditions on the yellow school
7 bus. Also, to student OMNY for all, expanding travel
8 training and a jobs pipeline into student transit
9 careers.

10 Problems with daily school busing
11 impede education, safety, and civil rights for
12 one-sixth of the student body. The air, traffic, and
13 the economy suffer when parents must take students
14 individually instead of putting them on the bus and
15 going to work.

16 To align with the Charter, we must
17 change the governance of pupil transportation.
18 Chapter 78 calls for making the experiences of the
19 people who use and deliver government's programs the
20 central focus to inform policies, processes, and
21 systems, and to increase equitable access to city
22 services by incorporating these type of design into
23 every agency's work.

24 The only agency is the NYC Public
25 Schools, but it created a separate Office of People

1 Transportation, OPT, to contract 50 private bus
2 companies and one nonprofit.

3 OPT spends two billion a year making
4 two-hour routes for five-year-olds, but doesn't own
5 the vehicles, apply for electrification grants, pilot
6 air cooling units that work without polluting, nor try
7 to fix our driver shortage with proactive recruitment.

8 OPT uses highly flawed tech. Its call
9 center has no full-time Spanish speakers. It has put
10 off providing clear guidance on protecting migrant
11 students or skilled drivers who -- whose TPS might end
12 next Friday.

13 Last year's audit of OPT by the City
14 Comptroller concluded that the system must change
15 drastically and said City Hall must quickly study
16 whether to take over school bus service or perhaps
17 expand the nonprofit fleet.

18 We suggest a ballot proposal to empower
19 a commission of known representatives of parents,
20 educators, bus workers, students, and -- and
21 disability advocates to help make and implement pupil
22 transportation policy decisions.

23 Resolutions passed across the city by
24 the Chancellors of Parent Advisory Council, Community
25 Education Council 30 in Queens, District 75

1 Legislative Committee, Manhattan Community Board 12,
2 and others have similar wording.

3 When the Panel for Education -- oh,
4 boy, we out of time. Okay. But with -- the unions
5 and the parents are ready to go, so we just need a
6 permanent body.

7 Thank you.

8 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Sara.

9 Alex.

10 MR. CAMARDA: Thank you.

11 Good evening, members and staff of the
12 Charter Commission.

13 My name is Alex Camarda. I'm a senior
14 policy advisor for Reinvent Albany. We advocate for
15 transparent and accountable government across New
16 York.

17 I'm here tonight to talk about ways to
18 eliminate outdated reports. That was commented on in
19 the Commission's preliminary report.

20 But I do want to state for the record
21 that our -- our organization supports ranked choice
22 voting and non-partisan elections. We note that only
23 two of the 25 biggest U.S. cities have closed
24 primaries, New York City and Philadelphia.

25 Turning to reports, we felt in the

1 preliminary report the commission issued that it made
2 a compelling case that the current system for
3 eliminating outdated reports, namely the Report and
4 Advisory Board Review Commission, more commonly known
5 as RABRC, is not working effectively.

6 The Commission's report notes that just
7 28 reports have been eliminated since 2010 when RABRC
8 was first created. In the meantime, over 1,500 new
9 reporting requirements have been mandated.

10 In our own assessment of data that
11 Doris put in the open data portal that includes all of
12 the government mandated publications, we totaled 2,231
13 required reports, and 1,859 of those are recurring
14 either daily or up to eight years.

15 The agency that has the most required
16 reports is the Department of Health and Mental
17 Hygiene, of which there are a hundred.

18 And so we think a new approach is
19 warranted. We propose in our testimony that agencies,
20 through a process akin to rule-making with the
21 addition of a public hearing, propose the reports
22 annually that they would see -- they want to see
23 eliminated and through that public process would make
24 recommendations.

25 And the Council could overturn,

1 retaining their legislative authority, if they did not
2 agree with the reports that were slated to be
3 eliminated. If they did not oppose it, they would
4 then -- the reports would then be eliminated.

5 For new reports -- I mean, that -- that
6 only deals with existing reports. For new reports, we
7 think that the -- there should be a sunset
8 requirement, as the -- as the Commission raised in its
9 report.

10 We would suggest four years as a time
11 frame. And during that period, those reports could
12 not be eliminated that are new that have a sunset
13 requirement.

14 We also suggest that the Council adopt
15 a protocol for any new legislation so that it doesn't
16 reflexively require reporting requirements, but
17 examines whether the information's available on other
18 means and -- and tries to informally request the
19 information of the administration.

20 Lastly, I would just note that there
21 are many ways in which information dissemination can
22 occur.

23 THE CHAIR: You're right at time, Alex,
24 if you can complete.

25 MR. CAMARDA: Okay. And we -- we

1 really support information dissemination through open
2 records and also the open data law.

3 THE CHAIR: Great. Thank you so much,
4 Alex.

5 Questions, comments for Sara, Alex?

6 None.

7 Thank you both for your testimony.

8 Thank you.

9 Slight departure from the standard
10 we've had here. Instead of calling two individuals to
11 testify from the general public, I want to now call on
12 a member of the central staff of the -- of the New
13 York City Council, Nwamaka Ejebe.

14 And please -- please forgive me for
15 mispronouncing your name at all. And -- and I know
16 you'll correct me. I believe that you're the general
17 counsel to the --

18 MS. EJEBE: That is correct.

19 THE CHAIR: -- to the City Council.

20 Thank you.

21 MS. EJEBE: Yes, that is correct.

22 Okay.

23 THE CHAIR: Thank you so much for
24 joining us.

25 MS. EJEBE: Yes. Thank you so much,

1 Commissioner.

2 Yes. My name is Nwamaka Ejebe, and I
3 serve as general counsel for the City Council. It's
4 an honor to testify on behalf of the Speaker for the
5 Council.

6 The Speaker asked subject matter
7 experts at the Council to review the preliminary
8 report in detail and offer data-driven recommendations
9 in response. She has invited leaders of her
10 legislation Land Use and Finance Division to discuss
11 those proposals and offer recommendations.

12 Your executive director has explained
13 to me that they won't have time to testify. So we
14 urge you to read our written submission, and we also
15 encourage a person meeting with the commissioner and
16 the vice chair.

17 I do want to flag here policy and legal
18 issues that we have.

19 As you all are probably aware, COGE is
20 one of the shortest Charter Revision Commissions in
21 all of the city's history. This has resulted to a lot
22 of break in precedent, including the fact that the
23 Council's experts couldn't engage with you. That is a
24 break from precedent.

25 In addition, the fact that the Council

1 has not engaged substantively with the Commission and
2 its staff on detailed recommendations. Again, another
3 break in precedent.

4 By comparison, the Charter Revision
5 Commissions created by the Council in recent years
6 lasted eight to nine months respectively before they
7 issued the final report.

8 As Citizens Union correctly noted
9 during its testimony, "When commissions are
10 established at the last minute, they have little
11 opportunity to gather public input, conduct research,
12 or engage in thorough and deliberative process."

13 For the sake of New Yorkers, I echo
14 what one of the Council members noted before. By law,
15 you have two years to meet. You can put on the ballot
16 something in 2027.

17 We at the Council are not naive that
18 commissioners' commissions can be used by
19 administration to cynically reduce legislative bodies'
20 authority.

21 But if the stated intent here is
22 government efficiency, we urge you to focus on getting
23 complete information. There's nothing efficient about
24 getting the wrong policy outcome.

25 And here, my colleagues, their

1 testimony will spell out missing information,
2 including the fact that the Council, out of its own
3 initiative, has removed from the books far more
4 reporting requirements than the RABRC Commission. It
5 has through its own initiative.

6 And please really review that
7 carefully. It explains a very detailed process that
8 the Council goes through to get rid of its reports.

9 But I wanted to turn to the legal
10 concerns. The core concern that we have in one of
11 the -- two of the staff proposals is that it seems to
12 violate the State Constitution by requiring the
13 City -- that the State Constitution only allows for
14 one legislative body.

15 And the two recommendations that appear
16 to be written -- and again, this is more vague, so
17 we're not sure exactly where the Commission is going.

18 But the proposal that gives the
19 Department of Buildings power to amend the building
20 code without Council approval, as well as any proposal
21 that would automatically sunset or remove the
22 Council's authority for voting requirements are both
23 unlawful.

24 The State Constitution only allows
25 legislative power to be in the hands of the City

1 Counsel. So to attempt to move it from the
2 legislative body to another entity is a violation of
3 the law.

4 THE CHAIR: Understood. I -- I'm going
5 to ask you if you could just bring this to conclusion,
6 because you're well past time.

7 MS. EJEBE: Yep. I'm done.

8 THE CHAIR: Great. Thank you.

9 MS. EJEBE: So any questions?

10 THE CHAIR: Thank -- thank you so much.
11 I'll invite questions for you from commissioners.

12 I -- I know, of course, that the staff
13 of COGE met with the speaker and her chief of staff at
14 the very beginning of this process. And I know that
15 there were additional meetings with -- I believe with
16 you and -- and the staff. And you had several
17 questions that the staff then returned to respond to.

18 Your point generally about the
19 unprecedented timeline is -- is duly noted. You asked
20 whether or not I and the -- and the vice chair would
21 meet and absolutely would be happy to meet. I'd like
22 to include Secretary Kang in that meeting as well, and
23 we'll do so based on availability.

24 But really appreciate both your
25 testimony here and your rigorous engagement with the

1 team and with this entire process.

2 Questions, comments?

3 MR. GARRIDO: I -- I have one.

4 THE CHAIR: Please.

5 MR. GARRIDO: Yeah. I -- I just want
6 to say for the record, I served on the City Charter
7 previous commission. And while we took long to look
8 at the charter and the things that were implicated,
9 right, there was a bump provision that was exercised
10 by the former mayor that basically invalidated a lot
11 of the work that had been done. So part of this
12 timeline of this is not the control of this
13 Commission, just for the record. But --

14 MS. EJEBE: I --

15 MR. GARRIDO: The -- just -- just want
16 to make sure that --

17 MS. EJEBE: Yeah.

18 MR. GARRIDO: -- that the implication
19 is now somehow that we're rushing through things to
20 get things to take away powers from the Council or
21 anybody for that matter. I -- I want that to be very
22 clear.

23 MS. EJEBE: So two important points. I
24 think that there -- the Council agrees that there are
25 a lot of things in the preliminary report that have

1 consensus. And so it makes sense within that short
2 time frame to move forward with the consensus items.

3 But then there are other items that we
4 haven't had real engagement on. And I want to draw a
5 distinction between our conversations we've had with
6 the executive director, which have been based on vague
7 concepts of ideas in the report as opposed to concrete
8 recommendations where we can really dig our teeth
9 into.

10 So the Adams Land Use, our Council, our
11 central staffers met with the Land Use team on
12 numerous occasions with detailed recommendations. And
13 even though the end result was not what we wanted, it
14 was shaped by those concrete engagements.

15 And so that's what we're encouraging,
16 to come with specific ideas. Let us have engagement
17 before it shows up in your final report. And that's
18 our good governance request.

19 THE CHAIR: Yeah. You -- and you have
20 that commitment from --

21 MS. EJEBE: Okay. Fantastic.

22 THE CHAIR: -- from this Commission.
23 And I think it was important for us not to get ahead
24 of the public process.

25 We were actually serious about the

1 input that we were receiving from over 600 New Yorkers
2 that have testified, inclusive of experts and folks
3 who are just struggling every day in their communities
4 to try to find ways to make this the most livable city
5 possible.

6 And we did not want to get ahead of
7 their input before we offered detailed recommendations
8 to the mayor and the Council. But we are now at a
9 point where we'll be ready, prepared, and excited to
10 be able to engage with you and Council leadership.

11 Other comments, questions?

12 MS. RIVERA: I -- I have a question.

13 Thank you for your testimony. I wanted
14 to ask, outside of your legal concerns around building
15 code and reporting, whether or not your testimony
16 includes any details on actual recommendations
17 included in the report. Are there --

18 MS. EJEBE: It does. My colleagues
19 here are the policy experts.

20 MS. RIVERA: I know you only have three
21 minutes.

22 MS. EJEBE: Yes.

23 MS. RIVERA: And the -- the rest of the
24 gang didn't get to say anything, but can you highlight
25 what you --

1 MS. EJEBE: So some of them. So the
2 Rainy Day Fund, our director of finance could tell you
3 more about it, but there are recommendations detail
4 why it's important to have the details about
5 withdrawals and deposits be part of the legislative
6 process, as opposed to something in the charter that
7 would not give the City its ability to maneuver under
8 specific circumstances.

9 We have details about the reporting
10 requirements and why the Council process really works
11 well. And to be frank, the mayor's team of operations
12 is the one that's slowing down the process in terms of
13 increasing the number of reports.

14 There's details about that as well as
15 sidewalk cafe leasing. So I really -- and I'm sad
16 that my colleagues here can't speak to you because
17 they could give you more detail here.

18 MS. RIVERA: Yeah. We understand.
19 Thank you.

20 THE CHAIR: We will -- we will make all
21 the time in the world to engage with them. We -- we
22 though it was really important to advantage the
23 general public for this hearing. There will be plenty
24 of time to engage in formal meetings in City Hall.

25 That's why we could not have testimony

1 from all five of them and just wanted to be able to be
2 in discussion with you. But we'll look forward
3 to -- to more engagement. Thank you so much for this
4 testimony.

5 We're going to now turn to two online
6 participants, Lee Drutman and Briana Strong.

7 Lee and Briana, if you can hear us,
8 please begin.

9 MR. DRUTMAN: Great. Thank you.

10 Good evening. My name is Lee Drutman.
11 I am a political scientist at New America, a think
12 tank in Washington, where I study electoral reform.

13 And I've read essentially the entire
14 academic literature on open and nonpartisan primaries.
15 So I come tonight not as a defender of any party or
16 any incumbent, but as someone who is actually
17 genuinely puzzled by this open parties proposal at
18 this time.

19 Now, it is true that more than a
20 million New Yorkers have chosen to register as
21 independents. And as a result, they are unable to
22 vote in the Democratic primaries that often decide the
23 city's election. But this is a choice that they have
24 made.

25 And it is -- and if it is important for

1 them to vote in a Democratic primary, they are
2 absolutely free to do so. Registering as a Democrat
3 costs nothing. It's as free as a free bus. You just
4 have to show up on time for it.

5 Now, advocates of open primaries will
6 make a number of claims for what opening the primaries
7 to independents will do. And again, as someone who
8 has looked closely at these studies and analyzed much
9 of the data myself, these claims do not hold up.

10 Take the central claim that these
11 systems produce less polarization and more moderate,
12 responsive government. Well, I've reviewed every
13 independent academic study testing this claim. And
14 these are dozens of -- dozens of studies published by
15 top academics and top journals, and there is no
16 support for this claim. Of course, multiple studies.

17 And this is not a new idea. We have
18 three-quarters of states that allow independents to
19 vote in primary elections. We have, you know,
20 hundreds of elections in California and Washington
21 State and Alaska.

22 And you know, again, after decades of
23 research, dozens of studies, the honest answer is that
24 the only studies that torture the data enough to show
25 qualified and tiny positive effects are the ones

1 funded by the very wealthy donors who support this
2 reform.

3 Advocates of open primaries also claim
4 it will fix lower turnout, but New York City doesn't
5 really have a turnout problem for primaries. Last
6 year's Democratic primary was incredibly high
7 participation, the highest since 1989. Over a million
8 voters that was expanding on the 2021 record.

9 So turnout in New York City isn't
10 falling. It's actually rising under the very system
11 that this proposal claims to replace.

12 So then there's the claim that the
13 primary is the only election that counts. And I think
14 last year's may all race disprove that.

15 Andrew Cuomo lost the Democratic
16 primary, and he still ran in the general election
17 anyway on his own independent line. So any serious
18 primary loser can force a competitive general election
19 if they want one.

20 The general election is open. If the
21 goal is to get real competition and real
22 representation, open primaries aim at the wrong
23 target.

24 The reason that the November election
25 often feels settled isn't the closed primary. It's

1 single-member districts in a one-party city. And the
2 reform that fixes that is the same one --

3 THE CHAIR: You're right on time, Lee,
4 if you can wrap up.

5 MR. DRUTMAN: You've heard of it, which
6 is proportional representation for New York City. So
7 if the folks who are advocating this really want to
8 have everyone cast a meaningful vote in November, one
9 of those sorts of reform that would actually --

10 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Lee. Thank you.
11 Please -- please stay on the line in case we have
12 questions for you. Stay -- stay with us, Lee.

13 Briana.

14 MS. STRONG: Hi. Yes. I'm here. Can
15 you hear me?

16 THE CHAIR: We can.

17 MS. STRONG: Okay. So I actually --
18 I'm going to, I guess, maybe pick up where Lee left
19 off.

20 So my name is Briana Strong. I am -- I
21 come before you today, because I refuse to accept a
22 democracy that tells more than 1.2 million New York
23 City voters that our voices matter only after the most
24 important decisions have already been made.

25 I live and work in Brooklyn where I am

1 raising my daughter, who just turned eight years old.
2 And I am a proud independent because I believe my vote
3 should belong to me, not to a political party.

4 Open primaries are about fairness,
5 equality, and the fundamental promise that every
6 citizen deserves a meaningful voice in government.

7 Every eligible voter pays taxes. Every
8 eligible voter is expected to obey the laws. Every
9 eligible voter is affected by the decisions our
10 elected officials make. Yet more than 1.2 million
11 independent voters in New York City are shut out of
12 taxpayer-funded primary elections.

13 That is wrong. It is taxation without
14 meaningful representation. And it has no place in a
15 city or a nation that claims to value democracy.

16 I am independent because for far too
17 long, we have allowed political parties to place their
18 own interests above the interests of the people.

19 We have watched corruption,
20 self-preservation, and partisan gamesmanship become so
21 common that -- excuse me -- gamesmanship become so
22 common that many people simply shrug their shoulders
23 and accept it as normal. It is not normal, and it
24 should never be acceptable.

25 Government should answer to the people,

1 not the other way around.

2 Every time we ignore an unfair system
3 because it has existed for a long time, we send the
4 message that accountability is optional.

5 You have the opportunity to do
6 something about a system that has become unjust. It
7 is my hope that you will place a proposal for an open
8 primaries on the ballot this November so the people of
9 New York City can decide whether every voter deserves
10 an equal voice.

11 Democracy belongs to the people no
12 matter how we are registered. I urge you to support
13 open primaries because every voice deserves to be
14 heard.

15 Thank you.

16 THE CHAIR: Thank you so much, Lee and
17 Briana. I see no questions for you.

18 But Lee, I just want to thank you,
19 because I'm assuming that you're the Lee Drutman whose
20 piece I read some years back on ten ways to fix
21 democracy that was in Foreign Policy. It was a really
22 great piece. And I'm assuming you're the same
23 Professor Lee Drutman. So thank you for that.

24 MR. DRUTMAN: I am. I am the same.
25 Yes.

1 THE CHAIR: Awesome, awesome.

2 MR. DRUTMAN: Well, thank you.

3 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Appreciate you.
4 Lourdes Blanco and Alvin Carter.

5 MR. CABRERA: She goes first?

6 THE CHAIR: Please. What -- let's --
7 so -- so we could -- if -- if -- we'll do this any way
8 that works best for you. If -- if it's easier
9 for -- for Lourdes to give her entire testimony and
10 then have you translate it, that's fine. Or if she
11 prefers to stop every 30 seconds as you translate,
12 we'll accommodate that as well.

13 Can we put the mic -- give her -- share
14 the mic so we can sort of hear her. Yeah.

15 MR. CABRERA (FOR MS. BLANCO): Hi,
16 goodnight. My name is Lourdes Blanco, and it's been
17 four years of me working in the NYPD as a crossing
18 guard. I just want to make it clear that I'm coming
19 here on my own behalf, and I'm not here as a
20 representative of the NYPD.

21 It worries me that in my day-to-day, in
22 my job, I see people that they do not respect the
23 traffic signals.

24 So I -- I am from Venezuela. I have a
25 law degree. I have five master's degree in law in

1 Venezuela. And it has come to my attention that there
2 is an urgent need for there to be more respect from
3 civil society and also for students to respect the
4 traffic signals in order to avoid accidents.

5 I work in a very busy area. It's an
6 area where you have normal citizens and students that
7 they -- they converge. And it's a place where there's
8 a lot of -- where a lot of accidents occur.

9 And I do my job, and I do it -- I do
10 it -- I love my job and I love what I do. And it has
11 come to my attention and it causes me great worry that
12 I get disrespected often when I try to guide people in
13 how to -- how to behave or how to maneuver themselves
14 safely.

15 And -- and this has caused a lot of
16 issues because while me and my colleagues, we address
17 these problems to other people for them not to get
18 hurt, they go to the Precinct, and they tell the
19 Precinct that we scream at them, that, you know, we're
20 not treating them fairly and whatnot.

21 So because of time, I would like for
22 the interpreter to read the proposal that I've written
23 down for you all to take note and -- because of time.

24 THE CHAIR: Yes, please. Yes, yes,
25 please.

1 MR. CABRERA: "Stage one, road safety
2 education in schools. The goal would be to create a
3 new culture from childhood.

4 "Actions: practice practical workshops
5 with the different school districts where children
6 interact as pedestrians and drivers. Activities:
7 invent prevention short films and use playful material
8 for minors to identify what a regulatory preventive
9 and informative sign is.

10 "Stage two, community awareness
11 campaigns. Goal: to use empathy and citizen
12 commitment. Actions: promote neighborhood campaigns
13 under slogans related to respect for traffic signs and
14 life.

15 "Activities: hand out flyers on the
16 difference between being a pedestrian and being a
17 driver and defensive and pedestrian driving workshops
18 and civic centers.

19 "Stage three, audit and road
20 technology. Goal: monitor compliance and adjust
21 infrastructure actions. Actions: place smart
22 counting and statistical monitoring devices to
23 identify the most vulnerable intersections.

24 "Activities: in high incidence areas,
25 use defensive driving programs (such as those approved

1 by the New York DMV driver training programs to reduce
2 violations) ."

3 THE CHAIR: Are we -- are we close to
4 the end of the list? Or that was it? Great. Thank
5 you so much. Gracias, Lourdes.

6 MS. BLANCO: Thank you.

7 MR. CARTER: Good afternoon, Council
8 Members, Chair Gaspard.

9 My name is Alvin Carter. I'm the
10 deputy director of the Security Division at Local
11 32BJ. 32BJ is the largest union of property service
12 workers in the country, representing over 175,000
13 members across 13 states, including tens of thousands
14 of commercial property service workers, residential
15 building staff, and security officers here in New York
16 City.

17 32BJ supports efforts to improve our
18 City government to be more responsive and effective
19 and -- and believe that a better City government is a
20 powerful tool to improve the lives of working people.

21 However, we have concerns about some
22 proposed changes to procurement rules. The City, both
23 directly by agencies or DCAS and -- and indirectly
24 through DHS contracted shelter operators contracted to
25 security companies who employ thousands of officers to

1 keep our government workers, important locations, and
2 some of New York's most vulnerable people safe and
3 secure.

4 These workers, including thousands of
5 unionized security guards, do vital work to keep our
6 cities running. Unfortunately, the City often fails
7 to take into account when workers are represented by a
8 union in its decision to renew or replace contractors.

9 In the past 12 months alone, over a
10 hundred unionized contracted guards at City agencies
11 and -- and contracted shelters have -- have faced
12 displacement and the threat of disruption of health
13 benefits they and their families rely on because the
14 City or its contractors replaced its security
15 contractors with a contractor that refused to
16 recognize the employee's union.

17 Put bluntly, the City and its
18 contracted shelter operators facilitate the lowering
19 of job standards for security officers.

20 The solution to the problem likely do
21 not lie in the -- in the charter, and we continue to
22 engage with the administration to find a resolution.
23 However, we worry that some charter proposals could
24 exacerbate the problem.

25 The preliminary report proposes

1 limiting public notification requirements for some
2 contracts. Oftentimes, City public reporting
3 requirements are how we learn the City or its
4 contractors are planning to replace security
5 contractors.

6 Public notifications with ample lead
7 time are vital to making sure that guards can hold
8 incoming -- incoming contractors accountable to
9 existing displaced worker ordinances and prepare for
10 potential changes, terms, and conditions of
11 employment, including the possible succession of
12 health benefits.

13 Without this notice, workers could be
14 blindsided by these changes. Proposals to limit this
15 reporting must still allow workers sufficient time to
16 act.

17 THE CHAIR: You're -- you're at time.
18 Sorry.

19 MR. CARTER: Oh, thank you.

20 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

21 Thank you both for your -- your
22 testimony.

23 MS. WOLFE: Thank you. I was
24 whispering to the Chair, and he correctly said I
25 should -- I should make the public comment about it.

1 I just wanted to thank you for your testimony.

2 As a crossing guard, you're -- well,
3 you're keeping our -- you're helping to keep kids
4 safe, which is incredible, but -- but -- and doing --
5 doing a service.

6 But -- but really, I also want to talk
7 about the fact that it's a example of what can happen
8 when you create a venue for folks who are doing the
9 work day in and day out who are seeing where culture
10 change and operational change can happen.

11 So I'm sure the staff will take under
12 advisement. It doesn't sound like it's about the
13 charter, but it is a great example for what can happen
14 when you go out into the world and listen.

15 Thank you.

16 MS. BLANCO: Thank you.

17 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

18 MR. GARRIDO: Just a question.

19 THE CHAIR: Henry, please.

20 MR. GARRIDO: (Speaking in Spanish.)

21 MS. BLANCO: (Speaking in Spanish.)

22 MR. GARRIDO: Gracias.

23 MS. BLANCO: (Speaking in Spanish.)

24 THE CHAIR: Henry, can you share with
25 the -- with the class?

1 MR. GARRIDO: Oh, I asked what
2 precinct.

3 THE CHAIR: Yes. I just want to make
4 sure everyone understands you.

5 MR. GARRIDO: What precinct
6 she's -- sorry.

7 MS. BLANCO: (Speaking in Spanish.)

8 MR. GARRIDO: No, no.

9 Yeah. As everybody knows, our union
10 represents crossing guards, and we have a crossing
11 guards counsel on recommendations. Some of the things
12 that she proposed today, I'd like to forward them to
13 the Crossing Guard Council for implementation, and
14 that's why I'm asking.

15 Thank you.

16 THE CHAIR: Thank you. I understood
17 what you were asking, but as somebody who has a mother
18 who retired as a DC-37 crossing guard, I just wanted
19 to make sure you had an opportunity to say that.

20 Thank you for your testimony.

21 Thank you both.

22 Going to -- I see that we've been
23 joined by Council Member Gail Brewer. I'm going to
24 ask the council member to join us and I'm going to --

25 UNASSIGNED: She can wait.

1 THE CHAIR: No. No, you can't.

2 I'm going to ask the council member to
3 join us. And I'd also like to invite Michelle Jackson
4 to -- to the table as well.

5 MS. BREWER: She can go. Let her go.

6 THE CHAIR: Say Gail. Gail, please.
7 I'm -- I'm going to ask staff to take your name so
8 that we can at least check to see where you are in the
9 queue, because there are so many others who signed up.

10 MS. WESSLER: No, I told her. I just
11 got a -- I didn't --

12 THE CHAIR: It's hard to hear. Oh,
13 you're -- are you saying that you have to depart now?

14 MS. WESSLER: Coming here -- coming
15 here -- there were --

16 MS. BREWER: Yes.

17 MS. WESSLER: -- they would be five
18 minutes late. Now I just got notified that they're on
19 their way.

20 MS. BREWER: Access-A-Ride.

21 THE CHAIR: Oh, your Access-A -- I'm so
22 sorry. It was hard to hear.

23 MS. WESSLER: My Access-A-Ride.

24 THE CHAIR: Your Access-A-Ride is here,
25 and you'd like an opportunity --

1 MS. WESSLER: I call it the
2 Distress-A-Ride, but --

3 MS. BREWER: Have her speak.

4 THE CHAIR: You have to forgive me.
5 The way the acoustics work in here. Are you saying
6 that your Access-A-Ride is here and you're hoping to
7 speak before you leave?

8 MS. WESSLER: I said -- no, I'm saying
9 my time is gone now.

10 THE CHAIR: I -- I apologize. I -- I
11 would invite you to come and speak now if they can
12 wait another --

13 MS. WESSLER: I can't. No, I can't.

14 THE CHAIR: Sorry.

15 MS. WESSLER: I am -- I have a paper.

16 THE CHAIR: Thank -- thank you.

17 MS. WESSLER: I submitted my name and
18 information. It's on here. You may remember me from
19 the Lower East Side. You asked me a question.

20 THE CHAIR: Oh, it's Judy.

21 MS. WESSLER: Yes. Who else would
22 interrupt?

23 THE CHAIR: I am -- I am so very sorry,
24 Judy, that you didn't have an opportunity to -- to
25 testify.

1 If there's any way that staff can help
2 maybe to have the Access-A-Ride wait longer, we'd love
3 to take Judy's testimony. See if she can work this
4 out. In the interim, we'll --

5 MS. BREWER: I can work it out.

6 THE CHAIR: We'll engage with -- with
7 Gail.

8 But we'll stop if you're able to make
9 the Access-A-Ride wait.

10 MS. BREWER: Judy, I can work it out if
11 you want to wait.

12 MS. WESSLER: What?

13 MS. BREWER: I'll work it out.

14 MS. RIVERA: Gail, get her -- get her a
15 car to Chelsea.

16 THE CHAIR: I think we can get you back
17 to Chelsea.

18 Please, Council Member.

19 MS. RIVERA: I shouted out here where
20 you live. I'm sorry. I know where you live.

21 MS. BREWER: Okay. I do, too, know
22 where she lives.

23 All right. Thank you very much. I am
24 Gail Brewer. I represent the Upper West Side,
25 Clinton, and part of the City Council in Central Park.

1 So I do want to thank you. I have to
2 say that it's a good report. I appreciate being
3 mentioned in it in terms of wanting a permit instead
4 of revocable consent, because I didn't know what the
5 hell revocable consent is, nor does anybody else.

6 And I also just want -- there's a lot
7 of good issues listed. Streamlining is important, but
8 there are so many challenges.

9 I do have -- I'm very familiar with
10 charter revision. With Tish James in 2018, we passed
11 a law that made a Charter Revision Commission that had
12 input from the comptroller, public advocate, the
13 Council, and the mayor.

14 And one of the outcomes was advising
15 consent for corporation counsel ironically has played
16 a role. But I have some concerns. Reporting
17 requirements, which are listed.

18 Ester Fuchs working in the Bloomberg
19 Administration suggested a report and advisory board
20 review commission with inclusion from the City Council
21 reviewing all reports. And I have to say they should
22 meet, and they should do their job. I don't know that
23 we need to have a second discussion on that same
24 topic.

25 Sidewalk cafes. As a former community

1 board member, Manhattan Borough president, where I
2 appointed them as a counsel member, I review the
3 sidewalk cafe applications.

4 Very few get called up for Council
5 review. So any slowdown in the process is due to a
6 City agency's lack of staff or challenges, not due to
7 the Community Board and the City Council. So I just
8 think that it should continue as is.

9 At the same time, Lincoln Restler is
10 negotiating the roadside. And I know according to
11 your report and real life, there is some confusion
12 between sidewalk cafe and cafes in the roadside.

13 But I think we should wait until he
14 does his negotiation and see if anything needs to be
15 done. It could be done legislatively if we need
16 changes.

17 Major transportation projects. To my
18 surprise, the issue of transportation has way taken
19 over constituent interest from housing. Used to be
20 tenants, and now it's DOT every day.

21 It could be street permits for street
22 openings, for Con Ed. It's all about bike lanes, bus
23 lanes, open streets, street lights, bus stop
24 locations. Everything is DOT. And so I worry that
25 there isn't enough notification and people having

1 input.

2 How do you streamline it and continue
3 the input? I don't know, but that's what has to be
4 done.

5 East River Park was a nightmare. That
6 was when I was borough president, but we had input.

7 Office space. I think that the
8 commissioner of DCAS walks on water. So I -- she did
9 call and she had discussion about the leasing process.
10 She gave the stupidest example of a building right now
11 leased to the City that is -- just wants an extra room
12 in the basement for something or other.

13 That should not go through a process.
14 So there is a possibility of a medium in terms of
15 figuring out what has or has not --

16 Bye, Judy.

17 Could or could not be done in terms of
18 leasing. I am for whatever Yume is for.

19 Rule-making. When Patricia Lancaster
20 was the commissioner in 2002, she had a huge effort.
21 She redid the entire building code. It's complicated,
22 hard to put on a ballot. You really got to have
23 stakeholders in the room. I don't know that it could
24 be understood.

25 Rainy Day Fund. There have to be

1 guidelines and procedures for funding and withdrawing.
2 I agree. But I don't know that it should be any extra
3 money surplus goes to the fund. I think that does
4 usurp the power of the Council, as I said so earlier.

5 What to do? DOI, I think you've heard
6 from others. It has a lot of need to incorporate.
7 There must be no removal of the DOI commissioner.
8 They need to be strengthened, fixed terms, and they
9 need a minimum budget.

10 Same thing for COIB. They need a
11 minimum budget. And the lobbying bureau needs to get
12 out of the Office of City Clerk and go to COIB.

13 You know better than I about their
14 procurement process. You've heard a lot about it. It
15 needs help. And Marla Simpson couldn't figure it out.
16 I don't know if I can figure it out. So I will just
17 say talk to Marla. But there has to be a focus on
18 workforce and training.

19 CCRB still needs attention.

20 I just want to list though, finally,
21 what are people interested in? Quality of life. How
22 do you get a copy of a police report electronically?
23 You have to go to person.

24 Signing one's name and other
25 information on consent forms for social services. So

1 many times you have to sign so many problems with
2 screen renewal, SNAP renewal, city theft renewal,
3 Section 8 reform, lack of language access, puddles of
4 dirty water on street intersections after a rainfall.
5 Disabled drivers can't get renewal permits. And guess
6 what? Transportation with Access-A-Ride listed right
7 here.

8 THE CHAIR: Council Member, I'm going
9 to ask you to just take 20 more seconds to wrap.

10 MS. BREWER: I will.

11 So I wanted to say there's a long list
12 of things that I will submit or what people are
13 considered about -- concerned about. I don't think
14 that the issues that I have listed should be on the
15 ballot.

16 They're too complicated. They usurp
17 the City Council, and I think you should be much more
18 nuanced about what goes on. The ones I listed should
19 not go on.

20 Thank you very much.

21 THE CHAIR: Thank -- thank you, Council
22 Member.

23 I -- so -- so Judy, you were -- you
24 were next in queue, so I just asked us to shuffle
25 this. And Michelle was -- was kind enough to -- to

1 agree to it. So if you could --

2 MS. WESSLER: I want to thank --

3 THE CHAIR: -- provide your testimony
4 now. And -- and forgive me, but this is, you know, my
5 own vanity and not putting on my glasses, because I
6 should have realized that only Judy would have
7 interrupted in that -- in that way. And I'm-- I
8 always welcome your interruptions.

9 MS. WESSLER: I appreciate the
10 recognition, Ambassador. Thank you.

11 Yeah. And -- and Christina Sparrock
12 was testifying with me. So could we get her up here
13 as well?

14 This is Christina.

15 THE CHAIR: Yes, but I will ask you to
16 please start if you -- if you can.

17 MS. WESSLER: Sure. I have been a
18 community public health advocate for over 40 years. I
19 won't tell you how many more than that, and I'm
20 testifying tonight as an individual.

21 But what I want to talk about is public
22 health is really important, and it's been largely
23 ignored by the mayoral administration, by the City
24 right now.

25 And you know, we just lost -- 450,000

1 people just lost health insurance because of not only
2 federal stuff, but State inaction, so that there are a
3 lot more people without insurance. And they don't go
4 to the fancy hospitals, because they get -- don't get
5 seen there. Carlina can verify that with me.

6 So we -- I was part of Healthcare
7 Workers for Zohran, the public policy committee of it.
8 We wrote some really good stuff. I was excited about
9 it, and, you know, I don't get excited about
10 everything except if I can't testify.

11 And yeah, that's it. Tell them I --
12 so --

13 MS. BREWER: She's testifying. She'll
14 be there in a little while, but you know.

15 MS. WESSLER: This is --

16 THE CHAIR: Only in New York.

17 Please, Judy, if you could continue.

18 MS. WESSLER: This is very funny, or
19 not.

20 Anyway, what I want to say is that
21 there were some really, really good proposals. I only
22 brought one copy of this, but I would hope that this
23 commission or whoever is going to do it is going to
24 look at it.

25 It's penny wise and pound foolish, that

1 old stupid saying, to not provide preventive and
2 primary care, particularly to people that are not
3 going to have access.

4 And -- you know, and there are rich
5 institutions that call themselves voluntary nonprofit
6 hospitals that have a lot of money.

7 And there are ways of tapping that
8 money and making sure that it goes to the safety net
9 healthcare providers in -- in communities where people
10 should be able to -- be able to get their care.
11 Again, some of those proposals are in here.

12 There are people that are not just me.
13 Rex is one and Christina is another. And -- and there
14 are others who, you know, would be ready and available
15 to talk about it.

16 I urge -- strongly urge you all to
17 please pay attention to this and do something.

18 THE CHAIR: We will, we will. Thank
19 you so very much, Judy.

20 MS. WESSLER: Thank you, Patrick. It's
21 nice to see you again.

22 THE CHAIR: It's good to see you
23 always.

24 MS. WESSLER: The Lower East Side;
25 right?

1 THE CHAIR: Mr. Lower East Side.

2 MS. WESSLER: Yeah. Okay.

3 THE CHAIR: Judy, thank you so much.

4 We're -- we're -- because we're almost
5 at eight o'clock, Judy, I'm going to have the
6 commissioners direct their questions to Council Member
7 Brewer if they have any for her.

8 MS. WESSLER: I'm leaving. My phone
9 number is on here.

10 THE CHAIR: And we'll, of course, be in
11 touch.

12 MS. YANCHE: And Gail took care of it
13 for me, so.

14 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

15 MS. YANCHE: Thank you.

16 THE CHAIR: And -- and as the
17 Council -- and -- and as we take questions for the
18 Council Member, Michelle, if you could rejoin.

19 MS. BREWER: Yeah, Michelle, please
20 come.

21 THE CHAIR: You'll have -- you'll have
22 an opportunity in a moment.

23 Questions for the Council member?

24 Questions? Comments?

25 MR. GARRIDO: I guess, how are you?

1 MS. BREWER: I'm fine.

2 MR. GARRIDO: Good. The -- the
3 question is -- I'm -- I'm trying to be clear. You
4 position is that anything that is too obscure should
5 not be on the ballot?

6 MS. BREWER: There in the report, there
7 were some good ideas. I didn't mention the good ideas
8 time wise. But the -- you know, things on revocable
9 consent, for instance, or things on the bonding.

10 No, those are complicated. But these,
11 I think, cut the power of the City Council, and that's
12 why I'm concerned.

13 So it's more -- but I will also say,
14 having been through, as you have, all of these many,
15 many charters, they usually pass, you know, even if
16 it's complicated, because people don't know what
17 they're voting for, to be honest with you.

18 The only time which was frustrating
19 was, and Carlina will remember, when the word
20 "minority women business" appeared, everything on that
21 charter passed except the word "minority," and they
22 vote against it.

23 So it's a -- it's a fickle population
24 voting when it comes to charter. You have to get it
25 right. And so I worry that these would usurp some of

1 the power of the City Council.

2 On the other hand, there are other
3 complicated things, bonding and other things,
4 on -- that doesn't usurp the Council's power.

5 MR. GARRIDO: So just to be clear, your
6 position is that anything that is proposed to this
7 Charter that you believe would -- would usurp the
8 power of the Council should not be on the ballot?

9 MS. BREWER: I think it should be
10 discussed either at the Council with the City or
11 legislatively and have a different approach. Maybe
12 there's an issue to be dealt with, but I don't think
13 it should go this route.

14 MR. A. MORANO: Thank you.

15 MS. WOLFE: Thank you. Any other
16 questions for the council member?

17 Okay. Michelle, would you like to
18 provide your testimony?

19 MS. JACKSON: Yes. Hello.

20 MS. WOLFE: Council Member, thank you
21 so much if you have to go. Thank you so much.

22 MS. JACKSON: Good evening. My name is
23 Michelle Jackson. I'm the executive director of the
24 Human Services Council. We represent over 180 human
25 service providers in New York City.

1 I will be very quick because you've
2 heard much testimony about procurement reform, and
3 that's what I'm here to talk tonight.

4 In my testimony, I have outlined a
5 number of very clear places where the Charter Revision
6 Commission could take on procurement reform to help
7 eliminate the delays in payment that nonprofits face.
8 You heard from two of my members earlier about what
9 these delays look like for nonprofits.

10 I have been giving the same testimony
11 since 2010. On the chart -- I looked it up. There's
12 some new -- new faces and old faces that I have made
13 this testimony to and for.

14 Hi, Kathy. We've done this before.
15 Kathy could probably do my testimony
16 for me.

17 And so -- and the reason I say that is
18 more important than my recommendations is because
19 every charter has decided to not -- every Charter
20 Revision Commission has decided not to pick this up.

21 They have said the Council will
22 legislate. There's another fix. There's a new
23 administration coming in. And it continues to be a
24 persistent, you know, problem.

25 We got HHS Accelerator. It got better.

1 Passport made it a little worse. We get a new
2 administration. They make it a little better, and
3 then it gets worse.

4 Including the last Charter Revision
5 Commission felt that the 50 percent cash advance would
6 be something that would help and that the Charter
7 Revision Commission maybe didn't need to pick up
8 procurement reform. And as we saw just a couple of
9 weeks ago, that 50 percent advance was threatened to
10 not go through on July 1.

11 And I think that's a very clear
12 illustrative example of why we need the Charter
13 Revision Commission.

14 I realize that you are all on an
15 abbreviated timeline. And if you don't feel that this
16 Charter Revision Commission could pick it up, there
17 needs to be a recommendation that a Charter Revision
18 Commission absolutely focuses just on procurement
19 reform, not just for nonprofits, but also for, you
20 know, construction and other.

21 Procurement has not had a revision in
22 decades. And this has a real impact. You heard from
23 some members. I have organizations who have a \$20
24 million line of credit fully extended for the City of
25 New York. I have people who pay \$80,000 a month in

1 line of credits.

2 And our recommendations are to create
3 clear time frames to ensure that the PPB has to meet
4 quarterly. They do not do that. And that's an area
5 where there would be much needed transparency.

6 And we actually have clear in my
7 testimony where you could write these pieces into the
8 Charter. So I'll let you all read that at your
9 leisure, but just wanted to really say that this is a
10 really important topic. The Charter Revision
11 Commissions, legislation, others have failed to really
12 crack the nut on how to fix this.

13 Thank you.

14 THE CHAIR: Thank you so much,
15 Michelle. We have -- we have a question for you.

16 But as we take the question, I just
17 want to just note to everyone who's here, if you had
18 hoped to be able to testify, clearly we are at 8 p.m.
19 already. And I will ask you to please submit your
20 written testimony to the -- the Commission.

21 We're going to have an opportunity to
22 hear just from one last person here, and that's Eric
23 Huntley. I'll ask Eric to please begin to come
24 forward to the table and to the microphone, but that
25 will be the last testimony that we receive tonight.

1 Question for Michelle.

2 MS. RIVERA: Hi, Michelle. Thank you
3 for your testimony. I just wanted to ask. I know
4 you're speaking specifically on procurement and the
5 delay of payments.

6 Do you have thoughts on or -- or
7 comments or recommendations on the role that OMB plays
8 in the delay of payments?

9 MS. JACKSON: Yeah, absolutely. I
10 think that the role of OMB from contract registration,
11 they have to approve a budget, and that can delay a
12 contract registration. But it's also part of the
13 process, and OMB has to delay -- has to approve the
14 budget.

15 But then we've also found over the last
16 few years that OMB has played as an outside role. Not
17 necessarily that that's bad, but they have.

18 In the invoicing and budget
19 modification, so post-contract registration, there's
20 been a lot of OMB back and forth about approving
21 budgets, approving modifications.

22 For example, there's something called
23 the Indirect Cost Rate Initiative that went into place
24 about six years ago. We have -- in the Department for
25 the Aging, we have organizations who for six years

1 have not been paid for their indirect cost rate.

2 And you can decide where that's coming
3 from. Like, they'll just battle it back. Like, is it
4 an OMB? Is it a -- you know, is it a confusing thing?

5 And so I think there's a role for OMB
6 in this process, but -- and I think this is where the
7 Charter Revision Commission could be remarkably
8 helpful is by setting guideposts.

9 It doesn't matter. You know, OMB will
10 have to approve an invoice in a certain period of
11 time. They'll have to approve a budget for a new
12 contract in a certain period of time.

13 And I think those guardrails will make
14 it so that regardless of who's at OMB, the -- you
15 know, the role that the mayor wants to play in
16 oversight and things like that, that there will be
17 really clear, consistent guidelines of you have to pay
18 on time. And if you don't, there's interest
19 penalties, which are super important.

20 And so it will help establish, I think,
21 better, you know, phases for where the budget needs to
22 go.

23 MS. RIVERA: Thank you.

24 THE CHAIR: Kathy.

25 MS. WYLDE: Michelle, I don't know if

1 you have in your testimony specific language and time
2 frames that you would suggest. If you don't, would
3 you write up what you think and share it with us?

4 MS. JACKSON: Absolutely. We do have a
5 specific language right now that does not have time
6 frames, but it says where the time frame language
7 should be and that the Procurement Policy Board should
8 establish those time frames.

9 There was a local law that was passed
10 two years ago that asked the Mayor's Office of
11 Contract Services to, like, lay out how long it takes
12 and ideally to establish time frames.

13 And all they did was lay out how long
14 it takes, which is over 500 days, by the way, from
15 when a contract is awarded to when it's registered.
16 But they did not ask us to, like -- or they did not
17 give ideas of how long time frame should be.

18 So we would be happy to follow up with
19 you all and say what we think some time frames should
20 be.

21 MS. WYLDE: Quickly.

22 MS. JACKSON: Yes.

23 MS. WYLDE: Thank you.

24 MS. JACKSON: Heard that.

25 THE CHAIR: Thank you so much,

1 Michelle. We can't engage with you any further now,
2 but obviously you've -- you've piqued all of our
3 interest in this. And appreciate your -- your
4 testimony, your contributions. Thank you.

5 MS. JACKSON: Of course. Thank you so
6 much.

7 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

8 Eric is the last person whose testimony
9 we're receiving this evening.

10 Eric, there won't be time for -- for a
11 lengthy Q&A with you at all, but we, you know, welcome
12 your testimony. And as we hear from you, Eric, I want
13 to just thank Council Member Gail Brewer.

14 I just want to note to everybody here
15 Council Member Brewer is not a Queens representative.
16 She's a representative on the Upper West Side of
17 Manhattan. And it's clear -- it's -- it's clear that
18 even if we had this hearing on the dark side of the
19 moon, Gail Brewer would -- would be there to represent
20 the interest of all New Yorkers.

21 And as a commission, we -- we're just
22 so inspired by her and grateful for the leadership
23 that she brings every day.

24 Please, Eric.

25 MR. HUNTLEY: Yes.

1 Good evening, Commissioners of New York
2 City Commission of Government Efficiency.

3 My name is Eric, and I am a proud Black
4 restaurant worker. I have spent more than 20 years
5 working in New York City restaurants industry. I have
6 served customers, trained new workers, worked
7 holidays, weekends, late nights, and long shifts to
8 make sure the city keeps moving.

9 I am here today to ask you to put a
10 charter "admittment" before voters that says New York
11 City should not give out outdoor dining eatery license
12 to businesses that do not pay their workers a living
13 wage.

14 For more than two decades, I have
15 watched restaurant workers work harder than anyone yet
16 still struggle to make ends meet. I have seen
17 coworkers skip meals, worry about rent, and choose
18 between paying bills and taking care of their
19 families.

20 Hard work should not mean living in
21 constant struggle. As a Black worker, I have seen how
22 this system has held back our communities. Too many
23 Black and Brown workers are doing essential jobs but
24 are still not able to build a secure future for
25 themselves or their families.

1 A business license is a privilege. The
2 City already makes sure businesses follow health and
3 safety rules. Making sure workers are paid enough to
4 live should be just as important.

5 I have worked for restaurant owners who
6 paid fair wages and respected their employees. Those
7 businesses have stronger teams, less turnover, and
8 workers who were proud to be there. When workers are
9 valued, everyone benefits.

10 After 20 years in this industry, I'm
11 not asking for special treatment. I'm asking for a
12 dignity. I want to retire knowing that my years of
13 hard work mattered. I want the next generation of
14 restaurant workers to have a better chance than we
15 did.

16 New York City should not give outdoor
17 dining -- outdoor dining license -- outdoor eating
18 license to businesses that keep workers in poverty.
19 If you want the privilege of doing business in our
20 city, you should pay the people who make your success
21 possible enough to live.

22 THE CHAIR: Eric, I'm going to ask that
23 you end right on that -- on that exclamation point,
24 because you're at -- you're over time, but I -- I'm
25 really glad that we're able to get your testimony in.

1 MR. HUNTLEY: Okay. I got it.

2 THE CHAIR: Thank -- thank you
3 for -- thank you for the moral clarity in your
4 testimony.

5 MR. HUNTLEY: Appreciate it.

6 THE CHAIR: Thank you to everyone who
7 testified this evening and to everyone who testified
8 across all of our hearings.

9 Special thanks to the staff of the
10 Queens Borough Hall, our stenographer, our sign
11 language interpreters, who have made all of our
12 meetings accessible, inclusive, and welcoming.

13 The final public hearing of this
14 Commission will be a procedural meeting without public
15 testimony. At that time, we'll review and vote on the
16 final ballot proposals that we advance.

17 This meeting is not yet scheduled.
18 When it is, notification will be published and posted
19 to our website and across all the platforms that we've
20 used for outreach for these meetings.

21 I'd like to bring this meeting to a
22 close. Is there a motion to adjourn?

23 MR. GARRIDO: So moved.

24 THE CHAIR: Is there a second? All in
25 favor?

1 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Aye.

2 THE CHAIR: Thank you. We are
3 adjourned.

4 (Whereupon, the meeting concluded at
5 8:11 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I, PAUL GRASSO, the officer before whom the foregoing proceedings were taken, do hereby certify that any witness(es) in the foregoing proceedings, prior to testifying, were duly sworn; that the proceedings were recorded by me and thereafter reduced to typewriting by a qualified transcriptionist; that said digital audio recording of said proceedings are a true and accurate record to the best of my knowledge, skills, and ability; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this was taken; and, further, that I am not a relative or employee of any counsel or attorney employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.



PAUL GRASSO

Notary Public in and for the
State of New York

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIBER

I, KIRSTEN FITZGERALD, do hereby certify that this transcript was prepared from the digital audio recording of the foregoing proceeding, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings to the best of my knowledge, skills, and ability; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this was taken; and, further, that I am not a relative or employee of any counsel or attorney employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Fitzgerald", is written over a horizontal line.

KIRSTEN FITZGERALD

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