

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS

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IN THE MATTER OF:

PUBLIC HEARING: COMMISSION ON COMMUNITY
REINVESTMENT AND THE CLOSURE OF RIKERS
ISLAND.

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DATE: November 18, 2025

HELD AT: ZOOM

TIME: 9:30 am

BEFORE: MARLOWE PARAISO,
Moderator

ALSO PRESENT: DEREK PERKINSON, Closing Rikers Coalition
JORDYN ROSENTHAL, CCIT - NYC Coalition
TIFFANY TUCKER-PRYER, Department of
Youth and Community Development
KEITH HOWARD, Commissioner, Department
of Youth and Community Development
VIDAL GUZMAN, America on Trial
TAMMY REED, Freedom Agenda
VICTOR HERRERA, Freedom Agenda
JASON RODRIGUEZ, Legal Action Center
JAMILLA DAISE, Neighborhood Ad. Board
ANTHONY SPRINGER, Youth Alliance
SHAKEMA DAISE, Case Manager
JUMAANE WILLIAMS, Public Advocate
IVELISSA GILESTRA, Survivors of the System
FREDDY ABRAMSON, Spanish Interpreter

DIGITALLY RECORDED PROCEEDING, TRANSCRIBED BY:
GABRIELLE ATKINSON
ACOLAD

1 RECORDED VOICE: Recording in progress.

2 MR. MARLOWE PARAISO: Good morning and welcome
3 to today's public hearing. Thank you so much for your
4 flexibility. A slight hiccup with technology. My name is
5 Marlowe Paraiso. I'll be moderating today's public
6 hearing. I am a Filipino American male with black hair
7 and brown eyes. I have eyeglasses on, and I'm wearing a
8 blue suit and a pink shirt. Thank you for joining us for
9 today's Commission on Community Reinvestment and the
10 Closure of Riker's Island Public Hearing. We will start
11 in a few minutes to give everyone a chance to join the
12 meeting. Everyone is muted at this point. We'll start
13 the public hearing at about 9:45, so a minute or so.

14 [Silence]

15 MR. PARAISO: So, it is 9:50, and we will get
16 started. I want to acknowledge that we've also been
17 joined by the Commissioner of DYCD, Commissioner Howard,
18 who's on our screen. So, hopefully everyone can see him.
19 Again, welcome, and thank you for attending today's
20 hearing. My name is Marlowe Paraiso, and I am Director of
21 Special Projects at the Department of Social Services,
22 Office of the Commissioner. As I mentioned earlier, I am
23 a Filipino American male with black hair and brown eyes.
24 I have eyeglasses on, and I'm wearing a blue suit and a
25 pink shirt. I will be moderating today's hearing. First

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1 of all, I will ask the interpreters to introduce
2 themselves. We have both Spanish and American Sign
3 Language. If the Spanish interpreters could introduce
4 themselves really briefly.

5 MR. FREDDY ABRAMSON: Yes, good morning. My
6 name is Freddy Abramson, Spanish interpreter. [Spanish
7 00:32:34 - 00:32:52]

8 MR. PARAISO: Thank you so much. As I mentioned
9 earlier, I will be moderating today's hearing. Anyone who
10 wishes to comment will have three minutes to speak. I
11 will not be answering any questions or responding to your
12 comments, but please know that your comments will be
13 shared with the Commission. If you wish to submit written
14 testimony, please send your testimony by midnight today,
15 November 18th. Comments can be emailed to
16 reinvestment@dss.nyc.gov. Speakers will be called in the
17 order they signed up. Momentarily, I will paste the names
18 of individuals in the chat box. For those who did not
19 sign up but wish to speak, please raise your hand. If
20 you're using the Zoom desktop application or browser,
21 click on the Reactions icon at the bottom right of the
22 webinar controls toolbar. On your phone, click the
23 horizontal dot icon labeled More at the bottom of the
24 screen, and then click on Raise Hand from the pop-up. If
25 you have joined this hearing by calling in, you can raise

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1 your hand by pressing star 9. If you need help, please
2 let us know in the chat box. Speakers, when you deliver
3 your testimony, please state your name for the record and
4 your organization, if applicable. I will paste the first
5 five names in the chat box. Bear with me.

6 TIFFANY: Good morning, Marlowe. Derek
7 Perkinson is also on, the Honorable Derek Perkinson.

8 MR. PARAISSO: Oh, I'm so sorry. The Honorable
9 Derek Perkinson. And sir, do you plan to deliver
10 testimony?

11 HON. DEREK PERKINSON: Yes. Yes, I'm
12 (inaudible) Derek Perkinson. Yes, I do plan on delivering
13 testimony.

14 MR. PARAISSO: So, we can start with you, the
15 Honorable Perkinson.

16 HON. PERKINSON: Excellent. I appreciate it.
17 Hold on one second. Okay. All right, okay. Sorry for
18 the hold up. Good morning, esteemed advocates and
19 members. Okay. Good morning, Commissioner, and thank you
20 for the opportunity to testify. My name is Derek
21 Perkinson. I am a long-standing member of the Closing
22 Rikers Coalition. I'm also the founder of the Nonprofit
23 Coalition Commission, and I'm a community advocate who
24 spent decades organizing across New York City for racial
25 and economic justice with the Black Institution, Ms.

1 Bertha Louis, and the National Action Network with
2 Reverend Sharpton and attorney Michael Hardy. I currently
3 serve as Vice Chair of Public Safety on Manhattan
4 Community Board 10, as well as a member of the Parks and
5 Recreation Committee. I wish to send condolences and
6 prayers, first and foremost, to the families who have lost
7 loved ones on Rikers Island this year and previous years.

8 First, I want to ground this conversation in
9 simple truth. Closing Rikers isn't only about shutting
10 down a jail, it's about reinvesting in the people and the
11 neighborhoods that the jail has harmed for generations.
12 According to the Commission's own findings, the key
13 drivers of incarceration in New York City are systemic
14 racism, poverty, criminalization, and untreated mental
15 health and substance use disorders. If we don't invest
16 directly in addressing these root causes, the harm will
17 simply relocate from Rikers Island into our communities.

18 Second, the dollars saved from closing Rikers
19 must be tracked and publicly accounted. Each year, New
20 York City spends over \$550,000 per incarcerated person,
21 more than it costs to attend an Ivy League university.
22 Yet, the communities most affected by incarceration remain
23 chronically underfunded in housing, healthcare, and
24 ultimately, opportunity. We must commit to transparent
25 budgeting and measurable reinvestment with annual public

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1 reporting on outcomes, not just dollars allocated, but
2 lives improved.

3 Third, I urge the Commission to prioritize four
4 pillars of community reinvestment. Housing, we want to
5 expand justice-involved, supportive housing programs to
6 guarantee stable homes for people reentering society. We
7 want to check off health. We want to fund community-based
8 crisis responses teams like B-HEARD and strengthen
9 outpatient and mental health and addiction treatment.
10 Economic mobility, we would like to create job pipelines
11 and entrepreneurship funds led by community organizations
12 that employ and empower justice impact.

13 Finally, the fourth pillar is youth and
14 prevention. We want to invest in education, restorative
15 justice programs, and youth mentorship as the true public
16 safety strategy. These are not just abstract ideals; they
17 are evidence-based solutions already working in pockets
18 across the city. The Commission's job is to scale them up
19 and sustain them. Finally, as someone who has witnessed
20 the harms of mass incarceration firsthand and resilience
21 of our neighborhoods daily, I say this with conviction.
22 Reinvestment is the repair owed to our communities, but it
23 is also the smartest, most cost-effective public safety
24 investment New York can make. We have a moral and fiscal
25 responsibility and obligation to ensure that the closure

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1 of Rikers translates into lasting opportunity,
2 accountability, and healing, and I want to thank you for
3 your leadership and for ensuring that the community voices
4 continue to guide this process. And I stand ready to
5 partner in that work. Thank you.

6 MR. PARAISO: Thank you so much, sir.

7 MS. TIFFANY TUCKER-PRYOR: Commissioner Howard
8 would also like to say a few words, please.

9 MR. PARAISO: Thank you, Tiffany. Yes, of
10 course.

11 COMMISSIONER KEITH HOWARD: Good morning. I
12 just want to thank just everyone's passion and purpose for
13 this event and just getting on the call. I do have
14 something that is important and relevant in terms of
15 everyone's advocacy and investment in Rikers and the
16 closing of Rikers. There is 100% agreement that the harm
17 that's associated with having a facility without the
18 reimagined investment, it's already been a proven fact
19 that there needs to be a reinvestment. I can honestly
20 report for the very first time that the borough-based jail
21 that is in Queens, Kew Gardens, the community space that
22 is part of the legislation, we just had a ribbon cutting
23 event and that space will be open, God willing, within the
24 next couple of months.

25 Just to my friend, the Honorable Derek Perkinson

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1 and his investment, all of the things that you have
2 outlined in terms of the services will be part of a one-
3 stop shop at the Kew Gardens facility. It's the first
4 community space that is going to be open, and agencies as
5 well as nonprofit organizations that you described will
6 have space to provide services. Those opportunities are
7 currently being worked out by the Department of Youth and
8 Community Development, my team, so it's a step in the
9 right direction. The other borough-based community spaces
10 that we're having conversations on, those spaces are in
11 talks, and my team is working with DDC and DCAS and City
12 Hall on when those spaces would be open, as well. So,
13 would love to take anybody on the Commission on a tour of
14 the space so that you can see the space, and you can see
15 that your work and your advocacy has led to the first
16 community space borough-based jail to be opened. So, I
17 wanted to report that.

18 MR. PARAIISO: Thank you so much, Commissioner.
19 I think the Honorable Derek Perkinson is interested in a
20 tour. There's a request in the chat.

21 HON. PERKINSON: Thank you, Commissioner. Thank
22 you for that update. That was wonderful. Thank you.
23 We're making progress.

24 MR. PARAIISO: I will paste the names in the chat
25 box (inaudible). I don't think the first three

1 individuals are here. Otherwise, we will start with
2 Jordyn. I feel like I saw you, Jordyn. So, Jordyn, if
3 you could just state your name for the record and which
4 organization you represent, if applicable. And you have
5 three minutes so, whenever you're ready.

6 MS. JORDYN ROSENTHAL: Great. Thank you so
7 much. Hi, everyone. My name is Jordyn Rosenthal, and I
8 use she/her pronouns, and I'm the Director of Advocacy at
9 Community Access, which is a supportive housing provider
10 for people with mental health concerns. But I am also the
11 lead organizer of a coalition call CCITNYC, which stands
12 for Correct Crisis Intervention Today in New York City.
13 So, I'm really here to talk about reinvestments to support
14 people with mental health concerns and making sure that we
15 don't further criminalize mental health crises and mental
16 health experiences. So, I heard some things the Honorable
17 Derek Perkinson mentioned previously, and I'd really like
18 to expand upon them.

19 So, first off, we really need to invest in peer
20 workforce development. Community Access runs one of the
21 premier peer training programs, Howie the Harp, and if we
22 want more peer positions throughout the city, we need to
23 invest in these programs so we actually can support the
24 workforce development, which is really needed to support
25 people to promote ways to--I can't say the word.

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1 Basically, reject recidivism, right? And to make sure
2 that people are supported and feel comfortable in their
3 communities, and that they have people to talk to. Other
4 supports on like peer-run programs that would be really
5 useful to invest in, are places like crisis respite
6 centers, which are alternative suicide wards. And there
7 are only about four in the city right now, and they have
8 very limited bed capacity. So, investing in more of
9 those.

10 There was a piece of legislation that passed in
11 the city council, I want to say like two years ago about,
12 creating more respite, but nothing has happened from that.
13 So, the reason why, again, I'm promoting it here is
14 because there's so much money or ways that we can redirect
15 money from the Department of Corrections to support the
16 mental health continuum of care.

17 Additionally, we can also revamp the B-HEARD
18 program to make it 24/7 and city-wide. But most
19 importantly, add peers to that program and make sure that
20 the dispatch isn't run through 911, but 988. And really
21 using 988 as a system to connect people to community-based
22 resources, right? Not everything needs to become this
23 super administrative process of someone going to a psych
24 ward or kind of having the most extreme measures. There
25 are ways to support people in the continuum of care to

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1 also prevent people from getting to a place that is so
2 extreme. So, yeah, that's really it. I probably am
3 almost at time. So, I will stop there unless anyone has
4 questions about things that I could go into more depth. I
5 see Jamilla has her hand raised, but I don't know if she's
6 also trying to speak.

7 MR. PARAISO: Yeah, I think she's also on the
8 list for speaking. Thank you so much for sharing your
9 testimony and the next person I see, a strong partner,
10 always attending these hearings. Thank you so much, Vidal
11 Guzman. You're up next.

12 MR. VIDAL GUZMAN: How you doing? My name is
13 Vidal Guzman. I'm the ED of an organization called
14 American on Trial. I'm not just speaking to you as a
15 nonprofit leader, but someone who grew up in Harlem and
16 was incarcerated at Rikers at 16 and 19. I know the
17 trauma of these places, not just through headlines, but
18 through experience. I walked this hallway. I felt what
19 it means to be discarded by a system that criminalized
20 poverty and punished youth instead of protecting them.

21 But if we truly want to close Rikers, not just
22 the building, the cycle that feeds it, we must invest in
23 programs that build power, not just jails. I mean invest
24 in education that teaches voting and civil engagement and
25 democracy. When young people and formerly incarcerated

1 individuals understand how the government works, they gain
2 the power to change it. A Greek philosopher said,
3 "Educating the mind without educating the heart is no
4 education at all." The Greeks believe when citizens are
5 educated, they're empowered and that education creates a
6 stronger democracy. The same truth applies today. When
7 we teach youth to use their voice, we strengthen our
8 community and weaken the pipeline to incarceration.

9 We also must learn from other countries that
10 treat civil education as essential to democracy and not
11 optional. In Germany, civil engagement is required
12 nationwide, teaching students about democracy, voting, and
13 human rights. In Finland, same civil engagement,
14 understanding the power of government fact checking. In
15 Canada, school teaches about elections and even hold mock
16 votes for students to experience the power of
17 participating early. These countries understand that
18 democracy is strong when people are educated, informed,
19 and engaged. That's the kind of investments we need here
20 in New York City.

21 I believe we need to invest in special
22 initiatives like youth training and civil engagement,
23 leadership, and voting, as well as programs that keeps
24 engaging formerly incarcerated individuals in civil life.
25 These programs can lower incarceration rates. When people

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1 know their power, they see themselves a part of shaping
2 the system. They're less likely to be trapped by it.
3 Closing Rikers must not be just a symbol. It must be a
4 commitment to fuel bold grassroots solution led by those
5 who lived the harm and are building the way forward. When
6 we must invest in people and not punishment, we can't just
7 close Rikers, we must open the door to democracy. Thank
8 you for your time, everybody.

9 MR. PARAISO: Thank you so much for your
10 testimony. So, we'll just read out the names again of
11 folks who signed up. Diamond, are you in the room?

12 MS. TUCKER-PRYOR: And before Diamond speaks, I
13 just want to say that Commissioner Howard is definitely
14 committed to ensuring that anyone who wants a tour can get
15 a tour. I'm going to put my name and my email in the
16 chat. If you would like the tour, please do just send an
17 email in regards to that, and then we'll ensure that the
18 tour happens. Thank you so much. All thank you. Thank
19 you, Marlowe.

20 MR. PARAISO: No, thank you, Tiffany. Raine?
21 Daniele? So, we'll go to the next group of folks who
22 signed up to deliver testimony. Bear with me. And I
23 think the only person I might see is Victor, but--Isaiah?
24 Isaiah. I don't see our friend Tammy. She's usually
25 here. Yes, I think Victor is the only person that might

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1 be here. No, Tammy, you are here. Sorry. I didn't see
2 you earlier, Tammy. Whenever you're ready. Tammy Reed.

3 MS. TAMMY REED: Okay. I'm sorry. I just came
4 on. Well, I think this is about the third time that I've
5 come on to testify. And I think this time around, maybe
6 what my group, Freedom Agenda, what we're looking for will
7 actually happen, and that is Rikers closing. With that in
8 mind, I want to see that money, which I believe is like
9 \$1.2 billion, to be moved into communities with the most
10 needs, such as Southeast Queens, where I am, Arlen
11 Bushwick, wherever the money is needed. I want to see
12 that money moved to these communities for mental health
13 facilities, affordable housing.

14 Local organizations, such as another
15 organization I work with, the Family Enrichment Centers.
16 And I specifically work with the one here in St. Albans,
17 Queens, Community Connections. A lot of them are starting
18 to come up, but the budgets are so low that it's hard to
19 do anything. Because when we do things, we also feed
20 people, we feed the community.

21 I'd like to see the money come out for
22 organizations like that and the Jamaica Community
23 Partnership. And there's a whole bunch of communities out
24 here that serve the Southeast Queens area, and we need the
25 money. So, I'm happy. It looks like we're moving and--

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1 we're moving forward with this new mayor-elect. So, I
2 hope to that money coming to new communities soon. And
3 that's it.

4 MR. PARAISO: Thank you so much, Tammy. Always
5 a pleasure to see you and your advocacy on this issue.
6 So, I think the next person I see is a Victor H. Herrera.

7 MR. VICTOR HERRERA: Hi. Hello. Good morning.

8 MR. PARAISO: Yes.

9 MR. HERRERA: My name is Victor Herrera. I'm a
10 leader and member of Freedom Agenda and the Close Rikers
11 campaign. I'm also a member of the Treatment (inaudible)
12 Act. A lot of resources are lacking in the community, and
13 we really need more resources so that many people that are
14 actually coming from like (inaudible) or being given
15 alternatives to incarceration and diversion can be
16 treated. And much of the funding that's needed in the
17 community is necessarily being held up by many of these
18 carceral systems that basically results in (inaudible)
19 child detention and imprisonment, which a lot of these
20 individuals, basically a majority of them, are nonviolent
21 offenses being sent upstate to address their core issues
22 in regards to mental health and chemical addiction. And I
23 believe that with much of the funding that could become
24 available with the closing of Rikers and on alternative
25 populations, that much of the funding could be actually

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1 diverted to the resources that we need in the community.

2 And I really, really feel that it's necessary in
3 order for many of the individuals who experienced the
4 trauma of incarceration and juvenile detention are
5 actually receiving the services that they need upon the
6 entry or returning citizens.

7 I've been a part of the Close Rikers campaign
8 since day one. Too many people have died on Rikers
9 Island. I just feel that there's more to be gained from
10 treating people rather than incarcerating them. I
11 appreciate it. Thank you.

12 MR. PARAISO: Thank you so much, Victor. So,
13 I'm going to paste the next set of names in the chat box.
14 And I think I saw the person in the room already, Jason
15 Rodriguez. Are you still here?

16 MR. JASON RODRIGUEZ: Yes, thank you. Good
17 morning, Chair, and distinguished members of the
18 commission. My name is Jason Rodriguez. I am a policy
19 research associate at the Legal Action Center, but also,
20 more importantly, a survivor of Rikers Island. The facts
21 are undeniable. The city spends over half a million
22 dollars a year to incarcerate just one person on Rikers.
23 This immense financial failure is inseparable from its
24 devastating human cost. A system that actively produces
25 violence, instability, and perpetual trauma for the 90% of

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1 black and Latin American population detained.

2 That is why our focus must be on three areas for
3 reinvestment, prioritizing the zip codes paying the
4 highest price. One, community-led economic ownership and
5 wealth. We must stop funding punishment and start funding
6 economic ownership. A significant portion of Rikers'
7 savings must be allocated to creating and scaling
8 community wealth. Fund business ownership, directly seed
9 and support cooperatives and small businesses that are
10 100% owned and operated by formerly incarcerated and
11 justice-impacted individuals. B, permanent, affordable
12 land. We can fund community land trusts to acquire
13 distressed properties, guaranteeing permanently affordable
14 and secure housing and community space. This is about
15 shifting the power dynamics from extraction to ownership
16 using funds currently wasted on carceral failures.

17 Two, truly supportive and permanent housing.
18 Housing is the single greatest predictor of successful re-
19 entry, and the city must fully fund solutions for a
20 population in crisis. We know that 50% of those detained
21 have a Brad H mental illness classification, and 21%
22 suffer from serious mental illness. Housing is treatment.
23 Housing vouchers with fair chance vetting. Fund permanent
24 subsidized justice-involved supportive housing vouchers
25 coupled with dedicated landlord engagement. And also,

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1 reentry-specific supportive housing. Create small-scale
2 neighborhood based supportive housing units run by CBOs
3 that focus on peer support, vocational services and trauma
4 counseling.

5 Three, non-carceral mental health infrastructure
6 and racial justice. Rikers Island is a mental health
7 crisis center and a driver of systemic racial injustice.
8 We must invest in proven alternatives. ATIs are
9 overwhelmingly effective, while 35% of people with mental
10 illness on Rikers Returns to Custody, programs like
11 Nathaniel Act show a 0% felony conviction rate two years
12 after completion for high-need individuals.

13 Also, fund crisis teams, not police. Dedicate
14 funds to expand non-police mobile crisis teams like
15 Intensive Mobile Treatments, Team Crisis, and Respite
16 Centers, who are peer-led and trained to de-escalate
17 without resorting to arrest.

18 Conclusion. The mandate of this Commission is
19 clear: equitable reinvestment. We recommend the
20 establishment of a dedicated Rikers reinvestment fund to
21 permanently ring fence all core savings in a public trust.
22 Create a mandatory community oversight of spending
23 composed primarily of formerly incarcerated residents and
24 their communities. We urge you to adopt policy that
25 tangibly shift power and resources and to stick to the

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1 fastest possible closure timeline. Do not let this once-
2 in-a-generation opportunity become another broken promise.
3 The time for true justice and equitable distribution of
4 wealth to our communities and those most impacted by
5 incarceration is now. Thank you.

6 MS. TUCKER-PRYOR: Thank you so much, Jason.
7 Marlowe, do you want to call who's next on the list?
8 You're muted. Still muted. Okay, let's go with--I think
9 it says--oh, there you go.

10 MR. PARAISO: (Inaudible) goes off.

11 MS. TUCKER-PRYOR: Sorry. Go ahead.

12 MR. PARAISO: So, I just want to reintroduce the
13 interpreters. So, we have Spanish interpretation. So,
14 can the Spanish interpreters introduce themselves really
15 quickly, and how to access the service?

16 MS. CHERYL WERTZ: Freddy, I have brought you
17 out of the Spanish language room. Can you please
18 reintroduce how to join the interpretation services by
19 clicking on the globe below?

20 MR. ABRAMSON: Sure. [Spanish 00:15:12 -
21 00:15:24]

22 MS. WERTZ: Thank you, Freddy. You are about to
23 be back in the Spanish language room. Paula, please
24 continue by providing interpretation services. Thank you.
25 We're ready to keep going.

1 MR. PARAISO: Thank you so much, Cheryl, for
2 that. I don't see--is Brian in the room? I don't see
3 him. His name, at least, on the list. MD, are you in the
4 room? Moyen? And I think Jamilla, you had your hand up
5 raised earlier. Whenever you're ready to deliver your
6 testimony, if you could introduce yourself and the
7 organization you represent.

8 MS. JAMILLA DAISE: Good morning, everybody. My
9 name is Jamilla Daise. I'm with the Neighborhood Advisory
10 Board, NAB3, and the NYCHA Mental Health Task Force. This
11 is my first time doing it, so bear with me. I know
12 everybody's testimony is so well prepared.

13 So, I'm a peer specialist also with Services for
14 the Underserved. I'm also a harm reduction specialist
15 where I work in the community Narcan training and giving
16 out drug test strips. I'm a survivor of the foster care
17 system in the 80s and 90s. My only brother, Jack, who
18 passed away four years ago, spent 12 years of his life
19 incarcerated. And I remember when he was on Rikers Island
20 in the C-74, which was very dangerous back in those days
21 in the 90s.

22 So, I'm really here to talk about the
23 introduction of peer services. And for those who don't
24 know what peers are, we're people with lived experience,
25 whether it's substance disorder, mental health disorder,

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1 or homelessness, AKA housing crisis.

2 So, we have training. So, what we do is we go
3 out in the community, and we help with clinical
4 professions. Sometimes I do sessions, I facilitate peer
5 groups. And I also work within the community. And what I
6 found out is, peer are very essential in the community.
7 It not only helps eliminate a lot of the emergency rooms
8 filling up, because if they have a place to go in the
9 outlet to talk to somebody before their appointment with a
10 professional, it shows that it helps. Doing research,
11 working with people with substance use disorder, I found
12 that in New York there's not really many inpatient
13 programs for 17 and under. New York City has a lot of
14 programs for adults, but the youth are--they don't really
15 have many programs to go to as far as inpatient. And I
16 feel that if we open up a lot of programs in the high
17 schools, as well as the junior high schools to train the
18 students to become peers that they can also, because of
19 their lived experience and because they're from the
20 community, their parents would be able to talk to them
21 about things such as substance use, if they have any
22 mental health disorders or bullying, which will help
23 eliminate a lot of the youth on the street.

24 Getting arrested, I also understand that even
25 though the way I grew up, sports and PAL kind of saved me,

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1 and that's kind of non-existent now. So, if we can invest
2 more into sports also and invest more in the groups like
3 SOS, brothers who have been incarcerated and now
4 dedicating their life to serving the community. With more
5 investment, they can invest in peers and reach out to more
6 different communities, because it's not too many of them.
7 And they are very instrumental in helping stop the
8 violence in a lot of our communities. When the gangs are
9 having squabbles, they are very good. So, if we could put
10 more money into peer services, the new profession that's
11 coming up into the high schools, and invest in inpatient
12 treatment, I think that will work out. Thank you.

13 MR. PARAISO: Thank you so much for your
14 testimony. Much appreciated. Next person we have on the
15 list is Shakema. Are you in the room? And the last
16 person who signed up, and I'll just post their name in the
17 chat. I don't see them. Their name, at least on the
18 list, is James. James, are you in the room? Is there
19 anyone else in the room who would like to deliver a
20 testimony? If so, please raise your hand.

21 MS. ROSENTHAL: I know I commented, but can I
22 follow up on something?

23 MR. PARAISO: So, we ask you limit your
24 statement to three minutes, but that is, yes, fine. So,
25 you have three minutes.

1 MS. ROSENTHAL: Thank you. There was previous
2 comment about inpatient services, and while I think that's
3 important, I actually want to advocate against inpatient.
4 I think that there needs to be more community-based
5 services, and specifically things that allow people to go
6 on with their daily life and then also still receive
7 services, right? So, the crisis respite model, like a
8 peer model, is really, really important because it allows
9 people to come--go to and from work, school, et cetera.
10 They're not limited to just the facility like an inpatient
11 place would be. So, when we're talking about community
12 integration and making sure that people are stabilized and
13 also connected to community care, we need something beyond
14 inpatient. We need kind of like step-down programs.

15 Similarly, one thing that actually has been
16 discussed around IMT teams is having step-down programs
17 for IMT because you can't just go from a very high level
18 of care to like much less care. It's like that's where
19 problems arise. So, when we're talking about this
20 continuum of care, I just really want to encourage the
21 Commission to look at everything from soup to nuts and not
22 just the most extreme ends. Thank you. Sorry for the
23 interjection. I just, knee-jerk reaction.

24 MR. PARAISO: No, understood. Anthony, are you
25 interested in delivering testimony?

1 MR. ANTHONY SPRINGER: Yes. Good morning, all.
2 My name is Anthony Springer. I am the Senior Advocacy
3 Associate at Urban Youth Alliance. We have locations in
4 Bronx, Brooks, Manhattan, and Staten Island. We service
5 youth and adults all around the city. I say that to
6 primarily to say that one of the things that we constantly
7 see is really the need for these wraparound services,
8 really the need for care during crisis, and that's really
9 where a lot of our communities that are residing in Rikers
10 are at right now. They're in crisis. What we see that
11 works here in our organization, where we have statistics
12 to back up the model, is that when you provide services,
13 you provide care, and you provide opportunity, you begin
14 to see lives change. If we really want to see the
15 recidivism rates go down, we need to provide job services,
16 we need to provide mental health services, we need to
17 provide mentorship.

18 So, when looking at a lot of the teams and young
19 adults and even adults that we're working with, what they
20 really need is somebody just to say, hey, you know what,
21 there is a better way to deal with this. So, we have our
22 credible messengers that can go on that actually speak the
23 language. We have our services where we get the on-the-
24 job training. We mentor, we employ, and then we also
25 provide other wraparound services. We even train them in

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1 advocacy work. So, this is something that we definitely
2 understand is needed is just care during crisis. So,
3 thank you.

4 MR. PARAIISO: Thank you so much, Anthony. And
5 Shakema, I see your hand up, and I did see you sign up to
6 testify. So, whenever you're ready. Shakema?

7 MS. SHAKEMA DAISE: Hello. Sorry. I was trying
8 to unmute myself.

9 MR. PARAIISO: If you can introduce yourself and
10 the organization you represent, if applicable.

11 MS. DAISE: My name is Shakema Daise. I'm a
12 case manager at Breaking Ground and Safe Haven in
13 Manhattan. I'm also a survivor of the "Just Say No" era.
14 I've had a family. My family was torn apart due to
15 incarceration, mass incarceration of black men in the 80s.
16 Broke a lot of families apart.

17 And what I recognize is we still have a group of
18 people going through PTSD from that time through foster
19 care, or even guys who been in jail came out, can't find
20 nothing. And it's a lack of mental health resources in my
21 community, especially the African-American community,
22 which we seem to be the last, it seems like, on a lot of
23 lists. People incorporate our community for votes and
24 stuff, but when it comes down to it, we seem to be the
25 forgotten group.

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1 One of the most destructions that I've noticed
2 in where I work at is mental health is not taken seriously
3 when it comes to my people. It's either like, oh, they
4 don't really want to get help, or they're just trying to
5 play the system. It's not taken as seriously as far as
6 like the opioid crisis. And with these extra funds, I
7 think the number one thing we need to work on his mental
8 health and housing for those coming out, making them feel
9 like they're more valuable in the community and not trash
10 from yesterday. More resources, more focusing on less
11 rent.

12 Another thing, resources we need, is places
13 where we could get healthy food options. We have no
14 healthy food options in our community. What's the point
15 of fixing everything if we can't even fix our health with
16 healthy options? No, we don't have no fruit stands,
17 nowhere we could get fresh fruit. Those are just some of
18 the observations that I've noticed. Thank you.

19 MR. PARAISO: Yeah, thank you so much for your
20 testimony. Very much appreciated. If there is anyone
21 else who would like to testify, please raise your hand.
22 Victor, you would like to testify again?

23 MR. HERRERA: Yeah, just to add a little more
24 because I did put in the chat, but I should have mentioned
25 that I was a former client of CUCS Intense Mobile

1 Treatment. I was with them since they started as a pilot
2 program, eight years. And I testified to the council and
3 stuff like that in regards to expansion. They now have 18
4 (inaudible), and I believe that intentional re-treatments
5 are very, very, very supportive resource to individuals
6 experiencing mental health crisis. And I believe that
7 people can actually benefit from the expansion of this
8 program very, very much because I learned much from the
9 treatment that I received from the program. And they
10 became like a second family to me, and that's the type of
11 approach that they actually initiate with a lot of the
12 clients. And I believe that that would be a good resource
13 for many individuals in the city of New York and five
14 boroughs. That intense medical treatment would be a very
15 ideal program for them. I just wanted to add on to my
16 testimony. I appreciate for giving me the opportunity.
17 Thank you.

18 MR. PARISO: Thank you so much, Victor. Does
19 anyone else wish to deliver testimony? Also want to
20 acknowledge that we are joined by two Commission members,
21 Darren Mack, who is part of the Commission, as well as Dr.
22 Devine Pryor, who is also part of the Commission. So,
23 they are on the line, have been on the line, and have been
24 listening to the community's testimony. Does anyone else
25 want to deliver testimony? If so, please raise your hand.

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1 Okay, so the room will remain open until 11:30
2 a.m. this morning. Please, please, please encourage
3 community members, colleagues, friends who are interested
4 in delivering testimony to log in. We will be here until
5 11:30 a.m. today. Please remember that written testimony
6 can be submitted by midnight today, November 18th.
7 Comments can be emailed to reinvestment@dss.nyc.gov. The
8 transcript of today's hearing and written testimony will
9 be posted on the Human Resources Administration website in
10 the Inside HRA section. If you would like to be notified
11 about the next hearing, please send an email to
12 reinvestment@dss.nyc.gov. So, once again, the room will
13 remain open--

14 Ms. TUCKER-PRYOR: [interposing] Jumaane
15 Williams has joined us.

16 MR. PARAISO: Perfect timing. The Honorable
17 Jumaane Williams, New York City Public Advocate, has
18 joined us. So, sir, whenever you are ready to deliver
19 your testimony, the floor is yours, sir.

20 HON. JUMAANE WILLIAMS: Oh, thank you so much.
21 Can everyone hear me?

22 MR. PARAISO: Yes.

23 MALE VOICE: Yes, we can hear you.

24 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, thank you. Give me
25 one second to adjust my tech on my side, if you will.

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1 Peace and blessings, everybody. Love and light to you
2 all. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak.
3 Thank you to the Commission and all the community members
4 that are here today.

5 This process exists because communities that
6 have been most harmed by decades of over-policing, of mass
7 incarceration in carceral systems, demand accountability,
8 transparency, and true reinvestment in these communities.
9 Closure of Rikers Islands means little, though, if we do
10 not reinvest in savings and funding and structures into
11 the neighborhoods that have borne the brunt of not just
12 the city's failures, but failures on a state level and a
13 national level, communities that have been over-
14 criminalized and under-resourced for generations. Even
15 when attempting to try to address things like violence in
16 these communities, often see it in over policing, over in
17 carceral position, but doesn't actually address the
18 concerns and intends to cause more harm.

19 As the Adams administration finally, and I will
20 unabashedly say thankfully, comes to a close, we need to
21 take an honest look at its legacy in many areas in order
22 to move forward and correct for its really disgraceful
23 failures in many areas that people had hoped for. The
24 Commission was initially designed and established to
25 engage with the community and address root causes which

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1 led to incarceration, something that the mayor himself had
2 spoken about before. Poverty, lack of opportunity,
3 systemic neglect, reinforced these carceral systems.
4 They're not the only issues and the only reasons, but
5 actually those are three primary ones, and ones that we
6 actually can have the most effect on if we really wanted
7 to. These were policy areas we as a city have made, the
8 state has made, and the country has made.

9 The administration rarely convened the
10 Commission or gave it the resources that were needed to
11 produce mandated reports, reports, and recommendations,
12 which the Adams administration would then pretty largely
13 ignore. Fortunately in the recommendations, it was able
14 to put out, we saw a clear path forward for a city that is
15 interested in taking it. They include use in development,
16 mental health, housing, economic opportunity, and
17 restorative justice models.

18 The Commission explicitly calls for upstream
19 investment to prevent crime. Instead, the mayor ordered
20 cuts to childcare, CUNY, and libraries. These are vital
21 community services, and we also did that while pouring
22 money into downstream to specialize police units and
23 aggressive enforcement.

24 Not closing Rikers, but instead allowing the
25 jail population to bloom through policy choice, is in

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1 direct opposition to the very reason this commission
2 exists. The point is building a future without Rikers
3 Island. This administration is not closing the pipeline
4 that feeds it, and actually, I think very much sabotaged
5 the ability to close it on the timeframe that was set
6 forward by law.

7 Instead of using funds to really get to social
8 networks and build up infrastructure we spoke about, even
9 using the funds sometimes that go to carceral systems like
10 mental health and funding the folks who are best equipped
11 for it, the administration seems to still lean on a more
12 punitive approach. We have seen no meaningful investment
13 into communities, only doubled down on cost of spending.
14 Even though if we look in history, there hasn't been a
15 connection between how many people are actually locked up
16 in Rikers and how people were actually safe or not, or how
17 they felt safe in their communities. And we've seen the
18 same communities feeding Rikers Island for decades and
19 decades. And those are the same ones still dealing with
20 the type of violence many of us are trying to address.

21 The Commission is one of many areas in which the
22 administration stonewalled, slowed, or simply undid action
23 aimed at accountability and change. They dealt in
24 obfuscation and secrecy and lack of transparency.

25 My hope is that the new leadership, which I'm

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1 excited about at City Hall, can be given renewed power and
2 purpose. To that end, I want to reiterate the following
3 recommendations, which is to expand access to mental
4 health treatment, harm reduction services, and community-
5 based supports that prevent incarceration in the first
6 place. Create pathways to stable housing. We know that
7 housing instability is one of the clearest predictors of
8 justice involvement. Fund workforce development, youth
9 program, and criminal (inaudible) models that create real
10 opportunity and reduce violence. The city must make
11 public line-by-line accounting of the savings associated
12 with the incarceration and closure of Rikers. Communities
13 deserve to know what is being saved, where it's going and
14 who's making those decisions. And finally, reinvest.
15 Reinvestment strategy should be guided by community
16 advisory boards and subject to regular public reporting.

17 We must scale with evidence-based alternatives
18 that keep people in their communities, connect services,
19 family, and stability. The city must shift its mind state
20 from simple, just punishment to actual prevention. I
21 think sometimes we equivocate the two, and they not always
22 should be equivocated. Punishment does not necessarily
23 lead to prevention, and we use those terms interchangeably
24 to the detriment of actually trying to deal with these
25 issues.

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1 And that's not to say people shouldn't be held
2 accountable, because they should, but we want to make sure
3 the biggest thing is to prevent the violence from
4 occurring in this community in the first place. We also
5 want to make sure we switch the mindset from that to
6 healing and to care. That's work that I'm hopeful this
7 Commission can play a leading role in. I'm happy to say I
8 support the Commission and the work that it's doing. I
9 support the incoming administration. I think there's
10 massive failures to address this in the outgoing
11 administration. And the communities that are most harmed
12 are the ones already feeding Rikers Island, and we're not
13 seeing those harms being reduced in meaningful ways. We
14 simply try to arrest the children of the people we
15 arrested a couple of decades ago. And if it would have
16 worked, it would have probably worked a couple of decades
17 ago.

18 So, I'll end there with just reiterating this is
19 not about not holding people accountable. This is not
20 trying to address the violence that's occurring there.
21 It's simply trying not to do the same things we have been
22 doing over and over to the same communities without seeing
23 the desired results. And it is about building out an
24 infrastructure that doesn't depend as heavily on
25 incarceration and policing. And actually, we're at a

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1 timeframe where law enforcement themselves are agreeing
2 they should be doing all the jobs that everybody else can
3 be doing if they are funded properly and structured
4 properly. And yes, this is a process that is new, and
5 sometimes it's scary, but where we are is actually scary,
6 and it is harming people, and so it's time that we just
7 get the courage to do it. So, I'm looking forward to
8 continue to work with you all. And hopefully, you're now
9 under an administration that actually cares about this
10 stuff in a way that will fund it both financially and
11 structurally. Thank you.

12 MR. PARAISO: And thank you so much, Public
13 Advocate. So, as stated earlier, the hearing room will
14 remain open until 11:30 a.m. today. Please, please,
15 please, encourage friends, community members, colleagues
16 to join if they are interested in delivering testimony.
17 The team will be on the line until 11:30 a.m., eagerly
18 anticipating and hoping more people will deliver
19 testimony. Otherwise, enjoy the rest of your day. Their
20 hearing room will remain open until 11:30 a.m. today.
21 Thank you.

22 Please raise your hand in the chat or press star
23 9 if you're calling in by phone. If you need translation
24 assistance, please let us know. The hearing room will
25 remain open until 11:30 a.m. to accept public testimony.

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1 Thank you so much.

2 MR. PARAISO: Introduce yourself, and if
3 applicable, state the organization you are delivering
4 testimony for. So, whenever you're ready.

5 MS. IVELISSA GILESTRA: (Inaudible). Thank you.
6 Sorry. I was working. It's late. My name is Ivelissa
7 Gilestra and I am delivering testimony on behalf of the
8 community. I'm part of the co-chair of Survivors of the
9 System, and I would like to share that Rikers Island has
10 been an open wound, an open wound specifically for the
11 black and brown community.

12 I myself have many loved ones. I am formerly
13 incarcerated and I knew about Rikers Island before I came
14 to United States. And to me, that's the irony, right?
15 Learning about Rikers Island, even when I used to live in
16 Puerto Rico because I had family members that were in
17 Rikers Island. So, it was a common name. La Roca, we
18 used to call it, even when I didn't know English.

19 So, my recommendation is that there are specific
20 communities that are being targeted that resources need to
21 be invested and allocated. We are at a state of a
22 different type of warfare that I sometimes don't know if
23 elected officials, even those that are from black and
24 brown communities understand. And we have youth at risk.
25 I think that there should be investments in our youth, in

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1 mentorship, in folks that have been through the gulags of
2 United States and have transformed their lives. We need
3 more investments in this community, and I'm glad that this
4 is going to be close, and it needs to be close so that we
5 don't keep bleeding from the same wound.

6 So, my recommendation is investment in those
7 communities, specifically on youth, on programs or
8 mentorship that the church, from the violence that has
9 been indoctrinated, and to acknowledge what this place
10 created. Yeah.

11 MR. PARAIISO: Thank you so much for sharing your
12 testimony with us. We greatly appreciate it. Last call,
13 does anyone else want to deliver a testimony? We are at
14 time at 11:31. A transcript of today's hearing and
15 written testimony will be posted on HRA's website in a
16 couple of weeks. If you would like to be notified about
17 the next hearing, please send an email to
18 reinvestment@dss.nyc.gov. This concludes today's public
19 hearing. Thank you so much, and enjoy the rest of your
20 day. Take care. Bye.

21 (Proceeding Concluded.)

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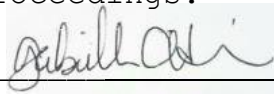
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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Gabrielle Atkinson, certify that the foregoing transcript of proceedings in the New York City Department of Social Services, Office of Legal Affairs, Matter of Public Hearing: Commission on Community Reinvestment and the Closure of Rikers Island, was prepared using the required transcription equipment and is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.



12/03/2025