

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

2 -----

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

5 -----

6 Hearing Room B  
7 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, New York

8 February 6, 2024  
9 9:39 a.m.

10 PRESIDING:

11 Senator Liz Krueger  
Chair, Senate Finance Committee  
12  
13 Assemblywoman Helene E. Weinstein  
Chair, Assembly Ways & Means Committee

14 PRESENT:

15 Senator Thomas F. O'Mara  
Senate Finance Committee (RM)  
16  
17 Assemblyman Edward P. Ra  
Assembly Ways & Means Committee (RM)  
18  
19 Assemblyman Edward C. Braunstein  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Cities  
20  
21 Senator Luis R. Sepúlveda  
Chair, Senate Committee on Cities 1  
22  
23 Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr.  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Local Governments  
24  
25 Senator Monica R. Martinez  
Chair, Senate Committee on Local Government  
26  
27 Senator Rachel May  
Chair, Senate Committee on Cities 2

1 2024-2025 Executive Budget  
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2 General Government  
2-6-24

3

4 PRESENT: (Continued)

5 Assemblyman Harvey Epstein

6 Senator John C. Liu

7 Senator Jeremy A. Cooney

8 Assemblyman Charles D. Fall

9 Senator Andrew Gounardes

10 Assemblyman Jonathan G. Jacobson

11 Assemblyman Robert C. Carroll

12 Assemblyman William Conrad

13 Senator Shelley Mayer

14 Assemblyman Steven Otis

15 Assemblywoman Latrice Walker

16 Assemblywoman Rebecca A. Seawright

17 Assemblyman Chris Eachus

18 Assemblywoman MaryJane Shimsky

19 Senator Rob Rolison

20 Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon

21 Assemblywoman Yudelka Tapia

22 Assemblyman Al Taylor

23 Senator Roxanne J. Persaud

24 Assemblyman Michael Reilly

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4 PRESENT: (Continued)

5 Senator Cordell Cleare

6 Assemblyman Michael Tannousis

7 Assemblywoman Jessica González-Rojas

8 Assemblyman Zohran K. Mamdani

9 Senator Leroy Comrie

10 Assemblyman Nader J. Sayegh

11 Assemblyman Ari Brown

12 Assemblyman Jeff Gallahan

13 Senator Steven D. Rhoads

14 Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar

15 Assemblywoman Dana Levenberg

16 Assemblyman David I. Weprin

17 Senator Robert Jackson

18 Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow

19 Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman

20 Senator Samra G. Brouk

21 Assemblywoman Taylor Darling

22 Assemblyman Scott Gray

23 Senator Simcha Felder

24 Assemblyman Jonathan Rivera

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4 PRESENT: (Continued)

5 Assemblywoman Chantel Jackson

6 Assemblyman Steven Otis

7 Assemblyman Demond Meeks

8 Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal

9 Assemblywoman Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn

10 Assemblyman Alec Brook-Krasny

11 Senator Alexis Weik

12 Assemblyman Lester Chang

13 Assemblyman Michael Novakhov

14 Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy

15 Assemblyman Tony Simone

16 Senator George M. Borrello

17 Assemblyman Manny De Los Santos

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10	Honorable Ben Walsh Mayor		
11	City of Syracuse -and-		
12	Honorable Mike Spano Mayor		
13	City of Yonkers -and-		
14	Honorable Kathy M. Sheehan Mayor		
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7	New York State Conference of Mayors		
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20	-and-		
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24

1 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Good morning.

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

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

11 Today we begin the eighth in a series  
12 of hearings conducted by the joint fiscal  
13 committees of the Legislature regarding the  
14 Governor's proposed budget for fiscal year  
15 '24-'25. The hearings are conducted pursuant  
16 to the New York Constitution and the  
17 Legislative Law.

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

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

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

4 So Assembly Majority members  
5 participating today: Assemblymember  
6 Braunstein, who chairs our Cities Committee,  
7 which is one of the participating committees  
8 today; Assemblymember Darling; Assemblymember  
9 Fall; Assemblymember González-Rojas;  
10 Assemblymember Mandani; Assemblymember  
11 Sayegh; Assemblymember Shimsky;  
12 Assemblymember Simon; Assemblymember Weprin;  
13 and Assemblymember Epstein. And  
14 Assemblymember Seawright.

15 Senator?

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

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

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

1 Senator Liu; Senator Martinez; Senator May;  
2 Senator Hoylman-Sigal; Senator Comrie;  
3 Senator Cleare.

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

7 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you,  
8 Chairwoman Krueger.

9 Good morning, everyone.

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

15 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember Ra  
16 to introduce the Minority members.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

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

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

1 for witnesses: Governmental witnesses have  
2 10 minutes, nongovernmental witnesses have  
3 three minutes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 Twenty-four months later -- it only

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 New York City is proud to uphold our

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

16           However, right now there are more than  
17 66,000 asylum-seekers still in our care.  
18 When you add in the 55,000 longtime  
19 New Yorkers in the city's DHS system, as well  
20 as others, that means we have close to  
21 three times the number of people in our  
22 shelter system than when we came into office.  
23 And it all comes at a great cost to our city.

24           In November, due to the growing

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

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

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

1           \$6.6 billion in PEG savings over fiscal years  
2           '24 and '25 in the November and January  
3           plans. And we accomplished all this without  
4           layoffs, without raising taxes or major  
5           disruptions to city services. Our savings  
6           include \$1.7 billion that we achieved by  
7           taking steps to manage the cost of providing  
8           services for new arrivals by, one, reducing  
9           daily household costs; negotiating and  
10          renegotiating rates and rebidding contracts  
11          and shelters run by for-profit vendors;  
12          implementing intensive case management  
13          support to help asylum-seekers reach their  
14          final destinations and leave our care; and  
15          transitioning away from a humanitarian-  
16          relief-centered model of care to nonprofit  
17          service providers.

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

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

1           3 percent of the savings we achieved over the  
2           two years. But I need to be crystal clear:  
3           Although we have stabilized our financial  
4           situation through hard work and advanced  
5           planning, we're not out of the woods. But I  
6           want you to understand that -- we are not out  
7           of the woods.

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

19                        While we are deeply grateful for the  
20          \$1 billion that was appropriated in this  
21          year's State Budget, the midyear adjustment  
22          of nearly \$900 million, and the \$1.1 billion  
23          in shelter costs proposed in the Governor's  
24          Executive Budget, we are still shouldering

1 the largest share of asylum-seeker costs.

2 In our budget, we assume that the  
3 state will meet its commitment to cover  
4 one-third of \$10.6 billion in migrant costs  
5 over fiscal years '23 through '25. As of the  
6 Governor's Executive Budget, the state's  
7 commitment to the city is just over  
8 \$3 billion, or roughly 28 percent, which is  
9 \$400 million short.

10 This, along with \$200 million in  
11 budget hits like the Distressed Hospitals  
12 Fund sales tax intercept and school aid  
13 reduction, grows our fiscal year '25 gap by  
14 \$600 million. New Yorkers are already  
15 carrying most of the asylum-seeker costs.  
16 It's wrong to ask them to do more, and it's  
17 put our city in a precarious position. Today  
18 we're asking the state to increase its  
19 commitment and cover at least 50 percent of  
20 our costs.

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

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

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

12 This is more than a curriculum change,  
13 it's a reading revolution. New York City  
14 Reads is already being implemented in  
15 90 percent of our schools.

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

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

1                   And I will turn over my time on time.

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

7                   For our first question, I call upon  
8                   Assemblymember Fall.

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

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

13                  Assemblymember Braunstein. Sorry.

14                  ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you,  
15                  Fred.

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

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

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

1                   And as they come in with our new  
2                   30-day initiative, and 60-day for children  
3                   and families, we are trying to get as many  
4                   out the door as possible to be  
5                   self-sustaining. So that number does  
6                   fluctuate and it does change based on how  
7                   many we get in. From time to time we get a  
8                   surge coming from particularly the state of  
9                   Texas. But the number does move from time to  
10                  time.

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

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

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

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

20                  We had, as I indicated, 172,000 total.  
21                  We were able to get 60 percent out of care,  
22                  but it has never gone down below around  
23                  60,000.

24                  ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: And what's

1           been the highest?

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

4                   ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN:  In your care  
5           at one time?

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

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

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

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

22                   NYC MAYOR ADAMS:  On the current  
23          amount.

24                   You have the current numbers, Jacques?

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

7                   ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: So out of the  
8                   1.9 you've put in requests for 1.2?

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

11                  ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay.

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

22                  ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. The  
23                  Governor's Executive Budget sets aside  
24                  2.4 billion to help with the asylum-seekers.

1 How would you spend that money?

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

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

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

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

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

8                   NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Assemblyman, your --  
9                   I grew up in Queens and I know that community  
10                  very well. And what your residents are  
11                  feeling is what I would feel if it was on  
12                  134th Street or -- 167th Street, I should  
13                  say, where my mother's house is. This should  
14                  not be happening to your community. It  
15                  should not be happening in Floyd Bennett  
16                  Field, it should not be happening anywhere in  
17                  our city. And no, I don't see a relief in  
18                  sight. I see that everyone is starting to  
19                  ship migrants and asylum-seekers to New York  
20                  City. It's happening every day, and there's  
21                  not any relief in sight.

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

1 is no relief in sight for us.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: So you  
3 mentioned that at one time you had  
4 100,000 asylum-seekers in your care. You're  
5 current at 66,000. So where are the other --  
6 you know, at some point there was 100,000.  
7 That extra 30,000, where were they being  
8 housed?

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

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

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

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

6 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: But that's  
7 not -- my question is if at one time you were  
8 housing 100,000 and now you're housing  
9 66,000.

10 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: We have 67,000, as  
11 Jacques just shared with me. Both -- when we  
12 looked at the number I've given you of  
13 100,000, that is the asylum-seekers plus the  
14 long-term traditional New Yorkers who were in  
15 our homeless shelter system. It's a  
16 combination of the two.

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 situation.

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

5 The city's moving forward to implement  
6 Local Law 97. I represent -- the affordable  
7 housing in my district is co-op housing.  
8 It's garden apartments, it's seniors on fixed  
9 income, young families starting out. The  
10 lawyers for the co-ops are telling us that to  
11 comply with Local Law 97 they're looking at  
12 increasing everybody's monthly maintenance  
13 costs 15 percent. And remember, that's  
14 before property taxes, which these co-op  
15 owners, under our unfair property tax system,  
16 pay some of the highest effective property  
17 tax rates in the city already. They're  
18 looking at increased maintenance costs of  
19 15 percent per month.

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

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

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

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

18                       And we've taken some major steps to  
19          try to minimize the pain to those co-ops and  
20          property owners. But I agree with you  
21          100 percent.

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

24                       ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: (Inaudible.)

1 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

2 Good morning, everyone.

3 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Good morning.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Good morning,

5 Mr. Mayor.

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

12 Our first up is the chair, Senator  
13 Sepúlveda.

14 SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: Good morning,  
15 Mayor.

16 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: How are you,  
17 Senator?

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

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

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

4                     Just recently I attended the hearing  
5           at the Tax Equity Now NY LLC case versus  
6           New York City at the Court of Appeals, and  
7           sat for the entire argument. And based on my  
8           31 years of being an attorney, I believe the  
9           city is going to lose that case.

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

16                    NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Senator, thank you  
17           for that.

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

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

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

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

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

19 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: If Albany fails to  
20 act?

21 SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: Yes.

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

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

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

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

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

24 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes. And that is

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: Let me shift topic  
18 a little bit here. The Executive Budget  
19 proposes increasing the Transitional Finance  
20 Authority bonding from 13.5 billion to  
21 19.5 billion from July 1, 2024, and from 19.5  
22 billion to 25.5 billion beginning July 1,  
23 2025.

24 This cap hasn't increased since 2009.

1           What necessitates the increase in bonding  
2           authority now?

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

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

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

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

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

8                   (Laughter.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

15                  SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: Thank you for  
16                  that, Mayor.

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

24                  NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes, I can. And my

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

6                         And there are too many illegal shops.  
7           And I think all of you are experiencing this;  
8           it's not only localized to New York City.  
9           The dream of legalizing cannabis is going in  
10          the wrong direction. And if I'm given the  
11          authority to locally address this problem, we  
12          will rid our city of illegal smoke shops in a  
13          30-day period.

14                        SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: Thank you, Mayor.

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

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

4                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator, I --

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

8                   NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

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

12                   Assembly.

13                   ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Yes, thank you,  
14          Senator.

15                   We are joined also by Assemblymember  
16          Seawright and Assemblymember Taylor.

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

20                   ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you,  
21          Mr. Chair.

22                   Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

23                   NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Good morning. How  
24          are you?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: No --

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

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

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

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

23 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you,  
24 Mr. Mayor.

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

7                   ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you,  
8                   Assemblymember Reilly.

9                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

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

14                  Thank you.

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

17                  NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Good morning.

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

1                   NYC MAYOR ADAMS: The cost of those  
2 services?

3                   SENATOR PERSAUD: Yes.

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

6                   NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: It's about  
7 \$4.2 billion this year and about \$4.9 billion  
8 next year. And it covers everything ranging  
9 from housing --

10                  (Call of "microphone.")

11                  NYC MAYOR ADAMS: It's on.

12                  NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: It's on.

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

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

18                  SENATOR PERSAUD: All costs.

19                  NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Yes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

1           seeing waste in food, they are now able to  
2           get their own food that is going to be spent  
3           \$12 a day. So we're going to save money on  
4           delivery, we're going to save money on people  
5           wasting food. And this is a pilot project  
6           we're going to use that is going to save us  
7           \$6.7 million a year and is -- if the pilot  
8           turns out to be successful, then we're going  
9           to expand it not only with the migrants and  
10          asylum-seekers, we would look to do that  
11          expansion throughout the entire system.

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

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

17                     CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
18                     Assembly.

19                     ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

20                     We've been joined by Assemblymember  
21                     De Los Santos, Assemblymember Rajkumar,  
22                     Assemblymember Simone, Assemblymember  
23                     Levenberg.

24                     And our next questioner is

1 Assemblymember Fall, for three minutes.

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

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

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

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

24 I want to bring the issue related to

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 ASSEMBLYMAN FALL: Gotcha.

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

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

4 And I also would love to have --

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

7 ASSEMBLYMAN FALL: The Carter Center  
8 in Stapleton.

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

11 (Laughter.)

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

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

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

18 (Laughter.)

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

21 (Overtalk.)

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

24 SENATOR BORRELLO: I've been there

1 several times and --

2 (Laughter; overtalk.)

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

5 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 government to secure the border to help stop  
2 this?

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

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

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

24 Do you stand on the policy that

1 New York City should remain a sanctuary city?

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

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

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

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

24 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: No, I don't think

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

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

11 SENATOR BORRELLO: God bless you, and  
12 good luck.

13 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you,  
15 Senator.

16 Assemblymember Mamdani, three minutes.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Thank you.

18 Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

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

21 ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Good to see you  
22 as well.

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

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

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

12 ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Thank you.

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

18 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I like to believe  
19 that.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Okay. So on to  
21 my question.

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

1           20 miles of bus lanes in 2022. In that year  
2           you built 12.9 miles. The law then required  
3           you to build 30 miles of bus lanes in 2023.  
4           You built 7.8 miles.

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

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

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

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

1 I'm a mayor that listen to communities.

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

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

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

20 ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Absolutely --

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

1 side or on the Israeli side.

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

6 ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: So would you --

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

14 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

16 We've been joined by Robert Jackson.

17 And next up is Senator Hoylman-Sigal.

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

20 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

17                        SENATOR HOYLMAN-SIGAL: Is there a  
18          number?

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

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

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

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

10                      SENATOR HOYLMAN-SIGAL: In my last  
11           30 seconds, is the language in the  
12           Executive Budget on giving localities the  
13           authority to close illegal cannabis shops  
14           sufficient for you to do the job?

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

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

22                      SENATOR HOYLMAN-SIGAL: Thank you.

23                      CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

24                      Assembly.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember  
2 Weprin for three minutes.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Thank you,  
4 Mr. Chair.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Thank you. And

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

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

10 (Laughter.)

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

13 ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Okay, thank you.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

15 Next up is Senator Felder.

16 SENATOR FELDER: Good morning. How  
17 are you?

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

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

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

1                   NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

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

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

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

24                   You have made great progress for

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

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

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

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

1 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Well said, Senator.

2 And really my first introduction into  
3 this was Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon and the  
4 work she has done. We -- the administration  
5 added 490 million to Carter Cases. And this  
6 is not enough. The real price tag is about a  
7 billion dollars. And we cannot continue to  
8 deny these families, I agree with you  
9 100 percent. And we're going to continue to  
10 do what we have to do to look after these  
11 families.

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

14 Thank you.

15 Assembly.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember  
17 Epstein for three minutes.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you,  
19 Chair.

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

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

1 rent regulation?

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

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

11 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: That's great,  
12 Mayor.

13 So we have a lot of expiring use 421-a  
14 buildings. There's -- every year thousands  
15 of units come out of rent regulation because  
16 they were pre-2013 rent-regulated because of  
17 421-a. We don't have a lot of tools right  
18 now to be able to continue to regulate those  
19 units and keep those as affordable housing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you,  
7 Mr. Mayor.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
9 Senator Gounardes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

14 (Off the record.)

15 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: The City of Yes is  
16 100,000, but our overall goal is to get  
17 500,000 units. But the City of Yes is  
18 100,000.

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

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

9 I want to shift gears --

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

15 SENATOR GOUNARDES: That's great.

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

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

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

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

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

1 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

3 Assembly.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember

5 González-Rojas for three minutes.

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

8 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18 Moving on, are you aware that HRA is  
19 required to process public benefits within  
20 30 days of application?

21 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes, I am.

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

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

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

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

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

1 we're facing.

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

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Thank  
9 you.

10 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

12 Senator Rolison.

13 SENATOR ROLISON: Thank you, Chair.

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

16 A question on Floyd Bennett Field --

17 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes, sir.

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

23 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: That's correct.

24 SENATOR ROLISON: And what is that,

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

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

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

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

13 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: The state is picking  
14 that up.

15 SENATOR ROLISON: Okay. To go over to  
16 the retail theft issues that obviously the  
17 state is experiencing, in the Governor's  
18 proposed budget she put in approximately  
19 \$40 million for various initiatives,  
20 \$20 million going to the State Police to  
21 create a task force.

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

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

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

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

14           NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes.

15           SENATOR ROLISON: -- he had spoke  
16 about the small number of, say, 250  
17 individuals who had been arrested almost  
18 2500 times.

19           NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Exactly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

11 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
13 Assembly.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember  
15 Brown for three minutes.

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

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

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

24 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Okay.

1                   Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

2                   NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Good morning.

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

6                   (Laughter.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

17          (Laughter.)

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

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

15                  ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Thank you,  
16                  Mr. Mayor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

6 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Thank you,  
7 Mr. Mayor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you,  
19 Assemblymember.

20 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
21 much.

22 Next up is Senator Comrie.

23 SENATOR COMRIE: Good morning,  
24 Mr. Mayor.

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

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

5                   (Laughter.)

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

8                   (Laughter.)

9                   SENATOR COMRIE: I have three  
10                  questions.

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

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

1           there is a Fair Fares program or alternate  
2           programs.

3                         So I hope that we can -- that your  
4           team will take a look at it and support that  
5           program. It would increase ridership,  
6           especially for people in the outer -- better  
7           boroughs, as I like to say. You could save  
8           10 or 12 hours a week in commute time if we  
9           expand that program. I hope you can support  
10          that.

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

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

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

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

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

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

1           inside these stores. We can find that  
2           balance.

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

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

11                    ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you,  
12          Senator.

13                    NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

14                    ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: We are joined by  
15          Assemblymember Hyndman.

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

18                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN DARLING: Thank you.

19                    Hi, Mayor and team.

20                    NYC MAYOR ADAMS: How are you doing?

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

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

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

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

14 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: For which --

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

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

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

1 World Cup.

2 ASSEMBLYMEMBER DARLING: Yup.

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

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

9 ASSEMBLYMEMBER DARLING: Exactly.

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

19 ASSEMBLYMEMBER DARLING: Exactly.

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

1 to see how we could attract businesses into  
2 our area.

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

9 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Love it.

10 ASSEMBLYMEMBER DARLING: Thank you.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

12 Senator Cleare.

13 SENATOR CLEARE: Good morning,  
14 Mr. Mayor.

15 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: How are you doing,  
16 Senator?

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

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

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

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

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

14           SENATOR CLEARE: The vested projects.

15           SENIOR MAYORAL ADVISOR SAVINO: So the  
16 421-a vested projects, it's a moving target.  
17 It's very hard to quantify the number of  
18 units because as -- we had Deputy Mayor Maria  
19 Torres-Springer up last week and she  
20 addressed this, I think, very extensively  
21 with Senator Kavanagh and Assemblywoman --  
22 Rosenthal, thank you. I'm getting senile in  
23 my old age here.

24           It's hard to quantify the number of

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

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

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

1 need for senior housing.

2 The migrant crisis has really impacted  
3 my district with a large number of African  
4 migrants into my community. We want to be  
5 compassionate -- and are compassionate -- and  
6 extend a hand, but this has really impacted  
7 our district. The quality of life issues,  
8 overcrowding -- we have blocks where there's  
9 400, 500 men on the street on a daily basis.  
10 We have houses of worship who want to  
11 participate in the program that the city  
12 offers to sleep and have them in an adult day  
13 care setting. But they can't meet the code  
14 that they are being asked to meet.

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

22 We'll talk later.

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

1 (Laughter.)

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

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

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

11 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

12 And our next questioner is  
13 Assemblymember Seawright for three minutes.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you,  
15 Chairs Thiele and Krueger.

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yeah, the -- you

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

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

24 We saw during COVID-19 that high-speed

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

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you.

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

12 Thank you.

13 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Well said.

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

22 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: We'll make sure.

23 Just as Chris talks about his favorite  
24 Assemblyperson, he talks about you being his

1 favorite Senator.

2 (Laughter; inaudible cross-talk.)

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

5 (Laughter.)

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

9 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

10 Mayor Adams and your team, welcome to  
11 Albany.

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

14 SENATOR JACKSON: So my question is,  
15 the first one, Aid to Municipalities,  
16 \$715 million are given to municipalities  
17 around the State of New York -- with the  
18 exception of New York City. And they can  
19 spend the money as they deem appropriate.

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

1 mind?

2 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I am with you,  
3 Senator. You know, I believe you are  
4 100 percent correct. And I think it's  
5 admirable that you have taken on this fight,  
6 and everyone needs to line up behind you.  
7 It's just fair that New York City should  
8 receive that as well.

9 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10                  NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Right.

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

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

20                  SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

21                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
22                  Assembly.

23                  ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.  
24                  We are joined by Assemblymember

1 Bichotte Hermelyn.

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

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: It always sneaks  
5 up on you.

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

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

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

23 And then second --

24 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: And that's parking

1 in the bike lanes?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

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

20 SENATOR RHOADS: Thank you, Madam  
21 Chairwoman.

22 Hello, Mayor Adams. Thank you --

23 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: How are you?

24 SENATOR RHOADS: -- for your testimony

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

3                     NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Oh, good.

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

7                     NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4 SENATOR RHOADS: Which leads me to my  
5 next question.

6 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes.

7 SENATOR RHOADS: Why has there been --  
8 you're talking about a crisis that is going  
9 to cost the City of New York \$4 billion this  
10 year. The federal government has given you  
11 \$157 million in support. The same federal  
12 government is charging the state my  
13 estimation is \$300 million for the use of  
14 Floyd Bennett Field, federal property. Not  
15 only are they not giving it to you for free,  
16 they're actually charging us to be able to  
17 house some of those migrants.

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

1 for their failed border policies?

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

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember  
10 Tannousis for three minutes.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN TANNOUSIS: Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

14           CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

15           Senator Weik.

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

18           NYC MAYOR ADAMS: How are you?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yeah, no problem.

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

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

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

3                   (Laughter.)

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

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

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

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

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

5 And number two, I think that any  
6 lawmaker --

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

11 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: The --

12 (Time clock chiming.)

13 SENATOR WEIK: We tried.

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

17 Assemblymember.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember  
19 Hyndman for three minutes.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Always good to  
21 see you, Mayor.

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

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I also want to

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

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

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

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

1           could be -- really work towards.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 responsible for the school system.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

3 Senator John Liu.

4 SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

5 Mr. Mayor, always good to see you.

6 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Always.

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

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

17 (Laughter.)

18 SENATOR LIU: So I suppose I  
19 appreciate that.

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

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

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

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

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

24           But let me say this. We execute the

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

7 But Jacques, can you go over --

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

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

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

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

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

3           SENATOR LIU: Ten in the first round?

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

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

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

10           (Laughter.)

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

13           (Laughter.)

14           NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: We have  
15 three major --

16           SENATOR LIU: No answer.

17           Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

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

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

1 authority.

2 NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Sure.

3 Sure.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

5 Assembly.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember

7 Bichotte Hermelyn for three minutes.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN:

9 Thank you. Good to see you, Mr. Mayor.

10 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you. Always

11 good seeing you.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Good

13 seeing you and the team.

14 I want to first thank you and the

15 whole team for just phenomenal work,

16 responsive. And again, I want to thank you

17 all for pushing and making sure that we pass

18 these landmark MWBE bills. So we're very,

19 very grateful for pushing equity and

20 empowerment in our community.

21 I also want to just commend you on

22 your hard work on dealing with this

23 unprecedented asylum seeker/migrant issue.

24 No other city is dealing with this burden

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

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

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

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

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

1           doing around dyslexia screening, around a  
2           better environment.

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

8                     The request is a simple one. Let us  
9           finish the job. Let us finish the job. An  
10          80 percent graduation rate, outpacing the  
11          state on reading and math. A safe  
12          environment. And so we can't play with this  
13          and go backwards. We have two  
14          public-school-reared -- one mayor and one  
15          chancellor that really understand what these  
16          children need, everything from teaching our  
17          children how to do self-care with breathing  
18          in the morning, to better food so we don't  
19          feed the healthcare crisis through bad food.  
20          You're just seeing what you asked for.

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

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

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN:

8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

10 Senator Tom O'Mara, ranker.

11 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you,

12 Chair Krueger.

13 Good morning, Mayor. Thank you for  
14 being here.

15 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Good to see you.

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

20 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 amount for you. But it was --

2 SENATOR O'MARA: State, state money?

3 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you, Mayor.

8 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you very much.

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember  
11 Gallahan for three minutes.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN GALLAHAN: Thank you,  
13 Mr. Chairman.

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

16 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

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

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

1 World Trade Center.

2 And, further, the units will be  
3 available to those with incomes between  
4 40 percent and 120 percent of the area median  
5 income, which is about a little under 40,000  
6 to a little under \$119,000 for an individual  
7 living alone. Also, 20 percent of the units  
8 will be set aside for those who lived or were  
9 working in Lower Manhattan during 9/11 and in  
10 the immediate aftermath.

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

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

23 ASSEMBLYMAN GALLAHAN: Thank you.

24 Is there any concern with the site and

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

5 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I don't believe so.

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

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

16 And what is the range of dates that  
17 you must have worked or lived in  
18 Lower Manhattan to qualify for these  
19 20 percent set-aside units?

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

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

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

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

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

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

22 ASSEMBLYMAN GALLAHAN: Thank you so  
23 much.

24 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you very much.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

24          And the fact is that a huge number of

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

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

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

1           That's your issue.

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

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

20                      CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Mm-hmm.

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

1 continue to be as supportive as possible.

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

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

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

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

20 For the record --

21 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes.

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

24 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: I always get scared

1           when I hear that.

2                       (Laughter.)

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

7           NYC MAYOR ADAMS:  Without a doubt.

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

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

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

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

4                   We already started to talk about the  
5 issues of how -- what you need the capital  
6 money for. And I think we are going to have  
7 some separate briefings, so I won't go into  
8 that. But I did want to ask you -- and it's  
9 a self-serving question, because I carry a  
10 bill called the Climate Change Superfund Act  
11 which would require that the gas and oil  
12 companies who cause the most pollution and  
13 climate change damage have to pay the State  
14 of New York \$3 billion a year for the next  
15 25 years. That would be \$75 billion.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

14           CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Tell me about it.

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

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

1           60 years old.

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

6                   (Laughter.)

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

15                   And I'm going to cede back my  
16 48 seconds. Thank you very much.

17                   ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

18                   We've been joined by Assemblymembers  
19 Jackson and Meeks.

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

23                   ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

24                   Mayor, thanks for being here today. I

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 And I think, lastly, we are winning.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, Mayor.

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

21 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Okay, we will.

22 Assemblymember Jackson, for three  
23 minutes.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Thank you,

1 Chair. Hi, Mr. Mayor.

2 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: How are you doing,  
3 Assemblywoman?

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Always well.

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

13 When they see that we're putting  
14 \$2.4 billion in the budget for migrants and  
15 asylum-seekers, they think, well, what about  
16 me? What about my housing need? What about  
17 my health insurance need? What about my fast  
18 track to workforce?

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

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

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

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

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

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

24           So I think you should share with them

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

6                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Thank you.

7                     Thank you, Chair.

8                     ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

9                     Assemblymember Meeks for three  
10           minutes.

11                    ASSEMBLYMAN MEEKS: (Mic off;  
12           inaudible.)

13                    NYC MAYOR ADAMS: How are you?

14                    ASSEMBLYMAN MEEKS: (Mic off.)

15                    NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Good.

16                    (Off the record.)

17                    ASSEMBLYMAN MEEKS: Can you hear me  
18           now?

19                    NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Yes, we can.

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

23                    NYC MAYOR ADAMS: It has not. We have  
24           100 percent of funding of FSF, 100 percent.

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

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

12                    You want to add to that answer?

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

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

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

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

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

5 I think it's a combination of things.  
6 You know, Chancellor Banks has always made it  
7 clear that by the time our children reach  
8 11th grade, they ask why was I here? What  
9 was the purpose? And we removed the purpose  
10 of education. And not every child is going  
11 to go to college, but they should be able to  
12 have a pathway to be a contributor to  
13 society. And Chancellor Banks has really  
14 changed the game with his partnerships with  
15 outside entities -- tech companies,  
16 hospitals, facilities. And we have started  
17 to give children their purpose. And previous  
18 administrations as well, from Mayor Bloomberg  
19 to Mayor de Blasio. We're continuing that  
20 tradition of saying the responsibility lies  
21 with the mayor and the chancellor.

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

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

6 ASSEMBLYMAN MEEKS: Thank you.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Okay, our last  
8 questioner --

9 UNIDENTIFIED LEGISLATOR: Oh, no,  
10 please.

11 (Laughter.)

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

15 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you,  
16 Fred.

17 Just a couple more questions. The  
18 Transitional Finance Authority's outstanding  
19 debt, the city comptroller reports that it  
20 has \$48 billion in outstanding debt for the  
21 fourth quarter of 2024. The cap is currently  
22 13.5 billion. So what do you attribute that  
23 extra \$35 billion of outstanding debt to?

24 NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: This is --

1 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: If you could  
2 speak in the mic.

3 NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Yeah. This  
4 is debt that is outside of that  
5 \$13.5 billion. There is a cap of  
6 \$13.5 billion, okay, that doesn't count  
7 toward the debt limit. And anything above  
8 that counts toward the debt limit. You  
9 follow what I'm saying to you?

10 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: No.

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

13 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: 13.5 billion.

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

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

22 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. Okay.

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

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

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

8 NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: The general  
9 debt limit.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay.

11 NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Okay?

12 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay.

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

21 NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: It's about  
22 \$900 million {no audio}.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Year to year,  
24 900 million?

1 NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Yeah.

2 But -- {mic off; inaudible}.

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

8 NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: (Nodding.)

9 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: For education  
10 or for everything?

11 NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Educational  
12 programs, about 700. But overall it's about  
13 \$900 million.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: So but for  
15 the education piece --

16 NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Seven  
17 hundred.

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

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

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: --  
24 700 million from one year to the next.

1 NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Yup. Yup.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay.

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

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

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

16 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay, thank  
17 you.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you very  
19 much.

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

22 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

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

1 today.

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

5 Thank you.

6 NYC MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you very much.

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

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

12 (Brief recess taken from 12:12 to  
13 12:29 p.m.)

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

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

1 for this panel.

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

6 BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: I'll begin.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Okay.

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

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

24 You have my written testimony, but

1 I'll highlight some of my most pressing  
2 requests.

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

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

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

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

4 We've been forced to retain additional  
5 equipment and labor from private contractors  
6 at the cost of millions of dollars. For  
7 Buffalo storms this January, we've already  
8 paid outside contractors over \$5 million,  
9 with a total overall cost approaching  
10 \$7 million. These massive speedy responses  
11 drive hundreds of thousands of dollars for  
12 the municipal workforce in overtime, as they  
13 work to clear roads, respond to emergencies,  
14 and shelter our most vulnerable residents.

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

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

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

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

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

24 Because I'm here with fellow mayors

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

3 Thank you.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Who would like to  
5 go next?

6 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: I'll go.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 We're also working with the state and  
8 partners to advance multiple large-scale  
9 mixed-income housing projects. The financing  
10 and design plans for the first phase of the  
11 East Adams Neighborhood Transformation are  
12 actively underway, and construction will  
13 begin in 2025. This multiphase plan will  
14 include a one-to-one replacement of all  
15 Syracuse Housing Authority public housing  
16 units in that neighborhood and include some  
17 new mixed-income apartments, totaling  
18 1,400 units of new housing on the southside.  
19 We're also reactivating the former  
20 state-owned Syracuse Developmental Center  
21 site on the westside, and the old  
22 Maria Regina campus on the northside, which  
23 will put two long-vacant properties back on  
24 the tax rolls and add hundreds of new units

1 of quality housing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1           200,000 people in the City of Syracuse and  
2           multiple surrounding communities get their  
3           drinking water from Skaneateles Lake, a  
4           pristine Finger Lake southwest of the city.  
5           In close coordination with the Health  
6           Department and DEC, we're making good  
7           progress on a plan to extend one of the  
8           two intake pipes that draw water from the  
9           lake to a deeper location that is less  
10          susceptible to turbidity due largely to  
11          climate change.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6 As we institute new local measures to  
7 achieve fiscal sustainability, I also must  
8 address the negative impact of the state's  
9 12-year freeze on AIM -- actually, it has not  
10 been increased in 15 years. AIM is the  
11 second-largest source of revenue for the City  
12 of Syracuse, and flat AIM is a major  
13 contributor to our fiscal plight, as you  
14 heard from Mayor Brown.

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

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

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

12                    Thank you.

13                    ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Who's next?

14                    YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: I'll go.

15                    ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Mayor Spano,  
16          welcome back.

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

20                    ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Yeah.

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

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

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

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

1 boards of education. There's so much there.

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

13 This being held at that line for all  
14 these years is literally devastating for us.  
15 It hurts. It hurts us, and again, you know,  
16 all the other costs continue to go up with  
17 it. You know, I don't know if anybody's  
18 really talked about it but, you know, health  
19 insurance. Health insurance costs for this  
20 year are going to go up to the tune of -- at  
21 least in Yonkers, to the tune of over  
22 \$20 million. It will be 6 percent on the  
23 property tax levy just to cover the cost of  
24 the healthcare increase to the city. Six

1 percent.

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

7 So healthcare, the loss of federal  
8 funds, I know we're all suffering that. But  
9 I think that if we speak and we have another  
10 conversation later on, we could talk about  
11 ARPA funds and what the Big 5 cities have  
12 spent that money on, especially in dealing  
13 with COVID and dealing with the mental health  
14 issues that we have kind of taken on since  
15 COVID has gone, right? And so that 800 or  
16 \$700 million statewide is a pretty  
17 significant number. If we don't get the feds  
18 to fill it, and you don't fill it, then we're  
19 going to have to fill it.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

13 And when you look at housing, even  
14 though it costs a lot to build, we have  
15 actually put forth just in the past 10 years,  
16 12,500 new units of housing. Ten percent of  
17 it -- actually, 22 percent of it is  
18 affordable.

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

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

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

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

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

23 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Ladies first.

24 (Laughter.)

1                   ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: All right.

2                   Thank you so much for having us today,  
3                   Chairs Krueger and Weinstein -- who's not  
4                   here.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 way as it can be.

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

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

24 And that property tax bill is a huge

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

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

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

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

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

1 coming our way.

2 Thank you.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

4 Mayor Evans.

5 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: (Mic off) --

6 absence Chairwoman Weinstein, and

7 Chairman Thiele. And I also just want to

8 also thank members of my delegation that are

9 here: Senator Brouk, Assemblyman Meeks,

10 Senator Cooney. Thank you all for being

11 here.

12 You have my testimony, so I will not

13 read it verbatim. I'll be brief, but I just

14 want to make a couple of points.

15 When I took office in 2022 I

16 immediately declared a gun violence emergency

17 because Rochester had one of the highest

18 per-capita murder rates in the country and we

19 had seen our highest gun death rates that we

20 had ever seen.

21 I declared a gun violence emergency,

22 but I could have easily also declared a

23 poverty emergency. Of the top five poorest

24 zip codes in New York State, Rochester, a

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

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

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

1 critical.

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

12 So an increase in AIM aid or whatever  
13 we want to call it is something that could  
14 have a major impact on our city and thereby I  
15 think also improve our state. You can't have  
16 a city that has that many children living in  
17 poverty.

18 The second point I wanted to make is  
19 gun violence. I said I declared a gun  
20 violence state of emergency. I've been in  
21 office -- this is going into my third year.  
22 We cut -- homicides last year were down by  
23 almost 34 percent. And one of the things  
24 that this body and the state helped us with

1 was GIVE money. I cannot stress enough the  
2 importance of the Gun Violence Elimination  
3 Program and the impact that that has had on  
4 us driving down gun violence.

5           There is no reason why a state like  
6 New York, with its pretty strict gun laws,  
7 should have people across the state dying of  
8 gun violence. My commitment is to try to do  
9 everything we can, from a prevention,  
10 intervention and suppression standpoint, to  
11 make sure that we drive down gun violence.  
12 We must make sure that we put investments in  
13 programs -- not just intervention or  
14 suppression, but also preventative programs  
15 that will stop young people in particular  
16 from picking up a gun, and encouraging them  
17 to make sure that they pick up a book or that  
18 they get into a workforce development program  
19 where they can get jobs. It is absolutely  
20 critical that we continue to invest in those  
21 programs.

22           Just a couple of things from the  
23 Governor's Executive Budget that I looked at  
24 that I want to highlight that I think that

1 are important for both Rochester and Monroe  
2 County. Our city and our county, we work  
3 together. Our legislative proposals are  
4 joint because we believe that we have more  
5 firepower if we're able to work together.

6 I want to highlight the investment in  
7 new public safety communications systems.  
8 That is extremely important for us.

9 The FAST NY Shovel-Ready Grant  
10 Program, a great program. As much as we can  
11 get shovel-ready sites to clean up these  
12 brownfields and other dilapidated areas that  
13 have been poisoned by individuals -- you  
14 know, what happens and what frustrates me as  
15 a mayor is these folks, they tear our cities  
16 up, leave it poisoned -- we have a Vacuum Oil  
17 site that we're working on cleaning up -- and  
18 then they leave the city, the poorest of the  
19 residents, to clean up this mess that they  
20 benefited from for like a hundred years.

21 And then by the time I become mayor,  
22 they say, Hey, congratulations, here you are.  
23 Any resources to clean up those sites is  
24 extremely important.

1           Equipment grants to support response  
2           to emergency weather events, as Mayor Brown  
3           mentioned.

4           Very happy to see the increased access  
5           to swimming and instruction for important  
6           life skills, and the creation of the Office  
7           of Workforce Development, which is needed  
8           because the sugar high of ARPA will be  
9           ending. And we have put millions of dollars  
10          into workforce development as a means, as a  
11          means of decreasing poverty.

12          We know that all these jobs are here,  
13          but without the skills and workforce, it  
14          doesn't matter. We can have all the jobs we  
15          want, but if we are not tying people to those  
16          jobs that are going to pay them a livable  
17          wage, none of it matters. But what do we do  
18          after ARPA runs out? So I'm happy to see  
19          that in the budget, and we need to make sure  
20          we do that.

21          A continued investment in clean water  
22          infrastructure and reduced lead exposure.  
23          Rochester has been a national model for this.  
24          We spoke at President Biden's Lead Summit

1           that he had last year where we talked about  
2           our commitment to accelerate the replacement  
3           of every single lead service line in  
4           Rochester by 2030.

5                         We want them all replaced. We want  
6           them all gone, because we don't want to have  
7           our children bearing the contaminants that  
8           lead brings. We did it in paint, and now  
9           we're doing it in water. That is an  
10          expensive enterprise. So any dollars that  
11          the state can put our way is something that  
12          we would be extremely grateful for. And I'm  
13          happy that that is in this budget.

14                        We are also happy about the continued  
15          investment in roadway infrastructure through  
16          CHIPS, Pave Our Potholes, and Extreme Winter  
17          Recovery.

18                        And also the expanding of access to  
19          mental health services. That is up there  
20          with the opioid epidemic, the challenges  
21          around mental health. It all relates. It is  
22          all correlated, and I believe that it is all  
23          things that we should make sure that we  
24          invest in. And I am happy to see those in

1           this budget.

2                       So I thank you for your time today,  
3           and look forward to answering any questions  
4           that I may be able to answer.

5                       ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: I thank you all  
6           for your testimony.

7                       I just want to add that we've been  
8           joined by Assemblymember Fahy and  
9           Assemblymember Pretlow. Thank you for being  
10          here.

11                      CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm sorry, I just  
12          want to add Senator Shelley Mayer, Senator  
13          Samra Brouk, Senator Rachel May, who's back;  
14          she had to go.

15                      Thank you.

16                      ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Okay. And we're  
17          going to open the questioning with  
18          Assemblymember Shimsky.

19                      ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Boy, that was  
20          fast.

21                      We've been talking a lot about the  
22          challenges you all face in an operating  
23          budget scenario. But especially as climate  
24          change gets worse, I suspect your capital

1 needs are going to be exploding too.

2 Since one of my mayors is on the  
3 panel, I think I'd like to engage Mayor Mike  
4 a little bit on this issue. Now, the City of  
5 Yonkers has done some really good things that  
6 have helped with stormwater management. The  
7 most spectacular one is probably the  
8 multi-phase Saw Mill River daylighting  
9 downtown, which is great. But you still have  
10 a lot of challenges to go. Do you want to  
11 maybe list a few of them and talk about how  
12 you hope to be able to fund these one day?

13 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Yes. And thank  
14 you, Assemblywoman. Yeah, the story of  
15 infrastructure, the story of our schools, our  
16 police, fire infrastructure, the cleaning of  
17 our streets, the dealing with the effects of  
18 climate change, I think it's fair to say we  
19 could all probably give you price lists  
20 that's in the hundreds of millions if not  
21 billions of dollars, each and every one of  
22 us.

23 And, you know, Yonkers is a city of  
24 hills, you know, it's built on two mountain

1 ranges -- seven rivers, seven hills, seven  
2 lakes, seven valleys. And so when Hurricane  
3 Ida hit, you know, we were whacked pretty  
4 hard. It was probably worse than what Sandy  
5 had to do to us. In general, it was worse.

6 And so when you're looking at certain  
7 infrastructure projects, everything that  
8 we're going to come to you with is going to  
9 have a price tag of 50 million or more, in  
10 some cases. It's big stuff.

11 Now, we could try and prioritize and  
12 get us enough money to kind of do -- you  
13 know, take care of Troublesome Brook --  
14 perfect name. That's the name, Troublesome  
15 Brook, right? And to do a couple of  
16 different things. But then we also have, you  
17 know, like the mayor said before, just the  
18 issue of lead. Right? So the federal  
19 government has put down certain things that  
20 we have to do. One of them is they say you  
21 have to create a list. Well, we have  
22 30,000 people that we have to inspect their  
23 pipes. It's \$10 million just to create their  
24 list, you know, for them before we even talk

1 about how we're going to solve the problem.

2 And so, again, we've built a -- you  
3 know, we just built a school with the help of  
4 New York State, and thank you for that.

5 We -- you know, and that has been big for us.

6 But just repairs of our schools -- you know,  
7 we're talking about, just to get to where we  
8 need to be, another half a billion dollars.

9 I don't have that. Because if I raise -- if  
10 I borrow 30 million -- my budget person is  
11 sitting over there -- if I borrow 30 million,  
12 we have to raise taxes 1 percent. It's  
13 just -- there -- the money just isn't there.

14 And so any help we can get from the  
15 deep pockets, which I refer to the state and  
16 the federal government --

17 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you,

18 Mr. Mayor.

19 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Thank you,

20 Assemblyman.

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. And

22 our first questioner is the chair,

23 Senator May.

24 SENATOR MAY: Thank you. And thank

1           you all for your testimony.

2                     The Cities 2 Committee partly exists  
3           because we have these -- some of these  
4           specific problems, like concentrated poverty  
5           in our small and medium cities. And I wanted  
6           to -- first of all, I hear you loud and clear  
7           about AIM aid. Every year you advocate for  
8           it; every year we in the Legislature advocate  
9           for it; every year the Governor shoots it  
10          down.

11                    So I think the city auditor in  
12          Syracuse has a creative idea for how to  
13          propose it differently. I don't know,  
14          Mayor Brown, if you were suggesting a  
15          different way to kind of come at AIM aid in  
16          relation to like county versus city needs.  
17          If you have creative ways to do this that  
18          maybe are a little different from what we've  
19          done before that might get a different  
20          result, I am all ears. So that's just  
21          open-ended. I'm available anytime.

22                    I did want to talk about the  
23          concentrated poverty issue. When we had a  
24          hearing in December about this issue after

1 Syracuse was listed No. 2 in the nation for  
2 child poverty, one of the things we heard was  
3 that the state tends to support and fund  
4 affordable housing projects that are supposed  
5 to be 100 percent affordable, understandably,  
6 but 100 percent affordable housing actually  
7 can serve to further concentrate poverty.  
8 And we need more mixed-income housing in our  
9 smaller cities.

10 So what tools do you need from the  
11 state to make it possible to support  
12 mixed-income, development of mixed-income  
13 neighborhoods? Is that something any of you  
14 have thoughts about?

15 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: Well, if I  
16 could, I have a council that passed very  
17 restrictive inclusionary zoning. We had an  
18 inclusionary zoning ordinance. It was  
19 working. It required that 5 percent of the  
20 units within a new market-rate development be  
21 affordable. They raised the percentage and  
22 lowered the income level, and I have not had  
23 a single market-rate project proposed in my  
24 city. And that's because there is no tax

1 credit or other way of paying for those  
2 affordable units.

3 So while I support the spirit of it,  
4 the reality is that banks will not finance it  
5 unless it cash-flows. And even though we  
6 might hope that banks would be willing to  
7 make less money or take more risk, that's not  
8 how it's working. And so I think some sort  
9 of credit for developers who create a certain  
10 percentage of affordable units within  
11 market-rate housing will move some of those  
12 units out of the areas of concentrated  
13 poverty. But it requires some dollars, and  
14 they're dollars that we as local governments  
15 just simply don't have.

16 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: (Mic off;  
17 inaudible.) It cuts both ways. So we know  
18 that left to its own devices, the market  
19 isn't going to finance or fund the gap for  
20 incorporating affordable units into  
21 market-rate projects. So again, to the  
22 mayor's point, we need flexible financing to  
23 assist with that.

24 On the flip side -- as, Senator, you

1           and I have talked about before -- the toolkit  
2           for affordable housing is very restrictive as  
3           well. So for low-income-housing tax credits,  
4           which is the biggest tool in the affordable  
5           housing toolkit, it doesn't allow for the  
6           inclusion of market-rate units in an  
7           otherwise affordable project. And what we  
8           all know is that concentrating any type of  
9           housing, whether it's low-income housing or  
10          luxury housing, isn't the best way to do it.

11                         And so that's one of the reasons we  
12          created the Syracuse Housing Trust Fund, was  
13          to try to have a mechanism -- where we have  
14          to obviously find resources for -- where we  
15          can make strategic investments in different  
16          projects, whether they be like affordable  
17          projects or otherwise market-rate projects,  
18          to incorporate a mix of income levels into  
19          them.

20                         So the short answer is some sort of  
21          flexible financing tool. You know, we have  
22          seen some limited use of economic development  
23          funds, state economic development funds to do  
24          that. I think we could see more of that.

1                   But thank you for the question.

2                   SENATOR MAY: Let me also ask if any  
3 of you --

4                   BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: May I answer  
5 that?

6                   SENATOR MAY: Quickly.

7                   (Mic difficulties.)

8                   BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: It takes real  
9 power to get this mic on.

10                  (Laughter.)

11                  BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: I think flexible  
12 finances is critically important, but having  
13 the resources to provide incentives for  
14 housing development is critical.

15                  And again, you know, when we look at  
16 what the Governor tried to do with affordable  
17 housing across the state last year, a lot of  
18 communities were resistant to that. In my  
19 community, the majority of the affordable  
20 housing is physically located in the City of  
21 Buffalo. Seventeen percent of city rental  
22 units are income-restricted. Almost  
23 70 percent of affordable housing is in the  
24 city. Eighty percent -- 87 percent of public

1 housing is in the city.

2 We've built over 4,000 units of  
3 affordable housing during my tenure as mayor  
4 of the City of Buffalo. So having flexible  
5 financing is critically important, and  
6 recognizing that something -- there should be  
7 some incentive for communities that have  
8 invested in affordable housing. You know,  
9 some --

10 SENATOR MAY: Okay, I'm going to --  
11 I'd like to move on to a couple of other  
12 topics, though.

13 BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: Okay.

14 SENATOR MAY: But thank you.

15 One of them is about the role of my  
16 committee. Actually every time I come to  
17 Albany I am impressed with the public  
18 transportation here and I'm excited by the  
19 new FLEX system that's an on-demand system  
20 for getting out to the train station, for  
21 example.

22 What we heard from Mayor Evans about  
23 fighting gun violence -- how much do you  
24 share with each other things that are working

1 or things that you have tried and that have  
2 failed? And how can this -- the Cities 2  
3 Committee be helpful in brokering some of  
4 those conversations and making sure we are  
5 learning from each other?

6 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: Well, we just  
7 met for two days, a day and a half, with the  
8 New York Conference of Mayors, so we do share  
9 a lot of information.

10 And I think -- I'll be very quick, but  
11 a lot of us are investing our ARPA dollars in  
12 new programs that are really tests of  
13 theories of change with respect to mental  
14 health issues and how we address those  
15 issues, rapid rehousing. There's a lot of  
16 creativity that is going on with those ARPA  
17 dollars.

18 We plan on measuring the outcomes and  
19 then figuring out how to fund the things that  
20 work permanently. And so I imagine we will  
21 be back next year with very specific requests  
22 because we want to ensure that when we can  
23 demonstrate that something works, that we  
24 have a funding stream that's going to pay for

1           it.

2                   SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

3                   And just real quickly, are any of you  
4 looking at Detroit's example of using a land  
5 value tax to replace some or all of the  
6 property tax so that you can really get more  
7 land in production for housing or get rid of  
8 some of the surface parking lots that are  
9 blights on our cities?

10                   ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: (No audio.)  
11 -- just around the land value tax. But as  
12 you know, we would need this honorable body  
13 to have permission to be able to do that.

14                   SENATOR MAY: I carry the bill.

15                   ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: But I think  
16 it's a discussion that's worth having,  
17 because we just can't keep doing the same  
18 thing that we've been doing. We know that's  
19 the definition of insanity.

20                   SENATOR MAY: Mayor Evans, I have a  
21 kind of pointed question for you because one  
22 of my constituents died 11 months ago at a  
23 concert in Rochester. I know one of your  
24 constituents died, Mayor Brown's constituents

1 died there.

2 Have you taken any steps to make sure  
3 that doesn't ever happen again? Are there  
4 policy measures we can take at the state  
5 level to prevent that kind of tragedy?

6 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Well, you  
7 know, I mean it was a terrible tragedy, that  
8 concert. One of the things we did was do an  
9 assessment of these concert venues to see  
10 what their security plans were, and also to  
11 make sure that if you are doing an event like  
12 this, to make sure that you are hiring people  
13 who, number one, understand crowd control and  
14 also make sure that people aren't being  
15 packed into these locations.

16 And that's something that you have to  
17 do working through zoning and the fire  
18 department. That's something that we did.  
19 And we did ultimately end up closing down  
20 that location as a result of that tragedy  
21 that happened last March.

22 SENATOR MAY: I'm glad to hear that,  
23 honestly. We're working on some legislation  
24 to make sure -- whatever the state can do to

1 make sure that kind of tragedy doesn't happen  
2 again.

3 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Thank you.

4 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Senator, if I  
5 can -- can I just -- just on policing real  
6 quick. You know, in 2012 when I took office,  
7 Yonkers was under a Department of Justice  
8 investigation. They wanted to take over the  
9 police department, they wanted to institute a  
10 lot of different measures to change the  
11 department. It was under investigation for  
12 being aggressive and maybe even have  
13 systematic racism.

14 And we -- anyway, we went to work with  
15 the Department of Justice and made a hundred  
16 different changes. Like we banned chokeholds  
17 long before the murder of George Floyd. But  
18 my point is we made a hundred different  
19 changes working with community groups -- the  
20 clergy, community groups, working with  
21 legislators, working with the Department of  
22 Justice. And we did a bunch of things. Some  
23 of the things were kind of corny: "Coffee  
24 with a Cop," "Pizza with the Police" --

1                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Mayor, I have to  
2 cut you off, I'm sorry.

3                   YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: I know, I'm  
4 sorry. I'm going off on a tangent. I  
5 apologize, Senator.

6                   SENATOR MAY: Thank you. Thank you  
7 all.

8                   YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: But just so you  
9 know, there's ways we can do it, keep the  
10 crime low, and also keep complaints against  
11 our officers -- we've done it.

12                   SENATOR MAY: Thank you. Thank you  
13 all.

14                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

15                   ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Yes,  
16 Assemblymember Conrad, for three minutes.

17                   ASSEMBLYMAN CONRAD: Thank you,  
18 Chairs.

19                   I guess I would direct this question  
20 to Mayor Byron Brown, but it could be  
21 addressed to all of you as a panel.

22                   We talked about AIM funding. I  
23 certainly support your efforts to get a  
24 higher rate of AIM funding. I've been in

1 local government, I know what that does for  
2 you, and CHIPS and so on. And I certainly  
3 can understand where you're coming from.

4 But one of the things I want to talk  
5 about is the cost of clean water. And I was  
6 interested by the testimony of the Syracuse  
7 mayor. But what I was experiencing at the  
8 local level of government was the cost of  
9 chemicals to actually clean drinking water to  
10 be able to get it out to our customers and to  
11 our residents. And I know we have the lead  
12 pipes, we have fluoride issues, we've got the  
13 gamut. And that's a very expensive thing.

14 But the question I have is, are you  
15 experiencing the same amount of increase of  
16 cost of chemicals? In my tenure in the local  
17 town board, the cost went up from 200 to  
18 300 times more. And that expense is of  
19 course going back to the taxpayer. Are you  
20 experiencing that? And really my question  
21 is, I see that Syracuse is attempting to do  
22 something there. I'll go from there. So  
23 I'll leave it to you.

24 BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: The cost of

1 every commodity has gone up, including the  
2 cost of chemicals that go into the water.

3 And in Buffalo, we are transferring,  
4 automating systems. And what we saw in other  
5 communities across the country, when they  
6 changed water sources, when they changed  
7 systems, water got contaminated. So you have  
8 to be very careful. In addition to costs,  
9 you have to do the research to make sure that  
10 when systems are changed, different chemicals  
11 are used, that it's going to work properly.

12 Lead is a major issue, I think, for  
13 all of us. As Mayor Spano said, the federal  
14 government is requiring lead pipes to be  
15 replaced by a certain period of time.  
16 Buffalo years ago started a program called  
17 ROLL, Replace Old Lead Lines. We have  
18 replaced thousands of lead lines, at a cost  
19 of a little over \$30 million. But to do all  
20 of the lead lines in the City of Buffalo  
21 would be about half a billion dollars.

22 So costs are going up with chemicals,  
23 but to do the work that's being required by  
24 the federal government to address lead pipes,

1           that's going to be very expensive for all of  
2           us.

3                   ASSEMBLYMAN CONRAD:  I guess I'll  
4           leave it to the Syracuse mayor.  You  
5           mentioned a program using electric and salt  
6           to kind of clean the water.  Is this new  
7           tech?  And how costly is it?

8                   SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH:  So hopefully to  
9           reduce costs and increase public safety,  
10          rather than trucking in chlorine gas to the  
11          facility, we're using a process to create it.  
12          So that's the idea.

13                   But again, to your point, part of that  
14          is -- aside from the public safety aspect,  
15          part of it is just cost savings.

16                   ASSEMBLYMAN CONRAD:  Thank you.  
17          Appreciate it.

18                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER:  Thank you.  
19          Senator Shelley Mayer.

20                   SENATOR MAYER:  Thank you very much.

21                   And thank you for being here.  A  
22          special thank you to my -- Mayor Mike Spano,  
23          thank you for your leadership in Yonkers and  
24          restoring confidence in our city.

1           One thing none of you mentioned -- and  
2           particularly you, Mayor Spano -- is that the  
3           Governor's proposal on school aid funding,  
4           even for the Big 5 and other districts, if  
5           you got more, you're still getting less more  
6           than you would have gotten before her  
7           proposals, because she reduced the  
8           inflationary index in the Foundation Aid  
9           formula. And for Yonkers, I think that's  
10          about 33 million or thereabouts.

11          So Yonkers, because they have a  
12          mayoral-control type of situation, but even  
13          in the others, your school funding is  
14          extremely important. So none of you spoke to  
15          that. I just wonder, Mayor Spano, if you  
16          have any comments on that.

17          And my other two comments are -- one  
18          on AIM, I like your idea, Mayor Evans, of  
19          coming up with a new name or a new thing,  
20          because every year we put in increased AIM in  
21          our one-house budget. Since I was in the  
22          Assemblymember, and Mayor Spano before me, we  
23          have been fighting for increased AIM. I  
24          think it's absolutely acknowledged that

1 cities can't make it without additional state  
2 funding. But somehow this word "AIM" seems  
3 to be a problem. And so maybe, working  
4 collectively, we can come up with a new idea.

5 And thirdly, Mayor Spano, you rightly  
6 pointed out that DOT investment in the City  
7 of Yonkers' aging roadways is inadequate. I  
8 wonder if you could address sort of the  
9 specifics of those -- any of those three  
10 things.

11 Last, I just want to say on the  
12 regional cost index, we hear you loud and  
13 clear. We know it would really make a  
14 difference for all of Westchester's schools.  
15 So that is top of mind.

16 But I just wondered, on the State Ed  
17 cuts, new name of AIM and DOT, whether you  
18 could address those.

19 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: (Mic off;  
20 inaudible.) Remember, you guys had a formula  
21 but we never fully funded it. And so the  
22 last couple of years you started fully  
23 funding the formula. So that meant that  
24 where we were not getting upwards of

1           \$40 million that we should have gotten, we  
2           started getting it. Which has been great.  
3           But then the formula, at least under the  
4           Governor's proposed budget, has changed. And  
5           so I hope that you'll address that. That  
6           would be a significant help for us.

7                     You know, because like I said, we have  
8           not decreased our contribution, nor will we  
9           decrease our contribution to education, even  
10          when we get huge increases from New York. So  
11          hopefully whatever you get, that would be  
12          great for us.

13                    AIM aid, I think we talked about  
14          enough, and you guys know where we all stand  
15          on AIM. But infrastructure money, especially  
16          for paving -- you know, the weather is so  
17          severe these days. Our roads just -- they  
18          don't -- they don't last.

19                    You know, it used to be you could pave  
20          a street and it would last 10 years or so.  
21          You pave a street, it's less than two years  
22          and it's just a mess. And so -- and that's  
23          something that really affects the quality of  
24          life. And so any type of dollars we can get

1 just for something as simple as paving would  
2 make our constituents very happy.

3 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

6 Assemblymember Otis for three minutes.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you, Chairs.

8 And thank you, Mayors. Appreciate the  
9 comments.

10 And we've heard a few of you talk  
11 about water costs in different ways. And so  
12 I'm going to assume all five of you would say  
13 the costs of water infrastructure repair are  
14 going up, not down. We'll get a group  
15 decision on that.

16 PANEL MEMBERS: Yes.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Number two, in  
18 terms of drilling down more on stormwater  
19 problems, stormwater infrastructure has been  
20 revealed to be more pressing since recent  
21 storms. Is that something maybe some of you  
22 who have not spoken yet on water can talk  
23 about, things that you're seeing that you  
24 didn't think you were going to have to deal

1 with stormwater improvements but now have to,  
2 seeing storm damage. Would someone like to  
3 weigh in on that category?

4 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: I think the  
5 storm damage is something that is a major  
6 challenge, but just as equal as the storm  
7 damage is the massive water main breaks that  
8 are happening in cities across the state and  
9 across the country, really.

10 We had a major one that was a  
11 catastrophe two years ago that basically  
12 disrupted water throughout almost half of the  
13 city because of the aging infrastructure of  
14 the water mains. So that is also a major  
15 issue where you're starting to see more water  
16 main breaks than you've seen in previous  
17 years. Due to a couple of things -- the  
18 aging infrastructure, but also the extreme  
19 swings in weather that we're seeing.

20 We say in Rochester, you know, you can  
21 wear a fur coat and have a bathing suit  
22 underneath because the weather's just going  
23 to -- you never know what the weather's going  
24 to be. And that affects the critical

1 infrastructure as it relates to water mains.

2 But to your point, it costs dollars to  
3 be able to fix these things, and you're  
4 seeing these costs continue to accelerate  
5 over the years.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: So when you have a  
7 water main break, you're handling that on an  
8 emergency basis and just doing what you have  
9 to do. Where you're trying to hit those  
10 kinds of vulnerabilities ahead of time, how  
11 are each of you going about funding that?  
12 Some through state dollars, some through  
13 federal dollars? What's your strategy in  
14 terms of trying to cover some of those costs?

15 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: In Rochester  
16 it's an all-of-the-above strategy, trying to  
17 use multiple resources. But a lot of it is  
18 local share that we have to put forth in  
19 order to do that. And we are trying to be  
20 proactive in trying to address the ones that  
21 might be older and replacing them before they  
22 rupture, or those that are rupturing on a  
23 daily basis.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: And on the lead

1 pipe issue, where are you going to go for  
2 dollars? I think Mayor Brown, you said it's  
3 a half a billion dollars --

4 BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: Half a billion.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Half a billion. I  
6 said B. I was there with B for Buffalo.

7 (Laughter.)

8 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: How are you --  
9 what's your game plan for funding that?

10 BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: We're still  
11 working through that game plan. What we can  
12 do at a local share annually is just not  
13 enough right now.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Okay. Thank you  
15 all for what you do.

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

17 Senator Samra Brouk.

18 SENATOR BROUK: Thank you so much.

19 And thank you all for all of your  
20 patience today, and being here.

21 I'm going to talk to my mayor here,  
22 Mayor Evans, and first of all just want to  
23 say thank you so much for your leadership.  
24 You talked about when you came into office --

1 I don't think anyone would say you came into  
2 an easy job coming off of the COVID pandemic  
3 and so many other things.

4 So I want to say back to you some of  
5 the things that I heard you talk about and  
6 make sure I heard them right and make sure  
7 they're on the record again.

8 You talked about obviously AIM  
9 funding. You talked about some of the  
10 concentrated poverty that we have in the City  
11 of Rochester. You talked about your gun  
12 violence emergency order. And you also  
13 talked about the fact that Rochester has not  
14 received the funding that we are owed for so  
15 many years, and that you clearly see a  
16 relationship between these two things. I too  
17 see that relationship. My office, as you  
18 know well, came out with a report last year  
19 really defining the fact that Rochester has  
20 received such little funding and our rising  
21 rates of violence, really differentiating us,  
22 unfortunately, from a lot of other cities in  
23 New York and even nationwide.

24 But you also talked about things that

1           are working. And I think that oftentimes  
2           that's not getting the headlines and we're  
3           not paying enough attention, especially at  
4           the state, to what's working. And so what I  
5           hear from you is you were able to make  
6           significant inroads of decreasing gun  
7           violence through preventative programs. And  
8           that if we're serious about that, we perhaps  
9           need to increase some of those line items.

10                        So I would love for you to talk about  
11           what an increase in GIVE funding could do for  
12           the City of Rochester, but also what some of  
13           this anti-poverty funding -- and again, we  
14           won't call it AIM, I guess, because that's  
15           harder to get. So we'll call it whatever we  
16           want to call it. But essentially we need  
17           more unrestricted funding for you, as the  
18           mayor of the city, to decide where that goes  
19           so that it can best benefit your residents.

20                        So if you could talk about those two  
21           things and what you could do with it, I would  
22           love to hear it.

23                        ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Yeah, and I  
24           think, you know, one of the things, you want

1 to give people hope but you've got to give  
2 them opportunity. And opportunity sometimes  
3 costs dollars. So that means investing in  
4 workforce development programs that will give  
5 people a pathway out of poverty, where you  
6 will be less likely to pick up a gun. Those  
7 type of things are absolutely critical for  
8 us.

9 Anything with workforce and job  
10 training, mental health supports. We've done  
11 pilots where we now offer mental health  
12 supports in our libraries and rec centers.  
13 If you would have told me that we had to do  
14 that 10 or 15 years ago, I would have said,  
15 No, that's not where -- the schools do that,  
16 or you go to a counselor's office to be able  
17 to do that. But we know that those things  
18 have paid dividends in terms of those types  
19 of things.

20 We've invested in a program where we  
21 actually go after individuals that are --  
22 that have shotguns or have been shot, to  
23 redirect them into positive opportunities  
24 where they are now working and doing well.

1                   But again, those types of  
2                   interventions cost money. So that is where  
3                   we will put those extra resources, and that  
4                   will save the government so much money in  
5                   other social service supports because it's an  
6                   investment on the front end and not the back  
7                   end.

8                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
9                   Assembly.

10                  SENATOR BROUK: Thank you.

11                  ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember  
12                  Rivera, for three minutes.

13                  ASSEMBLYMAN RIVERA: Thank you,  
14                  Mr. Chair.

15                  My two questions and comments are for  
16                  my mayor, Mayor Brown. A couple of things.  
17                  You know, we're here discussing the budget in  
18                  a lot of different directions, and there's a  
19                  lot of things in this budget that, you know,  
20                  a lot of my colleagues are really having to  
21                  review and assess and determine, you know,  
22                  how hard we're going to have to fight for  
23                  changes.

24                  And you mentioned a few things, and I

1 just want to sort of touch on them. One of  
2 the things you mentioned was funding arts and  
3 culturals. And, you know, thankfully I've  
4 been appointed as the subcommittee chair of  
5 Regional Tourism, and I've been able to go  
6 across the state and see just how beautiful  
7 this state is, truthfully, and how unique our  
8 arts and cultural organizations are and what  
9 they can do and their capacity and the  
10 economic benefit from it. And we know that  
11 when we spend money there, that's money we're  
12 getting back.

13 So, you know, we have a big challenge  
14 in front of us with, you know, cutting  
15 NYCHA -- no, I'm sorry, not NYCHA -- the  
16 New York Council for the Arts almost in half.  
17 So there's a lot that's going to be done  
18 around that. So I applaud you for mentioning  
19 that.

20 I want to talk for a second on AIM.  
21 You know, there's been a lot of initiatives  
22 that predate certainly my time here that  
23 touch on AIM. One of the things that myself  
24 and Senator Cooney, who's right behind me,

1 pushed recently in the last few years was a  
2 bill that would call upon the state to  
3 assemble a new AIM task force to reassess the  
4 formula, to get down to really challenging  
5 ourselves and what it should look like and  
6 how it needs to change.

7 Unfortunately, that bill was vetoed.  
8 And I'm asking you and perhaps your -- the  
9 other mayors here, if you would support us in  
10 pushing for the Governor to reconsider that.  
11 We believe that maybe we change the name of  
12 it, maybe we call it something else. But at  
13 the end of the day, we need to change the  
14 formula. And creating a panel, a task force,  
15 assembled of people from all over the state,  
16 supported by NYCOM and NYSAC and other  
17 entities, is a first step in that.

18 So I'm asking sort of if you'd support  
19 us in that.

20 BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: Thank you very  
21 much, Assemblyman Rivera. I would certainly  
22 be very supportive of that.

23 I think for all of us -- Buffalo, all  
24 of these cities -- we need AIM now. We don't

1           need it next year or the year after that, we  
2           need it right now. We have urgent, pressing  
3           financial concerns. So I definitely support  
4           that.

5                     I mentioned arts and cultural.  
6           Again, I see an inequity between all of the  
7           services that are provided by the city to  
8           support the cultural jewels and gems that we  
9           have in Erie County and the City of Buffalo,  
10          but we don't get commensurate support to  
11          support those cultural. I just take one of  
12          the zip codes in your district, 14201,  
13          highest poverty rate in Erie County.

14                    So we have to weigh supporting our  
15          arts and culture with trying to lift people  
16          out of poverty.

17                    ASSEMBLYMAN RIVERA: Thank you,  
18          Mr. Mayor.

19                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Cooney.

20                    SENATOR COONEY: Thank you, Chair.

21                    Always wonderful to see all of our  
22          upstate mayors. And thank you for the  
23          incredible work and innovation that you do.

24                    And Mayor Spano, I'll let your --

1 we're still sensitive about this third,  
2 fourth city thing, but I'll let it go today.

3 (Laughter.)

4 SENATOR COONEY: Mayor Evans, I know  
5 you've been a terrific advocate for public  
6 transportation, as have all of the mayors.  
7 And I'm wondering if you could comment  
8 specifically on our opportunity in Rochester  
9 to expand our long-distance bus service by  
10 kind of doing Phase 2 of the Louise Slaughter  
11 Intermodal Transportation System as it  
12 relates to this kind of Interloop North  
13 Transformation Project that you and your team  
14 have been working on. That would be of value  
15 to the City of Rochester?

16 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Yeah, the  
17 intermodal Phase 2 station is absolutely  
18 critical to the City of Rochester. I mean, a  
19 major city should have such a facility. I  
20 think it is long overdue.

21 And I think we should definitely do it  
22 not only because it's the right thing to do,  
23 but I think Louise would be very, very happy  
24 to see us making progress on this long-held

1 project that could transform Rochester as it  
2 relates to transportation.

3 SENATOR COONEY: Well, I completely  
4 agree with you. Moving and staying with you,  
5 Mayor Evans, something else that the former  
6 Congresswoman cared about was literacy. And  
7 you have been a wonderful advocate, both in  
8 your time as a school board member to now, as  
9 mayor, for child literacy.

10 The Imagination Library program --  
11 this is part of the Dolly Parton  
12 Foundation -- has started in Rochester under  
13 the leadership of Dr. Matt Present. I know  
14 you delivered a milestone book to a family,  
15 this is where we give children under the age  
16 of five access to free children's books so  
17 that they can supplement their reading at  
18 home.

19 Could you talk to us about that  
20 program specifically for the City of  
21 Rochester?

22 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: It is  
23 absolutely critical. We know -- and I know  
24 that the Governor talked in her State of the

1 State about the importance of reading and  
2 education and making sure that our kids get  
3 back on track.

4 The Imagination Library is an amazing  
5 concept of any child under five can get a  
6 free book in the City of Rochester. In  
7 November I delivered their milestone book at  
8 a young -- Corduroy, I still remember the  
9 book, one of my kids' favorite books -- to  
10 continue to support literacy.

11 So I think it's absolutely a model for  
12 the state. Because if we're going to get to  
13 a level where kids are able to be strong  
14 adults, they need to become strong readers.  
15 And instilling that in them at a very early  
16 age is important, and the Imagination Library  
17 is one organization that I believe that helps  
18 to do that.

19 SENATOR COONEY: Well, we're going to  
20 try to expand that statewide with  
21 legislation, so more on that to come.

22 Finally, just an acknowledgment. As  
23 the city school district looks to  
24 consolidate school buildings for their use,

1           some of those buildings will come back to the  
2           City of Rochester for a purpose. Would you  
3           be open to considering housing options for  
4           some of those buildings as it makes sense  
5           within the city's plan?

6                     ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Absolutely.  
7           As they make sense, obviously we'll wait to  
8           get those back, put out RFPs and we see what  
9           we get. But housing is definitely an option.

10                    SENATOR COONEY: Thank you, Mayors.

11                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
12           Assembly.

13                    ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember  
14           Meeks, for three minutes.

15                    ASSEMBLYMAN MEEKS: Thank you, Chair.

16           I'll be addressing Mayor Evans.

17           So we've heard, you know, throughout  
18           the day about three of the top five poorest  
19           zip codes being in the City of Rochester.  
20           One of the things that I recognize is those  
21           same top three zip codes are part of the top  
22           10 zip codes that represent 56 percent --  
23           I'll repeat that, 56 percent of all child  
24           sexual and physical abuse cases in our

1 region. And there tends to be a correlation  
2 with the poverty and the challenges that our  
3 children experience.

4 The Governor has proposed 25 million  
5 of additional aid to attack poverty in the  
6 City of Rochester. How would you begin to  
7 tackle these type of challenges in our  
8 community?

9 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: I think one of  
10 the big challenges is that we have to make  
11 sure that we are focused on children and the  
12 issues that have been associated with  
13 poverty, be it lead poisoning or physical  
14 abuse. These are all things that are  
15 absolutely tied to poverty.

16 You mentioned it, we just had a  
17 horrific case yesterday that made the news  
18 that is a direct result of child abuse that  
19 someone that was living in poverty  
20 experienced. So I think that that's  
21 important.

22 But again, I always go back to this  
23 concept of hope and opportunity. If you're  
24 going to give people opportunity -- or hope,

1           you have to make sure that they have  
2           opportunity. That means making sure that you  
3           invest in workforce development programs,  
4           that you invest in mental health, that you  
5           invest in youth job programs, that you invest  
6           in strong mental health supports.

7                     All these things I think are  
8           absolutely critical to get rid of the sting  
9           of poverty that exists in our community. And  
10          then good housing. I mean, good housing,  
11          there's a direct correlation to a kid's  
12          performance in school. In the City of  
13          Rochester you have people who sometimes  
14          throughout their career in school could move  
15          20 times from dilapidated structure to  
16          dilapidated structure. Imagine if any of us  
17          had to be able to do that. You cannot talk  
18          about bringing someone out of poverty without  
19          making sure that you have a good housing  
20          policy to make sure that they are able to do  
21          that.

22                     Homeownership, which we know is still  
23          one of the critical things that creates  
24          wealth, investing in those programs. And,

1           you know, in our testimony that we presented  
2           we talked about our By the Block program,  
3           which is a program to get people into homes.

4                        These are all things that we can  
5           invest in to give people not a handout, but a  
6           hand up. And this is what these types of  
7           resources will be able to do for our  
8           community.

9                        ASSEMBLYMAN MEEKS: Well, we  
10          definitely look forward to working in that  
11          space.

12                      And just to share some other  
13          statistics, children who experience abuse are  
14          nine times more likely to be involved in  
15          criminal activity. Fourteen percent of all  
16          men and 36 percent of all women in prison  
17          were abused as children.

18                      So there's a direct correlation with  
19          these challenges, and we must change these  
20          systems. Thanks.

21                      ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Thank you.

22                      CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

23                      Senator Martinez.

24                      SENATOR MARTINEZ: Good afternoon.

1 Thank you, Mayors, for being here today.

2 And thank you for the invitation to be  
3 at your conference yesterday morning and  
4 allowing both my colleague and friend  
5 Assemblyman Fred Thiele to speak to you. And  
6 we heard you loud and clear regarding what  
7 your needs are, specifically when it pertains  
8 to AIM. And you've heard us loud and clear  
9 that we are committed to assisting you in  
10 this effort.

11 And I also want to thank every single  
12 one of you because you've all mentioned  
13 housing and the need to increase housing  
14 stock. Now, my question to you is the  
15 Governor has created this Pro-Housing  
16 Community initiative that she has funded for  
17 municipalities to apply. My question is,  
18 have you applied for this, to become a  
19 pro-housing community? And if you have, are  
20 you encountering difficulty in the process?

21 And I can tell you on Long Island we  
22 have three of our municipalities have  
23 received funding, they have applied. So she  
24 just came down recently and provided money to

1           these districts, and I just want to know if  
2           you're having difficulty or if the process  
3           has been difficult for you. And if it has,  
4           how can we assist?

5                         And that goes to any one or all of  
6           you.

7                         ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: I'll just say  
8           we've applied. I haven't heard of any  
9           difficulty yet, but we definitely have  
10          applied and I'm hoping that we will be able  
11          to be recipients of some of those resources.

12                        SENATOR MARTINEZ: Great.

13                        YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: At least for us,  
14          like I said, we're in Westchester County  
15          where for 20 percent of the population we  
16          have now 40 percent of the affordable housing  
17          in the entire county. And we -- if there's  
18          something that we can apply for, we do it,  
19          and we do it across the board.

20                        It all depends on how restrictive it  
21          is or if there are local concerns. But for  
22          the most part, we're able to get access and  
23          the Governor has been very good with our  
24          offices in seeing a lot of these through.

1                   SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: (Mic off;  
2                   inaudible.) But just to tie it back to AIM,  
3                   because I don't think we've talked enough  
4                   about it --

5                   (Laughter.)

6                   SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: -- I think that  
7                   it is relevant that the cities represented  
8                   here bear a disproportionate burden of the  
9                   affordable housing in any given region. As  
10                  you've heard, some pretty significant  
11                  statistics.

12                 So, you know, as we are considering  
13                 possible adjustments to AIM, I think the fact  
14                 of the role that cities play in producing  
15                 affordable housing, critical affordable  
16                 housing, should be a factor in the resources  
17                 we receive from Albany. Beyond just what's  
18                 included within the Governor's current plan.

19                 SENATOR MARTINEZ: And I know you've  
20                 all mentioned you need AIM now. We get it.  
21                 But we also need to hear from you in terms of  
22                 what you're thinking in terms of dollars.  
23                 Right? You say you need money, but yet we  
24                 need an X amount. Right?



1 Brown, for five minutes.

2 ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: (Mic off;  
3 inaudible.) -- construction business for  
4 nearly 50 years, and current deputy mayor of  
5 my village, and I used to be the chairman of  
6 the Town of Hempstead Industrial Development  
7 Agency.

8 So my question is, why not use the  
9 best tool in your arsenal without having to  
10 go to the state? When I sat for many, many  
11 years on the IDA, we built some of the  
12 biggest projects in the state, market-rental  
13 housing, that were so successful. We had a  
14 past governor that tried to destroy all the  
15 IDAs, made it seem like a pariah of the area.

16 Let them do a 15-or-20-year PILOT.  
17 Why not use this tool that you already have  
18 instead of looking to some other tax-exempt  
19 incentives? This could be your best method  
20 of creating this housing.

21 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: We wouldn't  
22 have built a single unit of market-rate  
23 housing if it were not for our IDA.

24 The challenge that we have with the

1 restrictive inclusionary zoning that our  
2 council has introduced is that it would  
3 require PILOTs that far exceed anything that  
4 I think would be acceptable to our residents  
5 going forward. And I think it's asking the  
6 municipalities to pay in lost tax dollars for  
7 creating affordable housing units that people  
8 want to see in creating mixed-income.

9 We don't have any problem with all  
10 market-rate. We don't have any problem with  
11 all affordable. The challenge is creating  
12 mixed-income housing that spreads beyond just  
13 the areas where we have high concentrations  
14 of poverty. And that's where we think that  
15 there are tools that if we do it through the  
16 IDA and we tax-exempt it out of it, we're  
17 actually ultimately going to be coming to you  
18 and saying, We need even more AIM because  
19 we've lost the opportunity.

20 So we are doing it. We have a  
21 formula. We provide tax incentives through  
22 our IDA for these market-rate units. They  
23 wouldn't happen without PILOTs.

24 ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: Thank you,

1 Mayor. And I think that's exactly my point.  
2 I think there's a misconception of how IDAs  
3 work. It's not a tax exemption. You would  
4 actually --

5 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: No, understood.

6 ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: -- be  
7 spreading out the increase over many years.  
8 And as a builder, I know how valuable that  
9 could be. And the tool would be to try to  
10 sell this to your residents as a positive  
11 thing. So much bad press in the past --

12 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: (Mic off;  
13 inaudible.) -- virtually every housing  
14 project in the city. And I would encourage  
15 the Legislature to look very closely at any  
16 proposed legislation that weakens the ability  
17 of the IDAs to do more of this, because it's  
18 needed. Thank you.

19 ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: If I may  
20 ask the mayors -- and anyone could take this  
21 question also -- 10, 15 years ago our  
22 wonderful Governor Cuomo removed the aspect  
23 of doing retail through the IDAs. How did  
24 that affect your communities?

1           SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: I will say I  
2           think it's -- I previously served as the  
3           executive director of the Syracuse IDA. It  
4           presents a challenge. I think we all  
5           understand that, you know, we shouldn't be  
6           using an IDA to subsidize, you know, a  
7           corporate chain retail store that's going to  
8           go in there anyways. But using that but-for  
9           provision and doing your financial due  
10          diligence, ensuring that you're extracting a  
11          benefit from that public investment, I think  
12          as long as you apply the same tests, we  
13          should be more flexible in what types of  
14          projects we apply them to.

15                 ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: Thank you.

16                 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: (Mic off.)

17                 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Turn your mic --

18                 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: -- take -- can  
19          you hear me now?

20                 So you take this 10 percent or this  
21          20 percent, potentially, then you add project  
22          labor agreements, right? Now you go to the  
23          developers, they'll say, okay, you got  
24          project labor agreement, it will cost me 30

1           percent more whatever it costs for the  
2           affordable, and then they look at me  
3           cross-eyed and go, there is a tax incentive  
4           your IDA can give me that would make me want  
5           to build here. Right?

6                     And so -- and then we take it all on  
7           the chin, because we all do, because when  
8           people say, Oh, you know those mayors and  
9           their IDAs, they're giving away the store.

10                    No, we're not giving away anything.  
11           We're trying to find a sweet spot so that we  
12           can build the housing, bring people here. At  
13           the same time know that we have the police,  
14           fire and education, and we can't do it if we  
15           just give it away for free. So we're always  
16           trying to find that. And I think that every  
17           one of us does that.

18                    ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: Thank you  
19           very much. And my last question, I'm  
20           wondering if you all have local development  
21           corporations in your arsenal also.  
22           Non-for-profits can certainly benefit, and  
23           maybe they'd be drawn to your municipality if  
24           that was in place.

1 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Yes.

2 ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: I thank  
3 you, and I yield my other 14 seconds.

4 (Laughter.)

5 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Thanks,  
6 Assemblyman.

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. I  
8 think I'm the last Senator. Thank you all.

9 So yes, we all keep talking about AIM,  
10 we never get it. And for the record,  
11 New York City hasn't gotten it, I don't know,  
12 a decade now, maybe? So it is -- it's a real  
13 issue for everyone out there.

14 And yes, any innovative ideas of how  
15 we call it something new or market it as  
16 something new so we can finally get the  
17 Governor's attention, that would be very  
18 helpful.

19 But you were also answering the  
20 question, and I forget which of my colleagues  
21 asked you now, about using the state funds  
22 that are under I think about eight different  
23 categories for different kinds of housing.  
24 And she's now sort of -- you know, at first



1 have thought about that or might be willing  
2 to look at that in the context of us trying  
3 to help you be eligible for money that's  
4 there that you need, that you want to use the  
5 correct way, but for whatever reasons has not  
6 really jibed with what will work in your  
7 cities.

8 So it's more a suggestion of getting  
9 back to us, as opposed to you're going to  
10 automatically have that answer.

11 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Thank you,  
12 Senator.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Well, thank you.  
14 I think Assembly.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Yes.

16 Assemblymember Reilly, Cities ranker,  
17 for five minutes.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you,  
19 Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mayors.

20 I wanted to ask you about specifically  
21 grand larceny autos, car thefts. How is it  
22 impacting your cities? And I currently have  
23 legislation that would increase repeated  
24 offenders to make a crime of aggravated grand

1           larceny auto. What do the numbers look like  
2           in your cities? And do you see an increase  
3           in youth offenders, 16- and 17-year-olds?

4                    ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Well, I mean,  
5           sadly, I hate to say last year Rochester led  
6           the state in the number of auto thefts -- I  
7           think Buffalo was second.

8                    But one of the things that we did  
9           was -- the second half of the year we saw a  
10          precipitous drop. We worked with our county  
11          and youth court to make sure that we launched  
12          a program called the JEDS program, which  
13          targeted -- exactly as you're mentioning --  
14          youthful offenders to say if they are doing  
15          these things repeatedly, they have to do  
16          these things, they have to be monitored,  
17          sometimes on an ankle monitor. They have to  
18          go to school, they have to get counseling,  
19          they have to get those things.

20                   And we saw a major decrease in repeat  
21          offenders. But it caused mayhem and havoc.  
22          I mean, this "Kia boys" phenomenon was  
23          something that was big. I remember seeing  
24          Mayor Walsh last year: "Hey, did it come to

1 your city yet?" And he said "Not yet."

2 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: It has.

3 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: And now it  
4 has.

5 But now in Rochester we're seeing a  
6 precipitous decline because of the  
7 interventions that we put in working with the  
8 youthful -- the youthful offenders and really  
9 zeroing in on them. It's still an issue, but  
10 not as much of an issue as it was around this  
11 time -- the first six months of last year  
12 were absolutely bananas as it related to car  
13 thefts in our community. But luckily we're  
14 seeing a precipitous decrease now.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: I remember years  
16 ago when I was a sergeant in Brooklyn with  
17 the NYPD, and the key fob incident was the  
18 old Toyota Camry key was the one that they  
19 used to take.

20 On the same line, staying on crime,  
21 how is organized retail theft in your cities,  
22 if anybody would --

23 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: I'll weigh in  
24 on that one. It's been a real problem. I'm

1 really proud of the work that the Syracuse  
2 Police Department has done, in close  
3 cooperation with our Onondaga County district  
4 attorney, where we have reached out, we've  
5 run the numbers, we have identified the  
6 locations that have been hardest hit, and  
7 then have also identified the most frequent  
8 offenders and have really focused in on those  
9 repeat offenders, in partnership with some  
10 retailers -- I'll specifically give a shout  
11 out to Rite Aid, who we've worked closely  
12 with. We've been able to turn the tide. In  
13 those cases where we've been able to focus  
14 our efforts, we've been able to put some  
15 repeat offenders in jail. But it's a real  
16 problem. And again, it's a problem that  
17 disproportionately impacts our poorest  
18 communities that need these retail operations  
19 the most.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: And just to be  
21 clear, I know we're on the same page with  
22 this. This isn't targeting those that are  
23 stealing because of poverty. This is about  
24 the organized retail thefts to resell.

1 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: Absolutely.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: And I want to  
3 make sure that everybody knows that we're on  
4 the same page with that.

5 And I have legislation also for that,  
6 that would help be able to compile the  
7 charges if you have a previous conviction in  
8 organized retail theft.

9 (Overtalk.)

10 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: You know,  
11 Assemblyman, this is how bad it got. You  
12 would go into a -- let's say Marshall's on  
13 Central Avenue in Yonkers, take a bag, take  
14 the bag, walk out the door. I would have our  
15 crime units sitting outside because that's  
16 what we were doing, because we were trying to  
17 protect our retail.

18 And they would say to us, Well, if  
19 it's less than a thousand dollars, we're not  
20 prosecuting. And that word got out quick in  
21 the community, and there were people walking  
22 in and taking a thousand dollars of stuff and  
23 walking out the door. I wanted to do it.  
24 You know, but we --

1 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

2 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: But we were --

3 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: He says that  
4 jokingly.

5 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: -- able to get  
6 them -- I did say that jokingly.

7 (Laughter.)

8 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: But they did get  
9 that -- they did change, they worked with us.  
10 We also did some things which I'm sure that  
11 the mayor was talking about, which is if  
12 you're a repeat offender, you know, after we  
13 get you the first time, we get you to sign --  
14 you know, you have to sign a piece of paper  
15 saying you won't trespass. So it's a greater  
16 crime. And we then prosecute the person on  
17 the second time, and that has drastically  
18 reduced our numbers.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: So we spoke  
20 earlier with the mayor in New York City and  
21 we talked about the migrant and asylum-seeker  
22 issue. And no way am I trying to transition  
23 from crime to that. This is just  
24 specifically I'm asking, how is -- and if it

1 is -- the migrant crisis impacting your  
2 cities fiscally and what support do you need?

3 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: We've welcomed  
4 over 800 migrants from New York City, who  
5 have come in through New York City and are  
6 now in the City of Albany and in a couple of  
7 adjoining communities. And, you know, the  
8 challenge is work authorizations. You know,  
9 getting individuals the legal help that they  
10 need to get work authorizations as quickly as  
11 possible is a key to the success of these  
12 individuals in our communities.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you.

14 (Off the record.)

15 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Go right ahead.

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, thank you.

17 Senator May, chair, for her  
18 three-minute follow-up.

19 SENATOR MAY: Thank you so much.

20 I realized one of the things I was  
21 expecting to hear all of you talk about was  
22 lead service line replacement, and I didn't  
23 hear any of you talk about it --

24 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: I mentioned

1           it.

2                   SENATOR MAY: Did you mention it?

3                   ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Yeah, I talked  
4           about it.

5                   SENATOR MAY: Okay. How big a  
6           challenge is that for you? And do we need a  
7           separate funding stream for dealing with that  
8           challenge?

9                   ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Yeah, I  
10          mentioned it. I mean, our goal is to replace  
11          all of ours by 2030, I believe. And it's --  
12          you know, the capital stack is important.  
13          I'll put on my hat -- I was a banker back in  
14          the day. How do you fund it all? And we're  
15          piecing it together with -- we've used ARPA  
16          funds, we're going to go after federal  
17          dollars. The state has funded some of it.

18                   But it's just not enough to get to  
19          where you want to be to replace every -- (no  
20          audio) -- to get to that point. And I know  
21          Mayor Brown said the same thing as well.

22                   ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: Yeah, and one  
23          of the things that we haven't talked about is  
24          that there's a portion of this lead line, at

1 least in our city, that is privately owned.  
2 And so we need to ensure that there are grant  
3 sources available for residents who are  
4 required to pay the cost of the replacement  
5 of that line. We have some grant programs  
6 that are in place, but that is a huge piece  
7 of this, is that, you know, getting rid of  
8 our lead is only part of the equation. And  
9 we cannot burden particularly, you know,  
10 homeowners who are seniors, who are on a  
11 fixed income, you know, people who are living  
12 in apartments, with that cost.

13 And so it's important to look at not  
14 just what we need, but that private funding  
15 source for that part of the lead service that  
16 is privately owned.

17 BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: In Buffalo we're  
18 picking up that cost for the homeowner.

19 UNIDENTIFIED PANELIST: So are we.

20 SENATOR MAY: That's great.

21 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: It's a big cost.  
22 I mean, you talk about a system that's over  
23 200 years old. I have portions of southwest  
24 Yonkers that they have wood mains that are

1 still in operation.

2 (Overtalk.)

3 SENATOR MAY: There's still some of  
4 that in Syracuse.

5 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: When we start  
6 tearing the system up, it's a real problem  
7 for us.

8 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: The only thing  
9 I would add is that the bipartisan  
10 infrastructure law has been a significant  
11 boost in funding for that specific use.  
12 That's where we're getting our extra funding  
13 from. But it's still not enough.

14 SENATOR MAY: Okay, thanks.

15 And then I also wanted to mention I  
16 know the Mayor's Ball was a fundraiser for  
17 the Police Athletic League after-school  
18 programs in terms of both fighting crime,  
19 giving kids something to do after school.  
20 We're fighting for that in the Senate to make  
21 sure that there's funding for that. But I  
22 wanted to make sure you knew I see this as  
23 city issue that we really need to make sure  
24 we are providing funding for.

1 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: Great. Thank  
2 you, Senator.

3 SENATOR MAY: Yup.

4 All right, thank you.

5 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember  
7 Braunstein, Cities chair, for 10 minutes.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you.  
9 Hopefully I don't use all of the 10 minutes.

10 And thank you, all of you, for joining  
11 us again this year.

12 I'm just going to follow up on what my  
13 colleague said he was starting to ask about  
14 the asylum-seekers. We heard the mayor of  
15 the City of New York this morning, he says  
16 the city is caring for 66,000 asylum-seekers  
17 right now. If you could just go through --  
18 we'll start with Mayor Sheehan -- how many  
19 asylum-seekers is your city caring for?

20 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: So as I said,  
21 in the City of Albany we have 800 of those  
22 asylum-seekers. So through that funding that  
23 is being provided to New York City, that  
24 funding is then paying for individuals to be

1 staying in our community because of the space  
2 constraints that exist in New York City.

3 We also have a number of volunteer  
4 organizations that are then working with  
5 those individuals, providing legal services  
6 and ensuring that they are getting the  
7 assistance that they need if they're seeking  
8 asylum, if they have parole status.

9 You know, many of these individuals  
10 are coming to us, they don't even know their  
11 status. So, you know, this is an issue  
12 that -- you know, we've spoken to folks at  
13 the federal level, there is so much more that  
14 needs to be done to streamline these  
15 issues and create a pathway for these  
16 individuals. Overwhelmingly they want to  
17 work, overwhelmingly they're looking for a  
18 new home. And we need a workforce, but the  
19 challenge for us is finding enough people --  
20 even if we had the funding, finding enough  
21 people who are qualified to represent them to  
22 get them to that point where they get that  
23 work authorization is what we're finding to  
24 be the largest hurdle.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay.

2 Mayor Brown?

3 BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: We have a  
4 limited number of migrants, if you will, in  
5 the City of Buffalo.

6 There are migrants in some of the  
7 surrounding suburban communities -- Amherst,  
8 Cheektowaga -- and they have expressed  
9 concern about the cost of those individuals  
10 being in those suburban communities,  
11 particularly the cost of providing education  
12 for the children.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Mayor Walsh?

14 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: In Syracuse,  
15 Onondaga County is currently in litigation  
16 with New York City, so there has not been any  
17 formal asylum-seeker relocations to  
18 Onondaga County. I'm sure we have some  
19 within the community, but none that we're  
20 formally aware of.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Mayor Evans?

22 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: And in  
23 Monroe County we've taken a couple of hundred  
24 asylum-seekers from New York City. You know,

1 Rochester has a large refugee resettlement  
2 organization in Rochester, and we've been  
3 able to take the number we have at a  
4 controlled pace.

5 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: In Yonkers we  
6 have one hotel capable of taking a hundred  
7 families. I believe it's full.

8 My -- you know, in Yonkers we have not  
9 had any issues with the migrants,  
10 asylum-seekers, whichever word you want to  
11 use. My bone of contention has been that,  
12 you know, New York City kind of sprung this  
13 on us without any plan, without any funding.

14 And when you're talking -- if you take  
15 40 or 50 kids that could come out of this one  
16 hotel, it can be a real budget-buster for our  
17 board of education. From what I understand,  
18 we probably have about 20 students, so it's  
19 not that bad. I think we probably have more,  
20 let's say -- I would say undocumented that  
21 are in the system that we're dealing with as  
22 well. So ...

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. Thank  
24 you.

1                   And then just one more question for  
2                   Mayor Brown. You had said earlier -- you  
3                   know, you were referencing the inequitable  
4                   funding formula. You're referring to AIM?  
5                   You feel that as AIM applies to cities versus  
6                   counties that you feel maybe it should be  
7                   more need-based?

8                   BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: No, I wasn't  
9                   solely referring to AIM, I was referring to  
10                  the county sales tax distribution formula.  
11                  An additional percentage was added that did  
12                  not follow the original formula that we  
13                  believe put the city at a disadvantage.

14                  So if the original formula had been  
15                  followed from 1986 to 2022, that would have  
16                  meant an additional \$1.2 billion coming to  
17                  the City of Buffalo. So that additional  
18                  percentage that was added that was supposed  
19                  to be temporary to help Erie County out of a  
20                  financial --

21                  ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: What year was  
22                  that?

23                  BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: 1985. It was  
24                  implemented to help the county out of a

1 financial crisis. It was supposed to be  
2 temporary. It hasn't been temporary. And  
3 the formula has not been adjusted to reflect  
4 the needs of the City of Buffalo and other  
5 municipalities.

6 I think that formula has to be fixed  
7 and would certainly like the state to help do  
8 that, because the local county government  
9 itself is not going to do it. I think it's  
10 going to require the state to do it.

11 And there are many other examples in  
12 Erie County of financial inequity between the  
13 county and the city in the way things are  
14 funded and the way they are allowed to be  
15 funded under state law.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. Yeah,  
17 I just wanted you to expand on that. And,  
18 you know, we'll follow up offline just to get  
19 more details about what you're talking about,  
20 see if we can help you with that.

21 BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: Thank you.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Senator Rhoads.

24 SENATOR RHOADS: Thank you so much,

1 Chair Thiele. I doubt that I'll take the  
2 full five minutes.

3 I know that you gave answers with  
4 respect to the migrant crisis and how they're  
5 impacting your individual jurisdictions. Out  
6 of curiosity, of the five mayors that are  
7 here, did any of you declare yourselves to be  
8 sanctuary cities?

9 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: We are a  
10 sanctuary city. Which simply means that our  
11 police department will not inquire as to  
12 legal status unless it is central to an  
13 investigation that they're conducting.

14 It is part of the chief of police --  
15 the International Chief of Police's  
16 recommendations for police policy. We don't  
17 want people to be afraid to call the police  
18 because they're worried that they'll be asked  
19 about their immigration status.

20 SENATOR RHOADS: Sure. But if there's  
21 any kind of criminal activity, there's no bar  
22 to your police department actually  
23 communicating with Immigration and Customs  
24 Enforcement at that point.

1           ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: I mean, it's  
2 pretty rare that that happens. But if it is  
3 central to the investigation, then clearly we  
4 work with our partners in state and federal  
5 government to ensure that we're enforcing the  
6 law.

7           SENATOR RHOADS: Okay. Thank you for  
8 that answer.

9           And I know that some of you are  
10 dealing with -- and I believe in the City of  
11 Albany you said you had 800, if I'm not  
12 mistaken, migrants that are there. And I  
13 know a few of you mentioned a few different  
14 numbers.

15           In advance of receiving those  
16 migrants, was there any communication from  
17 the City of New York to let you know that  
18 they would be coming?

19           ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: There was some  
20 limited communication. The first buses  
21 arrived Memorial Day weekend, so it was a bit  
22 of a challenge. But we have a number of  
23 community-based organizations that I had  
24 already pulled together months in advance, in

1 anticipation of what we saw happening across  
2 the country with migrants just being dropped  
3 off, human beings being put on buses and  
4 dropped off in distant cities.

5 So we had pulled together our  
6 community-based organizations that work in  
7 this space. We're also a refugee  
8 resettlement city. Albany Law School has an  
9 Immigration Law Clinic, so we had as best we  
10 could be prepared to and looked at what we  
11 would do were we to be receiving  
12 asylum-seekers in our city.

13 That work really has not been funded,  
14 and that is one of the frustrations that we  
15 have. We think that we have people who are  
16 able to help, willing to help, but the  
17 funding is very -- you know, certain agencies  
18 get some funding and other agencies have not.

19 And so that's been -- I will say it's  
20 been a frustration. We're frustrated that  
21 there is not an immigration court in the City  
22 of Albany. So when somebody comes to the  
23 City of Albany from New York City, their case  
24 has to get transferred to Buffalo. Getting

1 from Albany to Buffalo is expensive.

2 There are a lot of barriers that have  
3 been put in place, I think unnecessarily,  
4 that are preventing people from being able to  
5 get their work authorizations, move forward  
6 through the system, and be able to work.  
7 Because if you can get a job here, we can  
8 help you find housing. If you have an income  
9 source and you're paying taxes, then it  
10 becomes a very different experience for the  
11 families that are seeking to come here.

12 SENATOR RHOADS: And with limited  
13 time -- I didn't want to cut off the ability  
14 of the other mayors to answer that question,  
15 but --

16 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Yeah, I'll --  
17 two things. We found out about the  
18 asylum-seekers -- I found out from my police  
19 department because they I guess communicated  
20 with NYPD. And then of course after I  
21 inquired I found that they'd be coming  
22 probably within a day after that.

23 And as far as -- we're not a sanctuary  
24 city, but we had changed our policies and

1 regulations. Our police department, our  
2 police forces know that they are there to  
3 serve and protect everyone irregardless of  
4 their immigration status. It's not a  
5 question they ask unless of course it's an  
6 investigation that deals with that.

7 SENATOR RHOADS: The relevant  
8 question, though, in terms of you and your  
9 own budgets is the fact that while the City  
10 of New York received a billion dollars in  
11 funding last year and through the budget is  
12 seeking an additional -- well, seeking  
13 2.4 billion total as part of this year's  
14 budget, have you received any funding from  
15 the City of New York to compensate you for --

16 (Overtalk.)

17 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: I like to  
18 talk -- you know, we have -- and Senator,  
19 that's such a good question. That was my  
20 bone of contention, which was, you know, you  
21 come here without a plan and then there's no  
22 additional dollars that are being associated  
23 with this to help us. All right? And so --  
24 you know, in terms of whatever comes our way.

1                   SENATOR RHOADS: The city's dropping  
2 these individuals on your doorstep and is not  
3 giving you --

4                   YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Well, you know,  
5 we have a sales tax and we have a hotel  
6 occupancy tax. New York City uses their  
7 loophole, they use that exemption not to pay  
8 the local government. So we've lost tens of  
9 thousands of dollars just on the hotel  
10 occupancy taxes. So they're paying the bill,  
11 but they're not paying the local government  
12 at least that. And --

13                   SENATOR RHOADS: That's just housing.  
14 The other resources --

15                   (Overtalk.)

16                   YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Yeah. Just the  
17 taxes that they owe us, we don't get.

18                   SENATOR RHOADS: But education, social  
19 services, those are all being borne by your  
20 taxpayers.

21                   YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Are being borne  
22 by us and the county.

23                   SENATOR RHOADS: Can you estimate what  
24 the cost has been?

1           YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: I don't know. I  
2 can get back to you, though, Senator.

3           SENATOR RHOADS: Okay. I was going to  
4 ask you a question about unfunded mandates  
5 from the state. I've got seven seconds left.  
6 If you wouldn't mind getting back to me on  
7 that issue, I would appreciate it.

8           Thank you.

9           ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

10          Assemblymember Jacobson for three  
11 minutes.

12          ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Good afternoon.

13                 I'd like to follow up about the  
14 lead-contaminated lines. I mean, that's all  
15 over the state. Because most of the cities  
16 have state of the art -- unfortunately, the  
17 state of the art was about 1890. And so we  
18 have lead there.

19                 And this year also, in the budget, the  
20 Clean Water Infrastructure Act funds got cut  
21 in half. We were getting, since 2019,  
22 \$500 million a year. It's now cut to 250 a  
23 year. And what I'm proposing is that not  
24 only do we restore that, but add an extra

1           100 million for lead line replacement so  
2           there'd be a line item in the budget, which  
3           would make it easier.

4                     Because right now all the state  
5           programs are piecemeal, right? You get about  
6           \$10,000 a line, and you get it done. And  
7           it's so expensive to do it that way that if  
8           you can do neighborhoods together in one  
9           shot, you can really bring the cost down. I  
10          know in Troy, after doing nothing for years,  
11          they did it that way.

12                    And I just want to know, have you  
13          been -- any of you been able to do  
14          neighborhoods in one shot and how it reduced  
15          the cost?

16                    ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Yeah. I mean,  
17          we absolutely -- we only do neighborhoods in  
18          one shot. We don't do a scattershot, we pick  
19          areas of the city and then we do those areas.  
20          And that has been very successful for us.

21                    But again, the overall cost is just  
22          astronomical. And in order to really meet  
23          this 2030 date that I put out there, I mean,  
24          putting that out there, we -- it's just going

1 to cost more money.

2 But yeah, we do neighborhood by  
3 neighborhood in order to -- it makes it also  
4 more efficient and allows us to do what we  
5 need to do on it in the neighborhood and then  
6 move to the next one. So we do it quadrant  
7 by quadrant.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: What's your  
9 average cost?

10 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: I don't know  
11 the average cost off the top of my head, but  
12 we can get back to you on that.

13 BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: Buffalo does it  
14 by need. So when a lead service line breaks,  
15 we replace it. We've replaced I think over  
16 3,000 broken lead service lines across the  
17 city. It's estimated we have another 40,000  
18 and that that would cost us about half a  
19 billion dollars.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: About 12,000  
21 each, yeah.

22 And let me ask you this. One of the  
23 problems of all small cities and villages,  
24 when you want to repair the streets -- and

1 this is someone who has been on the Newburgh  
2 City Council, and I ran on -- with signs that  
3 said "Let's fix all the streets" -- is the  
4 cost of ADA compliance. That's more than the  
5 paving.

6 And I would like to set up a separate  
7 CHIPS fund for that. How much does the ADA  
8 compliance -- when you do it, compare to the  
9 cost of paving?

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And you'll have  
11 to get back to him following, because he used  
12 up his time. Sorry.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Thank you,  
14 Senator.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember  
16 González-Rojas, three minutes.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Thank  
18 you all for being here.

19 Specifically for Mayor Brown, Mayor  
20 Evans and Mayor Walsh, I know that your  
21 cities face high rates of poverty and food  
22 insecurity, and I'm working with members  
23 statewide -- I represent Queens, but working  
24 with members statewide to address some of

1           that, and specifically looking at universal  
2           school meals so that every child has a free  
3           breakfast and free lunch, as well as  
4           increasing the SNAP benefit for individuals.

5                     Right now the minimum SNAP benefit is  
6           \$23 a month. So as we all know, the price of  
7           eggs, you know, you can get a few dozen eggs  
8           with that \$23, and that's about it. And we  
9           want to increase that to \$100 a month.  
10          New Jersey did it.

11                    So I would just love to hear from you  
12          about how these food security proposals would  
13          fare for your districts and your communities,  
14          and what else needs to be done to address  
15          poverty and food insecurity.

16                    BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: Just very  
17          quickly, Senator, I think your proposal is a  
18          sound one. We know that in the City of  
19          Buffalo the bulk of households in poverty are  
20          single female head of households, and we have  
21          a very large percentage of children living in  
22          households in poverty.

23                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Thank  
24          you.

1            ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Yeah, and that  
2            proposal I think will go a long way not only  
3            just in the City of Rochester, where you have  
4            childhood poverty, but throughout the state.

5            I'm a member of an alliance, Mayors  
6            Against Childhood Hunger, and, I mean, these  
7            are the type of innovative things that we  
8            need to be able to take care of.

9            Students do better in school when  
10           they're able to eat. And it's a major issue  
11           that many of us take for granted, but  
12           absolutely critical. And we absolutely  
13           should be doing universal meals. It works.  
14           I was a member of the school board and at one  
15           point, because people were embarrassed to  
16           hand in the form, we said, You know what  
17           we're going to do, we're going to make it  
18           universal for everyone. You don't have to  
19           hand in the form. You don't want to eat it,  
20           fine, but you have it for everyone.

21           Those are the types of things that we  
22           should do, and it's just common sense in my  
23           book.

24           SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: I would agree

1 with both my colleagues here. Certainly  
2 supportive of the proposal.

3 One additional note is just the  
4 challenge that we have in I would guess all  
5 of our cities relative to food deserts and  
6 the model of grocery store is not fitting  
7 into our communities. It's really hard to  
8 attract traditional grocery stores to many of  
9 our neighborhoods, and that's what our  
10 neighborhoods are crying out for, is walkable  
11 access to healthy, affordable groceries.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Thank  
13 you so much.

14 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: It's important  
15 to us too. I mean it really is. We thought  
16 it was so important that even now New York  
17 State fully funds it with federal funds, but  
18 we went out and funded it ourselves, just to  
19 make sure it happened.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS:  
21 Exactly. Well, we're committed to supporting  
22 you all. Thank you so much.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

24 And I have just a few questions.

1           First of all, not to beat AIM to  
2 death, but, you know, you heard me yesterday  
3 at NYCOM. Certainly we are committed to  
4 working with you on whatever it might take,  
5 or if we need to vary -- you know, come up  
6 with some changes or something that might  
7 entice the Governor to provide increased  
8 funding through AIM. So we certainly look  
9 forward to working with you on that.

10           Other than that, just a couple of  
11 questions. Mayor Brown, you had talked about  
12 city/county and the sales tax in Buffalo. I  
13 was just curious, from the other mayors, is  
14 that unique to Buffalo? Or is that something  
15 other cities are dealing with also?

16           BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: I think the way  
17 the tax structure has evolved city to city in  
18 the state is different. I think it is unique  
19 to Buffalo. Syracuse has a greater share of  
20 its county sales tax than Buffalo does.  
21 Rochester has a greater share of its county  
22 sales tax than Buffalo does.

23           I think the formula doesn't work any  
24 longer. The formula was changed in 1985 to

1 address a fiscal crisis that the county was  
2 having, and it was never rationalized after  
3 that. And Buffalo, which is the city that  
4 has the greatest poverty, the greatest  
5 affordable housing, the greatest number of  
6 new Americans, is being shortchanged in an  
7 inequitable funding situation.

8 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: Can I just --  
9 on the AIM --

10 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Yes.

11 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: To put it in  
12 context, one of the reasons we're hesitant to  
13 give you a number is we don't want to give  
14 you sticker shock.

15 (Laughter.)

16 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: But if AIM had  
17 kept pace with inflation, it would be up  
18 32 percent from where it is now. And so, you  
19 know, we have talked about 10 percent a year  
20 over three years, you know, a way of catching  
21 us up over time. You know, we understand  
22 that you have difficult decisions to make and  
23 lots of things that need to be funded. But I  
24 think that's why we've been bashful.

1                   But 32 percent would be my number.

2                   ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Yeah, that is the  
3                   approach I think we took with -- I don't know  
4                   if it was last year or the year before with  
5                   the one-house was, you know, what would be  
6                   the adjustment just for the cost of living.  
7                   It is a substantial number.

8                   ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: It's a big  
9                   number.

10                  YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Assemblyman,  
11                  just an even -- kind of easier point for us  
12                  to swallow, right, is Governor Cuomo when he  
13                  was here, right, he bragged about he'd only  
14                  allow state spending to go up 2 percent.  
15                  Right? And AIM aid is part of state  
16                  spending. It stayed flat, stayed at zero.  
17                  So he took that 2 percent and spent it on  
18                  something else, whatever.

19                  And if we just got 2 percent that we  
20                  should have gotten every year as part of the  
21                  state policy that was enacted here, yeah, we  
22                  would have gotten another almost 25 million?  
23                  Yeah, 25 million. And a year, to that.

24                  ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: And I think

1 even when you think about 2 percent or  
2 whatever the dollars might be, the dollars  
3 might seem small but the impact to our cities  
4 are monumental. I mean, it just can't be  
5 understated what those dollars would be able  
6 to do for all of the things that we just  
7 mentioned for sure.

8 BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: The crack  
9 researchers on my staff say that New York  
10 State has provided municipalities some sort  
11 of revenue sharing since 1789. That hasn't  
12 happened since 2012.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Who was the  
14 Governor?

15 (Laughter.)

16 BUFFALO MAYOR BROWN: They didn't give  
17 me that name.

18 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: And it's been  
19 longer for many of us, Mayor Brown.

20 (Laughter; overtalk.)

21 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: I kidded in our  
22 majority conference that AIM hadn't been  
23 increased since the Coolidge administration.  
24 You're actually going back a little further

1 than that.

2 (Laughter.)

3 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: So just two  
4 different topics, if I could get a response.  
5 I mean, this was talked a little bit about at  
6 NYCOM yesterday, and that is Tier VI, which  
7 is a double-edged sword for you. The need to  
8 try to recruit and retain staffing is  
9 something that I think all levels of  
10 government are dealing with, and certainly  
11 the pension system is part of that. Of  
12 course any increase in cost of the pension  
13 system you are -- there's an employer  
14 contribution you have to be mindful of.

15 So how do you balance that, and what  
16 are your thoughts with regard to Tier VI and  
17 possible reform?

18 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: You know, the  
19 whole idea of these pensions, right, have all  
20 been based around what was happening  
21 economically -- Tier I, II, III, IV, V, VI.  
22 Right? So now we're at VI because of what  
23 was happening to us with Tier IV and the  
24 costs that were borne to us.

1                   And so I will tell you that Tier VI  
2                   has been -- has been saving at least my city  
3                   a lot of money. But I will also tell you  
4                   that my labor leaders aren't super thrilled  
5                   about it either. So I'm going to stop short  
6                   of endorsing it but say that it does provide  
7                   us with some savings. And, you know, maybe  
8                   it should be looked at sometime in the  
9                   future, but right now it is helping stem the  
10                  tide of the bleeding.

11                  ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: Well, we'd like  
12                  to see what the projections would look like.  
13                  We want to be part of the conversation. It  
14                  is -- we are having difficulty recruiting.  
15                  Tier VI is less competitive than what a lot  
16                  of private-sector employers require. I think  
17                  where we got ourselves in trouble in the past  
18                  was doing away for the lower tiers with the  
19                  contributions that were supposed to continue  
20                  throughout an employee's lifetime. I think  
21                  if we can agree that having the employee  
22                  continue to contribute that 3 percent or, you  
23                  know, whatever that is, that has been a huge  
24                  help. And so we could look at Tier VI

1 through that lens and ensure that we're able  
2 to be competitive in hiring people.

3 But we'd really love to see from the  
4 Comptroller's standpoint and from the  
5 standpoint -- you know, we're the ones that  
6 get the bill. So, you know, what are the  
7 projections of what that's going to look  
8 like. But we recognize we do have to be  
9 competitive in order to attract workforce.  
10 And we're not with Tier VI, I will say that.  
11 That's the -- what we're getting from people  
12 that we're trying to hire and the -- that's  
13 the input that we're getting, is that it's  
14 not competitive.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: And I have just  
16 one more subject area, the Open Meetings Law.  
17 The Open Meetings Law we have now, coming out  
18 of the pandemic we modified the Open Meetings  
19 Law to allow hybrid meetings, to allow the  
20 public to participate remotely, under certain  
21 circumstances to allow the public officials  
22 and public bodies to participate remotely.  
23 That expires. The Governor has proposed  
24 extending it I think as is. I don't think

1 she's proposing any changes.

2 Just your thoughts on that extender,  
3 whether there should be -- you know, in your  
4 implementation of this are there things you  
5 would like to see changed? Is it fine the  
6 way it is? Any suggestions with regard to  
7 that? (Pause.)

8 Don't all go at once.

9 (Laughter.)

10 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: I'm always going  
11 to get myself in trouble. Honestly, you  
12 know, COVID is over, we can go back to work.  
13 For me, it's not an issue.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: I'll leave it at  
15 that. Thank you very much.

16 (Laughter.)

17 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: That is our last  
18 question. So we're done. First of all, I  
19 want to thank you all for your testimony and  
20 for being here today.

21 You know, as a former town supervisor,  
22 I think you have the most difficult job in  
23 all of government. The way I used to  
24 describe being town supervisor when I was

1           there was that when I would go to the grocery  
2           store, the list I came out with was always  
3           longer than the list I went in with. So we  
4           appreciate all the great work you do on the  
5           frontlines, and we look forward to working  
6           with you to come up with a good budget.

7                         So thank you so much.

8                         CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Exactly the same  
9           from the Senate. Thank you very much.

10                        Next panel, we're calling up the  
11           New York City Comptroller Brad Lander, and  
12           the New York City Council Speaker Adrienne  
13           Adams.

14                        And we're asking everyone to take  
15           their conversations with the five mayors out  
16           in one hall or the other.

17                        (Off the record.)

18                        CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: If everyone can  
19           take their conversations out in the hall. We  
20           don't want you to not talk to each other,  
21           just take it out to the hall to talk to each  
22           other.

23                        Do we need more chairs at the table?  
24           You're okay? Okay.

1                   Good afternoon. I just wanted to  
2 point out that I just got an alert that our  
3 friend Jumaane has couped everyone, since the  
4 Adams administration and the City Council and  
5 the Comptroller are here in Albany. So you  
6 have nowhere to go home. Sorry.

7                   (Laughter.)

8                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: That's only a  
9 New York City joke. Everyone else is going,  
10 what is she saying? So never mind.

11                   It's the Assembly's day to run the  
12 hearings. I'd better let him do it.

13                   ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Well, I live  
14 close enough to get the joke, unfortunately.

15                   {No audio} -- New York City  
16 comptroller. You want to fight over it,  
17 that's fine with me, too. Flip a coin,  
18 whatever you'd like to do. You just happen  
19 to be first on the list here, that's all.

20                   NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Good  
21 afternoon, Chair Thiele, Chair Krueger,  
22 members of the committee. Thank you so much  
23 for the opportunity to testify today to  
24 discuss the New York State Executive Budget

1 for fiscal year 2025, especially as it  
2 pertains to the City of New York.

3 First, the good news. The city  
4 continues its economic rebound. Jobs have  
5 recovered to pre-pandemic levels, inflation  
6 has moderated, and there's reason to be  
7 optimistic that the economy will see the soft  
8 landing that few economists believed likely a  
9 year or two ago. And fiscally, revenues have  
10 consistently come in above plan, and the  
11 outlook has improved since the Governor's  
12 midyear update and the city's November plan.

13 But of course significant challenges  
14 remain. Jobs are growing faster in  
15 lower-wage industries than higher ones.  
16 Housing affordability threatens the stability  
17 of families and discourages businesses from  
18 locating in the city. City expenses,  
19 including areas including uniformed overtime,  
20 Carter cases, and shelter for asylum-seekers  
21 are growing faster than revenues. Federal  
22 pandemic stimulus is expiring and, as a  
23 result, budget gaps increase in each  
24 subsequent outyear.

1           And we have many challenges as well  
2 building and maintaining the critical public  
3 infrastructure that we need -- our public  
4 schools, housing, transit, parks, hospitals  
5 and more -- especially in the face of aging  
6 infrastructure and more frequent climate  
7 disasters.

8           So as we work through the current  
9 budget cycle, I'll be pushing for stronger  
10 management from City Hall to help close  
11 outyear budget gaps without cuts to essential  
12 services, to address the affordability  
13 crisis, and to set New York City on a strong  
14 economic footing for the years ahead.

15           We do need help from the State  
16 Legislature by restoring funding reductions  
17 made in Foundation Aid and sales tax  
18 intercept; providing additional support  
19 focused on helping asylum-seekers obtain work  
20 authorization and jobs so they can move out  
21 of shelter; a thoughtful approach to  
22 increasing the city's debt limit; and  
23 especially reaching a deal on housing to  
24 address the affordability crisis.

1           I'll begin by talking about the work  
2           welcoming asylum-seekers, as you've been  
3           discussing.

4           New York City has received over  
5           170,000 asylum-seekers. It's worth noting  
6           that during the pandemic we lost nearly half  
7           a million residents. So that is folks who  
8           are there to help do a lot of the jobs that  
9           New Yorkers need done in childcare, in home  
10          care, in construction, in restaurants. If we  
11          can help people get to work, they will  
12          continue to help drive our flourishing  
13          economy, as immigrants have done in New York  
14          City since Dutch refugees fled religious  
15          persecution and Irish and Italian immigrants  
16          fled hunger and Jews and Dominicans and  
17          Chinese folks all made their way to make  
18          New York City the greatest immigrant city  
19          that the world has ever seen.

20          And what we can do, rather than  
21          shutting our doors, is help that tradition  
22          continue to make sure people can get on their  
23          feet. To do that, we do need help and  
24          support. Of course we're going to keep

1 pushing for federal aid, but we know that not  
2 a lot more is coming, given this Congress.

3 It is fair that the city and the state  
4 would split the costs of meeting the goals of  
5 the city's -- the federal obligation to  
6 provide the state's opportunity to seek  
7 asylum. And it's worth remembering that the  
8 right to shelter is grounded in the State  
9 Constitution. The work that the city is  
10 doing is on behalf of the Constitution of the  
11 State of New York.

12 I am grateful that the state is  
13 investing the money for legal services that  
14 are helping new arrivals file their asylum  
15 applications, gain temporary protective  
16 status, and get work authorization that helps  
17 people move out of shelter and get on their  
18 feet.

19 We've actually helped several thousand  
20 folks move through those systems with state  
21 resources in city clinics co-operated with  
22 the federal government. I hope you'll come  
23 see it sometime. It's actually something  
24 that we should be doing a lot more of.

1           And we'd like to see the city actually  
2           emphasize that work even more strongly. I  
3           was struck by what Mayor Sheehan said about  
4           being eager to get people who have work  
5           authorization. The program that we'd like to  
6           have would use those resources together, help  
7           folks get that work authorization, and then I  
8           hope they would be welcomed in cities all  
9           across the state.

10           I also urge the Legislature to pass  
11           the Access to Representation Act, which will  
12           make sure that legal services are available  
13           to people throughout that process.

14           Probably I think the most important  
15           business I hope you will do this year is  
16           confronting the housing affordability crisis.  
17           Last year a deal eluded the Governor and the  
18           Legislature, and I really hope this year will  
19           be different. We need more housing  
20           production, stronger tenant protections and  
21           more housing vouchers.

22           First, such a deal should facilitate  
23           the creation of new housing across income  
24           levels, with a strong emphasis on

1           affordability. That will require a new  
2           approach to taxing multifamily housing  
3           development to replace the 421-a program.

4           My office has offered up a  
5           framework to reform the taxation of  
6           multifamily housing development, starting  
7           with tax parity between rentals and condos,  
8           with a better approach to matching costs and  
9           benefits in order to create truly affordable  
10          rental and cooperative rental and  
11          homeownership housing, including a  
12          21st-century reboot of the Mitchell-Lama  
13          program.

14          A comprehensive strategy for growth  
15          would include office to residential  
16          conversions, a path to basement apartment  
17          legalization, and regional growth targets  
18          grounded in fairness and aligned with  
19          planning and infrastructure investments.

20          The second component of the deal we  
21          need is protecting tenants from displacement  
22          with good-cause eviction protections.

23          And third should be the creation and  
24          funding of the Housing Access Voucher

1 Program. We urgently need those vouchers to  
2 help homeless families who have long been  
3 stuck in shelter, and to help the most  
4 vulnerable, including some folks like in  
5 those New York Times articles on homeless  
6 mentally ill New Yorkers who are a danger to  
7 themselves and to others to get off the  
8 street in ways that would increase their  
9 safety and their neighbors' safety.

10 Finally, some New York City subsidized  
11 affordable housing stock is at risk due to a  
12 combination of unaddressed rent arrears  
13 accumulated during the pandemic and rising  
14 costs. The state should provide \$250 million  
15 in emergency affordable housing preservation  
16 funds with priority for the most vulnerable  
17 portfolios, to put these buildings back on  
18 sound financial footing.

19 I was encouraged to see in the  
20 Governor's budget resources to strengthen our  
21 mental health infrastructure. We need those  
22 investments to provide the services necessary  
23 to keep people healthy and safe. The state  
24 should increase the Medicaid payment rate to

1 cover the full cost of hospital care,  
2 particularly for inpatient psychiatric beds,  
3 which are still not at pre-pandemic levels.

4 And I urge the Legislature to pass the  
5 Home Care Savings and Reinvestment Act to  
6 bring home care back under the direct  
7 management of the state and out from under  
8 costly for-profit managed care companies.

9 I ask the Legislature to continue to  
10 consider passing Senator Ramos and  
11 Assemblymember Reyes's Workplace  
12 Accountability and Greater Enforcement -- or  
13 WAGE -- Act, which would expand local labor  
14 enforcement in New York City to combat wage  
15 theft, retaliation against workers, and other  
16 violations of New York State labor law by  
17 strengthening the existing workers' rights  
18 enforcement authority of the Comptroller's  
19 office to complement the enforcement efforts  
20 of our government partners.

21 You may have seen Comptroller  
22 DiNapoli's audit out just this week which  
23 highlights some of the challenges of labor  
24 investigations in New York City. And we'd be

1 very happy to be able to step up and  
2 complement that enforcement if that  
3 legislation passes.

4 On education, while we're very  
5 grateful -- and I really mean this -- to the  
6 legislators for increases in the  
7 Foundation Aid in recent years -- that was  
8 really critical -- this year's budget would  
9 decrease that expected aid by \$130 million by  
10 lengthening the reference period for  
11 inflation adjustment after the spike in  
12 prices we experienced over the past two  
13 years.

14 With federal COVID aid -- especially  
15 for our schools -- expiring, I hope the state  
16 will consider adding funding to help  
17 localities preserve some of the great  
18 programs we started, like Summer Rising and  
19 3-K and student mental health programs,  
20 rather than take it away.

21 At the higher education level, while  
22 the Legislature has invested more in SUNY,  
23 I'm sad to say that CUNY has consistently  
24 faced cuts at the city level. That is not

1 the State Legislature's fault, but there is  
2 something that you could do to help us.  
3 While CUNY faces cut after cut, two of the  
4 city's largest private owners of real estate,  
5 Columbia and NYU, continue to benefit from  
6 property tax exemptions, \$342 million in  
7 FY '24 alone. The CUNY Repair Act,  
8 introduced by Senator Liu and Assemblymember  
9 Mamdani, would help remedy that inequity.  
10 Private universities would pay something more  
11 like their fair share so CUNY could thrive as  
12 one of the greatest engines of upward social  
13 mobility we have anywhere.

14 If there's a common theme that ties  
15 all of those items together, it's that we  
16 need to combine strong fiscal management with  
17 wise public policy so we can avoid steep  
18 cuts, balance our budgets, and invest in the  
19 infrastructure to ensure a thriving, diverse  
20 city. I'll be pushing aggressively through  
21 the city budget process to make that a  
22 reality, but the state also has a part to  
23 play to help pave the road to that future.

24 So we ask, first, treat New York City

1           fairly and on par with other localities in  
2           the state. I mentioned already  
3           Foundation Aid, but also the extension of the  
4           sales tax intercept for distressed hospitals  
5           only in New York City reduces our revenue by  
6           \$150 million each year for three more years,  
7           even as we have rising budget gaps.

8                     And we're still the only school  
9           district in the state that doesn't receive  
10          transitional charter school aid.

11                    The last issue that I have, I'm happy  
12          to do in response to a question, Chair, about  
13          the capital debt limit.

14                    And I will turn it over to the  
15          Speaker.

16                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

17                    ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

18                    NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Thank you  
19          very much.

20                    ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Speaker Adams.

21                    NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you  
22          so much.

23                    Good afternoon, Chair Krueger, Chair  
24          Thiele, Ranking Minority Members O'Mara and

1 Ra, and all members of the Senate Finance and  
2 Assembly Ways and Means committees, and  
3 Assembly Cities Committee. And a special  
4 greeting to all of my colleagues from Queens  
5 today. Great to see you.

6 I am New York City Council Speaker  
7 Adrienne Adams, and I thank you so much for  
8 providing me the opportunity to discuss the  
9 Governor's Executive Budget for state  
10 fiscal year 2025 and its potential impact on  
11 New York City. I would also like to thank  
12 Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and  
13 Assembly Speaker Heastie.

14 I have submitted my full written  
15 testimony with a more complete set of  
16 priorities. In my oral testimony, though, I  
17 will touch upon a select few.

18 Our governments share the goal to  
19 improve the lives of New Yorkers. One way we  
20 must do this is by building more housing,  
21 especially homes that are affordable to a  
22 range of New Yorkers. Housing is key to the  
23 safety and stability of our city, and  
24 confronting our housing crisis is one of the

1 top priorities we must address together.

2 The Governor's Executive Budget  
3 includes several welcome and important  
4 policies intended to increase housing  
5 production in our city and around the state,  
6 including legislation to eliminate the  
7 required floor-to-area ratio that's  
8 restricted housing development in key parts  
9 of New York City. Legislation to enable the  
10 conversion of commercial buildings to  
11 housing, accompanied by the financial  
12 incentives that facilitate these conversions  
13 for the creation of affordable housing, is  
14 also critical.

15 It is vital that state funding and a  
16 new financial incentive program for  
17 affordable housing production throughout our  
18 city are put into place this session to  
19 remove the barriers to housing development,  
20 in conjunction with tenant protections as  
21 part of our efforts to confront the housing  
22 crisis.

23 We appreciate the Governor's continued  
24 inclusion of funding for supportive housing

1 in her budget and encourage deeper  
2 investments in collaborative city and state  
3 efforts to develop even more. It is one of  
4 the most effective solutions to successfully  
5 tackle issues of mental health and reentry  
6 from the justice system.

7 At the same time, we cannot ignore the  
8 continued rent arrears facing our public  
9 housing system since the beginning of the  
10 pandemic that destabilized families. Last  
11 year's budget offered significant help  
12 through the Emergency Rental Assistance  
13 Program, and additional support will be  
14 needed this year to help NYCHA reduce the  
15 outstanding balance of unpaid rent from over  
16 70,000 households.

17 Homelessness remains at high levels.  
18 State funding to cover the cost of the rate  
19 increase of StateFHEPS rental vouchers is  
20 essential to avoid placing an additional  
21 \$198.8 million of unfunded mandate on the  
22 city. Additional programs to combat  
23 homelessness, such as the Housing Access  
24 Voucher Program, or HAVP, and Rental

1 Supplement Program, RSP, should be adequately  
2 funded by the state. HAVP requires at least  
3 \$250 million to provide aid to those most at  
4 risk of becoming homeless and already  
5 unhoused. RSP would provide New York City  
6 with the ability to provide housing vouchers  
7 for underserved residents, regardless of  
8 immigration status, helping those perpetually  
9 stuck in the shelter system without access to  
10 other pathways to stable, permanent housing.

11 The city appreciates the support in  
12 the Governor's budget for our efforts to  
13 provide shelter and support services to  
14 people seeking asylum who have arrived in our  
15 city, and urges that those funds remain in  
16 the adopted budget.

17 As a city with one of the highest  
18 costs of living, food insecurity remains a  
19 major issue. In fiscal year 2023, 1 million  
20 New Yorkers relied on SNAP benefits. But  
21 because benefit levels are not adjusted for  
22 cost of living, New Yorkers are at a  
23 disadvantage compared to their counterparts  
24 across the nation.

1           There was some reprieve for New  
2           Yorkers during the pandemic when SNAP benefit  
3           recipients were provided the maximum benefit,  
4           and we urge the state to continue with the  
5           higher benefit level to provide adequate  
6           nutrition for New Yorkers.

7           Education for young people at all  
8           levels is one of the best investments we can  
9           and should make. While the Governor's  
10          proposed budget continues fiscal support for  
11          New York City's funding for universal  
12          pre-K -- that we appreciate -- we urge the  
13          state to consider increasing its commitment  
14          towards early childhood education to protect  
15          our city's 3-K program that is facing  
16          challenges from the expiration of federal  
17          stimulus funds.

18          Our school system also needs greater  
19          support for students in temporary housing,  
20          after recently enrolling over 20,000 more  
21          students -- adding to the over 100,000 such  
22          students already in our schools. We urge  
23          that the school Foundation Aid formula  
24          reflect the prior year's inflation rate of

1 approximately 4 percent, rather than the  
2 10-year average of 2.4 percent, which does  
3 not reflect the needs of our schools.

4 Supporting CUNY as an engine of  
5 opportunity that educates New Yorkers from  
6 all backgrounds will also require state  
7 funding for increased personnel costs once  
8 the current round of collective bargaining is  
9 settled. Without this help, CUNY would be  
10 forced to make cuts in other critical  
11 operating expenses, which will come at the  
12 expense of our students' education.

13 To protect New York City from cost  
14 shifting that has been overly relied upon to  
15 balance state budgets, we urge you to reverse  
16 the proposed extension of the Distressed  
17 Hospital Fund sales tax intercept -- that  
18 would take an additional \$150 million from  
19 the city -- so we can adequately support our  
20 public hospitals.

21 New York City must also be granted  
22 greater local control over our tax  
23 expenditures as a necessary tool to safeguard  
24 the health of our own budget. Albany is a

1 critical partner in this process, but the  
2 city needs the authority and input on the tax  
3 programs that significantly affect us, to  
4 ensure our resources are used wisely. This  
5 will require the state to not authorize a  
6 city tax credit without a home-rule request,  
7 a provision giving the city local authority  
8 to determine tax credits and authorization to  
9 obtain data needed to evaluate tax breaks.

10 We support state bills to give IBO  
11 access to tax data and to alter or repeal  
12 real property tax exemptions for private  
13 institutions of higher education. All of  
14 this would allow the city greater local  
15 control and ability to conduct oversight.

16 At the center of our considerations  
17 are the working families and New Yorkers who  
18 comprise the backbone of our city and state.  
19 We look forward to working with you, our  
20 partners in the State Legislature, to enact a  
21 budget that equitably supports our city and  
22 state.

23 Thank you very much for your  
24 consideration and for your time.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: First up, our  
4 Cities chair, for 10 minutes,  
5 Assemblymember Braunstein.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you,  
7 Fred.

8 And thank you, all of you, for joining  
9 us today. It's good to see you up here.

10 The first question I have is for  
11 anybody who can answer it. I'm not expecting  
12 you have the answer, but you might. The  
13 mayor testified earlier that currently the  
14 city has around 67,000 migrants in their  
15 care. Those numbers, do they fluctuate?  
16 Does anybody know what the low number was?  
17 Has there been a higher number? I'm just  
18 trying to get a sense of how those numbers  
19 move.

20 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: We put them  
21 out monthly in our monthly newsletter, and  
22 we've been tracking them from when they were,  
23 you know, essentially zero prior to July  
24 2022, and they have been rising steadily

1 since then.

2 That current 67,000 is a high, but  
3 there's been somewhat of a tapering, mostly  
4 as the 30- and 60-day rules have gone into  
5 effect, so people have been pushed out of the  
6 H+H shelters, even as folks continue to come.  
7 I've got a little chart that shows -- yes.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Yeah, I mean  
9 that's what I was asking for. So you would  
10 say as a chart it would be a tapering --

11 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Oh, I'm  
12 sorry, the peak was 69,000, and it's now at  
13 67,000, so it's a little lower than it's  
14 been.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Is there a  
16 projected increase, do you know?

17 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: This is  
18 really the 40,000 -- you know, the \$69,000  
19 question.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: But if you  
21 don't know, I understand.

22 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Well, we  
23 don't know. The impacts of the 60-day rule  
24 are just -- you know, what they said is that

1 for single adults, in response to the 30-day  
2 rule, about 80 percent of people wound up  
3 leaving and only 20 percent -- but of  
4 families, we think it's going to be a higher  
5 percentage that need shelter and wind up  
6 staying in shelter. And we'll be seeing that  
7 in the coming months, and we'll report on it.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay, thank  
9 you.

10 For the speaker or your team, you  
11 know, you reference -- and it's frustrating,  
12 we're seeing the potential loss of the 3-K  
13 program. You know, how much do we anticipate  
14 that program in particular will cost? I know  
15 the Mayor's office testified earlier that  
16 they expect they're going to lose, just for  
17 education alone, \$700 million in stimulus  
18 funding year to year.

19 You know, you talked about us changing  
20 the formula slightly for Foundation Aid,  
21 which the comptroller estimates could be  
22 around 130 million. How much is the 3-K  
23 program cost?

24 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Do we have

1 a cost on that, Tanisha?

2 NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: (Mic off.)

3 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Your mic  
4 isn't on. There you go -- now you turned it  
5 off again. There you go.

6 NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: It's  
7 difficult in this --

8 (Laughter.)

9 NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: For FY '24  
10 the cost level was \$760 million. In FY '25  
11 it's expected to be -- and this is because  
12 there was a sort of 5 percent peg to the  
13 program -- \$509 million.

14 So that would be the general cost to  
15 efficiently run the 3-K program, or at least  
16 how much is currently budgeted now.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. I  
18 mean, I understand your coming to us -- we  
19 have increased education funding to the City  
20 of New York to historic levels over the last  
21 few years. So --

22 NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: Well, a lot  
23 of the money that the city has received from  
24 the state was from pre-K. And it's been

1 great, but with our level of funding coming  
2 in for 3-K, in order to get the amount of  
3 seats that we need across the city, where the  
4 needs are great -- in some areas there are  
5 waitlists for months and months and months.

6 And so we need additional money to  
7 fulfill the need where they're needed.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay, thank  
9 you.

10 For comptroller Lander, the city is  
11 requesting increasing the Transitional  
12 Finance Authority bond limit I believe the  
13 Governor has proposed -- was it the Governor  
14 or the mayor's office is asking for 6 billion  
15 this year, then another increase of 6 billion  
16 the year after that. You know, what's your  
17 thoughts on that?

18 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yeah. So the  
19 mayor asked for 19.6 billion, and what's in  
20 the Governor's budget is, as you say,  
21 \$12 billion over two years. And that's an  
22 increase in the city's overall debt limit,  
23 which is set by a very kind of imprecise  
24 formula that values the total city

1 real estate.

2 So, you know, what's key is keeping  
3 debt service below 15 percent of the city's  
4 total operating budget. We believe that the  
5 \$12 billion over two years is a reasonable  
6 increase that would help us, you know, with  
7 big infrastructure investments we have in the  
8 BQE and our roads and bridges and building  
9 the borough-based jails and many other things  
10 that we need.

11 But there's a couple of critical  
12 things that are necessary. One is stronger  
13 local policy to make sure we stay below the  
14 15 percent threshold. One is some better  
15 planning on what our infrastructure needs  
16 are. I know you've all been joking about  
17 AIM. AIM for us is the annual assessment of  
18 our infrastructure, and we think it's more  
19 like "aimless."

20 So there are some other -- and as you  
21 know, we're working hard with you, and  
22 thank you for chairing the recent hearing,  
23 Chair Braunstein and Chair Thiele, to help us  
24 have better access to alternative delivery

1 methods to bring down the cost of our capital  
2 projects.

3 But yes, broadly, we think the  
4 increase is needed with those provisos.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: So the  
6 current debt cap is tied to property tax  
7 revenue. Is there a concern about property  
8 tax revenue? I mean --

9 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: It's not tied  
10 to property tax revenue, it's tied to an  
11 estimate of the overall valuation of all real  
12 property in the city. And the valuation is  
13 done by a state board appointed by the  
14 Governor that has a lot of quirks to it, it  
15 won't surprise you, in the way it values our  
16 co-ops and condos.

17 So the short answer is no. Like  
18 what's critical -- right now we're at about  
19 11 percent of our operating budget on debt  
20 service. We need to keep that below  
21 15 percent, and we've got a lot of room to do  
22 so. Adding the 12 billion over two years to  
23 the TFA is essentially an adjustment to the  
24 formula of the assessment of real estate, and

1 we can do it consistent with keeping that  
2 service below 15 percent of our budget.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. When  
4 we talk about the assessment of real estate,  
5 there's been a change in behavior with --  
6 after the pandemic with people working from  
7 home. We know there's vacancies in  
8 commercial real estate in Manhattan. Is  
9 there a projected concern about real estate  
10 property tax, I mean commercial real estate  
11 property tax, in the outyears?

12 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Let me  
13 separate this. I don't think that what  
14 you're talking about is what is jeopardizing  
15 the debt limit.

16 But sure, on tax revenues, Class B and  
17 C real estate that we're seeing, you know,  
18 significant vacancies in, we're keeping a  
19 sharp eye. So far, overall real estate tax  
20 revenue in the city has continued to grow.  
21 But this is absolutely something that we're  
22 keeping a careful eye on.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. And  
24 the city counts -- or the city is projecting

1 deficits in the outyears. What are those  
2 attributable to?

3 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Expenses  
4 rising faster than revenues. Revenues  
5 actually are rising. I just want to be  
6 clear, our revenues are rising, but expenses  
7 are rising faster. And that's, you know --

8 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: I mean, are  
9 there big expenses that you can -- that you  
10 point to that are driving that?

11 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Well, look,  
12 we gave a much-needed increase to  
13 public-sector workers, and that was about  
14 \$17 billion over the four-year financial  
15 plan.

16 I mentioned a few big growing costs  
17 like uniformed overtime, Carter cases for  
18 kids with special needs, and shelter and  
19 services for asylum-seekers, which we had not  
20 anticipated before last year.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. And  
22 then just my final point is, you know, we  
23 talk about this, Comptroller Lander -- I know  
24 Councilmember Brannan -- talk about doing

1 something about our broken property tax  
2 system. And while we ultimately have  
3 authority to make that change up here, we  
4 look to the city for guidance about what they  
5 would like that property tax system to look  
6 like.

7 Ideally, if there was a change  
8 requested, a resolution or something from the  
9 City Council would be helpful in, you know,  
10 moving us to take up that issue. So -- and I  
11 know, you know, we could talk offline about  
12 commissions and things of that nature.

13 But ultimately this is going -- you  
14 know, if we're going to get this done, we  
15 need something driven from the city up. It's  
16 going to be more challenging for us to do it  
17 from the top down.

18 And then, finally, you talked about  
19 the alternative delivery. We continue to  
20 have conversations. It does not have a state  
21 fiscal impact, so I anticipate, you know,  
22 we'll take up that conversation sometime  
23 after we're done on April 1st. So --

24 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: That would be

1 great. I wasn't pushing for it to be in the  
2 budget --

3 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Yeah, I know,  
4 I'm just --

5 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I'm just  
6 encouraging it to -- along.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay, thank  
8 you.

9 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Thank you.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Our Cities chair,  
11 Senator Sepúlveda.

12 SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: Good afternoon,  
13 everyone. Thank you for being here today.  
14 Good seeing everyone.

15 So I first have a question for  
16 Comptroller Lander. I asked the mayor  
17 similar questions earlier. I have been on a  
18 mission to modify and change the property tax  
19 system in New York City. As the Cities 1  
20 chair for the last two years, I have been  
21 hounding and harassing the mayor's office to  
22 provide a plan or something.

23 A couple of weeks ago I attended  
24 the -- at the Court of Appeals the hearing on

1 the appeal on a case on the New York City  
2 property tax system. Based on my experience  
3 as an attorney, I believe that the city is  
4 going to lose that case.

5 I believe you presented a plan, some  
6 kind of plan to modify the property tax  
7 system. What is that plan? Can you explain  
8 what you're doing to put it into effect?  
9 Because I think it's unconscionable that a  
10 resident in my community in the South Bronx  
11 is paying the same or more taxes than someone  
12 in affluent neighborhoods like Malba and  
13 Whitestone.

14 What are you going to do to make sure  
15 that we modify the property tax system?

16 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Thank you,  
17 Senator. It's a good question, and I really  
18 agree. And I know the speaker does, and I  
19 know the finance chair does.

20 And it's work that we have to and can  
21 do together, because you are right, we know  
22 the effective tax rate for someone in your  
23 neighborhood is three to four times the  
24 effective tax rate for someone in my

1 neighborhood. It does not pass a basic  
2 fairness test. And there's a whole history  
3 of reasons why it evolved that way.

4 But, you know, the pathway to fixing  
5 it for homes, for one-to-four-family homes,  
6 co-ops and condos, I believe was largely set  
7 out by the commission that was, you know,  
8 appointed in the prior administration that  
9 came out the third-to-last day of the  
10 administration. But they actually got a lot  
11 of the basics right, and we need to move to a  
12 system that has a uniform tax rate for all  
13 homeowners.

14 So if -- let's call it 1 percent, it's  
15 1 percent on the homes in your neighborhood  
16 and 1 percent on the homes in my  
17 neighborhood. And there are various ways to  
18 move to that over time while you protect, you  
19 know, seniors or folks on fixed incomes who  
20 might be at risk. But it can be done. That  
21 report actually outlines a lot of what's  
22 needed on -- for homes, for homeownership.

23 We've outlined a plan for multifamily  
24 development to replace 421-a that begins with

1 parity between rentals and condos for future  
2 development, and after that any tax  
3 incentives for affordability have to be  
4 underwritten to make sure you're actually  
5 getting the affordability that's promised.  
6 Glad to go into more details with you.

7 The challenge is just one of a lot of  
8 parties -- the legislature, the governor, the  
9 council, the mayor, the city all have to do  
10 this together. It's challenging. It has  
11 some, quote unquote, winners, people who over  
12 time would see a lower tax rate. But it has  
13 some, quote unquote, losers, people who will  
14 wind up paying a higher effective tax rate.  
15 And of course a change like that is hard  
16 because people resist it. I would love to  
17 work together with you and others to make it  
18 happen.

19 SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: We've been working  
20 with a couple of groups, including Jonathan  
21 Lippman's group, on this issue.

22 Now, we know that -- at least the  
23 research that I've done indicates that if you  
24 have a fair property tax system in New York

1 City you will spur affordable housing. So,  
2 Madam Speaker, can you tell us about the  
3 efforts the City Council is doing to -- in  
4 this measure, and compared vis-a-vis with the  
5 issue of affordable housing and how this can  
6 help develop it?

7 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Yeah.

8 Thank you very much for the question.

9 I actually had legislation that passed  
10 recently, it was called -- it is called the  
11 Fair Housing Framework Law. And it is a law,  
12 I call it a law of housing equity, something  
13 that we haven't seen I don't think ever, in  
14 that every single district is responsible for  
15 doing their fair share of making affordable  
16 housing possible in each district.

17 As you know, we are the most diverse  
18 council, and it is noticeable that building  
19 has taken a different look across the board  
20 across the city. There have been but a few  
21 select districts that have actually had  
22 affordable housing built over the years  
23 compared to others. So what my legislation  
24 did was it advanced clear and set transparent

1 local targets for housing production and  
2 preservation and investments that serve as  
3 tools of accountability for every single  
4 district to equitably solve the housing  
5 crisis.

6 By setting these targets, though,  
7 we're letting all stakeholders, elected  
8 officials, land use applicants, our community  
9 members, know that the objective expectation  
10 is for every single district.

11 Our framework ensures that there is  
12 input by developers, by community boards, by  
13 elected officials. And it also -- people  
14 talk about member deference a lot. This  
15 actually gets us to where -- I always say we  
16 always want to get to a place of yes when it  
17 comes to affordable housing and building  
18 affordable housing equitably. By ensuring  
19 that everybody has a place at the table,  
20 particularly our community that has felt left  
21 out of the process for so long. They feel  
22 left out -- agencies can come to them, the  
23 city can come to them, and by the time they  
24 get to the community, the decision's already

1 made. It's already a done deal.

2 So communities have pretty much been,  
3 you know, kind of X'd out of the process.  
4 This legislation will ensure that communities  
5 are a part of the entire process from A to Z,  
6 and ensure equitability that has been lacking  
7 in the city actually does take place.

8 SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: I hope to get more  
9 into that with you and the comptroller about  
10 the issue of affordable housing and the  
11 property tax issue because, as I said, I've  
12 been on a mission to get this modified.

13 The -- back in December,  
14 Comptroller Lander, you had indicated that  
15 you took away the mayor's power to enter into  
16 contracts with private contractors that  
17 provide housing, food and other services for  
18 asylum-seekers without prior approval. Tell  
19 me about the pilot program that's been  
20 announced now for prepaid cards to purchase  
21 food, I believe it's about five -- it's a  
22 pilot program with 500 people.

23 But do you think the plan is  
24 effective? Is it going to save the city

1 money? Are you for or against it?

2 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: So in July of  
3 2022 when asylum-seekers started to arrive,  
4 City Hall requested and we granted  
5 essentially a blanket prior approval. We  
6 were going to move quickly into emergency  
7 procurement to find enough hotels and other  
8 contractors. And we granted that blanket  
9 prior approval.

10 And they've done, you know, 70 or so  
11 emergency procurements under that blanket  
12 prior approval, and a lot of them -- most of  
13 them were essentially for hotels. But some  
14 of them required more scrutiny. The biggest  
15 one that required more scrutiny was the  
16 \$432 million contract to DocGo, a medical  
17 services staffing company with no experience  
18 in asylum seeker shelter or services that  
19 came through the door of that blanket prior  
20 approval.

21 And there were a lot of questions  
22 about that contract, so we revoked the  
23 blanket prior approval. They can still come  
24 to us on a contract-by-contract basis; they

1 did just this week, for some transportation  
2 services. And we very quickly, I think  
3 within two days, granted their prior  
4 approval.

5 On these prepaid cards, we also  
6 granted approval to use this contractor. The  
7 use of prepaid cards makes a lot of sense in  
8 different circumstances. But we didn't  
9 evaluate the program itself. We looked at  
10 the contractor: Is it an appropriate  
11 contractor? Do they provide the services at  
12 a reasonable procurement? Yes. Is the  
13 program a good idea? It's brand-new. We  
14 haven't yet evaluated it, and I'll have to  
15 get back to you when we have.

16 SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: Thank you.

17 One more question for Madam Speaker.  
18 Can you discuss the efforts in the City  
19 Council to help with the issue of the migrant  
20 crisis? What are some of the steps that  
21 you've taken? And what else we can do at the  
22 state level to help in that process.

23 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Well, as  
24 far as the migrant crisis is concerned, you

1 know, the council has been involved. We have  
2 continued to advocate that even though we got  
3 this literally -- it feels like overnight,  
4 but it's been two years. And we're still  
5 waiting for help from places in D.C. that  
6 seem to be kind of out of space, but we  
7 believe in that.

8 So we have actually continued to  
9 advocate for shelter for our asylum-seekers,  
10 for migrants that have come into the city  
11 looking for a place to live, just like people  
12 have looked for a place to live forever, it  
13 seems. We are -- we are glad the Governor  
14 has included the migrant situation in the  
15 budget, but we still need additional state  
16 funding to support and care for  
17 asylum-seekers.

18 Absent this federal aid we know is not  
19 promised -- and we don't see it anywhere  
20 coming around the corner to us, so any  
21 support or help that the state can give is  
22 completely welcome. It's going to help us  
23 manage the continued influx. And we spoke  
24 about it earlier with a question from

1 Assemblymember Braunstein, in speaking to the  
2 comptroller about the numbers and what are  
3 the numbers and when are we going to see a  
4 plateau and when are we going to see a peak.  
5 We just don't know.

6 So the council is going to continue to  
7 advocate for sheltering for migrants, not  
8 necessarily hotel sheltering, but through our  
9 CityPHEPS program. We want to move people  
10 into permanent housing.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

12 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

14 Assembly.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember  
16 Simon for three minutes.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

18 Thank you very much.

19 I have a couple of questions that I  
20 wanted to ask the comptroller, in particular,  
21 and that is that we have a persistent problem  
22 in New York -- you mentioned the Carter  
23 cases -- with parents shelling out money for  
24 these schools because there is no appropriate

1 placement for them in New York City schools.  
2 Borrowing money, incurring costs, settling  
3 the case -- most of them settle -- and the  
4 city then taking 18 months to pay them back.  
5 They're already borrowing again for the  
6 following school year.

7 What can your -- and the check comes  
8 from the comptroller's office. What part of  
9 that can you fix to ensure that that stops  
10 happening? It's been a persistent problem  
11 for decades, as you know. That's one  
12 question.

13 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yeah. No,  
14 this is really critical. And like you, I've  
15 talked to many families who wind up, you  
16 know, spending on the assessment, spending on  
17 the attorneys, spending on a year of tuition,  
18 and being out of pocket substantially just to  
19 get their kids the education they need.

20 There is a class-action lawsuit here,  
21 and there are settlement negotiations  
22 actively underway that are pushing the  
23 Department of Education. We're in dialogue  
24 with them. You know, I can't talk about the

1 settlement negotiations, but what I can tell  
2 you is we have given DOE some expanded  
3 authority to settle without having to come to  
4 us. We move very quickly when they do. But  
5 we are giving them some additional  
6 flexibility. Most of this is in changes that  
7 DOE needs to make, and I'm hopeful that the  
8 class-action settlement will make a lot of  
9 them.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: And then another  
11 question I have is about how the  
12 comptroller's office can help us figure out  
13 the costs of providing all this  
14 representation for people who have a right to  
15 representation in court.

16 You know, I have a bill that would  
17 actually provide greater loan forgiveness for  
18 people who are lawyers representing people in  
19 the indigent legal services, as well as the  
20 prosecutor's offices. But that's costing us  
21 money. That's costing the city money if  
22 we're not giving people the representation  
23 they need and they are evicted or they suffer  
24 other noxious consequences.

1                   NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Let me --  
2                   let's follow up and see what information we  
3                   have. We did a report earlier this year on  
4                   special education services rather than on  
5                   tuition, but we didn't look at the legal  
6                   costs. So let me see what we might be able  
7                   to do.

8                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Okay. Thank  
9                   you.

10                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

11                  Senator John Liu.

12                  SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

13                  Thank you, Madam Speaker and  
14                  Mr. Comptroller, for joining us today.

15                  This is a question for both of you.  
16                  There's -- you know, the last few years ever  
17                  since the Democratic Majority took over the  
18                  State Senate, the State Budget has always had  
19                  more money for schools all across the state,  
20                  including the City of New York. And yet  
21                  there are these nagging reports that the city  
22                  reduces funding for schools. Not necessarily  
23                  either of you being responsible for that,  
24                  but, you know, my question for both of you

1 is, is there some kind of violation of  
2 maintenance of effort? I mean, as the state  
3 increases funding for schools, the city  
4 shouldn't be using that increased funding to  
5 reduce what the city was putting into  
6 schools.

7 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Parsing the  
8 Department of Education budget, as you know  
9 from your time as comptroller and now in the  
10 Senate, is --

11 SENATOR LIU: I was?

12 (Laughter; overtalk.)

13 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: I lived by  
14 your documents at one time.

15 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: You know, a  
16 lot of the reductions to individual schools  
17 have been because the Fair Student Funding  
18 formula bases what your school is getting on  
19 how many students you have. And when we saw  
20 some pandemic school declines, that led to  
21 that formula leading to cuts and good  
22 advocacy to restore much of that money.

23 The adjustments to the Fair Student  
24 Funding formula that got made are quite good.

1           They put more money in for students in  
2           temporary housing.

3                         But it is not so easy to evaluate the  
4           maintenance of effort question that you're  
5           asking, and I think it would be fair for the  
6           Legislature to insist on a real parsing out  
7           of what's coming from the state, what's  
8           coming from the city and others --

9                         SENATOR LIU:  Therefore for the State  
10          Legislature to demand maintenance of effort.

11                        NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER:  You guys can  
12          demand, yes, that's true.  We ask a lot in  
13          the comptroller's office.

14                        SENATOR LIU:  Okay.  Defer to the  
15          comptroller?

16                        NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS:  I agree  
17          with everything the Comptroller said.

18                        SENATOR LIU:  You do, okay.

19                        NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS:  I do,  
20          imagine that.

21                        SENATOR LIU:  So I have one final  
22          question for the both of you.  Who is the  
23          second-most powerful person in New York City?

24                        (Laughter.)

1 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: John Liu.

2 Senator John Liu.

3 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: The chair  
4 already told us that the public advocate  
5 committed a coup while we were here.

6 SENATOR LIU: All right, whatever.  
7 Thank you, Madam Chair.

8 (Laughter.)

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- budget-related  
10 question, John Liu? I don't think so.

11 Assembly.

12 SENATOR LIU: It's been a nagging  
13 question for eons.

14 (Laughter.)

15 SENATOR LIU: I figure everybody's  
16 collaborating so nicely. The speaker says  
17 she agrees with everything the comptroller  
18 says --

19 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: I did. I  
20 did.

21 SENATOR LIU: So you want to answer  
22 the question, Miss --

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No, you don't.

24 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: He's the

1 chair of the troublemakers committee in the  
2 New York State Senate, I see.

3 SENATOR LIU: Well, it's been a long  
4 day.

5 (Laughter.)

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You had him all  
7 those years, but we now have him, so --

8 (Laughter.)

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Assemblymember  
11 Reilly, Cities ranker, for five minutes.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you,  
13 Mr. Chair. Thank you, Madam Speaker,  
14 Mr. Comptroller.

15 So, Mr. Comptroller, I have a question  
16 about -- we had Island Shores on  
17 Staten Island, basically, as an example, was  
18 a senior residence that was closed months  
19 before, and then it became a migrant shelter  
20 with a contract roughly eight, 10 months  
21 later. They have a history, Homes for the  
22 Homeless, of doing this. Five years ago they  
23 did it in Manhattan, where they closed down a  
24 senior residence and then opened up within

1 days a homeless shelter.

2 How do we stop the incentives where  
3 the contracts are that lucrative that it's  
4 more beneficial for them to relocate our  
5 senior population for homelessness?

6 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I mean, I'm  
7 not familiar with the Island Shores, but I  
8 think there are a number of places where we  
9 don't have the incentives in the right place.  
10 I mentioned Medicaid funding for inpatient  
11 psychiatric beds. Hospitals have been  
12 closing their inpatient psychiatric units  
13 because the Medicaid reimbursement rate is  
14 not good enough. And they close those units  
15 and do something else with the beds when we  
16 urgently need it.

17 So I guess I don't know the details  
18 here. You would want the senior program to  
19 have adequate reimbursement that it could  
20 provide the revenues that would be needed to  
21 operate that program. I mean --

22 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: It just seems  
23 like a pattern, especially -- you know, we  
24 talk -- when we relate this to like housing,

1 right, we talk about bad actors, like the bad  
2 landlords and bad tenants or whatever we call  
3 them. Right? What about the bad actors in  
4 the not-for-profit organizations that are  
5 truly driven by the high incentive of making  
6 money off of converting and moving from that  
7 senior center -- senior residence?

8 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I mean,  
9 again, I don't -- I can't speak to this  
10 individual case. There's no doubt that one  
11 challenge of the surge of asylum-seekers is  
12 that the combination of the obligation to  
13 provide people the right to seek asylum with  
14 the city's right to shelter, like the city's  
15 facing a law here, you know --

16 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Well, the city  
17 had the opportunity -- I spoke to the mayor  
18 earlier today and I asked him a question.  
19 The city had the opportunity, because of the  
20 Staten Island case that was decided and right  
21 to shelter was addressed -- they immediately  
22 appealed, the city, and then filed a right to  
23 shelter case in Manhattan.

24 So it doesn't -- you know, they had

1 the opportunity to -- based on the judge's  
2 decision that revamped a little bit of right  
3 to shelter, gave them an out on it. They  
4 chose not to take it, the city. Are you  
5 aware of that?

6 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: That's not  
7 how I understand the legal proceedings.  
8 So -- that's not how I understand them.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Okay, fair  
10 enough. Fair enough.

11 Madam Speaker.

12 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS:  
13 Assemblyman.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Currently in the  
15 news with the assault on police officers and  
16 the incident that happened in Manhattan and  
17 over the next several days, one of the  
18 questions that I asked the mayor today was  
19 about the cooperation with federal  
20 immigration agencies and the New York City  
21 law. I actually specifically asked him about  
22 if he would do an executive order that would  
23 allow, when a asylum seeker is arrested for a  
24 violent crime, that they notify federal

1 authorities. And remember, this isn't  
2 targeting all migrants and asylum-seekers.  
3 This is for those that commit those serious  
4 crimes.

5 Would you be open to revisiting the  
6 sanctuary city law and the notification  
7 between law enforcement with federal agencies  
8 when it comes to those serious felonies.

9 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Well,  
10 thank you for the question. From what I  
11 understand, the sanctuary city laws --  
12 sanctuary city just means welcoming to  
13 immigrants. It has no uniform definition in  
14 the law per se. So any crime committed by  
15 anyone should be adjudicated properly from A  
16 to Z, whether it's an immigrant or a  
17 non-immigrant.

18 In our estimation in the council,  
19 those that commit crimes should be held  
20 accountable for those crimes.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: So would you --  
22 so would the cooperation between the NYPD,  
23 Department of Corrections, the court system  
24 notifying federal agencies like ICE when

1           those individuals commit those serious  
2           crimes -- they're prevented right now. And  
3           that's been on the books for years, even when  
4           I was at the NYPD.

5                        Would you be open to considering  
6           reopening that and looking at ways that we  
7           can streamline that communication for the  
8           most heinous crimes?

9                        NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: I think  
10          that the council would be open to  
11          conversations and collaborating when it comes  
12          to the safety of New Yorkers at any time.

13                       ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you.

14                       CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

15                       Senator Weik.

16                       SENATOR WEIK: Thank you.

17                       And thank you for being here today. I  
18          appreciate your testimony.

19                       But I'm a little confused. I'm  
20          listening, and your testimony clearly states  
21          that you can't afford the migrant crisis, yet  
22          you continue to welcome them. And I've been  
23          listening to you have many, many financial  
24          asks on the state and the federal government,

1 yet you have \$53 million in prepaid credit  
2 cards that you're giving migrants.

3 Who's paying that? Where's the money  
4 coming from?

5 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I guess a few  
6 things I'll say here.

7 I think in the long-term it will be  
8 extremely beneficial for the City of  
9 New York. And I think if other  
10 municipalities and jurisdictions in New York  
11 State welcome people, it will be extremely  
12 economically beneficial for them. All the  
13 evidence shows that when immigrants come,  
14 your economy generally grows and flourishes.

15 We do have the short-term challenge of  
16 providing shelter and helping people --

17 SENATOR WEIK: So I'm sorry, just for  
18 the sake of time, because I have more  
19 questions --

20 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Where does  
21 the \$53 million come from?

22 SENATOR WEIK: -- where is that money  
23 coming from?

24 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: From the City

1 of New York. Because the mayor is asking the  
2 question -- rather than provide institutional  
3 food, a lot of which gets wasted, would it  
4 work to give people prepaid debit cards.  
5 It's a small pilot program to see if it  
6 works.

7 SENATOR WEIK: So it's coming out of  
8 the taxpayer's dollars, yes or no?

9 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Of course.

10 SENATOR WEIK: Yes, of course.

11 Okay. And just a yes or no question,  
12 the congestion pricing. Do you support it?

13 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I do.

14 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Do I  
15 support congestion pricing?

16 SENATOR WEIK: Uh-huh.

17 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: That's a  
18 loaded question for Queens.

19 SENATOR WEIK: It's just a yes or a no  
20 question.

21 (Laughter.)

22 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: It's a  
23 loaded question for Queens.

24 SENATOR WEIK: So I'll take that as a

1           yes?

2                   NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS:  You can  
3           take it as it's a loaded question for Queens.  
4           It's a -- it's a --

5                   SENATOR WEIK:  Okay.

6                   NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS:  We're  
7           still -- we're still checking it out and  
8           trying to figure it out.

9                   SENATOR WEIK:  So with that in mind,  
10          I'm just curious -- and the cost of trains of  
11          course increasing, how do you envision  
12          New York City residents getting around town?

13                   NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER:  Most -- the  
14          biggest way New York City residents get  
15          around town is by the subways and buses,  
16          which need investment, which is where the  
17          congestion pricing resources will go.

18                   SENATOR WEIK:  And how do you  
19          recommend they afford that?  We're talking  
20          about not the millionaires or the migrants  
21          who are getting --

22                   NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER:  Well, if  
23          you're taking the subways or the buses, you  
24          won't pay the congestion charge.  And if your

1 subways and buses get where you're going  
2 faster, you'll be grateful for investment in  
3 them. We all want to keep the fares down.  
4 That money doesn't come from the --

5 SENATOR WEIK: The fares are rising,  
6 correct? Fares are rising?

7 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: They rarely  
8 go down.

9 SENATOR WEIK: Right. So they're  
10 rising, we have congestion pricing. How do  
11 you suggest -- or what do you envision being  
12 the solution for the average New York City  
13 resident to get around town affordably?

14 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Well, here's  
15 what I'd love, if Albany could reach an  
16 affordable housing deal to help bring down  
17 the cost of housing --

18 SENATOR WEIK: Is that how come you  
19 asked for more money?

20 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: If Albany  
21 could provide the resources that help us have  
22 3-K or reduced childcare for our kids, if  
23 Albany could help make sure we're able to  
24 reduce energy costs, then it would be a lot

1 easier for working New Yorkers to live in  
2 New York City.

3 SENATOR WEIK: It's like you want  
4 Albany to run New York City financially.

5 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: The housing  
6 deal I don't think will cost you that much to  
7 enable us to build more housing and protect  
8 tenants.

9 SENATOR WEIK: But that doesn't answer  
10 any of my questions about commuting around  
11 New York City.

12 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: No, I think I  
13 said it did. We'll put the congestion  
14 pricing dollars in the subways and buses,  
15 which is by far the most affordable way to  
16 get around, way less than driving.

17 SENATOR WEIK: Thank you.

18 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Thank you.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
20 Assembly.

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman Ra.  
22 (Reaction; general welcome.)

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Nobody noticed.

24 (Overtalk; laughter.)

1                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Ways and Means  
2 Chair Helene Weinstein.

3                   (Applause.)

4                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: The claps don't  
5 get you any more money, just so you know.

6                   (Laughter.)

7                   NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: We only have  
8 paper cups. We don't have tin cups out here  
9 to ask, so --

10                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman Ra.

11                  ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you. And  
12 welcome back, Chair Weinstein. Good to have  
13 you.

14                  Nothing against Fred; it was nice  
15 having Fred over here for a few hours.

16                  (Laughter.)

17                  ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Glad to have you  
18 back.

19                  I want to go back, Comptroller, to the  
20 procurement issue that was raised earlier. I  
21 know you mentioned that particular contract,  
22 and I don't know exactly what the  
23 circumstances were. I know there was kind of  
24 a denial of that that was issued, but my

1           understanding was that the mayor was able to  
2           still follow through with the contract.

3                     And since -- you know, last year we  
4           originally allocated a billion dollars; our  
5           financial plan now reflects that at about  
6           1.9 billion. We have a proposal in this  
7           budget for another 2.4. So my question is,  
8           do we need to, as we're doing that, perhaps  
9           consider measures to ensure that there is  
10          oversight of these contracts when they're  
11          being given out?

12                    NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: We take the  
13          contract oversight very seriously. That's  
14          part of why we revoked the blanket prior  
15          approval.

16                    So we are doing more, you know,  
17          individual reviews on every emergency  
18          procurement, and we don't -- you know,  
19          sometimes we deny emergency procurement.  
20          That just means it has to go through the  
21          normal bidding method so that you make sure  
22          you're getting price competition and  
23          contractors with integrity. So that's why we  
24          did that, and I think it was, you know, kind

1 of a wise -- we're putting out now quarterly  
2 reports on what all the contracts were.  
3 We've got audits underway on several of those  
4 contracts in realtime. So we'll be glad to  
5 keep providing them to you.

6 You know, if the state believes  
7 additional oversight is needed on resources  
8 it provides to the city, we respect your  
9 authority to get it. But we're certainly in  
10 our office doing as much as we can to make  
11 sure you've got the transparency that you  
12 need.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: And as you're looking  
14 at these contracts, I think one of the things  
15 that -- I think there were a couple of things  
16 that were eye-opening about that particular  
17 contract, one of which was obviously the  
18 inexperience of the operator with regard to  
19 these types of services. But also just -- it  
20 seemed like the amount that they were seeking  
21 to benefit financially from it was kind of an  
22 eye-opening amount as well.

23 So I assume those are the types of  
24 things you're looking at as you're going

1 through these contracts?

2 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yes.

3 And another example from that contract  
4 is that they get \$170 a night per hotel room  
5 regardless of the cost of the actual hotel  
6 room. So if they can find hotel rooms that  
7 rent for less, they get to keep the  
8 difference. So is that an incentive for them  
9 to look everywhere in the state that they can  
10 to find the cheapest hotel rooms? I mean,  
11 financially it functions like that.

12 You know, do they need a percentage  
13 above what the cost of the hotel room is to  
14 provide that service? Sure. But we should  
15 structure our contracts in ways that, you  
16 know, are the most cost-effective and provide  
17 the wisest incentives.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: And then just going  
19 more generally to the city's budget,  
20 obviously we've had a lot of conversations  
21 around the impact of the migrant crisis and  
22 what it's costing the city and how that has  
23 impacted other services.

24 I think the city obviously has been

1 dealing with something not that unlike what  
2 we're dealing with at the state level in  
3 terms of, you know, we had all this  
4 pandemic-era aid and, you know, I would argue  
5 perhaps that we started spending above where  
6 our recurring revenues were going to  
7 ultimately end up, and there's a rightsizing  
8 that's going on.

9 Now, I know revenues have come in a  
10 little stronger, so some of those cuts have  
11 not been realized at this point. But what is  
12 the outlook now if, you know, the revenues  
13 look like we're seeing them now in terms of,  
14 you know, fire services, NYPD, the other  
15 types of things that were going to be  
16 impacted by those proposed cuts?

17 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Oh. He's  
18 the money guy.

19 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Whichever. I  
20 mean, I'm happy to -- if you want me to.

21 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: The impact  
22 because of the proposed cuts, from the  
23 council's perspective, is going to be  
24 significant. We're going to continue, of

1 course, in our capacity in oversight to do  
2 whatever we can to get to the bottom of  
3 whatever the reasoning behind the cuts are.

4 But we are short-staffed when it comes  
5 to city agencies right now because of cuts.  
6 Services are not being delivered to  
7 New Yorkers because of cuts. We have had to  
8 restore significant amounts of funding back  
9 to places that have lost libraries, cultural  
10 arts systems, and a lot of other places that  
11 we actually put into the budget were taken  
12 out of the budget because of substantial  
13 cuts.

14 So as far as the council is concerned,  
15 we're going to continue to advocate for  
16 restoration of whatever we can -- NYPD, FDNY,  
17 all of it -- DSNY -- to the best of our  
18 ability as a council.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: All right. Thank  
20 you, Madam Speaker. And thank you,  
21 Mr. Comptroller.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate.

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

24 Senator Rhoads.

1                   SENATOR RHOADS: Thank you so much,  
2 Chairwoman.

3                   And just to follow up on  
4 Assemblyman Ra's point, where is the  
5 rightsizing in the city's budget? You have a  
6 \$7 billion budget deficit that's coming up  
7 this year. We know about budget deficits  
8 here in Albany as well. And by the way, to  
9 Senator Weik's point, it's all taxpayer  
10 dollars. Right? No matter where it comes  
11 from. Whether it comes from Albany, whether  
12 it comes from the City of New York, it's all  
13 taxpayer dollars.

14                  We hear about restoring services --  
15 which we want to see happen, obviously. But  
16 at some point in time, where is the  
17 rightsizing of the city's budget to meet its  
18 anticipated revenue?

19                  NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Well, first  
20 let me just correct the record. For this  
21 year, fiscal year '24, the budget's in  
22 balance and the preliminary budget that the  
23 mayor presented for fiscal year '25 is also  
24 in balance. So neither this year nor next

1 year's budget has any deficit, much less  
2 \$7 billion --

3 SENATOR RHOADS: If I could, just for  
4 the sake of time, I'd like --

5 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: For the  
6 following fiscal year we project a \$5 billion  
7 deficit.

8 SENATOR RHOADS: If I can ask --

9 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: And a whole  
10 bunch of cuts have been made. I was in the  
11 Flushing library on Saturday. It's now  
12 closed on Sundays. We've closed our  
13 libraries one weekend day when kids need  
14 them. Unfortunately, there are a whole bunch  
15 of places that we have made significant cuts  
16 to services for New Yorkers because we're  
17 required by law to have a balanced budget,  
18 and we do.

19 SENATOR RHOADS: But don't we see that  
20 there's an issue with respect to the fact  
21 that the city plans this year alone on  
22 spending \$4 billion on migrants?

23 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I'm sorry,  
24 can you ask the question again? I'm not sure

1 I understand.

2 SENATOR RHOADS: Sure. Not a problem.

3 Don't we see that part of the issue  
4 with having to cut services, part of the  
5 reason why they're talking about cuts in the  
6 FDNY, cuts in the NYPD, cuts in funding to  
7 our schools, the fact that the libraries have  
8 to be closed on Sunday -- is that not part of  
9 the reason for that the fact that we are  
10 spending \$4 billion -- the City of New York  
11 will spend \$4 billion providing free housing,  
12 thousand-dollar food cards, providing free  
13 medical care, providing free education for  
14 migrants?

15 NYC COUNCILMAN BRANNAN: Senator, I  
16 would just say that a lot of the outyear gaps  
17 that we were seeing were there with or  
18 without the migrant crisis.

19 So you have to also remember that the  
20 city is grappling as well with the final  
21 sunset of COVID relief funds. So that we had  
22 a lot of permanent programs that were set up  
23 by a prior administration that were built on  
24 temporary dollars. So you have permanent

1 programs with temporary dollars, we're  
2 grappling with that as well.

3 So the cuts to the police department,  
4 the fire, everything you mentioned, all that  
5 was restored, just as the council predicted,  
6 when the administration acknowledged the  
7 money that was already there. That the money  
8 that is sitting in the tax revenues right now  
9 for the City of New York, those -- the  
10 restorations that you saw towards the -- last  
11 month, I guess, that the mayor did was  
12 because the administration recognized money  
13 that was already there.

14 So all those cuts you're mentioning  
15 were never necessary in the first place, and  
16 they're not happening.

17 SENATOR RHOADS: I understand that for  
18 this year. But I guess my larger concern is  
19 that there seems to be a disconnect with  
20 reality. We're spending \$4 billion on  
21 migrants. We talk about the fact that  
22 New York City has a housing crisis, for  
23 example, right?

24 Meanwhile, during your testimony,

1 Madam Speaker, NYCHA has difficulty  
2 collecting rents from 70,000 of its  
3 residents. Why would you want to be a  
4 landlord in the City of New York when it is  
5 impossible to evict a tenant who does not  
6 pay, when limits are placed on their ability  
7 to do all sorts of things as landlords? Who  
8 would want to make that investment in the  
9 city?

10 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Well,  
11 Senator, I don't disagree that there are  
12 several obstacles that make what you just  
13 said a reality as far as landlords and the  
14 difficulties these days.

15 I would also say that, just like my  
16 Finance chair, Councilman Brannan just said,  
17 we were under -- we were under this water  
18 because of the pandemic, largely, beforehand,  
19 before we got to now. So in seeing where we  
20 are right now, largely funding has come back  
21 for fiscal year 2024 and '25, and we're  
22 projecting out now deficits through '26.

23 So when we take a look at where we  
24 were and where we are, I think that the

1 outlook really is more positive than negative  
2 at this point.

3 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: And I would  
4 just add -- I mean, if we didn't have a right  
5 to shelter, we would have some more money in  
6 the city's bank account, and we would have  
7 tens of thousands of people sleeping on the  
8 streets of our city, as they do in  
9 Los Angeles and Seattle and --

10 SENATOR RHOADS: You can always ask  
11 the Biden administration to do what they're  
12 supposed to do and take care of the problem  
13 they created.

14 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: -- Chicago.  
15 That wouldn't be better for New  
16 Yorkers.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you,  
18 Senator. Thank you, Comptroller. Your time  
19 is up.  
20 Assembly.

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman  
22 Epstein.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you,  
24 Comptroller and Speaker.



1 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

2 Thank you.

3 So in the last couple of years that  
4 we've been increasing funding to CUNY, and  
5 we've seen over the past couple of years on  
6 the city, even though we've been giving more  
7 money, there have been cuts on the city level  
8 to our CUNY program. So I ask the  
9 comptroller and the speaker, how do we  
10 guarantee CUNY the Foundation Aid that  
11 Senator Liu just raised earlier? If we're  
12 going to increase giving money to the city,  
13 how do we guarantee that those won't result  
14 in cuts to services to our communities or to  
15 our public schools?

16 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: I think  
17 that from a council perspective -- and thank  
18 you for the question. From a council  
19 perspective, we are going to continue to do  
20 whatever we can as a council to protect the  
21 funding that comes into CUNY. CUNY is a  
22 tremendous priority for the City Council.

23 Whatever cuts or whatever happens down  
24 the line as far as lessening what's done to

1 CUNY is never done at the hands of the  
2 City Council -- I never say never, but I just  
3 did, because CUNY is such a tremendous  
4 priority for us. I don't know if the  
5 comptroller wants to add to that, but the  
6 City Council would never advocate for cuts  
7 for CUNY. Many of us come from CUNY.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: You and me both.  
9 Thank you.

10 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yes. I mean,  
11 you know, unfortunately, despite that  
12 leadership which the speaker has played  
13 during this administration, CUNY has seen,  
14 with the cuts that are now proposed in the  
15 preliminary budget, over \$90 million in  
16 recurring annual cuts.

17 We I think would welcome a kind of  
18 maintenance of effort approach: If the  
19 state's going to put more money in, that the  
20 city doesn't cut.

21 And I urge folks to look at that  
22 REPAIR Act, which would provide so that, you  
23 know, Columbia and NYU, instead of receiving  
24 a \$342 million annual property tax

1 exemption -- at least, let's say, for the  
2 dorms, which essentially function like  
3 residential property -- would be taxed, and  
4 those resources could be targeted to CUNY.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Well, thank you.  
6 I know I'm out of time, but -- (no audio).

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Good afternoon.  
8 I think I'm the last on the Senate side, just  
9 double-checking. Thank you all for  
10 attending.

11 And I was sort of joking about they're  
12 couping the city since you're all up here.  
13 But I did see a large number of people here.  
14 I was like, hmm, who's at home?

15 (Laughter.)

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So Brad, you  
17 already answered the explanation for the  
18 capital borrowing as far as the dollar  
19 amounts that you believe are reasonable  
20 within the context of real estate values of  
21 the City of New York.

22 Do you think we need to clarify with  
23 you and the City Council what that money is  
24 being spent for when we decide we're going to

1 support this ask? Or do you feel like you  
2 and the council have a legal role that  
3 ensures that the people of the City of  
4 New York agree with how \$12 billion would be  
5 borrowed and then have to be paid back?

6 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yeah. I  
7 mean, the capital budgeting process, it moves  
8 through the same, you know, public  
9 transparent budget process. The council,  
10 you know, sees what's in it.

11 There is robust public debate. This  
12 year I've heard from people who are pushing  
13 to make our schools more accessible. You  
14 know, there's a whole range and -- that's not  
15 as much what people advocate for as the  
16 expense budget, but it is robust and  
17 transparent.

18 Some of what City Hall has put forward  
19 as saying here's the need for that increase  
20 are not yet in the capital budget. But the  
21 reality is we don't project actually hitting  
22 the limit till 2029, about five years out.  
23 So this is really paying attention to kind of  
24 that long-term outer limit. Every year we'll

1 make sure to -- you know, that there's good  
2 oversight on the capital budget.

3 As I said, I do think we need actually  
4 a better state of good repair assessment than  
5 the city has. We have an audit coming out  
6 soon that's going to recommend some changes  
7 at the city level to the way we do that. And  
8 I think we need some new city policies to  
9 make sure we stay below that 15 percent  
10 threshold.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So when  
12 Senator Sepúlveda was here, he was talking  
13 about the lawsuit against the city and the  
14 property tax inequities, and I agree with  
15 that. And you and I have had conversations  
16 about how perhaps we could improve the  
17 property tax formulas.

18 We all talk about, though -- and the  
19 Governor in her budget proposal, even though  
20 she's a little vague on the numbers -- about  
21 creating additional housing programs that  
22 will provide tax credits and abatements from  
23 the New York City property tax for real  
24 estate in return for some formula of an

1 X amount of affordable housing.

2 And then I know that the real estate  
3 industry is also lobbying us for a  
4 significant tax abatement for any kind of  
5 energy upgrades that they do. That is also,  
6 I think, an enormous number, potentially.

7 Who's looking at how much money from  
8 property tax you, the City of New York, can  
9 afford to give up for these things? Even  
10 though I think we would all agree affordable  
11 housing is on the top of our list, and  
12 improved green energy is on the top of our  
13 list. When does somebody go, Wait a second  
14 here, this will be 5 billion a year, can we  
15 actually afford to give that up?

16 I'm just wondering whether the council  
17 and the comptroller's office have those  
18 discussions or have a role in that kind of  
19 decision-making if and when the State of  
20 New York moves forward with some of these  
21 proposals that the Governor seems to be  
22 supporting.

23 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: We do a lot  
24 of analysis. And Francesco Brindisi, who's

1 our executive deputy comptroller, is looking  
2 at these things on a really regular basis.

3 It's part of why we -- you know, we  
4 raised concerns about 421-a, that it was  
5 oversubsidizing without really attending on a  
6 kind of deal-by-deal basis to whether there's  
7 a good match between the affordability  
8 benefit we're getting and the tax benefit  
9 we're giving up. It's why one of the things  
10 in our proposal is that on larger deals each  
11 one get underwritten, to make sure we're  
12 giving the right amount away, and not more.

13 We don't have power over the  
14 decision-making there, and we have not taken  
15 a look at the energy tax break that you are  
16 referring to, which I have also heard could  
17 be quite, quite expensive.

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Has the council  
19 taken a look at this from your perspective?

20 NYC COUNCILMAN BRANNAN: Thank you,  
21 Senator.

22 Yeah, I think it's important to -- not  
23 to divorce our housing crisis from our need  
24 for property tax reform. And, you know, the

1 council worked hard with the prior  
2 administration on the blueprint for property  
3 tax reform. But, you know, we ultimately  
4 need a dance partner.

5 But we are also -- we'd love to see  
6 the administration put this as a priority as  
7 well. We're ready to go. Many of, you know,  
8 our colleagues -- this is a huge issue for  
9 folks. And if you're seeing the housing  
10 crisis fixing -- solving for the housing  
11 crisis through the lens of justice and  
12 equity, the property tax system as it exists  
13 right now is inequity hidden in plain sight.

14 So something's got to get done, and  
15 we're ready to roll up our sleeves and work  
16 with you guys.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

18 So this will be a test, for those of  
19 us who are old enough to remember  
20 Senator Moynihan. Any hands up in the  
21 audience?

22 (Laughter.)

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, I see  
24 a few hands. Thank you.

1                   So he used to put out almost an annual  
2                   report on how much more money the State of  
3                   New York gave to Washington, D.C., than it  
4                   got back. And I believe that in various  
5                   years comptrollers and others in the City of  
6                   New York did the same thing on how much more  
7                   we gave -- we as a New York City resident  
8                   gave Albany, versus getting back.

9                   Are there any new numbers to work off  
10                  of? I'm just curious if anybody's looking at  
11                  that.

12                 NYC EX. DEP. COMPTROLLER BRINDISI: I  
13                 am.

14                 (Inaudible; off the record.)

15                 NYC EX. DEP. COMPTROLLER BRINDISI: I  
16                 think the general sense of the balance of  
17                 payment between the city and the state where,  
18                 you know, the city is the economic engine,  
19                 it's got a lot of jobs that are -- as part of  
20                 the general business district, right, that  
21                 are located in the city -- those dynamics are  
22                 still very much in play. They have not  
23                 really changed significantly, even though  
24                 there has been outmigration from the city to

1 the suburbs. Right?

2 So that, I think, you know, it's  
3 something that -- although we don't have  
4 numbers at our fingertips right now, it's  
5 something that is still very much in play,  
6 where the city sort of contributes to the  
7 state budget more than it receives.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So thank you. I  
9 think most of us in the Legislature believe  
10 we are elected to represent all 19.5 million  
11 New Yorkers even if our home base might or  
12 might not be New York City. But sometimes  
13 when you sit up here in budget hearings  
14 enough time, you start to internalize, boy,  
15 all the money's going to New York City, it's  
16 always all about New York City.

17 And I just really wanted to remind  
18 everyone that's not really true. And in fact  
19 as you all heard, because you were all  
20 sitting here for the previous panel of  
21 upstate cities and the fact that they need  
22 more AIM -- and they do -- but we haven't  
23 given New York City AIM in years and years  
24 and years, even though we promised to put it

1 back. I remember, I was here. We've cut the  
2 formulas for administration of government  
3 benefits and social services.

4 As you talked about, I think, both the  
5 tax intercept in relation to distressed  
6 hospitals, does anybody have a sense of just  
7 how much more you'd be getting from Albany if  
8 we just hadn't done all of these inequitable  
9 cuts to you that we didn't apply to anyone  
10 else?

11 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: It's a  
12 lot. A lot.

13 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: We can get  
14 back to you with the details, for sure.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I just think it's  
16 important to put all of that in perspective  
17 whenever we're talking about the needs of  
18 localities and what we're going to do in the  
19 state budget or not do in the state budget.

20 And I think people haven't like added  
21 those numbers up in a while. So I didn't  
22 really -- I wasn't trying to go stump you, I  
23 just think that would actually be good  
24 information for us to all have as we're

1 negotiating a budget over the next month or  
2 so.

3 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you,  
4 Senator.

5 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So I'm going to  
6 cede back my time, and I really appreciate  
7 your all being here today.

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

9 We go to Assemblywoman Hyndman.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you,  
11 Chair Weinstein.

12 Good afternoon. Thank you for coming  
13 here today, all the way to Albany.

14 I have a couple of questions. I'm  
15 going to ask the comptroller first, and then  
16 Speaker Adams.

17 I know -- I think -- I believe you  
18 support the increase of basement apartments  
19 around the City of New York. Do you also  
20 support the -- raising the FAR ratio cap? I  
21 know City Council supports it.

22 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yes. That  
23 would let the city then decide -- you know, I  
24 mean, it still is a city decision on where to

1 map FAR, but that would enable the city to  
2 have a higher one as it maps, yes.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I just also  
4 wonder -- I know a lot of -- both of you,  
5 from your testimony -- we've talked a lot  
6 about the low-income in supports for the City  
7 of New York. But in the Governor's budget  
8 she's zeroed out the HOPP program, the  
9 housing opportunity program that helps  
10 homeowners maintain housing. I don't know if  
11 you know that, but I would hope we could get  
12 some support in making sure that we get that  
13 back in.

14 We haven't talked a lot about  
15 maintaining homeowners in the City of  
16 New York, because that is the population that  
17 is leaving. I know Councilman Brannan and  
18 our districts really mirror each other, and  
19 these are the individuals that are paying the  
20 bulk of the property taxes that we use for  
21 everything in the city and the state of  
22 New York.

23 NYC COUNCILMAN BRANNAN: Absolutely.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: So please, I

1 would really like your support on the HOPP  
2 program.

3 And my last question is about mayoral  
4 accountability. I remember previous  
5 comptrollers -- Betsy Gotbaum did a lot of  
6 work and working groups and had a report when  
7 it came to mayoral accountability. And as  
8 you know, that's also in the Governor's  
9 budget where she's asked for four years.

10 That's one policy I think the Assembly  
11 likes to remove from the budget and make it  
12 policy, standalone. I just wanted to know  
13 where both of you stood on that.

14 Thank you.

15 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: You know,  
16 when I was in the council I was a long-time  
17 supporter of what we called municipal  
18 control. You know, in which the mayor still  
19 has a lot of authority over the school  
20 system, but in which the council is a full  
21 partner. And broadly, that is what I would  
22 like to -- what I would like to see.

23 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: For us  
24 right now, our focus hasn't been so much on

1           that issue, it's more on maintaining and the  
2           provision of keeping our programs together --  
3           our school aid, our 3-K. That's been the  
4           primary focus, you know, of the council.

5                     And the other part, we're waiting to  
6           see what the state has to say.

7                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

8                     CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So there are no  
9           more Senators, so we'll go to  
10          Assemblyman Weprin next.

11                    ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: These are new  
12          mics, so we still have to get used to them by  
13          pushing harder.

14                    But it's great to see you all here. I  
15          remember when I chaired the Finance Committee  
16          of the City Council and Tanisha Edwards was  
17          my counsel, I used to come up to Albany. And  
18          one of the things that -- when Mayor  
19          Bloomberg was there, that we would come up on  
20          is making sure that we got our AIM and  
21          increased AIM a number of times.

22                    Senator Jackson brought up with the  
23          mayor about restoring AIM. It was only  
24          supposed to be zeroed out for one year only,

1 I think it was during Governor Cuomo's first  
2 term, maybe it was. And for some reason  
3 people forgot that. There was a commitment  
4 it was only going to be eliminated for one  
5 year.

6 And that of course is unrestricted  
7 funds, so even though the dollar amount might  
8 not be as large as other dollar amounts of  
9 aid to the city, that was a tremendous  
10 resource because it, you know, didn't have  
11 the restrictions that other aid has.

12 And I know Senator Jackson brought it  
13 up with the mayor, and the mayor said he  
14 would support that. Is there any talk about,  
15 you know, lobbying to restore AIM, which was  
16 only supposed to be eliminated for one year  
17 only?

18 NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: You raised a  
19 really good point. We have, just like with  
20 the sales tax intercept, just like with the  
21 MTA cuts, just like with FMAP, which are  
22 generally recent cuts, AIM, that's still  
23 generally a high priority of the council  
24 because we would like that money back.

1           Because as you've said, it's allowed us to do  
2           whatever we want.

3                     But oftentimes -- you know, it  
4           happened over a decade ago, so not that it's  
5           less important, but just --

6                     ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: But it would be a  
7           lot more money now. It would have been, you  
8           know, in the billions by now.

9                     NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: It's in  
10          the -- well, I think it was a little less  
11          than a billion by maybe \$700 million. But we  
12          had a lot of money.

13                    So we're still -- that's something  
14          that we have not forgotten about. But there  
15          are sort of other recent priorities that we  
16          continue to fight for, and AIM will be one of  
17          them that we now will have a loud voice on.  
18          But unrestricted aid was huge then, and it  
19          should be now also.

20                    ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Well, I would  
21          like to support a campaign to bring it back,  
22          along with Senator Jackson, who raised it  
23          with the mayor. So if you want to  
24          strategize on that, I'm willing to get

1 involved.

2 And I have 30 seconds left. I just  
3 want to put on Comptroller Lander's radar  
4 when he mentioned the NYU tax exemption and  
5 the Columbia tax exemption, I've had a bill  
6 for many years, along with Senator Kavanagh  
7 in the Senate, to eliminate Madison Square  
8 Garden's tax exemption --

9 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Amen.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: -- which is a  
11 huge amount, and that's certainly much more  
12 private in their use than NYU and Columbia.

13 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I support it.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Okay. I have one  
15 second left.

16 (Laughter.)

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

18 We go to Assemblywoman González-Rojas.

19 (Pause.)

20 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: She stepped  
21 out, so we'll go to Assemblyman Otis.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you. Welcome  
23 back, Helene.

24 So thank you all for your testimony.

1 I want to talk about affordable housing. And  
2 two years ago, Comptroller Lander, you put  
3 out a good report about the 421-a program  
4 sort of detailing how it really wasn't  
5 providing affordable housing to the income  
6 ranges that we would call people in need of  
7 affordable housing.

8 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yup.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: And so more  
10 broadly -- and this is a problem actually not  
11 just with 421-a, but with other kinds of  
12 affordable housing programs outside of  
13 New York City as well, where we're having  
14 programs that are dealing with folks who are  
15 sort of upper-middle-class incomes, and we're  
16 leaving out a lot of people at AMIs that are  
17 much lower.

18 So comments about where you see that  
19 issue going. And Madam Speaker, if you have  
20 comments on the same issue as well, you can  
21 both feed into that real dynamic. Because we  
22 need to be providing affordable housing for a  
23 wider range of people who are working but  
24 have more moderate incomes.

1                   NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Absolutely.  
2                   As you say -- and, you know, when we looked  
3                   at 421-a, the bulk of the units that have  
4                   been created in the last four years of the  
5                   program were in the outer borough,  
6                   130 percent AMI programs. So still rental  
7                   housing, it wasn't even like a  
8                   homeownership -- it was rental housing, but  
9                   it was only affordable to the wealthiest  
10                  25 percent of New York City residents. And I  
11                  just -- that didn't pass the smell test as  
12                  affordable housing. But we were still giving  
13                  full tax -- 35-year tax exemptions for those  
14                  developments.

15                  And this is the kind of scrutiny we  
16                  need of our affordable housing programs. You  
17                  know, I don't mind scaled incentives. There  
18                  certainly are middle-class families who, you  
19                  know, can't afford to live in New York City.  
20                  But we've got to focus our energy on kind of  
21                  hardworking folks and really target -- I gave  
22                  the example in my testimony on vouchers. You  
23                  know, the mayor actually talks often about  
24                  how there's just a few hundred people who

1 cycle through, are homeless and mentally ill,  
2 cycle through Rikers, cycle through the  
3 hospitals.

4 So let's focus, you know, our vouchers  
5 to make sure those folks get off the street,  
6 stop spending so much money on jails and  
7 hospitals -- and target our affordability  
8 programs to the working families who really  
9 need them.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you.

11 Madam Speaker?

12 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Yes, and  
13 thank you. I just believe that a program to  
14 incentivize affordable housing is absolutely  
15 imperative. Anything that we can do to get  
16 there, we need to use all available tools  
17 that we can possibly have to help deliver  
18 affordable housing at all of the levels that  
19 New Yorkers need -- I think that we need to  
20 do that and do it together.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you very  
22 much. Thank you both for your good work.

23 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you.

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

1           Thank you all for being here. Sorry I  
2 missed the beginning of your presentations,  
3 but I did see the written remarks. So thank  
4 you all for being up here today, and we're  
5 going to move on to our panels of -- Panel C.  
6 I'll just give you a few minutes to gather  
7 your belongings.

8           Thank you, Brad.

9           So our Panel C is going to be the  
10 New York State Conference of Mayors,  
11 Executive Director Barbara Van Epps; New York  
12 State Association of Counties, NYSAC,  
13 Executive Director Steven Acquario; and  
14 Association of Towns of the State of  
15 New York, Gerry Geist, executive director.

16           We'll just take a few minutes as  
17 people stretch their legs and say hello and  
18 goodbye.

19           (Pause.)

20           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we are ready  
21 to begin, thank you. We can go in the order  
22 that we announced, Barbara first.

23           MS. VAN EPPS: Sure. Can you hear me?

24           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: The ring needs

1 to turn green. Now -- you're green now, so  
2 you should be okay.

3 MS. VAN EPPS: Okay, great. Yes,  
4 there it is.

5 Assemblymember Weinstein, Senator  
6 Krueger -- wherever she is -- and  
7 distinguished members of the State  
8 Legislature, thank you so much for giving me  
9 the opportunity to testify in front of you on  
10 behalf of the 575 cities and villages that  
11 are members of NYCOM.

12 This is my first time testifying  
13 before you as the executive director, but I  
14 have worked with many of you over the years  
15 on a variety of issues, and I look forward to  
16 continuing to do that with those I have  
17 previously worked with and the rest of you  
18 going forward.

19 So you have my written testimony. I'm  
20 not going to read from that. I just want to  
21 highlight a few issues.

22 I'm sure you'll be shocked to see that  
23 the first issue in our testimony was AIM  
24 funding. And I know you've spent a lot of

1 time talking about AIM funding. You've  
2 already heard from all of the city mayors  
3 earlier about AIM funding, but I just want to  
4 echo some of their remarks. As I think many  
5 of them stated, we as mayors have the same  
6 goals as the Governor in terms of both -- two  
7 of the biggest goals being affordability and  
8 public safety.

9 We are on the frontlines of doing  
10 that. But as the costs of everything  
11 continue to go up, particularly public  
12 safety, and every single one of our  
13 communities have -- that's our largest cost  
14 driver. Whether it's EMS, whether it's  
15 police, whether it's fire, every single one  
16 of our communities are feeling the pressure  
17 of the rising costs as a result of public  
18 safety.

19 And we also have a tax cap to contend  
20 with. But the only way we can address these  
21 issues, particularly the public safety  
22 issues, are by raising taxes. We don't have  
23 AIM funding to help us fill those gaps. It  
24 translates directly into property tax

1 increases and putting an increasing burden on  
2 our taxpayers.

3 So I know we talked a lot about this  
4 today, and I will say I don't know what the  
5 answer is either. We talked to  
6 Assemblymember Thiele and Senator Martinez,  
7 who were both at our conference yesterday,  
8 about -- you have always been very generous  
9 to us in your one-house budgets when it comes  
10 to AIM funding. And one of the questions we  
11 had asked the two who came to our meeting  
12 yesterday was how do we -- what do we do to  
13 help you get this over the finish line?

14 We've talked about changing the name.  
15 We actually did change the name a couple of  
16 years ago; we called it the Municipal  
17 Investment Initiative, the MII. We've talked  
18 about different criteria to put into the  
19 formula, which has been not withstood for  
20 several years. We even talked about tying  
21 strings to how we use the money. And maybe  
22 that's public safety, and maybe that's  
23 housing, but we are open to any and all  
24 suggestions.

1           We don't have to call it AIM anymore,  
2           we just want to try to get something for our  
3           communities. Since it has been 15 years, our  
4           costs are rising -- you know, the cost of  
5           everything is going up. We just need some  
6           way to figure out how we plug this hole and  
7           how we get this across the finish line.

8           Mayor Sheehan pointed out that the  
9           cost of living, she said, was in the  
10          30 percent range. I think we did the  
11          adjustment. It's closer to like 43 percent,  
12          based on the numbers we have. That would  
13          call for a much bigger number than you are  
14          probably able to -- or the state is able to  
15          provide for us.

16          But as Mayor Sheehan and the other  
17          mayors said, we aren't looking for the full  
18          \$309 million. We'll take a 10 to 15 percent  
19          increase and maybe tie it to something so we  
20          can have something that we can rely on going  
21          forward.

22          Infrastructure obviously continues to  
23          be a huge issue -- even more so recently with  
24          the increased focus on housing, especially

1 after last year. Generally speaking, the  
2 state has been good to us in terms of  
3 infrastructure. We've gotten the increases  
4 in transportation funding over the years.  
5 But unfortunately, our needs continue to far  
6 outpace the resources we have available. It  
7 was already raised before.

8 We also have these ADA requirements  
9 for curb ramps that we talked about earlier.  
10 That is eating up more and more of our CHIPS  
11 allocations. We have some communities that  
12 say those requirements alone are eating up  
13 their entire CHIPS allocation.

14 So we have concerns about needing more  
15 transportation funding, but even greater  
16 concerns about the cuts that are in the  
17 Governor's budget, the 60 million reduction  
18 to the CHIPS program and the 40 million to  
19 the Touring Routes program. We have concerns  
20 about that, obviously. We're hoping that we  
21 can get the Legislature to restore those  
22 cuts, but also increase those funding  
23 streams. Because other than the Touring  
24 Routes, all of those other transportation

1 programs that you've been funding go to every  
2 single community. We all benefit from that.

3 In terms of water and sewer  
4 infrastructure, that's another area where you  
5 have been very generous to us. Again, our  
6 members find that money difficult to get  
7 their hands on because most of it comes  
8 through grants and loans and you have to  
9 apply for those. So we have asked for the  
10 last several years for a dedicated funding  
11 stream similar to CHIPS.

12 CHIPS is popular because it's  
13 reliable, it's based on a formula. So we'd  
14 like to see a funding stream similar to that  
15 to go to communities that have public water  
16 and sewer systems so they can count on that  
17 money for maintenance and upgrades, so they  
18 don't have to wait for an emergency to try to  
19 get their hands on grant money. So that's  
20 been something that's been very important to  
21 us.

22 We also think with, again, the  
23 increased pressure on housing, that will help  
24 in that regard as well, because

1 infrastructure is a big issue. It's a big  
2 barrier when it comes to expanding housing.  
3 So if we have the money to maintain and  
4 upkeep that infrastructure, that would be  
5 very helpful to us.

6 And I just have to say, in speaking of  
7 housing, we have come a long, long way in a  
8 year. I'm very glad I wasn't the executive  
9 director last year when we were dealing with  
10 the housing compact, because you may recall  
11 some of our members were a little upset by  
12 that. So we appreciate all the efforts you  
13 did to recognize that, you know, zoning needs  
14 to be a local issue, a local choice.

15 We think the pro-housing communities  
16 were happy to see that the Governor has  
17 turned her attention to a more  
18 incentive-based, roundup, you know, local  
19 option program when it comes to housing. We  
20 have a lot of mayors who are out there and  
21 really want to do the right thing, and we  
22 think with some, you know, more  
23 enticements -- more money for infrastructure,  
24 more flexibility, removing some of those

1 barriers -- that we are definitely heading in  
2 the right direction.

3 Illegal cannabis sales. We have some  
4 real concerns about that. With the rollout  
5 taking as long as it did at the state level,  
6 there's obviously a lot more illegal cannabis  
7 and illegal cannabis shops popping up around  
8 in our communities.

9 We were happy to see that the Governor  
10 put language in there that would not only  
11 strengthen the state's ability to combat  
12 those illegal sales, but also give local  
13 government the tools to do that. We think  
14 that's very important. That's something I  
15 know a lot of our mayors are going to be  
16 interested in taking advantage of.

17 And then the last thing I'll say is on  
18 the issues of mental health, homelessness,  
19 and substance use issues. That has obviously  
20 become a much, much bigger issue for our  
21 communities, mostly as a result -- it was  
22 always an issue, but it's gotten 10 times  
23 worse, a lot worse since the pandemic.

24 From our perspective, one of the

1 biggest challenges is a lot of these issues  
2 are concentrated in cities, but a lot of the  
3 resources are concentrated in the counties.  
4 And that's just by function of the fact that  
5 the counties are the social services arm of  
6 the state.

7 So we just want to see a little more  
8 coordination there -- more of the money  
9 flowing to cities; more, you know, creative  
10 ways of responding to this. A lot of times  
11 it's our police officers that are responding  
12 at 2:00 in the morning because the county  
13 offices closed at 5:00, and how can we work  
14 together to make it so that the right people  
15 are there to deal with these folks and get  
16 them the right services and the right  
17 shelters that they need.

18 So we just want to have more of a  
19 collaboration, a seat at the table to talk  
20 about how we best deal with these issues.

21 So with that, I will cede my last  
22 two minutes to my colleagues.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Steve?

24 MR. ACQUARIO: Thank you. Just

1 waiting for the green light to come on.

2 Thank you. My name is Steven  
3 Acquario. I'm the executive director of the  
4 New York Association of Counties, or NYSAC,  
5 as it's known.

6 NYSAC is a 100-year municipal  
7 association. It was formed in 1925 by county  
8 officials for county officials and provides  
9 education, research, advocacy in a  
10 government-to-government collaboration with  
11 the state.

12 And it's wonderful to be with you  
13 here. Thank you for the invitation to come  
14 here to report on the counties of New York --  
15 the 57 counties and the City of New York,  
16 with its five boroughs, our members of the  
17 association.

18 I want to thank our Local Government  
19 chairs, Monica Martinez in the Senate,  
20 Fred Thiele in the Assembly; the ranking  
21 members, Senator Rhoads and Ari Brown. I  
22 extend birthday wishes to Ari Brown. There's  
23 nothing better than sitting through fiscal  
24 testimony on our birthday. So happy

1 birthday.

2 (Laughter; inaudible response from  
3 Assemblyman Brown.)

4 MR. ACQUARIO: Happy birthday.

5 And thank you to the fiscal chairs,  
6 Senator Krueger, Assemblywoman Weinstein.  
7 It's wonderful to be with you here again.

8 The counties of New York are evolving.  
9 We've been here since the 1600s. The late  
10 1600s, specifically, the counties were  
11 formed; there were 12 of them. And they were  
12 a product of the King of England, and the  
13 names of those counties -- Rockland, Suffolk,  
14 and Nassau, the Boroughs of the City of  
15 New York, Dutchess, Ulster -- regal counties.  
16 They all come from the King of England.

17 But we've evolved and have different  
18 functions over the years as we've come into  
19 2024.

20 We are a general-purpose local  
21 government. That's why you hear counties  
22 complaining all the time. They want to use  
23 local resources for local programs and to  
24 address the needs in their community -- like

1 the towns, the cities, and the villages.

2 But we've become the administrative  
3 arm of the State of New York since the 1960s,  
4 providing every single service that the State  
5 of New York pays for or partially pays for,  
6 we have to deliver. So we are your service  
7 delivery agent. Whether you're in the City  
8 of New York, the County of Westchester, the  
9 County of Suffolk, the County of Warren, we  
10 are delivering the state services.

11 So that's why there's a lot of tension  
12 going back and forth between counties and the  
13 state, because we want to use local resources  
14 for local purposes.

15 A couple of items -- as Barb  
16 mentioned, I won't go through our testimony.  
17 We have submitted it for you. I just want to  
18 flag a few things.

19 One is on the short-term rentals:  
20 Airbnbs, your VRBOs. This has taken us many,  
21 many, many years to work with governors to  
22 convince the state to allow sales tax to be  
23 collected. What's collected now on a  
24 voluntary basis through certain companies is

1 an occupancy tax.

2 So this legislation that  
3 Governor Hochul has introduced in this budget  
4 would modernize the state sales tax code to  
5 include the vacation rental industry. These  
6 changes would ensure short-term rentals are  
7 treated the same as any other temporary  
8 lodging, such as a hotel or an inn.

9 So we're very supportive of that. We  
10 thank the Governor. We ask for your  
11 consideration in modernizing these  
12 short-term-rental sales tax laws.

13 In rem foreclosure, the United States  
14 Supreme Court ruled last year that surplus --  
15 any surplus from a foreclosed property must  
16 be returned to the homeowner. Okay. That's  
17 the law of the land. The Legislature  
18 introduced a bill that you passed last year  
19 to do a moratorium. The Governor has now  
20 introduced language in the budget this year  
21 that we do strongly support.

22 It's a very complex issue on  
23 foreclosure. Nobody wants to foreclose on  
24 anyone's property for failure to pay taxes.

1 And the surplus that's generated on any tax  
2 foreclosure will be returned to any prior  
3 owner.

4 It's very complicated to find that  
5 owner and make sure legally it goes to the  
6 proper owner and that there's no disputes  
7 amongst family members or things of that  
8 nature. But administrative costs, the  
9 penalties, all of these things are factored  
10 into the Governor's language. So we very  
11 much support how the Governor is treating  
12 this issue and ask for your consideration on  
13 in rem foreclosure.

14 I'd like to ask you for \$625 million,  
15 because that's the amount of money that was  
16 intercepted by the federal Medicaid program  
17 last year in 2023. This was funds that we  
18 worked with United States Senate Majority  
19 Leader Schumer, dedicated for county  
20 governments -- it was intercepted by the  
21 state. That's \$625 million that we received  
22 in 2023, including the City of New York, that  
23 we do not receive today.

24 So I would like that to be discussed

1 and considered in your deliberations. These  
2 are fundings that go for our most vulnerable  
3 populations such as older Americans, our  
4 workforce housing, children and special  
5 healthcare needs, disabled veterans, and  
6 counsel for disadvantaged communities. We  
7 urge the Legislature to continue those  
8 discussions on the lost Medicaid monies.

9 Rescuing EMS. We continue to have a  
10 crisis in our volunteer fire, emergency  
11 medical system, advanced lifesaving systems,  
12 basic life systems in our ambulance systems,  
13 the amount of time it takes to get an  
14 ambulance to pick somebody up, whether you're  
15 in rural Warren County or urban  
16 Suffolk County. There's an issue with  
17 recruitment, retention, how do we keep these  
18 systems running.

19 EMS is not traditionally a county  
20 function, and we do not want it to become a  
21 county function. But in certain  
22 circumstances some counties have come  
23 forward -- Wayne County, Wyoming County,  
24 Greene County, Niagara County,

1           Montgomery County, and a growing list of  
2           others -- that need some reform, that need a  
3           taxing district to help offset a property tax  
4           impact to provide these services, working in  
5           conjunction with our towns.

6                     So working very closely with the  
7           EMS community, our towns, villages, and  
8           cities, we think the package of legislation  
9           that's been introduced by the Governor is a  
10          good start to have this discussion. So we  
11          ask for your support in that regard.

12                    Under some judicial-related issues,  
13          under indigent legal services -- again, a  
14          program that is the state's constitutional  
15          responsibility that they mandate the counties  
16          of New York and the City of New York provide.  
17          The state is sweeping 120 million out of the  
18          Office of Indigent Legal Services and  
19          depositing that into the General Fund.

20                    We would ask that you use those funds  
21          to pay for the increases to the counties last  
22          year of 90 million for the increased hourly  
23          rates.

24                    We also urge caution on the expansion

1 of Supreme Court judges. We oppose this  
2 issue of expanding the number of  
3 Supreme Court judges unless there's a fiscal  
4 note tied to it. The counties are  
5 responsible for the capital costs of the  
6 chambers and the courts to house the Supreme  
7 Court judges. We estimate it to be a  
8 \$240 million cost shift to the counties.

9 So we would ask that that not be  
10 approved unless there's a fiscal tie to that  
11 and a plan, through the Office of Court  
12 Administration, on how to house these judges.

13 We support, as Barbara mentioned, the  
14 CHIPS funding for our local governments.  
15 It's a program that works very well amongst  
16 the towns, cities, counties, and villages.  
17 You have increased that; last year you added  
18 an extra 100 million. We strongly support  
19 the restoration of those funds for our towns,  
20 counties, cities and villages in the CHIPS  
21 program.

22 Lastly, many counties have submitted  
23 shared-services programs in 2023. The  
24 Governor is eliminating this program in this

1 year's budget. We would ask that -- we do  
2 support the sunset of the program, but we ask  
3 for your consideration: 18 counties  
4 submitted a shared services with towns,  
5 cities, villages and counties last year in  
6 2023, and we would ask that those projects  
7 that were previously submitted be given an  
8 opportunity to receive funding.

9 Thank you very much again for the  
10 invitation to be here today.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

12 Who is next?

13 MR. GEIST: Yes, good afternoon,  
14 Chairwoman Krueger and chairs of the local  
15 finance committee Fred Thiele and  
16 Senator Martinez. Thank you. And all the  
17 other members of the Legislature who are  
18 here, thank you on behalf of the Association  
19 of Towns, 933 towns across the state. Thank  
20 you for allowing us to comment on the  
21 Governor's budget and how towns are fixed  
22 this year in 2024.

23 You know, this is going to be my last  
24 experience before you; I'm retiring on

1 May 1st. And nothing would please me better  
2 than to tell my members, all 933, that we're  
3 getting an AIM increase for the first time  
4 since I've been in this chair.

5 As my colleagues have mentioned, AIM  
6 is so significant. It represents a true  
7 partnership with the State of New York and  
8 its towns, villages, and cities. And we  
9 don't quite understand why the Governor's  
10 office has resisted.

11 We've tried -- as my colleague  
12 Barbara Van Epps has mentioned -- we tried to  
13 rename it, we tried to come up with different  
14 alternatives, we tried to do anything to make  
15 it more appealable.

16 You know, the thing is, in the state  
17 of the entire budget it's not a lot of  
18 dollars. However, it's so significant to my  
19 members. You know, we're all dealing with  
20 living under the construct of the tax cap.  
21 We have increased costs, increased service  
22 costs, salaries, pension, insurance, cost of  
23 fuel. The cost of everything is going up,  
24 and we don't have an increase in 15 years.

1                   And we do so much every day in terms  
2                   of public safety, public resources,  
3                   libraries, recreation. We do so much every  
4                   day for our constituents. This extra money  
5                   would make a significant difference.

6                   Everyone always says, Well, what would  
7                   an extra \$20,000 mean to a town? It could  
8                   mean a lot of things. It could mean hiring a  
9                   grant writer so they could become, you know,  
10                  part of the housing, the pro-housing  
11                  community. It could be a grant writer to get  
12                  more funding for highway equipment. It could  
13                  be adding some more kids for the summer in  
14                  the rec programs, or it could be doing more  
15                  services in a library.

16                  Money like this, to be given to our  
17                  towns, makes a significant difference. And I  
18                  have to thank the two houses here, the  
19                  Assembly and the Senate, for everything  
20                  they've done for towns and continue to do so.  
21                  You've been a tremendous advocate for us, and  
22                  I hope that you can do something in your  
23                  discussions with the second floor later this  
24                  year to push this across. It would mean a

1 lot to me and my towns.

2 Secondly, we've all heard about CHIPS.  
3 And even though the Governor says it's flat,  
4 it's really a reduction from last year  
5 because she's cut out the monies that you  
6 appropriated last year. All you have to do  
7 is travel the state from Eastern Long Island  
8 to the top of the Adirondacks to Western  
9 New York, and you'll see the roads need help.

10 And, you know, this is an interesting  
11 fact. In our state, 85 percent of the roads  
12 throughout the towns are controlled by the  
13 towns. And it's an incredible amount of  
14 roads and maintenance. When I served as a  
15 town board member, what I learned was that  
16 the road maintenance review, they said the  
17 roads had to be maintained every 10 years.  
18 Well, I can tell you now it's every 20 years,  
19 because the monies have dried up.

20 And, you know, the school buses travel  
21 on the roads every day. People need to get  
22 to work, to travel on the roads every day.  
23 Commerce, every day you see an Amazon truck  
24 go by. So we need more help in roads, and we

1           hope that you will restore those cuts and do  
2           more. And once again, we always appreciate  
3           what you do for our roads and our members.

4                     And now I want to talk about water and  
5           sewer infrastructure. As was mentioned  
6           earlier, a lot of the money through grant  
7           programs is not good -- or able to be easily  
8           obtained by a lot of the towns that are  
9           smaller in size. And my towns represent a  
10          range of difference: There's a town of  
11          38 people -- it's the smallest one in the  
12          state -- up to almost 800,000 in Long Island.  
13          So we're all over the place geographically.

14                    But what I can tell you is water and  
15          sewer, like a dedicated program for CHIPS, is  
16          so meaningful. And all you have to do is  
17          pick up the newspaper or read what happened  
18          yesterday in the City of Los Angeles to know  
19          what's coming.

20                    I have two children who live in  
21          Los Angeles. Eight inches of rain in  
22          24 hours in downtown L.A. Now, we all know  
23          the song "It Never Rains in Southern  
24          California," but try telling all of them

1 yesterday what it was like out there.

2 Climate change is real. It's coming.  
3 And there's no greater urgency for water and  
4 sewer infrastructure and dedicated funding  
5 for our efforts than what we saw last night  
6 on the news. We really need to do it, and I  
7 urge you all to do that.

8 Now, on a couple of other things.  
9 Justice Court. You know, the towns have been  
10 taking care of the Justice Court for years.  
11 When Governor Spitzer was governor, he did  
12 away with State Troopers prosecuting vehicle  
13 and traffic tickets, so the towns had to go  
14 out and hire prosecutors, for the most part.

15 They have not raised the fine money  
16 for local governments since 1997, that small  
17 portion of the V&T tickets. So we're asking  
18 your permission to allow the Justice Court  
19 fees for small -- you know, for towns to be  
20 raised. It doesn't come out of the state  
21 budget. It would only be paid by the  
22 offending person. And I think it's \$12,  
23 which is the local portion. I think we  
24 can -- let's raise it to 20 and help out the

1 cost of running our court system so  
2 importantly.

3 We've heard about the EMS program.  
4 The only thing -- we support the Governor's  
5 proposal, but we don't want it to override  
6 existing town or village EMS programs that  
7 are already providing ambulance districts.

8 In my town, because we didn't have  
9 one, we created our own ambulance district.  
10 It works great. So we're supportive of the  
11 new legislation, but let's not override or  
12 supersede what's already been done. Let them  
13 work in harmony.

14 (Inaudible remark from Mr. Acquario.)

15 MR. GEIST: And I've spoken to the  
16 counties and NYCOM, we all agree on that  
17 part.

18 Now, the other thing we also support  
19 is on the vacation rentals. We believe that  
20 that money should be allocated to the  
21 counties through the towns as well, the --  
22 you know, for the legislation. That's really  
23 important.

24 Interest rates on judgments. We talk

1           about this a lot. It's 9 percent on a  
2           judgment against a municipality. We think  
3           that should be modified and changed to be  
4           consistent with the current market  
5           conditions, whether it's the 1-Year Treasury  
6           or some other reasonable Wall Street Journal  
7           indices. Because what happens is the longer  
8           it takes for a matter to go on in litigation,  
9           interest rate gets accrued from the beginning  
10          of the action. At 9 percent, it's very  
11          costly for municipalities. That's a real --  
12          it's a real headache.

13                 The other thing we would like to  
14          mention is that towns don't have the  
15          authority to regulate speeds on local roads.  
16          And where villages and cities have that  
17          authority, towns do not.

18                 So in a best case example, in my town  
19          there's a road that's 30 miles an hour. The  
20          road has the same name, it crosses over into  
21          the next governing entity, and it's 25. But  
22          we can't change it without getting a report  
23          from the Department of Transportation and an  
24          act of the State Legislature. So we would

1           like your assistance in trying to get that --  
2           to get that fixed.

3                     And the last thing I'll say, in  
4           wrapping up, is I want to thank each and  
5           every one of you for your dedication and your  
6           hard work for everybody in the State of  
7           New York. It's clear that what you do is not  
8           just about your communities or who you  
9           represent. Each of you -- over the  
10          years I've spoken with many of you -- have  
11          always understood that you're responsible for  
12          everybody in this great state. And I thank  
13          you for your support of towns throughout the  
14          years, and I look forward to working with you  
15          until I retire.

16                    Thanks so much.

17                    (Laughter.)

18                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

19                    We go to the chair of our Local  
20          Governments, Assemblyman Thiele.

21                    ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Good afternoon to  
22          all of you. It's a pleasure to see you all,  
23          and it's been, you know, great to work with  
24          all of you through the last many years.

1           And Barbara, we've gotten to know each  
2           other but it's your first time in the actual  
3           seat there, so you did a great job and it was  
4           a pleasure to hear from all of you.

5           I'm going to ask you all a question  
6           that I couldn't get the mayors to answer  
7           earlier, and that had to do with -- not very  
8           much, anyway. And I couldn't get them to  
9           really talk about the changes post-pandemic  
10          that we made in the Open Meetings Law that  
11          allows for hybrid meetings and remote  
12          participation by the public but also, in  
13          limited circumstances, also by members of  
14          public bodies.

15          When we did that, it was new, it was  
16          different. You know, we were still getting  
17          used to the technology, and that's why it has  
18          a sunset date in it that comes up this year.  
19          The Governor has proposed to extend it. You  
20          know, my question is really how has that  
21          worked out so far? Are there any changes  
22          that you would recommend based on the  
23          experience that your members have had in this  
24          particular area?

1           MR. GEIST: Thank you for that  
2 question.

3           We support the extension of the video  
4 conferencing. Our data and our information,  
5 from what we gather, is that people don't  
6 abuse it and that it's an opportunity to  
7 continue government in a modern way and that  
8 it does not violate the principles of good  
9 government. And we support that proposition.

10          ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

11          Barbara?

12          (Pause.)

13          MS. VAN EPPS: I'm having trouble with  
14 the microphone, folks, I'm sorry.

15          I echo Gerry's remarks. We  
16 certainly -- what we're hearing from our  
17 members, it's increasing public  
18 participation, it's increasing access. I  
19 certainly would say that we support an  
20 extender, if not making it permanent, because  
21 I think this is the way of the world now. I  
22 think they're going to continue to have, you  
23 know, people who want to just be in their  
24 homes and participate that way.

1           The only thing I will raise -- and  
2           we've heard this from our members -- is that  
3           there's some confusion over whether the  
4           recordings suffice for minutes, if it's  
5           sufficient for being minutes. And I know  
6           that's --

7           ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: I've heard that  
8           question also.

9           MS. VAN EPPS: I think we've raised  
10          that with some of the legislators in the  
11          past, is that there's still -- according to  
12          our attorneys, there's still a requirement  
13          that minutes be produced and you can't just  
14          use the video recording. But the language is  
15          a little confusing.

16          And so, if anything, we would ask that  
17          maybe you could clarify that language. But  
18          in terms of, you know, having the ability to  
19          do that, I think we would fully support the  
20          extension or making it permanent.

21          ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.

22          Steve?

23          MR. ACQUARIO: Like the cities and  
24          villages and towns, we would also support the

1 extension.

2 We have the clerks of the legislative  
3 boards in the LOB in two weeks; I'd like to  
4 bring them to meet with you --

5 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Sure.

6 MR. ACQUARIO: -- and go over the very  
7 technical specifics of how the bodies are  
8 operating right now.

9 The preference is in-person governance  
10 at the county level. That's the preference  
11 right now.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: By members of  
13 public bodies.

14 MR. ACQUARIO: Yeah. Yes.

15 And we would support the continuation  
16 of this if not, as Barb mentioned, making it  
17 permanent.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Okay, thank you.

19 MR. ACQUARIO: But we'll see you in  
20 two weeks.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Okay.

22 You know, with regard to AIM,  
23 obviously the topic of the day from the  
24 electeds as well as from the associations.

1           And, you know, Senator Martinez and I, you  
2           know, are both committed in our respective  
3           houses to continue to push this, you know, in  
4           our one-house budget bills. And I know  
5           there's a lot of support among my colleagues  
6           in local -- who, you know, represent towns,  
7           villages, cities, for this.

8                     You know, we'll try to be creative and  
9           see if we can come up with something that  
10          breaks through this -- you know, climate  
11          change is real, but it hasn't been able to  
12          unfreeze AIM funding, right?

13                    (Laughter.)

14                    ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: So we'll see what  
15          we can do this year with regard to that.  
16          maybe, you know, phase something in over a  
17          period of years like what happened with  
18          Foundation Aid. So we look forward to  
19          continuing to work with you on that.

20                    You know, on the issue of speed  
21          limits, Gerry, one of the things that I  
22          always find it very hard to explain to the  
23          local governments that I work with in my  
24          district is why the rules for speed limits

1           are different for different levels of  
2           government. Why do villages get to do  
3           something that towns can't do? And, you  
4           know, cities, it's something different. And  
5           it gets very confusing and, you know, we're  
6           trying to protect public safety with having  
7           the right level of speed limits.

8                        So maybe we can talk with our -- in  
9           our house with our Transportation chair, Bill  
10          Magnarelli, and talk about at least  
11          uniformity among all the levels of government  
12          as to how they can regulate speed limits.

13                       And my last point here is -- and I'm  
14          going to cede back a fair amount of time --  
15          is the point that, you know, Steve made with  
16          regard to the shared-services program. We've  
17          flagged this also in the Assembly. You know,  
18          those that are in the pipeline already, we  
19          should keep our commitment to. It's fine  
20          going forward. I think there may be  
21          consensus that, you know, the time for this  
22          program has come to an end.

23                       But those that are in process, I think  
24          that is something we in the Legislature



1           and medium cities held a hearing about  
2           concentrated poverty, and one of the things  
3           we learned was that in Onondaga County  
4           outside of Syracuse, only 1 percent of  
5           buildable land is zoned for multifamily  
6           housing. Which says to me that the  
7           municipalities outside of Syracuse are  
8           working very hard to prevent low-income  
9           families from settling there.

10                   And we also learned that concentrated  
11           poverty leads to profoundly differential  
12           outcomes in school success, in generational  
13           wealth, in life expectancy, in just every  
14           measure you can think of.

15                   So if zoning is off the table as a  
16           policy that the state can have any influence  
17           on, what is your solution to addressing  
18           concentrated poverty in our upstate cities?

19                   MR. GEIST: Thank you very much for  
20           that question. It's very thought-provoking,  
21           and I can tell you've spent a lot of time  
22           trying to analyze where we're going here.

23                   As a former town official, and now  
24           running the Towns organization, there are so



1 local level. I think they all can be  
2 overcome. But we all need to work together.  
3 And what I said last year, and I'll repeat it  
4 today, we need to have some type of  
5 comprehensive plan to get input from all the  
6 locals to come up with new ideas that would  
7 be incentivizing local governments to do more  
8 on all these levels.

9 SENATOR MAY: I will say one thing  
10 that I worked on very hard my first year in  
11 office was getting funding for a school in  
12 Syracuse that will be open to kids from the  
13 entire county that's kind of a magnet school  
14 for the arts and STEM. And it's going to  
15 open next year. I'm very excited about that.

16 But are other counties doing that type  
17 of thing to try to get over the barriers  
18 that -- you know, between our school  
19 districts? Because the differentials are so  
20 enormous between school districts within  
21 counties.

22 MR. GEIST: You know, Senator, in my  
23 earlier career I did a lot of work in  
24 childcare in Westchester County. And

1           childcare was so important then, but it's so  
2           much more important now. And the fights that  
3           we did 30, 40 years ago in childcare --  
4           they're still there, but they've dwarfed  
5           every -- it's so much more now.

6                         And that's why I say we need to  
7           incorporate all these things: Childcare,  
8           education. You know, zoning incentives.  
9           Funding from the state. Water and sewer  
10          infrastructure. Because we're all a big tent  
11          and we've got to get everybody working on it  
12          together.

13                        And I think that if given the  
14          opportunity, we have a lot of information to  
15          give and a lot of good examples of what's  
16          worked well around the state.

17                        MS. VAN EPPS: If I can just jump in,  
18          I just want to echo a couple of things Gerry  
19          said. And I appreciate where you're coming  
20          from, Senator. In fact, we came and talked  
21          to you soon after the housing compact was  
22          introduced and sort of had to disagree on  
23          some of the is it just NIMBY or is it really  
24          that these communities don't have the

1 infrastructure, don't have the space to build  
2 housing? And I think for a lot of our  
3 members that was truly the case.

4 But two things I would say, is the  
5 resources. We have to have resources there  
6 for infrastructure. Because the ones that do  
7 want to do it, that's their biggest concern;  
8 they just don't have the infrastructure to  
9 support it.

10 I also think, to Gerry's point,  
11 there's an educational component to this as  
12 well. I think some of our smaller  
13 communities that were threatened by this fact  
14 that the state was going to come in and  
15 override their zoning -- they just need help  
16 in developing a comprehensive plan, seeing  
17 where that development can happen and still,  
18 you know, not put a strain on their  
19 communities or upset the character of their  
20 communities.

21 I think there's a way to do that. But  
22 we're dealing with villages that, you know,  
23 have two and three staff and just don't have  
24 the capability of doing that. So I think

1 that's a very important component as well.

2 And then the two other things we heard  
3 from some of the places that are trying to do  
4 it are that the tax credits, we need -- we  
5 need to take a look at the tax credits and  
6 revise them a little to make them a little  
7 more flexible and popular among developers.

8 But also the fact that the process at  
9 the state level -- and we did talk to the  
10 Budget Director and HCR about this -- the  
11 process of getting some of these approvals  
12 through is taking way, way too long. We've  
13 had things in the pipeline for, you know, six  
14 months to a year, two years. And they just  
15 thought if there's things they can do at the  
16 state level to keep things moving, that will  
17 help us get the results we need.

18 SENATOR MAY: So let me ask you,  
19 because I have a bill to streamline the  
20 Environmental Quality Review process so that  
21 it wouldn't be -- it would really focus on  
22 the environmental impacts of the buildings  
23 and would be less open to kind of frivolous  
24 lawsuits.

1           Which is something that holds back a  
2           lot of multifamily housing development, is  
3           people bringing lawsuits because they think,  
4           you know, the traffic is going to get worse  
5           or something like that. You know, not  
6           totally frivolous, necessarily, but used to  
7           block those kinds of projects.

8           Would you be supportive of that kind  
9           of legislation to make it easier to build  
10          this housing and --

11          MS. VAN EPPS: Yes, we would. NYCOM  
12          would. Streamlining it. Not doing away with  
13          it, but certainly streamlining it, we would  
14          be supportive of.

15          MR. GEIST: And on behalf of Towns,  
16          you know, we would have to look at the  
17          legislation to see the wording. But as long  
18          as it doesn't override but, you know,  
19          modernizes and makes things more efficient,  
20          with local input, you know, depending on the  
21          language, is something we could consider.

22          SENATOR MAY: It's designed to  
23          incentivize infill housing so that you don't  
24          get as much sprawl development, which has all

1 kinds of environmental impacts of its own.  
2 So trying to make sure that we're looking  
3 globally at the environmental impacts of  
4 building housing.

5 Yeah, okay. Thank you very much.

6 MS. VAN EPPS: Thank you.

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

8 Assembly.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman  
10 Otis.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you all. And  
12 like Fred Thiele, I know all of you and have  
13 worked with all of you on different issues  
14 and thank you for your good advocacy here.

15 Steve and Gerry spoke about the EMS  
16 issue, but I want to give Barbara an  
17 opportunity to feed in on that. And it is a  
18 complicated issue around the state, but one  
19 that has gotten to crisis proportions, and so  
20 want to make sure NYCOM is heard as well.

21 MS. VAN EPPS: I would love to chime  
22 in. I should have, because it is in my  
23 testimony and I ceded my last two minutes and  
24 I could have covered EMS.

1           So we are supportive of the Governor's  
2           proposal.  Actually, this -- declaring EMS as  
3           an essential service is actually part of our  
4           legislative program this year.  We think it  
5           deserves that recognition.  We think, you  
6           know, it has to be taken seriously.  People  
7           have to be able to get EMS services when they  
8           need them.

9           In terms of working with the counties,  
10          I know the counties are required, I believe,  
11          under this legislation to put plans together.  
12          We are more than happy to work with them on  
13          that because, again, you know, we have these  
14          smaller villages that are having a terrible  
15          time recruiting and retaining EMS,  
16          firefighters, everything.

17          So that the last thing I'll say on  
18          that is the funding stream is something we're  
19          also concerned about.  If there's more  
20          funding -- you know, we've declared it an  
21          essential service, so now what are we going  
22          to do to help fund it?

23          Because while we were able to do some  
24          fees, those fees that you put in place two

1 years ago under 207-b, I guess it was, of the  
2 General Municipal Law that allows volunteer  
3 fire departments to try to offset those costs  
4 with fees, that legislation does sunset. So  
5 if that stream goes away, we're going to be  
6 very concerned about being able to maintain  
7 both our firefighters and our EMS services.

8 But generally speaking we support what  
9 is in the Governor's proposal.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you, Barbara.

11 And I'd say to Steve's comment, one of  
12 the things is -- the comment that you made,  
13 it's different in different ways. We don't  
14 want to wipe away the things that are  
15 working. So that is, I think, something we  
16 all subscribe to as well.

17 But thank you. I'll yield back the  
18 rest of my time.

19 Gerry, you want to comment more?

20 MR. GEIST: The only thing I want to  
21 say is that in my town we created the  
22 ambulance EMS districts years ago, and what  
23 we did was we created the districts so the  
24 residents who are in that district pay a tax

1 to do it.

2 And we think that we could work  
3 definitely in concert with the counties and  
4 the villages and the cities to have a unified  
5 system, because there's too many gaps now.  
6 And we think that this should be addressed in  
7 this year's budget.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you. Thank  
9 you all.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

11 Senator Rolison.

12 SENATOR ROLISON: Thank you,  
13 Madam Chair.

14 First question, for NYCOM. And I --  
15 we can talk about AIM. We can all talk about  
16 AIM. This is my first time talking about it.  
17 But I remember when I became a mayor in 2016  
18 and AIM was -- there was this sort of AIM  
19 being -- padding fund balances. And then I  
20 think it was last year I heard that we got  
21 ARPA money we didn't need, an AIM increase.

22 Do you have any sense of where that is  
23 today through whatever means you have of  
24 hearing why there's no AIM increase in the

1 Governor's budget?

2 MS. VAN EPPS: So first let me say  
3 it's very nice to see you. We miss you at  
4 NYCOM.

5 I wish I had the answer to that  
6 question. But, you know, obviously when we  
7 met with the administration prior to the  
8 budget being -- the Executive Budget being  
9 released, you know, we were warned it was  
10 going to be a tough budget year, there's a  
11 lot of difficult choices, and we certainly  
12 appreciate that.

13 I will say that in the briefing book  
14 for the Executive Budget there's commentary  
15 saying how local governments are on very  
16 strong financial footing, something to that  
17 effect. And to your point, Senator, that has  
18 to do with the fact that, you know, sales tax  
19 has increased, and ARPA money, and the fact  
20 that so few local governments are on the  
21 Comptroller's fiscal distress or fiscally  
22 stressed list.

23 And I just -- the fact is that sales  
24 tax, yes, they've gone up, but they're

1 starting to flatten. The ARPA money has gone  
2 away. And I'm thrilled that there's only  
3 14 local governments on the Comptroller's  
4 list. And I don't want us to be penalized  
5 for trying to do the right thing.

6 And so that concerns me that, you  
7 know, they're saying because you're not in  
8 fiscal stress, you know, maybe you don't need  
9 AIM funding. And I don't want that to be the  
10 rationale. I want them to -- you know, I  
11 want to be in a partnership with them -- with  
12 all of you. I want to partner. I want to  
13 continue to allow us to do what we need to do  
14 without having to pass it along to our  
15 taxpayers.

16 So while I don't have a definitive  
17 answer, I mean, the fact that they see us as  
18 on strong financial footing I think has  
19 something to do with it.

20 SENATOR ROLISON: So I guess I should  
21 have asked for a carveout for the City of  
22 Poughkeepsie, then? Because we were on the  
23 fiscal distress list.

24 MS. VAN EPPS: I'm sorry, I wasn't

1 going to flag that you were one of the 14.

2 SENATOR ROLISON: But it's gotten  
3 better. It's gotten better.

4 MS. VAN EPPS: Yes.

5 SENATOR ROLISON: And I just wanted  
6 to, you know, end with this. I like the idea  
7 of specific targeted areas within a municipal  
8 budget for that AIM funding. It's going to  
9 public safety. It's going, say, to road  
10 repairs or infrastructure, whatever it may  
11 be. But clearly I think the open-ended --  
12 and not that there's anything wrong with  
13 that -- it does lend itself for people to say  
14 "Well, you really don't need it." Well,  
15 yeah, yeah, we do.

16 Oh, go ahead.

17 MR. GEIST: Senator, there's one  
18 component of towns revenue that we haven't  
19 spoke about. We've talked about sales tax,  
20 we've talked about AIM. We haven't talked  
21 about the mortgage tax.

22 And once again, if you read the  
23 newspapers, with mortgage rates over  
24 7 percent and inflation sky-high still, the

1 Fed holding on to policies, the money that  
2 we're going to receive this year from  
3 mortgage tax revenue, I've spoken to our  
4 members, is -- they've cut back on it because  
5 it's too expensive. So there's another  
6 reason why AIM funding needs to be increased,  
7 to make sure public services and public  
8 safety in our towns is there.

9 SENATOR ROLISON: Thank you.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

11 Okay, the next up is Assemblywoman  
12 Shimsky.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Thank you,  
14 everyone.

15 I just want to address the topic of  
16 infrastructure, especially with regard to  
17 climate change and climate resiliency. You  
18 know, Gerry, it's not coming to us, it's  
19 already here. We've had plenty of counties  
20 with washed-out roads and all kinds of things  
21 already. And flooding is getting worse in an  
22 awfully large number of places.

23 I have a three-part question. And  
24 since I mentioned your name, it's the

1 Marty Rogowsky Rule: You get the right to  
2 speak first. But if anyone else wants to  
3 jump in, that would be great.

4 Number one, what do you see as the  
5 scope of need? I mean, people may not have  
6 thought about roads, while they might have  
7 thought about sewers. What kinds of work are  
8 we going to have to do?

9 What do you see the financial aid --  
10 the financial need being as we move forward?

11 And third of all, would there be a  
12 need for at least some of our municipalities  
13 or counties to have a planning process to  
14 determine what choices are best for certain  
15 problems, what problems we prioritize and,  
16 God forbid, what we're going to have to let  
17 go?

18 MR. GEIST: So thank you for that  
19 question. I know full well the Town and  
20 Village of Mamaroneck has always had flooding  
21 issues, as we all know. And any parkway in  
22 Westchester County that has the word  
23 "River" -- the Hutch, the Saw Mill, or the  
24 Bronx River -- is always flooded. So we all

1 know those stories.

2 To answer your question is a lot,  
3 because let's start with water and sewer.  
4 And I talk about my town because I served  
5 there for 24 years; I have a lot of -- I've  
6 learned things like the word "tuberculated"  
7 when I talk about the water system.

8 You know, one thing about being from  
9 Westchester, we did a lot of infrastructure  
10 improvements in the early 1900s because we  
11 had the need. But these systems are  
12 antiquated. They're not modernized. They're  
13 not state of the art. So we're punished for  
14 being first. And we can't do anything to  
15 expand opportunities for development because  
16 there's no capacity.

17 So I think that's the first thing. We  
18 need to have a real dedicated fund to allow  
19 people with existing systems or improvements  
20 to systems to expand. That's smart growth  
21 opportunities.

22 There's so many issues with roads and  
23 elevations. And I know it probably was your  
24 district when you were in the county when you

1 fixed the Saw Mill River Parkway and the exit  
2 on Marble Avenue --

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: That's just  
4 north of me.

5 MR. GEIST: But pretty close.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Yes.

7 MR. GEIST: But there's a great  
8 example. There's so many things that need to  
9 be done in roads to elevate the roads,  
10 creating curbing, to make it safe for our  
11 seniors and our young.

12 And then the last thing is we just  
13 really have a comprehensive opportunity to  
14 present ideas on how we could get more  
15 funding to get to do the things to attack the  
16 infrastructure issue.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

18 The Senate?

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

20 Ranker Rhoads.

21 SENATOR RHOADS: Thank you,  
22 Chairwoman.

23 First off, Ms. Van Epps, I want to  
24 thank you for raising -- as a volunteer

1 firefighter myself, I want to thank you for  
2 raising the issue of making permanent the  
3 ability for fire departments and ambulance  
4 services to be able to charge for the  
5 services they provide to nonresidents. It's  
6 critical.

7 And since EMS particularly is so  
8 unbelievably expensive to fully equip and  
9 operate an ambulance, you know, being able to  
10 recoup a part of those costs makes it  
11 possible for those companies to be able to  
12 provide that service to our residents.

13 And in light of the fact -- I'm from  
14 Nassau, and we have a fairly robust EMS  
15 program. But I understand in more rural  
16 parts of the state it's a real challenge to  
17 fill those gaps in coverage. So that I want  
18 to thank you for mentioning that.

19 And that does have to be made  
20 permanent. We can't permit that to sunset.

21 I do want to ask a fairly loaded  
22 question. And we did actually get into it a  
23 little bit. But I would love each of you to  
24 be able to tell me, what do you believe are

1 the three most significant unfunded mandates  
2 that you find most challenging for your  
3 members?

4 I know as a former county legislator I  
5 have my own list. Any thoughts?

6 MR. ACQUARIO: Well, for us it would  
7 be obviously Medicaid. We send -- which is  
8 not factored into the State Budget --  
9 \$6 billion a year to the State of New York  
10 from local taxes.

11 If you aggregate all of the mandates  
12 on the counties, and this evolution or  
13 devolution of government in New York State,  
14 we spend \$14 billion to Albany for state  
15 programs and services. Child welfare,  
16 preschool special education, Early  
17 Intervention and Medicaid would be the top  
18 ones. Indigent defense would be another one,  
19 which is a growing cost to us. And lastly,  
20 the safety net, which is a program that's  
21 provided after the Temporary Assistance to  
22 Needy Families program, the five years of  
23 federal funding expires, they come on to a  
24 safety net program which the counties pay

1 two-thirds of.

2 SENATOR RHOADS: Any other thoughts?

3 MS. VAN EPPS: I'm going to let you go  
4 next.

5 MR. GEIST: It's a great question. I  
6 can tell you that running the Justice Courts  
7 is very -- it's really, truly an unfunded  
8 mandate because we don't get a lot of money  
9 to basically represent the state in running  
10 those court systems for the vehicle and  
11 traffic laws. So that's one.

12 Town clerk's office handles an array  
13 of requirements from the state for processing  
14 birth certificates, death certificates, all  
15 sorts of permits and fees. And even though  
16 our costs have gone up, our state portion of  
17 it hasn't been increased.

18 And the same thing in our building  
19 department, with all the requirement of, you  
20 know, the building code, the fire codes, the  
21 training that's going in. We don't get  
22 enough back from the state -- you know, we  
23 have to cover a lot of those essential  
24 services.

1           MS. VAN EPPS: All right, I'm going to  
2           throw out there the ones that I think my  
3           members -- I hear most from my members.

4           Prevailing wage, because they keep  
5           expanding it. And I think we'd like to see,  
6           you know, it tied to something -- you know,  
7           we think there's got to be a better way of  
8           determining what the prevailing wage actually  
9           is. Not just the union wage, but also, you  
10          know, the expansion of it needs to be looked  
11          at.

12          But I would also say the procurement  
13          thresholds just need to be adjusted. You  
14          know, the fact that we have to go out to bid  
15          under procurement thresholds that are so low  
16          and haven't been looked at in some time, I  
17          think that's something that they would say is  
18          probably burdening themselves in terms of an  
19          unfunded mandate.

20          SENATOR RHOADS: Okay. And just with  
21          the quick remaining time that I have left,  
22          just -- have you seen -- the prior  
23          administration's treatment of local  
24          governments wasn't exactly perfect in many

1 assessments.

2 What recent programs have you  
3 advocated for on behalf of your members that  
4 you feel are working -- and it's really not  
5 fair to ask you this question with so little  
6 time left, because you're not going to be  
7 able to answer it. So I'm just going to drop  
8 it at that point.

9 So thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

10 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

11 Assemblywoman Levenberg.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEVENBERG: Thank you,  
13 Madam Chair.

14 I wanted to follow up on one of the  
15 statements that was made by the counties with  
16 Gerry. We heard about the in rem  
17 foreclosures, and I had gotten some feedback  
18 from a tax receiver that what was in the  
19 budget was not adequate to cover the costs  
20 that many towns will, you know, be on the  
21 line for.

22 And I just wanted to see if you could  
23 offer some feedback on that.

24 MR. GEIST: Yeah. So we do support

1 the Governor's proposal because it's  
2 consistent with the Supreme Court decision.

3 And that's -- you know, offhand I  
4 would say that your people's observations  
5 about the inequities of this situation are  
6 accurate. But we're hamstrung because we  
7 have a court decision by the Supreme Court of  
8 the United States that has set limits. So  
9 the Governor's proposal is consistent with  
10 that. And we're hamstrung by that.

11 So we do support the Governor.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEVENBERG: Okay.

13 And also I appreciated my Senate  
14 colleague's questions about housing and some  
15 of the feedback about -- I know that we  
16 recently met with Westchester municipal  
17 officials, and they have like a subgroup on  
18 housing, and they had actually said that they  
19 did support the streamlined SEQR review --  
20 which I think is your bill, Senator.

21 And I would also just mention that my  
22 colleague Assemblyman Burdick and I are  
23 working on some bills, having met with a  
24 number of municipal leadership and housing,

1           that would, you know, start to give -- it's  
2           similar to the pro -- what's it called, the  
3           Governor's pro --

4                     MS. VAN EPPS: Pro-housing  
5           communities.

6                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEVENBERG: What is  
7           that?

8                     MS. VAN EPPS: Pro-housing  
9           communities.

10                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEVENBERG: Yeah,  
11           pro-housing communities, but kind of expand  
12           it. So would sort of require comprehensive  
13           plans or require an analysis to establish  
14           comprehensive plans statewide in all  
15           municipalities and decide, you know, case by  
16           case in municipalities if they needed to have  
17           them -- housing action plans similar to what  
18           was done for police reform.

19                    And then smart growth, with an  
20           emphasis on climate-sensitive smart growth.  
21           So thinking about all of those things.

22                    So I'm hoping that you all have an  
23           opportunity to take a look at those and share  
24           them with your members when they're ready,

1 ready for prime time. Because I do think  
2 that, you know, housing is certainly very  
3 critical for all of our municipalities to be  
4 considering and take responsibility for.

5 Thanks.

6 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

7 To the -- six seconds isn't enough to  
8 respond, so we'll send it to the Senate.

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, thank you.

10 I think to close for the Senate,  
11 Senator Tom O'Mara.

12 SENATOR O'MARA: All right, great.  
13 Thank you, Chair Krueger.

14 Just to -- briefly here, with all of  
15 you, thank you for being here and your  
16 testimony.

17 CHIPS is always a hot topic of mine on  
18 this, and the cuts to CHIPS this year are  
19 very concerning. If you could, you know,  
20 just maybe elaborate a little bit more on the  
21 impacts of what you see with these cuts to  
22 CHIPS to local roads' budgets, which is so  
23 critical.

24 And particularly Gerry, with the

1           number of towns in -- I mean, your  
2           organization represents towns larger than  
3           most cities in this state, but also towns  
4           that are vast and lightly populated. And  
5           some towns, a lot of which I represent in the  
6           seven counties of the 58th Senate District,  
7           the only budget they have for their roads is  
8           the CHIPS money they get.

9                         So if you could just elaborate for  
10           everybody here just how important that CHIPS  
11           funding is.

12                        MR. GEIST: You know, thank you for  
13           that question, Senator. CHIPS is so critical  
14           for our communities, our towns. And as you  
15           stated -- your facts are correct -- towns are  
16           responsible for a great majority of the  
17           center-line highways throughout the state.  
18           You know, over half the state's population  
19           lives in towns. And these roadways have to  
20           be maintained for the delivery of service and  
21           getting people to school.

22                        And the need is critical because the  
23           roads haven't been maintained. And what  
24           happens is when the roads aren't maintained

1 properly, there's more accidents, more  
2 delays. And most times when I was a member  
3 of the town board, the people who would come  
4 up to me and talk to me about town issues,  
5 nine times out of 10 it was always about  
6 "Thanks for making that highway improvement,"  
7 "Thanks for, you know, painting the lines,"  
8 "Thanks for repaving that road."

9 It's essential. It's not just a  
10 request, it's essential that we protect our  
11 roads and protect our communities.

12 Thank you for that question.

13 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you.

14 Would either of you two like to add on  
15 to that?

16 MS. VAN EPPS: I'll just reiterate the  
17 concerns I've heard among our membership is  
18 really the fact that because of the ADA  
19 requirements -- which everyone wants to abide  
20 by. We have nothing against curb ramps. We  
21 want to do that. But the fact that these  
22 requirements have ramped up, the CHIPS  
23 funding is just not enough.

24 I mean, we had our conference

1 yesterday and actually asked the question,  
2 you know, how much can you actually do with  
3 your CHIPS? And they were like "Oh, a  
4 quarter of our Main Street," in some of these  
5 smaller villages, because everything's just  
6 so expensive.

7 So I know for our members, you know,  
8 any reductions are going to be devastating.  
9 But what we'd really like to see is an  
10 increase.

11 SENATOR O'MARA: Yeah, I think  
12 particularly with the inflation and costs of  
13 supplies, for sure.

14 Steve, do you want to add anything on  
15 that?

16 MR. ACQUARIO: Well, you have been,  
17 Senator, a champion of CHIPS. And I want to  
18 thank you and the Legislature, the Assembly  
19 and the Senate, for always advocating for  
20 local governments. That's often the only  
21 revenue stream that we have to fix our roads  
22 and bridges.

23 Counties are responsible for about  
24 9,000 bridges in the state. And like the

1 roads, the bridges are in constant need of  
2 structural repair.

3 The CHIPS program is the only program  
4 that I can think of that is the most  
5 successful program that encompasses the  
6 1605 local governments in the history of the  
7 state. There's no other program that works  
8 and unites us together and treats us fairly.

9 And it should be doubled in size  
10 because of its benefit in the communities of  
11 fixing the roads and bridges. And it also  
12 helps the private sector, with all of the  
13 industry that's jobs that are created for  
14 this, for the men and women working out there  
15 on the roads and fixing the bridges. It has  
16 an exponential effect in the engineering  
17 community, and our products and materials.

18 So we greatly appreciate your being a  
19 constant champion on that. It needs to be  
20 increased. You could take water and sewer --  
21 Assemblywoman Lupardo and Senator Hinchey  
22 have a bill to do a CHIPS program for  
23 drinking water and wastewater. It makes  
24 sense. The formula works. And I would ask

1           that you continue to put an emphasis on it.

2                    SENATOR O'MARA:  We're certainly  
3           looking into that.  And I know Senator  
4           Tedisco had sponsored something like that a  
5           few years ago as well.  And certainly very  
6           supportive.

7                    But I agree with you that the CHIPS is  
8           really one of the most fundamentally fairly  
9           distributed programs in the state because  
10          it's per lane mile it gets distributed.  No  
11          matter whether you're a county, a town, a  
12          city, you get a pro rate share based on the  
13          number of miles you have.  So I don't see any  
14          more fairly distributed program in the state.

15                   Thank you.

16                   MR. ACQUARIO:  Thank you.

17                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER:  Thank you.

18                   Assembly.

19                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:  The last  
20          questioner on the Assembly side, Assemblyman  
21          Ari Brown.

22                   ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN:  Thank you,  
23          Chairperson Weinstein.

24                   This is going to be the quickest

1 question. Having served for a quarter of a  
2 century in my own village and town, I  
3 understand thoroughly what you're going  
4 through.

5 So I ask the following question.  
6 Would it be of assistance to your legal  
7 residents -- your hardworking people of  
8 your towns, villages, counties -- would it  
9 help balance your budget and take care of  
10 infrastructure if we took \$2.4 billion of  
11 improperly proposed state funding and  
12 distributed it to the 533 villages,  
13 933 towns, 62 counties? Would that help at  
14 all in any way, shape or form?

15 MS. VAN EPPS: You can't say no to  
16 that.

17 ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: Beautiful.

18 MR. GEIST: I don't know where the  
19 2.4 -- did you say where it was coming from?

20 ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: It's being  
21 allocated to people who didn't work hard,  
22 didn't put in the effort, and don't  
23 understand the first thing about our  
24 infrastructure.

1 MS. VAN EPPS: Well, I wouldn't -- I  
2 take that back. I would love to see any more  
3 money come to my communities, my cities, my  
4 villages. I don't know that I want to take  
5 the money that has been spoken for for the  
6 asylum-seekers and the migrants.

7 ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: Oh, I guess  
8 it's going to the counties, maybe.

9 MR. ACQUARIO: We need the resources.  
10 Thank you.

11 MR. GEIST: Towns always welcomes  
12 additional revenue from the state, but we're  
13 not here to comment on that portion of the  
14 Executive's budget if it doesn't affect towns  
15 directly.

16 ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARI BROWN: Thank you.  
17 See, made it quick.

18 MR. ACQUARIO: Happy birthday.

19 MR. GEIST: And happy birthday.

20 MR. ACQUARIO: Thank you for inviting  
21 us and listening to us. Thank you.

22 MR. GEIST: Thank you very much.

23 MS. VAN EPPS: Thank you.

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

1 Thank you all for being here.

2 And we're going to go to our last  
3 panel, Panel D: New York State Election  
4 Commissioners Association, Dustin Czarny, the  
5 Democratic Caucus chair; Fair Elections for  
6 New York, Karen Wharton, democracy coalition  
7 coordinator; League of Women Voters,  
8 Erica Smitka, deputy director; and  
9 Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of  
10 Law, Joanna Zdanys, senior counsel.

11 (Pause.)

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So if you can  
13 go in that order, starting with the  
14 Democratic Caucus chair.

15 MR. CZARNY: Thank you for letting me  
16 testify. My name is Dustin Czarny, and I'm  
17 the Democratic Caucus chair of the New York  
18 State Election Commissioners Association. In  
19 my --

20 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Can the people  
21 leaving please -- I'm sorry.

22 MR. CZARNY: Happy to wait.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: The voices  
24 carry. If people can just leave quietly.

1                   MR. CZARNY: They're very excited for  
2 my testimony today, is what I believe.

3                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I think they're  
4 excited because this is the last panel.

5                   MR. CZARNY: Well, that might be it.

6                   (Laughter.)

7                   MR. CZARNY: I'll start again, if  
8 that's okay.

9                   My name's Dustin Czarny. I'm the  
10 Democratic Caucus chair for the New York  
11 State Election Commissioners Association.  
12 However, today I'm testifying on behalf of  
13 the entire association as everything that I'm  
14 testifying for today is approved by both the  
15 Republican and Democratic caucuses.

16                   Our association represents all  
17 62 counties in New York State and the  
18 bipartisan election commissioners that run  
19 the Board of Elections.

20                   We enter a very hectic and challenging  
21 year in 2024. And let me set the stage for  
22 some of the requests that we're going to ask  
23 for. In 2024, this presidential election, we  
24 are going to see a significant amount of

1 voters that have not voted in person since  
2 2016. As we know, in presidential elections  
3 there are presidential-only voters, and many  
4 of those voters voted in 2020 via mail  
5 ballots who will now be going back to voting  
6 in person.

7 This presents an enormous challenge  
8 for boards of elections, as we are also  
9 dealing with a lot of new reforms that we  
10 have to inform these voters of and prepare  
11 our offices for.

12 We want to applaud Governor Hochul for  
13 including in her Executive Budget \$14 million  
14 for replacement of electronic poll books.  
15 This is vital. In 2019 when we went to  
16 electronic poll books, those fifth-generation  
17 or sixth-generation iPads, those are now  
18 starting to age out. And in fact Apple has  
19 told us that the next version of IOS, IOS 18,  
20 will not support the fifth- or  
21 sixth-generation iPads. In laymen's terms,  
22 they're too old. They need to be replaced.

23 So the \$14 million that Governor  
24 Hochul put in her budget will help replace

1 those before the 2025 June primary, and that  
2 is why it's needed in this year's budget.

3           However, NYSECA would like to ask for  
4 an additional \$10 million that is left out of  
5 Governor Hochul's budget in Aid to Localities  
6 funding that will aid county boards of  
7 elections. This money will be used for  
8 temporary workers for the 2024 election to be  
9 able to address that surge in voting that we  
10 are going to have and especially have this  
11 presidential election as opposed to the last  
12 couple of presidential elections.

13           With early voting by mail, expanded  
14 early voting hours, and also a 10-day  
15 registration limit, these are all things that  
16 we are going to address in a presidential  
17 election for the first time. And this  
18 \$10 million in extra funding that we are  
19 requesting, distributed by the State Board of  
20 Elections based on voter population, will  
21 allow the counties to have the flexibility  
22 they need to meet the needs that you, the  
23 Legislature, have asked us to do in this  
24 upcoming presidential election.

1                   So thank you.

2                   (Pause.)

3                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Karen? Yeah.

4                   (Laughter.)

5                   MS. WHARTON: Chairs Krueger and  
6                   Weinstein, my Assemblymember --

7                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Please pull the  
8                   mic toward you.

9                   MS. WHARTON: Sure.

10                  -- and members of the Legislature,  
11                  good evening. My name is Karen Wharton, and  
12                  I thank you for the opportunity to testify on  
13                  behalf of the Fair Elections for New York  
14                  Coalition.

15                  In her Executive Budget this year,  
16                  Governor Kathy Hochul allocated  
17                  \$114.5 million to the Public Campaign Finance  
18                  Program, the PCFP. Now, as budget  
19                  negotiations get underway, we urge you to  
20                  ensure the state's final budget matches the  
21                  Governor's allocation for the PCFP. This  
22                  investment will help ensure that the program  
23                  fulfills its promise to strengthen our  
24                  democracy by elevating the voices of everyday

1 New Yorkers in our political process and  
2 delivering on issues that matter most.

3 Take housing. Albany's failure to  
4 address the housing crisis is largely due to  
5 the corporate real estate interests that rule  
6 the day -- interests that spent over  
7 \$8 million last year to defeat good cause  
8 that would have protected tenants from  
9 discrimination and helped keep New Yorkers  
10 housed.

11 Corporate interests and the wealthy  
12 continue to spend huge sums on state  
13 elections, translating into disproportionate  
14 influence on our political process.  
15 According to the Brennan Center, 200 of  
16 New York's wealthiest residents contributed  
17 \$16 million to the 2022 state elections.  
18 Meanwhile, over 200,000 New Yorkers who could  
19 only afford donations of \$250 or less,  
20 donated \$13 million. So 200 gave much more  
21 than over 200,000.

22 Now, if political contributions are a  
23 form of free speech, how can the poor and the  
24 working class be heard if the wealthiest big

1 money drums out their voices? Every voice  
2 should have an equal say.

3 And while we cannot stop big money  
4 from putting its thumb on the scale, the way  
5 to counteract its corrosive influence is by  
6 having robust a system where small amounts of  
7 money from regular people count as much and  
8 are valued as much as the big checks.

9 The PCFP does that. Candidates who  
10 rely on public funding may be more inclined  
11 to create more room in the budget for  
12 childcare workforce investment, and less room  
13 for special-interest spending and tax  
14 loopholes. Combined with voting reforms, the  
15 PCFP brings more people into the democratic  
16 process and protects our democracy from bad  
17 actors.

18 Thank you for the opportunity today.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

20 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

21 MS. SMITKA: Thank you for the  
22 opportunity to testify today. My name is  
23 Erica Smitka, and I'm the deputy director of  
24 the League of Women Voters of New York State.

1 The League is a nonprofit grassroots  
2 organization with a mission to educate  
3 voters.

4 The League is greatly appreciative of  
5 the improvements that the Legislature and the  
6 Governor have made to New York elections in  
7 recent years. We applaud the Governor's  
8 Executive Budget for including adequate  
9 funding for the State Board of Elections and  
10 the Public Campaign Finance Board. However,  
11 many reforms have still not been sufficiently  
12 funded at the local level -- especially in  
13 light of the fact that the 2024 presidential  
14 election will add additional stress on local  
15 boards of elections.

16 Since the 2020 election we've seen  
17 misinformation, disinformation and denialism  
18 around our election process soar, while trust  
19 in our electoral process has only declined.

20 In New York State we have seen the  
21 proliferation of actions by bad actors  
22 looking to sow distrust in our election  
23 process, such as individuals falsely claiming  
24 to be representatives from the Board of

1 Elections and intimidating voters, going door  
2 to door. Or the increase in threats to  
3 election workers, making it difficult to  
4 retain staff and recruit poll workers.

5 Our local boards are on the frontlines  
6 of organizing and conducting our elections,  
7 educating voters, and addressing any  
8 logistical challenges. Investing in local  
9 boards of elections not only strengthens the  
10 democratic foundation of New York State, but  
11 it also reinforces public confidence in our  
12 electoral system.

13 The funding proposed in this year's  
14 Executive Budget for boards of elections is  
15 quite similar to last year, with funds set  
16 aside to invest in new electronic poll books,  
17 cover the cost of absentee and early  
18 vote-by-mail ballot postage.

19 And while the cost to run elections  
20 varies county to county, it would be  
21 unreasonable to assume that counties can run  
22 almost twice as many races this year with  
23 similar amounts of funding from the state --  
24 especially when a portion of those races will

1 be state elected positions.

2 Elections are often the last item on  
3 the list when it comes to county budgets, and  
4 many county boards operate with limited  
5 resources. The League urges the Legislature  
6 to seriously consider the cost of new  
7 election improvements when introducing your  
8 proposed budgets, and to consider setting up  
9 a yearly fund specifically dedicated to  
10 enhancing and supporting election reforms at  
11 the local level.

12 We ask that a minimum of an additional  
13 \$10 million in funding be allocated to county  
14 boards of elections so that they may make the  
15 upgrades necessary and hire the staff  
16 necessary to effectively run our elections in  
17 2024.

18 Lastly, we'd like to note our strong  
19 support for the \$114.5 million allocated for  
20 the Public Campaign Finance Board. The  
21 funding for this program would ensure that it  
22 can level the playing field, amplify the  
23 voices of small donors, and reduce the impact  
24 of wealthy special-interest groups in

1 New York State. We urge you to include the  
2 full 114.5 million in your one-house budgets,  
3 and we urge you not to make changes to the  
4 program.

5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Joanna?

7 MS. ZDANYS: Good afternoon to the  
8 chairs, ranking members, and members of the  
9 Legislature. My name is Joanna Zdanys, and I  
10 am senior counsel at the Brennan Center for  
11 Justice.

12 I appreciate the opportunity to  
13 testify in support of funding for the state's  
14 Public Campaign Finance Program and other  
15 voting and elections infrastructure needs in  
16 this year's budget.

17 We are grateful to this body for  
18 championing policies that break down barriers  
19 to the political process and expand access to  
20 the vote. New York's leadership in fostering  
21 a stronger and more inclusive democracy has  
22 never been more urgent. That's why the  
23 Brennan Center enthusiastically supports the  
24 Executive Budget's provision of

1           \$114.5 million for the Public Campaign  
2           Finance Program.

3                     This program is the strongest response  
4           we've seen enacted anywhere in the country to  
5           counter the distorting influence of unlimited  
6           wealth in our politics. You passed this law  
7           with the promise of ensuring, quote, a  
8           government that is accountable to all of the  
9           people of the state regardless of wealth or  
10          position. Now you are delivering on that  
11          promise, and that is to be commended.

12                    This program promises to dramatically  
13          increase the importance of everyday  
14          New Yorkers in our elections. Data shows  
15          that if the program had been in place in  
16          2022, small donors' share of funding in  
17          legislative races would have increased  
18          sixfold.

19                    Preliminary analyses of the current  
20          cycle show the trend of greater inclusion in  
21          our democracy that this Legislature  
22          envisioned when it passed this law. To date,  
23          publicly financed candidates have raised a  
24          greater share of their campaign funds from

1 small donors than at this point in the  
2 2022 cycle. This is consistent with research  
3 that shows that public financing enables  
4 candidates to raise competitive sums while  
5 relying on small donors, and to spend more  
6 time campaigning for support in their  
7 districts than fundraising from big donors.  
8 To date, more than 200 candidates from across  
9 the state and the political spectrum have  
10 enrolled in the program.

11 As nonpartisan policy advisors to  
12 lawmakers nationwide, we know that other  
13 states are watching closely and looking to  
14 model their own pro-democracy reforms on  
15 New York's program. Fully funding this  
16 program is important to secure candidate and  
17 public confidence and ensure that this first  
18 run is successful. We ask you to reaffirm  
19 the commitment that you made to New Yorkers  
20 when you created this program by making sure  
21 that it's fully funded in this fiscal year.

22 We also urge you to ensure sufficient  
23 funding to support the implementation of the  
24 important voting reforms that you've secured

1 in recent years and make sure that boards of  
2 elections and the workers who are serving on  
3 the frontlines of our democracy have the  
4 resources that they need to provide excellent  
5 voter service in this critical year.

6 Thank you for your continued  
7 leadership in strengthening our democracy.  
8 We stand ready to help, and thank you for the  
9 opportunity.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

12 So for questions, we go first to  
13 Assemblywoman Walker, chair of the Assembly's  
14 Election Law Committee, for three minutes.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALKER: Thank you.  
16 thank you, Madam Chairwoman, -women.

17 And thank you so much for your  
18 testimony today.

19 The New York Early Mail Voter Act went  
20 into effect on January 1st of this year. The  
21 Executive has proposed an additional funding  
22 of \$7.7 million for prepaid return postage  
23 for this program.

24 The funding also includes the prepaid

1 postage for absentee ballots. In your  
2 estimation, is this funding adequate to fund  
3 prepaid return postage for both  
4 mail-in-voting programs?

5 MS. ZDANYS: (Mic issues.) Oh, there  
6 we go.

7 Yes, I believe that this is a good  
8 faith estimate for covering both of those  
9 mail programs. It is really hard to estimate  
10 what the populace is going to do in this  
11 presidential election. Obviously we saw  
12 extensive use of mail voting in 2020. The  
13 early vote-by-mail program with its universal  
14 approach should be well used by the public.

15 And I do note that yesterday's court  
16 ruling making it constitutional should ensure  
17 us to be able to promote that new feature to  
18 the public and use it.

19 I believe it's a good estimate. We  
20 just probably won't know until we get done  
21 with this in November, around  
22 Thanksgiving-time, how many people took  
23 advantage of this program. But we'll get a  
24 good idea over the first two primaries and

1 comparing to previous primaries as well.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALKER: Awesome.

3 Mandatory training of poll workers and  
4 train-the-trainer programs will be  
5 implemented this year. The Executive has  
6 provided funds to support the staff for these  
7 programs.

8 In your estimation, are the funds  
9 provided to support the new employees  
10 sufficient, and have local boards of  
11 elections voiced any concerns regarding their  
12 ability to accomplish this new training?

13 MR. CZARNY: So it is my understanding  
14 that this training is going to be handled by  
15 the State Board of Elections. The funds are  
16 there for them to do that training.

17 And we are going to send two  
18 representatives from each county to learn  
19 from them, get this train-the-trainer  
20 training, and then implement them into our  
21 current existing training programs, which  
22 should not add any cost to those programs.  
23 It's just making sure that the best practices  
24 are put forward in the training that we

1 already do.

2 So I do believe that the funding is  
3 adequate at this time.

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALKER: Awesome.

5 And the last question I have is the  
6 New York State Public Campaign Finance  
7 Program has recently been implemented. To  
8 date, are you aware of how many candidates  
9 have applied to participate in the program?

10 And do you believe the program -- how  
11 do you believe the program has fared so far?

12 MR. CZARNY: I'm going to defer to my  
13 colleagues on that.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Just a quick  
15 answer. And perhaps you'd like to follow up  
16 in writing to both the Assemblywoman and the  
17 committees.

18 MS. WHARTON: Sure.

19 Based on the publicly available  
20 information, over 205 have -- last I looked,  
21 had signed up for the program.

22 And so we're encouraged. We're  
23 pleased with the rate and -- as well as the  
24 demographics. It's upstate, downstate,

1 incumbents, challengers, Republicans,  
2 Democrats, everyone. So we're pleased at  
3 this point.

4 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

5 We go to the Senate. Senator May?

6 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

7 And thank you all for your testimony  
8 and your good work.

9 Petitioning is about to start, and I  
10 represent a number of rural communities where  
11 the weather can be terrible in March, and a  
12 lot of the petitioners are senior citizens,  
13 and it can be dangerous work. I've got some  
14 proposals to reduce the thresholds or to have  
15 online petitioning. I've heard other  
16 proposals for just a fee to get on the ballot  
17 or allowing local county committees to  
18 designate candidates.

19 What is the best way to deal with  
20 petitioning, in your view?

21 MR. CZARNY: So the association hasn't  
22 taken an official position. So anything that  
23 I say is for my personal position on this.

24 I think we do need to take a hard look

1 at petitioning as our only ballot access  
2 method. It is becoming harder and harder to  
3 go to doors. Ring cameras are making it  
4 harder for volunteers to actually receive  
5 those signatures.

6 You know, other states do a variety of  
7 different things. They have petitions  
8 available, but they also have filing fees  
9 available, they also have versions of online  
10 petitioning available. I think we should  
11 look at all of these methods to provide as  
12 many pathways to getting on the ballot so the  
13 voters can have their choice in the primary  
14 and fall elections.

15 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

16 Okay, then I have another question  
17 that maybe Dustin can't answer. But --

18 MR. CZARNY: Okay, fine.

19 SENATOR MAY: -- in my county, the  
20 county legislature is talking about spending  
21 six figures to challenge the law that moved  
22 county and town elections to even years.

23 Is that a good use of taxpayer money?  
24 Does that -- will that promote more democracy

1 or less democracy?

2 MR. CZARNY: I'll -- I'm happy to  
3 answer this. It is my county, and it is my  
4 legislature. And as you may know, that the  
5 legislature actually shorted the --

6 SENATOR MAY: It's your taxpayer  
7 dollars too.

8 MR. CZARNY: It's my taxpayer dollars.

9 And the legislature also shorted the  
10 board of elections a million dollars off our  
11 bipartisan request for funding this election.  
12 Yet they are putting in \$100,000 of taxpayer  
13 money -- at least, is what they're saying --  
14 to -- and they passed this today, to start a  
15 lawsuit.

16 These lawsuits are usually brought by  
17 political parties and not taxpayer-funded  
18 lawsuits. And I'm -- I would love to see  
19 that money spent elsewhere. I have a lot of  
20 holes in my budget that I could fill with  
21 that.

22 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

24 We go to the Assembly, Assemblyman

1 Jacobson.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Thank you all  
3 for your testimony.

4 I represent parts of three counties:  
5 Orange, Dutchess and Ulster. The big  
6 difference is not the population; you have  
7 400,000, 300,000 and about 200,000. The  
8 problem is, is that the county boards of  
9 elections do not support the boards of  
10 elections in the same way.

11 And so it's so important that we get  
12 the money from the state, because as you  
13 mentioned -- because it was great -- we're  
14 curing ballots. So once the boards got used  
15 to that and were able to get some people, now  
16 we're finally counting most of the votes  
17 before Election Day. That means they had to  
18 take people off that and get more people.

19 I'm proposing another 20 million that  
20 half would be for staff and half would be for  
21 equipment. Because most of the equipment was  
22 bought in about 2019, and then -- and since  
23 then you have all these updates. And I think  
24 that would be necessary.

1           And just real quick, you want to  
2           answer that, what you think? I'll give you  
3           15 -- just say -- yes is fine, and that's  
4           good.

5           MS. ZDANYS: The Brennan Center  
6           certainly supports greater funding for county  
7           boards of elections for personnel and for  
8           infrastructure costs.

9           ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Yeah. I mean,  
10          that's the problem. And it's hard to get  
11          inspectors. It seemed like, when I was  
12          growing up, it was easier to get them at \$35  
13          a day. But at any rate, I think we have to  
14          consider raising that and getting the state  
15          to supply.

16          And I just want to get my personal  
17          opinion in concerning online petitioning. I  
18          think it would line us up for fraud so  
19          much -- so easily. And I would -- I don't  
20          want us to be like New Hampshire and the  
21          other states where you pay \$100 and you're on  
22          the ballot, because then I think that by  
23          petitioning it shows support in the community  
24          and it means something.

1                   Because to have 20 people running for  
2                   any office is not really a choice either.  
3                   And, you know, you get so many people you  
4                   don't know what's going on.

5                   So I would hope that all of you would  
6                   consider that. And of course my friend  
7                   Senator May and I will have a discussion  
8                   later.

9                   (Laughter.)

10                  ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: But it's not to  
11                  get into a debate, it's just that I know what  
12                  would happen. And I think it's important  
13                  that we're -- in New York, we're different.  
14                  You have to show support. And we made it  
15                  easy enough. And I really think that that  
16                  would be the way to go.

17                  If you want to comment on that, you  
18                  may. If you don't want to comment, that's  
19                  fine.

20                  MR. CZARNY: Well, I think like with  
21                  any process that we put in place, sufficient  
22                  fraud protections have to be put in place as  
23                  well.

24                  I believe that we have really great

1 minds here in the New York State Legislature.  
2 We could find a way to do this without having  
3 fraud --

4 ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: You're getting  
5 diplomatic in your old age.

6 (Laughter.)

7 ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: That's all I  
8 have. Thank you.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
10 Our last questioner, Assemblyman  
11 Eachus.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you,  
13 Chairwoman.

14 Thank you for your testimony today.

15 First of all, I agree we should do  
16 petitioning. I just think it's the wrong  
17 time of the year to be doing petitioning.  
18 But that's another issue.

19 Dustin, this is for you. And correct  
20 me if I'm wrong. But you can register to  
21 vote up to 10 days before the general  
22 election.

23 MR. CZARNY: Correct.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Okay. We have

1 nine days of early voting and one day off.

2 That makes 10 days.

3 So I have been approached by an  
4 election inspector saying we should restrict  
5 the election to 11 days before, because those  
6 who come in on the 10th day to register then  
7 must register -- or vote, rather, via  
8 affidavit.

9 MR. CZARNY: Only if they're not  
10 registered to vote and not in the poll books.

11 So this is what's referred to as  
12 "Golden Day." I actually think it went off  
13 with a pretty good success in 2023. The  
14 Legislature also codified Golden Day as well,  
15 that the preferred method for this would be  
16 affidavit-ballot voting.

17 And let's be clear. Whether it was 11  
18 days or 12 days or any amount of days before  
19 the election that are right before the early  
20 voting, there's going to be a significant  
21 amount of people that have to vote by  
22 affidavit if they register at the last  
23 minute, because it takes time for the boards  
24 of elections to process those registrations

1 and then push them out to the poll books.

2 It's not instant registration.

3 That's why --

4 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: No, I realize  
5 that. But the election inspectors -- and  
6 it's only been a few -- have said to me they  
7 could do it within 24 hours and would save  
8 them a lot of work --

9 MR. CZARNY: I don't believe any board  
10 of elections could register voters within  
11 24 hours that late to the election. We're  
12 always running two to three days behind.

13 And that affidavit ballot is a proper  
14 use, because those are inspected and opened  
15 after Election Day under bipartisan review.  
16 And so --

17 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: I would agree  
18 with that. I don't have a problem with that.  
19 It was just trying to get them on the  
20 polls -- in the books beforehand.

21 MR. CZARNY: I understand that.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Erica, I've got a  
23 question for you. One of the main  
24 functions -- first of all, I have a very

1 active League of Women Voters group in my  
2 district, and I'm very proud of that. One of  
3 their main functions they consider is  
4 election registration. Okay? But what  
5 they're doing is having trouble getting into  
6 some schools to actually do that. Some  
7 schools allow them in; some schools do not.

8 Are you, as the deputy director or as  
9 the head group here in New York State, doing  
10 anything to help them with access in schools?

11 MS. SMITKA: Yes, we are. That's a  
12 great question.

13 And we're actually working with  
14 Senator Mayer's office to work on the bill  
15 that was passed last year to create programs  
16 to work with students on preregistration in  
17 schools.

18 And so we've been working a lot with  
19 our local leagues on how we can work to move  
20 that program forward and make it that much  
21 easier for younger voters to get registered  
22 and preregistered.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Great. Thank you  
24 very much.

1 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

2 Don't leave just yet. Assemblyman --  
3 our ranker, Assemblyman Ra.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

5 Just a quick question. I know we  
6 talked about, you know, faith in elections,  
7 which I think is very important. There's  
8 been a lot of discussion and controversy  
9 about these ExpressVote XL machines that were  
10 authorized by the state board.

11 I don't know if -- on the election  
12 side, I don't know if any counties have  
13 actually purchased them yet. But if you -- I  
14 was just interested in your thoughts with  
15 regard to those machines.

16 MR. CZARNY: So I'm going to defer,  
17 only because they are certified machines by  
18 the State Board of Elections, certified to  
19 run in New York State Board of Elections.

20 I don't know of any county in New York  
21 that has put those into the field yet, but I  
22 know many are planning to -- or not many, but  
23 some are planning to. And it's certified by  
24 the State Board of Elections, so I'm going to

1 leave it at that.

2 But I'll give it to the advocates on  
3 that.

4 MS. SMITKA: The League currently  
5 doesn't have a position that would allow us  
6 to support or oppose the machines. I don't  
7 know if the Brennan Center or --

8 MS. WHARTON: We -- Fair Elections,  
9 we're primarily -- or exclusively public  
10 campaign financing, and so we don't have a  
11 position on that.

12 MS. ZDANYIS: And the Brennan Center,  
13 similarly, does not have a position in  
14 support or against these specific machines.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay, thanks.

16 And then Ms. Wharton, you may have  
17 mentioned this, but what do you think is the  
18 appropriate amount that we will need to cover  
19 the public campaign finance? Because I would  
20 agree that -- you know, regardless of how you  
21 feel or anybody feels about the program, that  
22 the amount that has been appropriated, you  
23 know, last year and this year isn't -- if we  
24 get the participation that we're looking like

1 we're on our way to getting, it's not going  
2 to be sufficient.

3 MS. WHARTON: Well, we think that the  
4 amount that has been appropriated in the  
5 Governor's budget is a good start. And we --  
6 of course if you'd like to increase that,  
7 feel free. But we think this is a good start  
8 for this cycle.

9 And at the end of the cycle we'll have  
10 data that will inform our decisions going  
11 forward. But based on all of the studies  
12 that the Brennan Center has done, and experts  
13 around the country, we're pleased with this  
14 amount.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

16 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for  
17 all of your testimony today. I want to thank  
18 my colleagues for being here.

19 This is going to conclude the Local  
20 Governments hearing. Tomorrow at 9:30 we  
21 will be having the Environmental Conservation  
22 hearing, which will be starting first with  
23 agriculture and then moving to environmental  
24 conservation and energy. So see you all

1 tomorrow.

2 Thank you all for being here today.

3 (Whereupon, at 5:35 p.m., the budget  
4 hearing concluded.)

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