

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

2 -----

3 JOINT LEGISLATIVE HEARING

4 In the Matter of the  
2020-2021 EXECUTIVE BUDGET ON  
5 HUMAN SERVICES

6 -----

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

9 January 30, 2020  
10 9:34 a.m.

11 PRESIDING:

12 Senator Liz Krueger  
Chair, Senate Finance Committee

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

15 PRESENT:

16 Senator Patrick M. Gallivan  
Senate Finance Committee (Acting RM)

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

19 Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee  
20 Chair, Assembly Children and Families  
Committee

21 Senator Velmanette Montgomery  
22 Chair, Senate Committee on Children  
and Families

23 Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi  
24 Chair, Assembly Committee on Social Services

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3 PRESENT: (Continued)

4 Senator Roxanne Persaud  
Chair, Senate Committee on Social Services

5  
6 Assemblyman Harry B. Bronson  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Aging

7 Senator Rachel May  
Chair, Senate Committee on Aging

8  
9 Assemblywoman Didi Barrett  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Veterans' Affairs

10 Senator John E. Brooks  
Chair, Senate Committee on Veterans,  
11 Homeland Security and Military Affairs

12 Assemblyman Jake Ashby

13 Senator Diane J. Savino

14 Assemblyman Clyde Vanel

15 Senator Sue Serino

16 Assemblyman Mark Walczyk

17 Senator Brian Kavanagh

18 Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy

19 Senator James Tedisco

20 Assemblywoman Tremaine Wright

21 Senator Gustavo Rivera

22 Assemblywoman Inez E. Dickens

23 Assemblyman Al Taylor

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1                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So I'm  
2                   Assemblywoman Helene Weinstein, chair of the  
3                   Assembly Ways and Means Committee, and today  
4                   we have the fourth hearing in a series of  
5                   hearings conducted by the joint fiscal  
6                   committees of the Legislature regarding the  
7                   Governor's proposed budget for fiscal year  
8                   2020-2021.

9                   The hearings are conducted pursuant to  
10                  the New York State Constitution and the  
11                  Legislative Law.

12                  And so today the Assembly Ways and  
13                  Means Committee and the Senate Finance  
14                  Committee will hear testimony concerning the  
15                  Governor's budget proposal for human  
16                  services.

17                  So just couple of ground rules. For  
18                  the -- well, let me introduce the members  
19                  first that are here in my conference, and  
20                  then Senator Krueger will introduce --  
21                  Senator Krueger, chair of the Senate Finance  
22                  Committee, will introduce the members from  
23                  her conference from the Senate.

24                  So we have with us the chair of our

1 Children and Families Committee, Ellen  
2 Jaffee; the chair of our Aging Committee,  
3 Harry Bronson; a member of the Children and  
4 Families Committee, Assemblyman Al Taylor.

5 Liz, would you like to introduce  
6 your --

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Sure. Actually  
8 I'm joined by the sitting-in ranker for  
9 Finance for the Senate Republicans, the  
10 acting, Senator Gallivan. Senator Seward  
11 couldn't be with us today.

12 Then I am joined by the chair of  
13 Social Services, Velmanette Montgomery; the  
14 chair of -- I did it backwards? I did it  
15 backwards, excuse me. The chair of Children  
16 and Families, Senator Velmanette Montgomery.  
17 The chair of Social Services, Senator Roxanne  
18 Persaud. The chair of Aging, Senator Rachel  
19 May from Syracuse. Senator John Brooks,  
20 chair of Veterans. Senator Diane Savino.  
21 And I am Senator Liz Krueger. Thank you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We also are  
23 joined by Assemblyman Hevesi, chair of our  
24 Social Services Committee.

1                   And Assemblyman Ra, our ranking  
2                   member, will introduce the members of his  
3                   conference who are here with us.

4                   ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

5                   Joining us this morning is Assemblyman  
6                   Jake Ashby and Assemblyman Mark Walczyk.

7                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

8                   So now a few ground rules for  
9                   everybody. Keep an eye on the time clocks.  
10                  It's been helping us get through our hearings  
11                  with having time for the witnesses to present  
12                  testimony, for the legislators to be able to  
13                  ask questions. The clock time is both for --  
14                  other than for the people testifying, but for  
15                  the members. Just be mindful, the clock is  
16                  both for your questions and answers.

17                  And we try and keep a pretty tight  
18                  ship because there are many nongovernmental  
19                  witnesses who are joining us today, as they  
20                  have other days, and we want to make sure  
21                  that the last person on the list gets an  
22                  opportunity to speak to the members.

23                  So -- and just for the members, the  
24                  chair of the relevant committee has

1           10 minutes to ask her questions and get  
2           answers; the other members, five minutes.  
3           The chairs are the only ones -- the relevant  
4           chair can have a second round of five  
5           minutes. And when we go to nongovernmental  
6           witnesses, the nongovernmental witnesses will  
7           have up to five minutes to present their  
8           testimony, and members will have three  
9           minutes to ask a question.

10                   We also, before we get started, we're  
11           joined by Assemblyman Vanel.

12                   And with that, I think we are ready,  
13           Commissioner, to begin. So we begin with  
14           Sheila Poole, commissioner, New York State  
15           Office of Children and Family Services.

16                   OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Thank you.  
17           Good morning, Chairs Krueger and Weinstein,  
18           Children and Families Committee Chairs  
19           Montgomery and Jaffee, and distinguished  
20           members of the Senate and Assembly. My name  
21           is Sheila Poole, and I am the commissioner of  
22           the New York State Office of Children and  
23           Family Services, and I am pleased to have  
24           this opportunity to discuss this year's

1 proposed budget for OCFS.

2 This year's Executive Budget maintains  
3 OCFS funding just above last year's levels to  
4 support our core child welfare, childcare,  
5 and juvenile justice programs, while  
6 investing in new initiatives to better serve  
7 New York's children and families.

8 As you know, on October 1st of 2019  
9 New York reached an historic milestone when  
10 Raise the Age took full effect. In keeping  
11 with Governor Cuomo's pledge to fully fund  
12 Raise the Age for eligible counties, the  
13 Executive Budget adds \$50 million to support  
14 Raise the Age implementation, for a total of  
15 \$250 million in the coming fiscal year.

16 The Executive Budget expands the  
17 Empire State Child Tax Credit to provide \$157  
18 million in relief to 400,000 families who  
19 have children under the age of 4 and who earn  
20 up to \$50,000 a year.

21 Having adequate access to childcare  
22 remains a national policy and fiscal issue as  
23 well as one here in New York State. The  
24 Governor's Childcare Availability Task Force

1 is continuing its important work and will  
2 issue its final report in December.

3 In the meantime, the proposed  
4 Executive Budget maintains its commitment of  
5 nearly \$832 million for childcare  
6 subsidies -- the highest level of investment  
7 in state history, serving more than 100,000  
8 low-income families and 170,000 children.

9 We're also pleased to share that  
10 New York State has awarded an additional \$20  
11 million in federal funding to expand  
12 subsidized childcare statewide by an  
13 additional 2500 childcare slots.

14 In addition, OCFS anticipates  
15 additional funding this year through the  
16 federal Childcare Development Fund. And the  
17 New York State Council of Children and  
18 Families, which OCFS hosts, has also been  
19 awarded federal funds in the amount of  
20 \$40 million through the Preschool Development  
21 Birth through Five Grant, which will  
22 strengthen our early childhood care and  
23 education system.

24 Governor Cuomo mandated the Regional

1 Economic Development Councils to consider  
2 childcare in their proposals, and they  
3 answered. During Round 9, nearly  
4 \$8.8 million was awarded to 16 childcare  
5 projects, and an additional \$7.3 million was  
6 awarded to four projects that have a  
7 childcare component. Every region has  
8 responded with proposals specific to their  
9 area, and we're looking forward to seeing  
10 these public/private ideas come to fruition.

11 But still, we recognize there is more  
12 to be done to make quality, affordable  
13 childcare accessible to all families who need  
14 it, and we will continue our work toward that  
15 end.

16 The Governor's proposal again expands  
17 access to quality after-school programming by  
18 adding \$10 million for a fourth round of  
19 Empire State After-School Program grants.  
20 This will create 6250 new after-school slots  
21 for students in high-need districts, and will  
22 bring our total expenditures for after-school  
23 programs to \$134 million and serving  
24 80,000 students.

1                   When combined with funding for  
2                   prekindergarten programs and child-focused  
3                   tax credits, the state's overall support for  
4                   families with young children has increased by  
5                   more than \$500 million since 2011.

6                   As cochair of the Governor's Domestic  
7                   Violence Task Force, I'm pleased to report  
8                   that the Executive Budget includes ambitious  
9                   proposals to address the growing problem of  
10                  domestic violence. As urged by the task  
11                  force, the budget adds \$5 million in new  
12                  funding for a pilot program to expand  
13                  innovative models and provide a greater  
14                  flexibility in meeting the needs of families  
15                  affected by domestic violence.

16                  The number of children entering foster  
17                  care continues its downward trajectory.  
18                  However, we know that far too many children  
19                  from minority families end up involved with  
20                  the child welfare system as a result of  
21                  implicit bias, despite the best intentions of  
22                  our dedicated child welfare workforce.

23                  This year we will take the bold step  
24                  of requiring every county in the state to

1 follow a blind removal process when  
2 considering to remove a child from their  
3 home. It is time to adopt blind removals and  
4 take a significant step forward in ensuring  
5 social justice for all children and families.

6 And last year, with your support,  
7 New York began implementing the federal  
8 Family First Prevention Services Act, with a  
9 Family First Transition Fund to help local  
10 social service districts support, recruit and  
11 retain foster families, including kinship  
12 caregivers. The Executive Budget continues  
13 \$3 million in funding for the state-supported  
14 transition fund.

15 It also provides authorization to  
16 spend up to \$75 million in new one-time  
17 federal funds that we've recently received  
18 through our aggressive lobbying efforts in  
19 Washington. This new funding includes up to  
20 \$50 million for the Administration for  
21 Children's Services in New York City.

22 And before I close, I'd be remiss if I  
23 didn't acknowledge you, Senator Montgomery.  
24 This is your last Human Services Budget

1           Hearing, I understand. When I was here  
2           earlier in the week doing some meetings, I  
3           ran into a group of young people, a large  
4           group of young people proudly wearing their  
5           YouthBuild t-shirts, and they reminded me,  
6           obviously, of you.

7                         So it's been a pleasure. You have  
8           been a fierce and tireless advocate for  
9           children and families. I will miss you. And  
10          I look forward to our final session together.

11                        SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Thank you.

12                        OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: I thank you  
13          again for the opportunity to address all of  
14          you, and I look forward to your questions.

15                        CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

16                        So today's hearing the Assembly is  
17          coordinating, so I'll go first to the chair  
18          of our Children and Families Committee, Ellen  
19          Jaffee, for some questions.

20                        ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: Thank you very  
21          much.

22                        Thank you very much, Commissioner, for  
23          your advocacy, the work that you've been  
24          doing, and the opportunity to speak today, as

1 well as on a personal level we've had the  
2 chance to review some of the issues of  
3 concern.

4 But I do want to review some of the  
5 concerns, and I wanted to ask you -- as  
6 noted, the budget does include 75 million,  
7 which you know, will help counties with their  
8 ability -- their compliance with the federal  
9 Family First Prevention Act, \$50 million for  
10 the statewide compliance, 25 for the  
11 counties, giving them the opportunity, if  
12 they have the expired Title IV-E  
13 demonstration projects -- this way, they can  
14 have that support.

15 How will the funding work in terms of  
16 meeting the requirements of the Family First  
17 Prevention Act? Can you provide, you know,  
18 more details about the Title IV-E  
19 demonstration projects and how they work and  
20 how this will come into support?

21 OCFs COMMISSIONER POOLE: Sure. So  
22 just going back to your question about the  
23 Title IV-E demonstration projects, they date  
24 back I think five or six years ago. And New

1           York City was the only county in New York  
2           State to take advantage of a Title IV-E  
3           waiver that the feds allowed municipalities  
4           to use Title IV-E funding in sort of new  
5           ways, in unrestricted ways, to test out  
6           evidence-based models of care.

7                         And so New York City took advantage of  
8           that. They've had some success in adopting  
9           several models of evidence-based care that  
10          have had some really good outcomes. They've  
11          reduced caseloads for foster-care workers.

12                        But unfortunately, those federal  
13          waivers expired, and so there was no  
14          replacement funding strategy for that. And  
15          so for many states who had really deeply  
16          invested in these IV-E waivers, sort of the  
17          bottom was going to drop out of these new  
18          programs and services that were really  
19          showing some promise.

20                        And so many states, including  
21          New York -- and with our partners in New York  
22          City -- we have made a lot of noise in  
23          Washington about the need, if we're going to  
24          be successful in implementing the new Family

1 First federal act, that we need to find ways  
2 to not only continue those waiver services  
3 that were allowable under the previous  
4 waiver, but also give states additional new  
5 dollars to help us do the many things that  
6 are now required for us to comply with the  
7 federal statute that will take effect here in  
8 New York in 2021.

9 So the money that is appropriated in  
10 the budget, so the 75 million, Assemblywoman,  
11 approximately 21.4 of that will be for the  
12 general use for us as a state to consider how  
13 we can use those funds to sort of carry on  
14 the work that we began last year with the \$3  
15 million transition fund -- so ways of  
16 recruiting and supporting kinship relatives,  
17 you know, doing kinship support groups, sort  
18 of whatever it takes for us.

19 You know, there's a lot of provisions  
20 in Family First about independent assessors  
21 and agencies having to meet QRTP standards.  
22 There are a lot of things that we still have  
23 to find a way to fund and to do.

24 So that's our thinking. We haven't

1 developed, you know, our plan for request for  
2 proposals yet, but it's a one-shot. So it's  
3 -- \$20 million, as you know, is not a huge  
4 amount of money for a state as large as ours,  
5 and we want to be very thoughtful and  
6 strategic about how we use that investment.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: Well, within  
8 the Families First Prevention Act, how do you  
9 define what the -- how they have qualified  
10 for the residential -- what -- what is --  
11 what creates a qualified group for  
12 residential treatment? What is the  
13 qualifying need?

14 OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Yeah. Yeah.  
15 So this new federal act, which New York State  
16 took advantage of a two-year waiver --  
17 because there were many questions, and that  
18 was among them. So what does it really mean  
19 for residential programs to be considered a  
20 QRTP, a Qualified Residential Treatment  
21 Program?

22 So those programs, under the new  
23 federal definition, will need to adopt or be  
24 able to implement trauma responsive models of

1 care. They must have nursing services. They  
2 must provide up to six months of after-care  
3 for children in their care. They must do  
4 significant outreach to families of children  
5 who have wound up in residential care.

6 And so looking across our current  
7 service system in New York, we believe that  
8 many of our current residential providers  
9 would meet that QRTP designation.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: Can you share  
11 the impact of the market rate that went into  
12 effect last year? What is the statewide  
13 cost, you know, for that increase? Is there  
14 consideration being given to returning the  
15 market rate to the 75th percentile, which was  
16 recommended by the federal government?

17 OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: So  
18 New York -- so we're on to childcare now,  
19 just, right, switching gears a bit. So  
20 New York State maintains, as a result of the  
21 last year's market rate, a 69th percentile  
22 rate, which is among the highest in this  
23 nation. We watch where we stand in  
24 comparison to other states. So we remain

1 among the top states in preparing for the  
2 market rate at 69th percentile.

3 This year, this fall, we will again --  
4 it will be our cycle to do a new market rate  
5 analysis, so that will give us another  
6 opportunity to do a sampling of a variety, a  
7 stratification of providers across the state.  
8 And so that survey allows us to really ask  
9 providers what is the actual cost of care  
10 that is providing for you. We collect that  
11 information, and then we begin to determine  
12 how we can continue to support the cost to  
13 childcare providers.

14 So again, that would mean that our new  
15 market rates, Assemblywoman, would take  
16 effect in the fall of 2021.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: There is -- I  
18 have concern -- the Executive proposed  
19 eliminating the 18.42 percent state share for  
20 outside-New York City residential placements  
21 for children with disabilities by, you know,  
22 the Committee on Special Education. Which  
23 the cost will be -- will be by the school  
24 districts, then, which is a concern in terms

1 of how the school districts are going to be  
2 able to maintain that stability, having to  
3 then add -- this is added to their cost and  
4 impacts their budget.

5 Can you explain the purpose of  
6 eliminating the funding and how it will  
7 then -- how we can -- the school districts,  
8 how they'll be able to maintain their  
9 stability?

10 OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Sure. So  
11 the proposal in this year's budget is to  
12 really create parity with what was already  
13 done for New York City several years ago.  
14 So, you know, these children, frankly, the  
15 payment for the CSE really does not belong in  
16 the Office of Children and Family Services  
17 budget. These are not children in foster  
18 care. These are not children in prevention  
19 services. These are children who are a  
20 school district's responsibility to provide  
21 services for.

22 So it is -- it's shifting  
23 responsibility in the budget where we believe  
24 responsibility lies for these Committee on

1           Preschool Education and Special Education  
2           Services for Children.

3                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: We should then  
4           also increase funding for our school  
5           districts. I'm very concerned that this will  
6           really negatively impact in terms of their  
7           ability to provide the programs and the  
8           education that is necessary. So this is an  
9           issue we need to follow up on.

10                   The budget, the '19-'20 budget  
11           implemented the Family First Transition Fund  
12           that included \$3 million. Are there any  
13           updates that you could provide regarding this  
14           fund? Is the \$3 million in the Executive  
15           proposal added on top of last year's funding?  
16           How did this work?

17                   OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Yeah. Good.  
18           So lots of questions there.

19                   So last year when we passed the  
20           budget, that included the \$3 million fund.  
21           In May we distributed all of the funding out  
22           to every local social service district in the  
23           state, including New York City. And we asked  
24           them to submit a plan to us about how they

1           planned to use that money. Again, to better  
2           support the recruitment and retention of  
3           foster parents, but with a real specific  
4           focus on doing a better job in supporting our  
5           kinship families.

6                        So those counties all submitted plans  
7           to us outlining their strategies. All of  
8           those plans are up on our OCFS Family First  
9           website, so I'd encourage all of you to take  
10          a look at those plans.

11                      And so we've been following those  
12          activities on the local level, and they've  
13          done some great things, ranging from new  
14          marketing campaigns to starting focus groups  
15          for kinship and foster families. Some have  
16          used the money in creative ways to help  
17          kinship families and foster families who  
18          might not otherwise -- maybe their house  
19          needed smoke detectors or something to meet  
20          the certification standards. So there's been  
21          a lot of good work and activity across the  
22          state.

23                      So we are adding an additional  
24          \$3 million to this year's budget to be able

1 to continue those efforts across the state,  
2 and that will be in addition to the  
3 \$21.4 million that we expect to receive from  
4 the federal government.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. We  
6 go to the Senate now.

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. We've  
8 been joined by Senator Sue Serino, the ranker  
9 on -- Social Services? Thank you.

10 And our first questioner is Velmanette  
11 Montgomery, chair of Children and Families.

12 OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Good  
13 morning.

14 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Good morning,  
15 Commissioner. Good morning. I'm trying to  
16 get the microphone to work.

17 Thank you for those kind words.

18 I want to just ask you, if you will,  
19 you mentioned in your remarks that -- let me  
20 just give you a little of background. We did  
21 some traveling around the state to speak to  
22 people who were the front-line people  
23 providing services in various aspects of your  
24 particular area.

1                   And one of the things that kept coming  
2                   up which I found very interesting, that  
3                   people all over the state, an issue that  
4                   people are grappling with is how do we  
5                   improve our system to better address what you  
6                   have identified as biases that people have  
7                   that perhaps are unintended. So I interpret  
8                   that as culturally competent ways of looking  
9                   at what happens with children and families.

10                   And you talked about a blind removal  
11                   process. I'm just wondering where you are in  
12                   terms of having counties across the state  
13                   look at this particular tool in a way that is  
14                   effective to address the issue of being more  
15                   sensitive and removing this unintended bias  
16                   that we bring with us in our work.

17                   OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Thank you,  
18                   Senator. Happy to talk about that.

19                   So just by way of -- before I answer  
20                   your question, Senator, just by way of  
21                   introduction to the topic, you know, while I  
22                   mentioned in my remarks that we continue,  
23                   unlike many states, to see a decline in the  
24                   overall number of children in foster care in

1           our state, we have failed to make really  
2           significant process in terms of the number of  
3           minority children who are in foster care.

4                     And so in a general sense in terms of  
5           kids in foster care -- and we have under  
6           16,000 kids in care. Over 40 percent of the  
7           children in foster care in New York are  
8           children of color, mostly black and brown.  
9           So we've got a ways to go.

10                    And so we have been watching for a  
11           number of years a pilot initiative that  
12           Nassau County Department of Social Services  
13           undertook where it introduced a blind removal  
14           process. So it's relatively low demand in  
15           cost, but it requires a different level of  
16           decision-making as to when Child Protective  
17           Services is considering the imminent risk  
18           removal or removal of a child.

19                    And so what Nassau County has done is  
20           developed processes where they redact, they  
21           de-identify information regarding parents or  
22           a child's name, address, zip code, anything  
23           that might, right, lead someone to make a  
24           decision -- unintentionally. As we all know

1 from the work and training on it, this is the  
2 way our brains work, unfortunately.

3 And what Nassau County experienced as  
4 a result of redacting that and making it  
5 blind, right, to race and ethnicity and other  
6 issues, is that -- not surprisingly, right --  
7 the number of black and brown children  
8 entering care in Nassau County declined  
9 significantly.

10 And so we have been working with a  
11 number of other counties -- Westchester,  
12 Onondaga, there's a number of other counties  
13 who also wanted to adopt this. So there's  
14 been a curriculum that has been developed, in  
15 partnership with the School of Social Work  
16 here at SUNY Albany. And frankly, the time  
17 is now for us to require that every county in  
18 the state adopt this blind removal process.

19 And so we at OCFS throughout 2020 will  
20 be requiring all the counties to adopt this  
21 curriculum and to adopt those practices as  
22 they are making decisions -- a very critical  
23 decision, obviously -- around children.

24 What I will also say, Senator, is that

1           this seems like the logical place to start,  
2           right, in terms of child welfare  
3           decision-making. It is the most difficult  
4           and impactful decision there is, when you're  
5           removing a child from their family. But make  
6           no mistake about it, we are all aware that  
7           there are many other places in child welfare  
8           and in all human services, for that matter,  
9           where implicit bias enters into  
10          decision-making and negatively impacts  
11          families and communities of color.

12                        So I am hopeful, after we roll out  
13          this initiative of blind removals, that we  
14          can then continue our work on where else in  
15          our system, right, does implicit bias play a  
16          role.

17                        SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Thank you. Thank  
18          you for that. And I hope you start with  
19          New York City.

20                        I just want to just briefly talk a  
21          little bit about the Families First. It's  
22          very -- I'm inspired and encouraged that this  
23          perhaps will be part of how we begin to  
24          reduce the numbers of young people in care,

1 especially the congregate care.

2 My question to you is, to what extent  
3 have we been able to, one, create sort of a  
4 target that you have in mind to the numbers  
5 that you see us looking more like we should  
6 look, as it relates to how many children go  
7 into congregate care versus how many children  
8 either remain out of foster care or are in  
9 other family care? And especially with a  
10 sort of, I guess, a target focus on kinship  
11 care in particular.

12 OCFs COMMISSIONER POOLE: Yes. Yes.

13 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Could you give us  
14 an idea of where we are with that?

15 OCFs COMMISSIONER POOLE: So when  
16 Family First passed in 2017, right, we knew  
17 that we had some ways to go in New York State  
18 to sort of re-shift our focus. And when you  
19 look back in 2017 to New York State's  
20 reliance on congregate care as compared to  
21 other states in the country, we were above  
22 the national average.

23 And so we began preparing data. We  
24 have provided every county in the State of

1 New York with very detailed data analysis of  
2 where the children in those counties are  
3 placed, how many are in congregate care, what  
4 levels of congregate care, who are they, how  
5 long are they staying, as well as the number  
6 of children in foster care, the number of  
7 children in kinship foster care, and the  
8 number of children being cared for.

9 And so we've done a lot of work since  
10 2017, including all the things I've already  
11 discussed, to really help counties begin to  
12 think about making sure that the only  
13 children entering congregate care are  
14 children for whom there is no fit and willing  
15 relative who would support, right, and  
16 services that sometimes are not always made  
17 available could be successful in a lower  
18 level of care.

19 So we did, we did exactly what you  
20 suggested and we set targets as a state. So  
21 we said that we would like all -- that we  
22 would like, as a statewide target, at least  
23 34 percent of kids in -- 30 percent, rather,  
24 of children to be placed with kinship care.

1           I am happy to say that as of today,  
2           statewide -- and it's because many of you  
3           have been beating this drum and supporting us  
4           in this work -- that today we have 34 percent  
5           of children in foster care placed in kinship  
6           care.

7           Again, New York City is a little bit  
8           ahead of the rest of state, but the rest of  
9           the state is really making some very  
10          significant progress. So we are -- you know,  
11          we're excited about that.

12          But, you know, you also have to make  
13          sure that you're not just moving kids out of  
14          congregate care, right? Kids in congregate  
15          care in our state are kids who have many,  
16          many special needs. Right? So when we look  
17          forward to Families First and what that will  
18          mean -- no one is suggesting that there will  
19          not always be a place for our congregate care  
20          facilities, right, but we have to make sure  
21          under Family First that only those children  
22          who need that care get in there, that they  
23          only stay for the right dose of time, as  
24          determined by an independent assessor, not

1           just local districts or the congregate care  
2           agencies.

3                         And that's where that culture, that  
4           sea change, right, that we have to sort of  
5           create here is going to be very challenging.  
6           And we're doing our best to work with our  
7           COFCCA partners, with all the local  
8           districts. So we're on our way, but there is  
9           still a lot of work to be done in  
10          anticipation of the effective date in  
11          September of 2021.

12                        SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Thank you. And I  
13          believe I see in the budget where we have  
14          eliminated -- proposed to eliminate funding  
15          for the Kinship Navigator. So that seems to  
16          be going in the opposite direction to what  
17          you're saying, so we will continue to have  
18          that discussion.

19                        And thank you. I hope we'll go far  
20          beyond the 34 percent, but we're getting  
21          there.

22                        OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: I hope so  
23          too, Senator.

24                        SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Thank you.

1 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

2 Assembly.

3 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We've been  
4 joined by Assemblywoman Barrett, chair of our  
5 Veterans Committee; Assemblywoman Fahy;  
6 Assemblywoman Dickens.

7 And we go to Assemblyman Hevesi for  
8 questions.

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We've also been  
10 joined by Senator Brian Kavanagh. Oh, excuse  
11 me, and Senator Gustavo Rivera.

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. So  
13 now we go to Assemblyman Hevesi for  
14 questions.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI: Hi, good morning,  
16 Commissioner.

17 OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Good  
18 morning.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI: You know, I've  
20 come to look forward to our time together at  
21 these hearings.

22 (Laughter.)

23 ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI: So I'm going to  
24 go quick, and there are some questions that

1 I'm going to ask Chairwoman Weinstein to ask  
2 for me because I'm not going to get to them.  
3 So I haven't had coffee, I'm not going fast  
4 on purpose, I just -- there's a lot of topics  
5 I've got to get through.

6 So first, let me start with a general  
7 thank you to OCFS and OTDA and the other O  
8 agencies and the agency staff for all the  
9 work they do. You really do do a great job  
10 under difficult circumstances, and I want to  
11 say thank you.

12 A couple of other thank yous. Thank  
13 you for continuing the Family First  
14 Transition Fund, appreciate that. It's a  
15 \$3 million -- look for us to try to get that  
16 up to 4.5 million, but we appreciate that.

17 I'd like to thank you for the  
18 firewall, the kinship firewall. Great  
19 proposal, I think that will be very helpful.  
20 Look from us, from the Assembly -- and I will  
21 talk to my Senate colleagues -- about looking  
22 to have an open-ended new funding stream  
23 pulling KinGAP out of the Foster Care Block  
24 Grant.

1                   In an effort to replicate the success  
2 we had with preventative services, we will  
3 drill down on what the right reimbursement  
4 for counties is. But we believe that KinGAP  
5 is the future. You're moving in that  
6 direction. I think we should put some money  
7 behind it.

8                   Thank you for the childcare tax  
9 credit. That's really impressive. You've  
10 been listening to the advocates, I appreciate  
11 that. And thank you for the childcare slots.  
12 This is all good stuff.

13                   Now, if you don't mind, I'm going to  
14 ask you on four topics. I'll ask them quick,  
15 and you can take your time answering them and  
16 I'll just go through.

17                   In your Article VII language you have  
18 some language about assessors, and it seems  
19 that the assessor who will be making  
20 determinations about placement of children  
21 goes above and beyond the federal requirement  
22 for Families First, and that gives me pause  
23 and scares me a little bit. So that's the  
24 first one. I'm going to keep going, so if

1           you want to --

2                   OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE:

3           {Inaudible.}.

4                   ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI:  Yeah, sorry, it's  
5           the time constraint, I apologize.

6                   The second is COPS.  You have opened  
7           up the Community Optional Preventive Services  
8           program.  Just if you could touch on what the  
9           intent of that is, and make sure that the  
10          programs that are already in there stay  
11          whole, because there are some very good  
12          programs in there.

13                   Third topic -- and again, sorry for  
14          throwing these all at you -- the  
15          public/private partnership.  This funding is  
16          already used to help vulnerable children and  
17          families, and it has a private match.  What  
18          are we doing with that?  I just want to make  
19          sure that those programs stay whole.

20                   And then the last question -- and I'm  
21          sorry to bombard you -- apparently the  
22          Childcare Availability Task Force made a  
23          bunch of recommendations, but they're not  
24          reflected in your budget.

1                   So I apologize for throwing all that  
2                   at you. But your thoughts?

3                   OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Thank you,  
4                   Assemblyman. And I do appreciation your  
5                   recognition of the work of my agency.

6                   So as for the independent assessors  
7                   and the proposed language in our Article VII  
8                   bill, our interpretation of the federal  
9                   statute and regulations is clear, that the  
10                  feds expect that it is the role of the  
11                  independent assessor to determine the  
12                  appropriateness of the child's stay in  
13                  congregate care.

14                  And if the independent assessor  
15                  determines -- they have 30 days, under the  
16                  federal law, to do their independent  
17                  assessment. If at the end of that 30-day  
18                  assessment they come back and they say  
19                  "Sheila does not belong in a QRPT," it  
20                  requires that the county make an immediate  
21                  plan to transition that child to an  
22                  appropriate lower level of care.

23                  So they will have up to 30 days,  
24                  following that 30-day assessment, to make a

1 plan to move that child to the right level of  
2 care.

3 After that 30 days of transitional  
4 funding, the Title IV-E money will go away  
5 for the entirety of that child's spell in  
6 care going forward. So I want to put that  
7 there.

8 The federal bill also sort of -- they  
9 complicated things, in our view, that they  
10 also said there's an additional new Family  
11 Court hearing at a 60-day mark. However, the  
12 federal language doesn't give any authority,  
13 in our interpretation, to a Family Court  
14 judge to overrule or overturn the  
15 determination of the independent assessor.  
16 Right?

17 So we are concerned that if an  
18 independent assessor -- who the feds are  
19 saying is really tied to the continuation of  
20 these IV-E dollars -- says a child doesn't  
21 need this level of care, well, first of all,  
22 that was the whole point of Family First, is  
23 to say someone needs to be asking hard  
24 questions about whether or not this child --

1           so it would seem that if an independent  
2           qualified assessor says they don't, we should  
3           be making plans to step them down or to look  
4           for relatives or a foster home.

5                     But we're also concerned, Assemblyman,  
6           that with that IV-E federal money clock  
7           ticking, we don't want to set counties up to  
8           unintentionally be assuming. Right? If  
9           they're going to lose IV-E funding, what  
10          other funding stream, if they keep the kid in  
11          congregate care, are they going to be using  
12          to support that placement?

13                    So that is why our Article VII was  
14          intentionally written the way that it was.  
15          So I hope that clarifies a bit for you.

16                    ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI: It helps. It  
17          does, thank you.

18                    OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: And again,  
19          you know, a bill is the beginning of a  
20          conversation. Right? And so we'll be -- I'm  
21          looking forward to what our colleagues have  
22          to say.

23                    So COPS?

24                    ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI: Please.

1                   OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Just to move  
2 quickly. So Community Optional Preventive  
3 Services, for those of you who might not be  
4 familiar with it, has been around. It has  
5 been the same funding stream, about  
6 \$12.1 million. We've been funding the same  
7 programs since 2008.

8                   And so as we are looking across all  
9 our funding streams at OCFS and we're asking  
10 questions about when is the last time you  
11 looked at this funding stream, is what's  
12 being invested sort of in line with where we  
13 are 11, 12 years later in terms of  
14 Family First and other pressures and our work  
15 towards kinship and foster families, what  
16 we're simply saying is that the time has come  
17 for us to open up COPS.

18                   And our goal is to open up a  
19 procurement that eliminates some of the  
20 restrictions that currently exist in COPS.  
21 Because there have been no changes to how  
22 COPS funding has been able to be used since  
23 2008. It's now 2020.

24                   So that's really our intention, is

1           it's time to stop, open it back up to be more  
2           relevant, right, to where we are in 2020 in  
3           terms of the kinds of services and programs  
4           that we're trying to implement.

5                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you,  
6           Commissioner. Perhaps you could follow up  
7           with some of -- in more detail with  
8           information to the committee that we could  
9           share with the members.

10                   So we'll go now to the Senate.

11                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

12                   Senator Diane Savino.

13                   SENATOR SAVINO: Thank you, Senator  
14           Krueger.

15                   Good morning, Commissioner. I want to  
16           thank you for the meeting we had earlier this  
17           week where we talked about some of these  
18           complicated issues, including the role of the  
19           independent assessor and what -- what -- what  
20           complications they could create for Families  
21           First.

22                   I do want to follow up with you,  
23           though, at a later time on this blind removal  
24           thing. I think I might be the only person

1           here -- although there are new members of the  
2           legislature -- I think I might be the only  
3           one that's ever done that work. So I'm  
4           trying to figure out how it would work --

5                     OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Yeah.

6                     SENATOR SAVINO: -- and I don't want  
7           to waste our time here today. It's  
8           interesting.

9                     I just want to quickly raise my  
10          concern again about the failure to fund Close  
11          to Home. It is probably the most successful  
12          program that we've created for young people  
13          to turn their lives around. And I'll say it  
14          again, as a result of Close to Home, less  
15          young people are winding up arrested and now  
16          going through the Raise the Age program.

17                    I also want to raise my concern about  
18          the fact that the city has the bulk of the  
19          kids in the Raise the Age program, and  
20          they're not getting any money from the state.  
21          That's fundamentally unfair. We need to  
22          change that.

23                    Two other points. I'm very concerned  
24          about the workforce. We have, over the

1 years, shifted almost the entire burden of  
2 child welfare services, with the exception of  
3 protective services, to the nonprofit sector.  
4 And the turnover in those agencies is  
5 extraordinary. And that is equally  
6 traumatizing to children, every time they  
7 lose someone who is working with them.

8 We need to do something about  
9 stabilizing this workforce. Everyone cannot  
10 work for the government, and somebody has to  
11 work directly with these families. So we  
12 find more creative ways to either do tuition  
13 loan forgiveness for social workers in the  
14 nonprofit sector the way we do loan  
15 forgiveness in the public sector. But it's  
16 critically important that we stabilize these  
17 agencies. They really are the ones who are  
18 doing the hard work right now. Not to take  
19 anything away from my own union, but they're  
20 not doing foster care anymore.

21 One other thing I would like to point  
22 out. I know you can't talk about what  
23 happened in Suffolk County, it's too soon.  
24 But what I would hope that you could convey

1 to members is don't jump in with legislation  
2 to fix a problem that you might not  
3 understand. There's more to every case, and  
4 we cannot second-guess our workforce every  
5 time a bad case makes the headlines. There's  
6 a lot of people that play a role in whether  
7 or not children are removed or whether or not  
8 there's intervention.

9 So I just would ask you to convey that  
10 message to everyone. Calm down, we don't  
11 need 50 bills changing the child welfare  
12 system thinking that they can solve the  
13 problem.

14 And finally, last year we passed a  
15 bill on preserving family bonds which would  
16 allow for post-termination visitation in  
17 particular cases. We broke down over a  
18 potential chapter amendment. We still firmly  
19 believe in this, that these young people who  
20 want to have connections to their parents  
21 post-termination should, in certain  
22 circumstances.

23 And I understand your department is  
24 going to bring forward a departmental bill.

1           So if you are, I would appreciate -- let's do  
2           it, and let's do it quickly. I think that's  
3           a victory that we can have for some young  
4           people whose lives have been disrupted by the  
5           system, for better or worse, and they can  
6           have some continuity with their families.

7                        So I think that's it. Thank you.

8                        OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: I would just  
9           reflect back, Senator. You know, your prior  
10          experience as a worker in the Administration  
11          for Children and Families shines through. In  
12          your role as Senator you raise all very  
13          important, very challenging issues that, as  
14          you know and I think appreciate, we work  
15          toward every day at OCFS.

16                       And with respect to legislation,  
17          right, it is a new year, a new time for, you  
18          know, the reintroduction of things that  
19          didn't happen perhaps in 2019, and we are  
20          always open to having those conversations  
21          again. So thank you.

22                       And I also want to especially express  
23          my thanks to you for your comments. So the  
24          Senator is referring to what I'm sure you're

1 all aware was a horrific fatality of an  
2 8-year-old child in Suffolk County that has  
3 been devastating for everyone involved,  
4 including the child protective staff in that  
5 county.

6 And so because of confidentiality, I  
7 know you all appreciate the fact that we  
8 cannot speak about the case, but I do want to  
9 echo the Senator's caution that it is often  
10 during times of a case crisis that we --  
11 everyone feels a sense of responsibility to  
12 do something, and I appreciate that. But  
13 sometimes what we choose to do in the short  
14 term is sort of done hastily, and it's not  
15 always the right remedy to the solution.

16 So again, I think as we continue our  
17 open dialogue and work together, there are  
18 ways that we can continue. And I hope -- I  
19 hope -- if nothing else, that you see me, as  
20 commissioner of OCFS, committed to always  
21 working toward that goal.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

23 We now go to Assemblyman Walczyk.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Thank you.

1           As Mr. Hevesi was saying, and I  
2           appreciate all of his questions, the  
3           Executive Budget eliminates 3.5 million in  
4           P-3 funding. Nonprofits who have created  
5           pragmatic and successful programs will be  
6           affected here. Can you point to some  
7           assessment that would have forced this to be  
8           eliminated?

9           OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: So I think,  
10          Assemblyman, that the short answer to that is  
11          that it is part of our contribution, if you  
12          will, to trying to assist in helping close  
13          the state's budget gap.

14          You know, I can't say for sure, but as  
15          we had sort of the COPS conversation, it is a  
16          possibility that some of those programs that  
17          may no longer be receiving the public/private  
18          partnership money, you know, might be able to  
19          respond to the procurement of the COPS  
20          funding. But I can't guarantee that.

21          ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: But from your  
22          agency's perspective there's no assessment  
23          that you've done that says, you know, these  
24          programs aren't proven or this program should

1 be eliminated, the 3.5 million?

2 OCFs COMMISSIONER POOLE: You know, I  
3 think our overall assessment has been that  
4 all things considered, where we are making  
5 our investments, that that \$3.5 million is a  
6 place where I think we have the opportunity  
7 to provide services in other ways. Many of  
8 those programs are local programs, with all  
9 due respect, you know, to the work that they  
10 are doing, so we're not achieving sort of a  
11 statewide practice change as a result of  
12 those.

13 But again, whenever we have to make  
14 these very difficult decisions, we will do  
15 whatever we can through other potential  
16 funding mechanisms to make that continuation  
17 possible.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: I appreciate  
19 that. Thank you, Commissioner.

20 And I think as you sort of segued to  
21 COPS as well, if that's opened up, is there  
22 an assessment that shows that the agencies  
23 that are currently funded through there  
24 aren't doing a great job or, you know --

1                   OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: You know, I  
2                   think my answer is that, you know, COPS was  
3                   created a long time ago. And that again, we  
4                   are 12 years ahead now. Our pressures to do  
5                   business differently, our driving toward more  
6                   kinship care and doing things sort of -- you  
7                   know, allow us to ask ourselves the question,  
8                   which I think we should be, is it time to  
9                   open this up and try and modernize some of  
10                  the funding available.

11                  ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: I would love to  
12                  see something on paper there, and maybe your  
13                  agency can send me something. Because I see  
14                  those current funding streams as pragmatic  
15                  progress, the way that the Governor likes to  
16                  be on it, and I think they've done a great  
17                  job.

18                  The average New York family is  
19                  spending \$16,000 annually on childcare. The  
20                  next couple of questions are real big  
21                  picture. How can we reduce that cost?

22                  OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: {Chuckling.}  
23                  That is, Assemblyman, you know, the  
24                  million-dollar question. And, you know, I

1 know and you all know that the Governor's  
2 Childcare Task Force -- and they are an  
3 amazing group of individuals. They are  
4 smart, they are fierce, they have rolled up  
5 their sleeves and done, you know, an amazing  
6 amount of work. And they're fierce, and they  
7 are determined to make recommendations for  
8 change here. And you'll be hearing, I'm  
9 sure, from many of them when they speak  
10 later.

11 You know, the challenge for us is in  
12 spite of all of the investments that we make  
13 on a state level -- the tax credit, our high  
14 market rate, the number of children tapping  
15 into subsidy, all the good things that I  
16 listed out in my testimony -- and even with  
17 additional federal dollars coming, you know,  
18 the truth is that this is a huge economic  
19 issue to solve across the country, and we're  
20 no different in New York.

21 And so I think the question before us  
22 is even with the state's investments, with  
23 the money we get from the federal government,  
24 right, we are still falling short in, you

1 know, meeting the needs for families who --  
2 working families who rely on subsidy.

3 And the cost of care is high. And for  
4 good reason, right? Because we have a highly  
5 regulated system. We put a lot of value and  
6 emphasis on health and safety, you know,  
7 regulations here. So it's a very challenging  
8 issue.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: One final one,  
10 and you mentioned this as an issue  
11 country-wide. I couldn't agree more. We  
12 have an interesting demographic in New York  
13 State, and I just wonder what you'd think  
14 about rural areas and recruiting additional  
15 providers. Right now it's not even so much  
16 the cost as it is the access to childcare for  
17 a lot of the area that I represent.

18 OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Yeah. I  
19 think that the workforce and the salaries for  
20 the childcare workforce and the childcare  
21 deserts and the particular challenges in  
22 rural communities are just another dimension,  
23 right, of the challenges for us to be  
24 solving.

1           You're right, it is more challenging  
2           in some of those rural communities. And  
3           grappling with the salary structure and what  
4           childcare workers make in New York and across  
5           the country is in fact, you know, one of the  
6           major components, I think, of the discussions  
7           of the task force and the things we are  
8           struggling with moving forward.

9           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

10           We've been joined by Assemblywoman  
11           Wright. And now to the Senate.

12           CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. We've  
13           been joined by Senator Tedisco.

14           And our next questioner will be chair  
15           of Social Services, Roxanne Persaud.

16           SENATOR PERSAUD: Good morning,  
17           Commissioner. It's always great to see you  
18           and to work with you.

19           I am -- in the interest of time, I'm  
20           just going to go through some questions that  
21           we have.

22           In reference to special education  
23           residential placement, can you tell us what's  
24           driving the proposal that the Governor has

1 sent in the budget of the cost shift? Can  
2 you provide us the financial breakdown for  
3 school districts? Do you have a geographical  
4 map of where these placements are?

5 Also in terms of that, has the state  
6 consulted with the educational stakeholders  
7 on this proposal? The cost shift is -- it's  
8 something that we're very concerned with, as  
9 you know. We've had that conversation.

10 Do you also know what is the average  
11 maintenance cost for the special ed  
12 placement?

13 In terms of the Childcare Availability  
14 Task Force, can you provide us a status  
15 update on the recommendations that were made?  
16 Also, do you anticipate that the task force  
17 will be holding any hearings in the near  
18 future so that everyone -- the public will  
19 have input?

20 Then in terms of the rightsizing of  
21 youth facilities, we know that a facility is  
22 going to be closed, it's on notice to be  
23 closed, it's located in Delaware County. Is  
24 there going to be an impact on the workforce?

1           What are the plans for that facility? And  
2           are there any other facilities that are  
3           underutilized at this time that are on the  
4           list to be closed in the near future?

5                     Okay. I'll give you that, and then  
6           I'll come back for my next one.

7                     OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Okay, great.  
8           Thank you.

9                     So with respect to the proposal to  
10          shift -- it is approximated to be about  
11          \$22 million out of OCFS's budget, and to  
12          shift that to the State Education Department.  
13          And that is in the overall context of trying  
14          to close the budget gap, Senator.

15                    I do not have the distribution by  
16          school district of that, nor the actual rate.  
17          I can certainly follow up with you, but I do  
18          not have that analysis at this point in time.

19                    With respect to the Childcare  
20          Availability Task Force, so just to be clear,  
21          though the task force has been meeting  
22          regularly, the final report of the task force  
23          is due in December of this year. I do not  
24          believe as of now that public hearings are

1 contemplated. But there have been,  
2 obviously, regular and ongoing meetings.

3 And, you know, so the task force has  
4 not issued its final recommendations yet,  
5 although I know that members of the task  
6 force had hoped to see deeper investments in  
7 the budget. But again, that is part of the  
8 discussion we had about the challenge, right,  
9 and just the magnitude of what is needed  
10 here.

11 And then thirdly, Senator, with  
12 respect to the proposed closure of one of our  
13 juvenile residential facilities, it's the  
14 Youth Leadership Academy that you're  
15 referring to. It is located in South  
16 Kortright in Delaware County. It is a 25-bed  
17 limited secure facility, and it has been  
18 significantly underutilized over the past  
19 couple of years. So on average, we've had  
20 seven or eight young people there.

21 And because we have the -- so it's not  
22 cost-effective, frankly, to continue to  
23 operate that program. And we do have  
24 availability in our other OCFS limited-secure

1 facilities to accommodate those young people.

2 No layoffs will happen as a result of  
3 this, so we have already met with the staff  
4 at YLA. We have other OCFS facilities in the  
5 Rochester area, in Finger Lakes. And so  
6 those staff who work at YLA will have first  
7 priority for any vacancies at OCFS, and then  
8 they will also go through the civil service  
9 ARTL process where they are prioritized for  
10 any other civil service positions in other  
11 state agencies for which they qualify. And  
12 also it's a year closure notice, so we'll  
13 have a year to work through that process with  
14 the staff.

15 And as for the future intended use of  
16 the facility once it's vacated, no decisions  
17 that I'm aware of have been made yet.

18 SENATOR PERSAUD: Okay. Quickly, can  
19 you tell us about the TANF cost shift in the  
20 FFFS services? Can you give us some  
21 highlights of that?

22 OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: So the  
23 proposal in the budget is to increase the  
24 child welfare threshold under the FFFS, the

1 Flexible Funding for Families. So that also  
2 sits in OTDA's budget. It's all TANF  
3 funding. I think the total FFFS is around  
4 \$954 million.

5 The current child welfare threshold  
6 that has been in effect is about  
7 \$342 million. The proposal calls for that  
8 threshold to increase to \$382 million.

9 So what that means as a practical  
10 matter, because it's complicated, is that  
11 local districts will be required to spend  
12 more of their federal FFFS money before they  
13 can tap into the state's 62/38 enhanced  
14 reimbursement.

15 So what that may mean for counties  
16 is -- it may not necessarily mean a cut in  
17 child welfare services, but it is assumed  
18 that it will require counties to sort of go  
19 back to their FFFS funding, which allows them  
20 to pay for a number of services, including a  
21 lot of administration costs are in FFFS. But  
22 there's other services.

23 And this increase in the threshold is  
24 likely to result in districts having to make

1           some decisions about how they prioritize the  
2           use of their FFFS.

3                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER:  So, Commissioner,  
4           I think we've seen a pattern now.  People  
5           have a long list of questions for you, and  
6           then the clock goes off and you want to  
7           answer.  What we've done in other hearings --  
8           you have staff here.  If you will please,  
9           your staff, take careful notes, get the  
10          answers that you were not able to complete in  
11          the time frame for anyone who's asking  
12          questions.

13                   If you send them to Helene and I, we  
14          will make sure all of our colleagues get the  
15          letter from you explaining the answers.  
16          Because I don't want to show any disrespect  
17          for my colleagues or for you being able to  
18          answer, but we have these time clocks for a  
19          reason.

20                   So with that, I'm going to send it  
21          back over to the Assembly.

22                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:  Thank you.

23                   And as my cochair says, just a  
24          reminder to members that the time is for both

1 your question and answer.

2 Assemblywoman Fahy for questions.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you.

4 Good morning, Commissioner. Thank you  
5 for being here. And always good to see you.

6 And I want to start with just a couple  
7 of comments. It is good to see that we are  
8 seeing some federal increases. So many other  
9 areas that we touch into, whether it's the  
10 environment or water infrastructure or roads,  
11 where we're seeing a rollback. So it is good  
12 to see in a few areas where you are  
13 mentioning the increases from the feds. So  
14 that's somewhat encouraging, given the  
15 pushback.

16 I also want to commend the increase on  
17 Raise the Age -- that's something that has  
18 really helped up here with implementation --  
19 and also pleased on some of the kinship care  
20 as well.

21 A couple of questions, something I  
22 have not heard mentioned. One was the home  
23 visiting programs, which you know are near  
24 and dear to me and I think would go a long

1 way, since we've heard a lot today about  
2 child abuse and child preventive services.

3 The Healthy Families New York, I think  
4 you've proposed -- the Governor has proposed  
5 level funding on that. And yet the need -- I  
6 think we're serving the tiniest fraction of  
7 those who could be served or be eligible.  
8 Can you talk about that, and if there's any  
9 room for moving the needle on that funding?

10 OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Sure. So  
11 we're very proud, and thank you for your  
12 acknowledgment of our evidence-based Healthy  
13 Families program. So the budget does  
14 maintain \$26 million of stable funding for  
15 the program. And we serve about 6,000  
16 families a year. I think we conduct over  
17 70,000 home visits to families. So it's a  
18 very effective program.

19 You know, one of the opportunities --  
20 and it's not a this-year thing necessarily,  
21 Assemblywoman, but one of the things that we  
22 do look forward to is -- again, back to all  
23 things Family First -- that down the road  
24 when we submit our prevention plan, home

1 visiting programs are one of the  
2 evidence-based models that are in the federal  
3 clearinghouse that we can potentially invest  
4 IV-E dollars into using to expand,  
5 potentially, Healthy Families down the road.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Yeah, I think the  
7 evidence is profound, decades of evidence on  
8 home visiting programs in general. And we'd  
9 love to work with you on really expanding  
10 that package. I'd love to see us down the  
11 road look at universal access for those  
12 programs or universal services for all  
13 families, because I do think it is profound,  
14 that very earliest of intervention.

15 The second question is on DV. You  
16 mentioned in your testimony that there is a  
17 growing issue of domestic violence. And  
18 certainly we've read a -- you know, I read a  
19 lot of the national numbers. And then you've  
20 also proposed a new fund for flexible  
21 domestic violence services.

22 Can you mention what the growing --  
23 you know, what numbers you're seeing on  
24 domestic violence in terms of the growing

1           problem, and then where the flexible domestic  
2           violence program has come from?

3                   OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE:  So I will  
4           certainly say from my child welfare hat and  
5           my experience, you know, the prevalence of  
6           domestic violence in child protective service  
7           reports is astonishing.  It is everywhere,  
8           seemingly.

9                   We're also, right, knowing from some  
10          very serious cases reported in the news  
11          across the country -- Staten Island, New York  
12          City, out in the western part of the state.  
13          You know, too many murders, deaths, acts of  
14          violence.  And I think it's just -- it's  
15          nationally recognized.

16                  You know, whether it's actually an  
17          uptick versus more awareness and folks are  
18          coming forward, you know, that's always a  
19          question for us.

20                  But what we do know is at the end of  
21          the day we need to do much more across the  
22          system to do more prevention, to really help  
23          our service providers who are now, you know,  
24          working to meet survivors where they are,

1           where they're at.

2                     Our domestic violence model of funding  
3           in New York State has really not changed  
4           significantly in 30 years. And, you know, as  
5           I'm spending more and more time in state  
6           government, there's a lot of things that we  
7           really have not taken a look at -- models  
8           that were built, you know, 10, 20, 30 years  
9           ago that have sort of stayed the same.

10                    And as we look across the country and  
11           other states, we see new models of  
12           innovation. And so as we're doing our work  
13           on the task force, we have NYSCADV, we have  
14           many of our domestic violence service  
15           providers. And so the way that we fund our  
16           shelter system now is sort of inflexible in  
17           some respects. And so we want to sort of  
18           test out some new funding models.

19                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: I'm almost out of  
20           time, so I just want to add I'd love to hear  
21           more on that. And then, finally, just want  
22           to add that the workforce training that you  
23           mentioned for the nonprofits, and that some  
24           of my colleagues mentioned, would love to

1           hear more on that point, given the turnover  
2           rates really do impact services.

3                     Thank you, Chair.

4                     CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

5                     Senate?

6                     CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

7           Senator Rachel May.

8                     SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

9                     And thank you, Commissioner.

10                    I have just a couple of quick  
11           questions. One is -- I represent Syracuse,  
12           and we have a sad statistic in Syracuse that  
13           about 10 percent of the students in the  
14           school district are functionally homeless,  
15           which means a lot of them are couch surfing  
16           on friends', families' couches and that sort  
17           of thing.

18                    I'm wondering if you have any systems  
19           in place to identify kids who are facing  
20           those kinds of challenges and to help them  
21           get the services they need.

22                    OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Yeah, that's  
23           a very sobering statistic, Senator.

24                    We don't at OCFS, you know, work with

1 the schools in that way or track those  
2 statistics. You know, the way that sort of  
3 child welfare system would have knowledge is  
4 if there's some reason to believe that those  
5 children are being maltreated, and a call  
6 would be made to the SCR.

7 But we don't at OCFS. But maybe our  
8 colleagues at OTDA -- I don't want to  
9 speak -- but as part of their homeless  
10 prevention may do some work in that area, but  
11 we do not at OCFS.

12 SENATOR MAY: Okay. Thank you.

13 And my other question is about the --  
14 I was encouraged to hear about the REDC  
15 program actually identifying childcare as a  
16 priority. One of the complaints I hear about  
17 state economic development is that it tends  
18 to prioritize new projects and  
19 entrepreneurial projects when there are a lot  
20 of things out there that could employ people  
21 tomorrow if they just had more funding.  
22 So -- and childcare is one of those areas  
23 where, if we could just pay childcare workers  
24 more, we could employ a whole lot more

1 people, we could keep the childcare workers  
2 off of public assistance, we could make it a  
3 job that people wanted to go into at higher  
4 rates.

5 Is there -- when those regional  
6 economic development decisions are being  
7 made, is that being taken into account, that  
8 we just want to beef up programs that are  
9 already out there?

10 OCFs COMMISSIONER POOLE: I am not an  
11 expert in the REDCs, to be honest with you.

12 You know, I think that the -- all the  
13 issues that you articulated are -- many of  
14 them are issues of the broader task force and  
15 of the broader challenge in childcare in  
16 New York State. You know, I think we wanted  
17 to take advantage of the REDCs, who have  
18 their own very specific purpose, right, in  
19 sparking, you know, regional economic  
20 development and growth. And I think the  
21 Governor and the Lieutenant Governor's  
22 message to them was while you're doing that,  
23 don't forget -- right -- if you're building  
24 new businesses, to take childcare into

1 consideration. And to your point, they have  
2 clearly responded to that.

3 You know, how much we can expect them,  
4 you know, to own as part of the greater  
5 childcare problem, you know, I think remains  
6 to be seen. But I think it is amazing in a  
7 very short period of time, right -- in only a  
8 year -- that almost \$16 million have been  
9 sort of in acknowledgment of the overall  
10 childcare challenge, so.

11 SENATOR MAY: Great. Thank you very  
12 much.

13 OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: You're  
14 welcome.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
16 Assembly?

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
18 Assemblywoman Barrett.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: Good morning.  
20 Nice to see you. And thank you for all  
21 you're doing and your leadership in this  
22 really essential area.

23 I share the comments or support many  
24 of the comments that my colleagues raised.

1 But I just want to focus on workforce and the  
2 whole notion of care continuum. One of my  
3 great frustrations in government is all the  
4 silos and how -- you know, when you try to  
5 look at something that works across agencies,  
6 there's always kind of roadblocks and, you  
7 know, why that should happen. And I know  
8 there's been an effort in some of the areas,  
9 you know, in Veterans and in Ag and in EnCon,  
10 to work across those agencies.

11 But I think that there's a real need  
12 in this state for a caregiving continuum that  
13 starts with childcare, goes through the aging  
14 and the senior population, but in between  
15 addresses families with kids with special  
16 needs. And so it would be kind of an OPWDD,  
17 you know, your agency, OMH, and Aging working  
18 together, potentially with SUNY, to look at  
19 how we could be doing a better job of  
20 creating a professional caregiving workforce  
21 that has the prestige and has the career  
22 possibilities commensurate with the essential  
23 work that they're doing in our communities.

24 And so often this population is -- the

1           caregivers are women, women of color, often  
2           immigrant women, family members, who are  
3           often the daughters and the wives who are  
4           unpaid. But I feel like we can't just kind  
5           of put Band-Aids on this and look for  
6           short-term patches rather than address this  
7           in a more holistic and more statewide way.

8                     And one -- you know, some of us have  
9           been looking at the idea of a caregiving  
10          fund, a workforce fund that we would put in  
11          the budget, you know, and look for innovative  
12          solutions in the -- you know, either  
13          regionally, for starters, or have it be  
14          across the state.

15                    And I wondered what you think about  
16          that and whether it's something you could  
17          support and see working with colleagues  
18          around.

19                    OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: I -- you  
20          know, I would acknowledge wholeheartedly  
21          that -- and I think as you speak to my other  
22          colleagues leading other human service  
23          agencies, that workforce is in every  
24          conversation. It is a challenge in every

1 corner of our work, the not-for-profits and  
2 state government and all of our human service  
3 agencies as well. And I am more than willing  
4 to sit and, you know, dialogue with you about  
5 your ideas.

6 You know, the Governor has a new  
7 leader of workforce development on behalf of  
8 the state, Madhuri, she's fantastic. So I  
9 know we would absolutely be willing to sit  
10 down, think this through, think about how we  
11 can develop some of those strategies.

12 Because, you know, to your point about  
13 sort of being siloed, right, it's not really  
14 the best way to sort of maximize all the  
15 resources and thinking because we're all  
16 sharing the same challenges across many  
17 sectors.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: Thank you, I  
19 appreciate that. Because I think people  
20 often do say, Well, we're just talking about  
21 childcare, we're not talking about older  
22 people or people, you know, that need help  
23 with caregiving on a daily basis, or working  
24 in an agency. And it is, it's a crisis, and

1           it's a crisis that's only going to grow,  
2           which I'm sure we'll talk about when the  
3           commissioner of Aging is here.

4                     But it is a continuum, and I  
5           appreciate that and would love to engage with  
6           you on that further. Thank you.

7                     CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
8           Senate?

9                     CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Sue  
10          Serino.

11                    SENATOR SERINO: Good morning,  
12          Chairwoman Poole. And today I wear two hats,  
13          I'm the ranker on Social Services and the  
14          ranker on Aging.

15                    And I know that we've had this  
16          conversation a few times about extending the  
17          hours of the Elder Abuse Hotline for -- to  
18          make it eventually 24/7. We know abuse  
19          doesn't just happen between the hours of 9:00  
20          to 5:00. The Governor has expressed support  
21          for the initiative but said that it needed to  
22          be handled within the context of the budget.

23                    And in 2018, we were able to have a  
24          compromise in the budget when the Senate



1 of -- the extended hours of 5 o'clock and  
2 8 o'clock is comparatively low when we look  
3 at the numbers during the day. But I think  
4 the good-news word is out that this call  
5 center exists, by virtue of the fact that the  
6 number of calls is increasing.

7 And it doesn't appear, Senator, at  
8 this point in time, just based on the number  
9 volume, that we're not meeting the current  
10 need for the after-hours calls.

11 SENATOR SERINO: Really, a year isn't  
12 enough time to get the message out there?  
13 That's really disappointing that we wouldn't  
14 be continuing that.

15 OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: No, we will  
16 be continuing. Oh, we will absolutely be  
17 continuing.

18 SENATOR SERINO: Okay. And keep  
19 track. And keep track.

20 OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Yes. Yeah.

21 SENATOR SERINO: Oh, okay. All right,  
22 very good.

23 And I just wanted to echo some of my  
24 colleagues' comments. Assemblywoman Fahy,

1           when she talked about the proposal to  
2           increase the funds for -- the flexible  
3           domestic violence funds -- I fully support  
4           this. You know, right now the funds that are  
5           there are restrictive. So this is a flexible  
6           funding. And I know in our community we have  
7           DART, which is domestic abuse response teams  
8           that -- it's multidisciplinary crisis teams  
9           that work with the domestic advocates. And  
10          it's just been amazing.

11                        So I fully support that. I'm hoping  
12          that that continues to go on.

13                        And then the other issue was the  
14          workforce. I know Senator Savino had spoken  
15          about that, and so did Assemblywoman Didi  
16          Barrett. And that is so important. Our  
17          vulnerable population, they get attached to  
18          the people that are working with them, and  
19          it's just such a shame. We really need to  
20          work on that. And, you know, the Governor  
21          fought very hard for the minimum wage  
22          increase, but we just -- we need to do more.  
23          Costs rise, and we have to be able to ensure  
24          that we can keep these workers.

1 OCFs COMMISSIONER POOLE: I agree.

2 SENATOR SERINO: Thank you. And I  
3 don't think I have anything else.

4 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

5 We go to Assemblywoman Wright.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Good morning.

7 OCFs COMMISSIONER POOLE: Good  
8 morning.

9 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: I wanted to --  
10 {inaudible; mic off.}

11 Good morning. Can you hear me now?  
12 Thank you very much. I wanted to talk with  
13 you first about the Family First Preventive  
14 Services Act. And we're anticipating  
15 \$75 million in new funding, but I don't see  
16 anything dedicated to permanency efforts for  
17 older foster kids in there, and the  
18 explanation of where and how we're going to  
19 be using the funds.

20 So I wanted to ask, what is it that  
21 you're thinking about and how you would like  
22 to see this and what you will be supporting  
23 to support permanency for older foster  
24 children? First.

1           And then I'd like to ask you to turn  
2           your attention to protective services for the  
3           aging. We've had very long conversations, or  
4           I and your staff, regarding what and -- the  
5           manner in which protective services is able  
6           to enter the home and then they have a lack  
7           of transparency to report exactly what  
8           directed them to enter the home of and to  
9           begin the investigation when it becomes --  
10          when it's a case of an aging person or that's  
11          an alleged abuse.

12                 So -- but there's been a tremendous  
13          amount of resistance from your office in  
14          examining the procedures that we use. But I  
15          think that this is one of the cases where we  
16          have an old model that's not working and we  
17          are not -- we're not giving enough  
18          information to the person who is purportedly  
19          being abused. And oftentimes -- and in cases  
20          that I've reported to you from my district --  
21          we've had elders who have been what I would  
22          say railroaded into a court process to prove  
23          that they're not incapacitated. And as we  
24          all know, it's very difficult to prove the

1 negative.

2 So I'll give you both of those.

3 OCFs COMMISSIONER POOLE: Sure. So  
4 I'll start there, and we'll sort of work in  
5 reverse order, because I want to acknowledge  
6 what you've just raised.

7 And, you know, Assemblywoman, I know  
8 that you are very concerned about that one  
9 case in particular, and we have done our  
10 best, as we always do, to try and address  
11 your questions. And I'm sorry that you're  
12 unsatisfied with that. I think there are  
13 times that despite our perspectives, we're  
14 not always able to come to agreement. But I  
15 am more than happy to come back to the table  
16 with you and to continue those conversations.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: But you didn't  
18 address what the pol -- the procedure and the  
19 regulations that I'm asking you to talk  
20 about.

21 So we have a regulation that allows  
22 people to enter the home and to call for  
23 emergency services if they deem it an  
24 emergency.

1 OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Right.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: However, under  
3 normal circumstances of an emergency, they  
4 are supposed to provide an affidavit to a  
5 judge, who expedites that case and gives them  
6 an order to enter the home.

7 There's no procedure in place for them  
8 to explain why they want to call the police.  
9 That's what I asked for, and that's what I'm  
10 asking you to address.

11 OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: I think that  
12 conversation will take a lot of time for us  
13 to continue to have, Assemblywoman. But I am  
14 happy to continue to have that with you.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Okay.

16 OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: So as for  
17 the Family First Preventive Services Fund, so  
18 we have \$75 million appropriated in the  
19 budget. So we think up to \$50 million of  
20 that will go to New York City to help them  
21 continue their services that they did under  
22 the waiver.

23 The additional funds are designed, by  
24 the federal statute, specifically to help

1 states prepare for the transition to the  
2 Family First Act. Which is really focused  
3 not as much on permanency, but it is focused  
4 on the recruitment of kinship foster families  
5 and foster families, because that's where we  
6 want to move more kids to in placement.

7           However, you know, to your focus and  
8 your good question about what about  
9 permanency for older youth, what we do know  
10 is when children in care are placed with  
11 relatives, placed in kinship families, that  
12 the likelihood of real permanency is better  
13 for them.

14           And so that that's all part of our  
15 hope and sort of march forward on Families  
16 First, that we're going to have more older  
17 teens -- instead of going into congregate  
18 care, that we're going to build better  
19 systems of support so that foster families  
20 and kinship families can care for their  
21 teenagers wherever possible so that they're  
22 not going into congregate care where  
23 sometimes permanency becomes more challenging  
24 and we have kids aging out, right, when

1           they're 18, leaving care without sort of a  
2           permanency resource and a place to live.

3                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Thank you.

4                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

5                   Senate?

6                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Gallivan.

7                   SENATOR GALLIVAN: Thank you, Madam

8           Chair.

9                   Good morning, Commissioner.

10                   OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Good

11           morning.

12                   SENATOR GALLIVAN: The Governor's  
13           budget called for authorizing the transfer of  
14           adolescent offenders from the Department of  
15           Corrections and Community Supervision to  
16           OCFS. And part of the rationale -- among the  
17           items the executive talked about is that this  
18           will free up 750 beds, allowing for a prison  
19           closure. So I don't want to focus on the  
20           DOCCS part of it; rather, the OCFS part of  
21           it.

22                   I have a whole host of questions.

23           Where will you put them? How will you handle

24           it? I didn't see any corresponding

1 additional staff to handle it. And the  
2 training, the security, all of those things.  
3 You can start anywhere.

4 OCFs COMMISSIONER POOLE: We're ready.  
5 So we have --

6 SENATOR GALLIVAN: Tell me how. How  
7 are you ready?

8 OCFs COMMISSIONER POOLE: So just to  
9 say that in OCFs's current secure facilities,  
10 about 87 percent of the young people we serve  
11 are ages 16 and older. So we already -- and  
12 have for years -- served older youth. And we  
13 have, you know, youth who have serious  
14 charges, longer sentences.

15 We have made -- and I would love for  
16 you, Senator, I've offered you this before,  
17 but now is another time for me to offer you  
18 to come and tour an OCFs facility. I think  
19 you would be quite pleased with seeing the  
20 investments that we have made in providing  
21 college access to young people in our care,  
22 doing vocational programs. Our model is very  
23 trauma-centered and focused for these young  
24 people.

1                   And so I believe that this is a good  
2                   proposal. They're talking roughly about less  
3                   than 40 young people who are in the DOCCS  
4                   system. I think the numbers of women are  
5                   extremely low; I think there's one woman.

6                   We have available capacity today  
7                   within OCFS's secure facilities and enough  
8                   funding for adequate staffing to transfer  
9                   these youth in -- again, as the Article VII  
10                  proposal calls for, a planful transition  
11                  process.

12                  So I feel -- I've had numerous  
13                  conversations with Commissioner Annucci.  
14                  We've been great partners on Raise the Age.  
15                  I feel confident in my system that we are  
16                  more than well-equipped to serve these kids.  
17                  And I believe what we have built up in our  
18                  youth justice system over the past decade at  
19                  OCFS can really achieve better outcomes for  
20                  those young people when they leave care.

21                  SENATOR GALLIVAN: So DOCCS had  
22                  originally planned for the male population to  
23                  be -- to have essentially an east and a west,  
24                  two separate facilities, I believe, for them.

1           How would you -- so you say you have the  
2           capacity. Would they be going to facilities  
3           across the state, these adolescent offenders,  
4           or are you focused on one or two geographic  
5           areas of the state?

6                   OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: We have  
7           capacity at a number of my secure facilities.  
8           So one of the first things that we would do  
9           with DOCCS is figure out where is home for  
10          the 30-plus young people that they have. And  
11          we would do whatever we can with our existing  
12          capacity, right, to try and position young  
13          people in the transfer to sort of be as close  
14          to their homes as possible.

15                   Because one of the other elements of  
16          our work in youth justice is a strong  
17          emphasis on family engagement and after-care  
18          services. So that would be the ideal plan.  
19          And as I said, Senator, with our current  
20          available capacity at OCFS, I think we can  
21          absolutely achieve that.

22                   SENATOR GALLIVAN: The time is now to  
23          follow up on that.

24                   OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Right. I

1           hope you'll come to visit.

2                   SENATOR GALLIVAN: It simply has been  
3           scheduling rather lack of desire. But I  
4           think it's more than appropriate now.

5                   Thank you.

6                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

7                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
8           Assemblywoman Dickens.

9                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN DICKENS: Thank you,  
10          Madam Chair.

11                   And thank you, Commissioner, for your  
12          testimony and being here this morning and the  
13          work that you've done, which has been great.

14                   However, I do want to piggyback on my  
15          colleague Assemblymember Wright's question  
16          about the elder abuse, in that frequently  
17          particularly single women, seniors -- the  
18          Department of Aging focuses on them because  
19          there's no one to really care for them,  
20          there's no relative, no children, no husband,  
21          no family -- they are removed out of the home  
22          once they start having difficulty and then  
23          their homes are put up for sale.

24                   But if there is a small mortgage --

1           because frequently those homes have been paid  
2           for. But if there is a mortgage left on  
3           there, the banks are complicit in this, in  
4           that the house is sold and then the money is  
5           not -- none of the money is designated even  
6           for them to have burial, let alone any  
7           additional money. The money is taken by the  
8           Department of Aging.

9                         So I'd like you to address that.

10           That's number one.

11                         The second thing is -- and this is  
12           rather short. In the Domestic Violence Task  
13           Force -- and I commend you for being the  
14           cochair for that. Domestic violence cases,  
15           frequently the children are put into foster  
16           care if it's designated that the mother is  
17           unable to protect the child. And I see here  
18           that, for instance, there's been a proposal  
19           in the Executive Budget to decrease, for  
20           instance, kinship care by \$2 million and the  
21           Youth Development Program by \$1.5 million,  
22           settlement houses, 2.45, and Safe Harbour,  
23           3 million. That could significantly impact  
24           particularly the kinship care on the care

1           that the youth can receive from family  
2           members that may need the additional help.

3                     In addition, because of the necessity  
4           for mental health, I see that also for a  
5           union professional development, that there is  
6           a proposal in the Executive Budget that  
7           although 4.3 million is there for childcare,  
8           that it represents a decrease of 4.3 million  
9           for FY '19-'20 for state support for  
10          professional development and quality  
11          enhancement activities.

12                    Can you give me some answers to that,  
13          please. Because -- and the other thing is  
14          that frequently in certain communities it's a  
15          severe undercount in the number of domestic  
16          violence cases because culturally they don't  
17          make the report. So the numbers that we see  
18          are really not the correct numbers.

19                    Thank you.

20                    OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Yeah, of  
21          course.

22                    So when you began your comments, you  
23          described something that sounds very alarming  
24          about some of the patterns that you may be

1           seeing in your district. I would like us to  
2           follow up, Assemblywoman, and perhaps bring  
3           our commissioner for the Office of Aging just  
4           to talk about some of those case-specific  
5           scenarios and find out what's really going on  
6           there.

7                         So the cut that you referenced is with  
8           respect to contracts that we have had with  
9           our partners at UFT and CSEA for professional  
10          development and grant programs. And they are  
11          proposed, as you said, for a reduction. And  
12          I want to say that the work that they've done  
13          is very valuable. In fact, when you look at,  
14          though, the amount of money that has been in  
15          the contracts versus the amount of money that  
16          actually has been spent in the contracts,  
17          there's been a lot of underspending of those  
18          contracts.

19                        And so I think what our sense is is  
20          after having experience with these contracts  
21          for a number of years now, that what we  
22          believe should remain in the budget actually  
23          more accurately reflects what the right  
24          spending level is for those programs.

1           The second thing I would say is even  
2           with the proposed funding reduction that  
3           we're talking about, that based upon the  
4           current funding that is still left from  
5           previous contracts, that both UFT and CSEA  
6           should be able to continue the work they're  
7           doing with their existing funds through the  
8           end of 2021.

9           ASSEMBLYWOMAN DICKENS: All right.  
10          Well, thank you so much. Because that  
11          includes mental health, and that's extremely  
12          important for women of domestic violence  
13          families and their children. So thank you so  
14          much.

15          OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Thank you.

16          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

17          CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. So  
18          this isn't a question for you to answer  
19          today, but hopefully you and your people can  
20          put together a chart for us.

21          It seems to me that there is a pattern  
22          over -- I'm going to say let's go back eight  
23          years. We keep shifting more and more of the  
24          cost for human services, children's

1 services -- the same question will be for  
2 OTDA afterwards, so if they're here  
3 listening, I'd like a chart that shows X  
4 program that's within your agency, what  
5 amount did you spend each year, what percent  
6 was state responsibility, what percent did  
7 you send over to the localities.

8 Because I'm very concerned, and I  
9 think many of us are, that we keep balancing  
10 our budget by shifting the cost  
11 responsibilities to the localities. We cut  
12 our aid continuing to them. We cut our local  
13 share, we tell them they have to cap what  
14 they can tax themselves.

15 And I think we maybe walk through life  
16 with the illusion that as long as it's  
17 getting paid for somewhere, it's getting  
18 taken care of. But you and I both know  
19 that's not how life works. The localities  
20 then find themselves unable to keep up with  
21 the increased costs on themselves, so they  
22 end up not delivering on the programs that we  
23 all think are the right programs, or having  
24 to cut something else that isn't as extreme a

1 mandate for them, which also does longer-term  
2 harm.

3 So that's all I'm asking for. It's a  
4 chart showing the amount change and the  
5 percent of change of what is state and what  
6 gets passed on to the localities for your  
7 full budget.

8 OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Thank you.  
9 I have your request, Senator.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
12 Assemblywoman Jaffee for five minutes.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: Thank you,  
14 Commissioner. I wanted to follow up on  
15 something that I think is really essential in  
16 the conversation. In my discussion with a  
17 variety of childcare leaders throughout the  
18 state, an issue of great concern has been  
19 availability of the workers, the childcare  
20 workers, who are at the levels of  
21 professional development that is so essential  
22 in terms of their education and preparation.

23 So there's -- the difficulty is often  
24 the limited amount of funding that can be

1 provided to the childcare program limits  
2 their ability to be able to provide the  
3 salary for the workers that encourages  
4 workers to come into the childcare program,  
5 that encourages them to maintain those  
6 programs after they've gone to college and  
7 gotten that level of education at that cost,  
8 and too many, as have been noted, move on to  
9 other levels of jobs.

10 And so there has been a great deal of  
11 struggle within the childcare programs on  
12 maintaining the programs at a level that is  
13 so essential in terms of the workers who are  
14 educated in the areas that are absolutely,  
15 you know, needed and required for these  
16 programs.

17 And so it truly is a major issue that  
18 we need to focus on in terms of providing  
19 more state funding for our programs so that  
20 they can then assure that there is the level  
21 of academic ability of these workers and then  
22 attracting workers at salary levels that  
23 maintain them.

24 So that really -- these are very real

1 issues. As well as -- well, the task force  
2 that I created that we're discussing, maybe  
3 we can sit down with the task force and talk  
4 about their thoughts about this issue as  
5 well. Because it really is something that  
6 has come up over and over again in my  
7 conversation with childcare programs in a  
8 variety of areas.

9 So it's something that we need to move  
10 forward with to assure that there are enough  
11 childcare providers and then, within that  
12 context, the workers are those that have that  
13 education level that is so essential.

14 OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: I can assure  
15 you, Assemblywoman, that what you just  
16 articulated is among the top-line issues and  
17 concerns being discussed and brought forward  
18 as part of the task force, for sure.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: So we will --  
20 can sit together, because it's something that  
21 we really need to move forward and assure  
22 that we are responding to this very real  
23 issue. So thank you.

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

1 We'll go to Assemblyman Ra for a question.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Good morning.

3 OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Good  
4 morning.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you. I just  
6 had a question about the Pay for Success  
7 program that had been launched a few years  
8 ago. There's been, you know, appropriations  
9 made for this. Is that operating? Or where  
10 are we with regard to that program? Or is  
11 that more OTDA?

12 OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: Yeah, that's  
13 not in my agency budget. I think  
14 Commissioner Hein and his staff can better  
15 answer your question, Assemblyman.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay, thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So --  
18 Commissioner, so I have a few questions. And  
19 we'll start with a couple that Assemblyman  
20 Hevesi didn't have a chance to get to.

21 So the federal Family First Transition  
22 Act also includes -- there's been some  
23 discussion about that already -- resources  
24 for jurisdictions who are transitioning off

1 Title IV-E waivers. And New York City was  
2 the only jurisdiction to have the waiver. So  
3 it's about \$50 million that we do for  
4 New York City. So I think we just want to  
5 make sure and clarify that that money will be  
6 for New York City, as intended by the federal  
7 government.

8 OCFs COMMISSIONER POOLE: Yes. So the  
9 answer is yes. The federal bill on that is  
10 very specific about what portion of the  
11 funding, of the total funding pool has to be  
12 directed toward those communities who had a  
13 waiver. And by extension, given that ACS was  
14 the only community that participated in the  
15 waiver, that money will be directed to ACS.

16 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And how is the  
17 state planning to use the 25 million from the  
18 federal Family First Transition Act?

19 OCFs COMMISSIONER POOLE: Yeah, so we  
20 expect that -- I don't know that it's going  
21 to be 25 million, but I think we think it's  
22 around \$21.4 million.

23 And as I described earlier, we have  
24 not made decisions yet about how. It's a

1 one-time infusion of dollars. It's not a lot  
2 of money when you look at everything we have  
3 to do between now and September of 2021 to  
4 adequately prepare for it.

5 But it will absolutely -- you know,  
6 Congress intended this money to support  
7 states' efforts to make the transition. So  
8 again, looking at further efforts to support  
9 kinship families, further efforts to recruit  
10 and support foster families. We're going to  
11 have to think about how do we prepare  
12 independent assessors, how do we allow  
13 agencies who might be interested in applying  
14 to be a QRTP but don't have an accreditation.  
15 There are a lot of things sort of on a list  
16 for us to take into consideration, you know,  
17 given what I think is a welcome but  
18 relatively modest pool of money, all things  
19 considered.

20 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Then a question  
21 about -- that really goes -- that is both to  
22 you and I guess as it relates to OTDA also --  
23 the child welfare services funding stream has  
24 historically been funded with \$635 million.

1           The Executive proposes a \$25 million  
2           reduction and would require an additional  
3           25 million of the FFFS to be used for child  
4           welfare, which seems to leave that whole.

5                     But there's a question that the city  
6           has used -- historically used some of that  
7           funding for senior centers. So I guess by  
8           putting the -- is there a way to assure that  
9           both the children and seniors remain whole?

10                    OCFS COMMISSIONER POOLE: So,  
11           Assemblywoman Weinstein, I -- and again, I  
12           will defer to my friends at OTDA who are more  
13           expert than I on it. So I think the funding  
14           stream that you're referring to for the  
15           senior centers in New York City was Title XX  
16           funds. And I don't believe that that is on  
17           the table or impacted by the FFFS.

18                    But if I am wrong, Commissioner Hein  
19           and his exec dep will tell me.

20                    But there is no question that it will  
21           require -- it will have a \$25 million impact,  
22           assuming that the counties are spending in  
23           the way that they have before.

24                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And then a

1 question -- several years ago, actually based  
2 on some legislation that Senator Savino and I  
3 had sponsored, we raised the age for runaway  
4 and homeless youth that could be served up to  
5 age 21. And we're wondering if these youth  
6 are being served. Now that there's the  
7 authority, is the funding stream sufficient  
8 to serve them? And can you just give some  
9 feedback on what's happened since we made  
10 that change.

11 OCFs COMMISSIONER POOLE: Well, you're  
12 not giving yourselves enough credit, because  
13 you actually got it raised to 24.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. Oh,  
15 right, from 21 to 24. You're right, yes.

16 OCFs COMMISSIONER POOLE: So since  
17 that was passed, there are about 14 counties,  
18 including New York City, who have opted in to  
19 take advantage of that expansion. There are  
20 a small number of programs that have actually  
21 been certified to date to serve the older  
22 population.

23 So I know in New York City they did a  
24 separate procurement. I believe they have

1 four programs in the city who are able to  
2 serve the older youth. In upstate, I believe  
3 there are two programs. And I understand  
4 that there are also several others in the  
5 state that are considering taking advantage  
6 of the option.

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Great. And I  
8 was wondering, last year we had some  
9 discussion when you were here about changes  
10 to -- the proposed changes based on a federal  
11 guidance related -- in relation to domestic  
12 violence programs, relating to public  
13 assistance.

14 And I just wonder if we can get an  
15 update on how that change is working without  
16 the requirement to have to apply for public  
17 assistance. Have programs reported decreases  
18 in funding as a result? And what findings  
19 did -- I assume the task force looked at this  
20 also -- did the task force make?

21 OCFs COMMISSIONER POOLE: Yeah,  
22 absolutely.

23 So, you know, as you may recall, when  
24 that change was made and there was a lot of

1 concern about it, we committed to keeping a  
2 careful watch on sort of what was the  
3 downstream impact of that.

4 And we meet regularly with NYSCADV --  
5 both OCFS and they are a valued member of the  
6 DV Task Force. So we have not heard of any  
7 significant concerns. And had not heard  
8 anything from any local department of social  
9 services, of course, concerned that it  
10 would -- you know, by not requiring them to  
11 apply for public assistance, you know, create  
12 other challenges.

13 I will say to you just last week I met  
14 with all of the local district commissioners  
15 for their annual conference, and there were a  
16 couple of smaller counties that did say to me  
17 that they've seen a bit of an increase. That  
18 was the first time after over a year I had  
19 heard that. So we are following up, as we  
20 promised we would, you know, with those  
21 counties to see really what the impact was,  
22 because that was our commitment, that we were  
23 going to be keeping an eye on that.

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Great. I

1 believe that that is the end of questions  
2 from the members. I know there are a few  
3 items that you'll get back to us on that  
4 there wasn't time to address. And thank you  
5 so much for being here today, Commissioner.

6 OCFs COMMISSIONER POOLE: Thank you  
7 all very much.

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next we'll be  
9 hearing from the New York State Office of  
10 Temporary and Disability Assistance, Michael  
11 Hein, commissioner.

12 Just letting everybody -- a minute to  
13 let everybody settle down.

14 (Pause.)

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay,  
16 Commissioner Hein, you're welcome to --  
17 welcome, and please begin.

18 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Thank you  
19 very much.

20 Good morning, Chairpersons Krueger,  
21 Weinstein, Persaud and Hevesi, as well as the  
22 other esteemed members of the New York State  
23 Legislature. I am Mike Hein, the  
24 commissioner of the Office of Temporary and

1           Disability Assistance, and it is my honor to  
2           appear before you today to discuss the  
3           2021 Executive Budget and the important work  
4           of our agency.

5                     OTDA's core mission is to help  
6           vulnerable New Yorkers by ensuring essential  
7           services for families and individuals that  
8           help them advance economically by providing  
9           meaningful opportunities for stable  
10          employment, better access to affordable  
11          housing, and quality nutrition for both  
12          themselves and their families.

13                    In addition, our agency administers  
14          vital programs for those temporarily unable  
15          to work, as well as for many working families  
16          who simply struggle to make ends meet. These  
17          programs create much-needed housing and  
18          provide employment services, healthy food as  
19          well as heating assistance. We also inspect  
20          homeless shelters to improve safety and  
21          security, make critical disability  
22          determinations that dramatically improve  
23          people's lives, provide child support  
24          services, as well as assist refugees and

1 immigrants that come to New York in search of  
2 the American dream.

3 And this year we are extremely pleased  
4 that while the Executive Budget addresses  
5 serious fiscal concerns, it continues the  
6 Governor's \$20 billion investment in  
7 affordable housing, which is creating or  
8 preserving more than 100,000 units of  
9 affordable housing and 6,000 units of  
10 supportive housing over five years.

11 All of these efforts share a common  
12 goal – and that is to help individuals and  
13 families meet immediate, essential needs  
14 while supporting their efforts to achieve  
15 lasting economic security.

16 Building on this initiative, the  
17 budget makes a major new investment in the  
18 Homeless Housing and Assistance Program, or  
19 HHAP, by actually doubling the funding from  
20 \$64 million to \$128 million, while investing  
21 \$5 million for projects specifically designed  
22 to assist homeless veterans.

23 HHAP provides pivotal capital grants  
24 and loans to expand and improve the supply of

1 permanent supportive, transitional and  
2 emergency housing for individuals  
3 experiencing homelessness.

4 This funding expansion will help a  
5 wide range of populations, including those  
6 experiencing mental illness, and also  
7 substance use disorder, victims of domestic  
8 violence, youth, as well as our veterans.

9 Under Governor Cuomo's leadership,  
10 New York has also made a strong commitment to  
11 fighting hunger and ending food insecurity.  
12 The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program  
13 has been a vital part of that work. SNAP can  
14 provide more than \$6,000 a year for a typical  
15 household, making it significantly easier to  
16 feed a family and make ends meet.

17 Currently, there are roughly  
18 1.5 million households in New York, totaling  
19 nearly 2.6 million people, receiving  
20 approximately \$360 million in SNAP benefits  
21 each month.

22 In this year's State of the State, the  
23 Governor announced plans to further expand  
24 access to SNAP for eligible community college

1 students, ensuring more students receive  
2 essential nutrition assistance as they work  
3 towards a college degree or certificate and a  
4 better future for themselves and their  
5 families.

6 And to reach even more people, OTDA  
7 has worked with the Department of Health and  
8 NY State of Health so that people who are  
9 eligible for Medicaid can quickly opt in to  
10 receive information about SNAP and over  
11 100,000 applicants have already done so.

12 On another positive note, the  
13 Executive Budget increases funding for the  
14 very successful Summer Youth Employment  
15 Program, providing \$45 million to help  
16 approximately 19,000 young people from  
17 low-income families get a job this summer.  
18 This program helps youth develop relevant  
19 skills that can lead to improved school  
20 performance, better positioning them for  
21 success in the future.

22 The Executive Budget also continues  
23 New York State's commitment to OTDA's other  
24 core programs. This includes resources to

1 fund the agency's child support program,  
2 which collected more than \$1.8 billion last  
3 year on behalf of nearly 800,000 families.

4 As you know, child support is an  
5 important source of income that helps  
6 families achieve financial stability. It  
7 reduces childhood poverty and, in turn,  
8 childhood trauma.

9 OTDA also oversees the federally  
10 funded Home Energy Assistance Program that  
11 helped nearly 1.5 million households heat  
12 their homes last winter and reduce energy  
13 needs through energy-efficiency investments.

14 This winter, HEAP again allows for a  
15 maximum regular benefit of up to \$726, which  
16 is especially helpful for low-income  
17 households that pay a higher percentage of  
18 their income towards energy costs.

19 Senators and Assemblymembers, like  
20 you, we at OTDA fully recognize the  
21 importance and gravity of the work we are  
22 committed to and the lives we touch in the  
23 process. In partnership with the Governor  
24 and the State Legislature, through every

1 program that we administer, we strive to  
2 empower vulnerable New Yorkers to improve  
3 their financial security and household  
4 stability in support of stronger individuals,  
5 families, and communities all across our  
6 state.

7 I want to thank you for the  
8 opportunity to appear before you today, and I  
9 welcome your comments and questions.

10 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to the  
11 chair of our Social Services Committee,  
12 Assemblyman Hevesi.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI: Thank you,  
14 Chairwoman.

15 Good morning, Commissioner. How are  
16 you, sir?

17 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Good morning.  
18 Good.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI: Thank you for  
20 coming, and thank you for all of the work  
21 that you and your staff -- and I see some of  
22 them here, Ms. Guinn, Ms. West and the  
23 rest -- thank you for all the work that you  
24 guys do at the staff level.

1 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Thank you.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI: I know you do  
3 good work under difficult circumstances. It  
4 is appreciated.

5 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Thank you.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI: I am going to  
7 focus on one topic only today. It's -- we've  
8 talked offline about this, and it will be a  
9 little out of left field. Normally people  
10 would expect me to talk about homelessness, I  
11 am not going to -- with the exception to say  
12 I am going to leave that alone because I  
13 believe that the big dogs at the mother ship  
14 are going to be handling that. That includes  
15 both chairs of Ways and Means and the  
16 Speaker; they are fully engaged now -- and I  
17 believe the Majority Leader as well -- and  
18 they will be handling the issue of  
19 homelessness. So I'm going to move on.

20 The one issue I want to talk to you  
21 today -- and I need your help, frankly -- is  
22 human trafficking. And I've got to set the  
23 stage for my colleagues just so we all have a  
24 sense of how we got there.

1                   So a couple of years ago the Assembly  
2                   held a hearing about human trafficking and  
3                   identified that the primary need for  
4                   trafficking victims is you've got to get them  
5                   out of the abusive environments, you've got  
6                   to get them safe houses. And we put in a  
7                   bill, the bill was passed unanimously by both  
8                   houses -- that means every one of my  
9                   colleagues voted for it -- and it was a nice  
10                  victory, and the law requires -- and this is  
11                  my Bernie Sanders moment: "I wrote the damn  
12                  bill." So --

13                   (Laughter.)

14                  ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI: So the bill says  
15                  that for every trafficking victim in New York  
16                  State, there will be culturally competent  
17                  short-term and long-term safe houses --  
18                  again, to take these victims of human  
19                  trafficking out of the abusive environments  
20                  so they don't have to -- and I don't want to  
21                  overstate this, but we're talking about  
22                  predominantly women who are being sexually  
23                  abused, raped, beaten, branded, drugged, the  
24                  worst horrible abuses. And every night that

1 we in government are not providing those  
2 actual safe houses I believe is our problem.

3 So I'd like to work with you. I just  
4 need a couple of pieces of information about  
5 the -- how we fill that need. Okay? So the  
6 first question for you is, how many certified  
7 human trafficking victims are there -- or  
8 survivors, I shouldn't say victims, survivors  
9 in New York State?

10 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Well, that  
11 question is two parts. One is -- I have the  
12 question of how many we are serving.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI: Mm-hmm.

14 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: And then the  
15 size and scope of the problem.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI: Great.

17 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: I think  
18 there's no question that the size and scope  
19 of the problem, we are serving a fraction of  
20 that. And that is consistent with what's  
21 happening all across the country. There is  
22 an enormous challenge bringing people forward  
23 and making sure that we're able to provide  
24 them services.

1           So there's a huge outreach effort  
2 going on right now. The legislature did a  
3 great thing when it changed the law and made  
4 sure that we could supply services for  
5 individuals regardless of their immigration  
6 status, which was a critically important  
7 component.

8           There's also a reality that we should  
9 talk about, and that is that the numbers that  
10 we saw going from '15 to '16 were a  
11 significant increase -- a 150 percent  
12 increase. And then what we saw was a  
13 leveling. And the challenge that we saw at  
14 that point, that we clearly are seeing right  
15 now is while we are seeing more individuals  
16 who are documented, we are seeing a  
17 significant drop-off in people who are  
18 undocumented, victims who are willing to come  
19 forward, because they're concerned about the  
20 net outcome for them.

21           And so that's a component of this  
22 process. Again, the number that we are  
23 actually serving is consistent across the  
24 board, it's about 288 individuals at this

1 point.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI: Two-eighty-eight.

3 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Correct.

4 Now, the question about housing is a  
5 really important one. And there might be a  
6 nuanced distinction here, but I think it's  
7 important that we have the conversation and  
8 we appreciate the discussion.

9 To provide this service across the  
10 entire state, we partner with six incredibly  
11 strong not-for-profits. And in our  
12 conversations with them what they have made  
13 very clear to us is they are able to provide  
14 housing to all who need housing -- and that  
15 is, again, all who will accept assistance in  
16 providing housing, because not everyone that  
17 comes forward will accept housing assistance.  
18 But the ones that do, and there's a large  
19 percentage of them that will, we provide the  
20 entire myriad of services to them, whether  
21 that be permanent housing, temporary housing,  
22 obviously, or emergency housing as well.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI: Okay. So first,  
24 thank you for the 288 number, that's helpful.

1           And again, you know, this will wind up being  
2           a range, it always is, when you're trying to  
3           budget.

4                     OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN:    Sure.

5                     ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI:    And we have  
6           corresponded -- my colleagues don't know  
7           this, but we have corresponded about this,  
8           and I know that we rely heavily on -- I  
9           thought it was five RHTPs, the regional --

10                    OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN:   We've added  
11           another one.

12                    ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI:    You added another  
13           one?

14                    OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN:   Yes.

15                    ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI:    Okay, great.

16                    I know we rely on them to make  
17           determinations about what housing needs to be  
18           provided and what services need to be  
19           provided, but under the law that we just  
20           passed, all of them are entitled to housing.  
21           So that's number one.

22                    Number two, the temporary -- some of  
23           the housing methodologies that you had  
24           mentioned in your letter -- housing

1           methodologies sounds weird. The types of  
2           housing that you had mentioned in your letter  
3           include domestic violence shelters, temporary  
4           shelters and others. None of those -- and  
5           this is an important point that we need to  
6           agree on -- none of those comply with the  
7           law.

8                     Domestic violence shelters do not  
9           provide the same services as is now required  
10          by -- for safe houses and long-term houses.  
11          Neither does temporary housing. They may  
12          provide some, and I'm open to the idea that  
13          some of the housing could be in compliance.  
14          But as a general principle, the answer is we  
15          are no longer in compliance with the law.

16                    So I'm going to assume, in the absence  
17          of other information from you -- and we'll  
18          share and work on this together --

19                    OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Sure.

20                    ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI: -- that none of  
21          the 288 that we're supposed to be serving are  
22          in housing that complies with the law that we  
23          just passed.

24                    And as such, it is now our job as the

1           Legislature and the Executive to figure out,  
2           okay, you have 288 certified victims, they  
3           are all legally entitled to housing, the  
4           housing is supposed to have a number of  
5           components, now we've got a budget for it.  
6           So how are we going to do that? How much  
7           capital money is that going to take, how much  
8           operational money is that going to take? And  
9           I would like to get those answers and work  
10          with you in time for this budget.

11                   My only concern is that we don't come  
12          to an agreement on what those numbers are in  
13          time to act this year, and then we would have  
14          to wait another budget cycle. And as you and  
15          I both know, and I'm sure we agree, the  
16          victims of human trafficking don't have  
17          another year to wait for us to get our act  
18          together and get the right housing.

19                   So I would like to -- thank you for  
20          the 288 number, that's very helpful as a  
21          baseline for our Ways and Means staff. We  
22          would like to work with you on maybe in the  
23          Governor's 21-day amendments -- and certainly  
24          in our Senate and Assembly one-houses --

1 coming back with a program to comply with the  
2 law to create and build, if need be,  
3 culturally competent, short-term and  
4 long-term safe houses. So I look forward to  
5 working with you on that, sir.

6 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Thank you.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN HEVESI: Thank you very  
8 much, Commissioner.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. We  
10 go to the Senate.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. The  
12 chair of Social Services, Roxanne Persaud.

13 SENATOR PERSAUD: Good morning.

14 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Good morning.

15 SENATOR PERSAUD: Thank you,  
16 Commissioner, for being here.

17 And my mic just doesn't want to work  
18 today. Can you hear me now? Great.

19 I'm going to start with the Summer  
20 Youth Employment Program. I know you were  
21 touting the success of that program. Why is  
22 it, then, that we're not adding additional  
23 slots for kids across the state? You know,  
24 we're increasing the budget by a million

1           dollars; it's only covering the cost of  
2           wages. Why aren't we adding additional  
3           slots?

4                     OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Again, we're  
5           very pleased at, again, the success that  
6           we're seeing. We're seeing it across the  
7           entire state, and that's one of the real  
8           wonderful parts about it. That's what makes  
9           it such a success, it works upstate, it works  
10          downstate, it works across the spectrum.

11                    It really comes down to this is a  
12          conversation in the context of a larger  
13          budget question. These are difficult  
14          financial years, and we firmly -- we're  
15          committed to making sure that we move forward  
16          and continue what we had. And obviously we  
17          made accommodations for the additional rate.

18                    SENATOR PERSAUD: But wouldn't it be  
19          in our best interests to ensure that those  
20          kids who are coming from the vulnerable  
21          communities are actually being employed by  
22          the Summer Youth Program?

23                    OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Again, I  
24          understand the question. I'm very concerned

1 about making sure that we retain the funding  
2 that we're talking about here. It is a  
3 \$45 million expenditure. And we are very  
4 pleased about it, and we know that we will be  
5 serving 19,000 youth in this process.

6 But I understand your question. I  
7 think it really comes down to -- it was a  
8 budgetary question.

9 SENATOR PERSAUD: Okay. Now, my  
10 colleague spoke about the homelessness issue.  
11 And, you know, we don't want to belabor the  
12 questions about homelessness. But have we --  
13 in 2018 when we added the \$50 million to the  
14 pilot program for HSS, have we looked at the  
15 cost, you know, how much it's really costing  
16 us? And are we intending to add additional  
17 counties to that program?

18 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: To the pilot  
19 program?

20 SENATOR PERSAUD: Mm-hmm.

21 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Maybe we  
22 should talk a little bit and get kind of an  
23 update on where we stand at this point.

24 Currently where we stand in that is

1           that Monroe County has been approved, and  
2           they are beginning that operational side in  
3           Rochester. And then what we expect in our  
4           conversations with New York and where we're  
5           at is that New York will be operational by  
6           June of this year. And obviously we're  
7           anxiously awaiting the outcomes of that.  
8           That's again a significant commitment and I'm  
9           looking forward to seeing what the results  
10          are.

11                         But no, at this point there hasn't  
12          been a conversation about adding additional  
13          cities to that.

14                         SENATOR PERSAUD: Okay. You know,  
15          every day we hear about the homelessness  
16          crisis across our state. We look -- you  
17          know, I'm from New York City. We see it  
18          every day.

19                         OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Sure.

20                         SENATOR PERSAUD: And we -- I'm not  
21          sure when we'll get a handle on that  
22          situation. And there is a need for us to do  
23          more. And, you know, if we have to add more  
24          counties to HSS -- we have to do something.

1 We need to get people off the streets. No  
2 one across the State of New York should be  
3 living on the streets in the conditions that  
4 they are living in.

5 You know, this morning I turned on the  
6 television and I am hearing talks about, you  
7 know, the possibility of us spending money to  
8 keep a football team in New York State -- but  
9 we have people living on the streets. Those  
10 are the kinds of things -- we have to  
11 understand which is more important. People  
12 living on the streets of New York City and  
13 New York State is not acceptable. We have to  
14 do more on that.

15 You know, we've had these  
16 conversations, and I really appreciate you  
17 coming in and us having these conversations  
18 so that we can really fight for the people  
19 across the state who are most in need.

20 Can you tell us about, you know, the  
21 SNAP benefits and what the federal government  
22 authorization is going to do to the  
23 population of New York State, the SNAP  
24 population?

1           OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Sure. I  
2           mean, what you're talking about is some of  
3           the rule changes associated with SNAP?

4           SENATOR PERSAUD: The rule changes,  
5           yes. Mm-hmm.

6           OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Well, again,  
7           there was a recent Supreme Court ruling that  
8           just came down on the {inaudible} --

9           SENATOR PERSAUD: An appellate --

10          OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: -- area of  
11          that, many of us know.

12          SENATOR PERSAUD: Yup.

13          OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: It removed a  
14          stay that was in place, and so now that rule  
15          has taken effect.

16          SENATOR PERSAUD: Yup.

17          OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: For us, it  
18          has been -- we've been working in advance of  
19          that, obviously. And to us it's about  
20          reducing the size of the pool of individuals  
21          who would be impacted by this rule change.

22          Obviously early on when the rule  
23          change first came out, we put out comments on  
24          that that were very focused against it, as

1 did many other people -- actually, 100,000  
2 comments plus, the vast majority against.  
3 The unfortunate truth is not only did they  
4 move forward with it, we think they've  
5 actually made it worse.

6           And so the reality of this process is  
7 that it will be in effect as of April 1st of  
8 this year. Again, our role is to minimize  
9 the negative impact in that situation. So we  
10 look at the pool of individuals that are  
11 affected, and we want to make sure that their  
12 status hasn't changed, that there aren't some  
13 other mitigating factors that would remove  
14 them from that pool.

15           Again, so we're in the process of  
16 trying to reduce that with all of the  
17 districts. And then, at that point, working  
18 more with the districts to make sure that all  
19 of the necessary training and assistance is  
20 available for them so that individuals aren't  
21 impacted. So there's an aggressive effort to  
22 be able to help ensure that that rule change,  
23 when it takes effect on April 1st, either  
24 impacts the fewest amount of people or has no

1 impact in New York, and that's the goal.

2 SENATOR PERSAUD: And you've allocated  
3 funding -- what is the cost to the state so  
4 far, based on your calculations?

5 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Well, again,  
6 we work extensively with the districts on a  
7 daily basis, and those costs are rolled into  
8 OTDA's normal budget.

9 SENATOR PERSAUD: This is over 100,000  
10 people we're talking about that's in that  
11 pool.

12 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Correct. We  
13 think that at this point it's 113,000 people  
14 in that pool.

15 SENATOR PERSAUD: Thirteen thousand?

16 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: One hundred  
17 and thirteen thousand.

18 SENATOR PERSAUD: Interesting.

19 The cost shift to New York City, can  
20 you talk about that? Why are we -- you know,  
21 we only last year shifted additional costs to  
22 New York City, and right at -- again, we're  
23 shifting it more. Why is that necessary?

24 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Well, I think

1           it's important that we talk about really  
2           where this is at. And I think this is a  
3           challenging public policy conversation that  
4           needs to take place.

5                        When we talk about where that 10 and  
6           now 15 percent proposal would come from, it  
7           really is directly tied to the escalation in  
8           Family Assistance, Family Assistance dollars.  
9           It's the rate of increase associated with  
10          that.

11                       And the rate of increase isn't going  
12          up commensurate with cost of living, it isn't  
13          going up commensurate with caseloads, it's  
14          going up, in our most recent calculations,  
15          almost quadruple anywhere else in the state.  
16          And so it is our position that it's not  
17          unreasonable for New York City to share in  
18          that process as we look to try to identify  
19          ways to be able to control those costs and  
20          control the rate of increase.

21                       SENATOR PERSAUD: But New York City is  
22          sharing the burden of the increase, the  
23          highest --

24                       OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: It's an

1           eight -- it's an eight -- with Family  
2           Assistance we're still paying 85 percent in  
3           this proposal.

4                     SENATOR PERSAUD:   Okay.   Thank you.

5                     OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN:   Again, I  
6           understand the position and I understand the  
7           question.   And I understand it can be  
8           controversial.   But I also -- again, it's not  
9           an unreasonable thing to start to examine  
10          that escalation in cost that goes to, again,  
11          near quadruple anywhere else in the state.

12                    SENATOR PERSAUD:   Quadruple.   Okay.

13                    And my final -- the Empire State  
14          Poverty Reduction Initiative.   Have all the  
15          municipalities developed their plans as yet?  
16          And what is the status of the implementation  
17          plans across the municipalities?

18                    OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN:   Sure.   Again,  
19          a wonderful innovative way of being able to  
20          look across the entire state to try to  
21          develop different strategies that were really  
22          grassroots-driven.   That's phase -- Phase 1  
23          really was working with the individual -- 16  
24          individual communities on strategies that

1           they believed could be helpful in reducing  
2           poverty in their particular area, with a  
3           respect for what works in one location may  
4           not work in another.

5                     That really was Phase 1. Phase 2 was  
6           the implementation and operationalizing of  
7           those plans, which has taken place now and is  
8           taking place as we speak.

9                     The next phase is -- we expect that  
10          there will be a full recommendation made  
11          going into next year's budget based off of  
12          those, on things that we have seen that have  
13          worked -- because again, it is designed in  
14          many ways to be an incubator. So to be able  
15          to identify ways and programs that we think  
16          should be expanded throughout the state.

17                    SENATOR PERSAUD: Okay, quickly, the  
18          \$40 million reduction from the Flex Fund for  
19          Family Services, can you talk about that?  
20          And is there really a need for concern about  
21          that, the cost of that shift?

22                    OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: I think --  
23          I'm always a big believer in having these  
24          conversations in a very frank way. There's

1 no question there's a \$25 million positive  
2 impact to the state budget.

3 That said, in that action we firmly  
4 believe that it also prioritizes child  
5 welfare, that we all believe is critically  
6 important in that fund. We also believe that  
7 we'll be able to work -- {time clock  
8 beeping}.

9 Did my answer get beeped?

10 SENATOR PERSAUD: Can he finish  
11 answering the question for me, please? Thank  
12 you.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Give it a whirl,  
14 yup.

15 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Okay, I'll  
16 give it a whirl.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And then when we  
18 cut you off, you will answer anything further  
19 in writing to us all.

20 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Absolutely.

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

22 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: So -- I'm  
23 sorry, where were we?

24 (Laughter.)

1                   OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: We'll get  
2 back to that question, I apologize.

3                   SENATOR PERSAUD: Thank you.

4                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
5 Assembly.

6                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
7 Assemblywoman Jaffee.

8                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: Thank you.

9 There is so much need, and we really -- in so  
10 many communities, it's truly unfortunate and  
11 troubling and very traumatic in many areas.  
12 I can tell you I've met with so many  
13 throughout -- in my areas as well who are  
14 struggling. Too much homelessness in this  
15 state. It's just unacceptable.

16                   But I wanted to ask -- and I thank you  
17 for the work that you are doing, and the  
18 leadership, and really attempting to respond  
19 to so many of these issues and to so many  
20 families in particular.

21                   In terms of certain of the issues  
22 regarding mental illness or substance abuse,  
23 domestic violence, all those real issues, is  
24 there counseling -- did you -- how do you

1 move forward in terms of providing support?  
2 Is there recommended counseling? How does  
3 that work?

4 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Okay. I  
5 think -- if we're talking about street  
6 homelessness at this point --

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: Well,  
8 homelessness in --

9 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: In general?

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: -- you know,  
11 those who have substance disorder, what  
12 exactly is provided to assist them?

13 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Well, the  
14 nonprofits that we work with, and we work  
15 with shelters on plans, and we also work with  
16 the local districts that will bring those  
17 types of services into the shelters to be  
18 able to assist in that process.

19 We're also simultaneously working with  
20 OMH on strategies to be able to enhance  
21 mental health services -- again, one of those  
22 classic conversations where no one who is  
23 seeking true mental health services who walks  
24 into a hospital should ever walk out the door

1 the next day. Okay? To be able to try to be  
2 in a scenario where we're able to provide  
3 real assistance and real services is  
4 something that we're working on.

5 We also have homeless services plans  
6 with each one of the districts specifically  
7 dedicated to being able to address mental  
8 health issues as well as substance abuse  
9 issues.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: Thank you. I  
11 think what I'm going to do to move forward,  
12 given this information, is meet with some of  
13 these groups to really see exactly how things  
14 are moving forward. So I appreciate that,  
15 and the funding that's provided. Because it  
16 really is a disaster in certain areas, you  
17 know.

18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

20 To the Senate?

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

22 Senator Velmanette Montgomery.

23 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: {Mic off.} Thank  
24 you. Good morning, Commissioner.

1 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Good morning.

2 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: {Mic on.} Good  
3 morning. Thank you so much for your patience  
4 answering some questions.

5 I just want to ask you specifically  
6 about the whole issue of homeless housing.  
7 So I was able to visit one of the programs  
8 that really focuses on housing for young  
9 people, and the thing that was so striking to  
10 me is that it's really a very strong  
11 organization, they do a very excellent job.  
12 They serve young people, I believe up to  
13 maybe age 24 or so, but for practically every  
14 young person in that program, in that  
15 facility, with excellent supports, great  
16 service, great outcomes. But it took  
17 basically a whole staff department to figure  
18 out how each of those young people, how their  
19 service was funded.

20 So it just occurs to me that we have a  
21 great investment in terms of homeless  
22 housing, but there are so many different  
23 regulations for the same population. I just  
24 don't understand.

1           So my question to you is, to what  
2           extent are we looking to coordinate the  
3           funding streams and the regulations and the  
4           guidelines and all of those things between  
5           the different agencies, you and other  
6           commissioners, HCR and whoever else is doing  
7           housing, so that there is a uniform way of  
8           looking. If a person is homeless, if they  
9           were just recently homeless, if they were  
10          about to be homeless -- why should we have a  
11          different set of regulations for each of  
12          those different categories? So that's one  
13          question that I have.

14                 And the other thing that I would like  
15                 to ask you to comment on, all over the  
16                 state -- we've been traveling around the  
17                 state, and everywhere we go, homeless and  
18                 housing are critical issues for practically  
19                 all of the different categories of people who  
20                 are vulnerable, and families in particular.  
21                 So how are we looking at this as a statewide  
22                 issue but looking at the different regions,  
23                 what their needs are, and ways in which we  
24                 can tailor our activity to meet the needs

1 from Long Island to the rest of the state?

2 And the last part of my question is,  
3 families and children are particularly  
4 vulnerable. The way that we -- so children  
5 also need to be able to get into a school no  
6 matter where they end up, where their family  
7 ends up, whether it's the Bronx or Brooklyn  
8 or whatever. And many times we have families  
9 who are temporarily housed in Brooklyn,  
10 children left school and have to go all the  
11 way back to the Bronx, and it just creates an  
12 impossible life for young -- for children  
13 whose families find themselves in homeless  
14 shelters in particular.

15 So I would like to hear how you are  
16 looking at trying to figure out a resolution  
17 or a solution to some of these issues that  
18 we're talking about.

19 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: I'd like to  
20 start by saying that may be the best question  
21 I've ever been asked.

22 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: And you only have  
23 a minute, so we'll --

24 (Laughter.)

1                   SENATOR MONTGOMERY:  -- I know, we'll  
2                   take it in writing, but whatever you have to  
3                   say --

4                   OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN:  Very  
5                   comprehensive.

6                   SENATOR MONTGOMERY:  -- would be  
7                   helpful.

8                   OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN:  I'll go fast.  
9                   (Laughter.)

10                  OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN:  First and  
11                  foremost, I understand -- I've been in these  
12                  shelters, I've seen the issues, and I  
13                  understand the importance of being able to  
14                  make sure that children can go to the school  
15                  and keep a continuity and what that can mean  
16                  in the quality of an individual's life.  What  
17                  that means also for the entire family, for  
18                  after-school programs, for the like.

19                  So there is a significant commitment  
20                  to that in the shelters at this point, but I  
21                  always say we can do better.  And so there's  
22                  a reality on that front.

23                  The homeless services plans that we're  
24                  talking about, when you hear us mentioning

1           those, those really are designed to be able  
2           to better coordinate services. That's the  
3           next logical step, first to develop the  
4           homeless services plans and then to begin to  
5           work on a level of coordination between  
6           agencies, between local districts and the  
7           state to ensure that it's seamless. And to  
8           make sure that there isn't waste when it  
9           comes to the process, to make sure the  
10          services that are delivered are actually  
11          benefiting the individuals who are in need.

12                           {Timeclock beeping.}

13                   SENATOR MONTGOMERY: And  
14          streamlining --

15                   OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Just under  
16          the wire.

17                   SENATOR MONTGOMERY: -- streamlining  
18          regulations, please.

19                   OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Correct.

20                   SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Thank you.

21                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
22          Assembly.

23                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
24          Assemblywoman Barrett.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: {Mic off;  
2 inaudible.}

3 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Thank you  
4 very much.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: Ah, here we  
6 go.

7 I would like, if you could, to have  
8 you share with us -- first of all, I want to  
9 thank you for the money and the attention to  
10 homeless vets. Obviously, as chair of  
11 Veterans' Affairs, that's a key issue.

12 I would like to hear your thoughts on  
13 what is in this budget to support people at  
14 risk and others in rural communities. I  
15 always feel like this budget focuses so much  
16 on urban issues, and we have issues of  
17 homelessness, we have issues, obviously, of  
18 rural suicide where -- you know, agricultural  
19 challenges, all sorts of things going on in  
20 our -- the rural parts of the state. And I'd  
21 love to hear your thoughts on that, please.

22 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Sure. I  
23 think one of the challenges -- and again,  
24 having come from the role of a county

1 executive in a rural county that also had an  
2 urban center in it, we understood fully the  
3 differences that could exist in those  
4 situations. And obviously rural poverty is  
5 very different in those situations.

6 For us, it still comes about making  
7 sure that everybody has access to services,  
8 making sure that social service districts are  
9 doing what they're supposed to. We have a  
10 regulatory role in that process, in making  
11 sure the programs that we roll out really are  
12 thoughtful of the idea that what works in,  
13 say, Clinton County is very different than  
14 what may work in the Bronx.

15 And so there's a real thought process  
16 that goes into all of our planning in this  
17 process. And again, those homeless services  
18 plans, when you're dealing with specifically  
19 the homeless population, it's again tailored  
20 to the individual district.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: But what does  
22 that look like? Because I don't think that  
23 we have the services in the rural parts of  
24 the area that we have in even -- in -- for

1           example, like, you know, in Kingston or in  
2           Poughkeepsie, the eastern parts of my  
3           district aren't -- don't have any of those  
4           resources.

5                     OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: I wouldn't  
6           disagree that there are areas that are less  
7           served than others, there's no question about  
8           that. And I think that there needs to be an  
9           effort towards that end. I think we're very  
10          focused on being able to make sure we bring  
11          that kind of parity across the system.

12                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: Okay. So at  
13          the moment there isn't anything intentional,  
14          but you'll work on that?

15                    OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Absolutely.

16                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: Okay. Thank  
17          you very much.

18                    OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Thank you.

19                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

20                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator May.

21                    SENATOR MAY: Commissioner, you  
22          probably heard the question I asked earlier  
23          about functional homelessness. Is that a  
24          concept that you deal with? We have a lot

1 of -- we said 10 percent of the student  
2 population is either homeless or functionally  
3 homeless in Syracuse, so they're living on  
4 someone's couch.

5 Is that -- is that just a concept in  
6 your lexicon, and do you have ways of dealing  
7 with it?

8 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: It's not lost  
9 on us at all in that situation. And we  
10 recognize that there is a portion of the  
11 population that is, for lack of a better  
12 conversation, couch surfing. And that  
13 scenario, we are very focused and working  
14 with the not-for-profits and with the schools  
15 to make sure that we can identify those  
16 individuals and those families, to make sure  
17 that they are accessing the services that are  
18 available in that particular district. That  
19 really is the challenge, though.

20 But there's no question, there's a  
21 segment of the population that is not falling  
22 into the standard counts.

23 SENATOR MAY: All right. Thank you.

24 And do you expect the MRT process to

1           have representation of people who represent  
2           the concerns of community-based nonprofits  
3           that are dealing with the needs of people  
4           with disabilities or the populations that you  
5           serve?

6                     OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: I would defer  
7           to others on discussions about the MRT. I'm  
8           sure that all of us are anxiously awaiting  
9           what is inevitably going to be a very  
10          difficult job.

11                    SENATOR MAY: Okay. And then finally,  
12          about refugees. So all across the Thruway  
13          communities, refugees are very important  
14          parts of our communities.

15                    OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: No question  
16          about it.

17                    SENATOR MAY: And the federal  
18          government has basically abdicated its role  
19          both in resettling refugees but also  
20          supporting the refugees who are here already.

21                    Just can you tell me what you're doing  
22          to support the organizations that are there  
23          to help them --

24                    OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Sure.

1                   SENATOR MAY:  -- and the people  
2 themselves?

3                   OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN:  Again, in  
4 serving our refugees -- I'll give you the  
5 good news.  There hasn't been a drop in  
6 federal funding at this point.  Okay?  That  
7 doesn't mean that we're not concerned about  
8 it, because we are.  When the access to  
9 communities, especially in New York, of  
10 individuals who are coming who are refugees,  
11 it's a deep concern.  We have seen a  
12 significant drop in numbers.

13                   The Governor has made it very clear  
14 that New York is open, New York is here and  
15 welcoming, and it's what we were built on and  
16 that we are very focused on that.  So -- but  
17 when it comes to the services, obviously  
18 language services, obviously any and all of  
19 the social services that we have available on  
20 the human services side of the house, making  
21 sure that access to schooling and culturally  
22 competent services -- that front as well.

23                   SENATOR MAY:  So is there any kind of  
24 additional funding -- I mean, when you say

1 federal funding hasn't dropped --

2 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: It doesn't  
3 mean --

4 SENATOR MAY: If they're not  
5 resettling people --

6 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Correct.

7 SENATOR MAY: -- then they are not  
8 sending the money in.

9 And there are a bunch of organizations  
10 that -- Interfaith works, for example, in  
11 Syracuse, which does a huge amount of work  
12 with refugees, and they have depended -- you  
13 know, a lot of their funding has come from  
14 new refugees coming in and they're not  
15 getting that funding now. So they're having  
16 to stretch everything they've got to provide  
17 the language support services and the, you  
18 know, cultural support services that  
19 they're --

20 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Sure.

21 SENATOR MAY: So I'm just wondering,  
22 is the state trying to fill those gaps?

23 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Yeah, I think  
24 it probably warrants a further conversation.

1           And if you don't mind, I'd like to be able to  
2           have that with you.

3                     SENATOR MAY:   Okay.   Thank you.

4                     OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN:   You're  
5           welcome.

6                     CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER:   Thank you.  
7           Assembly.

8                     CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:   Assemblyman  
9           Walczyk.

10                    ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK:   Thank you,  
11           Chairwoman.

12                    Good morning, I think, still.  
13           Commissioner, appreciate the time.

14                    We've talked a little bit about  
15           different solutions to end homelessness in  
16           the State of New York, and we actually have a  
17           program by that title already, the Solution  
18           to End Homelessness Program, or STEP, as many  
19           call it.

20                    OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN:   Sure.

21                    ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK:   Why, in your  
22           view, were a handful of counties in rural and  
23           upstate New York denied their renewal for a  
24           five-year contract in this last round last

1 year?

2 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Well, I think  
3 it's really important, when we talk about  
4 STEP, we highlight the fact that there was no  
5 cut in the STEP funding.

6 There is a normal process of the  
7 procurement that takes place every five  
8 years. And in that process we are very  
9 focused on being able to make sure that we  
10 obviously follow the rules, follow the law,  
11 and make sure that we meet -- again, some  
12 wonderful, wonderful programs that are out  
13 there.

14 But we also do recognize that in that  
15 process sometimes there are programs that are  
16 not selected, and they can be -- we're aware  
17 of the program that you're speaking about,  
18 and we're very focused on trying to figure  
19 out are there alternative ways to be able to  
20 move through procurement going forward. And  
21 we look forward to having that conversation  
22 as well.

23 We think there could be kind of a  
24 step-down process to STEP that might be also

1 helpful. We're exploring different options.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Well, I  
3 appreciate that, and your remaining open and  
4 flexible and understanding.

5 As we were talking on the dais here, I  
6 could hear a number of different things that  
7 certainly strike home for me. Watertown,  
8 New York, is home to the Urban Mission, who  
9 has taken advantage of STEP funding in the  
10 past and is actually I think a shining  
11 example of what we can do here to bridge  
12 people out of poverty and provide that sort  
13 of extra hand up for their independence.  
14 They actually have a 97 percent success rate  
15 six months after someone has used rapid  
16 rehousing through Urban Mission and your STEP  
17 funding. Six months later, they're in stable  
18 housing and independent -- 97 percent of  
19 their clientele.

20 You know, in 2018 they served 830  
21 families: 34 percent of those families had  
22 children under 18, 3 percent of them were  
23 veterans. So, I mean, we're hitting a lot of  
24 the -- you can talk about the programs and

1 consolidating all of them. I think this is  
2 one of those excellent methods that when you  
3 leave it to the locals who know it and do it  
4 every day, it's a shining example of what we  
5 can do right.

6 So I appreciate your flexibility and  
7 look forward to working with you further on  
8 that one.

9 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Thank you  
10 very much, Assemblyman.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Most programs  
12 that we have in the State of New York -- this  
13 is a little bit bigger-picture, if you'll  
14 entertain me --

15 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Sure.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: -- are based on  
17 income thresholds. And I just wondered if  
18 you could sort of explain your beliefs in  
19 benefit cliffs and whether they're a myth or  
20 a reality, and then what we can do and what  
21 your agency can do moving forward to  
22 eliminate some of those benefit cliffs  
23 programmatically. And how we as  
24 policymakers, sitting here and making

1 decisions that restrict you and your agency's  
2 ability, what we can do to make a difference  
3 and remove some of those cliffs.

4 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Again, the  
5 concept of benefit cliffs are huge and  
6 depends on -- again, it's a public policy  
7 kind of a conversation that is so critically  
8 important: Making sure that an individual  
9 who is receiving services isn't provided with  
10 a disincentive to be able to continue to  
11 transition.

12 That's why currently in our benefits  
13 package there are transitional benefits to be  
14 able to assist people in a whole host of  
15 areas, whether it be through SNAP or whether  
16 it be through Medicare. It's a whole host of  
17 benefits that come through on a transitional  
18 basis to be able to assist in that process.

19 But again, as we look at what these  
20 cliffs look like, those are big, real  
21 conversations. If what we're talking about  
22 is providing additional benefits, we have to  
23 understand what's the exit strategy to help  
24 someone transition off of public assistance.

1           A good example of that is making sure  
2           that they have significant employment  
3           training that can get someone through that  
4           process. Last year 51,000 individuals  
5           transitioned from public assistance into the  
6           private sector.

7           (Discussion off the record.)

8           CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Savino.

9           SENATOR SAVINO: Thank you, Senator  
10          Krueger.

11          Good afternoon. Just 12 o'clock on  
12          the dot, Commissioner.

13          I just want to quickly echo some of  
14          the comments of some of my other colleagues,  
15          my concern about the Summer Youth Employment  
16          and the length of OMH time it takes to do the  
17          processing.

18          As well as -- I'm going to tell you  
19          the same thing I told you last year and as I  
20          recently told Commissioner Poole from OCFS.  
21          It's beginning to be offensive -- and I know  
22          this is not your decision; you didn't craft  
23          the budget. It's beginning to be offensive,  
24          though, as a New York City representative and

1 a New York City taxpayer, that the state says  
2 to the City of New York that the people who  
3 live there are your responsibility with no  
4 obligation on the part of the state. It's  
5 just inherently offensive to New York City.  
6 They are not New York City's children or New  
7 York City's elderly or New York City's  
8 seniors or New York City's poor. They are  
9 the state's. We are all residents of this  
10 one state. I just have to say that again.

11 Because assuming that the city will  
12 pick up the responsibility for everything  
13 because they will find a way to make it work,  
14 these are also requirements that are placed  
15 on the City of New York by the State of  
16 New York.

17 So I would just hope that we could  
18 begin to stop this trend of shifting the  
19 burden totally to the City of New York for  
20 everything.

21 I want to ask specifically about one  
22 program because, as you know, there are  
23 severe challenges to providing housing for  
24 people who are either suffering from mental

1 health issues or the fragile elderly. A lot  
2 of them have relied on adult homes over the  
3 years. The adult home industry is closing  
4 largely because of the Olmstead decision,  
5 which says we have to move people to, you  
6 know, independent living where we can. Many  
7 of those individuals are decompensating, and  
8 they are winding up in our nursing homes  
9 because there's nowhere for them to go  
10 because the adult homes aren't there.

11 One of the things that could help  
12 stabilize the adult homes while they're still  
13 needed is an increase in the SSI rate. And I  
14 know the feds have pushed through this SSI  
15 COLA increase. What can we do to allow them  
16 to capture more of the SSI rate so that they  
17 can help provide more stable homes for people  
18 who really have nowhere else to go?

19 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: We recognize  
20 that there was legislation to be able to move  
21 down that path. I think the conversation  
22 really moves now to -- again, that took place  
23 outside the budget confines last time, and it  
24 ultimately ended up in a veto.



1 we're -- public assistance either applicants  
2 or cases are being reduced or dropping?

3 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: No problem.  
4 We used an econometric model that was  
5 consistent with how things are going across  
6 the entire state and what trends are showing.  
7 And that's traditionally the model that we  
8 utilize to be able to do that.

9 Again, we have seen trends moving  
10 downward at this point. But also, obviously,  
11 we have to make sure that OTDA is prepared,  
12 in case we have a scenario where the economy  
13 turns or other challenges come forward, we  
14 have to be able to provide those services.

15 SENATOR SAVINO: And I just want to  
16 echo also the concern about the benefit  
17 cliff. We hear that routinely from agencies  
18 that employ people who are marginal. And  
19 unfortunately, one of the unintended  
20 consequences of the minimum wage increase is  
21 it puts people up against the benefit cliff  
22 and it forces them to make a very harsh  
23 decision, staying in the workforce or leaving  
24 their job because they can't afford to

1           replace Medicaid, SNAP, or any of other  
2           supplemental benefits that they receive.

3                     OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN:    Sure.

4                     SENATOR SAVINO:    Thank you.

5                     OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN:    Thank you.

6                     CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER:    Assembly.

7                     CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:    We go to  
8           Assemblywoman Wright.

9                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT:    Good afternoon.

10                    OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN:    Good  
11           afternoon.

12                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT:    Thank you very  
13           much for being here.

14                    And I guess my question sort of  
15           follows suit to some of the others that have  
16           already been made, because we are talking  
17           about how we're tailoring needs to actually  
18           address what the local communities need  
19           and/or have decided would help their local  
20           population.  But we're finding that it's --  
21           so I'm going to ask you to help me reconcile  
22           or how we might be able to reconcile the  
23           challenge that we're facing, in that housing  
24           for the elderly -- I live in an aging

1 community -- the housing for the elderly and  
2 the benefits for the elderly, particularly if  
3 we use the term fragile elderly, is being  
4 supplanted with homeless and oftentimes  
5 chronic homeless when we try to develop  
6 housing options for our aging communities.  
7 So I guess I'm going to pass that to you.

8 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: To me, I look  
9 at these scenarios and say to myself, these  
10 are -- though they're oftentimes discrete  
11 populations, the reality is there's need for  
12 help on both fronts. Okay?

13 And so when it comes to what OTDA  
14 focuses on, we're very focused on homeless  
15 housing, obviously, through HHAP as a  
16 critical component of that. We're excited  
17 about what that means in making sure that  
18 those housing projects take place. But we  
19 shouldn't lose sight of the fact that we also  
20 invest heavily as a partner from HHAP in  
21 projects that serve a great deal of people  
22 across the entire spectrum, not just  
23 individuals who are homeless.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: So I guess

1           because we're not seeing an emphasis on the  
2           elderly or those who are disabled elderly,  
3           we're not getting funding to help support  
4           that endeavor.

5                        So in aging communities where people  
6           are unable to take stairs, they need  
7           assistance to get dressed, they -- we're  
8           just -- we're -- I understand the emphasis on  
9           homelessness. But what we're doing is  
10          creating a population of elderly that are  
11          homeless or going into nursing homes  
12          prematurely, and they shouldn't have to do  
13          that.

14                       So I guess what I'm asking as if  
15          there's a way for us to begin to emphasize  
16          that there is a disabled elderly population  
17          that needs particular attention.

18                       OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: The answer is  
19          yes. It's not a traditional HHAP kind of a  
20          discussion, but there's no question that  
21          there's need in the area.

22                       ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Okay. What  
23          about as a disability conversation? Are we  
24          having it as part of the disability

1 conversation? Because that would be a  
2 disability.

3 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: The answer  
4 would be yes, in other agencies within state  
5 government. The disability within OTDA  
6 really is about disability determinations.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Okay. All  
8 right, thank you.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
10 Senate?

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Sue  
12 Serino.

13 SENATOR SERINO: Thank you.

14 And good afternoon, Commissioner Hein.  
15 So good to see you here. And as  
16 Assemblymember Barrett said, we miss you in  
17 the Hudson Valley but are very happy that  
18 you're here.

19 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Thank you.

20 SENATOR SERINO: And I'd like to just  
21 comment on Assemblyman Hevesi's comments on  
22 human trafficking. I thank him and you for  
23 working on that. It's something that we've  
24 been working on in the Hudson Valley as well.

1           And I always say education is the key to  
2           prevention. I carry a couple of bills for  
3           that.

4                        I was thrilled to see the additional  
5           \$5 million included in the proposal to  
6           address the issue of homelessness among  
7           veterans. I was just wondering if you can  
8           tell us how that funding would be  
9           distributed.

10                       OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Well, the  
11           exciting part about that is that the  
12           additional \$5 million will obviously go for  
13           units across the state, to be able to provide  
14           housing for the individuals.

15                       We are also seeing homelessness among  
16           the veterans population around the state fall  
17           precipitously, so the capacity to be able to  
18           really move towards a number where we  
19           hopefully long for the day where there are no  
20           homeless veterans anywhere. And so this is  
21           an effort to be able to push towards that  
22           direction. You'll see additional units being  
23           built, but we shouldn't lose sight that the  
24           housing units that HHAP also does oftentimes

1 have a veterans component attached to them.

2 I was at an incredibly wonderful  
3 opening at a place that's called Serve Vets  
4 in Coney Island, and it really is  
5 extraordinary. We're seeing individuals have  
6 life-altering experiences. I was in the  
7 apartment of a gentleman who really was so  
8 proud to be able to show it, and it was the  
9 first time he had permanent housing in  
10 20 years.

11 SENATOR SERINO: Oh, that's amazing.

12 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: A wonderful  
13 veteran.

14 SENATOR SERINO: I'm concerned,  
15 though, there's a line in the proposal,  
16 though, that reads, essentially: However, if  
17 an insufficient number of viable proposals  
18 for veterans are received, the balance of the  
19 funding can be used for the development of  
20 housing for other priority-need populations.

21 And I know that we're talking about it  
22 going down, but I've known you for a long  
23 time and I know, like me, you care deeply  
24 about our veterans.

1 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Sure.

2 SENATOR SERINO: So I just wanted to  
3 put this on your radar. And you know, we --  
4 and I know the Dwyer money doesn't come under  
5 your budget, but the Dwyer funds and the  
6 people that work -- I know in our district we  
7 have a great team of guys and gals, and they  
8 help get that message out and they find our  
9 homeless veterans. So I don't know if other  
10 areas are the same. So when you're not  
11 getting proposals from other areas, they just  
12 might not have their finger on the pulse like  
13 our guys do. So just something -- like I  
14 said, I'd like to put that on your radar, and  
15 hopefully take that --

16 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Your point is  
17 not lost.

18 SENATOR SERINO: -- part out if it's  
19 at all possible.

20 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: I think it's  
21 designed to be able to provide maximum  
22 flexibility. I don't see it ever being a  
23 provision that would be utilized. In that  
24 situation we fully expect that we will have

1 to satisfy veteran proposals to be able to  
2 move this forward.

3 We're working, again, with Veterans'  
4 Services at the state level also to make sure  
5 that we're coordinated in our efforts,  
6 because I think it's really important.

7 SENATOR SERINO: That's great. Thank  
8 you so much.

9 And Senator Savino had spoken to you a  
10 little bit about the SSI. And like you said,  
11 that's something that we've passed bills, you  
12 know, constantly in the Assembly and the  
13 Senate, and the Governor had vetoed it. And  
14 I understand that the SSI pass-through falls  
15 in your portion of the budget.

16 So the current rate, for those that  
17 are listening, is only \$41 a day. And  
18 because of this abysmal rate, dozens of homes  
19 serving SSI individuals have closed after the  
20 last few years. You know, I was chair of  
21 Aging for four years, and now ranker, and it  
22 just breaks your heart because it's one of  
23 our most vulnerable populations. So -- and  
24 that state supplement has only been increased

1           once in 25 years.

2                       So I wanted to know what you think  
3           about -- is the \$41 a day adequate? What are  
4           your feelings on that?

5                       OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Again, this  
6           is that time for that conversation. Because,  
7           you know, we've talked about whether it takes  
8           place in or outside the budget. Clearly it  
9           is budget time and it's an internal budget  
10          conversation, and we would be glad to be able  
11          to participate in that conversation.

12                      SENATOR SERINO: Great. I look  
13          forward to talking to you, Commissioner,  
14          about this, so can we fight for our  
15          vulnerable population. Thank you.

16                      OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Thank you.

17                      CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
18          Assembly.

19                      CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We'll go to  
20          Assemblyman Ra for a question.

21                      ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Good afternoon.

22                      So I tried to ask this earlier, but  
23          I'm told you are the appropriate  
24          representative to ask about the Pay for

1 Success program.

2 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: I'll have to  
3 take that up with Sheila.

4 (Laughter.)

5 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Or you can take it up  
6 with Assemblyman Hevesi, because he also  
7 recommended --

8 (Laughter.)

9 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: -- that I ask you  
10 about the issue.

11 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: I hate to do  
12 this, because I think I could answer it very  
13 quickly. I heard this, the -- Senator  
14 Krueger was right, we were in the room, so we  
15 heard the question.

16 The challenge is Pay for Success isn't  
17 an OTDA program. Okay? So we will gladly  
18 find the answer for you, because it's a  
19 legitimate question and you have every right  
20 to have an answer to it, but it's not an OTDA  
21 program.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. Thank you.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

1                   Senator John Brooks.

2                   SENATOR BROOKS: Thank you,  
3                   Madam Chair.

4                   Actually, two of my colleagues touched  
5                   on a point that I just want to reemphasize.  
6                   I think the homelessness on the college  
7                   campuses is far higher than we think and much  
8                   more dangerous than we think, particularly in  
9                   those areas where the climate this time of  
10                  year is not the best.

11                  And the other issue on the veterans'  
12                  housing -- I think, again, that's a hidden  
13                  problem too. Many of those who are homeless  
14                  are too proud to step forward. I'm not sure  
15                  that \$5 million is anywhere near enough. I  
16                  think there are individuals who take steps to  
17                  try to protect themselves, but if they miss,  
18                  they're risking their lives in some of the  
19                  locations they're putting themselves in right  
20                  now.

21                  So I appreciate that we do have a  
22                  program designed specifically to look at the  
23                  vets, but I think that too is a bigger  
24                  problem than we think. And I think -- I was

1 in a meeting the other day on the island  
2 where a group said, "No, we don't have  
3 homeless vets anymore on Long Island."  
4 That's not even close to being right.

5 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Of course.

6 SENATOR BROOKS: And I think -- one of  
7 the things I worry about sometimes is we're  
8 not being as honest with ourselves as we  
9 should about the significant number of people  
10 who are first homeless -- and then we had an  
11 incident over the summer where I was speaking  
12 with a group of kids in an educational  
13 program, and the teacher told us the one  
14 girl -- part of the educational program was  
15 current events, and the girl wasn't allowed  
16 to watch television at night. So they helped  
17 her with the current events.

18 When I talked to them later and we  
19 talked about getting food and the rest, it  
20 wasn't that she wasn't allowed to watch  
21 television. The family had no electricity.  
22 Which meant they had no heat, which meant  
23 they didn't have hot water, which meant they  
24 couldn't keep food.

1           So we're in a situation that there's  
2           almost grades of homeless. Being in a house  
3           that doesn't have electricity or heat is  
4           homeless.

5           But I appreciate that you're working  
6           on the programs that covered it, so I didn't  
7           have a specific question, I just wanted to  
8           underscore how significant these problems  
9           are.

10           OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Senator,  
11           thank you very much.

12           I will share with you something --  
13           again, for that kind of a scenario where an  
14           individual is in a home but has an electrical  
15           shutoff, there are programs and emergency  
16           services available to assist them to make  
17           sure that that does not take place.

18           There is a significant commitment in  
19           every district to make sure that the capacity  
20           exists to be able to help individuals in that  
21           particular condition.

22           The other situation that you were  
23           mentioning about homelessness among veterans,  
24           I come from a community -- and I remember

1 hearing those voices that said, We don't have  
2 a homeless problem among our veterans  
3 population. And ultimately we built the  
4 transitional housing for homeless veterans  
5 and we really -- there was a big move to be  
6 able to reduce homeless veterans within our  
7 community, and it was ragingly successful,  
8 especially when you began to tackle things  
9 like PTSD and a series of other major issues  
10 that happened at that point.

11 SENATOR BROOKS: Yeah. I brought up  
12 the young lady only to illustrate the fact  
13 that she just accepted that as a way of life,  
14 didn't think it was out of the norm.

15 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Sure. I  
16 think you're really talking about adverse  
17 childhood experiences, you're talking about  
18 childhood trauma, you're talking about things  
19 that affect people for their life. It's why  
20 many of us got into human services in the  
21 first place, to be able to make a difference  
22 and change people's lives.

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. I  
24 believe I'm next, and last for the Senate.

1 I'm glad you closed with childhood  
2 trauma with Senator Brooks, because we look  
3 at the numbers of children who are in the  
4 shelter system and we might as well be  
5 writing up the reports now on what we're  
6 going to need to pay into their adult years  
7 because they did have so much childhood  
8 trauma, moving from location to location,  
9 school to school, et cetera, et cetera.

10 So the Governor said in his -- I  
11 believe it was the State of the State speech,  
12 not his budget speech, that he was going to  
13 do more for homelessness this year than ever.  
14 So tell me how we're doing more this year  
15 than ever. I know that we have a commitment  
16 from 2016 for 20,000 supportive housing beds.  
17 We've only gotten to 6,000. Are we doing  
18 14,000 this year? How many are we doing?

19 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Again, I will  
20 only speak to the commitment as I understand  
21 it, and the commitment as I understand it is,  
22 again, the \$20 billion that is for affordable  
23 housing across the board, 6,000 supportive  
24 units to be completed in a five-year window

1           that ends next year. We should highlight --  
2           and then a 15,000 -- excuse me, a 20,000 unit  
3           commitment for supportive housing over  
4           15 years.

5                     And so when it comes to the  
6           commitment -- and we should touch base on  
7           this -- we're very proud of the work that has  
8           happened. We've got an enormous amount of it  
9           through HHAP, but obviously others as well in  
10          this process. And when it comes to the  
11          supportive housing side, we now have  
12          4,000-plus units, well on our way to being  
13          able to attain and exceed the 6,000  
14          supportive housing units.

15                     That doesn't mean there isn't even  
16          greater need, but that commitment is -- we're  
17          very focused on being able to make sure that  
18          we attain it and exceed it. And the overall  
19          affordable housing number, we are also ahead  
20          of schedule.

21                     CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So you also  
22          referenced -- and I think in answer to a  
23          question, not in your testimony -- that the  
24          City of New York, with the largest numbers of

1 homeless, is spending too much money in their  
2 programs. So can the state do it cheaper,  
3 and will you?

4 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: If you're  
5 asking if the state will take over Family  
6 Assistance and Family Assistance operations,  
7 what we are working with with New York City  
8 at this point is to be able to amend their  
9 homeless services plan and to assist them to  
10 be able to speed the process. You're really  
11 talking about extremely expensive hotel and  
12 motel rooms, and the attempt to be able to  
13 reduce the time spent in those units.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: What is the most  
15 cost-efficient model for ensuring that people  
16 don't continue to flow into our very  
17 expensive homeless shelter system with such a  
18 long timeline for getting them out of the  
19 homeless shelter system?

20 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Sufficient  
21 permanent housing.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: What prevents us  
23 from getting them into sufficient permanent  
24 housing?

1 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Enough units.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Enough --

3 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Enough units.

4 And again, we are in a scenario right now,  
5 especially in the metro New York area, where  
6 that portion of it -- there is, without  
7 question, a crisis with that situation.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Do you think it  
9 has anything to do with too little rental  
10 assistance to afford the units in the  
11 locations where people are?

12 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Well, what I  
13 would say is this. Very few people are  
14 transitioning -- not in total numbers, but  
15 I'm talking about percentagewise,  
16 transitioning over from PA into the shelter  
17 system. Okay? So there are clear strong  
18 supports, both state but again extensively  
19 from the city as well, to have supports in  
20 place to be able to assist people staying in  
21 their homes, CITYFEPS and the like.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So I just want to  
23 repeat that. So we don't think -- your data  
24 shows people are not ending up in a shelter

1 system having been evicted from an apartment  
2 they couldn't afford.

3 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: No, we're not  
4 saying that at all. What we're saying is  
5 that that percentage is significantly less  
6 than people who are not coming out of the PA  
7 system.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So where are the  
9 people coming from?

10 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Again, I  
11 think that we're seeing a whole myriad of  
12 reasons for homelessness. In the city,  
13 obviously cost of housing. Clearly things  
14 like mental health and substance use  
15 disorders and a whole host of other  
16 challenges, as well as economic factors.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Have you taken a  
18 look at the Assemblymember's housing support  
19 proposing -- the HSS proposal which would  
20 provide an increased rental supplement to  
21 keep people in their homes or to move them  
22 out of shelters?

23 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: I have.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: What is your

1 opinion of that?

2 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Well, again,  
3 I think rather than being able to comment  
4 specifically on any legislation, I think it's  
5 important that we talk -- and again I commend  
6 the Assemblymember and everyone else for  
7 pushing to have this kind of public policy  
8 conversation. We think it's really  
9 important.

10 For me, it's more about the  
11 conversations about what things should be  
12 considered in the conversation and how we  
13 move forward. Clearly there's budgetary  
14 concerns associated with that, and the  
15 finances need to be addressed.

16 There also needs to be -- in my  
17 opinion, one of the factors that should be  
18 discussed is how we ensure that when we look  
19 across the entire state that we're not  
20 treating, say, Clinton County the same as we  
21 would treat the Bronx or some other portion  
22 of the city. We want to make sure that --  
23 again, to me, those are two of the -- two key  
24 components. I want to make sure that I don't

1           make mistakes, and I really appreciate the  
2           time.

3                         In addition to local variations, there  
4           is the cliff conversation that needs to at  
5           least be discussed, and how we're going to  
6           transition over. I know that there's a  
7           component of it that carries out for an  
8           additional year. But the real conversation  
9           about how we ensure that an individual  
10          doesn't find themselves in a situation where  
11          the cliff makes them -- in a situation where  
12          they're just as bad but a year or two down  
13          the road. Okay?

14                        We understand the value in the  
15          conversation. And I am also very much  
16          looking forward to the outcomes of the pilots  
17          that have been proposed. I think the pilot  
18          in New York City will be a very informative  
19          study, specifically tied to, again, the area  
20          where we see some of the biggest crisis. But  
21          also to be able to see the results of that  
22          pilot in Rochester will speak volumes about  
23          how upstate cities are dealing with that as  
24          well.

1                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Because there are  
2 such higher costs for housing in New York  
3 City --

4                   OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: No question.

5                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- does the state  
6 support the City of New York moving people  
7 into other counties with lower costs for  
8 housing and shelter?

9                   OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Again, if  
10 what we're talking about is the SOTA program  
11 that was traditionally run and continues to  
12 be run out of the city, we shouldn't lose  
13 sight of the fact that that program is funded  
14 solely with city dollars and not state  
15 dollars.

16                   But we do support, if individuals can  
17 find access to employment or family members,  
18 that people have a right to be able to move.

19                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. Would you  
20 support the city being allowed to use money  
21 they currently can only use for shelter  
22 placement -- which I think is now close to  
23 72,000 a year -- would you allow the city to  
24 use more of those funds specifically to help

1 provide rental housing so that either the  
2 family can go into a housing unit sooner or  
3 avoid having to leave a housing unit?

4 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: I think it's  
5 an area that I'm going to have to take a  
6 closer look at. I can't speak to it right  
7 now.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So -- but you  
9 will take a look at that.

10 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Absolutely.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. Because  
12 we're basically setting up that only the most  
13 expensive failed model can be used. So I  
14 would really like the state to look at the  
15 economics of that.

16 And you are right that not everybody  
17 goes into the shelter system from losing a  
18 home. The data actually shows a huge  
19 percentage, at least of the singles, are  
20 released from State DOCCS -- I think about a  
21 third of the people going into the singles  
22 shelter system.

23 There are other -- and there have been  
24 historically MOUs and discharge planning so

1           that people leaving mental health  
2           institutions, people leaving DOCCS aren't  
3           simply dropped off, as it happens, at the  
4           30th Street Men's Shelter in my district. We  
5           have seen an enormous growth in populations  
6           just being dropped off with nothing.

7                     What can OTDA do to ensure that DOCCS  
8           is not simply busing people into a  
9           nonsolution? Which is going to increase  
10          their likelihood of ending up right back in  
11          DOCCS anyway.

12                    OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Sure. Again,  
13          we all recognize the importance of and the  
14          value of proper housing and strategies for  
15          release and why that's so important to reduce  
16          recidivism and how that can be effective.

17                    I've also seen firsthand the  
18          30th Street Shelter in full operation and  
19          recognize the value that that particular  
20          facility provides in the system, and note  
21          areas for improvement as well.

22                    That said, it is imperative that the  
23          state agencies all collaborate. And we work  
24          together now, but there always is room for

1 improvement to be able to make sure that  
2 whether it's DOCCS or OTDA or any other  
3 different portion, different agencies are  
4 collaborating to make sure that we don't find  
5 that situation where an individual is dropped  
6 off and the chances for success are extremely  
7 limited.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Are you operating  
9 under any MOUs today? I found some pretty  
10 old ones.

11 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: There are  
12 some old ones. And we are --

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Can you get those  
14 to me, please, after the hearing?

15 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Of course.

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

17 And again, you heard me when I asked  
18 Sheila Poole from OCFS. I would also like to  
19 see the same information, because --

20 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: They are  
21 working on it as we speak.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Excellent. Thank  
23 you very much for your testimony today.

24 I believe the Senate is done,

1 Assembly.

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So that  
3 concludes the questions for you,  
4 Commissioner. Thank you so much. And we  
5 look forward to some of the follow-ups that  
6 you've committed to.

7 OTDA COMMISSIONER HEIN: Thank you  
8 very much. And thank you all.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next we will be  
10 hearing from New York State Office for the  
11 Aging, Greg Olsen, acting director.

12 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: You guys ready  
13 for me?

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Feel free to --  
15 well, wait one second. People are just --  
16 actually, leaving very quietly. So, Greg,  
17 you can begin.

18 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Thank you.  
19 Well, good afternoon. It's always a pleasure  
20 to be here.

21 Chairpersons Krueger, Weinstein,  
22 Chairpersons May, Bronson and all the  
23 distinguished members of the Assembly and  
24 standing committees, I'm Greg Olsen. I'm the

1 acting director of the New York State Office  
2 for the Aging. And as always, I'm always  
3 honored to testify on the portions of  
4 Governor Cuomo's proposed budget that affect  
5 older New Yorkers.

6 Governor Cuomo's commitment to older  
7 New Yorkers is unprecedented, and New York is  
8 viewed across the nation as a trailblazer for  
9 the work that we're doing to support older  
10 adults through the Office for the Aging. Our  
11 approach is so much broader than one agency.  
12 It's about making New York the healthiest  
13 state in the nation through a multi-agency  
14 coordinated focused effort on improving  
15 physical and behavioral health, implementing  
16 preventive healthcare strategies, embedding  
17 healthy aging principles into planning,  
18 procurement and policies to change the built  
19 environment, and much more.

20 Utilizing the state's 2019-2024  
21 Prevention Agenda as the umbrella, and  
22 instituting a "health across all policies"  
23 approach, all New York State agencies are  
24 incorporating health considerations into our

1 planning, our programs, and our initiatives.  
2 We have been charged to work together and  
3 consider how all of our policies further our  
4 efforts as the first age-friendly state in  
5 the nation. This approach will have and is  
6 having a significant positive impact on  
7 New York's older population.

8 Under the Governor's leadership,  
9 New York State became the first state in the  
10 nation to receive the age-friendly  
11 designation by the AARP and the World Health  
12 Organization because we ranked high in the  
13 eight domains of age-friendly, livable  
14 communities. But more importantly, we have a  
15 comprehensive plan to systematically build  
16 age-friendly and smart growth principles into  
17 how government operates and functions. We're  
18 truly leading the nation in this  
19 collaborative and thoughtful approach.

20 The fiscal year '20-'21 Executive  
21 Budget continues its ongoing commitment to  
22 older New Yorkers. It includes: The  
23 continuation of the historic \$15 million  
24 targeted investment that was contained in

1 last year's enacted budget to assist those  
2 who are awaiting services in our network.  
3 And I want to thank you all for your support  
4 of that historic investment.

5 The continuation of \$1.5 million to  
6 the CSE program that was contained in last  
7 year's enacted budget.

8 The continued support for the New York  
9 Connects systems reform, which exceeds  
10 \$20 million annually to help individuals of  
11 all ages and payors access long-term services  
12 and supports.

13 Maintaining our \$500,000 funding  
14 stream that draws down an additional  
15 \$2 million to support our enhanced multi  
16 disciplinary teams to combat elder abuse and  
17 financial exploitation.

18 Provisions by the Governor to lower  
19 prescription drug prices, which will have a  
20 significant impact on older adults.

21 And maintaining all core funding  
22 levels from last year.

23 The 2021 Executive Budget proposal  
24 will continue to help hundreds of thousands

1 of older New Yorkers maintain their  
2 independence, support their loved ones who  
3 care for them, reduce future Medicaid costs,  
4 and further demonstrate why New York is the  
5 first-age friendly state in the nation.

6 The State Office for the Aging and our  
7 network does not stop there. We can't stop  
8 there. In order to meet emerging goals, we  
9 need to do a lot more together, and that's  
10 exactly what we do.

11 Through innovative partnerships with  
12 foundations, state and community partners,  
13 and our own efforts, we are expanding  
14 services and testing new delivery models.  
15 These include advancing our state  
16 age-friendly work via grants to help  
17 communities replicate the Governor's signed  
18 Executive Order 190 at the county level;  
19 bringing new municipalities into AARP's  
20 age-friendly network; standing up, first in  
21 the country, five Age-Friendly Regional  
22 Technical Assistance Centers that are being  
23 led by the New York Academy of Medicine and  
24 creating a learning collaborative to assure

1 the success of our grantees in the short-term  
2 and then an expansion, hopefully, in the  
3 long-term.

4 Implementing our private-pay program  
5 as a result of receiving the statutory  
6 authority in last year's enacted budget --  
7 again, I thank you for that support. Working  
8 with the PPS systems and health plans and  
9 providers around the state to purchase  
10 services from our network that address the  
11 social determinants of health. Significantly  
12 expanding our state certification and  
13 skills-based trainings for staff who deliver  
14 services across the state. Expanding our  
15 partnership with the Office of Temporary and  
16 Disability Assistance to provide targeted  
17 nutrition counseling and nutrition education  
18 in low-income targeted areas across the  
19 state.

20 Working with the Village to Village  
21 network and the Albany Guardian Society to  
22 seed local village movements that organize  
23 neighbors to help neighbors, and stood up the  
24 first-in-the-nation regional Village to

1 Village Technical Assistance Center right  
2 here in the Capital District.

3 Participating in a statewide  
4 collaborative to educate the public on the  
5 devastating impacts of sepsis. Reducing  
6 social isolation via the use of animatronic  
7 pets. Working with the New York State  
8 Council on the Arts to bring arts and arts  
9 education to senior centers and libraries in  
10 three regions of the state, which will help  
11 improve health, reduce social isolation,  
12 improve cognitive functioning, and support  
13 professional artists.

14 Working to better understand the  
15 fiscal impact that caregiving has on the  
16 public and private workforce as well as the  
17 healthcare costs for those caregivers in the  
18 work environment. And working with the DDPC,  
19 the Developmental Disabilities Planning  
20 Council, to provide training and education  
21 resources that will help us better serve  
22 individuals with disabilities who are  
23 entering our service infrastructure.

24 So we'll continue to engage all the

1 state agencies, our private partners,  
2 not-for-profits and other community-based  
3 organizations to serve New York's older  
4 population as effectively as we can.

5 As always, always appreciative to be  
6 here, and I'm happy to take any questions  
7 that you may have.

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

9 So we go to Assemblyman Bronson, chair  
10 of our Aging Committee.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Thank you,  
12 Chairperson Weinstein.

13 Acting Director Olsen, thanks for  
14 being here.

15 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: My pleasure.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: It's always a  
17 pleasure working with you. And I do want to  
18 credit the Governor and your office for your  
19 commitment to older New Yorkers and the type  
20 of work that we've been able to do.

21 The \$15 million increase in  
22 community-based services last year was huge.  
23 And I -- my first question is actually about  
24 that. And, you know, we were trying to

1 address the waitlist. At your request, we  
2 offered some flexibility in how those funds  
3 were distributed county by county.

4 So my question is twofold. First,  
5 were all counties able to participate? And  
6 if not, which ones didn't and what was the  
7 reason for that? And then, second, if you  
8 have an estimate of the number of people on  
9 the waitlist that we were able to provide  
10 services to.

11 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Sure. Thank  
12 you, Assemblyman, and Senator May. You know,  
13 you guys came in last year, and that was  
14 really a historic investment we hadn't seen  
15 in over 20 years.

16 I think what was key about that  
17 proposal -- which you all supported -- was  
18 that flexibility in bypassing our traditional  
19 funding formula. That's how dollars go out  
20 the door. It's based on the percentage of  
21 people over the age of 60 by county gets a  
22 certain percent of the dollars. And that  
23 model works effectively well for a lot of our  
24 programs.

1                   But you know, as you mentioned, what's  
2                   reported back to us in terms of unmet needs  
3                   doesn't necessarily follow the traditional  
4                   formula. So what we were able to negotiate  
5                   with you all last year was the ability to  
6                   bypass that, get resources directly to the  
7                   communities that reported back. Hence, the  
8                   \$15 million.

9                   So out of the 59 county-based area  
10                  agencies on aging that are part of our  
11                  network, 50 of them reported unmet need. And  
12                  so those resources were directed towards  
13                  those communities.

14                 For some of the nine who did not  
15                 report, I don't necessarily view that as  
16                 something that they didn't do right. What  
17                 that says to me is that with their federal,  
18                 state and local resources, the contributions  
19                 that they may get from the residents who are  
20                 receiving service, their own fundraising,  
21                 that they're able to meet the current need.  
22                 That's a success story.

23                 I will tell you that a few of the  
24                 counties who did not report unmet need --

1           which we've been receiving information for  
2           quite a long time in terms of what that looks  
3           like -- did have middle-of-the-year issues,  
4           and we were able to redirect some resources  
5           to them.

6                         ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON:   Okay.  And thank  
7           you for that work.  It's really important for  
8           our older New Yorkers and their families.

9                         What happens if someone is on a  
10          wait -- well, let me back up.  First of all,  
11          you know, I have information to suggest that  
12          there's significantly increased numbers of  
13          waitlists, upwards of 9,700.  And, you know,  
14          we need to quantify that and get a real  
15          number.  But when someone is on a waitlist,  
16          what happens to them?  If they're not getting  
17          those services they need to age at home, what  
18          happens to them?

19                        ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN:  So there's a  
20          lot of different things that could  
21          potentially happen.  So we have a policy that  
22          we put in place in 2014 that targets people  
23          who may be awaiting services that, if through  
24          their own resources or through a family

1 member or friends, can private-pay while  
2 they're working their way up that service  
3 category.

4           What we look at first, though, is the  
5 acuity level of the need. And so individuals  
6 who are not receiving services due to  
7 adequate funding are prioritized based on  
8 some factors, right, their income level,  
9 geography, their functional limitations. And  
10 so, you know, they would receive a priority  
11 over other people who may not be receiving  
12 services.

13           But because you may not be receiving  
14 services through us doesn't mean that there's  
15 not an effort underway by the area agencies  
16 and the community-based partners to connect  
17 them with other community resources. So I  
18 say that because we're not the only game in  
19 town. We're an important conduit to really  
20 look holistically and person-centered at an  
21 individual and what they may or may not need.  
22 But there are a variety of other entities at  
23 the local level from town and municipality  
24 programs, CAP agencies, you know, the

1 United Way, those types of things that offer  
2 similar types of services that we can connect  
3 to.

4 Some are case-managed while they're  
5 awaiting services. We can look at things  
6 like are they receiving SNAP benefits, try to  
7 hook them up with SNAP and HEAP and  
8 low-income subsidy to put money back in their  
9 pockets to get connected to services.

10 So it's not like they just languish  
11 while they're waiting. The area agencies are  
12 very adept at capitalizing and leveraging  
13 their community resources, because that  
14 really is how the network is structured.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Yeah, I  
16 appreciate that. And the network is very  
17 good, it's important to do those evaluations,  
18 those assessments, and try to get to the  
19 high-needs people as quickly as possible.

20 But if we don't get them the  
21 community-based needs, you know, they -- some  
22 go into, you know, nursing homes, others go  
23 into other forms of managed long-term care.  
24 And those costs are astronomical. And the

1 state is currently facing a Medicaid issue.  
2 Yet we have services to keep people at home,  
3 where the annual cost is around, you know,  
4 \$6,000, \$6,300 -- yet the cost of a nursing  
5 home is \$150,000 annually.

6 You know, we don't have to discuss  
7 this in detail, but I think through budget  
8 negotiations what I'd like your office to be  
9 involved in, as we look at the Medicaid  
10 Redesign Team No. 2 and the parameters that  
11 are set out there, if we could also ask  
12 them -- and with your assistance -- to look  
13 at if we invest more in keeping people at  
14 home, can we save money on the Medicaid side  
15 of the equation?

16 And with that -- \$15 million last  
17 year -- I'd be willing to advocate for more  
18 money for those services so that we can save  
19 that money at the Medicaid end.

20 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah, and I  
21 think what you just recognized and have  
22 recognized, with the support of the  
23 investment last year, is similar to what the  
24 Governor and the Health Department

1 recognized. You know, would \$15 million come  
2 out of the global Medicaid cap. I'm sure  
3 that -- you know, going back to Senator  
4 Krueger's -- the model, what's an effective  
5 model that might be less expensive, you know,  
6 I think that this will be talked about  
7 through budget negotiations. You know, our  
8 network is able to intervene a lot earlier  
9 than the medical model, and that's by design.  
10 And we should have a system like that that  
11 focuses attention on the front end in the  
12 community, waiting -- you know, not waiting  
13 for people to devolve to a point where you  
14 need those higher levels of care.

15 So I think that \$15 million investment  
16 came from exactly those facts, that we can  
17 target people who are at imminent risk of  
18 Medicaid and spend-down, and help serve them  
19 and their families in their homes and  
20 communities for quite some time. Hence, the  
21 investment.

22 So I'm hopeful that this will be a  
23 conversation that will play itself out during  
24 negotiations.

1                   ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: I am also  
2 hopeful.

3                   I've had conversations with you  
4 recently, along with your staff, in  
5 connection with nursing home transfers and  
6 evictions, and its relationship to the Long  
7 Term Care Ombudsman Program. The Comptroller  
8 had issued a report toward the end of last  
9 year about these types of transfers and, you  
10 know, what we could be doing to prevent this  
11 disruption to folks who are in these  
12 facilities and make sure that they're getting  
13 the notice that they're required under  
14 federal law and things of that nature.

15                   Can you expand on this a little bit?  
16 What's happening with our Long Term Care  
17 Ombudsman Program and its effectiveness, and  
18 how could we be more effective?

19                   ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah, that's a  
20 great question.

21                   So the program on its whole -- we  
22 could talk a little bit about that for a  
23 second. You know, we regionalized a couple  
24 of years ago for economies of scale. We had

1 several programs that were very, very small.  
2 It's difficult to run a county program, you  
3 know, when you're receiving \$15,000,  
4 especially to complete the functions that the  
5 program provides.

6 And so what it does is really the  
7 quality control eyes and ears in facilities  
8 to help individuals make sure that their  
9 rights are maintained and that they're  
10 receiving quality of care.

11 The eviction issue has been one that  
12 we've been working with the Health Department  
13 on to develop a process in order to, first,  
14 make sure that people know what their rights  
15 are in terms of the eviction, and then how to  
16 go through an appeals process. I'd be happy  
17 to share, you know, what that process is in  
18 writing with you, but that's something that  
19 we are working on.

20 In terms of the ombudsman program  
21 itself, you know, it's a challenge. We have  
22 a fairly large cadre of staff around the  
23 state, 35 full-time, 10 part-time, a little  
24 over 400 volunteers. So I think what we're

1           seeing both within LTCOP and within our  
2           Health Information Counseling Assistance  
3           Program, and probably elsewhere in other  
4           systems, is the face of the volunteer is  
5           changing.

6                     You know, these types of programs  
7           require a four-day intensive certification in  
8           order to become an ombudsman. The task is  
9           pretty intense, and you've got to give a lot  
10          of credit to these folks that are putting in  
11          20 hours a week. But the bottom line is that  
12          the face of volunteers are changing. People  
13          are spending less time doing the day-to-day  
14          volunteering and more, you know, the weekend  
15          warrior type of thing once or twice a year,  
16          which is perfectly fine. But it certainly  
17          has an impact on the programs and services  
18          that we provide.

19                    So we've tested a couple of things  
20          over the last year, and I think I mentioned  
21          this in last year's hearing. You know, we  
22          looked at implementing a \$75 a month stipend  
23          in the LTCOP program in four regions to see  
24          if that would have an impact on retention,

1 training, and the amount of work that you  
2 would get out by providing a small stipend.  
3 And it's been very, very successful. So  
4 that's something we're looking to potentially  
5 expand a little bit more, which would help us  
6 with the workload, which makes us able to go  
7 to more places and do the same thing with the  
8 HICAP program.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Okay. So,  
10 again, I'd like to continue to work with you  
11 regarding, you know, methodologies that we  
12 can better recruit and retain volunteers as  
13 well as paid folks in this area. And I'll  
14 defer and ask you questions on my second  
15 round.

16 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Okay, thank  
17 you.

18 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
19 Senate?

20 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Aging Chair  
21 Senator Rachel May.

22 SENATOR MAY: Thank you. Thank you.

23 And thank you, Commissioner. It's  
24 been a pleasure working with you over the

1 last year.

2 Let me help out my colleague here,  
3 because I was going to ask about the ombuds  
4 program as well. Have you considered a  
5 travel allowance for the volunteers? Because  
6 certainly in our part of the state they have  
7 to go long distances often.

8 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah, many of  
9 them have that -- have an allowance built in,  
10 so that that type of thing should not be on  
11 the backs of the volunteers.

12 What I like about the -- you know,  
13 what I like about the stipend idea is it's a  
14 low-budget, high-yield impact. It recognizes  
15 the value that these folks bring to the table  
16 every single day. It's something that's  
17 pretty complicated and not always positive if  
18 you're seeing, you know, things that you  
19 don't want to be seeing in some of these  
20 facilities.

21 And, you know, I think that on the  
22 receiving side from the volunteer, in  
23 addition to all the other recognition things  
24 that the program does -- and the support that

1 we try to provide in various other areas  
2 really is monumental in terms of them feeling  
3 valued for the time commitment that they put  
4 into this.

5 So we're certainly not averse to any  
6 of those types of incentives that are going  
7 to help not only, again, recruit people, but  
8 make sure once they're in and feel that it's  
9 a volunteer experience that's important to  
10 them, that we hang onto them.

11 SENATOR MAY: Okay, great.

12 So let me go back to these issues  
13 about keeping people in their homes and out  
14 of nursing homes. And the first question is,  
15 in the MRT process do you anticipate having a  
16 voice in what gets decided? And do you think  
17 that community-based programs that serve the  
18 elderly will have any kind of input into that  
19 process?

20 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: You know, I do  
21 think we will be -- always are and will be  
22 interacting with our Health Department  
23 colleagues. And I think that Dr. Zucker and  
24 Donna Frescatore mentioned that yesterday.

1           I think because -- the way that we  
2           kind of view our role in concert with the  
3           Health Department is that we do have a  
4           continuum of care. We're the front end of  
5           that. We are pre-Medicaid. We're trying to  
6           keep people out of the emergency room. You  
7           need a strong community-based network to be  
8           discharged safely back to the community.

9           So there's always going to be a  
10          positive interaction between those two  
11          things. I don't think it should be lost on  
12          any of us that that investment we got last  
13          year came from the Health Department's budget  
14          because they recognized that we are able to  
15          target certain individuals that eventually  
16          could wind their way into the Medicaid  
17          program, that we can do it for very, very low  
18          cost, hence what the investment is.

19          So I feel confident moving forward  
20          that some of the things that our network may  
21          be able to offer will be part of that  
22          conversation.

23          SENATOR MAY: Thank you. So that  
24          \$15 million investment last year was

1           predicated on a savings of about \$34 million  
2           from Medicaid in keeping people out of  
3           nursing homes. Have you run the numbers?  
4           Are you seeing that kind of savings, or is it  
5           too early to tell?

6                     ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Well, I think,  
7           you know, what we did do is we were able to  
8           tag future Medicaid savings. Because if  
9           you're receiving services in our network, you  
10          are not receiving services somewhere else.

11                    So, you know, we began the process  
12          with some assumptions based on some feedback  
13          from the area agencies that reported what  
14          happens to people if they're awaiting  
15          services and not getting them. I think what  
16          we have a little more definitively at this  
17          point -- I think our reporting requirement  
18          that we had agreed to in the budget last year  
19          is September, so I'll know a lot more by  
20          then.

21                    But I can tell you this. I asked 10  
22          of the counties fairly recently to go through  
23          some of their client data of folks who were  
24          awaiting services when they reported it back

1 in the '17-'18 cycle, which predated the  
2 \$15 million, to the time that we were able to  
3 release the money based on the enacted  
4 budget, what happened to those folks. And so  
5 they went through 2200 individual case files,  
6 which is a monumental labor-intensive  
7 process, and I appreciated that they did  
8 that.

9 And I think Assemblyman Bronson hit it  
10 on the nose. Those numbers are similar to  
11 what we found: 10 percent went directly from  
12 awaiting services into a nursing home. So  
13 that would have had a cost. Because, again,  
14 the clients that we're serving are  
15 traditionally 83-year-old females who live  
16 alone, are low-income, have four or more  
17 chronic conditions, and have three needs  
18 in -- you know, functional needs in a variety  
19 of different areas. So they're pretty much  
20 at risk.

21 So again, I think that the investment  
22 speaks for itself.

23 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

24 So like Assemblyman Bronson, I -- it

1 makes me wonder why we don't just multiply  
2 the investment by 10 and reap, you know, that  
3 much more in terms of the savings.

4 So I'm interested in a few things  
5 where I feel like we're kind of  
6 nickel-and-diming our home care system.  
7 There's not a COLA in there again. We are  
8 deferring the cost-of-living adjustment yet  
9 again, which makes it harder to find people  
10 to do the work of home care.

11 I didn't see if there was an increase  
12 in funding for NORCs, but that's a way that  
13 we support -- a pretty low-cost way of  
14 supporting seniors in their homes. The  
15 affordable senior housing service  
16 coordinators are -- what I'm told is they  
17 save about \$4,000 per person per  
18 hospitalization, helping them, you know,  
19 coordinate everything more easily. The  
20 Senior Companion Program that we have out in  
21 Onondaga County, where seniors are going and  
22 just visiting with isolated seniors, and it's  
23 great for both the volunteers and the people  
24 receiving those services. Data systems for

1           senior centers to connect with hospitals for  
2           discharge planning so people aren't missing  
3           meals, home-delivered meals or that kind of  
4           thing.

5                        So tell me about all of these areas:  
6           Is there room for further investment in these  
7           in order to save a lot of money on the  
8           Medicaid side of things?

9                        ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN:  Yeah, and I  
10          think you mentioned a lot of very important  
11          programs that are part of a much bigger  
12          coordinated system.  And that's why, again,  
13          you know, when we're going through the  
14          private-pay protocols -- and what we want to  
15          do to try to get people to the front door of  
16          the Office for the Aging.  And they're not  
17          looking at one particular program, they're  
18          looking holistically.  It's a person-centered  
19          approach looking at the individual and what  
20          do they need, what are their strengths, what  
21          other things can we leverage.

22                        So I think that those things are very  
23          important.  It's very difficult at times to  
24          get people to accept services, but that's the

1 culture that we live in. And our job is to  
2 make sure that we're out there in the  
3 communities letting people know that there  
4 are a variety of things they may be eligible  
5 for that they're not receiving that we can  
6 help them with.

7 I think what's the most promising  
8 thing -- and, you know, now being in this  
9 network for 27 years, what's happened over  
10 the last couple of years, at least where  
11 aging is concerned, to me is very exciting:  
12 The focus on value-based payments, shared  
13 savings with Medicare, with Medicare allowing  
14 services to be paid for that address the  
15 social determinants of health -- all of those  
16 things that we do very well in our network.

17 And so we've had some very, very  
18 productive conversations lately with Emblem,  
19 with Excellus, with the Albany PPS, with the  
20 Adirondack Health Institute, that are looking  
21 for ways not to recreate the wheel. And  
22 that's where we fit in.

23 We've got a network that's been around  
24 for 50 years that has, again, 59 offices for

1 the aging, 1200 community-based contractors  
2 that provide a variety of services that you  
3 just talked about, as well as, you know,  
4 800 congregate sites, 2400 home-delivered-  
5 meal routes. There's a lot that we can be  
6 doing in looking to diversify our funding,  
7 whether it be through private pay, Medicare  
8 contracts, others, to significantly expand  
9 service to do exactly the kinds of things  
10 that you and Assemblyman Bronson have  
11 mentioned.

12 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

13 And then the last thing is to talk  
14 about what's my top priority legislatively,  
15 and I believe Assemblyman Bronson's as well,  
16 which is the Family Caregiver Tax Credit.  
17 Which is partly just a recognition of all the  
18 work that families do, but it's also intended  
19 to make it easier for more families to do  
20 that kind of care and plug the gap in terms  
21 of the lack of the home healthcare workforce,  
22 and also to help people stay in their homes  
23 so they're not going into nursing homes.

24 So if that didn't make it into the

1 budget, is that something that you're willing  
2 to advocate for? We feel that that's very  
3 important. AARP does. It's potentially a  
4 really valuable thing in terms of return on  
5 investment, I believe.

6 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah, and  
7 there's been a lot of conversations about the  
8 tax credit. So I'm sure again, as we move  
9 forward, that will -- that's not going to be  
10 the last time it comes up.

11 I can tell you, one of the things I'm  
12 proudest about in the state is the caregiver  
13 investments that have not only been made in  
14 our agency, but also in the Health  
15 Department. I think one of the most exciting  
16 things what we're working on currently --  
17 I'll just quickly share with you -- is I  
18 think we get a lot bigger bang for the buck  
19 when we can show what the impact of  
20 caregiving is to the economic bottom line.

21 So we are working now with AARP  
22 nationally, AARP New York State, Emblem, the  
23 New York State Health Department and Excellus  
24 to do a really comprehensive study of the

1 impact of caregiving on state employees,  
2 county employees, and then maybe the  
3 20 biggest businesses in New York State. We  
4 have the ability through some health  
5 insurers, Emblem and Excellus, to look at  
6 claims data. What's the impact on  
7 healthcare, healthcare spending of  
8 caregivers? What does it cost businesses in  
9 terms of turnover, lost productivity? We  
10 know the wage reductions for women, which is  
11 a huge problem.

12 So I think that, you know,  
13 collectively the impetus behind getting data  
14 like that is really going to be an  
15 eye-opener, not only at the state level and  
16 the county level, but also through private  
17 businesses, where then we can be working  
18 together to provide strategies that not only  
19 help identify who caregivers are, because  
20 that's the number-one problem, but also  
21 connect them to the myriad of services that  
22 we have in New York State. We have over  
23 76,000 respite and caregiver programs at the  
24 community level that people, you know, use

1 but may not know about, because a lot of this  
2 is crisis-driven, as you know.

3 SENATOR MAY: Great. Thank you. Is  
4 there a date for when that report will be  
5 coming?

6 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: It's going to  
7 be this year. I mean, we are moving quickly  
8 and there's a lot of excitement. It's going  
9 to be not only a great assist to New York  
10 State, but it will become a national model to  
11 really hone in on this at the state level  
12 everywhere, because it matters, as you know,.

13 SENATOR MAY: Great. Thank you.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

15 We go to Assemblywoman Wright.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Good afternoon.

17 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Hi.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Hi. I do want  
19 to first acknowledge that there are some very  
20 good outcomes in my community related to the  
21 age-friendly program, and we recently  
22 designated a NORC, and so we're able to  
23 further support our aging community with  
24 those things.

1                   However, I am finding and hearing and  
2                   getting complaints in my office that the  
3                   problem really centers upon -- elder abuse is  
4                   really centered upon the abuses that exist  
5                   because those who we believe are supposed to  
6                   be helping our elders have too many gaps in  
7                   the systems and regulations that govern their  
8                   operations and allow abuse to occur.

9                   So I do want to ask, first, how much  
10                  influence, oversight, do you have on adult  
11                  day care centers?

12                 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: You want me  
13                 to --

14                 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Yeah.

15                 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Okay. Sure.

16                 So there -- I'm going to answer that  
17                 two ways, because there's two different  
18                 oversight entities. There are the social  
19                 adult day centers that we operate directly,  
20                 so we contract with directly. We have 13 of  
21                 those. And so those are required to, you  
22                 know, meet the state standards, which are  
23                 actually in our regulations.

24                 The area agencies on aging themselves

1 operate or contract with another 83 social  
2 adult day -- same thing, they're mandated to  
3 be monitored annually, we have monitoring  
4 tools, et cetera.

5 Then there are those that are  
6 receiving Medicaid funds. That's under the  
7 jurisdiction of the Health Department and  
8 their Managed Long Term Care contracts, and  
9 they are required to be certified through  
10 OMIG. So there are about 330 of them in  
11 New York City that would fall into the Health  
12 Department MLTC oversight.

13 Our role in that is to make sure that  
14 the plans that the SADC programs that we  
15 don't oversee directly, that everybody  
16 understands what the regs are, the types of  
17 things that they're supposed to do in  
18 monitoring. We've provided some tools, some  
19 self-monitoring tools. They all have to --

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: May I ask, do  
21 you monitor what type of information they're  
22 allowed to collect regarding the people who  
23 attend the facility and what they're able to  
24 do with the information that they collect?

1                   ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: So I can only  
2 speak to the little over a hundred that we  
3 touch directly. The ones that are, excuse  
4 me, touched by the -- overseen by the Health  
5 Department, the MLTC plans, I can't speak to  
6 that.

7                   But we certainly do have, you know,  
8 HIPAA and a public -- we definitely have  
9 requirements in terms of not sharing public  
10 health information or personal information.

11                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Not health  
12 information, just total information that  
13 they're able to collect and what they're able  
14 to do with that information.

15                   ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Let me look at  
16 the regs. I don't think that there is  
17 something that our programs are particularly  
18 sharing with anybody. But let me -- I want  
19 to make sure I answer that correctly.

20                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Okay. And I'm  
21 imagining the local departments of aging and  
22 protective services for the aging or elderly  
23 in the municipalities, you have -- do you  
24 have oversight or is it just partnership?

1                   ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah, so the  
2                   area agencies -- so in this regard, DFTA, New  
3                   York City Department for the Aging, again, if  
4                   they're contracting with social adult day  
5                   programs -- which they are -- using the  
6                   funding that we have, then they're required  
7                   to follow the same monitoring schedule that  
8                   we require of ours. And they do do that.

9                   And as you know, that DFTA is also --  
10                  runs a social adult day ombudsman program  
11                  where they field complaints from all the SADC  
12                  programs.

13                  Of course if they're theirs, they  
14                  would go out and do that monitoring  
15                  themselves. If they're not, and they're  
16                  attached to a Medicare dollar, those  
17                  complaints go to my office, they go to the  
18                  Health Department, and they go to the Office  
19                  of Medicaid Inspector General, where then  
20                  they will look into and make the appropriate  
21                  actions or correct the action plan.

22                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: And then I  
23                  guess the last thing I want to leave -- I  
24                  think it's more of a statement than a

1 question -- is that what I'm finding are  
2 those that are supposed to be protecting our  
3 older community are actually working to  
4 undermine the world that those people have  
5 created for themselves when they become  
6 vulnerable or in need of assistance. Instead  
7 of fortifying the connections that they've  
8 built around them, they work very diligently  
9 to pull them apart.

10 I'm finding that we have too much  
11 attention and strong-handed responses when  
12 the alleged victim of abuse is single, a  
13 woman, and childless. I have a case that has  
14 come to my office where after nine months  
15 of -- one, they broke down the door to get  
16 in. Then they put it -- it was in the court  
17 case. After nine months of adjournments, the  
18 first time my office misses an opportunity to  
19 show up in that courtroom, they make a  
20 decision that she's incapacitated. Within  
21 two months, she's in a nursing home, although  
22 she's been living independently all before  
23 this. And during the nine months that  
24 they've been involved, she did not have

1 anyone bring even food to her home. She's  
2 two months into the nursing home, and then  
3 within a month after that, both of her homes  
4 are up for sale and guardians are being paid.

5 I think your office needs to pay  
6 attention to what's going on in New York  
7 City, because it's a problem.

8 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah, and I  
9 know you were making a statement; I think  
10 that's a great statement. There's a lot of  
11 work that our agency does, not only in  
12 coordinating and administering the state's  
13 enhanced multidisciplinary team, but working  
14 with the city Elder Abuse Coalition and  
15 others -- but again, others across the state.

16 Look, we are in a culture now where a  
17 lot of people have no idea who's living next  
18 door to them. You know, people don't talk to  
19 their neighbors anymore. I know that the  
20 Governor had proposed some additional  
21 measures to combat financial exploitation  
22 within the budget this year. There are a lot  
23 of touch points that, regardless of how  
24 isolated the older person is, they're going

1 to see somebody, whether it be a physician or  
2 it be in the ER.

3 We're doing a lot of work in terms of  
4 trying to make sure that those different  
5 touch points can understand what the signs  
6 and symptoms are of physical and other types  
7 of elder abuse, but also on the financial  
8 part.

9 So what I would love to do is, you  
10 know, follow up with you on all the things  
11 that we are doing. And if there's things  
12 that we're not doing, to have you advise us  
13 on that would be very helpful.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

16 Senate?

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

18 So hi.

19 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: How are you,  
20 Senator?

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Fine, thank you.

22 So I'm always amazed with how small  
23 your agency is, given that the population of  
24 New York State trends to older and older.

1           That's going to be a discussion for another  
2           day.

3                         It's a huge population over a 30-year  
4           age framework. So there are issues for the  
5           frail elderly and those who need home care.  
6           I'm going to say -- and nursing home  
7           questions. The number-one issues that come  
8           to my district office for older New Yorkers  
9           are discrimination -- discrimination pushing  
10          them out of the workforce when they hit a  
11          certain age, discrimination in refusing to  
12          consider them for hiring, even though one of  
13          the realities of living much longer than  
14          everyone estimated is that they need more  
15          money because they're living longer. And yet  
16          they can't go back to work because there  
17          seems to be a consistent pattern of  
18          discrimination against seniors when they try  
19          to get jobs.

20                        Discrimination of even -- I always  
21          find this is interesting. Medicare is the  
22          healthcare program for seniors. At least in  
23          my district -- and we're doing a survey, and  
24          I'm wondering whether your agency might

1 consider taking on a similar survey --  
2 doctors don't want to take Medicare patients.

3 UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER: Mm-hmm.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I heard that  
5 "uh-huh." Well, yup, it's not just me. So  
6 we need to do something about that. I know  
7 Medicare is a federal law. But a couple of  
8 things.

9 One, if they're not taking seniors,  
10 somehow we're both flunking the test. And  
11 two, just FYI, if you can't get services  
12 through Medicare and you're a lower-income  
13 senior, you're going to line up to get  
14 Medicaid, and that was yesterday's  
15 conversation, that we have too many people on  
16 Medicaid and it's an issue for our budget.  
17 So we need to make sure that we as the State  
18 of New York are maximizing the ability for  
19 our older New Yorkers to actually draw down  
20 correctly on Medicare services.

21 But if everybody is confirming what I  
22 thought -- I was starting to think, oh, it's  
23 only me in my district, that nobody wants to  
24 take on Medicare patients -- I just think

1           this is huge.

2                       So, one, I ask you to look into and  
3 perhaps do surveys, because that's what we're  
4 doing, about -- you know, we actually just go  
5 through the medical referral lists and find  
6 out -- because you can do it by computer --  
7 how many are taking Medicare for new  
8 patients. And you find there's nobody. Or  
9 in Manhattan, you can find seven. Seven.  
10 That's not the exact number, but that small.

11                   ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah, that's  
12 crazy, right.

13                   (Cellphone sound.)

14                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: That's crazy.

15                   So I really think we have to do  
16 something about this. And we have to do a  
17 lot more to ensure that we put systems in  
18 place that are making sure -- I don't know  
19 who's ringing --

20                   ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: I just want to  
21 make sure it's not me --

22                   (Laughter.)

23                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: It's not me.

24                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Somebody's mic

1 and phone are on.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- that this  
3 growth of discrimination in employment as  
4 well. And I'm wondering whether you have  
5 seen anything or been able to do anything  
6 about that.

7 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah, so on  
8 your second point, you know, you'll be  
9 hearing from the Association on Aging in  
10 New York State. That might be something in  
11 terms of the physician networks, and that's  
12 something we could potentially work on  
13 together. I think that's really important,  
14 and I agree.

15 You know, the discrimination side,  
16 Senator, I feel exactly the same way you do.  
17 And I think if you look at the kinds of  
18 things that our agency has been talking about  
19 for the last seven years or so, is really to  
20 try to combat ageism stereotypes and the  
21 discrimination. And we do that a number of  
22 different ways.

23 I mean, we all -- we know how we grow  
24 up in this country, we know how the media

1           portrays older people. We know how cartoons  
2           do it, to start it with our kids. People are  
3           scared to get older. It's an age -- you  
4           know, young-age type of environment that we  
5           live in.

6                         But I think when you start to  
7           aggregate the facts of what older adults mean  
8           to their families, to their communities --  
9           the biggest bloc of entrepreneurs, biggest  
10          givers to philanthropy, largest volunteer  
11          group, hold 83 percent of the nation's  
12          wealth, support 90 million jobs, are  
13          43 percent of the federal tax base, same at  
14          the state and local level, in New York State  
15          represent 63 percent of all the personal  
16          income generated, and the thousand of years  
17          of work life and voluntary experience that  
18          you have -- you know, we're in competition  
19          with other states because they recognize the  
20          value of this population, have built it into  
21          their economic development, you know, talking  
22          points as ways to get older adults from the  
23          Northeast to move out of New York and go  
24          there.

1                   Hence the whole effort around  
2                   age-friendly. I mean, for us that's a  
3                   couple -- there's two reasons to do that.  
4                   One is to try to stop people from going to  
5                   New Jersey, Connecticut, Florida. And the  
6                   other is to make New York State the type of  
7                   community that people want to move to.

8                   So we are currently working on a  
9                   campaign to do a little bit more on the media  
10                  side in terms of ageism and discrimination.  
11                  And Assemblyman Bronson and I have talked as  
12                  recently as Tuesday on looking at some ways  
13                  we can address the workforce, have an  
14                  age-friendly workforce. You know, dispel  
15                  some of those myths that they cost more in  
16                  health insurance -- they don't. That they  
17                  won't learn computers -- they will. That  
18                  they're not reliable -- yes, they are. And  
19                  so I think collectively we all have a role to  
20                  do that, and that's really the basis of what  
21                  an age-friendly state does. It tells the  
22                  truth, it raises these issues and tries to  
23                  solve them.

24                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

1                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman  
2 Bronson.

3                   ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Thank you.

4                   So let's follow up on older  
5 New Yorkers in the workplace. And as you  
6 just indicated, we've had conversations about  
7 this this week, actually.

8                   And as an employment lawyer by trade,  
9 I'm well aware of the discrimination that  
10 happens on the basis of age as well as other  
11 factors, and so education and awareness is  
12 definitely an element to this.

13                  But I think we also need to think  
14 creatively. As we're looking at what we do  
15 with the gig economy in this budget, as we  
16 look at what we do with paid sick leave in  
17 this budget, as we reflect on what we've done  
18 with paid family leave in this budget -- in  
19 the prior years, I think we need to  
20 creatively look at some certainty in  
21 scheduling for our older workers at the same  
22 time as we look at flexibility to allow them  
23 to meet the other needs in their lives. And  
24 a recognition that some are in the workplace

1 still because they want to continue to  
2 contribute and they want to do it in that  
3 way, versus maybe volunteerism; some are in  
4 the workplace -- and unfortunately, more and  
5 more -- because they can't make ends meet.  
6 And especially with that population, we owe  
7 it to them to find ways for them to continue  
8 to work in a flexible environment that allows  
9 them to do that.

10 So, you know, the discriminatory piece  
11 of it, we can work on that. The educational  
12 piece of it we have to work on. And what you  
13 pointed out, what our older New Yorkers  
14 contribute to our economy is enormous, and we  
15 need to build on that.

16 So you don't really need to answer the  
17 question -- it's not really a question -- I  
18 just want to make sure -- and I know I have a  
19 commitment from you, because we talked about  
20 it before. In this budget cycle there are a  
21 number of policy decisions we're going to be  
22 making that I think have an impact on our  
23 older New Yorkers who are still in the  
24 workplace or want to be in the workplace or

1           are transferring in the workplace. And so we  
2           owe it to them and we owe it to all  
3           New Yorkers to see what we can do in that  
4           regard.

5                     ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah, and I  
6           think that, you know, given your background,  
7           that is something that I'm absolutely  
8           interested in working on, because I couldn't  
9           agree with you more.

10                    And, you know, the proportion of older  
11           people in the workplace compared to the  
12           younger population is only going to grow.  
13           And so as you mentioned, there's a variety of  
14           different reasons, there's a variety of  
15           flexible things that have been tried. And so  
16           we would be absolutely honored to work with  
17           you on that.

18                    ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: My family, like  
19           many families in New York, are -- we found  
20           ourselves in the situation of the highest  
21           number of people you serve, and that is my  
22           mom, in her early eighties, a woman alone at  
23           home who had 24/7 medical needs. Not because  
24           she couldn't function, but because she could

1           have a medical episode that she couldn't  
2           respond to, and that could have been  
3           life-threatening.

4                         She wanted to age at home. She wanted  
5           to stay at home to the end. We worked  
6           with -- we have the luxury of a huge labor  
7           pool. I have 11 brothers and sisters. So we  
8           had that fortunate labor pool to be family  
9           caregivers. We also self-paid and we also  
10          relied on insurance and other mechanisms for  
11          home care.

12                        So I reiterate Senator May's, my  
13          number-one priority when it comes to the  
14          Aging Committee is the Caregiver Tax Credit.  
15          We are capping it so we know the dollar  
16          certainty. We're limiting it so that it's  
17          verifiable, eligible costs, so we know what  
18          we're going to offset costs for for our  
19          families.

20                        But we also have to address the home  
21          care workers. And you had talked about  
22          collaborating with other agencies in other  
23          ways. I would ask that you collaborate --  
24          when we're looking at home care workers, we

1           need to develop this workforce, recruit,  
2           retain and train workers. But it has to be  
3           the medical healthcare, and it has to be the  
4           healthcare workers that help our aging.

5                         So what strategies would you use so  
6           that we move forward in a unified way to  
7           address all home care workers so that we're  
8           building that workforce?

9                         ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah, I mean  
10          it's a huge issue. Obviously it is for  
11          Medicaid, and you heard about that yesterday.  
12          And, you know, for our in-home program, it is  
13          for us as well. It's the fastest-growing-  
14          need labor pool of every sector in the  
15          country. You know, people are living longer.  
16          That's a great thing. I mean, if you're born  
17          today, you have a 50 percent chance of living  
18          to a hundred. I'm not sure if we're supposed  
19          to, but we are. Right?

20                        So, you know, this -- there's a couple  
21          of different things. So the Governor, you  
22          know, recognizes the workforce issue, not  
23          only in this but in other areas. And there  
24          are internal workgroups having some of those

1           conversations to see how we can address them.

2                     I think we had a couple of pretty  
3           innovative models that came out of the --  
4           some of the areas that had a shortage with  
5           the \$15 million investment. One is one of  
6           our counties -- and it was an old practice,  
7           years ago, that counties could hire their  
8           workers directly, and many of them got out of  
9           the business because the admin costs were  
10          pretty expensive. But one of our counties  
11          got back into the business. So you can  
12          assure that, you know, the workers are there  
13          to meet the need.

14                    We had one county that had a  
15          commitment and an arrangement with a local  
16          home care agency to have seven aides,  
17          full-time, assigned to the Office for the  
18          Aging, which is really great.

19                    What I really like about the model is  
20          that the aides come to the office every  
21          morning and are part of a care team. Their  
22          experience of what they see in the house with  
23          the customer, maybe the family, some other  
24          things, are part of a larger conversation.

1 Many of them don't get that kind of support.  
2 They also were able to lease vehicles to make  
3 sure that they had rides to get to where they  
4 needed to be.

5 I like to try to look at this issue a  
6 little bit more broadly. So there's some  
7 things that we're working on currently with  
8 the Home Care Association and some of our own  
9 other partners to try to look at this  
10 workforce issue out of the economic  
11 development lens.

12 And so what I mean by that, there's  
13 three areas that I think we could look at.  
14 Is there a healthcare cost either to the  
15 individual or to Medicaid or Medicare if an  
16 individual either can't have their case  
17 opened because there aren't the aides, or  
18 they're getting less hours than they were  
19 authorized because of an aide shortage. And  
20 what's the implication of that? Emergency  
21 room visits, hospitalizations or, most  
22 importantly, the inability to discharge  
23 safely back to the community and therefore --

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: If you could

1 quickly finish.

2 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah, sorry  
3 about that.

4 -- number one. Number two is, you  
5 know, the wage impact on other benefits that  
6 individuals would receive by being paid a low  
7 wage, and is there an offset there.

8 And then finally, if you're receiving  
9 additional dollars, is it an immediate impact  
10 to the economy, to the tax base, local  
11 businesses -- does it support the schools,  
12 the tourism industry if you have more  
13 discretionary money in your pocket?

14 So if we kind of pull these things  
15 together, we might be able to have a  
16 different conversation about the value.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Thank you very  
18 much. Appreciate it.

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
20 Senate?

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And we have a  
22 second round for Aging chair Rachel May. I  
23 think our chairs are tag-teaming.

24 SENATOR MAY: We are tag teaming each

1 other, because I want to follow up on that  
2 and a question I asked earlier about money  
3 for economic development around the state.

4 So we've got a zero-sum or a  
5 negative-sum budget that we're dealing with.  
6 And I definitely hear a lot about why we're  
7 putting money into regional economic  
8 development to develop new businesses or new  
9 opportunities for employment when we've got  
10 already such needs for people to work in a  
11 field like home healthcare. And if the  
12 government would consider shifting some of  
13 that economic development money into areas  
14 where you could employ somebody tomorrow, if  
15 we had the money, if we were able to, you  
16 know, boost that with a salary to something  
17 where people would really want to do it.

18 So I'm wondering if that is -- if you  
19 work together in any way with the REDC or  
20 other economic development folks to just talk  
21 about this.

22 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Well, I think  
23 our role has been -- you know, given the  
24 leadership of, you know, our agency, the

1 Health Department, the Department of State in  
2 helping, you know, advance the age-friendly  
3 principles, et cetera, we've had a lot of  
4 opportunities to present to the REDCs across  
5 the state and really, again, talk about, you  
6 know, the economics of aging and the  
7 investment and trying to keep these resources  
8 in the community by supporting, you know, the  
9 types of things that need to be done to  
10 improve people's health.

11 So I know that the way that the REDCs  
12 work is, you know, within the regions you can  
13 submit ideas to be funded. And so certainly  
14 that's an option that I hope that folks are  
15 thinking about and proactively pursuing.

16 SENATOR MAY: Okay. Thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

18 So I believe that's all of the  
19 questions we have for you for today -- oh,  
20 I'm sorry. Senator Serino.

21 SENATOR SERINO: Thank you. Good  
22 afternoon, Commissioner Olsen.

23 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Hi, Senator,  
24 how are you?

1                   SENATOR SERINO: Good. Nice to see  
2                   you.

3                   And I just want to say Assemblyman  
4                   Bronson asked quite a few of my questions,  
5                   and I echo his sentiments. And with the CSE,  
6                   the \$15 million is great, but I really do  
7                   feel that we need more money. I agree with  
8                   the -- having a seat at the table for MRT,  
9                   and I hope that we can all work together on  
10                  that.

11                  Assemblymember Wright, the points on  
12                  elder abuse, I echo those as well. The care  
13                  tax credit, that should be a number-one  
14                  priority. It will drive down costs in other  
15                  areas.

16                  The ombudsman, a lot of people, unless  
17                  you've had somebody in long-term care, you  
18                  probably don't even know who they are or what  
19                  they do, but they're the watchdog and the  
20                  patient advocate for these individuals, and  
21                  they're so critically important.

22                  So my question, Commissioner, is do  
23                  you think that we have enough ombudsmen  
24                  operating in the state now?

1                   ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: I think that  
2 we could definitely -- part of our strategy  
3 is to increase the number of highly trained  
4 volunteers to make sure that we have  
5 100 percent service coverage.

6                   SENATOR SERINO: And then do you have  
7 ideas for incentivizing volunteers? And do  
8 you think that you're going to need  
9 additional funding to do it?

10                  ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah, so as I  
11 mentioned earlier, we've been pilot-testing  
12 the \$75 a month stipend to some of the  
13 volunteers that have really shown that  
14 there's been a positive impact on recruitment  
15 and retention and, more importantly, that  
16 those higher-functioning volunteers are doing  
17 a lot more work because of that stipend. So  
18 there's been a real positive cause and  
19 effect, which we were hoping. And that's  
20 what we wanted to test.

21                  So I think that's something that we're  
22 looking at internally whether we can, you  
23 know, not only continue but expand -- and  
24 also want to do same thing with the HICAP

1 program for exactly the same reasons. A  
2 very, very labor intensive-type program with  
3 a lot of specialty. And, you know, you need  
4 a special person to do that type of work.  
5 And so it's amazing that we have almost 900  
6 volunteers in those two programs that, again,  
7 are state-certified, go through an amazing  
8 training. But it's intense, as you know,  
9 and -- so I'm proud that we can -- that we  
10 can suggest that, yeah.

11 SENATOR SERINO: And then my other  
12 thought is with retirees. You know, so often  
13 people live longer, they're retiring and  
14 they're looking for things to do to give back  
15 to the communities. Maybe if we did like a  
16 tax credit for them, that would incentivize  
17 them to do this as well, like we do with the  
18 volunteer first responders.

19 My other question is, because it's one  
20 of the biggest issues that I hear about, is  
21 the affordable housing in our area. And I  
22 see in the proposal there's a reappropriation  
23 of over \$100 million for rental affordable  
24 housing for low-income seniors. What

1 coordination of efforts do you have underway  
2 with HCR to ensure that housing needs for  
3 seniors are going to be met?

4 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah, I think  
5 the -- you know, the Governor's housing plan  
6 specifically tied funding to units. So I  
7 know that there was 8,659 units of housing so  
8 far that have either been built or  
9 refurbished specifically for older adults,  
10 and more as part of that plan.

11 I think again, you know, part of the  
12 effort that we're undertaking to have a  
13 top-down approach on age-friendly in the  
14 eight domains, of which housing is one of  
15 them, in a bottom-up approach is so that --  
16 you know, we've got 27 municipalities now  
17 that are officially certified and AARP/World  
18 Health Organization age-friendly  
19 communities -- are a grant that we just  
20 completed that we're going to contract with  
21 now, will bring another 13 communities on  
22 board.

23 And why that's important is because  
24 this is a real local effort, which again,

1 housing and transportation and social  
2 inclusion, all those domains that you're very  
3 well aware of, these will be part of and have  
4 to be addressed as the municipalities go  
5 through this local planning process. And so  
6 a lot of these decisions in terms of, you  
7 know, what's needed, how many housing units  
8 do you have, what are the ability to do X, Y,  
9 Z, will come as part of that planning  
10 process.

11 And so I think you can see from like  
12 where I come from that the opportunity here  
13 to kind of push this -- the idea that these  
14 are the types of things we all need to be  
15 thinking of -- you know, workforce -- aging  
16 is not just out here. I mean, there's every  
17 system that, in state government and  
18 community, has to deal with older adults,  
19 period. And so, you know, part of the  
20 planning and implementation process to become  
21 age-friendly, that these housing options are  
22 going to have to be discussed and planned for  
23 and built at the local level.

24 SENATOR SERINO: And that's one way of

1           keeping our seniors here. Because we keep  
2           talking about the outmigration of people  
3           here, and we talk a lot about the young  
4           population, but we're really not doing  
5           anything to keep the older population here.

6                        So -- and that was my question, too.  
7           Do you have any other ideas for keeping the  
8           seniors here? Like how do we keep them  
9           here -- and I guess we'll have to continue  
10          this conversation, because I see my clock is  
11          running out. But I think it's just something  
12          to keep in the back of our minds that we do,  
13          because once our older generation goes, the  
14          younger tend to follow too, so.

15                      ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: Yeah. And,  
16          you know, just quickly, because I would love  
17          to talk to you more about this -- I mean,  
18          that has been our strategy. We're aware of  
19          that.

20                      We're also aware that the reason  
21          people don't always move is not just because  
22          of taxes and the high cost of living. There  
23          are plenty of reports and studies about the  
24          entire nation, using 85 different indicators

1 on what matters to you in your community.  
2 And what's very interesting is that if you  
3 survey older adults in terms of what they  
4 want, how do they want their community  
5 designed, it's exactly the same types of  
6 things that millennials want. They want to  
7 not have to rely on the automobile. They  
8 want to go someplace where they can sit with  
9 a friend. They want to socialize. They want  
10 to have access to trails and parks.

11 So all these things that I keep seeing  
12 in the Governor's budget proposals over the  
13 years, with the Empire Trail and parks and  
14 things, all fit into this -- you know, that's  
15 what's going to help us attract people to  
16 come here, because this really is a great  
17 state. I'm a lifelong New Yorker. But  
18 you're not going to get these types of  
19 environments elsewhere. And recognizing that  
20 we're competing with other states.

21 So, you know, as we talk to counties  
22 and municipalities about why to engage into  
23 these types of things -- because we are  
24 competing with others who really get it. And

1 I think we are starting to get it here. And  
2 that's why the Governor's leadership has  
3 really put this on steroids through Executive  
4 Order 190.

5 SENATOR SERINO: Great. I look  
6 forward to talking to you about that.

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. So  
8 that completes the questions from the  
9 members. Thank you for being here.

10 Next we will hear from Colonel Jim  
11 McDonough, director of the New York State  
12 Division of Veterans Services.

13 ACTING DIRECTOR OLSEN: I am going to  
14 just say, before I get out of here, I just  
15 appreciate all of your support, both in the  
16 Senate and the Assembly. It's been long term  
17 for our agency and your local offices for the  
18 aging. It's meaningful, and it matters. So  
19 thank you.

20 (Off the record.)

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Welcome here  
22 for the first time.

23 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yes, thank  
24 you very much for the invitation. So I

1 wanted to say that right up front.

2 So good afternoon, Chairs Krueger and  
3 Weinstein, and distinguished members of the  
4 Senate and Assembly.

5 My name is Colonel (Retired, U.S.  
6 Army) Jim McDonough, and I am the director of  
7 the New York State Division of Veterans'  
8 Services, or NYSDVS. Thank you for the  
9 opportunity to discuss Governor Cuomo's  
10 2020-2021 Executive Budget as it relates to  
11 the New York State Division of Veterans'  
12 Services. The core mission of the Division  
13 of Veterans' Services is to connect veterans,  
14 members of the armed forces and their  
15 families and dependents to various economic,  
16 medical and societal benefits, programs and  
17 services available to them due to their  
18 active-duty military service.

19 As an agency entering its 75th year of  
20 service to New York State, DVS's professional  
21 benefits advising staff prepares, presents,  
22 and processes applications for United States  
23 Department of Veterans Affairs -- VA --  
24 compensation and pension awards, education

1 benefits, burial benefits, vocational  
2 rehabilitation training, health care, nursing  
3 home care, real property tax exemptions, and  
4 other resources, services, and care on behalf  
5 of individual veterans and their families.

6 Under Governor Cuomo's leadership,  
7 New York remains a state where veterans and  
8 their families are proud to call home. And  
9 with the additional support of the State  
10 Legislature, we can continue to provide the  
11 best possible care and assistance for those  
12 who have served our country.

13 The agency's economic impact,  
14 delivered directly to New York's veteran  
15 families, yields incredible results annually,  
16 with over \$750 million in tax-free federal  
17 dollars for thousands of New York's veterans  
18 filtering into every community across  
19 New York State, this alone due to our  
20 agency's actions. These efforts have a real  
21 and measurable impact on improving the  
22 quality of life and access to care for  
23 veterans and their families.

24 This year, under Governor Cuomo's

1 leadership, the division strengthened its  
2 relationship with our partners in county  
3 veterans' service agencies through  
4 improvements being made in training,  
5 technology, and tools by which to best serve  
6 our mutual clients. Importantly, the  
7 division is overhauling its training programs  
8 to be more inclusive of our partners in  
9 county veterans' service agencies by offering  
10 them access to all training and education  
11 endeavors. Our strategy is simple: what we  
12 provide for our own team, we will ultimately  
13 provide to the counties, and at no additional  
14 expense to them.

15 It is with this same commitment to  
16 bettering the lives of New York's veterans  
17 and their families that this year's  
18 Executive Budget includes initiatives which  
19 will additionally address their mental  
20 health, housing and educational needs. The  
21 Governor's budget also seeks to establish  
22 further dignified burial options for  
23 New York's veteran families by establishing  
24 the state's first veterans' cemetery.

1           The proposed budget also supports  
2           investments of \$5 million to expand permanent  
3           supportive housing for homeless veterans  
4           through the state's Homeless Housing and  
5           Assistance Program, HHAP, and \$1 million to  
6           partner with organizations to help veterans,  
7           law enforcement, and first responders with  
8           suicide prevention efforts.

9           We are grateful for the continued  
10          support of Governor Cuomo and his  
11          administration in further investing in the  
12          needs of our veteran families. We are  
13          committed to working with our partners at  
14          New York State Homes and Community Renewal  
15          and the New York State Office of Temporary  
16          and Disability Assistance to support housing  
17          New York's veterans and to apply these  
18          additional resources best. We will also  
19          utilize other funds such as the Homeless  
20          Veterans Assistance Fund to address  
21          additional societal needs of New York's  
22          veteran families.

23          As the state agency of record charged  
24          with assisting them, we maintain a very

1           robust and outwardly facing stance, with  
2           easy-to-access offices in every major VA  
3           Medical Center in New York State, coupled  
4           with an increasing presence in VA Vet Centers  
5           and community-based outpatient clinics, as  
6           well as community settings.

7                         Combined, our agency's efforts will  
8           continue to provide the best quality service  
9           to New York's veterans, service members and  
10          their families for the next 75 years and  
11          beyond.

12                        Thank you for the opportunity to  
13          present the Governor's Executive Budget to  
14          the committee. And on behalf of New York's  
15          veteran families, thank you for your  
16          continued support of the agency's mission. I  
17          look forward to answering any questions you  
18          may have. Thank you.

19                        CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for  
20          being here.

21                        And we'll go to our Assembly chair of  
22          the Veterans' Committee, Didi Barrett.

23                        ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: Thank you.  
24          Thank you for being here --

1 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yes, ma'am.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: -- and thank  
3 you, Madams Chair.

4 I appreciate the commitment in the  
5 budget and your focus on -- well, let me say  
6 at the offset we're really happy to have you  
7 here, and we're happy to have a head of the  
8 division. It makes a difference in this  
9 budget process, but it obviously has been  
10 making a difference all along, since you  
11 were -- came into this position last spring,  
12 was that --

13 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: April. April  
14 of last year. My second time, as you know.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: Yes, your  
16 second round. But the first as the director,  
17 right?

18 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: I was the  
19 same position.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: Oh, the same  
21 position?

22 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: I'm on my  
23 second spin, yes.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: And the second

1 time's a charm?

2 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: It is,  
3 absolutely.

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: Good.

5 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: It's an  
6 honor, actually, so.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: I appreciate  
8 the commitment and the work on housing. But  
9 as you know, many times especially veterans,  
10 but others, are homeless because of other  
11 issues. And so I'm very concerned -- and I  
12 know this is not in our budget, but what are  
13 you doing to ensure that the Governor puts in  
14 Dwyer funding, which has been one of the most  
15 effective programs in the peer-to-peer --  
16 with the peer-to-peer model. It's not in  
17 every county yet. It should be in every  
18 county. It should be fully funded. And it  
19 should be funded from the Executive, not just  
20 from the Legislature.

21 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Sure. Let me  
22 address the Dwyer program. Although my  
23 colleagues in the Office of Mental Health run  
24 the program, we are more or less integrated

1 behind the scenes on the delivery of those  
2 resources to the 26 of 62 counties to which  
3 they now flow.

4           It's a good program. I think it needs  
5 to be looked at in terms of a bit of  
6 standardization and quality in terms of what  
7 are the deliverables behind the program. I  
8 think we need to look at things like impact,  
9 measurable outcomes desired to the program.

10           And I think the program could use a  
11 bit of a refresh around what we put in for  
12 all. There are very good programs in those  
13 26 counties. They differ as much as the  
14 counties differ.

15           ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: So would it  
16 help if it were under your division as  
17 opposed to the OMH?

18           DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: You know,  
19 I -- it matters not to me where it's  
20 ultimately placed, but what impact can I have  
21 on the program from whether I sit at the  
22 center of it or adjacent to it. I'm actively  
23 involved with my partners in OMH in shaping  
24 the future of that.

1                   I can tell that you that as I approve  
2                   the monies to be sent forward, because it  
3                   does come through the division out of OMH, I  
4                   look hard at what are the activities, the  
5                   scope of work, and what's the impact that  
6                   we're seeking through those grants.

7                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: Okay. Thank  
8                   you. I mean, it is one -- the one issue that  
9                   I hear from all my colleagues over and over,  
10                  is they know when it's working in their --

11                  DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: I hear the  
12                  same. And they are hungry for a bit of  
13                  reinforcement around quality and expectations  
14                  and training that goes into the program.

15                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: And  
16                  consistency. I mean --

17                  DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yup.

18                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: -- I think,  
19                  you know, and there are counties that have,  
20                  you know, no access to it, so that makes a  
21                  difference.

22                  DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Absolutely.

23                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: I was very  
24                  happy last year to sponsor the legislation

1           which became law that allows veterans with  
2           bad papers, as you know, to apply for New  
3           York State veterans benefits that they  
4           otherwise would not have been eligible for.

5                     What, if any, are the resources that  
6           you've put into this year's budget to  
7           implement that measure?

8                     DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Sure. And  
9           thank you for the leadership on the  
10          Restoration of Honor Act, both you and  
11          Senator Brooks, and we really appreciate  
12          that.

13                    So the Restoration of Honor Act,  
14          signed into law by the Governor on Veterans  
15          Day of last year, is a very new programmatic  
16          effort within the Division of Veterans'  
17          Services. And just as you indicate, this is  
18          really a first-of-its-kind in the nation  
19          opportunity for those individual service  
20          members who have been uncharacteristically  
21          discharged from their military service due to  
22          five conditions or issues -- posttraumatic  
23          stress disorder, traumatic brain injury,  
24          military sexual trauma, and sexual

1 orientation or gender identity.

2 And so if a service member has been  
3 uncharacteristically discharged with paper  
4 other than honorable, we are the first state  
5 in the nation that's going to say to those  
6 individuals, there's a process for you by  
7 which to apply for and receive state veterans  
8 benefits. And while we're not influencing  
9 the federal benefits delivery system yet,  
10 we're recognizing that as a progressive state  
11 in this country, we have an additional  
12 responsibility for New York's veteran  
13 families to turn on those benefits as we can.

14 We have baked into the backroom of the  
15 Division of Veterans' Services a complete  
16 business process for handling those  
17 applications. The infrastructure is in  
18 place. We have an education campaign about  
19 to get underway with other state agencies and  
20 state leaders. Because as you know, the  
21 division doesn't control every state veterans  
22 benefit -- Parks and Rec, fishing licenses  
23 those things, DMV. We've got a big education  
24 campaign ahead of us to get the state

1 agencies on board with recognizing that as we  
2 approve these benefits, their responsibility  
3 is to turn them on.

4 I've spent a lot of time on this,  
5 Didi. The last three to four months of my  
6 time have been focused inwardly on getting  
7 the Restoration of Honor Act's elements in  
8 place so that we can begin processing those  
9 applications right away. And we're about  
10 30 days away from putting that in place.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: So you think  
12 there will be specific funding in the 30-day  
13 amendments, or is that the --

14 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: No. I think  
15 what I'm referring to is that we have the  
16 business processes in place, the eligibility  
17 determinations, the infrastructure to process  
18 those applications.

19 My understanding of the fiscal impact  
20 of the turning on of state veterans benefits  
21 is negligible, given where we are with cash  
22 ceilings and appropriations in these various  
23 programs.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: So with your

1 current staff and with the current network --

2 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yes.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: --- you feel  
4 it's just a matter of --

5 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: I do.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: -- of  
7 prioritizing and getting this information  
8 out --

9 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: I do.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: -- at no cost?

11 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: We oversee a  
12 lot of programs, this being one, and we're  
13 fully capable of addressing this within the  
14 division.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: What about for  
16 the appellate unit to upgrade? Is there  
17 funding implications of that?

18 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yeah, I --  
19 within the division's overall budget I've  
20 carved out funding for our brand new  
21 appellate unit, as you referred to it. It's,  
22 again, the first time the division has had  
23 such infrastructure. I'm actually  
24 reinforcing it in the next 90 days.

1           At this point it's more about shifting  
2           assets to their first best use and looking at  
3           efficiency before I pop up and say I need  
4           more. I am making more right now with what I  
5           have, as my first course of action, because I  
6           actually believe that's what I'm paid to do.  
7           And then I think the appropriate response,  
8           given additional requirements, will be --  
9           will be met, so.

10           ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: Okay, thank  
11           you. And then on the issue of the  
12           Article VII language, I mean, as you know  
13           we've got a couple of colleagues who are  
14           interested in having state military  
15           cemeteries in their districts. The committee  
16           that I guess you're chairing for site  
17           selection and the development process -- is  
18           there such a committee?

19           DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yes.

20           ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: Is there a  
21           process in place? Can you tell us about  
22           that.

23           DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Sure.

24           ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: Because I

1 think there's a lot of concern to have -- you  
2 know, in what you've been asking for, that,  
3 you know, we might be abdicating some of our  
4 responsibility for some of that.

5 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yeah. No, I  
6 will not let that happen. As you know, my  
7 relationship with you and others is one where  
8 we are partners in this endeavor, so.

9 The current statute, the amendment  
10 being introduced is being introduced to get  
11 us up and running relative to the times. I  
12 think if you look at 15 years ago when the  
13 statute was first drafted, it called for a  
14 study. We have to put a study together, even  
15 in the revised language being introduced into  
16 the study, for siting and management and  
17 oversight of the cemetery. So for me it's a  
18 process whereby I will engage with you  
19 throughout. Just because I'm putting the  
20 committee structure together doesn't mean  
21 that I'm going to not live up to my  
22 responsibilities to be your partner in  
23 government, to involve you in every step of  
24 the way.

1                   So the committee is being formed.  
2                   There will be an announcement forthcoming  
3                   about its membership. Key to the committee's  
4                   responsibilities will be to engage with the  
5                   Legislature on all fronts to make sure that  
6                   that is not the case. And you have my  
7                   personal commitment to making sure that is  
8                   not such.

9                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: And you will  
10                  be open to hearing the -- you know, the other  
11                  possible locations --

12                 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Absolutely.

13                 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: -- as well as,  
14                  obviously, the questions about long-term  
15                  funding. And, you know, the fact that we  
16                  can't fund a lot of programs that we want to  
17                  fund, but we're putting money into this.

18                 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Every step of  
19                  the way. I mean, what we have to do as a  
20                  committee is we have to come together on the  
21                  siting, first and foremost. And then we have  
22                  to put together the management, the  
23                  resources, the infrastructure required to  
24                  support state veterans cemetery operations.

1 I've been working with the Division of  
2 Budget and my partners in the executive  
3 branch with cost models relative to the other  
4 48 states that operate state veterans  
5 cemeteries. We're dialed into the National  
6 Cemetery Administration and its requirements.  
7 And I'm pleased that we're where we are in  
8 terms of the planning to kind of establish  
9 the state's first veterans cemetery.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: Okay,  
11 thank you.

12 And just as a final point, I've been  
13 hearing from people -- and we did at the last  
14 hearing we did on the nursing homes that are  
15 our state nursing homes --

16 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: The state  
17 veterans homes?

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: Yeah, the  
19 veterans homes, sorry. Can you talk a little  
20 bit about how -- the funding and, you know,  
21 the viability of those?

22 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yeah. Again,  
23 I don't run them or own them, but my partners  
24 in the Department of Health and SUNY actually

1           oversee our five state veterans homes -- four  
2           in the Health Department, one in SUNY down at  
3           Stony Brook.

4                     I think I've been in all of them. And  
5           while they're wonderful facilities, every  
6           program we're part of has room for  
7           improvement. The most challenging of the  
8           homes is Oxford in terms of its staffing  
9           models, and I think we need to look at that  
10          carefully as to what incentives could be put  
11          in place to kind of incentivize clinicians,  
12          providers to kind of work in that rural neck  
13          of the woods in our state.

14                    If you go to Long Island, it's -- the  
15          census is always there, St. Albans, Montrose.  
16          I've been in a lot of nursing homes lately  
17          and a lot of senior facilities. And the  
18          state veterans homes, while they have their  
19          share of challenges with staffing, are some  
20          of the best-run facilities that I've been in  
21          in the past three years of my life, my mom  
22          having passed away in one of them, so.

23                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: Okay. Thank  
24          you.

1 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

2 Senate?

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

4 Senator John Brooks, our chair of the

5 Veterans Committee.

6 SENATOR BROOKS: Thank you, Madam

7 Chairman. {Mic off; inaudible.}

8 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: I think your

9 mic, sir --

10 (Off the record.)

11 SENATOR BROOKS: Okay, good. Sorry.

12 Once again, Colonel, it's good to see you.

13 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: You too, sir.

14 SENATOR BROOKS: Thank you for your

15 service, by the way.

16 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: It was an

17 honor.

18 SENATOR BROOKS: You know, I think our

19 veterans in this state are probably one of

20 the key assets we have -- men and women who

21 have served this country with -- many with

22 distinction, served in different sets of

23 circumstances. And unfortunately, many of

24 them are facing issues, and as you and I well

1 know.

2 We have a suicide problem. We had a  
3 group in the other day, the female side of  
4 that problem seems to be getting worse.  
5 We've got many people, homeless people  
6 looking for food, people with mental health  
7 issues. A lot -- a lot of problems there.

8 You know, I think we've done some good  
9 things. This particular budget, I'm very --  
10 very disappointed in one -- one particular  
11 situation. You know, the budget -- and you  
12 and I have talked about the cemetery a number  
13 of times. It's in the budget, and that's  
14 good. But the legislative incentives -- or  
15 initiatives, rather, that we put in the  
16 budget last year, all of them were cut out.

17 That's programs for the living.  
18 That's programs that respect the service that  
19 these men and women gave to this country. It  
20 addresses the needs and problems that they're  
21 dealing with today. We know, for example,  
22 with many of the Vietnam vets, the Agent  
23 Orange problems are only becoming worse. Yet  
24 it's all cut from the budget. And these men

1 and women who serve this country, some in  
2 battle, are now, over the next couple of  
3 weeks, going to come back here and beg us to  
4 put that money back in the budget.

5 They are owed more respect from us as  
6 a state than to do that. Those programs  
7 work. Those programs should be expanded.  
8 The Dwyer program right now in Washington is  
9 being considered to be taken national. We  
10 shouldn't be in a situation of in a way  
11 disrespecting our veterans by telling them:  
12 You've got to come ask for that again.

13 We should be in a situation today  
14 where you're in a position to announce that  
15 because of the various programs, we've housed  
16 5,000 more veterans, or the suicide rate has  
17 dropped by 30 percent. So I find the history  
18 of the way we've handled this budget in some  
19 ways very disappointing. And I don't direct  
20 that at you at all. And I compliment you for  
21 the approach you've been taking, the  
22 discussions that we've had. But I think we  
23 have to do better.

24 And I think we have to recognize that

1           these folks have some serious challenges.  
2           And it's unfortunate, you can go in many of  
3           the communities in this state and see  
4           somebody with a sign that says "Veteran,  
5           homeless." We can do better than that.

6                         So I appreciate what you're trying to  
7           do. I appreciate the initiatives you're  
8           taking. I think the cemetery program is a  
9           good program. But we have to be honest with  
10          ourselves. We have to be honest with  
11          ourselves that many veterans are facing  
12          significant, significant challenges. And we  
13          should be proactive and recognize those  
14          programs, put the money in the budget at the  
15          front end, recognize what we're going to do,  
16          be in a position to report the information  
17          back.

18                        You know, we've talked a lot about  
19          communication with the veterans and programs  
20          to make them aware of, and assistance. And  
21          it's all good stuff. And I want to work with  
22          you to make sure we accomplish that. But  
23          when I saw the budget once again and we saw,  
24          what, \$106 million cut from the budget from

1 programs we worked hard to put in place,  
2 programs that do work, programs that veterans  
3 groups are counting on -- and now we're going  
4 to go through the process of trying to fund  
5 them again. And last year we know we missed  
6 some of them, and those funds weren't there.

7 So, you know, you're showing great  
8 leadership in this, and we've had many a good  
9 conversation. But this budget isn't the way  
10 it should have been done. This budget  
11 shouldn't say to veterans, come ask us again  
12 for what not only you deserve, but we should  
13 be proud to give them and talk about how  
14 we're enhancing some programs.

15 So I don't really have a question. I  
16 mean, we've talked about pretty much  
17 everything under the sun --

18 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yeah, may I  
19 address a couple of your points?

20 SENATOR BROOKS: But -- but I just --  
21 I think we could do this better. And our  
22 veterans deserve better.

23 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: So you're  
24 never going to hear me say I can't do

1 something better, because I know that's part  
2 of life every day. So that's point number  
3 one.

4 The second point I'd like to make is  
5 that when we talk about our veteran  
6 population, the tendency is to think of these  
7 individual baskets of problems. The truth is  
8 there's a lot of co-occurrence that  
9 transcends veterans' issues. Housing is  
10 related to legal, is related to family, is  
11 related to financing.

12 So the best thinking in the world will  
13 tell you that at this point in life -- and  
14 I've been part of it for the last 15 years  
15 since retiring -- is that there's a lot of  
16 capacity out there that just remains, you  
17 know, unnavigable. And the greatest effort  
18 has got to be put forth in breaking down the  
19 silos where there is rich capacity to address  
20 human needs. That's point one.

21 Point two is that for every veteran  
22 who has a problem, there's five to eight  
23 veterans who are functioning highly as  
24 wonderful assets in our communities, setting

1 examples for others to kind of live their  
2 lives by. So I know we tend to think of  
3 those with problems. Just flipping that  
4 narrative slightly to recognize that these  
5 problems are real, they're overlapping, they  
6 co-occur -- but all around these troubled  
7 souls are in fact people trying to help them,  
8 and they're very good veterans of our armed  
9 force.

10 With respect to the budget, I want to  
11 make this very clear, that the Governor's  
12 commitment, based upon inputs from those of  
13 us on the Executive side of the coin, reflect  
14 what we believe are some of the greatest  
15 priorities, you know, that need to be  
16 addressed for our veteran population.  
17 Housing, a \$5 million additional investment  
18 in tackling the homeless problem. That's a  
19 large investment given where the fiscal  
20 realities of the State of New York are right  
21 now. A new million-dollar initiative to  
22 address suicidality amongst law enforcement,  
23 first responders and our veterans.

24 So the things you talk about, we're

1 listening. We're doing more with these new  
2 initiatives in the next 12 months than have  
3 been done in the last three years. And while  
4 I recognize my responsibility is to work with  
5 you to kind of right whatever wrong I can --  
6 you have my commitment to doing so. Both you  
7 and Assemblywoman Barrett know how closely I  
8 want to work with you.

9 So I'm one of them, is the last thing  
10 I'll say. I am a veteran myself. This is  
11 personal and professional. And I go to work  
12 every day trying to meet the expectations of  
13 those I am charged with serving. Some days  
14 we do it better than others, but every day we  
15 put forth a good-faith effort across the  
16 agency, with our partners in county  
17 government and in the federal government, to  
18 make a dent in the problem, so -- and you  
19 have my ongoing commitment to do so.

20 SENATOR BROOKS: Yeah. No, I -- and I  
21 do think we have opportunities.

22 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yeah, we do.

23 SENATOR BROOKS: Certainly as we look  
24 over the program in Stony Brook, the nursing

1 home and the day care center, we should try  
2 to expand that where we can.

3 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Absolutely.

4 SENATOR BROOKS: I think there's a lot  
5 of opportunities. I just -- I just am  
6 upset --

7 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: I get it,  
8 sir.

9 SENATOR BROOKS: -- like I said, that  
10 people are going to have to come to ask for  
11 things that we know work. We should have  
12 shown the respect of putting them in the  
13 budget.

14 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: I think in  
15 this budget we are doing some new things that  
16 weren't there a year ago, and we will  
17 continue to press for innovative program  
18 delivery and capacity to address the needs of  
19 the people I served with, so.

20 SENATOR BROOKS: Thank you.

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman  
23 Walczyk.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Director

1 McDonough, sir, first, thank you for your  
2 20 years -- 26 years of service. And we're  
3 certainly very fortunate to have you continue  
4 to serve in this capacity, so --

5 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Thank you.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: -- thanks for  
7 being here.

8 I have the distinct honor of  
9 representing what I call the front yard of  
10 America. It's northern Jefferson and  
11 St. Lawrence Counties. I have a 120-mile  
12 border with Canada, and Fort Drum is in my  
13 backyard. So we have the fastest-growing  
14 veteran population in New York State. And as  
15 such, veterans services is near and dear to  
16 my heart and important to the representation  
17 that I do in this job.

18 You as a young officer I'm sure were  
19 told to salute and execute at times --

20 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: {Chuckling.}

21 ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: -- and there's  
22 no real -- in the same way that we do our  
23 business here in the Legislature, there's no  
24 opportunity, many cases in the Army, for

1           compromise or negotiation. People die if  
2           you're taking that time, right? So you  
3           salute and execute.

4                     And something else -- and I also  
5           served, but you've talked a few times today  
6           already about doing more with less. And I  
7           can think of these training opportunities in  
8           the past where, all right, well, we didn't  
9           get all the equipment we want, but we'll  
10          figure it out, because that's impressed on  
11          you as a leader.

12                    But I think when it comes to taking  
13          care of our veterans, doing more with less is  
14          not an acceptable thing. When you talk about  
15          the great work that the Private Joseph P.  
16          Dwyer Program is doing, if you look at the  
17          Veterans Outreach Center in Watertown,  
18          New York, I mean, I've seen it firsthand how  
19          important this funding is. When you talk  
20          about Helmets to Hard hats and, you know, the  
21          work that they're doing with our local IBEW  
22          to transition soldiers out of the military  
23          and hand them right into the workforce -- and  
24          we're talking about retaining some of the

1 best leaders and young minds and great  
2 workforce in New York State. I mean, that's  
3 an investment I can't compromise on.

4 When you look at the great work that  
5 Clear Path for Veterans is doing in Central  
6 New York, the phenomenal things that they're  
7 doing -- service animals to yoga, you know,  
8 you can enter a yoga program there, Project  
9 Healing Waters. Even SAGE, I was surprised  
10 to see the Governor -- which is, you know,  
11 addressed as a group that he usually says  
12 he's very friendly to and can't be ignored,  
13 certainly in our veteran community.

14 You were an OCS graduate, right?

15 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Correct.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Me as well. And  
17 I don't know if you remember the call and  
18 response in OCS, but at Officer Candidate  
19 School, when you salute, one individual says  
20 "Standards." And do you remember what the  
21 response is, sir?

22 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: "All the way"  
23 is what we said.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Well, that's

1 Airborne: "Airborne all the way."

2 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yeah, I was  
3 an Airborne soldier.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Yup. And  
5 Airborne's right behind the OCS School. But  
6 the response is "No compromise." And that's  
7 where I'm at on this --

8 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Understood.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: -- when it comes  
10 to zeroing out these important programs in  
11 this budget that the Governor's set forward.  
12 I don't think there's room for compromise  
13 here. I think they have to be restored. And  
14 I'd appreciate any comment that --

15 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yeah, sure.  
16 So let me take a swing at this.

17 So, first of all, I actually didn't  
18 say "do more with less," so let's be clear on  
19 what I did say. What I did say is my first  
20 course of business is to make sure that I'm  
21 making the best use of the resources I have.  
22 And I have found inefficiency. I have found  
23 malpositioned veterans' benefits advisors  
24 that I've moved. I have found the ability to

1 kind of squeeze where resources weren't being  
2 put to their first best use, and I have  
3 shifted those responsibilities.

4 So this is not a game of doing more  
5 with less. This is, first of all, a set of  
6 responsibilities that recognizes my  
7 responsibility is to run a good organization  
8 to the best of my ability, first, and then if  
9 that's not possible, to seek the additional  
10 resources to do so.

11 But I'll be honest with you, I found a  
12 lot of inefficiency. I found malpositioned  
13 resources. I've found people where the  
14 demand wasn't there. I've shifted them to  
15 where the marketplace demands more resources.

16 I was the state director who placed  
17 veterans' benefits advisors on Fort Drum,  
18 New York, to cooperate with the DOD, where I  
19 used to be assigned, to assist in the  
20 transition of people like me off that  
21 installation. The last seven years of my  
22 life I built the Onward to Opportunity  
23 program, the Career Skills program -- of  
24 which Helmets to Hard Hats is one -- which

1           does a great deal of work to ensure that  
2           today transitioning service members leave  
3           service with a job before they separate from  
4           service. So I couldn't agree with you more.

5                     But let's recognize I've been in the  
6           chair for nine months. My first  
7           responsibility is to make the first best use  
8           of my resources. When that's all said and  
9           done, I'm not afraid to seek the additional  
10          resources required to run this place best.  
11          And I think the Executive Budget reflects my  
12          voice that housing and suicide prevention is  
13          a big issue in this state, as it is in this  
14          country, and I'm going to do my best to kind  
15          of address those issues.

16                    So I'm not -- for those that know me,  
17          I don't compromise. I am relentless in my  
18          pursuit of right and what's good for people  
19          who serve their country, and I will continue  
20          to be so.

21                    ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Thank you, sir.

22                    DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yup.

23                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

24                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Savino.

1                   SENATOR SAVINO: Thank you, Senator  
2 Krueger.

3                   Commissioner, I just have one -- two  
4 questions, actually. One, on the veterans  
5 cemetery, I know there's going to be a lot of  
6 competition for where it should go. But  
7 there's long been an effort to bring one to  
8 Staten Island because of the difficulty and  
9 the distance that Staten Island residents  
10 have to go currently. So I'd just hope that  
11 that would be part of the discussion.

12                  DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: It is, yeah.  
13 So -- can I comment on that very quickly?

14                  SENATOR SAVINO: Sure, absolutely.

15                  DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: So the  
16 National Cemetery Administration is putting  
17 forth an effort to build a columbarium on the  
18 grounds of St. Albans. And so I think you'll  
19 see that come about. It's in the National  
20 Cemetery Administration's priorities. As you  
21 know, land is a premium. So this is an  
22 inside columbarium, kind of a first-of-its-  
23 kind set of plans. So I think when we get to  
24 down to Queens and areas like that, you'll

1 see some improvements right there.

2 SENATOR SAVINO: Hopefully so.

3 And then finally, three years ago on  
4 Veterans Day the Governor signed an amendment  
5 to the Compassionate Care Act, which is our  
6 medical marijuana statute in New York State,  
7 and he did it largely to add PTSD as a  
8 qualifying condition. That decision was  
9 driven largely by the efforts of the New York  
10 State Veterans Council and others recognizing  
11 the vast numbers of veterans who are  
12 suffering from PTSD.

13 So since that time do you have any  
14 sense of how many veterans have been able to  
15 avail themselves of it? And has there been  
16 any coordination with the VA?

17 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yeah. Yup.

18 SENATOR SAVINO: Because there was  
19 always a concern that they would use that  
20 against them.

21 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yeah, it's  
22 still a tricky issue because of the  
23 difference of opinion between the federal  
24 government and -- and certainly the state.



1 time. Suffice to say he became incredibly  
2 dependent on the medication. And when they  
3 added fentanyl patches to it, it was only a  
4 matter of time before he died. That's what  
5 happened.

6 So is there any coordination between  
7 the VA and the healthcare providers and even  
8 yourself in this state to say the amount of  
9 drugs they're giving people at one time is  
10 contributing to an early death for a lot of  
11 these veterans who are suffering from PTSD,  
12 suffering from chronic pain? Injuries that  
13 they may have sustained decades ago are still  
14 bedeviling them. I mean, what can we do to  
15 get a handle on this?

16 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: So first of  
17 all, I'm sorry for your loss. That's the  
18 first thing I will say.

19 SENATOR SAVINO: Thank you.

20 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: The second  
21 thing is I think you'd be surprised how  
22 involved I am in formularies at individual  
23 clinics across the state. I have a friend of  
24 mine who's a cardiac nurse in Plattsburgh,

1 New York, and she couldn't get a drug out of  
2 formulary for a veteran, a Vietnam veteran  
3 that she was caring for.

4 She called me and let me know the  
5 frustration he was having. I went right to  
6 the VA Medical Center director and explained  
7 the situation; he went right into the lab and  
8 reestablished the proper medication, the  
9 cardiac medication.

10 So we are involved in small ways and  
11 in big ways. You know, I'm of a generation  
12 where a lot of drugs were prescribed to my  
13 friends who served with me -- overmedication,  
14 as you'd say. That's kind of going by the  
15 wayside a little bit. The trend line is less  
16 so, because I think what we're realizing is  
17 that sadly, that doesn't solve a person's  
18 problems. So I think you're seeing the trend  
19 shift a little bit away from overmedication  
20 to other forms of therapy and clinical  
21 approaches. But certainly my population  
22 recognizes the danger of being prescribed too  
23 much in terms of the pain and suffering that  
24 comes from war, so.

1                   SENATOR SAVINO: Thank you. And  
2                   finally, there are some local initiatives  
3                   that are coming forward. In Brooklyn a local  
4                   veterans group is starting a mindful  
5                   meditation program. And I think those are  
6                   the types of things the VA and the State  
7                   Veterans could be very helpful in  
8                   establishing and, you know, coordinating with  
9                   veterans organizations.

10                  DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: I mean, you  
11                  mentioned Clear Path for Veterans and yoga.  
12                  We fund Clear Path for Veterans. We fund  
13                  SAGE Vets. So we're investing in these I  
14                  would say innovative approaches to dealing  
15                  with pain management, trauma and the impact  
16                  of war. And we're big believers in  
17                  whatever --

18                  SENATOR SAVINO: Whatever works.

19                  DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: -- works for  
20                  one person. I'm not a judge. If someone  
21                  tells me that these things work, I'm  
22                  generally going to take a hard look at it,  
23                  can we can develop the evidence around it,  
24                  and go from there, so.

1                   SENATOR SAVINO: Thank you.

2                   DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: You're  
3 welcome.

4                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

5                   We go to Assemblywoman Barrett for a  
6 second five minutes.

7                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: Thank you  
8 again for being here.

9                   And I just wanted to clarify a couple  
10 of points and then ask for one additional  
11 subject we haven't covered.

12                   We may in the enacted budget fund SAGE  
13 and Clear Path and Helmets to Hard Hats and a  
14 lot of other things, but it's never in the  
15 Executive Budget. And to my colleagues'  
16 points here, you know, it would be -- it's  
17 very hard to explain to constituents when you  
18 get back, you know, to the district, or  
19 veterans in general that, well, no, it's not  
20 in the Executive Budget, but we're -- it's a  
21 legislative add. What does that mean to --  
22 you know, to most people? Nothing.

23                   So I think that it's really  
24 important -- and I know that you've only been

1 here 10 months and it's -- you know, and  
2 you've done a tremendous amount, and I really  
3 appreciate particularly the outreach with the  
4 counties, because that has been a real  
5 bottleneck and a real source of waste --

6 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yes.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: -- and  
8 redundancy, so that's really important. But,  
9 you know, I think that it's important that  
10 this budget be a holistic statement of what  
11 matters not just to the Legislature but to  
12 the state. And I would love you to kind of  
13 look more seriously at that in the future.

14 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Absolutely.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: And the other  
16 issue that I -- and I'll let you answer both  
17 of them -- is that we really didn't talk at  
18 all about the special issues around women  
19 veterans. And I'm wondering if there's  
20 anything in the budget here or in your  
21 priority list that's addressing that.

22 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Sure, let me  
23 talk about that for a moment. And thank you  
24 for the question.

1                   So before I came over here this  
2 morning, I introduced to my own organization  
3 our new deputy director for diversity, equity  
4 and inclusion. Kind of an elevated title, if  
5 you will, beyond "women veterans  
6 coordinator," which by statute I'm supposed  
7 to have.

8                   My approach to this is to kind of  
9 integrate our efforts across all lines of  
10 activities that I'm responsible for. The  
11 idea of marginalized subsets of the veteran  
12 population is highly disturbing to me. The  
13 nature of becoming a veteran of the armed  
14 forces in this country has been plagued by  
15 membership and identity with one group versus  
16 another.

17                   And I -- I don't buy that. You served  
18 your country, you are in fact entitled to the  
19 fair treatment that I can deliver regardless  
20 of the circumstance. That even extends to  
21 those with bad paper. The subsets or the  
22 subdemographics don't concern me. What  
23 concerns me is elevating them up into this  
24 pattern of services, resources and care that

1 can be delivered to anyone in the least  
2 amount of time with the greatest amount of  
3 efficacy.

4 And so my approach, why I introduced  
5 this person this morning to my own team, is  
6 because the perspective is that we need a  
7 women veterans coordinator. Well, we need to  
8 deal with the issues that are sensitive to  
9 women in an inclusive way because they are  
10 also veterans.

11 So my approach is to peel back this  
12 with strategy and efforts that integrate our  
13 lines of activities, recognizing that our  
14 responsibility is to be inclusive, equitable  
15 and accommodating to all. And that's the  
16 approach that I will take in bringing these  
17 programs to life in the State of New York.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: Well, and  
19 specifically issues that often -- like  
20 childcare, you know, just need to be kind of  
21 taken out of the mix and addressed. So I  
22 hope, you know, that that's part of it too.

23 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Things like  
24 expanding our hours. There's several ways to

1 be accommodating to those who work, who are  
2 single parents, childcare.

3 You know, my colleague Mark Schroeder  
4 in DMV had to expand office hours and do  
5 things that traditionally government wouldn't  
6 think of doing with all the rules behind  
7 the -- we have to be accommodating. We have  
8 to be accessible. We have to be  
9 approachable.

10 The Governor has challenged every one  
11 of us with engaging better with our  
12 stakeholders and our constituencies. That  
13 was the message we received in the most  
14 recent cabinet meeting. That's me. You  
15 know, I want to get out in front of it as  
16 much as I can.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BARRETT: Great. Thank  
18 you. Thanks very much.

19 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yes, ma'am.

20 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Hi, I'm going to  
22 jump in probably just for one minute --

23 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yes, ma'am.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- because

1 Assemblyman Barrett just brought up an issue.  
2 So, you know, we're live-streaming, so that  
3 people are watching. And they're texting.  
4 So they said as of a few weeks from now,  
5 there will be no women counselors in your  
6 system in all of New York City. And I know  
7 what you said about wanting to make sure you  
8 have the broadest diversity in treating  
9 everybody equally. But there's got to be  
10 issues women veterans feel more comfortable  
11 talking to a woman counselor about.

12 So could you please double-check that  
13 for me, because this is --

14 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Oh, no, I  
15 have women veterans benefits advisors based  
16 in New York City and Long Island.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So I'm being told  
18 that that's not going to be true --

19 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: I run the  
20 place.

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- that there  
22 will be administrative staff left, but as of  
23 February there will be no -- because you  
24 closed one office and they have just

1 St. Albans?

2 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: No,  
3 St. Albans, we moved that benefits  
4 counselor -- we will, once her appointments  
5 free up, she's moving out to Hicksville in  
6 Nassau County. We will be backfilling her.  
7 So that's underway right now, ma'am.

8 So the young lady's name is Kristin,  
9 she's a good veterans benefits advisor.  
10 We're moving her to a Hicksville office  
11 because we have no presence there. Again, my  
12 resources are somewhat malpositioned. But I  
13 will backfill that office, so.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So how many  
15 counselors do you have in New York City?

16 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Ma'am, I have  
17 about 80 veterans benefits advisors, the  
18 majority of which are in and around New York  
19 City and the Lower Hudson Valley.

20 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So you don't know  
21 for specifically in the five boroughs, how  
22 many --

23 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: The five  
24 boroughs? I can get you that answer, ma'am,

1 so -- I will.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Because there's  
3 quite a few women veterans in New York City,  
4 I run into them all the time.

5 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yeah, my --  
6 my -- the person I just spoke of is based in  
7 Brooklyn. So the lion's share of my staff  
8 are located in or around New York City and  
9 Long Island.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. I  
11 look forward --

12 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yes, ma'am,  
13 I'll get you the information.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- to getting the  
15 follow-up information. Thank you.

16 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: But that is  
17 not true. We do have women veterans  
18 advisors.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

20 Okay, we'll keep going with the  
21 Senate. Senator Sue Serino.

22 SENATOR SERINO: Good afternoon,  
23 Commissioner. Thank you so much for being  
24 here today.

1                   DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Thank you.

2                   SENATOR SERINO: And I basically have  
3 more a couple of statements.

4                   I just wanted to say I agree  
5 wholeheartedly with Senator Brooks, I think  
6 we're sending the wrong message to our  
7 veterans. You know, they have to schlep up  
8 here to tell us what they want when we know  
9 what they need and want and what actually  
10 works. The Dwyer funding has been  
11 phenomenal, I know, in our district.

12                   And it goes through working with  
13 Mental Health America. When you think of all  
14 of the suicides and the increase -- I'm  
15 someone who lost a brother to suicide. He  
16 wasn't a veteran, but I understand the mental  
17 health issue of it, and that's key. And to  
18 not have this in every single county and to  
19 not have it in the Executive Budget is like a  
20 slap in the face to these guys and gals that  
21 fought for us.

22                   The other concern that I have too is I  
23 spoke to Commissioner Hein earlier -- very  
24 excited about the \$5 million for the homeless

1 veterans. But with the way it's written, if  
2 it's not -- if they're not getting the  
3 proposals in, that could be drawn back. And  
4 when you think about it, I think you said  
5 26 counties have the Dwyer money.

6 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: That's  
7 correct.

8 SENATOR SERINO: And I know our guys  
9 and gals have their finger on the pulse of  
10 what they need. They know the homeless  
11 veterans. So those other counties could be  
12 missing out and not -- you know, not be  
13 involved as much like to have this resource  
14 to be able to tell you guys what they need.

15 So I'm just really worried about that.  
16 I'd love to see that eliminated. I'd love to  
17 see your support on both of those counts.  
18 You seem like somebody -- you get it, you've  
19 been there --

20 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: I do, yeah.

21 SENATOR SERINO: -- you've got the  
22 heart for it, and now we just need to fight  
23 for it. So thank you.

24 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: You're

1 welcome. And both Senator Brooks and  
2 Assemblymember Barrett know my commitment to  
3 working with them and the veterans committees  
4 to kind of improve upon the service delivery.  
5 So thank you for that.

6 SENATOR SERINO: Great, thank you.  
7 Thank you, Commissioner.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. And  
9 to close, Senator Velmanette Montgomery.

10 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: {Mic off;  
11 inaudible.}

12 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Hello, ma'am.  
13 Thank you.

14 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Hi, I'm sorry. I  
15 would be remiss if I didn't mention the group  
16 that I always talk about, and I want to start  
17 by thanking you for the attention that you  
18 pay the group that we in Brooklyn consider  
19 our veterans organization, Black Vets for  
20 Social Justice, that --

21 DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: I know them  
22 well.

23 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: -- you know very  
24 well, yes. And I thank you for that.

1                   DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Good friends  
2 with Wendy.

3                   SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Yes, great.

4                   And you mentioned -- I see 5 million  
5 for housing for veterans. That's wonderful.  
6 We certainly would like to see much more, but  
7 at least it's on your agenda --

8                   DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yes, ma'am.

9                   SENATOR MONTGOMERY: -- and we  
10 appreciate that.

11                   I want to just say to you that I have  
12 two armories in my district that house men,  
13 African-American black and brown men,  
14 basically, and many of those men are  
15 veterans. So the need for housing is just  
16 absolutely tremendous. And it seems to me  
17 that an organization like Black Vets would be  
18 ideal as a -- to partner and consider doing  
19 some housing around, you know, veterans'  
20 needs that would be housing and support  
21 services in a supportive housing fashion.

22                   So I just wanted to put that on  
23 your --

24                   DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Thank you.

1                   SENATOR MONTGOMERY: -- your agenda,  
2                   and hopefully we can talk about that at some  
3                   point.

4                   DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: I'd welcome  
5                   the conversation. I'll get down there and  
6                   speak with you. And they're good old friends  
7                   of mine, so.

8                   SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Great. Thank you  
9                   very much.

10                  DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Yes, ma'am.

11                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

12                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

13                  That concludes questions, thank you.

14                  DVS DIRECTOR McDONOUGH: Thank you  
15                  very much.

16                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for  
17                  being here today with us.

18                  So now we begin the public portion  
19                  of -- the nongovernmental witness portion of  
20                  our hearing. Just as -- the first witness  
21                  will be Gail Myers from New York StateWide  
22                  Senior Action Council, to be followed by  
23                  UJA-Federation of New York, Association on  
24                  Aging in New York.

1           I just encourage people, as you're  
2           getting close to speaking, to make your way  
3           down. And a reminder, just in timing, the  
4           witnesses have up to five minutes and members  
5           have three minutes if you choose to ask a  
6           question.

7           Gail, go ahead.

8           MS. MYERS: Thank you very much.

9           I really appreciate the opportunity to  
10          testify today, and thank you all for the work  
11          you do to support the needs of older  
12          New Yorkers.

13          I will not be reading my very detailed  
14          and extensive testimony, because I know you  
15          will as soon as I leave, but I want to give a  
16          special shout-out to Senator Montgomery for  
17          her many years of leadership and advocacy for  
18          vulnerable populations. So thank you for  
19          that.

20          I'll start with the two programs that  
21          we have that are funded through the New York  
22          State Office for the Aging. One is our  
23          patients' rights and advocacy hotline, and  
24          the other is our managed-care consumer

1 assistance program. We have details on our  
2 programs and the services that we offer, but  
3 I want to get to the budget ask. And the  
4 budget ask is for the Legislature to restore  
5 our program to the current fiscal year level  
6 as you're contemplating next fiscal year.

7 The Executive put in the budget for  
8 \$31,500 to run our program, and the last two  
9 years the Legislature has added \$100,000 to  
10 that, which we very much appreciate and need.

11 Secondly, we ask you to reappropriate  
12 the \$100,000 that you put in the budget in  
13 '19-'20 because, due to problems in  
14 contracting, we still have not gotten that  
15 money. So please have it roll over, because  
16 the loss of that and services already done  
17 would be devastating.

18 The second thing is our managed-care  
19 consumer assistance program. We have a line  
20 in the budget, along with six other agencies,  
21 to provide services and counseling to older  
22 New Yorkers. We -- in addition to what we do  
23 for Medicare and EPIC enrollment, we also  
24 provide enrollment assistance in the Medicare

1 Savings Program, which I will be talking  
2 about in some more depth, and that gives  
3 low-income Medicare enrollees premium relief  
4 and also extra help, which is the federal  
5 program for prescription drug assistance,  
6 100 percent funded -- that last part by the  
7 feds.

8           What is disturbing is that only  
9 38 percent of currently eligible New Yorkers  
10 are receiving that benefit. That is far  
11 under the national average of 51 percent, and  
12 it makes us sixth from the bottom in the  
13 country of states that have penetrated moving  
14 up in enrollment on that. So because of  
15 that, we're asking for the MCCAP programs to  
16 receive \$1 million of additional funding  
17 spread out among our six not-for-profit  
18 agencies so that we can increase the  
19 opportunity to get people enrolled in the  
20 necessary benefit.

21           Now I wanted to talk a little bit  
22 about unmet needs. The \$15 million that was  
23 added to the budget by the Governor, and that  
24 you all worked very hard to have included

1 last year -- and it is back in the budget  
2 again this year -- addresses need. But we  
3 think it really focuses on past waiting  
4 lists, and there is so much more to do to  
5 ensure access to services for older  
6 New Yorkers based on the demographic data.

7 Now, we very much thank Senators  
8 Persaud and May for your committees' work and  
9 holding that hearing on poverty, and also for  
10 Mr. Bronson and the Aging Committee in the  
11 Assembly for holding a hearing on services  
12 in -- this fall. It really helped -- and of  
13 course your staffs. It really helped us  
14 focus on being able to report to you, and as  
15 a result we've completed a county-by-county  
16 compilation of data regarding older residents  
17 who may be relying or need to rely on aging  
18 services. And I don't think we should be  
19 shocked, as we're seeing the very, very  
20 predictable high use of long-term care in the  
21 Medicaid budget, we should also be able to  
22 predict that the same is true for people who  
23 have been relying on aging services.

24 So based on the census for New York



1           being used by our Congress's committee to  
2           look at funding for the Older Americans Act.  
3           And the House of Representatives has  
4           recommended that for the first of five  
5           years -- something's broken with the clock.

6                       (Laughter.)

7           MS. MYERS: For the first of five  
8           years there needs to be a 7 percent increase,  
9           and 6 percent increases in the years that  
10          follow.

11                       We have recommendations on capacity  
12          and reporting, we have recommendations on  
13          increasing the home-care worker shortage,  
14          initiatives, and ask for a \$15 million  
15          investment over three years.

16                       We have concerns about the  
17          long-term-care ombudsman program. There was  
18          a 37 percent decrease in volunteers in that  
19          program.

20                       And then on the last two issues --  
21          very, very quickly, sorry -- we have  
22          proposals that we will talk to the Health  
23          Committees, Ways and Means, and Finance about  
24          on how to achieve some savings on the

1 Medicaid side of the budget by expanding the  
2 Medicare savings program and also by  
3 improving eligibility requirements. The  
4 State of Louisiana took one option and saved  
5 \$2 million per year, so we think there are  
6 some savings to be had there that would  
7 improve benefits for seniors.

8 And we ask you to look at the EPIC  
9 program to improve the transparency and  
10 accountability surrounding the programmatic  
11 changes, because there have been some  
12 things -- including our concern about the  
13 second year of a proposed cut in the program  
14 where there have been benefits that have been  
15 cut within EPIC -- that we would like to see  
16 restored.

17 Thank you. Sorry.

18 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. You  
19 were very comprehensive. We have no  
20 questions.

21 You've got to talk faster next year,  
22 Gail.

23 (Laughter.)

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

1                   Next we will have UJA-Federation of  
2                   New York.

3                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER:   Sorry.   Sorry.  
4                   We have a question.

5                   Chair Rachel May.

6                   SENATOR MAY:   Thank you, Gail.   And  
7                   thank you for mentioning the Home Care Jobs  
8                   Innovation Fund.   I think that's an important  
9                   one.

10                  I wanted to follow up about the  
11                  hearing we had about SNAP and low-income  
12                  New Yorkers.   But we talked a lot about the  
13                  senior issues, and most of what came out of  
14                  that hearing -- because we held it before the  
15                  federal government cut those benefits, and  
16                  basically what everyone was saying is we've  
17                  got to make sure the federal government  
18                  doesn't do that.   And that was basically the  
19                  outcome of that hearing.   But they did it  
20                  anyway.

21                  So are you already seeing any results  
22                  from that?   And what should we be doing?   It  
23                  was very frustrating to come out of that and  
24                  say all we can do is stop the federal

1 government from doing this.

2 MS. MYERS: Well, there could be an  
3 investment -- when I look at this, I look at  
4 it from a senior perspective, because that's  
5 the population that we deal with mostly. But  
6 of course this affects children and everybody  
7 in New York State.

8 But from a senior perspective, I think  
9 that an investment increase in what's called  
10 the WIN program within Aging, which is  
11 wellness and nutrition, would help to offset  
12 some of the food insecurity that we're seeing  
13 among seniors. Calls that we're getting --  
14 what we find is that the anxiety level raised  
15 in a very large way as a result of the  
16 potential for federal cuts -- I haven't  
17 gotten calls recently about people saying "I  
18 don't have the benefits that I need," but we  
19 do get calls to say "Where can I go for  
20 food?"

21 SENATOR MAY: Okay. Thank you.

22 And then the one other thing I wanted  
23 to ask about was -- oh, the 7 percent  
24 increase that you recommend for over what the

1 core NYSOFA programs -- how is 7 percent  
2 arrived at? Why is that the amount?

3 MS. MYERS: Well, we felt that the GAO  
4 was a pretty good source and that was what  
5 U.S. House of Representatives used as their  
6 source for making a recommendation that the  
7 federal government should invest 7 percent  
8 followed by 6 percent in each of the four  
9 consecutive years.

10 So I guess I figured if it was good  
11 enough for the House of Representatives, it  
12 was good enough for statewide as an initial  
13 recommendation, knowing how tight money is.  
14 We think that should be a minimum and that  
15 you should continue to grow these services  
16 across the board, year after year. So we  
17 followed the federal recommendation of the  
18 house.

19 SENATOR MAY: Okay, great. Thank you  
20 very much.

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman  
22 Bronson.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Gail -- and you  
24 thought you were going to get away. In your

1 materials you have a couple of sections that  
2 talk about Medicaid. And as you know, one of  
3 the most serious issues we're going to face  
4 during the budget is the Medicaid situation.  
5 And I use "situation" intentionally.

6           Could you share with us how we in the  
7 area of serving older New Yorkers, how can we  
8 work toward Medicaid savings in particular?  
9 And, you know, the connection between  
10 Medicaid and Medicare and your services of  
11 getting people on benefits -- if you wouldn't  
12 mind, just outline for us how we can address  
13 Medicaid and help that benefit our system as  
14 we move forward.

15           MS. MYERS: All right. Well, I think  
16 there's two areas that I would point to. One  
17 is the CMS has already made recommendations  
18 to the states on how they can improve their  
19 eligibility and processing of people who have  
20 the Medicare Savings Program. That is funded  
21 in part by our state Medicaid and the local  
22 social services districts doing the work.

23           So the first would be: Achieve all  
24 the savings you can by streamlining and

1           improving that process, which would also stop  
2           people from the churning off-cycle by having  
3           to reapply and so on. First thing.

4                     And the second thing, we think that  
5           most people come to the Offices for Aging  
6           when they are beginning to enter a crisis  
7           situation. I need this, how do I get it?  
8           And there's a lot more that can be done,  
9           number one, to prevent moving into that  
10          crisis situation through programs that the  
11          offices offer.

12                    But also, in terms of averting that  
13          crisis mentality, we need to let people know  
14          that the services are there. People don't  
15          know -- they call our office, they call our  
16          hotline, and we're speaking to them and we  
17          refer them back to their county Offices for  
18          Aging -- who are doing great work. People  
19          just don't know: Oh, that's available to me?  
20          Oh, that's how I would get that?

21                    And we do educate people earlier on  
22          and do more outreach, which we think we need  
23          for all of our programs. That should  
24          delay -- it should keep people healthier and

1 we hope should delay Medicaid eligibility or  
2 their crisis where they enter into a hospital  
3 and then never go home.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Okay. And we  
5 have less than a minute, but on the EPIC  
6 program, what is your suggestion on how we  
7 expand EPIC so more seniors can take  
8 advantage of that?

9 MS. MYERS: Well, there are two pieces  
10 that have happened this year. One is a new  
11 application which requires a lot of detailed  
12 information that was not previously required.  
13 It is going to, we think, be a disincentive  
14 for people to enroll in EPIC. So we'd like  
15 you to fix that.

16 The other thing is rather than using  
17 the line of the Governor's cut, to restore  
18 that money and then to start lowering the age  
19 of EPIC eligibility from 65 down, so that  
20 people as they are entering seniorhood are  
21 coming in with the resources that they need.  
22 Everyone on EPIC, everyone on Medicare, which  
23 is including the persons with disabilities  
24 population, should have the same benefit, and

1 we'd like to see that expanded to everyone.

2 There are some bracket changes that  
3 could be made. The regs on EPIC allow a  
4 cost-of-living adjustment, which has not been  
5 made in recent memory. Things like not  
6 throwing someone off because they have just a  
7 little bit more money because they've gotten  
8 a COLA increase in their pension or Social  
9 Security.

10 So there are numerous  
11 recommendations --

12 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Right.

13 MS. MYERS: -- but we'd like to see  
14 more transparency and accountability in the  
15 system. There used to be a consumer advisory  
16 panel that doesn't exist anymore. That would  
17 help bring in more seniors into the program.  
18 And the program has declined significantly in  
19 their outreach, from nine outreach workers in  
20 the past to I think three now across the  
21 entire state. People don't know about the  
22 program, that it's there for them.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Thank you.

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

1 MS. MYERS: Can I leave this time?

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Now you can  
3 leave. We're not going to call you back.

4 (Laughter.)

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Ariel  
6 Savransky, advocacy and policy advisor,  
7 UJA-Federation.

8 MS. SAVRANSKY: Good afternoon. Thank  
9 you for the opportunity to testify. I'm just  
10 going to touch on a few points from my  
11 testimony as you have the full, longer  
12 testimony in front of you.

13 On behalf of UJA-Federation of  
14 New York, our network of nonprofit partners  
15 and those we serve, thank you for the  
16 opportunity to testify on the importance of  
17 maintaining and expanding support for the  
18 human services sector.

19 Established more than 100 years ago,  
20 UJA is one of the nation's largest local  
21 philanthropies. We support a network of  
22 nearly 100 nonprofit organizations serving  
23 those that are the most vulnerable and in  
24 need of programs and services.

1                   UJA's network of nonprofit partners  
2                   delivers programs, services, and resources  
3                   that support the well being of all  
4                   New Yorkers across their lifespan. However,  
5                   while New York's economy has been growing  
6                   steadily since 2008, state funding for the  
7                   human services sector has been cut by  
8                   26 percent. This leaves a lot of our  
9                   partners unable to provide the services that  
10                  vulnerable individuals need.

11                  We make the following recommendations  
12                  for investments in this year's state budget,  
13                  including a 3 percent increase on all human  
14                  services contracts and rates for the next  
15                  five years; allocating \$100 million in  
16                  recurring funds to the Nonprofit  
17                  Infrastructure Capital Investment Program;  
18                  and expanding State and Municipal Facilities  
19                  Program eligibility guidelines to include  
20                  nonprofit organizations.

21                  Additionally, Medicaid has been  
22                  discussed a lot. While the Medicaid Redesign  
23                  Team has been tasked with identifying  
24                  \$2.5 billion in savings to the state, should

1           that not be achieved, it is critical that  
2           nonprofit providers are held harmless.

3                       I also want to touch on Holocaust  
4           survivors. New York State is home to nearly  
5           40,000 Holocaust survivors. Forty percent of  
6           them live below the poverty level. As  
7           New York continues to support its immigrant  
8           communities and address the rise in  
9           antisemitism and hate crimes, it is  
10          imperative that we not leave Holocaust  
11          survivors behind. We appreciate the  
12          investment of \$400,000 in last year's budget,  
13          but more must be done. We ask the state to  
14          invest \$5 million to fund care, services, and  
15          resources for Holocaust survivors living in  
16          poverty.

17                      Along those same lines, we appreciate  
18          the inclusion of \$25 million to support the  
19          safety and security projects for at-risk  
20          facilities. We request that eligibility  
21          guidelines for this funding be expanded to  
22          all nonprofits that are at risk due to their  
23          beliefs or ideology, including houses of  
24          worship. This will provide a broader

1           understanding of statewide community  
2           vulnerabilities and ensure that all  
3           nonprofits are protected from hate-based  
4           attacks.

5                       Next I want to talk about the Summer  
6           Youth Employment Program. We thank you for  
7           the proposal to provide a \$1 million increase  
8           for SYEP to cover the minimum wage increase.

9                       However, as Senator Savino brought up  
10          earlier, there is an issue with the  
11          Article VII language that was enacted by the  
12          '19-'20 budget that implemented new,  
13          comprehensive background checks for both new  
14          and current employees at school-aged  
15          childcare licensed programs statewide, and  
16          this includes SYEP programs. Because of  
17          these new regulations, there is a huge  
18          backlog in the processing of these background  
19          checks, and it often takes months for a  
20          background check to be -- to go through. For  
21          a six-week program, which is what SYEP is,  
22          this creates real barriers to ensuring that  
23          these programs can be staffed and that these  
24          kids can have the opportunity to participate

1 in the program.

2 Before the regulations were in place,  
3 providers waited only two weeks for completed  
4 background checks. Due to the complexity of  
5 the new background checks, OCFS and local  
6 registrars require additional resources and  
7 staff to be able to perform the background  
8 checks in a timely manner. Providers also  
9 require more guidance on the background check  
10 process, specifically on how to properly stop  
11 their program if the process is not expedited  
12 by the time the SYEP students have to start  
13 their job placements.

14 And lastly, I just want to talk about  
15 food insecurity for a second. UJA  
16 appreciates the inclusion of a new initiative  
17 to reduce food insecurity among college  
18 students that Commissioner Hein mentioned in  
19 his testimony earlier today. This will  
20 really ensure that we can combat food  
21 insecurity on these campuses. We urge OTDA  
22 to ensure that the policy is changed in this  
23 budget cycle. And we also urge the state to  
24 consider ways to expand this to all college

1 students, as food insecurity is a real  
2 problem, not just in community colleges.

3 I also want to emphasize what my  
4 colleagues who spoke before me said about  
5 increasing WIN funding, which is another way  
6 to combat -- to reduce Medicaid costs as  
7 well.

8 And then, just along the lines of the  
9 SNAP attacks on the federal level, we have  
10 already started to see the reducing -- people  
11 reducing their use of SNAP benefits and thus  
12 relying more on food pantries, so that is  
13 something that we really need to make sure to  
14 fill some of those gaps.

15 Thank you for the opportunity to  
16 testify, and I'm happy to take any questions.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
18 Thank you for being here today.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

20 MS. SAVRANSKY: Thank you.

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next we have  
22 the Association on Aging in New York, Rebecca  
23 Preve. (Pause.)

24 Okay. I'm sorry, yes, please go

1 ahead.

2 MS. PREVE: Good afternoon. I wanted  
3 to say thank you to members of the  
4 Legislature for holding such an important  
5 hearing.

6 My name is Becky Preve, and I'm the  
7 executive director at the Association on  
8 Aging in New York. Our membership contains  
9 the 59 local area agencies on aging,  
10 otherwise known to you as Offices for the  
11 Aging -- I know there's at times confusion.  
12 Our mission is to support and enhance the  
13 Offices for the Aging to promote  
14 independence, preserve dignity, and advocate  
15 on behalf of older New Yorkers.

16 We serve a large number of people, and  
17 we serve in four different categories. So  
18 our first category is really active older  
19 New Yorkers. We provide volunteer  
20 opportunities. They engage in our senior  
21 centers for health promotion activities. We  
22 also touch those with small needs -- so  
23 individuals that may need help with their  
24 Medicare, they may need some counseling

1 services, they might need to get enrolled in  
2 new plans, and they're kind of a soft touch  
3 in our community.

4 We also serve the high-risk frail  
5 elderly. And so Commissioner Olsen spoke to  
6 this; under our core programs and services,  
7 we're typically serving clients at very high  
8 needs, early eighties, single females that  
9 live alone who have real deficits in being  
10 able to bathe, dress, go to the grocery  
11 store, et cetera. We also have a very strong  
12 caregiver support program and provide respite  
13 services.

14 I want to kind of start the  
15 conversation by doing a level set on this  
16 aging population, and I think Commissioner  
17 Olsen also spoke to this. So this population  
18 has a huge social, intellectual, and economic  
19 footprint in New York State. New York State  
20 is fourth in the nation as far as our aging  
21 population, and in 2015 we had 3.6 million  
22 people over the age of 60. By 2040, we're  
23 going to be looking at 5.6 million in that  
24 category. By 2025, 86 percent of counties in

1 New York State will have a population that's  
2 25 percent or more over the age of 60.

3           Again, this population contributes  
4 enormously across our service spectrum. The  
5 50+ Longevity Economy indicates that the  
6 population over 50 represents \$9 trillion in  
7 economic and unpaid activities from 2018.  
8 That's going to triple to \$28 trillion by  
9 2050. What that means for New York State is  
10 that individuals over the age of 45  
11 contribute \$379 billion per year to our  
12 economic situation. That's 63 percent of the  
13 income in New York State from this  
14 population.

15           Their volunteerism is worth over  
16 \$13 billion per year, and their unpaid  
17 caregiving has a value of about \$32 billion  
18 to the state. This kind of lays the  
19 framework for why New Yorkers really deserve  
20 the care and services that we're able to  
21 provide them, and it's also the reason that  
22 I'm here today to ask for an ongoing  
23 commitment to our aging network.

24           The \$15 million in last year's budget

1           allowed my members to bring older adults  
2           services that were on waiting lists, some  
3           from two months to three years. That meant  
4           home-delivered meals, transportation,  
5           personal care services, and other vital  
6           services to our economic drivers in New York  
7           State.

8                       My membership also shared kind of a  
9           deep data dive, so we looked into actual case  
10          files. And out of the 2,200 case files that  
11          we looked at, 10 percent of those individuals  
12          went directly to a skilled nursing facility  
13          under the Medicaid benefit; another 9 percent  
14          went to MLTC plans or traditional Medicaid  
15          coverage.

16                      Again, if you look at that from an  
17          economic standpoint, the state's share of  
18          Medicaid on those people is over \$60 million  
19          per year, so very, very significant  
20          statistics.

21                      What I'm asking for this year is the  
22          fact that my membership have reported to me  
23          ongoing waitlist issues. And so what that  
24          means is that the waitlist was a snapshot in

1 time, we had that data from a few years back,  
2 but that doesn't mean our waitlists stop. So  
3 people continually come on our waitlists and  
4 the membership reports that, and we currently  
5 have a large sum back on our waiting lists.

6 So the ask behind the 19.5 million in  
7 my testimony is directly tied to the  
8 9,000-plus people we have identified on  
9 waitlists, and the calculation is based on  
10 what a unit of service costs for that  
11 individual. So there's metrics behind the  
12 ask.

13 I also took a deep look at our CSE  
14 budget, and I know that there's been asks for  
15 an increase in that. Again, I really feel  
16 that we have clients behind these numbers,  
17 and so we do ask for a \$53 million investment  
18 in CSE. And that's for two things.

19 Number one is targeted case  
20 management. So the people that receive our  
21 home-care services and case management, those  
22 are exactly those very high risk, frail  
23 individuals who qualify for a skilled nursing  
24 facility placement. Right now, on average,

1           they get one hour of case management per  
2           month. And again, with the issues that we  
3           see with the older population, one hour  
4           really is not sufficient to meet the needs.  
5           So 10 million could bump that to two hours of  
6           case management.

7                     The additional funding again goes  
8           directly to our personal care program, so the  
9           home health aides that assist with bathing,  
10          toileting, dressing, feeding -- and our  
11          average client only gets 4.6 hours per week.  
12          The Medicaid system usually authorizes  
13          20-plus. So the ask behind that investment  
14          would be directly for increasing our  
15          home-care hours from the typical 4.6 to an  
16          average of 10 for New York State.

17                    Our services and supports are  
18          predicated on keeping people off  
19          Medicaid-covered services, and yet our  
20          funding has remained relatively stagnant. We  
21          provide services that keep people living in  
22          their homes and support the population that  
23          is the economic support New York State  
24          thrives on.

1                   I would like to thank all of you for  
2 your time, and I welcome any questions.

3                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

4                   Any Assembly? Assemblymember Bronson.

5                   ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Thank you.

6                   I've talked about this earlier with  
7 other witnesses. But your numbers show that  
8 an average cost in the nursing home is  
9 \$150,000 annually for an individual, whereas  
10 if we have a community-based services for  
11 individuals who would qualify to go into a  
12 nursing home, those costs are \$6,300  
13 annually.

14                   Tie that to the fact that even though  
15 with the \$15 million we addressed --  
16 whatever, I can't remember what it was, the  
17 2017 or 2018 waitlist -- but now you have  
18 identified somewheres above 9,000 people on  
19 the waitlist. How -- in those kind of  
20 savings, if we can keep people at home, safe  
21 with a quality of life, how does that impact  
22 on Medicaid -- and shouldn't we be talking  
23 about that, number one?

24                   And then, number two, do consumers

1           have a voice on the Medicaid Redesign Team  
2           II? Do -- you know, are agencies like yours,  
3           is there a voice there for Medicaid Redesign  
4           Team II? I mean, we need voices to make this  
5           argument as we're making the decision between  
6           now and April.

7                     MS. PREVE: Absolutely. I couldn't  
8           agree more.

9                     And I can tell you our population is  
10          traditionally non-Medicaid, and our services  
11          and supports -- you know, they don't last a  
12          month or two. So we're keeping people out of  
13          skilled nursing facilities for years.

14                    So the aggregate cost savings that I  
15          quoted, that's only for one year of the cost  
16          savings. So if you look at someone on the  
17          EISEP program that we've kept on for  
18          three years, you know, you triple that  
19          amount.

20                    And so, you know, as far as the  
21          MRT II, I absolutely feel that the consumer  
22          and advocate portion of New York State needs  
23          to be included in that conversation, and I  
24          absolutely think, again, in the climate of

1 Medicaid that we're looking at right now, our  
2 services are tried and true and they're  
3 proven that they absolutely can keep people  
4 off Medicaid.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Thank you very  
6 much.

7 MS. PREVE: You're welcome.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

9 Senator May.

10 (Mic problems.)

11 SENATOR MAY: Thank you, Rebecca.

12 I just have one quick question. Of  
13 the 9,000 number that you have of people on  
14 the waiting list, how does that compare to  
15 what it was before the \$15 million was put  
16 in? How many people came off the waiting  
17 list as a result of the investment?

18 MS. PREVE: So we were actually able  
19 to get over what we anticipated off the  
20 waitlist. So it was over 8,000 that came  
21 off. And I think the 9,000 that we now have  
22 on is a combination of numerous things. I  
23 think it's value-based payments.

24 So people are really looking, from the

1 healthcare sector, on getting people on  
2 services sooner. So our referrals from  
3 hospitals and the physician base have  
4 absolutely increased, and then our  
5 NY Connects program has grown enormously. We  
6 have a very large online presence now, so  
7 people definitely are coming to our services  
8 at an earlier time. And I think there was a  
9 lot of press involved with the historic  
10 investment that we received, and so people  
11 really were in tune to the fact that our  
12 services absolutely could help their loved  
13 ones.

14 So, you know, as the aging population  
15 continues to grow, our waitlists are going to  
16 continue to grow just because of the basis of  
17 the population that we're serving.

18 SENATOR MAY: So Gail Myers testified  
19 that we're maybe not doing the best job of  
20 getting the word out about what the services  
21 are that are available. Can you say what you  
22 find is working and what is needed in order  
23 to make it work better?

24 MS. PREVE: I definitely think that

1 social media has played a huge role. Our  
2 membership has absolutely started advertising  
3 their services on Facebook, tweeting, those  
4 types of things, so I think we're catching  
5 maybe the younger caregivers that might not  
6 use traditional ways of getting information.  
7 And I think our NY Connects marketing plan  
8 has been very successful.

9 And again, it's one of those things  
10 that there are many times where people don't  
11 want to plan or think about the future when  
12 they do have needs, and so some people kind  
13 of put blinders up until they're in that  
14 crisis mode.

15 SENATOR MAY: Okay. Thank you very  
16 much.

17 MS. PREVE: You're welcome.

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

19 Senator Sue Serino.

20 (Mic problems.)

21 SENATOR SERINO: Hello. Sorry about  
22 that. I can't get the mic to work.

23 But I just have to commend you on the  
24 incredibly thorough testimony that you put

1 here today. If my colleagues haven't gotten  
2 a chance to look this over, it's amazing.  
3 You really break it down for us, and I really  
4 appreciate it.

5 And in here you rightly point out that  
6 our senior population will virtually double  
7 in the next 20 years, and keeping our seniors  
8 here will be vital to our economic viability.  
9 I completely agree.

10 So I wanted to start by talking about  
11 the CSE funds. A couple of people have  
12 mentioned it already, and you know we were  
13 excited to get the \$15 million, but what do  
14 you see? Do you think that we're going to  
15 need more money? Like you talked about doing  
16 more on social media, and more -- you know,  
17 you're hitting other people, maybe a little  
18 bit younger, too, than notoriously {sic}  
19 would take the money. And if you think we do  
20 need more, do you have any idea of an amount?

21 MS. PREVE: Of the CSE funds?

22 SENATOR SERINO: CSE.

23 MS. PREVE: So the CSE -- that's  
24 included in the testimony. It might not just

1 be laid out --

2 SENATOR SERINO: Oh, maybe I'm --  
3 okay.

4 MS. PREVE: But the CSE ask that we  
5 came up with of the 53 million, I felt it was  
6 really important to have data behind that  
7 number, to have a specific ask, because I  
8 think that's beneficial for you to make  
9 decisions.

10 And so that was directly tied to our  
11 highest-risk customers, so those individuals  
12 that have three deficits in activities of  
13 daily living, three deficits in independent  
14 activities of daily living, and four or more  
15 chronic conditions. So that was based  
16 directly on this population, and the  
17 calculation was to double their case  
18 management and to essentially double their  
19 home care hours per week.

20 SENATOR SERINO: Okay. That's great.

21 And then the other question that I  
22 have, because I was really intrigued by your  
23 home-care innovation fund that you're  
24 proposing in your testimony -- so can you

1           elaborate a little on your vision for that  
2           too?

3                   MS. PREVE:  Sure.  So the home health  
4           aide crisis -- in my previous work I was a  
5           director of a local AAA, and we actually  
6           worked very closely on the home care crisis  
7           coalitions.  So we did some deep diving into  
8           this a while back, and what home health aides  
9           had shared with us were a couple of things  
10          that could be an easy fix with a pilot  
11          project.  So it was "New tires for my car" or  
12          "A lease" or "I don't have anyone to care for  
13          my child if I have a case from 6 to 9 p.m.,  
14          because my traditional daycare isn't open."  
15          So I think that there's a lot of work that  
16          could be done in that space.

17                   I think the other thing that was  
18          eye-opening for me personally is two of the  
19          members of my staff were previously home  
20          health aides and went back to school and came  
21          out as case managers.  And I asked them:  If  
22          you got paid the same amount of money to do  
23          case management or to provide direct care  
24          service in the home, which would you choose?

1           And they both laughed at me and said that  
2           they would be direct care workers immediately  
3           if they could make the same money.

4                        So I think that was kind of  
5           eye-opening to me, that if -- you know, if we  
6           can look to pilot a higher wage in certain  
7           areas and then really prove that those cases  
8           didn't go unfilled, again, that's some data  
9           to have behind what we're doing. And I think  
10          looking at those failed discharges from acute  
11          care facilities, or people that are  
12          readmitted, would be a really good place to  
13          start.

14                       SENATOR SERINO: That's a great idea.  
15          I love it. Thank you.

16                       MS. PREVE: Thank you.

17                       CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

18                       CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

19                       MS. PREVE: Thank you very much.

20                       CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next we have  
21          Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy,  
22          Dede Hill and Crystal Charles.

23                       MS. HILL: Hi. Good afternoon. Thank  
24          you for this opportunity to testify.

1                   Since 1872, the Schuyler Center has  
2                   been advocating to strengthen public systems  
3                   that serve low-income and disenfranchised  
4                   New Yorkers, particularly children and  
5                   families.

6                   First I'd like to just make some  
7                   general observations and create some context  
8                   around this Executive Budget. While this  
9                   Executive Budget contains some important  
10                  proposals and new investments that will  
11                  benefit children and families, it is not a  
12                  budget that puts children and families first.  
13                  It's not a budget that, if enacted as is,  
14                  will meaningfully reduce New York's high rate  
15                  of child poverty. It is not a budget that  
16                  will make any progress at all in addressing  
17                  the state's persistent childcare availability  
18                  crisis.

19                  It appears that when the many proposed  
20                  cuts are implemented at the county level,  
21                  including the caps on Medicaid, many New York  
22                  families that are already facing the  
23                  obstacles of poverty and systematic racism  
24                  and ill health and disability, those families

1 are going to be set back further.

2 Turning to the specifics of the  
3 Executive Budget, there are a few issues that  
4 I want to highlight. And I promise I'm not  
5 going to go through everything in our  
6 testimony, but there are a few things.

7 First I want to just touch on  
8 something that is not in the budget, but we  
9 think that all New Yorkers -- and we'd like  
10 your leadership in leading New York -- should  
11 make a public, binding commitment to cutting  
12 child poverty in half by 2030. We think  
13 New York has -- our child poverty rate has  
14 sort of lingered around 20 percent for more  
15 than a decade, and if we do not make a public  
16 commitment and if we don't sort of start down  
17 the path of incrementally reducing child  
18 poverty, we will never tackle this problem.  
19 So let's do this this year.

20 Turning to child welfare, there are a  
21 number of proposals in this Executive Budget  
22 that we applaud. The kinship firewall is a  
23 really important step. Blind removals, this  
24 is really going to move this state towards

1           addressing its overrepresentation of black  
2           and brown children in the state's foster-care  
3           system. These are important steps.

4                         But we do have some concerns. I want  
5           to turn your attention to an issue that  
6           Senator Persaud has raised in her questions  
7           about -- there are cuts to the preventive  
8           protective funding stream. They're kind of  
9           hard to discern in the budget. But what it  
10          looks like is done is there is a proposed  
11          \$40 million cut to the TANF Flexible Fund for  
12          Family Services. These are funds that we  
13          understand counties use in a variety of ways,  
14          including to support senior services, to  
15          support childcare in some counties, to  
16          support child welfare in some counties. So  
17          this is a \$40 million cut that will deliver a  
18          \$25 million savings to the state. It has to  
19          be transferred over to preventive services.

20                         We're also concerned that this may  
21          mean that counties utilize their preventive  
22          services a little bit less because they have  
23          to draw down more county funds before they  
24          can access those preventive services.

1                   We really want to draw attention to  
2                   this. I don't think it's on a lot of  
3                   people's radars, and we are -- it's of deep  
4                   concern to us. And it reminds us of  
5                   something that happened in 2017. There was a  
6                   proposal to shift \$20 million in Title XX  
7                   funds and move them to childcare. We raised  
8                   the alarm about that, and we actually  
9                   reversed that. We hope you will do that  
10                  again this year.

11                  In the area of foster care, we're very  
12                  excited and pleased that there is continued  
13                  support for the Family First Transition Fund,  
14                  but we want to see some more investment this  
15                  year.

16                  One other thing -- my time is running  
17                  out there -- there is no new funding in this  
18                  budget for childcare. We have -- the  
19                  Governor convened a childcare availability  
20                  task force a year ago. It's been working  
21                  hard, it has made some -- it is contemplating  
22                  some very ambitious proposals. But even as  
23                  the task force is taking, you know, a  
24                  half-step forward and doing some really good

1 thinking, the childcare system is crumbling  
2 around us.

3 We are moving backwards, and so we are  
4 going to be starting at a deficit when we  
5 finally get recommendations a year from now.  
6 So we urge investment in childcare this year.

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

8 Assemblywoman Jaffee.

9 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: Yes. The task  
10 force, which I created and has been moving  
11 forward, has really something we're going to  
12 be meeting on to discuss their  
13 recommendations, because I think that they  
14 are recognizing that there are  
15 some significant issues that -- of concern.

16 Regarding the childcare funding for  
17 the childcare in the state, impacting the  
18 children, obviously, and their future and  
19 their families, who need to be able to have  
20 the children in environments that are very  
21 positive while they maintain their jobs and  
22 their work, what specific numbers and issues  
23 do you see with the budget that the Governor  
24 has presented? I have concerns about that

1           also. Could you provide some details?

2           MS. HILL: Yes. With respect to  
3           childcare -- so I think that the headline,  
4           the most important message is there is no new  
5           state funding for childcare in the Executive  
6           Budget. There has been some confusion, some  
7           suggestion in the Budget Briefing Book that  
8           the child tax credit proposal which -- and I  
9           want to be clear, we're very supportive.

10           There is a proposal to expand the  
11           state's current child tax credit, which  
12           currently omits children under the age of 4,  
13           to expand the credit to include them, as it  
14           should. It's a child tax credit, it's  
15           designed to offset the high cost of raising  
16           children, it should include young children.

17           However, the child tax credit is not  
18           designed nor is it robust enough to be an  
19           answer to the childcare crisis. At most, it  
20           will provide a family between -- an extra  
21           \$333 a year in income. Again, this can be  
22           critical for a low-income family; if they  
23           have a car that is not working, they can fix  
24           it, they can go to work. It's a critical

1 step in efforts to reduce child poverty, but  
2 it is not a solution to the childcare crisis.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: And the other  
4 issue is workers in childcare. There is --  
5 as I noted earlier, there is a very real  
6 issue in terms of having the availability of  
7 workers who can provide assistance and work  
8 within the childcare programs. Is that  
9 something that you see of concern as well?

10 MS. HILL: Yes. So the other piece of  
11 the childcare puzzle is that while childcare  
12 is unaffordable for most New York families --  
13 it costs an average of \$15,000 a year -- at  
14 the same time, the childcare workforce is  
15 very underpaid. Most of the -- 60 percent of  
16 the workforce actually has to rely on some  
17 sort of public assistance, because they are  
18 paid wages that are that low.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: So we need  
20 to -- you know, certainly, thank you. So we  
21 need to certainly move forward in terms of  
22 getting -- having the Governor provide more  
23 funds for our childcare program and to be  
24 able to also expand the opportunities for the

1 salaries for our childcare workers so that we  
2 are able to have that kind of availability in  
3 programs to ensure that all of our children  
4 are in positive environments.

5 But thank you.

6 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you  
7 for --

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: Thank you so  
9 much.

10 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for  
11 being here.

12 MS. HILL: Thank you.

13 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next we have  
14 the Council of Family and Child Care  
15 Agencies, followed by Early Care and Learning  
16 Council, followed by New York State Network  
17 for Youth Success.

18 MS. BRADY-STEPHEN: Good afternoon.  
19 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

20 My name is Kathleen Brady-Stepien, and  
21 I'm the associate executive director of the  
22 Council of Family and Child Care Agencies, or  
23 COFCCA. We represent the more than 100 child  
24 welfare organizations around the state.

1           We were very disappointed not to see  
2           more of a commitment to our human services  
3           programs in this Executive Budget proposal.

4           We are proud to partner with our  
5           fellow human services organizations around  
6           the state to bring one single unified ask  
7           before you this year, and it's called #3for5.  
8           It's a request for a 3 percent increase in  
9           our rate in funding for our human services  
10          programs over the next five years. We  
11          believe that this would go a long way towards  
12          acknowledging a sector that has been ignored  
13          in our state budget for far too long, and we  
14          believe this would also go a long way toward  
15          allowing us to recruit and retain the best  
16          possible workforce for New York State human  
17          services programs.

18          What is our New York State budget,  
19          after all, if not a statement of New Yorkers'  
20          values and priorities? And human services  
21          programs around the state are very important  
22          for New Yorkers should they need to access  
23          them.

24          Turning to the foster-care workforce

1 now specifically, we have just updated our  
2 turnover and our salary information in a  
3 survey that we do of all of our agencies, and  
4 we know that our salaries remain far too low  
5 to be competitive. We're competing with fast  
6 food establishments for our front-line staff,  
7 and we have a 41 percent turnover in our  
8 front-line childcare workers. We have a  
9 38 percent turnover for our caseworkers  
10 around the state.

11 This is unacceptable because, as was  
12 brought up earlier, every time one of our  
13 workers departs a program, it is the loss of  
14 a relationship that a young person in foster  
15 care has built with a caring adult that  
16 they've come to rely on every day, that they  
17 go to with their challenges and successes.  
18 And we simply must do better on behalf of our  
19 kids to stabilize our workforce.

20 And we will be coming around to all of  
21 you for your help in driving an increase to  
22 the foster-care rate, which is set,  
23 post-budget, administratively between DOB and  
24 OCFS. Your partnership has been completely

1           invaluable over the last couple of years in  
2           helping us to make sure that we have an  
3           increase in our main mechanism to provide  
4           salary increases to our foster-care staff.

5                     We're also asking for your help in  
6           growing two programs that are actually  
7           higher ed programs for our child welfare  
8           staff. There is one that is focused on loan  
9           forgiveness for our child welfare workers and  
10          another one focused on tuition support for  
11          our child welfare staff. Those programs are  
12          in the Executive Budget at 50,000 each. We  
13          are appreciative of that, but we are asking  
14          for \$1 million for each one of those  
15          programs.

16                    HESC just made the first round of  
17          these awards this past fall, and we  
18          understand that there was just enough funding  
19          to hand out four awards around the state.  
20          And so while that's a handful of childcare  
21          workers and childcare staff around the state  
22          that are benefiting from those programs, we  
23          know that the need is far greater, and we ask  
24          for your help on that.

1           We are going to be implementing the  
2           federal Family First Act this next fall in  
3           our child welfare field, and it's hard to  
4           understate how much change that's going to  
5           bring to our field. There's also a lot of  
6           opportunity in it, and we are really excited  
7           about the opportunity to work together with  
8           OCFS and with our other partners in the  
9           counties on making sure that kids in foster  
10          care are in family-based settings whenever  
11          possible.

12           It's just that there is some very  
13          ambitious Article VII language that has been  
14          included on the independent assessor, and we  
15          have some serious concerns that if this  
16          particular part of the language, which has  
17          the independent assessor ultimately making  
18          the placement decision -- there are some  
19          safety concerns that brings up.

20           What if the local district is actually  
21          unable to find another placement within the  
22          30 days, as is written in the ELFA language?  
23          And we don't understand why this independent  
24          assessor has been given so much power to, it

1           seems, override the judgment of a judge and  
2           other local district commissioner who, at the  
3           end of the day, is ultimately responsible for  
4           the safety of the young people in his or her  
5           care.

6                         And also there have been no details  
7           established on this independent assessor role  
8           yet, which is a brand-new invention of the  
9           federal act. And so we think that this is  
10          really asking the Legislature to, you know,  
11          sign off on this before we have all of the  
12          details needed to understand the proposal in  
13          full. So we're asking for your help in just  
14          making sure that that language makes sense  
15          for the system that we need.

16                        We know that we need to invest a lot  
17          more in building the amount of foster homes  
18          that we need and supporting our kinship  
19          caregivers around the state, and the amount  
20          of transition funding that's in the budget is  
21          just simply not enough to do that yet, so  
22          we're asking for your help with that as well.

23                        Thank you for the opportunity to  
24          testify.

1 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

2 Assemblyman Ra.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

4 Good afternoon. I just had a couple  
5 of questions.

6 In terms of the share for special  
7 education placement, can you tell us about  
8 what the impact was when that shift was made  
9 in New York City? Just, you know, in terms  
10 of what we can expect it's going to have on  
11 the system and the rest of the state if this  
12 was to go through.

13 MS. BRADY-STEPHEN: Thank you for that  
14 question. Our understanding is that it  
15 hasn't had too much of an impact on the  
16 number of placements that were made from the  
17 New York City School District when the shift  
18 went through a couple of years ago at the  
19 New York City level.

20 You know, ultimately it is up to the  
21 school district to make the best decision on  
22 behalf of the young people that they see  
23 before them. I think what's important to  
24 point out is that, as Senator Krueger brought

1 up before, this is something that was done to  
2 New York City a couple of years ago in the  
3 budget, and here we're hearing in this year  
4 that it is now parity, that it's going to be  
5 carried out statewide.

6 And so, you know, the impact on the  
7 school districts -- it seems like it's about  
8 25 million that they're picking up this  
9 share, and we are trying to figure out some  
10 data in terms of answering your question on  
11 what kind of impact there was in New York  
12 City.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: I mean, I'd assume  
14 with any cost shift to a municipality,  
15 obviously, you know, it has an impact on  
16 their budgeting. And outside of New York  
17 City, with the tax cap and things of that  
18 nature, it makes it that much more difficult.  
19 And obviously you're dealing with independent  
20 school districts that are much smaller as  
21 well.

22 One other issue I wanted to ask you  
23 about, the ELFA language and Family First. I  
24 think what I'm getting is that this really

1 goes further than the federal government is  
2 really asking us to go; is that correct?

3 MS. BRADY-STEPHEN: It does. And just  
4 that one particular part of it which has the  
5 requirement that the local district would  
6 have to remove the young person out of the  
7 QRTF within 30 days -- that's not required by  
8 federal law. So OCFS and the Executive  
9 Budget are going far and above that with this  
10 proposal, yes.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

12 MS. BRADY-STEPHEN: Thank you.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Savino.

14 SENATOR SAVINO: Thank you, Senator  
15 Krueger.

16 Good to see you again.

17 I just want to make this point,  
18 because we've had this discussion before.  
19 You heard me speak earlier today about my  
20 concerns about the human service workforce.  
21 But just in case people think I'm  
22 exaggerating, the starting salary for a  
23 caseworker in the nonprofit sector with a  
24 bachelor's degree is \$36,994. The starting

1 salary for an ACS worker in the City of  
2 New York with the same bachelor's degree is  
3 \$49,279. That number jumps to \$53,519 if  
4 they complete six months of probation and  
5 they are moved up to the next level, Child  
6 Protective Specialist Level 2. If you become  
7 a brand-new youth development specialist in  
8 the City of New York -- those are the workers  
9 who now service the Raise the Age program --  
10 they walk in the door at \$46,000.

11 So this gap between the nonprofit and  
12 the public sector is growing further and  
13 further apart every year. And so I join you  
14 in your support calling for the establishment  
15 of a real fund to provide social work loan  
16 forgiveness, because these agencies are not  
17 going to be able to recruit anybody or retain  
18 them, and it has -- as you know, it has a  
19 terrible effect on young people.

20 And for those people who think these  
21 kids don't know the difference, I have not  
22 been a full-time caseworker since 1996. I  
23 still have young people who were on my  
24 caseload who call me, oftentimes in crisis,

1           because they don't forget the people who made  
2           a difference in their life. And so when  
3           they're separated again or there's disruption  
4           again, it doubly traumatizes them.

5                        So I totally support the idea of  
6           expanding the current social work loan  
7           forgiveness program to the nonprofit sector,  
8           adding as much money as we can. Thank you.

9                        MS. BRADY-STEPIEN: Thank you so much,  
10          Senator, for your advocacy and for pointing  
11          out the reality in terms of the huge  
12          disparity between us and the public sector.

13                       And the reality is that we simply  
14          cannot compete, and that's what we're  
15          finding. And also we're often the training  
16          ground, really, for the public sector,  
17          because folks are with us for, you know,  
18          maybe a few years, they're recent graduates,  
19          and then they move on to the public sector.  
20          There's more money, there's better benefits,  
21          and who can blame them.

22                       But as you point out, the importance  
23          of that relationship that is built is  
24          something that sustains over time. And for

1           our young people it's one more loss that  
2           they're experiencing after they've been  
3           through a lot.

4                     Thank you.

5                     CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

6                     CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblywoman  
7           Jaffee.

8                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: Thank you.

9                     There's no question you also recognize  
10          the difficulty with childcare and  
11          affordability in terms of asking the workers  
12          as well --

13                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Is your mic on?

14                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: Is it on now?

15                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes.

16                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: Okay. I'm  
17          sorry.

18                    The issues of childcare workers and  
19          the salaries, the limited salaries they earn,  
20          and then with that, the affordability of  
21          childcare, you mentioned that within this  
22          context. Do you see this continuing at this  
23          time? Is it something that we need to  
24          address? How soon can we move forward with



1           discussed about the safety and living spaces  
2           for those in foster care. Could you explain  
3           a little bit more about that?

4                     MS. BRADY-STEPHEN: Thank you for  
5           giving me time to do that. I couldn't fit it  
6           into my five minutes.

7                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: I know, I just  
8           said that for --

9                     MS. BRADY-STEPHEN: So we have had a  
10          capital proposal the last couple of years.  
11          We are asking for an investment from the  
12          Legislature for our residential foster-care  
13          campuses around the state and group homes and  
14          things of that nature.

15                    Our foster-care rate was held flat for  
16          many years, and our agencies did not have the  
17          resources from the state to be able to make  
18          those capital investments -- it's things like  
19          boilers, roofs, and it's also just making  
20          safety investments. We are, in our  
21          residential programs, under the jurisdiction  
22          of the Justice Center, and the Justice Center  
23          often wants to see camera footage of events  
24          that occurred, so it's investing in those

1 cameras also. So we'd like to see 15 million  
2 put forward for that.

3 There's been a nonprofit  
4 infrastructure capital investment program  
5 made in the past. In terms of a couple of  
6 years ago, there was about \$120 million  
7 available for that. We also certainly  
8 support larger efforts to put more money into  
9 that. That would cover us as well.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: We don't really  
11 have the time, but the issue regarding the  
12 foster-care youth in college -- I've had  
13 several come to me and ask for assistance.  
14 Once they are out of that foster-care system,  
15 they really are left very much with the need  
16 and with the inability to have the funding  
17 for their college program. So it's something  
18 we do need to focus on.

19 MS. BRADY-STEPHEN: Right. We want to  
20 go to that program this year. Thank you.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: Yes. Thank  
22 you.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

24 Next we have Early Care & Learning

1 Council, Meredith Chimento, followed by  
2 New York State Network For Youth Success,  
3 followed by New York State Kinship Navigator,  
4 Catholic Family Center. Those folks should  
5 start to make their way down. Thank you.

6 MS. CHIMENTO: Good afternoon.

7 I think that one of the hot topics  
8 today is the availability of quality  
9 affordable childcare in New York State. And  
10 I'd like to speak specifically to the role  
11 that the childcare resource and referral  
12 agencies play in developing quality and  
13 affordable childcare.

14 Ten years ago, the Early Care &  
15 Learning Council and 35 CCR&R agencies were  
16 awarded a continuation of a long-standing  
17 contract to serve childcare providers,  
18 parents, businesses, and their communities.  
19 In 2012, those contracts received a cut. It  
20 has remained untouched since then, yet the  
21 work of the CCR&Rs continue.

22 A CCR&R's role in the community is  
23 multifaceted. It helps parents locate  
24 quality childcare, it helps businesses stay

1 in the community by assisting employees and  
2 finding quality care for their children.  
3 CCR&Rs also provide a variety of training and  
4 intensive technical assistance to assist  
5 childcare providers in exceeding standards of  
6 quality, best practice, and meeting  
7 regulations.

8 This year, as you all know, has been  
9 almost the perfect convergence of national  
10 and local attention regarding the childcare  
11 crisis, its exceedingly high cost, and the  
12 underpaid wages that the predominantly  
13 woman-based workforce earns. At the same  
14 time, the Child Care and Development Block  
15 Grant afforded many CCR&Rs and my  
16 organization, the Early Care & Learning  
17 Council, an opportunity to expand its  
18 services towards increasing the quality of  
19 infant and toddler care in New York State.

20 Mental health consultants,  
21 infant/toddler specialists have been hired  
22 and trainings have been developed, all  
23 working toward meeting children and the  
24 individuals that care for them at a time in

1           their lives when their neurons are firing,  
2           brain cells are developing, and the  
3           foundation for an exceptional education is  
4           being formed.

5                        Yet the workforce responsible for the  
6           development of these centers, of the family  
7           members and providers who care for our  
8           youngest and most vulnerable citizens, are  
9           vastly underpaid. We are losing staff to  
10          programs where the pay is higher, to state  
11          jobs, and to different fields. Over the past  
12          three months, at least three long-term,  
13          highly qualified, and valued CCR&R staff have  
14          left due to insufficient pay.

15                       Last year the CCR&Rs in New York State  
16          fielded over 40,000 referral calls, delivered  
17          37,000 hours of basic technical assistance,  
18          and 19,000 hours of intensive technical  
19          assistance which helps parents locate care,  
20          helps providers increase their skills,  
21          knowledge, and behavior.

22                       What these figures don't show is the  
23          challenges that each of the 35 CCR&Rs face.  
24          With flat funding for 10 years, and the cut

1 to the contracts in 2012, the staff at the  
2 CCR&Rs suffer. Many have master's degrees,  
3 and many just earn just over minimum wage.  
4 The stress that these employees feel and the  
5 choices that CCR&Rs have to make are  
6 devastating.

7 Next week, over 250 childcare  
8 advocates will come here to Albany to carry  
9 the ask of the Early Care & Learning Council,  
10 Winning Beginning, Empire State Campaign --  
11 which you'll hear more about from my fellow  
12 advocates. But many CCR&Rs will not be able  
13 to attend. They have lost grants, travel and  
14 professional development budgets have been  
15 cut, and one CCR&R even called us last night  
16 so disappointed that they lost another grant,  
17 that they aren't able to join their sisters  
18 in the Capitol and rally to meet with each of  
19 you to tell the successes of our field and  
20 the challenges.

21 Sixty percent of New York State has  
22 been classified as a childcare desert, which  
23 means there's no care within reasonable  
24 proximity to a person's home. To address

1           this issue, the Childcare Availability Task  
2           Force has been working diligently for the  
3           past year to make recommendations at the  
4           conclusion of 2020. Regional Economic  
5           Development Councils have been tasked with  
6           making childcare a priority, and the  
7           aforementioned historic increase in the CCBG  
8           grant and its funding of infant/toddler  
9           services in New York State, have all laid a  
10          foundation for quality care in New York  
11          State.

12                       However, CCR&Rs will only be able to  
13          work with existing providers and new  
14          providers by offering boot camps, fiscal  
15          management, teaching them how to braid and  
16          blend funding, connect to local businesses  
17          and chambers to support their growth and  
18          ensure their sustainability, if we receive  
19          and realize a contract increase. CCR&R  
20          staffs have gone for many years without a  
21          cost of living adjustment, without an  
22          increase, without the ability to care for  
23          their own. Some CCR&R staff earn so little  
24          that they qualify for childcare subsidies

1 themselves.

2 I ask each of you to consider the hard  
3 work and success potential of these CCR&Rs.  
4 We ask you to identify \$5 million to account  
5 for a lack of COLA which will support the  
6 critical work of EC&LC and position ourselves  
7 at the ready to meet the needs of the  
8 recommendations of the Governor's task force  
9 and the Regional Economic Development  
10 Councils.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
12 Thank you for being here.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: May I?

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assemblywoman  
15 Jaffee.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: Yes, I want to  
17 thank you for your comments and your focus.

18 The childcare subsidies are truly  
19 essential for our families so that they can  
20 provide the opportunity for their child to be  
21 in an environment, a very positive  
22 environment where they are able to maintain  
23 their work when they are at that very, very  
24 limited of income. It really is essential.

1                   And the after-school programs as well  
2                   that you note are so important to ensure that  
3                   our children are in an environment -- it's  
4                   very positive. It gives them emotional and  
5                   social skills in a very positive way, and  
6                   it's something that we need to continue to  
7                   focus on. And so I thank you for that  
8                   suggestion, and perhaps we can discuss this  
9                   as we move forward.

10                   MS. CHIMENTO: Absolutely. Thank you  
11                   for your continued support, as always.

12                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
13                   Thank you for being here.

14                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you for  
15                   being here.

16                   MS. CHIMENTO: Thank you.

17                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: As I said, next  
18                   we have New York State Network for Youth  
19                   Success. I'm not sure if there's anybody  
20                   here from New York State Kinship Navigator; I  
21                   don't think anybody has signed in yet. So  
22                   then we would have, following this, Services  
23                   and Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and  
24                   Transgender Elders, SAGE, followed by

1 New York State Association of Training and  
2 Employment Professionals.

3 So we have Trudy Morgan, policy  
4 coordinator. Please proceed.

5 MS. MORGAN: Good afternoon. Thank  
6 you for allowing me to testify today. My  
7 name is Trudy Morgan, and I'm the policy  
8 coordinator of the New York State Network for  
9 Youth Success.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Could you pull  
11 the mic a little bit closer to your mouth?

12 MS. MORGAN: Is that better now?

13 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay.

15 MS. MORGAN: So my name is Trudy  
16 Morgan, and I'm the policy coordinator for  
17 the New York State Network for Youth Success,  
18 and I'm here to talk to you about  
19 after-school, summer, and expanded learning  
20 opportunities.

21 And before I invite you to look at  
22 some of the research with me about the  
23 crucial impact after-school has on New York  
24 State's children, I would like to emphasize

1           that I am a testament of why after-school  
2           matters. I am where I am today in my role,  
3           following my passion, because I was able to  
4           participate in several after-school programs  
5           that broadened my perspectives as a new  
6           immigrant, equipped me with the necessary  
7           skills and resources to navigate my  
8           academics, and served as a catalyst for my  
9           robust interest in policy and advocacy.

10                       Evidence shows that after-school  
11           programs play a critical role in improving  
12           student outcomes. A recent study looked at a  
13           broad range of after-school programs across  
14           different age groups and focus areas -- such  
15           as academics, athletics, and career  
16           pathways -- and found significant positive  
17           impacts on students. These quality  
18           after-school programs support our students to  
19           pursue their passions and learn how to take  
20           chances and make calculated risks and healthy  
21           choices.

22                       We also know that our after-school  
23           programs do not only help working families  
24           build bridges to their children's school day

1 by offering academic and social supports, but  
2 they also help working families maintain  
3 their own economic stability at work while  
4 knowing their children are safe and engaged.

5 We are pleased that the state has  
6 shown an interest in after-school by  
7 increasing investments through the Governor's  
8 Empire State After-School Program. While we  
9 support additional investments in  
10 after-school programs from the state, we must  
11 ensure that existing funding streams that  
12 support currently operating after-school  
13 programs are adequately funded as well.

14 Therefore we urge the Legislature to  
15 restore funding for the Advantage After  
16 School Programs. The Governor's budget  
17 proposal of \$28 million is a reduction from  
18 last year's enacted budget of \$33 million.  
19 We thank the Legislature for restoring the  
20 \$5 million cut last year and ask you and urge  
21 you to do so again.

22 At least 2,500 students currently  
23 enrolled in Advantage programs will be at  
24 risk of losing access to their programs if

1 funding is not restored. We also ask the  
2 Legislature to increase Advantage funding by  
3 \$5.1 million to increase the per-pupil rate  
4 to \$2,320. This \$2,320 would account for the  
5 minimum wage increase while holding all other  
6 factors related to after-school programs  
7 constant, including the number of children  
8 served.

9 We also urge the state to restore  
10 \$1.5 million in funding for the Youth  
11 Development Program that was cut from the  
12 Executive Budget this year, and also maintain  
13 the Governor's proposal to increase funding  
14 for Summer Youth Employment by an additional  
15 \$1 million.

16 On childcare, we also ask the state to  
17 invest \$40 million to create a fund to  
18 increase workforce compensation and improve  
19 childcare quality, and another \$60 million in  
20 the state's childcare subsidy program to  
21 expand access to more working families.

22 More than one-third of childcare  
23 allows New York to support childcare for  
24 school-aged children, including after-school

1 and summer programs. We also urge the state  
2 to reinstate \$50,000 in Child Care and  
3 Development Block Grant funds to provide  
4 technical assistance to Advantage After  
5 School Program grantees and other school-age  
6 childcare programs around increasing program  
7 quality.

8           These funds helped the network create  
9 and maintain the Quality Self-Assessment Tool  
10 for more than 15 years, which is the quality  
11 standards assessment tool created by experts  
12 and practitioners in New York State and is  
13 recommended for use by all state-funded  
14 after-school programs, including the  
15 Advantage After School Program, the Empire  
16 State After School Program, and the extended  
17 learning programs.

18           We also urge the state to invest an  
19 additional \$1.8 million towards the  
20 Educational Incentive Program, for a total  
21 funding of \$7 million. The Educational  
22 Incentive Program provides scholarships to  
23 assist childcare providers participating in  
24 professional development activities with the

1 intent to build provider knowledge, skills,  
2 and competencies to improve quality childcare  
3 in the state.

4 Finally, we request that the state  
5 invest 25 percent of any revenue secured  
6 through the legalization of adult-use  
7 marijuana into after-school programs. In  
8 Alaska, which allocated 12.5 percent of  
9 revenue from the legalization of recreational  
10 marijuana to after-school, data shows that  
11 youth who participated in programs just twice  
12 a week were 40 percent less likely to use  
13 marijuana.

14 I know that after-school works,  
15 because I am the return on investment in  
16 after-school.

17 In closing, I want you to know we are  
18 part of Winning Beginning NY, and we support  
19 the coalition's agenda.

20 Thank you for your time, and I am  
21 happy to answer any questions.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

23 Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: Yes, I want to

1           thank you because you are speaking to the  
2           very real issues in terms of additional  
3           funding for childcare subsidies and so many  
4           of the other issues in youth employment and  
5           after-school programs.

6                     All of those issues that you bring to  
7           the table here are so essential for our  
8           youth, it really is an investment in their  
9           future. And I thank you, and I -- it's  
10          something that I stand with, and we know how  
11          important it is. So thank you very much.

12                    MS. MORGAN: Thank you very much,  
13          Assemblymember Jaffee, for your continued  
14          support.

15                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And Senator  
16          Roxanne Persaud.

17                    SENATOR PERSAUD: Good afternoon.  
18          Thank you very much for your advocacy.

19                    I just have one question for you. On  
20          the Summer Youth Program, you indicate here  
21          that the funding -- the additional \$1 million  
22          of funding will support the additional staff  
23          and increase the number of youth that the  
24          staff will serve by 750. That's not what our

1 analysis shows.

2 MS. MORGAN: Yes. That's actually  
3 correct. So this was a -- something we  
4 confirmed as of last night, that this would  
5 go toward the minimum wage increase while  
6 holding the number of students served in the  
7 Summer Youth Employment constant.

8 SENATOR PERSAUD: Okay. So this -- I  
9 just wanted to clarify that this is not --

10 MS. MORGAN: Yes.

11 SENATOR PERSAUD: Thank you very much.

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Good for catching  
13 the error. Thank you.

14 Thank you very much for being here  
15 today.

16 Our next testifier we believe is not  
17 here, New York Kinship Navigator. Anybody  
18 want to argue differently? Okay.

19 Then -- sorry -- Melissa Sklarz,  
20 Services & Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian,  
21 Bisexual, Transgender Elders -- or, as we  
22 call you, SAGE.

23 MS. SKLARZ: Much simpler.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And for people

1 lining up, next is the New York Association  
2 of Training and Employment Professionals,  
3 followed by New York State Defenders  
4 Association Veterans Defense Program.

5 Hi, Melissa.

6 MS. SKLARZ: Right. Hi, Senator.

7 Okay, so my name is Melissa Sklarz.  
8 I'm the SAGE senior government relations  
9 strategist. Thank you to the members of the  
10 Senate and Assembly for holding this hearing  
11 today and allowing me the opportunity to  
12 testify on behalf of SAGE.

13 SAGE is the country's first and  
14 largest organization dedicated to improving  
15 the lives of LGBT elders. Founded in  
16 New York City in 1978, SAGE provides services  
17 and programs to LGBT older people throughout  
18 our five SAGE Centers across the city, four  
19 SAGE affiliates here in New York State --  
20 including Bay Shore, Hudson Valley, Syracuse,  
21 and Rochester -- and a network of affiliates  
22 across the United States.

23 Because of thin support networks, LGBT  
24 older people need to rely more heavily on

1 community service providers for care as they  
2 age. LGBT older people are more likely to  
3 face discrimination when accessing health  
4 care, social services, and other programs.  
5 For so many LGBT elders, it is their safety  
6 net.

7 I wanted to speak briefly today about  
8 three programs here -- of course housing, but  
9 that will be next week -- but within our SAGE  
10 housing, we have our SAGE Centers. As you  
11 may or may not know, this year we've opened  
12 our first LGBT-friendly housing in Brooklyn,  
13 called Stonewall House, in the Fort Green  
14 area in Senator Montgomery's district. We  
15 had the ribbon-cutting last month. It's  
16 145 units. Twenty-five percent are formerly  
17 homeless elders, 77 percent are people of  
18 color. And that will mesh well with the  
19 neighborhood. We -- it was split between  
20 LGBT people and people from NYCHA.

21 And this year, coming in April, we  
22 will be following up with a second house in  
23 Crotona North, in the Bronx, which will have  
24 83 units.

1           Both of these will have SAGE Centers,  
2           as the first LGBT-friendly housing in  
3           New York State. The Sage Center in  
4           Corona Park will be the largest SAGE Center  
5           in the state, over 10,000 feet, and the one  
6           in Brooklyn will have 8500 feet.

7           And so many of the elders who attend  
8           our SAGE Centers daily struggle with mental  
9           illness, substance abuse, and homelessness,  
10          requiring an intensive amount of care  
11          management and social service support. So  
12          with these houses open and to be open, we  
13          expect higher levels of needs among the  
14          residents and elders in the surrounding  
15          communities. Our SAGE Centers are open not  
16          only to the residents but the elder residents  
17          that are in the neighborhoods here, and so we  
18          expect to see a great influx. No one's ever  
19          complained there's too much social service  
20          for elders in New York.

21          So we will be requiring additional  
22          investment in our care management and SAGE  
23          Center program to meet these needs. SAGE  
24          requests \$100,000 in support from New York

1 State to provide comprehensive care  
2 management. SAGE Center programming support  
3 services alone cover predominantly LGBT elder  
4 residents in and around the -- our welcoming  
5 elder housing developments.

6 SAGE also requests a restoration of  
7 \$200,000 in support of our general services  
8 and expenses in support of our state LGBT  
9 elders. In total, we request a restoration  
10 of \$300,000 in fiscal year 2021.

11 Finally, as our veteran program -- we  
12 heard today Colonel McDonough and  
13 Assemblymember Barrett talked about SAGE  
14 vets. We are growing, we are expanding, we  
15 are -- most of our LGBT vets do not live in  
16 New York City but live throughout the state.

17 Our manager of SAGE Vets has been  
18 traveling from Long Island up to the  
19 Adirondacks, through the Southern Tier, to  
20 let veterans know that their discharges can  
21 be updated and approved, that care management  
22 is available, that legal services -- and the  
23 more that we can connect people to the  
24 federal system will make it easier on

1 New York State to have to worry less about  
2 the problems of homelessness and suicide if  
3 we can access them to the federal system.

4 So in this fiscal year, SAGE  
5 respectfully requests an increase in funding,  
6 requesting \$150,000 to continue the outreach  
7 and benefits connecting to LGBT elder  
8 veterans. The increased support will expand  
9 the SAGE Vet program and access LGBT elder  
10 veterans throughout the state through a  
11 re-grant to our SAGE affiliates at Out  
12 Alliance in Rochester and in SAGE Upstate in  
13 Syracuse.

14 So thanks for the chance to do this  
15 today, and I'll be happy to answer any  
16 questions.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

18 Anybody? Then thank you very much for  
19 being with us.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAFFEE: Thank you.

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

22 MS. SKLARZ: Thank you.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next we have  
24 New York Association of Training and

1           Employment Professionals, Melinda Mack,  
2           executive director, followed by the New York  
3           State Defenders Association Veterans Defense  
4           Program.

5                     MS. MACK: Hi, how are you. I usually  
6           think my organization's a mouthful, so I'm  
7           glad that there's others that are also tough.

8                     Hi, everyone, and good afternoon. My  
9           name is Melinda Mack. I'm the executive  
10          director of the New York Association of  
11          Training and Employment Professionals, which  
12          is known as New York State's workforce  
13          development association.

14                    I'm also not going to read through my  
15          testimony, but I want to spend a few minutes  
16          highlighting a few things that I think we've  
17          touched on a bit but haven't addressed yet in  
18          today's hearing.

19                    So as you know, I represent members  
20          who provide workforce development services,  
21          which are also part of the human services  
22          field, across New York State and all 62  
23          counties. They range from really small  
24          organizations like community-based

1 organizations to huge institutions like SUNY  
2 and CUNY.

3 I think one of the things I want to  
4 underscore is, as you know, many of the folks  
5 that our members serve are those who need  
6 jobs not only the most, but also will lift  
7 folks out of poverty based on their outcomes  
8 and employment. As you also know, around  
9 42 percent of New Yorkers have a high school  
10 equivalency or less. And so as we continue  
11 to think about human services investment, we  
12 really should be focusing our efforts in  
13 education, job training and employment  
14 services for the many New Yorkers who need  
15 support and skills training to be able to  
16 access good or better jobs.

17 I also want to just mention that, you  
18 know, we've worked with United Way over the  
19 last couple of years to highlight those who  
20 are working poor. We do know in our state  
21 about a quarter-million New Yorkers are stuck  
22 in part-time or low-wage work. These are  
23 folks who are working. These are people who  
24 have jobs, who are struggling to still make

1 ends meet. And about 45 percent of  
2 New Yorkers fit into that ALICE criteria as  
3 described by United Way.

4 For about 20 years now, New York's  
5 strategy to solve the workforce development  
6 crisis that we're facing -- and we have about  
7 50,000 jobs right now that are open and in  
8 demand that we cannot fill -- has been flat  
9 funding, cuts, or tax credits. When we look  
10 across the budget this year, the Executive  
11 Budget, we're about \$40 million short of the  
12 enacted budget last year.

13 However, there are some bright spots.  
14 We heard Summer Youth Employment mentioned  
15 here -- again, to offset the increase in  
16 minimum wage. There's also two new  
17 initiatives, one supporting environmental  
18 justice training across the state and then  
19 also diversity in entertainment.

20 I do want to spend a minute touching  
21 on the Governor's investment last year of  
22 \$175 million in workforce development, which  
23 is managed through the new Office of  
24 Workforce Development. Again, for those

1           who've seen me testify before, this was a  
2           huge win for the workforce system statewide,  
3           to think that there would now be dedicated  
4           resources going to education, job training,  
5           and employment to start to, you know,  
6           address, a little bit here and there, what  
7           we're seeing across the state in terms of  
8           service delivery needs.

9                         At this point about \$3.4 million in  
10           funding has been awarded, and the Governor  
11           has recommitted to investing in those dollars  
12           for the upcoming years. I do, however, want  
13           to draw your attention to the fact that the  
14           flexible dollars in that fund are coming out  
15           of the Pay for Success contingency fund,  
16           which continue to remain relatively  
17           unflexible, or inflexible.

18                        We are sort of at the discretion of  
19           the Division of Budget in terms of what  
20           constraints they put on those resources. For  
21           the human services sector -- again, of which  
22           many provide these economic development and  
23           workforce services -- they're required to  
24           have all of the money up-front in order to be

1           able to deliver the services, and then  
2           they're reimbursed by the state based on  
3           their outcomes. It's just not tenable, it's  
4           not reasonable, and it's not the way that we  
5           know to do effective best practices in  
6           workforce development.

7                     Additionally, we've prescribed  
8           performance for an outcome of employment  
9           after one year. If you're working with those  
10          with low basic skills, if you're supporting  
11          individuals with disabilities, if you're  
12          working with some of our hardest-to-serve  
13          populations or even trying to put someone  
14          through an apprenticeship program, one year  
15          is not enough time in order to be able to  
16          help someone access a good or better job.

17                    The last thing I wanted to mention  
18          before I also touch on childcare is that we  
19          still also struggle across the state in being  
20          able to measure the performance of our  
21          systems. I'm sure many of the other human  
22          service organizations or folks who represent  
23          human services would say our members have to  
24          enter data into anywhere between 10 and 12

1 data systems across New York State. It is a  
2 huge time-suck.

3 It also does not allow us to  
4 effectively describe or showcase what we're  
5 able to do. So we often hear from you all,  
6 "So tell us how many people you placed into  
7 employment across the state, across your many  
8 programs." I can't. I can't do it in a  
9 meaningful way.

10 And so we also ask and encourage you  
11 to continue to focus on -- I know  
12 Assemblymember Bronson has talked about this  
13 for years -- a way to better articulate and  
14 communicate the success of the workforce  
15 system and our investments in education, job  
16 training, and employment.

17 The last thing I wanted to mention is  
18 that childcare is a huge issue. Everywhere  
19 we go across the state and we talk to  
20 employers, people are missing work, they're  
21 having to call in, they cannot find access to  
22 affordable, reasonable childcare. This will  
23 continue to be a major impact on our economic  
24 development investment. You can deliver

1 jobs, you can have job numbers, as many as  
2 you like, but if you cannot find affordable  
3 childcare for people to be able to actually  
4 take those jobs, we're going to continue to  
5 struggle.

6 Thank you. I'm happy to answer any of  
7 your questions.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman  
10 Bronson.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Thank you. I  
12 just want to follow up on the \$175 million.

13 MS. MACK: Sure.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: What was the  
15 dollar amount that you said has already been  
16 disbursed or authorized?

17 MS. MACK: Sure. So we've seen a  
18 press release two weeks ago, \$3.4 million in  
19 funding.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Okay. And are  
21 you aware of applications that have been  
22 submitted and pending, and what that dollar  
23 amount translates into?

24 MS. MACK: No, so I don't know the

1 number.

2 But I do know that there's been a  
3 number -- so the way that the Governor's  
4 office is structured, the application  
5 process, there's a phase one that goes  
6 through a subcommittee of the Regional  
7 Economic Development Council where they sort  
8 of bless it, they say it aligns with the  
9 original strategy.

10 If that makes it through that  
11 gauntlet, it then goes up to the Office of  
12 Workforce Development in the Division of  
13 Budget, in which they negotiate and decide  
14 whether or not it meets the criteria for the  
15 funding stream. It then goes through a  
16 second phase of application where then they  
17 sort of go into contracting and end up  
18 supporting -- or moving forward.

19 So I do know there's a number that's  
20 sort of in that middle ground, but we  
21 certainly aren't spending money anywhere near  
22 fast enough.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Right. And this  
24 is actually the second year that there was

1 174 million, but nothing happened the first  
2 year, correct?

3 MS. MACK: Correct.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: All right. And  
5 are you aware of or can you issue some kind  
6 of idea on what's happening in connection  
7 with these \$175 million that are available,  
8 and how we're addressing the home care  
9 workforce?

10 MS. MACK: Yeah, so there is not a  
11 direct connection in terms of how it's dated.  
12 Again, I think we see across all caregiving  
13 occupations a consistent challenge around  
14 wages and the ability to recruit based on  
15 wages and educational requirements. So  
16 whether you're a direct support professional,  
17 home health aide, or childcare worker, we're  
18 seeing very similar challenges in the  
19 workforce field.

20 Of course, the 175 can certainly be  
21 used for education, training, and placement  
22 of those workers. It cannot be paid to  
23 replace wages. And so that's one of the  
24 struggles we're seeing.

1                   ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: All right. And  
2                   so it's been identified in home care workers  
3                   some of the struggles, some of the  
4                   barriers -- childcare being one of them,  
5                   transportation being another, the fact that  
6                   they get paid such low wages they can't even  
7                   pay for their car maintenance, yet that's an  
8                   essential part of their job because they have  
9                   to travel from site to site.

10                   Your understanding of the parameters  
11                   of these funds, could that offset any of  
12                   those costs, and possibly a pilot program or  
13                   something else as we're looking at developing  
14                   that workforce?

15                   MS. MACK: Yeah, we're hopeful that  
16                   the Division of Budget sees those as  
17                   opportunities for innovation, right?

18                   There's also something called the  
19                   Employer Resource Network that happens across  
20                   many regions where it's a coordination of  
21                   community-based services and human services  
22                   to support low-wage workers.

23                   Right now, the way that it stands, it  
24                   needs to end in employment. So any of those

1 retention supports that are necessary to get  
2 low-wage workers the skills and, more  
3 importantly, the work experience necessary to  
4 move up -- right now it doesn't look like  
5 those can be invested in unless there's an  
6 employment outcome.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Okay. And just  
8 a quick shout out to the Empire State  
9 Apprenticeship Tax Credit Program.

10 MS. MACK: Yeah.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: So we need to  
12 make sure that gets renewed in this budget.  
13 Thank you.

14 MS. MACK: Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next we have  
18 NYSDA, New York State Defenders Association,  
19 Veterans Defense Program, Lieutenant Colonel  
20 Roy Diehl, to be followed by the New York  
21 State Veterans Council, to be followed by  
22 Prevent Child Abuse New York.

23 LT. COL. DIEHL: Thank you. I see  
24 you're enjoying acronyms, which is, for

1 anyone in uniform, something that you both  
2 live by all the time, trip over, and use to  
3 abuse your friends and family.

4 So my name is Roy Diehl. I'm here as  
5 the deputy director of the Veterans Defense  
6 Program, a statewide program of the New York  
7 Defenders Association.

8 So I'm also one of the 718,000  
9 veterans who call New York home. I enlisted  
10 in the U.S. Army in 1984 at the height of the  
11 Cold War and served in West Germany at the  
12 Iron Curtain, I graduated from Albany Law  
13 School in '92 and was commissioned as a  
14 judge advocate in the New York Army National  
15 Guard in '98. I served with so many of my  
16 fellow New Yorkers in the 42nd Infantry  
17 Division in Lower Manhattan after 9/11 and in  
18 Iraq when we deployed there in 2005. I  
19 retired from the Army Reserve as a lieutenant  
20 colonel in 2015, and I'm now very proud to  
21 serve with the New York State community  
22 serving our New York State veterans through  
23 the Veterans Defense Program.

24 So the VDP, a three-letter acronym for

1 the Veterans Defense Program, provides  
2 training, support, and legal assistance to  
3 promote trauma-informed effective  
4 representation of veterans in criminal and  
5 family courts. I ask for your support for a  
6 legislative add to the budget -- legislative  
7 adds, a total of \$720,000.

8 So state funding has allowed us to  
9 help justice-involved wounded warriors  
10 suffering from mental health conditions to  
11 receive treatment and probation and avoid  
12 incarceration with a cost savings of up to  
13 \$77 million over the past four years. This  
14 year we request a \$500,000 renewal matched  
15 evenly by the Assembly and the Senate for a  
16 statewide program and a \$220,000 renewal by  
17 the Senate for a Long Island office where the  
18 highest concentration of our veterans are  
19 located.

20 So in brief, that's what I have to  
21 say. You have a lot of good things about the  
22 way we do our program in the written  
23 materials that go with the testimony.

24 So I'm subject to your questions.

1 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: No?

2 Thank you --

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

4 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: -- and we have  
5 the remainder of your submitted testimony.

6 Oh, I'm sorry.

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Savino.

8 SENATOR SAVINO: Thank you. Thank  
9 you.

10 I just have one question for you,  
11 because on the back page of your presentation  
12 you have a graph that shows, of the 718,000  
13 veterans in New York State, an estimated  
14 30 percent, or 215,670, have PTSD, TBI, or  
15 depression.

16 So I just wanted -- as I mentioned to  
17 the director of Veterans' Services, when we  
18 added PTSD as a qualified condition, it was  
19 largely driven by veterans. Do you have any  
20 indication of the number of vets who are  
21 suffering -- are trying to avail themselves  
22 of the Compassionate Care Act? Are they  
23 running into obstacles, are you hearing from  
24 them?

1                   LT. COL. DIEHL: This is part of the  
2                   joy of being a veteran. We internalize so  
3                   much. We self-medicate, we self-treat,  
4                   because we were taught to be self-reliant.  
5                   If you've got a problem, you just need to  
6                   overcome.

7                   So how many people have issues that  
8                   they're dealing with that have not manifested  
9                   at this time? This is the best guess from  
10                  the professionals who study these things. We  
11                  know when people commit suicide, they went  
12                  really, really deep. We know when they have  
13                  gotten themselves arrested because of drug or  
14                  substance abuse issues or some kind of  
15                  violence, acting out, we know they're  
16                  manifesting these things.

17                  But there are other people who can be  
18                  going along for years and years and you don't  
19                  notice until all of a sudden something snaps.

20                  So you just never know. It's not like  
21                  we're all, you know, Rambos out there waiting  
22                  to blow up in people's faces. But the  
23                  ability to get in and reach out and touch  
24                  people, to say, Hey, we got your back, come

1 on in, you know, we can help, you could use  
2 some help -- that's part of this whole thing  
3 in the Dwyer Program, as I understand it --

4 SENATOR SAVINO: Right.

5 LT. COL. DIEHL: -- with the mentors,  
6 to reach out and just drag people in so that  
7 they don't feel alone, they're not isolated,  
8 and they can get the help that is out there  
9 for them.

10 Again, with our program, we're only  
11 getting them when they get into the court  
12 system one way or another. When, you know,  
13 we need to make sure the government is not  
14 adding to the abuse and the pain. You know,  
15 so that's where I feel really good in helping  
16 my clients.

17 SENATOR SAVINO: Thank you.

18 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for  
19 being here.

20 LT. COL. DIEHL: Thank you.

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next we have  
23 New York State Veterans Council, Kirby Hannan  
24 and Bob Becker, followed by Prevent Child

1 Abuse New York, followed by Coalition for the  
2 Homeless.

3 MR. HANNAN: Bob actually wound up  
4 with a VA appointment, so he bequeathed the  
5 testimony to me. And I just want to say that  
6 you folks have given a whole new definition  
7 to "hard-ass."

8 (Laughter.)

9 MR. HANNAN: I thought I knew what it  
10 meant in the military. My hats are off to  
11 you, thanks for your dedication, thanks for  
12 listening. Everybody here feels the same  
13 way.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

16 MR. HANNAN: Quickly, I'm going to run  
17 through things that I think work together,  
18 and I'm hoping that you guys can understand  
19 that. And so here goes.

20 Veteran Service Officer funding --  
21 there's a couple of kinds. One's at the  
22 county level, and one's employed by a  
23 congressionally recognized organization such  
24 as mine, the VFW, or the American Legion.

1 All right? Having said that, you're funding  
2 the VFW, for example, to the tune of -- they  
3 have three VSOs -- to the tune of about  
4 \$125,000. Total, not each. Total. All  
5 right? For that, you get back about  
6 \$1.5 million a month in federal benefits in  
7 claims going to New York veterans. So we're  
8 getting our money's worth out of that.

9 And by the way, the county Veteran  
10 Service Officers are doing the same thing.  
11 They're -- the investment that we make, it's  
12 about \$30 for every dollar that we put out  
13 there. And the counties don't get much at  
14 all, by the way, and it should really be  
15 looked at again. Because typically they'll  
16 get about \$10,000 for every 100,000 vets that  
17 they serve, and then there's a formula that  
18 goes up from there.

19 All right. So having said that, you  
20 know, we don't need to have more money there  
21 necessarily. If it happens, good. All  
22 right? What we really need to do is to have  
23 them, the Veteran Service Officers, way more  
24 engaged in the Dwyer Program in terms of

1           accountability.

2                    You're funding the Dwyer Program to  
3           the tune of 3.5 million. We're always  
4           concerned about how OMH handles it. I want  
5           you folks to take a peek at two bills. One  
6           is the Veteran-to-Veteran Peer Certification  
7           Program -- it's one bill, excuse me. It's  
8           Ortiz/Parker. And then down below, with the  
9           Women Vet Peer-to-Peer programs. Again,  
10          Ortiz/Parker, it's in the same bill. We  
11          thought we could split it out, but it didn't  
12          work.

13                   But the bottom line is, the  
14          accreditation -- I could take an  
15          accreditation course through OMH right now.  
16          Or I could audit it, have them recognize me,  
17          I could learn more about peer-to-peer  
18          techniques as a VSO, and I could manage the  
19          program better as OMH distributes the funds.  
20          All right? And that -- I don't need to paint  
21          a different picture from that. And OMH could  
22          recognize me for having audited it. It  
23          doesn't have to be a requirement. It could  
24          be, for getting the funds, for that matter.

1 All right, moving to women veterans,  
2 because we are concerned about that -- and I  
3 heard that numerous times today. All right?  
4 The Women Veteran Peer-to-Peer is kind of  
5 left out. The men -- Dwyer's an AA program,  
6 all right? It's an AA program, it's an  
7 anonymous program at the post level for  
8 veterans to help other veterans. You just  
9 heard from Roy Diehl, he said the same thing.  
10 All right? It's ongoing at the grassroots  
11 level.

12 Having said that, if women are --  
13 don't go to the post as much. I'm going to  
14 say men go to the post, women not so much.  
15 All right? So having said that, Marlene  
16 Roll, an ex-past commander of the VFW, about  
17 once a year calls the women together in  
18 Erie County. She gets 200 women every time  
19 she sends the invite out. So this is what  
20 we're talking about regarding that  
21 Ortiz/Parker bill.

22 No brick and mortar, no money. Again,  
23 the accreditation program, no money. We just  
24 want to up the culture in terms of

1           understanding of how Dwyer can work. And I  
2           heard more about Dwyer today than I have in  
3           the last five years that we've been  
4           testifying, and I just want to say thank you,  
5           because you've been listening.

6                         Veterans Treatment Court benefits from  
7           this because they get a monitor and a mentor  
8           that knows what they're doing, and then if  
9           they can get into additional training from  
10          OCA, they'll know how that fits into the  
11          court structure and then we've got an  
12          alternative sentencing program that can  
13          really work. You've heard from Roy Diehl,  
14          Veterans Defense Program, I don't need to  
15          kill that.

16                        So there we are. Thanks. I don't  
17          blame you, you're not going to insult me if  
18          you don't have any questions. Don't worry  
19          about a thing, I get it.

20                        CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Kirby, you were  
21          very succinct and effective.

22                        CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

23                        CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for  
24          being here.

1 MR. HANNAN: Okay. All right, thanks.

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next, Prevent  
3 Child Abuse New York, followed by Coalition  
4 for the Homeless, followed by Empire Justice  
5 Center.

6 MR. HATHAWAY: Good afternoon. You  
7 have my testimony in front of you. My name  
8 is Tim Hathaway, I'm the executive director  
9 with Prevent Child Abuse New York. I'm not  
10 going to read through this entire  
11 presentation but instead pick out a couple of  
12 important points.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Bring the mic a  
14 little closer.

15 MR. HATHAWAY: Absolutely.

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

17 MR. HATHAWAY: Prevent Child Abuse is  
18 a statewide organization, not-for-profit. We  
19 have projects going on in Niagara Falls all  
20 the way down to the tippy toes of  
21 Long Island. So we're doing a lot of  
22 different work.

23 What I want to call your attention to  
24 are a number of projects. Some of them have

1           been mentioned today already. We believe  
2           primarily that child abuse prevention is a  
3           community-based activity. It's about putting  
4           the right sort of resources in communities  
5           and ensuring that those are working well on  
6           behalf of children and families.

7                     Right now it's estimated that the  
8           average cost of one child abuse case is about  
9           \$210,000. So if we have to march through the  
10          68,000 cases that happen annually in New York  
11          State, we're talking about a lot of dollars.  
12          It's much easier to prevent those child abuse  
13          cases, and we know that there are programs at  
14          work today in the state that do that  
15          prevention work for us. And I'm going to  
16          talk about five of those programs. These are  
17          all evidence-based programs. We know they  
18          work because the science tells us they work.

19                    The first one is maternal/infant/early  
20          childhood home visiting. We've heard a  
21          little bit of discussion about this today.  
22          Our budget ask around this is \$2 million for  
23          the Parent-Child Home Program, \$1 million for  
24          Healthy Families New York, and \$4 million for

1 Nurse-Family Partnership.

2 I will note that the cut to the  
3 private-public partnership is going to hit in  
4 particular the Parent-Child Home Program. So  
5 this will eat at their funding that's already  
6 in place. We're going the wrong direction if  
7 we don't do something about that cut to the  
8 public-private partnership.

9 We also want to spend a minute on  
10 Family Resource Centers. Family Resource  
11 Centers are places in communities where  
12 parents can go to find a supportive voice, to  
13 find information about child development and  
14 about other community resources. They can  
15 find many times the sort of resources that  
16 help strengthen their family in ways that we  
17 know prevent child abuse.

18 The evidence around this program says  
19 that in neighborhoods where Family Resource  
20 Centers are placed, the rate of child abuse  
21 goes down. Simple, simple prevention.

22 We're asking, based on what we've  
23 found, discovered in our work -- we're asking  
24 for a \$200,000 request to place two

1 additional Family Resource Centers, one in  
2 the Mohawk Valley where there is not one  
3 currently, and then also in another location  
4 to be determined.

5 Housing. We've heard a little bit  
6 about housing today. Housing is child abuse  
7 prevention. We know when families have  
8 stable housing, it reduces the amount of  
9 child abuse. Assembly Bill 1620 and Senate  
10 2375 would build out our current affordable  
11 housing availability in the state.

12 Childcare we have talked about many,  
13 many times today. I'm not going to spend a  
14 lot of time there, but what we know is that  
15 when childcare facilities, when providers are  
16 in place, it protects children and builds  
17 strong families.

18 The final one there is after-school.  
19 Again, we've heard a lot about after-school  
20 today. Again, if kids can be in a spot where  
21 there are caring adults when their parents  
22 are not available, we know that protects  
23 children. It supports families. It's  
24 important for us to build out that funding

1 and replace that budget cut of \$5 million  
2 that's been proposed.

3 Also attached to my testimony in the  
4 last seconds here is the childcare budget  
5 request from Winning Beginning and Empire  
6 State Campaign for Childcare. Prevent Child  
7 Abuse is a proud partner with those  
8 organizations.

9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for  
11 being here today.

12 MR. HATHAWAY: Yes.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next, Coalition  
15 for the Homeless, followed by Empire Justice  
16 Center, followed by New York Association for  
17 the Education of Young Children.

18 MS. NORTZ: Good afternoon. My name  
19 is Shelly Nortz. I'm the deputy executive  
20 director for policy with the Coalition for  
21 the Homeless.

22 Senator Krueger, Assemblymember  
23 Weinstein, thank you for your endurance.  
24 Other members, I appreciate your being here

1 and your willingness to listen.

2 I'm going to just hit the high points  
3 of my testimony. Can you hear me? Yes?

4 Good.

5 Last year saw homelessness rise again  
6 to record levels in New York State, evidence  
7 of a continuing and unchecked affordable  
8 housing crisis as well as the most extreme  
9 income inequality found anywhere in our  
10 nation. Shockingly, nearly 253,000  
11 New Yorkers were homeless in the 2018-2019  
12 school year, staying in shelters or doubled  
13 up with friends and family, a number  
14 exceeding the population of every city in the  
15 state with the exception of New York City.  
16 This consists of 133,000 unduplicated  
17 children and adults sleeping in New York City  
18 shelters, 79,000 homeless students in  
19 New York City not sleeping in shelters,  
20 including those doubled up, 34,000 homeless  
21 students outside New York City, including  
22 those doubled up, and 5,944 homeless adults  
23 sleeping in shelters outside New York City.

24 As we know, thousands more sleep on

1 the streets every night on steam grates,  
2 cardboard boxes, and in the transit system.  
3 New York City, where 85 percent of the  
4 state's undomiciled population lives, remains  
5 the epicenter of the worst homelessness  
6 crisis since the Great Depression. The  
7 number of children and adults sleeping in  
8 shelters each night was 63,000 in November  
9 2019, including more than 22,000 children and  
10 an all-time-record 18,681 single adults.

11 The New York City shelter census rose  
12 sharply in the first several years of  
13 Governor Cuomo's tenure in the executive  
14 chamber and remains at unsustainably high  
15 levels, due in large part to the withdrawal  
16 of state resources for a housing subsidy  
17 program that was never replaced, and a  
18 years-long delay in funding and initiating a  
19 new state supportive housing program.  
20 Thousands more adults have entered New York  
21 City shelters directly from state prisons, as  
22 we heard earlier, thanks to inadequate  
23 discharge planning and a lack of sufficient  
24 reentry housing options for people trying to

1 get back on their feet.

2 Indeed, the number of people staying  
3 in New York City shelters each night rose by  
4 60 percent between January of 2011 and  
5 November of 2019, an increase of more than  
6 23,000 children and adults.

7 There are far more single individuals  
8 seeking shelter in New York City today than  
9 during the terms of any other governor since  
10 modern mass homelessness began, as you can  
11 see from the table. The reasons for this are  
12 clear. Governor Cuomo not only eliminated  
13 state funds for a mediocre rent subsidy  
14 program without replacing it with a better  
15 one, but he also dragged out the process of  
16 starting a new state supportive housing  
17 program for years and has released increasing  
18 numbers of people from state prisons directly  
19 to New York City shelters.

20 The number who moved into supportive  
21 housing units in fiscal year 2018 reached a  
22 14-year low even as the number of single  
23 adults sleeping in shelters reached an all  
24 time high. Fewer than 1,450 adults were

1 placed in supportive housing in 2018, or just  
2 3.5 percent of all individuals who spent time  
3 in shelters that year, down from 7 percent a  
4 decade prior.

5 Further, New York State prisons  
6 released directly to New York City  
7 shelters contributed to record homelessness  
8 for single adults, representing over half of  
9 all New York City releases and 15 percent of  
10 all institutional releases directly to  
11 New York City shelters.

12 We have two imperatives for 2020:  
13 Home Stability Support, as we've talked about  
14 earlier today, and additional capital funds  
15 to spur supportive housing development.  
16 Thank you, Senator Krueger, for asking the  
17 commissioner those questions.

18 First and foremost, the time has come  
19 to enact Home Stability Support legislation  
20 introduced by Senator Krueger and  
21 Assemblymember Hevesi and cosponsored by 35  
22 Senators and 125 members of the Assembly. A  
23 2016 analysis used to help design HSS found  
24 that two-thirds of the 171,000 households

1 receiving public assistance shelter  
2 allowances have rents that exceed their  
3 allowances, placing them at risk of  
4 homelessness. Of those, more than 80,000  
5 households were then on the brink of  
6 homelessness. Surely their number has grown  
7 and their circumstances have become more  
8 acute since.

9 I'm going to skip to the next section  
10 of my recommendations because I'm running low  
11 on time. And let me just say that we are  
12 pleased that Governor Cuomo provided  
13 additional funds for more supportive housing  
14 in his Executive Budget proposal, but  
15 honestly it is far too little, too late for  
16 the dire circumstance that we see on the  
17 ground. And so we ask that the Legislature  
18 fund the 14,000 remaining units in this  
19 year's budget and enact Home Stability  
20 Support without delay, notwithstanding the  
21 fact that there's a pilot program out there.

22 Thank you.

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you for  
24 your years of hard work and for coming before

1 us.

2 MS. NORTZ: Thank you so much.

3 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

4 Next, Empire Justice Center, Saima  
5 Akhtar, followed by New York Association for  
6 the Education of Young Children, followed by  
7 New York State Community Mobilization Housing  
8 Works.

9 MS. AKHTAR: Is this about right? Or  
10 do you need it a little closer? Good, okay.

11 Good afternoon to the members of the  
12 committee. Thank you for sticking it out  
13 today. My name is Saima Akhtar. I am a  
14 senior attorney at Empire Justice Center. I  
15 truly appreciate the opportunity to submit  
16 testimony today.

17 I'll be giving some comments on a few  
18 selected portions of our written testimony,  
19 just of highlights and leaving the rest as a  
20 surprise for later.

21 Empire Justice Center, as many of you  
22 already know, is a statewide legal services  
23 organization with offices in Albany,  
24 Rochester, two in Westchester and Central

1 Islip on Long Island. The organization  
2 provides support and training to legal  
3 services and other community-based  
4 organizations, undertakes policy research and  
5 analysis, and engages in legislative and  
6 administrative advocacy.

7 We also represent low-income  
8 individuals as well as classes of New Yorkers  
9 in a wide range of areas that include civil  
10 rights, health, public assistance, domestic  
11 violence, and SSI and D disability benefits.

12 As the members of the committee are  
13 certainly well aware, the New York State  
14 economy has actually been relatively robust  
15 in the past year and, in spite of a looming  
16 and somewhat self-inflicted budget deficit,  
17 the Legislature still has the opportunity and  
18 the capacity to take action on behalf of  
19 those who are most in need. We can solidify  
20 the safety-net programs and provide some real  
21 progressive change here in New York.

22 One of the things that I want to  
23 highlight for you today is the Disability  
24 Advocacy Program, also known as DAP. DAP is

1 a long-standing program here in New York,  
2 it's existed since the early 1980s, and what  
3 DAP does is it funds advocates in every  
4 county in the state who assist folks who have  
5 been cut off or denied federal SSI or D  
6 benefits to secure those benefits and draw  
7 down federal funds into New York. This saves  
8 the state money. It's about a \$2-plus return  
9 on the investment for every one dollar that  
10 funds DAP.

11 What we are seeing is that in 2019,  
12 applicants for disability benefits began to  
13 face additional -- what's called a mandatory  
14 reconsideration before an actual hearing is  
15 held on a denied application. This process,  
16 this desk review process places an additional  
17 hurdle along the path of folks with  
18 disabilities being able to actually get their  
19 application reviewed. It puts them one step  
20 further away from securing benefits and  
21 receiving payments, it keeps clients poorer  
22 longer, it costs the state money, and it is  
23 an unnecessary delay that was essentially  
24 created by federal regulatory change.

1           The DAP advocates have willingly taken  
2           on this step and have not actually sought  
3           extra funding to do it. What we are seeking  
4           at this time is essentially a repeated  
5           investment, the same -- a hold harmless to  
6           where we were last year.

7           So the Executive Budget provisions  
8           have certain set-asides for DAP. We are  
9           asking the Legislature to add on \$3 million  
10          in addition to what's already in the  
11          Executive Budget to keep the DAP program  
12          funded at \$8.26 million this year as it was  
13          last year, even with the additional burden of  
14          the mandatory consideration process.

15          Additionally you've heard a fair  
16          amount already from my colleagues at the  
17          Schuyler Center, the Early Care & Learning  
18          Council, Winning Beginning you'll hear from,  
19          the Association for the Education of Young  
20          Children, about the critical need for  
21          childcare. In your written comments are  
22          robust data and information speaking to that  
23          need.

24          I cannot summarize that for you and do

1           it justice. What I will say is that it is a  
2           total investment consistent with Winning  
3           Beginning NY and the Empire State Childcare  
4           Campaign looking for \$60 million to increase  
5           access to childcare and then \$40 million to  
6           increase workforce compensation and quality  
7           of care.

8                     This is critical. Childcare, as you  
9           know, is a work support. And while we are  
10          looking at low-wage workers and keeping them  
11          here, we are also looking at other portions  
12          of the safety net being attacked at the  
13          federal level. For those of you who don't  
14          know, my primary practice is in the area of  
15          SNAP benefits, and what I am thinking about  
16          is the fact that SNAP is under attack at the  
17          federal level, SNAP benefits potentially  
18          stand to be reduced, and to the extent we can  
19          take the heat off of low-income families and  
20          support them in other ways, this is an  
21          opportunity to support families who are going  
22          to potentially lose SNAP.

23                     There is shifting that can happen  
24          here, and should. And to that end, just in

1           the smidge of time -- I know there was a  
2           question previously put by the committee, I  
3           believe it was Senator May who asked about  
4           preserving SNAP benefits and whether or not  
5           there was any opportunity to do that at this  
6           time.

7                        I did just want to take this  
8           opportunity to suggest that it would be  
9           useful if in New York we moved to a voluntary  
10          rather than a mandatory employment and  
11          training. Right now the employment and  
12          training options are distributed by county.  
13          Some counties do a mandatory program. To the  
14          extent that there will be additional folks  
15          who are forced into employment or training  
16          with the loss of ABAWD waivers later this  
17          year, freeing those slots would mean that  
18          there's administrative flexibility at the  
19          county level that would not otherwise be had.

20                       Thank you for your time today.

21                       CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

22                       CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for  
23          your testimony as well as the extensive  
24          information in your submission.

1                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: It's a  
2                   dissertation. We'll have to put a little  
3                   more time on that.

4                   MS. AKHTAR: Absolutely.

5                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

6                   Next, New York Association for the  
7                   Education of Young Children, Kristen Kerr,  
8                   executive director.

9                   MS. KERR: Good afternoon, and thank  
10                  you for this opportunity to provide testimony  
11                  today.

12                 As mentioned, I am Kristen Kerr, the  
13                 executive director of the Association for the  
14                 Education of Young Children. Our mission is  
15                 to promote excellence in early care and  
16                 education for New York State children and  
17                 families through education, advocacy, and the  
18                 support of the profession.

19                 As a statewide membership organization  
20                 of over 3,000 early childhood educators, we  
21                 represent the workforce that shapes the lives  
22                 of New York's youngest learners. These  
23                 members work across settings and are integral  
24                 in their communities, ensuring that parents

1 can work with the peace of mind that their  
2 children are safe, learning, and well cared  
3 for.

4           However, our state economy cannot  
5 reach its full potential when the workforce  
6 it relies on operates in the confines of a  
7 broken system in a state of market failure.  
8 After decades of asking whether high-quality  
9 early education works for young children, it  
10 is time to shift our focus to what works best  
11 and how we can support it.

12           As we advocate for change at the  
13 federal level, we cannot afford to wait for  
14 Congress to act. New York's children and  
15 families and early childhood educators need  
16 us now. Today we join with Winning Beginning  
17 NY and the Empire State Campaign for  
18 Childcare to ask the Legislature to commit to  
19 achieving universal access to quality  
20 affordable childcare by 2025.

21           Our educators are passionate and  
22 committed professionals. They often remain  
23 in our field for decades because caring for  
24 and teaching young children is what they

1 love. But many do it at a great personal  
2 cost. An alarming 65 percent of New York's  
3 early educators in childcare settings rely on  
4 supports such as SNAP, Medicaid, TANF, and  
5 the Earned Income Tax Credit. Nationally,  
6 rates of participation of early educators are  
7 double the rates of workers across all  
8 occupations.

9           Critical to quality early childhood  
10 programs are highly educated teachers and  
11 caregivers with a deep understanding of child  
12 development, and that are well supported and  
13 fairly compensated. Foundational to  
14 excellent early learning experiences for  
15 children are stable relationships with these  
16 educators.

17           High levels of turnover undermine  
18 those relationships, creating unease in  
19 children and a burden on administrators. A  
20 recent study of early childhood educator  
21 turnover rates by the Buffett Early Childhood  
22 Initiative found that nationally turnover  
23 ranges from 26 and 40 percent of staff per  
24 year. This rate is highest in child care

1 settings, with 58 percent of child care  
2 administrators identifying salary as the  
3 primary reason teachers leave.

4 As the minimum wage increases, we have  
5 seen an already dire problem worsen. Wage  
6 compression has diminished minimal wage  
7 differences between new aides and assistants  
8 and veteran early educators with advanced  
9 degrees. All workers deserve an adequate  
10 living wage, and early educators who dedicate  
11 years to pursuing higher education and remain  
12 in the field deserve a wage ladder that  
13 compensates them fairly in addition to this  
14 living wage.

15 A recent Raising New York survey also  
16 found that many programs are running at a  
17 deficit, and childcare providers who enroll  
18 at least one child with a subsidy are more  
19 likely to have a deficit than those who do  
20 not. The current market rate for subsidy is  
21 too low to provide high quality care for  
22 families who need it most. In fact, it is  
23 too low for programs who accept subsidies to  
24 remain financially solvent.

1                   High-quality early learning and  
2                   childcare experiences must occur in a system  
3                   that values early childhood educators and  
4                   childcare providers as the workforce that  
5                   prepares children for bright futures while  
6                   their parents work. As a member of both the  
7                   Empire State Campaign for Childcare and the  
8                   Winning Beginning steering committee, we  
9                   share in the deep concern that Governor Cuomo  
10                  included no new state investments for  
11                  childcare in his Executive Budget.

12                  We urge the Legislature to work with  
13                  the Executive to ensure the following  
14                  commitments and investments are included in  
15                  the 2020-2021 final enacted budget:

16                  New York commits to achieving  
17                  universal access to quality, affordable child  
18                  care by 2025. And to set New York on a path  
19                  of meeting this goal of universal access, and  
20                  to curb the exodus of educators from the  
21                  field while working towards it, New York  
22                  makes significant building block investments  
23                  in child care this year, including investing  
24                  at least 40 million to create a fund to

1           increase workforce compensation and improve  
2           the quality of these programs, and at least  
3           60 million in the state's child care subsidy  
4           program to expand access to more working  
5           families by making eligibility levels and  
6           copays more fair and uniform across the  
7           state.

8                         Thank you for considering our budget  
9           request, and we look forward to continuing to  
10          work with you to support the children and  
11          families and early educators of New York.

12                        CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
13          Thank you for being here.

14                        Next, we have New York State Community  
15          Mobilization for Housing Works, Elizabeth  
16          Deutsch, Jaron Benjamin -- three? Oh, okay.  
17          Good, I was wondering how three people were  
18          going to share five minutes.

19                        MS. DEUTSCH: Jaron's not here. They  
20          were just the backups.

21                        CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. Thank  
22          you.

23                        MS. DEUTSCH: I'm going to try not to  
24          read my testimony, but there's things in here

1           that I don't want to miss.

2                         Thank you for the opportunity to  
3           present testimony to the joint budget hearing  
4           on Human Services. My name is Elizabeth  
5           Deutsch, and I am the director of New York  
6           State and New England Community Mobilization  
7           for Housing Works, a healing community of  
8           people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.  
9           Housing Works is part of the End AIDS NY 2020  
10          Community Coalition, a group of over 90  
11          healthcare centers, hospitals, and  
12          community-based organizations across the  
13          state. Housing Works and the Community  
14          Coalition are fully committed to realizing  
15          the goals of our historic state blueprint for  
16          Ending the Epidemic for all New Yorkers by  
17          the end of the year 2020.

18                        Safe, stable housing is essential to  
19          support effective antiretroviral treatment  
20          that sustains optimal health for people with  
21          HIV and makes it impossible to transmit HIV  
22          to others. Indeed, New York State data show  
23          that unstable housing is the single strongest  
24          predictor of poor HIV outcomes and health

1           disparities. The blueprint's housing  
2           recommendations have been fully implemented  
3           in New York City since 2016, where the local  
4           Department of Social Services employs the  
5           New York State HIV Enhanced Shelter Allowance  
6           Program to offer every income-eligible person  
7           with HIV a rental subsidy sufficient to  
8           afford housing stability, and provides a  
9           30 percent rent cap and affordable housing  
10          protection for persons who rely on disability  
11          benefits or other fixed income.

12                       Upstate and on Long Island, however,  
13          as many as 4,200 low-income households living  
14          with HIV remain homeless or unstably housed,  
15          because the state law limits the 30 percent  
16          rent cap to residents of New York City -- and  
17          the 1980s regulations governing the HIV  
18          Enhanced Shelter Allowance set maximum rent  
19          at just \$480 per month, and only the New York  
20          City local Department of Social Services  
21          approves rental subsidies in line with fair  
22          market rents.

23                       It is time to ensure that homeless and  
24          unstably housed New Yorkers with HIV

1 throughout the state have equal access to  
2 vital New York State housing supports by  
3 enabling all local districts to approve rents  
4 in line with local fair market rents and  
5 extending the 30 percent affordable housing  
6 protection to eligible low-income persons  
7 with HIV in every part of New York State.

8 Indeed, the ongoing failure to meet  
9 this housing need threatens to undermine the  
10 ETE plan -- I'm sorry, I'm going to jump  
11 ahead because I'm afraid of running out of  
12 time.

13 ETE Community Coalition members have  
14 been told by social services commissioners  
15 outside of New York that they lack the  
16 resources required to expand housing options  
17 for their community members with HIV who  
18 remain homeless or unstably housed. So we  
19 were very pleased that the New York State  
20 fiscal year 2020 budget included our proposal  
21 to make \$5 million in New York State funding  
22 available to enable departments of social  
23 services outside of New York City to  
24 voluntarily partner with local payers and

1 community-based organizations to pilot  
2 innovative strategies to fund meaningful  
3 rental assistance for homeless and unstably  
4 housed low-income New Yorkers.

5 This New York State funding would  
6 leverage matching dollars from local  
7 partners, for a total of a \$10 million annual  
8 HIV housing investment. Ample evidence shows  
9 that dollars spent on HIV rental assistance  
10 generate Medicaid savings from avoided  
11 emergency and inpatient care that offsets the  
12 cost of housing supports.

13 However, the fiscal year 2020 budget  
14 language included a poison pill that  
15 undermined the ability of local districts to  
16 secure local partners and propose successful  
17 plans. The Aid to Localities language  
18 required that any savings realized through  
19 improved housing stability be recaptured to  
20 reduce the state investment, while still  
21 requiring the local partner providing the  
22 matching funds to continue to pay 100 percent  
23 of the costs for housed participants in  
24 perpetuity.

1           As we predicted when advocating for a  
2           fix for this budget last year, no local  
3           districts took us up on the offer. And  
4           consequently, no one was housed last year.

5           We are pleased that the fiscal year  
6           2021 Executive Budget again includes  
7           \$5 million in annual funding for the pilot  
8           program as well as the reappropriation of the  
9           \$5 million that went unspent last year.  
10          However, we are very dismayed that the  
11          proposed language continues to include the  
12          same undermining language.

13          It is critical to the success of the  
14          pilot program that this language be changed  
15          to allow local partners to propose the best  
16          use of healthcare savings realized through  
17          improved housing status, including sharing  
18          savings among the local social services  
19          district and the health payer to support  
20          programs and administrative costs and provide  
21          ongoing HIV housing subsidies.

22          Housing Works and the ETE Community  
23          Coalition urge the Governor and the  
24          Legislature to fully support this \$5 million

1 rest-of-state HIV housing pilot by including  
2 the revised initiative language in the  
3 enacted FY 2021 budget, and passing  
4 Education, Labor, and Family Assistance  
5 Article VII language to authorize the use of  
6 funds. We believe that this \$10 million  
7 investment will support sufficient housing  
8 subsidies to finally afford equal access to  
9 safe, stable housing for households living  
10 with HIV in every part of New York State.

11 (Laughter.)

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you  
15 for -- I believe there are no questions.  
16 Thank you.

17 Next, Citizen's Committee for Children  
18 of New York, Daryl Hornick-Becker, to be  
19 followed -- the next three witnesses are  
20 NEW Pride Agenda, Winning Beginning NY, and  
21 New York Immigration Coalition.

22 MR. HORNICK-BECKER: Good afternoon.

23 My name is Daryl Hornick-Becker, and I  
24 am a policy and advocacy associate at the

1 Citizens' Committee for Children of New York.  
2 CCC is a 75-year-old independent multi-issue  
3 child advocacy organization dedicated to  
4 ensuring that every New York child is  
5 healthy, housed, educated, and safe.

6 I'd like to thank Chair Weinstein,  
7 Chair Krueger, and all the members of the  
8 Assembly Ways and Means and Senate Finance  
9 Committees for holding today's hearing.

10 CCC recognizes the need to be fiscally  
11 prudent given the current budget deficit.  
12 That said, we are very disappointed that the  
13 State Budget is being balanced by cutting and  
14 curtailing services for the most vulnerable  
15 children and families. We're also worried  
16 that proposed caps on Medicaid spending and  
17 caps to TANF funds and initiatives would  
18 result in significant cost shifts in New York  
19 City. We urge the Legislature to negotiate a  
20 budget that is balanced in a manner that  
21 improves the well-being of children, youth  
22 and families.

23 For further detail, I refer you to my  
24 written testimony. Today I'll be summarizing

1           some key issues across the human services  
2           sector.

3                     For childcare, the Executive Budget  
4           proposes no new solutions to the current  
5           crisis that is facing New York. High-quality  
6           childcare is an expensive necessity, and  
7           helpful subsidies currently serve fewer than  
8           20 percent of low-income families.  
9           Additionally, early childhood educators in  
10          many regions of the state are paid so little  
11          that many are living in or near poverty.

12                    The Governor commissioned a Childcare  
13          Task Force over two years ago, and yet the  
14          Executive Budget includes no significant new  
15          investments. It does include an expansion of  
16          the childcare tax credit, but it would be a  
17          mistake to think that a credit of \$330 per  
18          year could have any meaningful impact on  
19          families facing average childcare costs of  
20          \$15,000 annually per child.

21                    We urge the Assembly and Senate to  
22          invest \$100 million in childcare:  
23          \$40 million to create a fund to increase  
24          salaries, and \$60 million for subsidies to

1           increase eligibility and decrease families'  
2           copayments.

3                   CCC was also disappointed to see only  
4           a small investment for statewide universal  
5           pre-K that would impact an estimated 2,000  
6           children -- despite the 77,000 four-year olds  
7           outside of New York City without access to  
8           full-day pre-K. We urge the Legislature to  
9           invest \$150 million in universal pre-K, to  
10          add seats, and to fund regional assistance  
11          centers.

12                   In the area of after-school, we  
13          applaud the Governor for adding \$10 million  
14          in a fourth round of Empire State After  
15          School grants, but were disappointed to see  
16          the same budget propose a \$5 million cut to  
17          the Advantage After School Program that would  
18          force 2,500 children to lose their  
19          after-school programming. We urge the  
20          Legislature to restore that funding and to  
21          add an additional \$5 million to increase  
22          per-pupil rates, to maintain services, and to  
23          accommodate rising operational costs.

24                   Turning to child welfare, CCC is

1 deeply concerned with the Executive Budget's  
2 proposed \$25 million reduction in funds to  
3 OCFS. The state also continues to reduce  
4 reimbursements of preventive services to  
5 62 percent despite statute requiring a  
6 65 percent match. We urge the Legislature to  
7 restore these funds, invest in preventive  
8 services, and help decrease the number of  
9 children placed in foster care.

10 We're also concerned that the state  
11 continues to fund KinGAP within the Foster  
12 Care Block Grant, causing it to be  
13 under-utilized across the state. There's a  
14 clear opportunity to expand the use of KinGAP  
15 by funding it outside of the block grant,  
16 similar to how adoption subsidies are funded.

17 In the area of juvenile justice, the  
18 CCC was very excited to see the new section  
19 of correction law requiring all adolescent  
20 offenders to be transferred from DOCCS to  
21 OCFS facilities. To build on this progress,  
22 CCC urges the Legislature to consider several  
23 youth justice initiatives. First, we are  
24 demanding an end to all forms of solitary

1 confinement in adolescent facilities,  
2 reversing current practice that permits  
3 children to be held in isolation for 18 to  
4 22 hours a day.

5 Second, we're asking to create a new  
6 young adult status up to age 25, allowing  
7 youth 19 years and older the same protections  
8 as offered under the Youthful Offender Law.

9 And third, we are asking to lower the  
10 age of juvenile delinquency from 7 to 12 to  
11 end the prosecution of children who under  
12 current law can be subject to police  
13 questioning and confinement.

14 In the area of homelessness, CCC was  
15 pleased to see the Executive Budget's  
16 investment in supportive housing, but it's  
17 unclear how it will be prioritized to impact  
18 families experiencing homelessness who make  
19 up the majority of residents in shelters. We  
20 urge the Legislature to combat family  
21 homelessness by addressing one of its lead  
22 drivers, domestic violence.

23 This year's budget should include  
24 flexible funding for a Rapid Rehousing for

1 Domestic Violence Survivors pilot program, a  
2 HUD-approved model that connects survivors to  
3 safe, affordable permanent housing.

4 The human services sector is a  
5 critical component of the fabric of our  
6 state, but budget reductions and cost shifts  
7 to localities ultimately impede the sector's  
8 ability to respond to the needs of vulnerable  
9 New Yorkers. The current budget deficit must  
10 not be balanced on the backs of New York's  
11 children and families.

12 Thank you for this opportunity to  
13 testify.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

16 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for  
17 being here.

18 Next, Cynthia Dames, NEW Pride Agenda.

19 MS. DAMES: Thank you very much.

20 Cynthia Dames. I know many of you  
21 from my prior life doing government affairs  
22 for nonprofits, some old friends, some new  
23 friends, and I have embarked on a new -- one  
24 last mission to try to move the ball. Thank

1           you. Nice seeing you again.

2                    Many of you know the history -- I'm  
3           just going to speak from my separate notes.  
4           Many of you of course know the long history  
5           regarding Empire State Pride Agenda. I had  
6           the privilege of working for them as a  
7           lobbyist in the early years under Alan van  
8           Capelle. We worked very hard regarding the  
9           passage of marriage equality in the Assembly,  
10          and of course we're enormously gratified by  
11          its full conclusion and implementation.

12                   A number of us were dismayed when ESPA  
13          closed down because we felt there's a variety  
14          of discriminatory issues that continue,  
15          particularly for young people, people of  
16          color, transgender community, communities --  
17          LGBTQ communities of poverty, and really a  
18          remarkable dearth of LGBTQ-sensitive services  
19          upstate. Really, really striking.

20                   And so we formed the NEW Pride  
21          Agenda -- you know, more women-led, more  
22          diverse, a variety of trans membership. We  
23          just got new board members from Rochester,  
24          we're recruiting in Buffalo, Long Island,

1 Western New York, et cetera. We are  
2 committed to developing a statewide,  
3 ground-up LGBTQ organization.

4 We're focusing on civic engagement  
5 beginning in New York City, but we'll do that  
6 as well upstate, and of course advocacy. So  
7 one of our major issues this fall that we  
8 worked on -- probably as a prior lobbyist,  
9 knowing and sensitive to the need for  
10 implementation of law when the law is little  
11 trickier or a little more challenging -- and  
12 so we had a variety of meetings all fall  
13 about ideas regarding implementation of  
14 GENDA. And we very much encourage the  
15 Governor to think about mandating state  
16 employees have an understanding of it. We're  
17 very gratified he included that in the State  
18 of the State.

19 We're very gratified that the  
20 Department of Human Rights is going to start  
21 a public education campaign to understand  
22 GENDA, and the companion to that, in our  
23 judgement, would be an awareness -- a  
24 training program, trans-led, in different

1 areas of the state, particularly with those  
2 that are responsible for implementing the  
3 law, whether you're in education or housing,  
4 employment, and certainly medical facilities.  
5 Perhaps in a phased-in approach.

6 So we're suggesting, starting in a  
7 modest way, \$1.5 million that would be  
8 distributed in four or five areas throughout  
9 the state, different regions, all for you to  
10 be decided. But trans-led training.

11 And I just want to do a separate  
12 comment. When marriage happened, we all  
13 understand marriage. Marriage has gone on  
14 for hundreds and thousands of years. There  
15 wasn't a huge educational component needed.  
16 But when you talk about individuals having a  
17 disconnect between mind and heart and body,  
18 and going through transitions and becoming  
19 transgender, that's something very hard for  
20 many people to understand.

21 And we are sympathetic to that. I'm  
22 learning about it myself. I'm in trans  
23 training. My 22-year-old daughter has more  
24 trans friends, I'm sure, than I do. It's

1 generational. It's different. And so we're  
2 really -- we know the need, sometimes, to  
3 really get behind the wheel and help laws  
4 become real.

5 And so we're asking your indulgence to  
6 consider trans training statewide that would  
7 help employers and others understand the  
8 differences and how to be respectful and how  
9 to respond. We ourselves at NEW Pride Agenda  
10 did a statewide survey, and the overwhelming  
11 response was not that people weren't  
12 well-meaning when one went for a job or  
13 medical facilities, but they were just  
14 ignorant. They didn't have knowledge about  
15 it. They didn't know what to do about it.

16 So this is not about blame, this is  
17 not about punishment, this is like --  
18 consider please putting some money forward to  
19 help this continuation of really implementing  
20 GENDA in a way that it needs to be  
21 implemented for people to understand it  
22 better.

23 We thank you also for some  
24 discretionary support we got for NEW Pride

1           Agenda for downstate organizing. We hope to  
2           get some for upstate as well. And thank you  
3           for your consideration. It's nice seeing you  
4           all again.

5                     Any questions? Okay, thank you very  
6           much.

7                     CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you,  
8           Cynthia.

9                     Winning Beginning NY, is anybody here?  
10          Okay. Have you -- did you submit testimony  
11          at the desk? Okay, kind of.

12                    Okay. Gregory Brender?

13                    MR. BRENDER: Yes.

14                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. You're  
15          on.

16                    MR. BRENDER: Thank you so much for  
17          the opportunity to testify and for sticking  
18          it out on a long day.

19                    Winning Beginning NY is a New York  
20          State statewide early care and learning  
21          coalition. We work on issues from prenatal  
22          to 8 years old, and we bring together many  
23          groups throughout the state. So a lot of  
24          what is in my testimony you actually heard

1 from many of our colleagues.

2 Just to sort of say who we are, we  
3 work with different groups throughout the  
4 state, and our steering committee includes  
5 Advocates for Children, the Chautauqua Lake  
6 Childcare Center, Early Care and Learning  
7 Council, Center for Children's Initiatives,  
8 Network for Youth Success, New York State  
9 Association for the Education of Young  
10 Children, Prevent Child Abuse New York,  
11 United Neighborhood Houses -- where I serve  
12 as the director of children and youth  
13 services -- and the Western New York Women's  
14 Foundation.

15 I want to highlight two key pieces  
16 where we see this budget really falling short  
17 of serving children and families and their  
18 communities. First, as you've heard from  
19 several of my colleagues around childcare,  
20 there's deep disappointment that despite the  
21 convening of a task force started in 2018 and  
22 the need of communities throughout the state,  
23 that the Executive Budget takes no action to  
24 address really the crisis in childcare for

1 New York's children and families.

2 Working with many of the  
3 community-based organizations who provide  
4 childcare, we see how desperate so many  
5 families are to get their children into  
6 something affordable, and how difficult it is  
7 for those families to afford child care, and  
8 so we ask that the Legislature not wait until  
9 this task force completes its convenings but  
10 takes action in this budget to move forward  
11 to expanding childcare.

12 In particular, we ask that New York  
13 commits to achieving universal access to  
14 quality affordable childcare by 2025,  
15 starting with two investments this year. One  
16 is to invest at least \$40 million to create a  
17 fund that will increase workforce  
18 compensation and improve childcare quality.  
19 Program quality, making sure that these are  
20 places where people want to have their  
21 children, and making sure that childcare  
22 programs are the kind of programs that really  
23 build on the benefits of childcare, requires  
24 a staff who are stable, who are

1 well-compensated, and who are well-trained.

2 And then also investing \$60 million to  
3 both increase family eligibility, so that  
4 more low-income families can access  
5 childcare. As well as to decrease the copays  
6 that parents pay. Because even with  
7 subsidies, many parents are struggling to pay  
8 for childcare.

9 I also want to quickly address  
10 after-school. For now I think the ninth year  
11 in a row, the Governor's budget has proposed  
12 cutting \$5 million from the Advantage After  
13 School Program. This would affect 2,500  
14 children. This is not something -- when we  
15 know that families are trying to get their  
16 kids into after-school and we know how  
17 important it is for families' work schedules  
18 and for childrens' development, this is not a  
19 cut that should be proposed.

20 We also want to ask the Legislature to  
21 push to increase rates in both the Advantage  
22 After School Program and the Empire State  
23 After School Program to 23.20 per child.  
24 These are programs that in many cases are

1 struggling to pay their staff and struggling  
2 to maintain quality.

3 Thank you for the opportunity to  
4 testify. And are there any questions?

5 Okay, thank you very much.

6 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for  
7 being here.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you for  
9 testifying.

10 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And the final  
11 witness of today's hearing, New York  
12 Immigration Coalition, Alana Cantillo.

13 MS. CANTILLO: Hi, good afternoon.  
14 Thank you for convening this hearing. My  
15 name is Alana Pilar Cantillo, and I'm the  
16 senior director of advocacy for the New York  
17 Immigration Coalition.

18 On behalf of the NYIC and its 200  
19 nonprofit organizations that make up our  
20 membership, I'm here to urge the inclusion  
21 and renewal and increase of funding to the  
22 New York State Enhanced Services for Refugees  
23 Program, also known as NYSESRP, in the  
24 FY '20-'21 budget.



1           refugees, including almost 5,000 case  
2           management integration services, over 1,000  
3           employment training services, and 600  
4           connections to English language courses.

5                        NYSESRP allows agencies to concentrate  
6           on long-term integration in a way that  
7           addresses the needs of each client, unlike  
8           existing federal programs, which focus merely  
9           on the first 90 days after arrival. This  
10          flexible funding and extended case management  
11          opportunities allows agencies to provide  
12          deeper and broader support, benefiting  
13          refugees and communities. In challenging  
14          times, this program is continuing to  
15          establish best practices.

16                       NYSESRP is a model for other states  
17          around the country. New York State was the  
18          first, Oregon followed suit last year, and  
19          advocates in California and states across the  
20          country have repeatedly reached out and  
21          inquired about New York State's program in  
22          order for advocates, service providers around  
23          the state to receive the sort of best  
24          practices that have been established here in

1 New York.

2 The state's \$2 million investment  
3 shows that New York is committed to refugees  
4 and the agencies that serve them. This is  
5 critical, as over 50 refugee-serving  
6 organizations in the United States have  
7 closed permanently, and over 40 have ceased  
8 resettling refugees since 2017.

9 I'm going to jump ahead to just note  
10 that the refugee resettlement population is  
11 on the decline and supports populations that  
12 are aging across upstate New York, in some  
13 cases even tipping cities toward population  
14 rebound. The majority of primary  
15 resettlement in New York is in upstate  
16 communities, over 90 percent. Resettlement  
17 agencies also play a key role downstate,  
18 helping individuals reach their full  
19 potential in economic and social integration.

20 NYSESRP attracts secondary migrants to  
21 New York as well. Because of the state's  
22 support, New York's resettlement agencies and  
23 communities welcome people from Bhutan,  
24 Somalia, Burma, Afghanistan, Congo, and other

1 countries from across the United States to be  
2 settled in New York.

3 When refugee and immigrant communities  
4 are more prominent, it also attracts young  
5 people who want to live in vibrant and  
6 diverse areas. A strong network of services  
7 that support the success of secondary  
8 migrants is critical to positive outcomes for  
9 the communities they choose to live in.  
10 Without the state's NYSESRP program, there is  
11 no statewide network.

12 This is a critical moment for New York  
13 State to take action. The federal government  
14 has put the refugee resettlement program  
15 under even further strain as years have gone  
16 by, setting the Presidential Determination  
17 that governs the maximum number of refugees  
18 to be resettled at a 40-year low -- around  
19 8,000 arrivals. Because that represents  
20 another devastating cut to our agencies'  
21 sustainability, NYSESRP is asking that the  
22 Governor and the Legislature increase support  
23 in the state's budget from \$2 million to  
24 \$5 million.

1 Thank you so much for your time.

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

3 Thank you for being here today.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
5 much.

6 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We have no  
7 questions.

8 This concludes the Joint Legislative  
9 Hearing on Human Services. The joint  
10 committees will reconvene for a budget  
11 hearing on Monday, February 3rd, at  
12 11:00 o'clock, on the subject of  
13 mental hygiene.

14 (Whereupon, the Human Services budget  
15 hearing concluded at 4:34 p.m.)

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