

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

2 -----

3 JOINT LEGISLATIVE HEARING
4 In the Matter of the
2023-2024 EXECUTIVE BUDGET
ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS/
GENERAL GOVERNMENT

5 -----

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

8 February 15, 2023
9 9:36 a.m.

10 PRESIDING:

11 Senator Liz Krueger
12 Chair, Senate Finance Committee

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

14 PRESENT:

15 Senator Thomas F. O'Mara
16 Senate Finance Committee (RM)

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

19 Assemblyman Edward C. Braunstein
20 Chair, Assembly Committee on Cities

21 Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr.
22 Chair, Assembly Committee on
Local Governments

23 Senator Monica R. Martinez
24 Chair, Senate Committee on Local Government

25 Senator Rachel May
26 Chair, Senate Committee on Cities 2

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4 PRESENT: (Continued)

5 Assemblyman Harvey Epstein
Chair, Assembly Legislative Commission
6 on State-Local Relations

7 Senator John C. Liu

8 Senator Jeremy A. Cooney

9 Assemblywoman Sarah Clark

10 Assemblyman Charles D. Fall

11 Senator Andrew Gounardes

12 Assemblyman Jonathan G. Jacobson

13 Assemblyman Robert C. Carroll

14 Assemblyman William Conrad

15 Senator Shelley Mayer

16 Assemblyman Steven Otis

17 Assemblywoman Latrice Walker

18 Assemblywoman Rebecca A. Seawright

19 Senator Jack M. Martins

20 Assemblyman Chris Eachus

21 Assemblywoman MaryJane Shimsky

22 Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein

23 Senator Rob Rolison

24 Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon

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4 PRESENT: (Continued)

5 Assemblyman Michael Reilly

6 Senator Cordell Cleare

7 Assemblyman Michael Tannousis

8 Assemblywoman Jessica González-Rojas

9 Assemblyman Zohran K. Mamdani

10 Senator Leroy Comrie

11 Assemblyman Nader J. Sayegh

12 Assemblyman Ari Brown

13 Assemblyman Jeff Gallahan

14 Senator Steven D. Rhoads

15 Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar

16 Assemblyman Brian Manktelow

17 Assemblywoman Dana Levenberg

18 Assemblyman David I. Weprin

19 Assemblywoman Stefani Zinerman

20 Assemblyman John T. McDonald III

21 Senator Robert Jackson

22 Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow

23 Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman

24 Senator Samra G. Brouk

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5 Assemblywoman Chantel Jackson
6 Senator Mark Walczyk
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Mayor of Brookville
7 -for-
Nassau County Village
8 Officials Association
-and-
9 Danny Pearlman
Policy & Communications
10 Director
Riders Alliance
11 -and-
Funmi Akinnawonu
12 Advocacy & Policy Manager
Immigrant ARC

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1 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we are here
2 for our eighth hearing in a series of
3 hearings conducted by the joint fiscal
4 committees of the Legislature regarding the
5 Governor's proposed budget for fiscal year
6 2023-'24.

7 I am Helene Weinstein, chair of the
8 New York State Assembly Ways and Means
9 Committee and cochair of today's hearing.

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

13 Today the Assembly Ways and Means
14 Committee and the Senate Finance Committee,
15 chaired by Assemblywoman {sic} Krueger, will
16 hear testimony from the Governor's proposed
17 budget for local and general governments.

18 I will now introduce the members of
19 the Assembly majority who are here, and then
20 Senator Krueger will introduce her colleagues
21 and our rankers will introduce their
22 colleagues. And a number of members will
23 probably be coming in as we begin.

24 So we have with us Assemblyman

1 Braunstein, chair of our Cities Committee.
2 We have Assemblyman Eachus, Assemblyman
3 Eichenstein, Assemblyman Fall, Assemblywoman
4 González-Rojas, Assemblywoman Hyndman,
5 Assemblywoman Shimsky, Assemblywoman Simon,
6 Assemblyman Weprin, and Assemblyman Epstein,
7 chair of our City and State Relations
8 Task Force.

9 Senator Krueger -- oh, sneaky. And
10 Assemblyman Mamdani. And I think that's it.
11 I know there will be more members coming in.

12 Senator Krueger?

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

14 Good morning, everyone. Gee, I feel
15 like we were just here at 11 o'clock last
16 night. But we're back.

17 (Inaudible retort.)

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: (Laughing.) I'm
19 sorry.

20 So we are, excuse me, so far:
21 Senator Liu, Senator Jackson,
22 Senator Gounardes, Senator Cleare,
23 Senator May. Again, I'm Liz Krueger.

24 And I just got a note that my

1 Republican colleagues are all in a mandatory
2 conference, so they hope to join us sometime
3 soon and we are not supposed to wait for
4 them.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay, thank
6 you. Assemblyman Ra, if you could introduce
7 your colleagues who are here.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you. Good
9 morning. We are joined by Assemblyman Ari
10 Brown, our ranker on the Local Governments
11 Committee; Assemblyman Mike Reilly, our
12 ranker on the Cities Committee; and
13 Assemblymembers Gallahan and Tannousis.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

15 And Assemblywoman Seawright is here
16 also.

17 So let me just go over the ground
18 rules for governmental witnesses, which we
19 have quite a few today. All governmental
20 witnesses get 10 minutes to present their
21 testimony. And nongovernmental witnesses get
22 three minutes to present their testimony.
23 The nongovernmental and some of the
24 governmental witnesses will be in a panel.

1 So it's each individual member of the panel
2 gets the time.

3 Then the members of the Legislature
4 will have an opportunity to ask questions.
5 And for colleagues -- I think just about
6 everybody has been here before, but just a
7 reminder that the time frame for chairs,
8 10 minutes and for rankers, five minutes, and
9 for all other members of the relevant
10 committee, three minutes is for the question
11 and the answer.

12 So please be kind to our guests who
13 are here testifying and don't say "I have
14 20 seconds left, so let me ask you my final
15 question." Leave time for the person to
16 answer the questions.

17 As Senator Krueger said, we left here
18 just around 11 hours ago. We're not looking
19 to break that record. Actually, Senator Liu
20 is the only one looking to break that record.
21 He wants -- but he can stay here by himself
22 when the hearing ends and break that record.

23 (Laughter.)

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So with that,

1 I'm very pleased to welcome the mayor of the
2 City of New York, Mayor Eric Adams. And
3 Mayor, if you could present your testimony, I
4 know there will be quite a few members who
5 have some questions.

6 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you. Thank you so
7 much. It is good to be here among my former
8 colleagues. Good morning.

9 And thank you Chairs Krueger and
10 Weinstein, Local Governments Chair Martinez,
11 Cities Chairs Sepúlveda, May and Braunstein,
12 and members of the Assembly Ways and Means
13 and Senate Finance committees. I'm Eric
14 Adams, as you indicated, and I'm honored to
15 be here as the 110th mayor of the City of
16 New York.

17 I'm joined by Jacques Jiha, director
18 of our Office of Management and Budget;
19 Sheena Wright, my first deputy mayor; Tiffany
20 Raspberry, my director of intergovernmental
21 affairs and external affairs; your former
22 colleague Diane Savino, senior advisor to the
23 chief advisor; and Chief Counsel Brendan
24 McGuire.

1 Before discussing the Governor's
2 Executive Budget and my vision for the City
3 of New York, I want to thank you for
4 partnering with me last year to deliver
5 results for the people of New York. Thanks
6 to your leadership, we established the
7 NYCHA Trust, extended our speed camera
8 program, doubled the MWBE spending threshold
9 for New York City, and provided real relief
10 to New Yorkers through the Earned Income Tax
11 Credit and significant childcare investments.

12 I also want to thank the Governor for
13 including many of our essential priorities in
14 this budget, including key components of our
15 shared "New" New York plan. We are extremely
16 pleased with the Governor's commitment to
17 funding a new generation of affordable
18 housing. And we know her proposed public
19 safety changes will make New York safer.

20 We also appreciate the support this
21 budget has provided to help us address
22 New York's mental health crisis. But while
23 the Executive Budget contains many shared
24 priorities, the cuts and cost shifts

1 significantly outweigh the assistance the
2 state is providing to address the
3 asylum-seeker crisis.

4 The impacts of these cuts and cost
5 shifts are most pronounced in three areas:
6 our schools, public transit, and Medicaid.
7 If unaddressed, these cuts will force us to
8 make difficult choices in regard to the city
9 budget and the services that we provide.

10 Governor Hochul and leaders in the
11 Senate and Assembly have been excellent
12 partners to the city and our administration.
13 My hope -- and my belief -- is that we'll be
14 able to sort out our differences and work
15 together to build a budget that works for all
16 New Yorkers.

17 In my State of the City address, I
18 laid out my vision for the city, based around
19 four pillars of supportive government: jobs,
20 safety, housing, and care.

21 By including community hiring and
22 increasing the MWBE small-purchase threshold
23 in her budget, the Governor is giving us the
24 tools we need to dismantle inequality while

1 also investing in jobs of the future. But we
2 know that all good jobs are built on a common
3 foundation -- a solid education. On that
4 note, I would like to thank the Governor for
5 continuing the phase-in of Foundation Aid in
6 her Executive Budget proposal.

7 But if the state raises the charter
8 cap as proposed, we will need more resources.
9 We believe it will cost us over a billion
10 dollars to site these schools and cover the
11 required per-student tuition -- money we do
12 not have.

13 Last year the state passed legislation
14 requiring New York City to reduce class sizes
15 without providing additional funding to build
16 schools and hire teachers. The requirements
17 of this new law will cost the city
18 \$1.3 billion by Year 5. We need the state to
19 provide funding to ensure that our children
20 get the education they deserve.

21 Safety, my second pillar. It's about
22 public safety: I always state it's the
23 prerequisite to our prosperity, public safety
24 and justice.

1 The Governor's budget rightfully
2 proposes to keep us safer by giving us
3 additional tools to address our recidivism
4 crisis. Changes to the least restrictive
5 standard, as the Governor has proposed, will
6 go a long way towards solving our recidivism
7 problem. This is critical because a
8 disproportionate share of serious crime in
9 New York City is being driven by a limited
10 number of extreme recidivists --
11 approximately 2,000 people -- who commit
12 crime after crime while out on the street on
13 bail.

14 We must also recognize that our city's
15 district attorneys and public defenders are
16 overwhelmed and need our help immediately.
17 The state must make a major investment in
18 them now or risk depriving defendants of
19 their constitutional right to a speedy trial,
20 delaying justice for victims and continuing
21 the unprecedented level of attrition within
22 each of these offices.

23 Our housing thought, which is my third
24 pillar. Whether you were born here or came

1 here seeking opportunity, we need you, and
2 you need affordable housing. Importantly,
3 the Governor has included provisions that
4 would facilitate the conversion of office
5 space into housing, eliminate the
6 floor-area-ratio cap to allow more housing,
7 implement the J-51 tax incentive to preserve
8 our housing stock and tax incentive programs
9 that drive the construction of new affordable
10 units.

11 And care, which is important to all of
12 us, my final pillar. National and global
13 trends often converge to create urgent and
14 unforeseen needs in our city, such as the
15 ongoing asylum-seeker crisis. We are at the
16 breaking point. Governor Hochul has
17 recognized the magnitude of this crisis and
18 has offered state support for our growing
19 costs. This is critical, because a
20 disproportionate share of the serious issues
21 that are facing us around healthcare is
22 something we must focus on. But with the
23 city expected to spend over \$4 billion on
24 this crisis by the middle of next year, we'll

1 need more than the approximately \$1.2 billion
2 in state and federal funds we believe will
3 come our way.

4 Other areas that we want to thank the
5 Governor and lawmakers is to -- we want to --
6 we appreciate the authorization of additional
7 tools which will allow us to build large
8 projects faster and smarter, while increasing
9 opportunities for MWBEs on city construction
10 projects.

11 In addition, we are pleased with the
12 inclusion of New York City parking reform,
13 which will allow us to keep our streets clear
14 of industrial vehicles to the benefit of our
15 families.

16 We also appreciate the inclusion of
17 the Waste Reduction and Recycling
18 Infrastructure Act, which will hold
19 manufacturers and big businesses accountable
20 for the waste they produce while doing
21 business in our city.

22 And we do need more state assistance.
23 While the Governor's budget includes many
24 welcome investments in our city, there are

1 notable cuts and cost-shifts that will leave
2 the city with no choice but to take very
3 serious measures in our upcoming city budget.
4 The first of these has to do with the city's
5 MTA contributions.

6 At the outset, we need to highlight
7 what the city government already contributes
8 on an annual basis -- \$2.4 billion in direct
9 and in-kind contributions -- and that's in
10 addition to the majority of the state's tax
11 revenue that New York City residents, workers
12 and businesses send to Albany every year.

13 This Executive Budget proposes new
14 contributions from New York City that would
15 cost \$526 million in the next fiscal year,
16 and more than \$540 million every year beyond
17 that. Aside from the increased Payroll
18 Mobility Tax contribution that all localities
19 in the MTA service area must pay, New York
20 City is the only locality that has been asked
21 to increase its contribution, and by hundreds
22 of millions of dollars.

23 We all want what's best for riders,
24 but we need a fairer and more sustainable

1 proposal. This current proposal hits
2 New Yorkers twice -- once through the higher
3 fares that riders will still face, and once
4 through diminished service delivery by local
5 government which will have at least half a
6 billion dollars each year going to subsidize
7 a state-run authority.

8 Additionally, the Governor's financial
9 plan proposes cuts to Medicaid support by
10 keeping 100 percent of eFMAP -- Enhanced
11 Federal Medical Assistance Percentage --
12 funding to localities. That will be
13 \$343 million taken out of our budget
14 beginning in fiscal year '24, which would end
15 a long-standing cost sharing arrangement
16 since 2015. This would effectively transfer
17 costs from the state to localities, undoing
18 one of the more important Medicaid reforms in
19 recent history.

20 Another cost the city is being asked
21 to fund is the court-mandated wage increases
22 for 18-B attorneys, which increased from \$75
23 to \$158 per hour. Currently, we split it; we
24 believe we need to continue to do so.

1 And finally, a recurring cut enacted a
2 few years ago continues to strain the city's
3 budget. We ask the state to discontinue the
4 sales tax intercept for the Distressed
5 Hospitals Fund -- \$150 million of the city's
6 tax revenues are intercepted yearly for this
7 fund, and New York City is the only locality
8 paying. Despite this, not a single dollar
9 goes to H+H hospitals.

10 So again, I thank you and I look
11 forward to answering your questions.

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you,
13 Mr. Mayor.

14 Since we began, we've been joined by
15 Assemblyman Conrad, Assemblywoman Jackson,
16 and Assemblyman Thiele, chair of our
17 Local Governments Committee.

18 And we go to -- let me just take a
19 moment to alert people that when you see the
20 yellow light go on -- but particularly for
21 the legislators, when you see the yellow
22 light go on, that means there's one minute
23 left. And then when the red light goes on,
24 hopefully everything should be asked and

1 answered.

2 So we go to --

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm sorry, we've
4 also been joined by Senator Martinez.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we go to the
6 chair of our Cities Committee, Assemblyman Ed
7 Braunstein, for 10 minutes.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you,
9 Chair Weinstein.

10 And thank you, Mr. Mayor and your
11 team, for coming up and joining us in person
12 today.

13 Before I begin, I just want to say as
14 chair of the Cities Committee, I spend a
15 significant amount of time with your SLA team
16 up here. And it's been -- always been a
17 pleasure working with them.

18 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: You know, you
20 mention in your testimony that by the middle
21 of next year the city expects to have spent
22 \$4 billion on the asylum-seeker crisis. And
23 Governor Hochul has committed funding to
24 assist the city in the State Budget, but

1 ultimately immigration is a federal issue.
2 And I want to know if you believe it's the
3 federal government's responsibility to help
4 share this burden.

5 And have you had conversations with
6 our federal partners, and can we count on
7 assistance forthcoming?

8 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you for that.

9 And we believe 1.4 billion during this
10 fiscal year, 2.8 billion next year. That's
11 how we come to the 4 billion. As you know,
12 we have to balance our budget two years out.

13 And yes, it is the federal
14 government's responsibility. We believe we
15 need comprehensive immigration reform. But
16 as you know, New York City is a right to
17 shelter state {sic}, and oftentimes we have
18 heard that obligation is not part of the
19 statewide responsibility. We believe that's
20 not true. We believe this is a statewide
21 responsibility as well as the city.

22 And we have fulfilled our
23 responsibility for the last few months, and
24 it has been an unbelievable strain on basic

1 services. And also it is a strain on those
2 who are seeking asylum and migrants who are
3 coming to the city.

4 We believe, due to the Majority Leader
5 of the Senate, Senator Schumer, and the
6 Minority Leader in Congress, Congressman
7 Jeffries, we have been able to get the
8 omnibus bill passed with \$800 million, but
9 that is going throughout the entire country.

10 We were able to secure \$8 million from
11 FEMA, but that is nearly -- nowhere near the
12 dollar amount that our city is going to
13 impact and cover the entire course of the
14 asylum and migrant seekers.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay, thank
16 you.

17 You mentioned concerns about
18 cost-shifts to cover the MTA operating
19 deficit. And, you know, I just want to point
20 out that the MTA is expecting a \$600 million
21 budget deficit for 2023, 1.2 billion for
22 2024, 1.6 billion in 2026.

23 And the Governor's proposal spreads
24 the burden around for closing that gap:

1 300 million from a one-time state
2 appropriation, 800 million from increasing
3 the Payroll Mobility Tax, a portion of tax
4 revenue from potential downstate casinos
5 between 460 and 820 million -- that's
6 potentially to begin in 2026. And obviously,
7 as you referenced, the city is being asked,
8 through cost-shifts, to cover 500 million.

9 Given the amount of services that the
10 MTA provides to New York City, don't you
11 think it's fair that the city shares some
12 portion of this burden? And if so, what
13 amount do you think would be a fair amount?

14 MAYOR ADAMS: Well, clearly part of
15 this burden is due to the drop in ridership
16 during the pandemic. And in 2021 New York
17 City was already mandated to pay \$3 billion.
18 And this current \$500 million per year -- the
19 state is going to put approximately
20 \$300 million in a one-time shot for one year.
21 We are being told to add a half a billion
22 dollars on to our budget for eternity.

23 That is just unfair. No other
24 municipality is being asked to do this. Half

1 a billion dollars added to New York City's
2 budget for each year -- when we're already
3 dealing with real fiscal issues -- is just
4 unfair to the city. And we should spread the
5 pain throughout the entire state, because we
6 realize the MTA is a statewide entity; it
7 should not fall on the burden of New York
8 City alone. And that's what I believe the
9 \$500 million is going to do to us.

10 Unlike the state's contribution of a
11 little over 300 million, one time, we've been
12 told half a billion dollars every year. That
13 is going to strain our existing ability to
14 provide services to the city.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: I mean, the
16 state is also contributing 800 million
17 through the Payroll Mobility Tax. Is there
18 an amount that you think the city, you know,
19 could shoulder?

20 MAYOR ADAMS: Well, as I indicated
21 already, the city is -- based on a 2021
22 mandate, we're already contributing
23 \$3 billion a year -- \$3 billion a year.

24 And we believe this pain should be

1 picked up by the state and other
2 municipalities, not only New York City.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay, thank
4 you.

5 As you know, the state has increased
6 Foundation Aid to the city year after year,
7 to the point where this year we're going to
8 meet the CFE lawsuit requirements. The city
9 has instituted universal 3-K. It's been a
10 tremendous program. My daughter is in 3-K.
11 Will we be able to continue that program
12 moving forward?

13 MAYOR ADAMS: That's our goal. And
14 one of the things that is concerning to me
15 that -- when I did an analysis of our budget
16 is that we were funding permanent programs
17 with temporary dollars. The funding from the
18 federal government, as you know, is going to
19 run out in 2025. It's a substantial dollar
20 amount. Our goal is to continue universal
21 pre-K.

22 And I also believe we made a major
23 error. We were funding seats and not bodies
24 in the seats. Our team went in, First Deputy

1 Mayor Wright went in and did a complete
2 analysis, just to discover that many of the
3 seats we were funding did not have bodies in
4 the seats.

5 And so we have to be prepared in 2025
6 when the federal dollars that fund this
7 program -- when these dollars run out, we
8 have to ensure that we can continue a great
9 program of universal pre-K. And it is our
10 desire to make sure every child that needs a
11 seat gets a seat, but not to just fund a seat
12 without a child in that.

13 And we're calling on all of our
14 lawmakers -- we have many Assembly districts,
15 Senate districts, Council districts, where
16 there are vacant seats. We're calling on
17 lawmakers to go out and find those families
18 that need the early childhood development
19 that comes with pre-K and 3-K and assist us
20 in filling the seats so that we can ensure
21 that every child that needs it has an
22 opportunity to do so.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: So just to
24 summarize, so even though 3-K was being

1 subsidized with federal money that's going to
2 run out, you still feel that you're going to
3 be able to continue the program.

4 MAYOR ADAMS: That's our goal. Our
5 goal is to continue the program, our goal is
6 to continue to make the necessary
7 cost-efficiencies.

8 But we need to be clear and honest
9 with New Yorkers, this was a permanent
10 program paid with temporary dollars. So
11 we're going to be looking towards the federal
12 government and the state to assist us when
13 these dollars run out in 2025.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: That's great
15 to hear, thank you.

16 And then my final question. And as
17 you know, Assemblywoman Rajkumar has
18 introduced a bill that would eliminate
19 Brooklyn-Queens Day as a city school holiday.
20 If we were to pass that legislation, do we
21 have your commitment that you would make
22 Diwali a school holiday?

23 MAYOR ADAMS: We -- we have to follow
24 state laws and rules on how many school days

1 children must be in school. And when this
2 was first brought to our attention, we
3 realized we had no more school days. And we
4 identified the Brooklyn-Queens Day, that this
5 was a day that will allow us to have a Diwali
6 holiday.

7 I think it's an excellent idea. We
8 sat down with community leaders, we sat down
9 with the chancellor, and we both saw that
10 this was an opportunity to do so. We shared
11 with community leaders that it had to come
12 through the state to make the determination.
13 And I'm excited with the possibility. The
14 community has been long calling for a Diwali
15 holiday. And if we're able to get that day,
16 we are encouraged to make it a Diwali
17 holiday.

18 We have to partner with the UFT as
19 well. But the first stop is here in the
20 state. And if we're able to accomplish that,
21 I believe we are one step -- a giant step
22 closer to a Diwali holiday.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Great. I
24 hope we ultimately make that happen.

1 Thank you for your testimony,

2 Mr. Mayor.

3 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

4 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

5 To the Senate.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very
7 much.

8 So our chair of the Cities Committee
9 had to be excused today, Senator Sepúlveda,
10 but we are going to continue on without him.

11 And we do have the chair of Local
12 Governments and the chair of Cities 2 that
13 will also likely be asking you questions.
14 So -- and of course I probably will as well,
15 Mayor. Nice to see you today.

16 So our first Senator will be John Liu.

17 SENATOR LIU: What a pleasant
18 surprise, Madam Chair. Thank you so much.

19 And thank you, Mr. Mayor, for joining
20 us --

21 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you, John.

22 SENATOR LIU: -- and your illustrious
23 team. Thank you for your support of the
24 Diwali holiday. Thank you for your support

1 of -- to make our streets safer by lowering
2 the threshold of DWI from .08 to .05. And
3 thank you for being a very inclusive mayor
4 and an administration that embraces all
5 communities in New York.

6 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

7 SENATOR LIU: I guess we have to talk
8 about your first pillar, jobs. Which as you
9 stated, the underpinning of which is
10 education.

11 You know, increasing the cap on
12 charter schools in New York City, as you
13 stated, will impose a severe financial burden
14 on the City of New York. It's something that
15 I adamantly oppose, lifting of that cap. And
16 it's good to hear that you kind of oppose it
17 also.

18 MAYOR ADAMS: Is that a question?

19 SENATOR LIU: No, that's not a
20 question.

21 (Laughter.)

22 SENATOR LIU: You don't have to say
23 anything. You already said what you need to
24 say here.

1 But on the next point, which is --

2 MAYOR ADAMS: Well, let's stay on that
3 point, because I don't want that point to be
4 giving the impression that I took a position
5 on it. I'm clear on scaling up successful
6 schools. And I'm not attached to charter,
7 district, public, private. I am -- I believe
8 scaling up successful schools is what I
9 believe in.

10 What I did today was point out what
11 the cost is for New York City. And we
12 believe it potentially could be a billion
13 dollars. But we have a real school crisis in
14 producing the quality of product that our
15 children deserve. And I support scaling up
16 good schools.

17 SENATOR LIU: And I know many of my
18 colleagues in the Legislature would like to
19 help you not have to bear this imposed --
20 additional imposed cost, and therefore many
21 of us oppose the increase in the charter cap.

22 On the issue of class sizes -- you
23 also talked about this -- you said that we
24 passed legislation without providing

1 additional funding to build schools and hire
2 teachers. Now, Mr. Mayor, this was not a
3 problem that you created, this has been a
4 long-standing issue. We've had many
5 discussions with your predecessor, and he
6 always said he'd love to build more
7 schools -- as was required by the courts in
8 New York -- but the state still owed more
9 money; i.e., Foundation Aid.

10 Since you've taken office as mayor,
11 last year the Legislature and the Governor in
12 the budget provided the City of New York an
13 additional \$600 million, which you did not
14 have when you took office. This year we are
15 poised to yet increase that further with an
16 additional \$600 million. And that will
17 continue to increase annually for the next
18 several years.

19 So by Year 5, Mr. Mayor, you will have
20 more, far more than the \$1.3 billion
21 necessary to provide a sound, basic
22 education. Which means that classes cannot
23 be excessively large. I just want to point
24 that out to you.

1 Thank you.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

3 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to
4 Assemblyman Reilly -- is he here? Ranker on
5 Cities, for five minutes.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Sorry.

7 MAYOR ADAMS: It's all good. The
8 clock's not running yet.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you,
10 Madam Chair.

11 Thank you, Mr. Mayor --

12 MAYOR ADAMS: How are you?

13 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: -- for your
14 testimony.

15 So I wanted to start out with gun
16 violence in New York City, 16- and
17 17-year-olds specifically, based on Raise the
18 Age. Have you seen -- with your executive
19 team, have you noticed that the increase and
20 the way that the court system is set up now
21 under Raise the Age, where if a 16- or
22 17-year-old is caught in possession of a
23 loaded firearm they automatically go to
24 Family Court -- do you think that if it was

1 one of the delineated models of keeping it in
2 Criminal Court, youth part Criminal Court, do
3 you think that would help address the
4 situation?

5 MAYOR ADAMS: Well, you know, when we
6 think about the Raise the Age, when we think
7 about criminal justice reform -- when I was
8 here in Albany, these were the issues that I
9 fought for. I believed that the criminal
10 justice system was unfair. I think it
11 targeted Black and brown people and it was
12 heavy-handed.

13 But when you do a real analysis in our
14 pursuit of making sure people that commit
15 crimes are receiving the justice they
16 deserve, we can't forget the people who are
17 the victims of crimes.

18 The way it stands now where a person
19 who's carrying a loaded weapon but is not
20 publicly exposed, is treated differently --
21 that is just something we need to reexamine.

22 We need to also reexamine if cases
23 should stay in Criminal Court instead of
24 Family Court. I believe those extreme

1 violent repeated offenders should be handled
2 in a Family Court criminal part.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you,
4 Mr. Mayor.

5 The next part focuses again on the
6 public safety aspect of organized retail
7 crime. Right now, currently, if they commit
8 misdemeanors -- petty larceny -- multiple
9 times, it's just a revolving door. Do you
10 think there's a way that we can help address
11 that, maybe like having -- if you have a
12 prior conviction or two prior convictions
13 within 18 months and then you commit another
14 crime and it accumulates, each one that you
15 go into different stores, over a thousand
16 dollars, making that a grand larceny felony?
17 Do you think that would help assist?

18 MAYOR ADAMS: Yeah, and there's
19 several layers. The -- some of the repeated
20 offenses that we're witnessing, particularly
21 property crimes, they fall into three
22 categories.

23 Category one is the individual who is
24 part of an organized ring. The Attorney

1 General did an amazing job of taking down one
2 of those rings.

3 Category two is a person who's --
4 substance abuse, they are dealing with a
5 substance abuse. And we need to address
6 that.

7 And category three are those who need
8 basic services.

9 So we believe that let's go after --
10 use the criminal justice apparatus to go
11 after those organized rings. Those people
12 who have substance abuse issues, let's
13 address that at the precinct level. If they
14 will partner with a social service provider,
15 we'll defer prosecution, and so they can get
16 the services they need.

17 If they're dealing with food
18 insecurity -- deferred prosecution, show them
19 the availability of food.

20 But what we can't do is allow repeated
21 offenders to make a mockery of our criminal
22 justice system, and repeatedly. We're losing
23 chain stores that are closing down. People
24 who are being employed in those stores are

1 losing their jobs, they're adding to our
2 unemployment.

3 So people who state that we're
4 criminalizing the poor that goes after people
5 who are repeated offenders, they're wrong.
6 We're going after and criminalizing the poor
7 when poor and low-income New Yorkers are
8 being unemployed because we're losing those
9 businesses in our city. We can't allow
10 repeated offenders to make a mockery of the
11 criminal justice system.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you,
13 Mr. Mayor.

14 So staying on that topic, talking
15 about with the marijuana shops that are
16 opening up, some are opening up illegally.
17 What type of enforcement is the city prepared
18 to do? What can the state do to help?

19 Specifically, I'm worried about it
20 going to the old weed-spot shootouts we used
21 to have in New York City when we were both in
22 the police department. We don't want to go
23 back to those days. Is there anything that
24 we can do as the state to assist?

1 MAYOR ADAMS: Thanks so much for that
2 question, because it's a real problem in the
3 city and I think it's going to become
4 pervasive throughout the state. Other
5 municipalities like California and others
6 have failed.

7 We need help. Number one, as it
8 stands now, if someone is selling illegal
9 cannabis in a store, the police can't take
10 action. We need to, number one, go after
11 landlords that intentionally set up illegal
12 shops in their location. We need to empower
13 the sheriffs and the police to appropriately
14 take action to confiscate those illegal uses.
15 And we need to identify those who are selling
16 to our children as well.

17 We have to close down these illegal
18 shops or we're going to do away with all the
19 good work that the state lawmakers did in
20 legalizing cannabis and the business that's
21 associated with it. Right now we don't have
22 the enforcement tools to correct the problem.

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

1 And drug recognition experts, I'm
2 hoping that we can still get some more
3 funding for drug recognition experts, for the
4 police law enforcement for driving under the
5 influence of marijuana.

6 MAYOR ADAMS: So important.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senate?

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, Senate.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

11 Next we're going to call on Robert
12 Jackson.

13 SENATOR JACKSON: Mayor -- good
14 morning, Mayor, and thank you and your team
15 for coming up.

16 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

17 SENATOR JACKSON: Let me just say I am
18 very concerned about the fact that New York
19 City has to pick up the locality share of
20 Medicaid when, around the country, New York
21 State is the only place that localities have
22 to pick it up. And that's hundreds of
23 millions of dollars that New York City has to
24 pick up.

1 I'm also concerned about Aid to
2 Municipalities, which New York City was cut
3 out a long time ago. And we would probably
4 get, right now, a billion dollars every year
5 where other localities in New York State are
6 getting their share but we get a big fat
7 zero.

8 So my question to you is, is New York
9 City the Federal Reserve Bank that we have
10 all of the money that we actually need? And
11 that's a serious question, because I've
12 always raised the issue of Aid to
13 Municipalities, that we're the only city, the
14 only municipality in New York State that gets
15 a big fat zero. And so I'm very serious
16 about that. But -- and I know your answer.
17 Obviously you're not the Federal Reserve
18 Bank.

19 But also you mentioned about the
20 distressed hospitals, and that you're the
21 only city that's paying for that. I mean,
22 where is the fairness to New York City? And
23 as you know, I've fought, when it comes to
24 Foundation Aid, with John Liu and other

1 advocates to make sure that all of our
2 children -- not only New York City, but the
3 entire state -- gets an opportunity for a
4 sound, basic education.

5 So I'm very concerned that we have to
6 push back at the state level and at the
7 federal level to ensure that New York City
8 gets its fair share so we can do all of the
9 things that we need.

10 And so with that -- I only have a
11 minute and a half -- I say to you that John
12 Liu said, and I agree, I'm not willing to go
13 along with the charter expansion. Basically
14 the Governor opened the door up for a
15 floodgate to New York City. And even if
16 there was a hundred schools that come to
17 New York City, under each charter they can
18 expand. And that's possibly 300 schools over
19 the next 10 years.

20 And you know one thing? You said it
21 in your statement, the cost factor to
22 New York City is going to be over a billion
23 dollars more. Do you have the money to do
24 that? I know the answer is no, we don't have

1 it. So that's another issue that we have
2 expressed publicly at a press conference at
3 City Hall with John Liu, Rachel May -- not
4 Rachel -- Shelley Mayer and others. And
5 advocates stood solidly and said, Stop, stop.
6 You keep pushing on New York City things that
7 we don't need. We have our own internal
8 problems.

9 I congratulate you for trying to deal
10 with the migrant situation, for people coming
11 in. You slept in a -- in the Brooklyn
12 location overnight with Assemblymember Eddie
13 Gibbs from Manhattan. And I appreciate the
14 fact that you want to get things done. But
15 we want to make sure that you have the
16 resources to get it done.

17 So thank you for your leadership. I
18 look forward to working with you on the
19 issues that I've expressed.

20 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you, Senator.

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

22 We go to Assemblyman Epstein, for
23 10 minutes.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you,

1 Mr. Mayor. Thank you for being here. I
2 really appreciate it.

3 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you. Good to see
4 you.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: You too.

6 MAYOR ADAMS: You've inspired me to
7 get my ears pierced.

8 (Laughter.)

9 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: You know, bald
10 men with earrings is a good look, you know?

11 (Laughter.)

12 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So I just wanted
13 to talk to you about the housing plan first.
14 You mentioned the housing plan; I notice you
15 didn't mention around the basement
16 apartments. And as you know, we lost
17 11 New Yorkers in basement apartments.

18 And in the Governor's proposal she
19 included a path to legalizing basement
20 apartments for New York City. My
21 understanding is you and your administration
22 are supportive of doing that this upcoming
23 year. I want to hear what your thoughts are
24 and how you're going to prioritize helping

1 the New Yorkers who are living in basement
2 apartments.

3 MAYOR ADAMS: Well, we -- we have been
4 looking at this for some time, and some of
5 the lawmakers here as well as the City
6 Council. We want to make sure, with the
7 accessory dwelling units, that it's done in a
8 safe way. We saw, after Hurricane Ida, we
9 lost several New Yorkers due to the
10 hurricane. Our goal is to make sure that any
11 accessory dwelling is done in a safe way and
12 be part of our overall plan on how we're
13 going to deal with the housing crisis that we
14 are facing.

15 And I want to commend the Governor and
16 her attempt to address this issue and make
17 sure we ensure that any accessory dwelling,
18 particularly basement apartments, are done in
19 a safe way.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So you support
21 the state giving you authority, under the
22 Multiple Dwelling Law, to do a New York City
23 plan to legalize basement apartments in a
24 safe and affordable way, is that correct?

1 MAYOR ADAMS: Yes, I do. And the
2 first attempt to roll out, it was costing
3 homeowners anywhere from a half a million to
4 a million dollars. It was just too expensive
5 for low-income New Yorkers.

6 And when you go to several communities
7 where you see these accessory dwellings or
8 basement apartments, they're in low-income
9 communities. And right now if it's done
10 illegally without any oversight, that is
11 what's making it dangerous. We want to stop
12 that from occurring.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: I appreciate
14 that. And I appreciate your support to
15 create a legal pathway to support these
16 homeowners.

17 As you know, we put in the budget
18 \$85 million last year, statewide, to help
19 homeowners and municipalities legalize these
20 basement units. And I know the city applied
21 for a plan to do that. Do you expect to be
22 applying for future funding as well to help
23 homeowners up -- legalize these units?

24 MAYOR ADAMS: That's our goal.

1 And I think that seems to be in line
2 with what the Governor is proposing as well.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Great, thank
4 you.

5 I want to talk to you about another
6 housing issue that you mentioned, the lifting
7 of the 12 FAR cap. And since I represent
8 Manhattan, that obviously will impact my
9 district. And, you know, obviously we have a
10 concern about housing, but more of a concern
11 about affordable housing. I'm concerned by
12 just lifting the cap without requiring
13 affordability above 12 FAR, that we're
14 missing the mark. We're not requiring
15 developers who are building above 12 FAR to
16 guarantee permanent affordable housing.

17 I was wondering if I could -- if you'd
18 be open to changing that and requiring, you
19 know, if there is a cap -- the 12 FAR cap
20 lifted, which at this point I can't support
21 because it's not affordable, would you
22 support something that required affordable
23 housing above 12 FAR?

24 MAYOR ADAMS: Yes. Yes, I do. And I

1 believe that we have an excellent
2 opportunity, when we look at almost
3 10 million square feet of available space in
4 our office buildings -- if we do the
5 conversions like we did post-9/11 in
6 Lower Manhattan, I believe that this is an
7 excellent opportunity for us to look at
8 converting some of the units into affordable
9 units -- and mixed-use affordable, low income
10 and middle income.

11 Because I'm concerned about my teacher
12 and McDonald worker. You know, they are
13 being priced out of this city, and we're
14 losing thousands of African-Americans that
15 are fleeing the city because it's no longer
16 affordable.

17 And so the goal is that as we look at
18 what could be done on the state level like
19 FAR, that's our opportunity to put as many
20 opportunities out there to build more units.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So in my
22 district on the East Side of Manhattan,
23 Waterside Plaza is in my district. And this
24 year I heard from residents who are seeing

1 in mind. So whatever we do around good-cause
2 eviction, let's remember that small property
3 owner who came from the Caribbean, was able
4 to buy a 10-unit house, how their increases
5 are going up, what they're going through.

6 I receive and field those calls all
7 the time, of these small property owners that
8 all of their assets, all of their savings is
9 in their homes. And if we don't take that
10 into account, the intention of good-cause
11 eviction can displace some of these small
12 property owners, and then you're going to
13 have large investors come in and take away
14 the real pursuit of the American dream.

15 I don't know any community from any
16 place on the globe that came to this country
17 with the desire of owning a home. Everything
18 they have is in that home. All that I have
19 is in that three-family house.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Mayor, we agree
21 on that. You know, Blackstone represents
22 tens of thousands of units in my district.
23 They own StuyTown-Peter Cooper Village. I'm
24 not talking -- now I'm talking about the

1 large property owners who are -- you know,
2 Blackstone's the largest landlord in the
3 world.

4 So those are the landlords who we're
5 trying to impact. And I think that's what
6 good cause is getting to, to support tenants
7 who are living in those buildings.

8 I want to turn to the cost-shifting
9 that you mentioned around the MTA. Part of
10 the cost-shifting was related to the Student
11 MetroCard Program.

12 And so I notice that the Governor
13 proposed shifting about \$100 million from the
14 state and the MTA to the city. And I'm
15 wondering, do you feel like it's the city's
16 responsibility to get students to and from
17 school and to their school-related
18 activities? What should be the shift? You
19 know, what should be the city's
20 responsibility versus the MTA versus state?

21 Because obviously, as the parent of
22 public school kids that personally went to
23 public school, my kids needed it to get to
24 school. They needed the MTA to get to their

1 thing after school. They needed it to go to
2 the Model U.N. Conference or the sporting
3 event or all the activities that -- the
4 MetroCard was critical for my children and
5 I'm sure for the million-plus New York
6 children who are going to school.

7 MAYOR ADAMS: Well, you know, I may be
8 dating myself; even before we had MetroCards,
9 I remember having that little free pass that
10 allowed us to get on the bus and train going
11 to Bayside High School.

12 We're doing our share. New York is
13 paying 45 million, the state is paying
14 25 million, and we believe it's a great
15 partnership that both the city and state --
16 we're not even saying split fifty-fifty.
17 We're paying 45 million, the state is paying
18 25 million. And we should not shift the cost
19 on New York City alone.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: I appreciate
21 that. Thanks for -- thank you for sharing
22 that.

23 The last question is around kind of
24 the mental health crisis we're seeing. So in

1 my district we have a large number of people
2 with mental health issues. It's really
3 affecting our small businesses. They're
4 going into stores and they're causing lots of
5 disruption. We've heard from our East
6 Village Merchants Association about the
7 negative impact it's having in our community.
8 In our local parks we see, you know, needles
9 in playgrounds. And we've been trying to get
10 more collaboration from the city to do
11 something about it.

12 How can we confront this? How can we
13 confront that? How can we confront the
14 vending that's happening on 14th Street where
15 we see people leaving food on the ground and
16 people buying it? It is kind of this mental
17 health street life that's really having a
18 negative impact on people in our community
19 and the small businesses in our community.

20 MAYOR ADAMS: First of all, I'm glad
21 that you're saying that. And, you know, I
22 hope people capture you saying it because --

23 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: It's being
24 recorded, so it's --

1 MAYOR ADAMS: Okay, that is so
2 important.

3 You know, I was on 14th Street the
4 other day around 11 p.m., which is --

5 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Call me, I'll
6 join you.

7 (Laughter.)

8 MAYOR ADAMS: Let's do that. Let's do
9 that.

10 And you're right. And I just don't
11 understand the philosophy that people embrace
12 that we should allow people to stay on the
13 street that cannot take care of their basic
14 needs. That is inhumane. January and
15 February, when I first got elected, I went
16 and visited people that lived in encampments,
17 that lived in boxes. I saw human waste, drug
18 paraphernalia, schizophrenic, bipolar --
19 people can't make those decisions.

20 And so our approach of using outreach
21 workers, combined with other professionals,
22 to give them the care they deserve, is what
23 we're going to continue to pursue.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So, Mayor, I

1 just -- I think -- I think I have only
2 10 seconds left. It sounds like -- I'd love
3 you to come back to the district. I know it
4 sounds like we agree that we don't
5 criminalize poverty, we want to help people,
6 and I think that's our shared goal. Is that
7 right, Mr. Mayor?

8 MAYOR ADAMS: Yes. Yes.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

10 To the Senate.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very
12 much.

13 Our next questioner is Senator Rachel
14 May, chair.

15 SENATOR MAY: Mr. Mayor, nice to meet
16 you.

17 MAYOR ADAMS: How are you?

18 SENATOR MAY: I'm great.

19 MAYOR ADAMS: You must have come after
20 I left.

21 SENATOR MAY: Yup, exactly.

22 Yeah, so I represent Syracuse and
23 Central New York, and I'm chair of the
24 Cities 2 Committee, which is all the other

1 cities.

2 So I was happy that you mentioned
3 waste reduction. A lot of New York City's
4 waste is trucked right through my district to
5 Seneca Meadows Landfill, which is slated to
6 close in a year or two, and needs to close.

7 So we in the Legislature have more
8 ambitious targets than what the Governor laid
9 out for packaging reduction as well as I
10 carry a major expansion of the Bottle Bill.
11 And I'm wondering if you will support more
12 ambitious efforts to reduce waste in those
13 ways.

14 MAYOR ADAMS: We would love to partner
15 with you and hear some of your suggestions.

16 But I am really pleased with
17 Commissioner Tisch. We started our
18 composting program in Queens, hit record
19 numbers ahead of time. This is going to be
20 eventually a citywide program to make sure
21 that we find better ways to use our waste.
22 But if there's some ideas that you believe
23 you want to present to the administration, we
24 are eager to do so. We want to make a real

1 mark on how do we reduce our waste and move
2 in the area of recyclables.

3 SENATOR MAY: Tremendous. I look
4 forward to doing that. I hope we have a
5 chance to meet about that.

6 I also had an opportunity to tour the
7 watershed in the Catskills, some of the
8 protection efforts that the city does to
9 protect its drinking water at the source.
10 But there are a lot of new pressures with the
11 climate crisis and with PFOS, the forever
12 chemicals that are getting into our water
13 supply and everything.

14 I'm wondering, is New York City
15 expanding its efforts to protect the
16 watershed at the source so that you can
17 continue having the unfiltered drinking water
18 that is the envy of the world?

19 MAYOR ADAMS: When you say expansion
20 of the protection, can you drill down a
21 little more for me?

22 SENATOR MAY: Well, so PFOS is a real
23 threat. These forever chemicals from
24 plastics and, you know, a lot of the

1 chemicals that are in our -- that we are
2 generating, they're ending up in the water
3 supply. They're dangerous for people to
4 drink.

5 So -- and then harmful algal blooms
6 are happening more and more as the
7 temperatures rise and also agricultural
8 runoff gets into the water. And so there are
9 just a lot more things to guard against in
10 order to keep our water safe to drink.

11 So I'm just wondering if New York has
12 allocated more funds or it needs more funds
13 to do that kind of watershed protection that
14 you already do at a large scale.

15 MAYOR ADAMS: Anything you want to add
16 on that, Jacques?

17 NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Yeah, we
18 will continue our efforts to make investments
19 in watershed to make sure that, you know, we
20 protect our water at the source.

21 SENATOR MAY: Okay, great.

22 MAYOR ADAMS: But again, Senator, if
23 there's some particular ideas you have, we
24 really want to partner with you. You know,

1 based on my reading of some of the proposals
2 you have produced, this is an area where
3 you're an expert. This is an area that you
4 believe in. And we believe let's go to the
5 experts. If there's some things you
6 specifically feel we should be doing, the
7 team up here is looking forward to that
8 engagement.

9 SENATOR MAY: Okay. If you haven't
10 gone on a tour and seen what they're doing,
11 training farmers to, you know, create buffers
12 around the water supplies and things like
13 that, it's a really great thing to do. I
14 recommend it because it's -- the water supply
15 in New York City -- if you had to start
16 filtering that water, that would blow up your
17 budget. So --

18 MAYOR ADAMS: Why don't we arrange a
19 time for me to come up. We just have to do
20 it quietly, because every time I leave the
21 city the press follows me.

22 (Laughter.)

23 SENATOR MAY: And then I just have one
24 other question which is about a bill that I

1 carried last year that I think you're
2 familiar with, the SIGH Act. I worked very
3 hard with the New York Civil Liberties Union
4 on this to protect our kids in schools from
5 siting schools right next to major highways.
6 And I recognize that New York City has
7 limited space for building new schools and it
8 may not be easy to find spaces that are far
9 enough away from a highway. We were only
10 asking for 500 feet, but still ...

11 My understanding was that New York
12 City was the sticking point on getting that
13 bill passed. So would you be open to working
14 with us to try to figure out wording for that
15 bill so that we can protect our kids all
16 around the state from the dangers of being in
17 a school right next to a highway, you know,
18 breathing the air, the noise pollution, the
19 other hazards that are associated with that?

20 MAYOR ADAMS: And I wrestled with that
21 bill because the intentions were right. And
22 I remember sitting down with the team and
23 going over it, because it is a concern.

24 And, you know, I'm proud of the fact

1 that any new building that is being built is
2 going to be 100 percent electric. We are
3 going to invest a substantial amount of money
4 to convert a lot of the diesel boilers, a lot
5 of the boilers that are spewing out toxic
6 fumes. We were up in the Bronx, at one of
7 the schools that was right by the highway.

8 The density issue is a real issue for
9 us -- you know, unlike other locales.
10 Finding and siting spaces to build schools is
11 a real challenge. But again, I would love to
12 sit down with you and see if we could come up
13 to a meeting of the minds. Because I did --
14 personally, I wrestled with that -- you know,
15 we had to say that can we actually do this.
16 But we have to deal with real environmental
17 issues. That's why we're converting our
18 vehicle fleet to electric vehicles. The deal
19 we're making with Uber and Lyft, we're
20 talking about thousands of vehicles going
21 electric.

22 So we're in line with you. And if
23 there's a way we could get to a place to
24 accomplish both those goals, two thumbs up.

1 SENATOR MAY: Great. I appreciate
2 that. I mean, you had some really
3 constructive counterproposals about air
4 quality inside the schools, which I think is
5 something we should be working on as well.

6 So thank you. I look forward to
7 working with you on these issues.

8 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you. But we
9 actually proposed it -- I'm just an overall
10 good guy.

11 (Laughter.)

12 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm not sure that
14 gets you anything in Albany, but thanks for
15 sharing.

16 (Laughter.)

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

18 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to
19 Assemblywoman Hyndman, three minutes.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Good morning,
21 Mr. Mayor. Thank you --

22 MAYOR ADAMS: How are you?

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: -- and your
24 team.

1 So Southeast Queens was one of the
2 biggest areas that did composting. So thank
3 you for saying that.

4 MAYOR ADAMS: And you know what's very
5 interesting, Assemblywoman, that South
6 Jamaica, Queens, St. Albans, all of those
7 communities that people stated would not
8 compost are leading the way. Those Black and
9 brown communities that they said wouldn't
10 participate in the program, they're leading
11 the way in Queens.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I'm very happy
13 to hear that. And I know that about my
14 constituents.

15 So my question, we have seen the
16 reopen of shelters in and around the
17 community that were closed, the hotels that
18 became shelters, and we know the migrants
19 need a place to stay and we're very happy to
20 provide that.

21 But one of the things you said is that
22 you may have to cut essential programs for
23 the city. And what gets cut first, is my
24 question. Because our schools are

1 overcrowded now, and the additional dollars
2 aren't coming for that, so principals are
3 having to do more with less. We're seeing an
4 influx of activity around some of these
5 places. So what more can you cut in order
6 to -- and still run the City of New York?

7 MAYOR ADAMS: It's a real frightening
8 experience when you think about it. Four
9 billion dollars in our budget. We're going
10 to -- in 2025, we're going to reach a real
11 fiscal cliff. We still have substantial
12 union contracts we have to settle. People
13 look at the \$8 billion we have in our
14 Rainy Day Fund and don't realize we still
15 have some very serious costs. Those dollars
16 are gone.

17 And every service in the city is going
18 to be impacted, every service. Over 11,000
19 children are in our school system we absorb.
20 Thus far we have not received any financial
21 assistance to assist us with what we've been
22 holding on for close to a year in this
23 migrant crisis.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I just wanted

1 to thank the staff that you have up here,
2 Nitisha and Chris, for the work that they do.
3 They're very responsive to the questions,
4 which helps me help my community.

5 And I yield back my 47 seconds. Thank
6 you.

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

8 Senate.

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Cleare.

10 SENATOR CLEARE: Good morning.

11 MAYOR ADAMS: Good morning, Senator.

12 SENATOR CLEARE: Thank you so much,
13 Mayor Adams and your team. Thank you for
14 being up here today.

15 I just want to drill down. You
16 already mentioned this a little bit in one of
17 your responses. But a recent New York Times
18 article highlighted an exodus of Black
19 residents from New York City over the last
20 decade. And though the city's overall
21 population has increased, nearly
22 200,000 Blacks have left New York City. That
23 resulted in us now being one in five
24 residents of New York City -- compared with

1 2000, where we were one in four -- according
2 to the latest Census data.

3 And one of the main causes pointed out
4 in the article is the rising cost of raising
5 a family in New York -- more specifically,
6 the rising rents and lack of truly
7 affordable, safe housing for Blacks in
8 New York City, who have an average median
9 income of \$53,000, compared to whites at
10 \$98,000.

11 We know that there's also been
12 historic barriers put in the way of Blacks
13 renting and owning in New York City.

14 I want to know, in your housing plan
15 and in your arsenal and with the tools that
16 you have, how can we address this major
17 housing injustice, this disparity that
18 exists? And I know earlier you talked about
19 the FAR cap; if that can be tied to in some
20 way providing housing for Blacks in New York
21 City who are very, very critically being
22 pushed out of New York City.

23 MAYOR ADAMS: Well said, Senator. And
24 you probably -- your community is Ground Zero

1 for that problem.

2 SENATOR CLEARE: Yes.

3 MAYOR ADAMS: The transformation of
4 Harlem is clear, and you're seeing long-time
5 residents are no longer finding it
6 affordable.

7 And our goal is to really zero in on
8 low- and middle-income New Yorkers. And the
9 cost of housing is making it challenging.
10 And one of the reasons we're finding that
11 landlords are able to have these exorbitant
12 fees and costs is because of the stock.
13 That's why we have to build more. We have to
14 build more housing. And building more
15 housing means that we need partners like you
16 and the City Council to state here's some
17 locations to build.

18 SENATOR CLEARE: But when I think --
19 and I don't mean to cut you off, because I
20 have limited time. You know, we built more,
21 we built a whole lot, and we built our own
22 displacement.

23 So I want to make sure that, going
24 forward, that we now focus on that, learn

1 from those mistakes, and make sure that we're
2 not -- that we're including all New Yorkers,
3 including Black residents, who want to remain
4 in the community. And as you know, I
5 represent a historically Black community, and
6 this has been devastating for all of us.

7 If you can just talk a little bit
8 about the executive's proposal to establish a
9 New York City Office of Community Hiring.
10 And, you know, is that something that you
11 would support? And I don't know if you're
12 familiar with it. You can send it to me.

13 MAYOR ADAMS: Yes.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.
15 Assembly.

16 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to
17 Assemblyman Weprin, three minutes.

18 SENATOR CLEARE: I'm going to have to
19 talk faster.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Good morning,
21 Mr. Mayor.

22 MAYOR ADAMS: How are you,
23 Assemblyman?

24 ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Thank you for

1 coming back to visit us. And I know you've
2 been a constant force back and forth.

3 I'm the new chair of the Assembly
4 Committee on Insurance, and I've been
5 reviewing the Executive Budget and the
6 potential impacts it will have on
7 New Yorkers. Specifically I'm referring to
8 Article VII HMM Part J, which is commonly
9 known as the pay-and-pursue, or
10 pay-and-resolve. This policy mandates that
11 health insurers pay emergency and in-patient
12 services claims prior to conducting a
13 utilization review.

14 Under this proposal, hospitals would
15 be reimbursed for services performed before
16 health insurers can fully assess the medical
17 necessity of those services.

18 It is my understanding that there is
19 concern among the municipal workforce
20 regarding the potential implementation of
21 this policy. And I'm curious to get your
22 feedback or your team's feedback on this
23 proposal and whether your administration
24 feels its implementation would be a benefit

1 or a hindrance to the municipal workforce.

2 MAYOR ADAMS: Well -- and I'm a big
3 believer in I know what I know and I know
4 what I don't know. So don't mind me turning
5 it over to Jacques, because I don't know.

6 (Laughter.)

7 NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Yes, it is
8 a bit of a concern to us. And because the
9 costs -- it's about like \$111 million this
10 year and going to 285 next year.

11 So we definitely would have to work
12 with the Governor to make sure that we --
13 they don't implement this policy. Because
14 again, as I said, it's another cost to the
15 City of New York.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Thank you.

17 We're going to be obviously discussing
18 that as we do our response to the budget in
19 our house, and we'd like to, you know, take
20 into consideration your feelings on it. But
21 we have not made a decision of whether the
22 Assembly Majority is going to accept it or
23 reject it at this point.

24 NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Sure.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Thank you.

2 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

3 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very
5 much.

6 Next we have -- oh, have you met
7 Senator Gounardes?

8 (Laughter.)

9 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Who is this man
10 here? I don't know if I've seen this man
11 before in my life.

12 (Laughter.)

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: It was a guess.

14 (Laughter.)

15 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Good morning,
16 Mr. Mayor.

17 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

18 SENATOR GOUNARDES: First, on behalf
19 of Assemblymembers Tannousis and Mamdani, we
20 want to request that Greek Independence Day
21 is also a holiday --

22 (Laughter.)

23 SENATOR GOUNARDES: -- the Green
24 contingent and the Astoria contingent.

1 MAYOR ADAMS: They say I'm from
2 Athens.

3 (Laughter.)

4 SENATOR GOUNARDES: I want to drill
5 down a little bit on some of these
6 cost-shifts you're being asked -- the city's
7 being asked to pick up as part of this
8 budget.

9 Operating expenses, paratransit,
10 Student MetroCards -- you said it's over a
11 half a billion dollars. What does that --
12 how does that compare to what the city's
13 currently providing? And are any other
14 localities in the MTA district providing a
15 similar rate or percentage of a share to help
16 support the MTA?

17 MAYOR ADAMS: And we find it -- and
18 Jacques, you could break down exact numbers
19 and details of it. We're finding in our
20 analysis all of those who fall within the MTA
21 throughout the entire state are receiving
22 some form of services. But it appears as
23 though only New York City is being required
24 to assume all of the costs of these services

1 that historically all of you have fought for
2 to make sure that the state pays their
3 portion of -- and that which we have fought
4 for now has been shifted totally to New York
5 City.

6 Jacques, do we have the exact numbers?

7 NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Yes.

8 It's -- I'll give an example of -- it's
9 two -- currently we pay about \$2.3 billion we
10 contribute to the MTA. City residents, okay,
11 contribute about 68.5 percent of all the
12 revenues that go to the MTA. That's on top
13 of that.

14 The Governor basically is asking the
15 city to pay half a billion dollars for
16 Fair Fares -- for paratransit and all of
17 these things. These are shared
18 responsibilities. That was the intent of the
19 program to begin with. Now they're trying to
20 shift everything onto the city. And the city
21 is the only locality, like you said, around
22 the entire region that is asked to contribute
23 half a billion dollars in perpetuity. It's
24 not like one time there is a short-term

1 problem, it's that in perpetuity we have to
2 contribute half a billion dollars a year.

3 SENATOR GOUNARDES: I want to get in,
4 because I have 40 seconds left. I appreciate
5 that answer.

6 Is it fair to say that people who use
7 Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road also,
8 when they come into the city, use city buses
9 and city trains?

10 MAYOR ADAMS: Yes, they do.

11 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Okay, thank you.

12 I also want to shift -- you mentioned
13 earlier about the migrant crisis. Next time
14 you're in Red Hook, give me a call, I'll come
15 with you. The federal money that was passed
16 last year, we haven't seen it yet, but how
17 much -- do we know how much is earmarked for
18 New York City at this point?

19 MAYOR ADAMS: No. They have not -- we
20 met with the board of control and sat down
21 and communicated with them. They have not
22 allocated the exact dollar amount that will
23 come to New York City.

24 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Do we know when

1 that might happen?

2 MAYOR ADAMS: No, we do not.

3 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman
6 Carroll.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN CARROLL: Good morning,
8 Mr. Mayor.

9 MAYOR ADAMS: How are you,
10 Assemblyman?

11 ASSEMBLYMAN CARROLL: Thank you so
12 much for coming. I'm well, thank you for
13 asking.

14 You and I share a similar passion and
15 a similar struggle. Of course I'm talking
16 about literacy. You were a great leader in
17 talking about your struggle with reading and
18 dyslexia as a young person. I, for the last
19 seven years here in Albany, have been beating
20 my head against the wall talking about
21 literacy.

22 You have done great service to
23 hundreds of thousands of children in New York
24 City by sounding the alarm of the literacy

1 crisis that we're facing in New York and
2 committing to reforming our elementary school
3 education. But yesterday in the city, there
4 was a report that said still a majority of
5 our public schools are using an outdated,
6 outmoded and debunked curriculum from
7 Teacher's College at Columbia University that
8 uses a method of teaching called "3-Cueing"
9 that has no basis in science or evidence.

10 I know that you care about instituting
11 an evidence-based structured literacy
12 curriculum that's based on the five pillars
13 of literacy -- which are, for those who don't
14 know, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency,
15 vocabulary, and comprehension. Will you
16 commit today to saying that we will ban
17 3-Cueing, we will ban these debunked literacy
18 curriculums that are destroying the lives of
19 our children? And can you support my bill,
20 the Right to Read Act, that will make sure
21 that we have evidence-based literacy
22 curriculum and teacher training for every
23 single teacher in this state and stop these
24 outmoded curriculums that are destroying the

1 lives of children?

2 MAYOR ADAMS: Well, first,
3 Assemblyman, I cannot thank you enough for
4 your commitment in this area. When people
5 talk about upstream models, 30 to 40 percent
6 of the men and women on Rikers Island have
7 learning disabilities, we believe with
8 dyslexia leading the way. And the
9 partnership you did with the chancellor a few
10 days ago just continues to show your
11 commitment in this area.

12 I have full confidence in
13 Chancellor Banks. He has really approached a
14 real literacy component to how we're going to
15 revamp education. I think we have done a
16 disservice to our educators by putting them
17 in an atmosphere without the right tools.
18 But evidence-based must be the way we must
19 go, and we want to partner with you in
20 getting there.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN CARROLL: I agree with you
22 a hundred percent. I hope you can bring that
23 clarity to the Governor. She vetoed last
24 year a bill of mine that would have just had

1 public hearings about literacy and dyslexia.
2 She was too scared to have public hearings
3 and listen to parents, educators, students.
4 We need your clarity. Please, support these
5 bills, talk to the Governor. Because if we
6 don't do it, our children will inherit the
7 wind.

8 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

10 To the Senate.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

12 I'm now going to turn to
13 Chair Martinez, from the Local Governments
14 Committee, for 10 minutes.

15 SENATOR MARTINEZ: Thank you.

16 Good morning, Mayor. How are you?

17 MAYOR ADAMS: How are you? Good to
18 see you.

19 SENATOR MARTINEZ: I am doing well,
20 thank you. Good to see you as well.

21 First of all, I just want to say thank
22 you for being here with us today, and with
23 your team, and presenting us with your
24 comments and especially making sure that

1 New York City is a safe place and a place
2 where people can live.

3 With that said, as chair of
4 Local Governments and also a proud immigrant
5 myself, I want to thank you for what you're
6 doing with the humanitarian crisis that we
7 are now facing, not just in New York City but
8 the entire State of New York.

9 Coming from Suffolk County and
10 Brentwood, New York, which is a very
11 transient and very diverse district,
12 sometimes people use fearmongering to elicit
13 emotions on the backs of the pains of
14 families that are struggling. And for me I
15 just want to say thank you for your efforts
16 in providing some sort of solace for our
17 people who are coming in from different
18 countries.

19 But with that said, I just want to
20 ask -- because there are rumors, and I just
21 want to make sure that rumors are not real or
22 fake, so I'm going to ask you personally. It
23 was reported that New York City is looking
24 into Nassau Coliseum as a potential housing

1 for our asylum-seekers. Is that part of the
2 New York City plan?

3 MAYOR ADAMS: I didn't hear the first
4 part, I'm sorry. You said reported that we
5 what?

6 SENATOR MARTINEZ: That New York City
7 is looking to use Nassau Coliseum in
8 Nassau County as a place for temporary
9 housing for our seekers, our asylum-seekers.

10 MAYOR ADAMS: That has not come across
11 my desk.

12 SENATOR MARTINEZ: Okay. See, because
13 it was a news article on January of this year
14 that said New York City was looking as a
15 potential -- looking for locations at
16 potential places around the state, and
17 Nassau Coliseum came up as one. So I just
18 wanted to make sure that I gave you the
19 opportunity to clear that up because, as you
20 know, if this is the case, all I would hope
21 is that there is some sort of discussions
22 with our local governments, with our local
23 schools, with our not-for-profits. Our
24 not-for-profits are already struggling with

1 resources and lack thereof.

2 So I just wanted to make sure that I
3 put that out there and gave you the
4 opportunity to clear that up.

5 MAYOR ADAMS: Yes. I think you
6 started out with the first words "there was a
7 news article," you know.

8 (Laughter.)

9 MAYOR ADAMS: Clearly that has not
10 come across my desk. And if we were to do an
11 initiative in one of the local municipalities
12 in the area, we're going to communicate with
13 the local electeds to share what we are
14 doing.

15 We -- this administration believes
16 strongly in empowering local electeds. I
17 think everyone here would tell you how
18 accessible our administration, my
19 administration is. And we would definitely
20 communicate with you.

21 But with that said, there needs to be
22 a decompression strategy in the state. I
23 think it's the obligation of the Governor's
24 office to decide how we're going to take the

1 close to 47,000 people that have come through
2 our care, how do we make sure that this is a
3 statewide initiative. This is not a New York
4 City obligation, and there should be a
5 decompression strategy that we could
6 successfully take small amounts of those who
7 are seeking to pursue the American dream.

8 SENATOR MARTINEZ: Which is why I also
9 said people are using the fearmongering
10 tactic, where these are families that are
11 seeking asylum that are coming from countries
12 where their lives are at stake. And I can
13 tell you from my personal story coming to the
14 United States, where my mother came on her
15 own, leaving her children and her husband
16 behind -- the resources were there for us to
17 be successful where we are today. All of my
18 siblings are successful individuals, and that
19 was because the resources were available.

20 And I just want to make sure that
21 whatever we do for these asylum-seekers --
22 because they are looking for help -- that we
23 talk and we communicate and that things don't
24 come up in surprises, because the last thing

1 we want is a surprise. But like you said
2 before, we need to figure out how to help
3 these asylum-seekers.

4 And I do want to say thank you for
5 being here and for providing that opportunity
6 for asylum-seekers, and especially these
7 children. Right? These children have
8 nothing to do with that's happening, and it's
9 scary to know that they're coming to a
10 strange place that they don't know and all
11 they want is to feel love and to feel
12 acceptance.

13 So again, I do thank you for that.

14 MAYOR ADAMS: Yeah, and they feel that
15 love with this administration. And it's
16 unfortunate that we had close to a thousand
17 people that lived in one of the hotels,
18 single adult males, and we told them that we
19 need to open the space for children and
20 families in hotels and put them in congregate
21 settings, similar to what we're doing with
22 everyday men in the city that live in
23 congregate settings. We want children and
24 families to be in hotel rooms as we

1 transition them into permanent housing.

2 And a small group of agitators have 40
3 of those individuals to protest and be on the
4 street. They were on their way into the bus
5 to go to the humanitarian center that we
6 opened -- heat, warmth, food, three meals a
7 day. We're incorporating English as a second
8 language instruction. And they are thankful.

9 And that's the real tragedy of this.
10 When you go to the asylum-seekers and the
11 migrants, they are saying thank you for what
12 you are doing. What we're doing in New York
13 City is not being done anywhere else in the
14 country. We are doing -- providing meals,
15 healthcare, education, mental health support,
16 all the things that we should treat people
17 with a level of dignity.

18 And who's it being led by? It's being
19 led by Commissioner Castro, who was a
20 Dreamer. He came here with his mother from
21 Mexico. He understands what they're going
22 through, like you understand that. And that
23 is who's leading our initiative. We've done
24 an amazing job, and this city should be proud

1 of what we have done and will continue to do.

2 SENATOR MARTINEZ: Thank you. And
3 just one last comment.

4 In moving forward we also need to make
5 sure that our not-for-profits, those
6 organizations that are helping across the
7 state, are also funded. Because they're at a
8 crossroads. They don't know who to help
9 because of the lack of resources that they
10 have. So that's something else that we need
11 to look at.

12 And obviously, going back with AIM and
13 the monies that are given to our
14 municipalities, which is staying stagnant, I
15 agree that needs to be increased. Our local
16 governments are facing so much right now.

17 And I just want to say thank you for
18 coming here, for answering my questions, and
19 for clearing the misconceptions that's out
20 there. Thank you.

21 MAYOR ADAMS: Yes. And not only did I
22 spend the night in the Brooklyn Cruise
23 Terminals and spoke with our brothers and
24 sisters that came from another country, but I

1 spent the night in El Paso. I saw that the
2 failure at the national level has decimated
3 that city as they had to take on the influx.

4 But a lot of people must realize --
5 these cities, these border states, people
6 pass through there. They end up in New York.
7 We have already been the leader of allowing
8 people to come from other municipalities. We
9 were already leading the way.

10 This new influx and the inhumane way
11 they were treated has put us on the precipice
12 of just being overwhelmed. And we can get it
13 right if everyone is participating in this.

14 SENATOR MARTINEZ: I agree. And I'm
15 going to also echo what my colleague
16 Senator Jackson always says, that New York
17 City needs some AIM money. And I do concur.
18 I think you do need a little extra help.

19 So I do appreciate you being here
20 again. Thank you.

21 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

23 Assembly.

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Before we go to

1 a questioner, we've been joined by
2 Assemblyman Sayegh. And Assemblywoman
3 Rajkumar has been sitting in the audience; I
4 neglected to announce her earlier.

5 Assemblywoman Seawright, for three
6 minutes.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you,
8 Chair Weinstein and Chair Krueger.

9 Good morning, Mr. Mayor, it's good to
10 see you --

11 MAYOR ADAMS: Always.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: -- and your
13 team. And as we roll into women's history
14 month, it's great to see the smart, talented
15 women -- Tiffany and your first deputy mayor
16 and our former colleague Diane -- around you.

17 I am the new chair of the People with
18 Disabilities Committee, and I know you have a
19 very active Mayor's Office for People with
20 Disabilities. But it's been documented that
21 people with disabilities in New York City are
22 more than twice as likely to live in poverty
23 as those without a disability.

24 Is there a comprehensive action plan

1 to change the city, from its transportation
2 to its schooling to its employment
3 opportunities, to access the affordable
4 housing and healthcare to help those with
5 disabilities improve their quality of life
6 and receive the economic opportunities they
7 need and so deserve?

8 MAYOR ADAMS: And there are too many
9 stigmas and untruths that are attached to
10 people with disabilities. And our workforce
11 development plan is looking at all of that.
12 All a person with disabilities is asking is,
13 number one, to be allowed to be gainfully
14 employed; number two, to be able to move
15 around the city the same way everyone else is
16 able to do so.

17 And that is what we are attacking.
18 And our commissioner is head-on in ensuring
19 that we look at all the barriers that have
20 historically prevented people living with
21 disabilities from entering the workforce, and
22 how do we move around the city in the
23 appropriate fashion.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: I also want

1 to just raise the Roosevelt Island Operating
2 Corporation.

3 Roosevelt Island, as you know, is in
4 my district, and we appreciated you coming
5 and visiting the island.

6 There's still several openings on the
7 board. As of last year there was a huge lack
8 of diversity on the board. And I know you
9 have several appointees, and we've talked
10 about the residents of the island wanting to
11 have a say and a voice in the authority, the
12 corporation that governs the island.

13 So maybe we could get together and
14 talk about how we could help the constituents
15 to have a voice in who represents them, in
16 filling those vacancies and taking into
17 account diversity and women on that board.

18 MAYOR ADAMS: The first deputy mayor
19 will reach out to your office. And I agree,
20 we traveled to Roosevelt Island, it's
21 amazing. I lived in the city all this time;
22 this is the first time I took the tram.
23 That's a beautiful place to live, right
24 across the street from Gracie Mansion.

1 Unlike Gracie Mansion, you don't have ghosts.

2 So, you know --

3 (Laughter.)

4 MAYOR ADAMS: But we -- the first
5 deputy mayor will communicate with you and we
6 will finalize those items we went through.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Great, thank
8 you.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: To the Senate.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

11 Next up we have Senator Leroy Comrie.

12 SENATOR COMRIE: Good morning,

13 Mr. Mayor.

14 MAYOR ADAMS: Senator, how are you?

15 SENATOR COMRIE: I'm good. Good to
16 see you this morning --

17 MAYOR ADAMS: Good. Good to see you.

18 SENATOR COMRIE: -- and your team. I
19 see you stole Latonia McKinney from the
20 Council. Along with your deputy mayor and
21 your new advisor, I'm glad that you have a
22 strong team of women along with Tiffany
23 Raspberry, because -- to move your
24 administration. And Jacques is also someone

1 that I've had the pleasure of working with.

2 I only have three minutes; I'm just
3 going to run off some things that I want to
4 talk about.

5 You know, I do -- I do not support
6 expansion of the charter school numbers, but
7 I do want to see more minority charter school
8 owners that have been waiting in the pipeline
9 to get opportunities to get charter schools.
10 So I just want to be clear about that; there
11 was a mistake that my office made last year
12 that people are confused about.

13 But we need to make sure that -- and
14 we need to end collocations with charter
15 schools and public schools as much as
16 possible. Hopefully this year in the
17 Legislature we can eliminate that as an
18 issue, because it's unfair to our local kids
19 to be imposing a charter school with new
20 properties, new equipment, and they're
21 suffering to look at that in an existing
22 school. That must end.

23 The issues on housing, I would hope
24 that you would work with the community

1 boards. I know it's a hard road, but a lot
2 of communities are concerned in
3 Cambria Heights and Laurelton about the ADUs,
4 the basement apartments. The pilot plan in
5 Brooklyn didn't work, it was too expensive.

6 I hope that we can also focus on the
7 AMI adjustment, which is a big problem.
8 Because trying to build affordable housing
9 when you have to project the prices in
10 Jamaica against Forest Hills, we can never
11 get affordable housing built. It's a federal
12 issue. I hope that we can all work together
13 to try to get rid of the AMI adjustment.

14 Progressive design-build. I know that
15 it's already -- DDC, your DDC has already
16 said it's saved the city over \$2 billion. We
17 can get a lot of projects done with the
18 savings. Hope that you can support my bill,
19 Senate Bill 1761, regarding progressive
20 design-build.

21 Also I'm glad to see that you're
22 moving on teleworking. I have a bill on that
23 also, Senate Bill 4580. I hope that we can
24 come to some opportunity to deal with

1 teleworking for those people that really
2 can't get to work because of particular
3 reasons. And I hope we can work that out.

4 Diwali, I support the Diwali holiday.
5 As you know, I represent parts of Kew Gardens
6 and Kew Gardens Hills. I want to thank you
7 for being there and calming their fears after
8 the incident in Jersey. You personally
9 showed up and promised continued
10 relationships with the Police Department.

11 Also what you're doing on migrants I
12 believe is critical and important. I hope
13 that we can all follow your lead on that.

14 Finally, the main thing I want to talk
15 to you about. As chair of the Corporations
16 Committee, I do support your reticence and
17 understanding that you shouldn't be taxed
18 another billion dollars from the MTA. So as
19 chair of the Corporations Committee with
20 oversight of the MTA, I do support you on
21 that, and we will work to get other tax
22 revenue, working with members here, to figure
23 out a way to fund the MTA without charging
24 city residents four times over with the

1 triple tax that they're trying to do right
2 now.

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

5 Assembly.

6 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

7 SENATOR COMRIE: Three minutes is not
8 long enough.

9 (Laughter.)

10 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to
11 Assemblyman Ari Brown, three minutes.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Thank you,
13 Madam Chairperson.

14 Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

15 MAYOR ADAMS: How are you?

16 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Another sharp
17 suit --

18 (Laughter.)

19 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: -- always
20 looking good.

21 Mayor Adams, you've consistently
22 called for changes to the state bail laws to
23 address repeat offenders that commit crimes
24 throughout the city. As you just testified

1 at this hearing on bail data, you've
2 identified around 2,000 individuals that are
3 responsible for most of the crime in the
4 city.

5 Do you think that last year's changes
6 to the bail laws have helped the city deal
7 with these repeat offenders? And what's your
8 plan on how to address these serial
9 criminals?

10 MAYOR ADAMS: My counsel, Brendan
11 McGuire, has done a lot of work around this
12 area. And Brendan, can you --

13 NYC CHIEF COUNSEL MCGUIRE: Sure.

14 Thank you for the question, sir.

15 I think the mayor's absolutely right,
16 there is a small number of extreme
17 recidivists in the city who are responsible
18 for a disproportionate amount of the crime,
19 and also who are failing to appear for court
20 appearances. The mayor has focused on the
21 2,000 or so individuals who are particularly
22 violent.

23 Beyond that number, though, there is a
24 larger group of extreme recidivists of about

1 9,000 people. Just to take one example,
2 those 9,000 individuals, they represent about
3 8 percent of the total number of defendants
4 arrested in 2022. Last year those 8 percent
5 of people were responsible for 56 percent of
6 felony burglaries in the city. They were
7 also responsible for more than 30 percent of
8 assaults as well as robberies.

9 So we have this issue where you have a
10 disproportionate -- where you have a smaller
11 number of defendants we are calling extreme
12 recidivists who are exploiting the current
13 system and need to be addressed.

14 MAYOR ADAMS: And one number's
15 important to point out that the counsel
16 shared with me is that they're eight times
17 more likely not to return to court. A small
18 number of people, disproportionate amount of
19 crime, making a mockery of the reforms we
20 fought for in the criminal justice system.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Thank you,
22 Mayor.

23 Just to continue on that thought, many
24 businesses around the city, both large and

1 small, have pleaded for changes to the law to
2 address serial shoplifters. We have the same
3 problem on Long Island. These criminals have
4 impacted the quality of life for New Yorkers
5 by repeatedly shoplifting at bodegas, grocery
6 stores, CVSs, Walgreens, and many other types
7 of stores every day. These criminals are
8 even threatening or assaulting workers who
9 try and stop them. What's your plan to
10 address this issue, Mr. Mayor?

11 MAYOR ADAMS: We spoke about some of
12 them, going after the organized portion of
13 this and taking down these organizations that
14 are selling the products on social media, but
15 also looking at those repeated offenders.
16 And those who refuse to get the necessary
17 care that we are offering around food
18 services and substance abuse, we believe
19 we're going to need the state lawmakers to
20 look at those extreme, habitual repeated
21 offenders to increase the penalties that are
22 associated with it.

23 But there's something that we often
24 overlook and I'm hoping that the state

1 lawmakers look at. Social media is feeding
2 many of the crises we're seeing in our
3 cities. When you're looking on social media,
4 on TikTok, Instagram and others, of people
5 going into shops, stealing all over the
6 country, it is feeding the behavior. And we
7 need to really rein in the role that social
8 media is playing on many of these social ills
9 that we are facing.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Thank you,
11 Mr. Mayor.

12 Just to switch to education for a
13 moment, according to the data from the State
14 Education Department, only 30 percent of
15 New York City students in Grade 8 were deemed
16 to have scored as proficient in math on
17 standardized exams, and only 65 percent of
18 students in Grade 8 were deemed to be
19 proficient in ELA exams.

20 Do you think these statistics support
21 or hurt the Governor's proposal to expand
22 charter schools in New York City?

23 MAYOR ADAMS: No, I don't think the
24 Governor's proposal is going to hurt those

1 numbers. You know, the fact that if a child
2 is in a school, we need to make sure those
3 children are proficient. I've quoted the
4 numbers over and over again -- 65 percent of
5 Black and brown children don't meet
6 proficiency in the Department of Education.
7 That's not a charter school; that's the
8 Department of Education.

9 We need to scale up and expand what's
10 successful and what works. And that is my
11 primary focus. Whatever works to educate our
12 children, we need to scale it up and we need
13 to make sure that children are prepared for
14 the future -- not only in what we have been
15 teaching previously, but how do they be
16 prepared for tomorrow. It's critical
17 thinking, working in groups, communication --
18 these are skills that historically have not
19 been in our traditional school system.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Thank you,
21 Mr. Mayor.

22 I see I have 35 more seconds. As a
23 former police officer, what can we do to
24 continue to support our police? You're one

1 of them; we admire you for that. What can we
2 do?

3 MAYOR ADAMS: Well, it's clear: To
4 not demonize the profession, because in a
5 numerical minority that tarnishes the badge.

6 We saw what has happened from the days
7 of Officer Mora and Rivera to losing an
8 officer while off duty shopping for a car.
9 Our officers are on the front line. They run
10 towards danger while we run away from danger.
11 And we need to let them know we appreciate
12 the sacrifices they make.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Thank you,
14 Mr. Mayor.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.
16 To the Senate.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.
18 I believe I'm the last Senator. So
19 welcome to Albany again, Mr. Mayor.

20 I also just want to highlight how
21 important we all do think, if we change the
22 law to do away with Queens or perhaps
23 Queens-Brooklyn Day, that you will have the
24 ability to provide the day for the

1 Diwali-participating community.

2 Which I personally have learned,
3 because everyone was telling me it matters in
4 the Indian community, but of course it
5 matters in the Indian, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh
6 and Jain religious communities. And I'm told
7 there's over 200,000 New Yorkers that
8 participate in religions that participate
9 with Diwali.

10 And I hear it's a great holiday, so
11 the Greeks might want to participate in
12 Diwali also, so they were raising that issue.

13 But to get to other topics. MTA. I
14 understand your point about these new costs
15 for the city, and I understand my colleague
16 Senator Comrie's point. And I've been
17 reading all these articles that are
18 commenting on why we shouldn't do this
19 proposal. But you agree we have to do
20 something. New York City is completely
21 dependent on making sure we have a
22 functioning MTA.

23 So what do you suggest we do up here
24 to actually get the MTA the money that I

1 think we both agree they need?

2 MAYOR ADAMS: Well, I think similar to
3 what I have done in the city government, when
4 we came into office on January 1, 2022, we
5 immediately implemented a 3 percent PEG on
6 all of our agencies. We didn't do it one
7 fiscal year, we did it the second year as
8 well.

9 And I think that the MTA must get
10 their books in order. We know that's not
11 going to be the only way to close their
12 budget gap. I believe that that is one of
13 the ways.

14 And the second, it is a statewide
15 responsibility. It is unbelievable for the
16 New York City electeds to be told that we're
17 going to take a half a billion dollars out of
18 only New York City's budget. Only New York.
19 MTA is a statewide obligation. And we have
20 been doing our share, as Jacques pointed out,
21 our budget director, and we were committed to
22 do the \$3 billion. We are doing our share.
23 We know how important the MTA is.

24 But it's unfair to do what's in

1 New York -- as I think Senator Jackson
2 pointed out, we don't have an endless flow of
3 cash, and it is imperative that the MTA --
4 and we're hoping that the Governor
5 understands that.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

7 Jumping to the migrant situation, so
8 when the state was testifying the other day I
9 asked them quite a few questions about how
10 their billion-dollar contribution really was
11 or wasn't a billion dollar contribution, over
12 how long, and what the impact actually would
13 be.

14 When I look at the numbers your
15 offices have shared, it seems that while the
16 state is saying -- the Governor in her
17 budget -- that we'll be covering our
18 traditional 29 percent of the cost of
19 sheltering this new growing population, that
20 (1) they're assuming they know how many
21 people it actually is and will be, but (2) it
22 turns out we actually haven't been giving the
23 city the 29 percent that they should be
24 getting even in your traditional homeless

1 shelter population, which is at crisis
2 levels, speaking as a New York City resident.

3 So help me understand what the math
4 actually should be if we are meeting our both
5 historic commitment to our share for shelter
6 in general, and then if we were attempting to
7 meet our commitment of a matching formula for
8 the migrant community. I know it's a little
9 technical, but it would be very helpful for
10 me to understand.

11 MAYOR ADAMS: As you pointed out,
12 that's only 29 percent, what they're
13 proposing. And what everyone I'm hoping
14 would wrap their thoughts around is that on
15 January 1, 2022, we had about 45,000 people
16 in our shelter system. And that's throughout
17 the years. In one year we have -- we reached
18 roughly 43,000. Now we're in the area of
19 47,000. In one year we've doubled what we
20 traditionally had in our entire shelter
21 system. The weight of that is just
22 unbelievable when you think about it.

23 Jacques, could you go into the
24 numbers?

1 NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Yes.

2 The Governor basically proposed a
3 formula of a third funding from the federal
4 government, a third funding from the state,
5 and a third from the city. As you know, in
6 the Republican-led House, it's highly
7 unlikely that we're going to get anything
8 from the federal government. Okay?

9 So therefore, from our perspective, if
10 you want to split the cost, at least it
11 should be, at the minimum, 50/50. Okay? But
12 right now it's like 29 percent. It's not
13 even a third. Like you said, they're only
14 giving us 29 percent.

15 And -- but again, it's a billion
16 dollars out of a \$4.2 billion problem,
17 leaving us \$3 billion that we have to close
18 within the amount of two months. I mean,
19 this is -- the timeline, the urgency of the
20 timeline, this is very critical for us. If
21 we don't have those resources, we have only
22 two months to balance our budget because
23 we're coming up to the Executive Budget at
24 the end of April, and we have to balance

1 fiscally '23 and fiscally '24. It's not like
2 something that you have to resolve in a year.
3 Okay? Within two months we have to balance
4 our budget.

5 So the fact that we don't have those
6 resources -- and on top of that, okay, there
7 is the added pressure of the billion-dollar
8 cut, okay, imposed on us because of the MTA,
9 the Medicaid cost shift, and other costs,
10 that's what's so concerning to us.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So if I just
12 stick with the math for the reimbursement for
13 the shelters and the HERRCs, my
14 back-of-the-envelope math is that we're
15 really only paying about 16 percent of the
16 city's share of its cost for traditional
17 shelter arrangements and HERRCs, and that we
18 need to get you to at least 29 percent if
19 we're trying to -- negotiating with the
20 Governor.

21 So could you -- not right this
22 second -- could you double-check my math and
23 get back to me about the percentage?

24 NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: I could

1 double -- I will -- sure.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Because I think
3 if we say we're giving the city 29 percent,
4 whether you think it should be 50 percent or
5 not -- we can discuss that -- I think we're
6 not giving you 29 percent. I think we're
7 giving you much less. Even though I
8 understand that with the growing migrant
9 population, as the mayor has pointed out, we
10 really don't know what the total numbers will
11 be --

12 NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: Exactly.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- three months
14 down the road or a year and a half down the
15 road. But it seems to me we ought to have a
16 fair and honest conversation about the
17 percentage the state is picking up regardless
18 of how many people are or are not coming in.

19 Obviously we don't want more people in
20 shelters, we don't want people in HERRCs.
21 And if they go down, we'll all be
22 celebrating. But I think we need to
23 establish that there is a percentage, we've
24 committed to it, and that's what we actually

1 ought to be paying you.

2 So getting back to me with more math
3 will be helpful --

4 NYC BUDGET DIRECTOR JIHA: We will do
5 it.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- so thank you.

7 Quickly jumping --

8 MAYOR ADAMS: It always impressed me
9 how you were just deep into those numbers,
10 Senator.

11 (Laughter.)

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Well, you know,
13 she's called the Ways and Means chair and I'm
14 called the Finance chair for a reason.

15 (Laughter.)

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: But thank you.

17 I'm sorry, I had a long list and I
18 want to try to get to a couple more.

19 Oh, so in the presentation we received
20 from your staff, Mr. Mayor, they did say the
21 charter schools, if they were to grow, would
22 cost you a real \$1.3 billion a year. So I
23 understand your points about you have to
24 educate children somewhere, but apparently

1 the proposal of the Governor really would dig
2 into your school budgets. And as you've
3 already pointed out, because of the law that
4 we passed on class size, you do have
5 continued responsibility for some growth in
6 the cost of education.

7 And I just, again, think that we
8 should all try to be on the same page of why
9 this is an extremely expensive proposal for
10 the City of New York. So I didn't want to
11 say you and your members -- your staff were
12 saying different numbers, but I do believe
13 that the briefing that we received referenced
14 an increase of over a billion dollars a year
15 if that charter school proposal of the
16 Governor moved forward.

17 And I also share the opinion of my
18 colleagues that I don't think this is in the
19 best interests of the city.

20 Oh, I have one minute left. As
21 someone who I know knows far more about
22 policing than I ever will, you've set up a
23 new system where we get on our phones or
24 perhaps our cellphones every action taken by

1 a precinct. It's a little -- you know what
2 I'm talking about, when the little alerts
3 come in?

4 MAYOR ADAMS: Mm-hmm.

5 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: They never report
6 a crime being solved. I'm sure there are
7 crimes being solved. But I actually think it
8 would be helpful if that information also
9 came to us. Because you sometimes read these
10 and think, oh, there's never a solution.
11 Nobody ever catches a criminal, nobody ever
12 gets somebody off the streets that supposedly
13 has done various things that we get reported
14 every day.

15 So could you potentially ask them to
16 add that to the information we're getting?
17 Because I don't think you're telling the full
18 story of the NYPD, and perhaps are even
19 skewing our opinions.

20 MAYOR ADAMS: Well-thought. And I
21 love that, and we're going to incorporate
22 that because their close rate is at a record
23 level. Many of the bad guys, they have been
24 removing and arresting. And it's really

1 impressive when you look at what they have
2 been doing. And we're going to incorporate
3 that.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I appreciate
5 that. And my time is up, so thank you very
6 much.

7 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to
9 Assemblyman Fall, three minutes.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN FALL: Thank you,
11 Madam Chair.

12 Mr. Mayor, thank you for being here.

13 And I just want to highlight something
14 before I get into my comments and questions.

15 You know, since you've been in office,
16 you know, you and your team have been
17 incredibly responsive to any requests that I
18 have sent your way. You always pick up my
19 calls. So I just want to publicly thank you
20 for that.

21 And I also want to thank you for
22 adding another Staten Islander to your team.
23 It's always good to have, you know, someone
24 across the aisle from Staten Island.

1 You know, public safety is a big
2 concern. You know, my district consists of
3 Northern Staten Island, Lower Manhattan and a
4 little bit of Brooklyn, and public safety is
5 very important in all three parts of my
6 district. And on the Staten Island side,
7 we're noticing a decrease in the head counts
8 for the police officers that we're seeing at
9 the 121 Precinct and the 120 Precinct. So
10 would like to have some help and support
11 there, because of course the more resources
12 that they have, the better it is.

13 On the Manhattan side of my district,
14 you know, we're seeing an issue with thefts,
15 right? So we had an issue where a Rite Aid
16 had to close down, and this is a Rite Aid in
17 Battery Park City. A lot of 9/11 survivors
18 relied on the pharmacy there. Now it's
19 closed as a result of the thefts that we're
20 seeing across the city. So, you know, I'm
21 hoping that the city will have a plan to help
22 protect some of these stores, you know, in my
23 district but across the city because that's
24 very important, especially in that part of

1 Lower Manhattan that has had impact in the
2 past.

3 As far as homelessness, we have, you
4 know, similar issues on the Staten Island
5 side and the Manhattan side. You know, would
6 love for your team to be on top of that. I
7 know there are times where, you know, it goes
8 away for a little bit, then it comes back,
9 it's very inconsistent. I understand it's a
10 citywide issue, but that is an issue that is
11 constantly brought to my attention from folks
12 in the district.

13 As far as infrastructure, one of my
14 concerns with Lower Manhattan -- I'm sorry,
15 with Staten Island is the flooding we've
16 seen. I know you and the former Senator have
17 visited a number of sites. And I'm just
18 curious to know what's your short-term and
19 long-term plans in addressing some of these
20 infrastructure issues on the island?

21 MAYOR ADAMS: Yes. Well, clearly
22 under this administration Staten Island is
23 not the forgotten borough.

24 We've been out on Staten Island a

1 number of times, both former Senator Savino
2 and I, looking at those sites. There's a
3 real plan of shoring up our shorelines, and
4 what we will do is have our team come in, sit
5 down and give you the full analysis of some
6 of the projects that we are going to put in
7 place on Staten Island, and partner with you
8 to get the resources we need on the state
9 level as well as what we're going to put in
10 on the city level.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN FALL: Gotcha. And I
12 appreciate that.

13 And just to quickly close,
14 Lower Manhattan, we have a number of
15 resiliency projects that are taking place.
16 The state is doing some, the city's doing
17 some. And my concern is the projects are not
18 talking to each other. You know? So I've
19 asked for a comprehensive plan. I really
20 haven't gotten a clear answer on that.

21 But, you know, we just want to make
22 sure that the government is spending money on
23 keeping that area safe, that we're doing it
24 in such a way that, you know, it makes sense,

1 right, and we're not missing any gaps.

2 And just would love to have your
3 support for the Bus Rapid Transit, the BQE,
4 and Five World Trade Center.

5 And that is all, Madam Chair.

6 Thank you.

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you,
8 Assemblyman.

9 We go to the Senate.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Well, actually
11 the Senate is closed for the moment. But a
12 few others are trying to get over here.

13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay, so we go
15 to Assemblyman Tannousis.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN TANNOUSIS: Good to see
17 you, Mr. Mayor.

18 MAYOR ADAMS: Always, thank you.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN TANNOUSIS: As you can
20 see, Staten Island is very well represented
21 in the Assembly between these two gentlemen.

22 Mr. Mayor, I want to ask you about
23 those 2,000 or so recidivists that are
24 wreaking havoc on our streets. Clearly there

1 has been an issue with those 2,000
2 individuals, being that they are continuously
3 being let out into the street.

4 Now, Mr. Mayor, obviously you were a
5 New York City police officer. I myself was a
6 former Bronx prosecutor. So, you know, I'll
7 be the first to tell you obviously there were
8 issues with the criminal justice system.

9 My question to you, Mr. Mayor, is
10 assuming we have the right people on the
11 bench, do you feel that we need an increased
12 judicial discretion? Because, Mr. Mayor,
13 would you agree that no two cases are alike,
14 no two defendants are alike, no two victims
15 are alike, and an increase in judicial
16 discretion would be able to prevent a lot of
17 these recidivists from continuously
18 committing crimes and now showing up to
19 court?

20 MAYOR ADAMS: I've always stated that
21 I believe that we should have some type of
22 judicial discretion.

23 But I'm also clear that we need to
24 look at the totality of the criminal justice

1 system -- underfunding defense attorneys, the
2 shortage in district attorneys, the amount of
3 cases going through the court system. And if
4 we don't take a full approach -- and even the
5 feeders to some of this violence, something
6 that Assemblyman -- Speaker Heastie raises
7 all the time, that we need to look at what
8 are some of the feeders.

9 Now, a report just came out recently
10 that stated out of all of the cities,
11 New York is doing more for upstream solutions
12 than other city. We're putting more into
13 preventive actions than any other city.

14 So I'm a supporter of giving judges
15 more discretion, but I'm also a supporter in
16 addressing the totality of the criminal
17 justice system and the problems we're facing.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN TANNOUSIS: Thank you very
19 much.

20 I yield back my time.

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

22 So we're going to continue with the
23 Assembly: Assemblywoman González-Rojas.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Thank

1 you, Mr. Mayor.

2 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS:

4 According to your 2024 budget, you proposed
5 eliminating 773 unfilled jobs within the
6 Department of Social Services, which oversees
7 the Human Resources Administration that
8 processes SNAP food stamp applications.

9 According to the DSS deputy
10 commissioner, Jill Berry, there were
11 50,000 applications for SNAP in October of
12 2022, which is a 60 percent increase from the
13 same month in 2019. Berry also said that
14 more than half of the food stamp
15 applications, 53 percent, were not processed
16 within the required 30 days in fiscal year
17 2022.

18 Can you share what your administration
19 is doing to address this issue so that our
20 neighbors don't go hungry?

21 MAYOR ADAMS: First, it's not
22 acceptable that anyone has to wait. That is
23 unacceptable. And as the mayor, I take full
24 responsibility for that.

1 There's several things we must do. We
2 have to stop using antiquated methods on
3 processing applications. My team has been
4 ordered to put in place how do we expedite
5 these applications. Far too many come in
6 that are either automatically disqualified
7 for one reason or another. There's no reason
8 we're going through a lengthy process to tell
9 someone they're disqualified. We can do a
10 better job by using myriad technology and
11 employees to resolve this issue.

12 And the cuts in personnel there? We
13 still have a substantial number of positions
14 that must be filled.

15 And again, we did a job fair this
16 weekend, a hiring hall, where over 800 people
17 showed up. My call is to my lawmakers. I
18 need for you to do an analysis of your
19 districts, see where you have high
20 unemployment, and partner with us and do a
21 hiring hall in your district so we can fill
22 these jobs. We have about 27,000 vacant jobs
23 when you have double-digit -- in some areas,
24 double-digit unemployment. That just doesn't

1 balance out.

2 We need to get New Yorkers employed
3 again and get them back into these offices so
4 that we can expedite things like SNAP and
5 WIC. We were able to get an extension, but
6 that's not enough for me. We should not need
7 an extension. And we're going to resolve the
8 issue of this backlog.

9 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Yeah,
10 and how -- what is sort of the immediate
11 response? Because I hear your job positions
12 could take time, the technology could take
13 time, but we still have our neighbors going
14 hungry. So is there any really immediate
15 steps to address this backlog?

16 MAYOR ADAMS: Again, for a person as a
17 child that needed SNAP benefits, I know what
18 it is not to get them on time. It's the
19 difference between a meal and not a meal, and
20 a difference between having some of your
21 basic needs met.

22 We will address this backlog.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Thank
24 you, sir.

1 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

2 Continuing, Assemblywoman Simon.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Good morning,

4 Mr. Mayor. How are you?

5 MAYOR ADAMS: Quite well. Yourself?

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Good. Good.

7 So I want to thank you for being here

8 today. I have a whole list of things. I'll

9 never get to them.

10 (Laughter.)

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: I'll leave off

12 the ones I disagree with you on.

13 (Laughter.)

14 MAYOR ADAMS: You're a good person.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: But first I want

16 to thank you again for your work on dyslexia

17 and invite you again to Dyslexia Awareness

18 Day on May 17th, and also ask for your

19 support of my bill, with Senator Myrie, that

20 would screen folks who go into our

21 correctional facilities and provide them with

22 the supports they need. Because if they're

23 going to be successful when they get out,

24 they need to read, as I'm sure you know.

1 As well as my bill addressing the way
2 we train our teachers in higher education,
3 which is where the problem starts.

4 But I also wanted to talk to you about
5 a couple of things with regard to the BQE and
6 funding and how we can really make this work
7 a little bit better. There are significant
8 issues. Some of them are funding issues,
9 clearly. We want to be supportive of the
10 city's application, but we need to make sure
11 that application actually is in the shape it
12 needs to be in when it's submitted. So I
13 really appreciate your administration working
14 with us on that.

15 But I also want to get to this issue
16 of housing, and Harvey talked about it with
17 the basements. And that is when you look at
18 where those floods occurred, it's because we
19 have no capacity in our sewer system, and it
20 is where the sources of the underground
21 streams were. And this is throughout the
22 city, that was mostly in Queens during Ida.

23 But we need a hydrology study. And
24 I -- it's going to be not inexpensive. But

1 it is the kind of thing we need. We clearly
2 have been asking for it in the Gowanus area,
3 which is a critical issue. And so I'd like
4 to get your reflections on the need for that,
5 because we are just building ourselves into
6 more and more and more disasters as we go.
7 And our sewer system needs a lot of work. So
8 please, if you could address that.

9 Thank you. I know I used my three
10 minutes, but -- oh, I've got -- go ahead.
11 You've got time. You got 51 seconds.

12 MAYOR ADAMS: No, no, and I agree with
13 you. And, you know, we both know the capital
14 needs of building out our sewer system. It's
15 not something that these major floods are
16 going to wait on. So we need a short-term,
17 middle-term and long-term plan. And
18 everything from a hydraulic system to looking
19 at how we are doing our resiliency projects
20 along our shorelines, and looking at what are
21 other countries doing to manage the flow of
22 water and overtaking of water.

23 The last storm, which was really
24 shocking to me, was not along our coastal

1 areas where we flooded. So our challenge is
2 no longer rising sea levels, it is how we're
3 going to ensure the infrastructure inland is
4 also able to handle the heavy flow of water.
5 And we're looking at creative ways of doing
6 that.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Hydrology study.

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

9 We go to Assemblywoman Jackson.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: All right.

11 Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Always a
12 pleasure to see you. Like everyone else,
13 your team is very responsive.

14 I just want to ask about funding for
15 reducing gun violence. With the exception of
16 policing, what else can we do? Can we fund
17 conflict resolution, job placement? Like
18 what else is there available for us to do,
19 besides adding more policing, to reduce our
20 gun violence?

21 I know that we're fully funding
22 Foundation Aid, which is great. But we also
23 are still seeing that Black and brown
24 students' graduation rates can be much higher

1 and literacy as well can be much higher. And
2 so I'm just wondering, what are we doing to
3 take care of those populations?

4 And I just need to plug that for the
5 Bronx we need cleaner -- we need a cleaner
6 Bronx. So I would love to see the DOT
7 machines -- the sanitation machines, the
8 electric ones, in the Bronx, so let's spend
9 some money on that.

10 More cameras for NYCHA. My NYCHAs are
11 requesting cameras, especially the ones that
12 are a target with a lot of gun violence, like
13 Morrisania Air Rights, which I know you and
14 your team visited. So cameras for them.

15 And creating more green spaces, like
16 Crotona Park. So I would love to see some
17 money being placed into that.

18 But let's talk -- can we talk about
19 what we're doing to fund programs and other
20 things besides policing for gun violence, as
21 well as graduation rates and literacy rates?

22 MAYOR ADAMS: Deputy Mayor, you want
23 to go into what you're doing with the gun
24 violence task force and some of the stuff

1 we're doing around it?

2 NYC DEPUTY MAYOR WRIGHT: Sure. The
3 mayor has convened all city agencies, at
4 least starting in June, to come together and
5 really put together a comprehensive plan to
6 deal with all of the upstream issues,
7 including housing, education, economic and
8 workforce development, small business
9 development, sanitation. And we are
10 targeting the six precincts that contribute
11 to 30 percent of gun violence in the city --
12 and they're predominantly in the Bronx and in
13 Brooklyn -- and are engaged in community
14 meetings on the ground in those neighborhoods
15 and communities to contribute to those plans.

16 And that's something we want to do in
17 partnership with the state in terms of what
18 those investments -- because as we all know,
19 those communities have not gotten the kind of
20 focus that they need and they're absolutely
21 going to get it in this administration.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Thank you.

23 And then can we talk a little bit
24 about graduation rates for Black and brown

1 students, and the literacy rates. What are
2 we doing to increase both?

3 MAYOR ADAMS: The chancellor -- and I
4 joined him yesterday -- he has a version of
5 COMPSTAT that was used in the police
6 department to do precision policing. He has
7 a version of that. He's going to start doing
8 it weekly with his superintendents, and will
9 be including principals.

10 And I would encourage some of you to
11 come and sit in and look at those meetings,
12 because they're zeroing in on those rates.
13 They're not waiting for the end of the
14 semester to determine there's a problem. And
15 they're zeroing in on those numbers that
16 you're talking about.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Okay. Thank
18 you, Mr. Mayor.

19 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.
20 How's your little one?

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: He's always
22 doing well. Thank you, sir.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to
24 Assemblyman Eachus.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you,
2 Madam Chair.

3 Thank you, Mr. Mayor, for being here
4 and for your testimony. Not only do you look
5 sharp, you are very sharp.

6 (Laughter.)

7 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: I'm going to make
8 a statement first. And just to let you know
9 where it's coming from, I was 40 years a high
10 school teacher, okay? I was in the classroom
11 and so on like that, in both private and
12 public school. And I've also experienced the
13 creations of these charter schools.

14 And I would love to talk with you at
15 any time about how inherently these charter
16 schools are discriminatory. And I certainly
17 would not be increasing the cap, never mind
18 the financial aspect of it. But I wanted to
19 let you know that that's what I'm going to
20 do.

21 MTA. Kind of going along with what
22 Senator Krueger asked, my district is Orange
23 and Rockland County. We're paying payroll
24 tax and receiving literally no services. Not

1 happy about that.

2 But my question is, shouldn't you --
3 since it's a state agency, shouldn't you be
4 asking us to kind of restructure the entire
5 MTA, not just worry about, you know, wage
6 increases and so on like that? Because we're
7 talking about hundreds and hundreds of
8 millions of dollars, year after year after
9 year.

10 MAYOR ADAMS: And I agree, and I think
11 that that is part of the deliberation process
12 that the state is going to go through. The
13 MTA is a statewide entity. And just as when
14 I served here, we knew that there were some
15 issues we had to do structurally with the
16 MTA, and I think that still stands true
17 today.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Okay. Thank you.

19 The final thing that I have that I'd
20 like to talk to you about, you mentioned --
21 are electric vehicles. Again, my experience
22 is I have been building actual electric
23 vehicles, racing them with kids cross-country
24 and so on like that, won national awards.

1 Very proud of my history with that.

2 However, the one thing that I noticed
3 is that we're encouraging electric vehicles
4 without the proper education for the folks as
5 well as for our emergency services folks.
6 What happens when these things get in an
7 accident? I'm sure you're aware that the
8 batteries are completely encapsulated, they
9 can't get to the batteries if a car or God
10 forbid a bus with schoolchildren gets in an
11 accident. And there really is at this point
12 no education for those folks out there.

13 And I'm hoping that you will join with
14 us to create an educational system where we
15 can teach not only the people that purchase
16 these but also the emergency services. And
17 I'd like to put that bill on the people that
18 are selling these vehicles, not on us.

19 MAYOR ADAMS: Well, a good point.

20 Two things that you stated that
21 resonate with me. Number one, I would love
22 for our team to speak with you about what
23 you're doing with children around electric
24 vehicles because I think we should build out

1 a pipeline. As this green economy grows, the
2 opportunities should grow for those children
3 that were ignored.

4 And the fire commissioner,
5 Commissioner Kavanagh, she's looking at the
6 battery issue in its totality. And so we
7 would love to talk with you about that.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Great, thank you.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

10 We've been joined by Assemblywoman
11 Zinerman and Assemblyman McDonald.

12 And we go to Assemblyman Sayegh for
13 three minutes.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN SAYEGH: Thank you very
15 much, Madam Chairwoman.

16 Mayor, welcome to Albany.

17 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN SAYEGH: Mayor, you know,
19 like my colleague, a lifelong educator. And
20 for me, diversity is crucial. And New York
21 City, you know, is the hub of diversity --
22 not only for the state but for the entire
23 nation.

24 And today is crucial because in your

1 role as mayor, your input and your positions
2 on issues play a major role. And we -- many
3 of the members spoke earlier about Diwali,
4 and Chancellor Banks already indicated that a
5 very special bill -- that's already sponsored
6 by Assemblywoman Rajkumar and also Senator
7 John Liu -- is before us.

8 And if this bill is voted and you're
9 in a position to support the extension of the
10 Diwali holiday in the school system, we
11 wanted to know if you would do so and really
12 allow New Yorkers to continue to show respect
13 for the traditions and religions and the
14 cultures of what makes New York great.

15 MAYOR ADAMS: Yes. Yes, I'm very
16 excited about the opportunity. When we met
17 with advocates last year, Chancellor Banks --
18 I have to take my hat off to him -- he knew
19 we were bumping up against the limitations of
20 school days. He found a creative way to do
21 it through the Brooklyn-Queens Day. And if
22 we get it out of the lawmakers here, we are
23 going to be encouraged to say that the
24 lawmakers understood the power of diversity

1 and acknowledging of all of our desires to
2 celebrate our heritage.

3 You know, Andrew, in my Greek
4 contingent, they joked about, you know, the
5 desire to do so with our Greek contingent.
6 But the more we can do it, the better we are.
7 It just really celebrates who we are. And if
8 anyone can get it done, this state, this body
9 here can get it done.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN SAYEGH: Mayor, thank you.

11 Also, in addition, we spoke last
12 session about the importance of proposals
13 involving small businesses in New York,
14 especially in areas of high crime and many of
15 the bodegas and the small business people.
16 And this was an issue YAMA -- the Yemeni
17 American and the Dominican associations in
18 New York City have lobbied for, and that is
19 for the establishment of a program with a
20 match and a support that would allow for
21 security and safety cameras into -- in the
22 businesses and outside.

23 This way it's very helpful for crime
24 prevention and really shows a little bit more

1 support, especially in light of the life
2 support that we lost in the community with
3 many businesses.

4 MAYOR ADAMS: We met with our local
5 businesses, our retailers, we had a session
6 at Gracie Mansion, and we're clear that this
7 is a problem that must be addressed by the
8 New York City Police Department.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN SAYEGH: Thank you very
10 much, Mayor.

11 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

13 We go to Assemblyman Mamdani.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Thank you.

15 Mr. Mayor, in the Governor's Executive
16 Budget she effectively proposes to raise the
17 fare from 2.75 to \$3. Do you support that
18 proposal?

19 MAYOR ADAMS: No. We're going to
20 evaluate whatever we could do to keep the
21 fares -- currently low-income New Yorkers,
22 they don't use the subway system as a form of
23 luxury, it's a necessity. And as a MetroCard
24 holder, I know how important it is.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Thank you.

2 And just a follow-up question, then.

3 Would it be safe to assume that you support
4 the Legislature finding a different source
5 for that \$245 million a year that raising the
6 fare would create?

7 MAYOR ADAMS: Yes, I do.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Thank you.

9 Moving on, last year when I asked you
10 at this very juncture if you would freeze
11 rents for the 1 million rent-stabilized
12 apartments across New York City, you told me,
13 quote, Let's freeze the rent of the tenant,
14 but let's give support to small property
15 owners as well.

16 Then the Legislature allocated
17 \$2.2 billion for homeowner tax relief and
18 \$1.1 billion for landlord relief in our
19 budget. And in response, your Rent
20 Guidelines Board raised the rent up to
21 5 percent. That hike is the largest in
22 nearly a decade, more than anyone since
23 Mayor Bloomberg, who ran as a Republican.

24 Will you commit this year to freeze

1 the rents for rent-stabilized apartments, as
2 your predecessor did in 2015, 2016, 2020, and
3 2021?

4 MAYOR ADAMS: Well, I think if you go
5 back and do an analysis of that period of
6 time, there was a proposal to increase I
7 believe to 9 percent. And you know and I
8 know that that board operates on its own. I
9 don't control the board. And when I appoint
10 people to boards, I appoint them to use their
11 deliberation powers to do what's right for
12 the people of this city.

13 That's how I run my boards and my
14 appointments. I don't meddle. I appoint,
15 and I take a step back. And I don't
16 interfere.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Okay. Well,
18 that's a disagreement between the two of us,
19 because I view any appointment in your
20 administration as an extension of your -- the
21 policy of your mayoralty. And since you have
22 the ability to appoint everyone within the
23 Rent Guidelines Board, that's where I see it
24 as your responsibility. But thank you --

1 MAYOR ADAMS: That's rather
2 interesting, because when we appointed to the
3 PEP, the reason we did fix appointments is
4 because we were stating we don't want mayors'
5 influence on the decisions that people make.
6 We can't have it both ways.

7 I appoint, I take a step back, and I
8 allow New Yorkers to do what's right for
9 New Yorkers.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Thank you.

11 And with my last 35 seconds, I just
12 want to follow up on Assemblywoman
13 Gonzalez-Rojas's questioning.

14 So around the Human Resources
15 Administration, which falls underneath your
16 administration, we have 1.7 million
17 New Yorkers relying on food stamps. As you
18 know, food stamp requirements state that
19 applications must be processed within
20 30 days. One thing that is troubling me is
21 that in the previous mayoralty, in fiscal
22 year 2021, 92 percent of applications were
23 being processed within that time period. But
24 in your mayoralty, it dropped to 60 percent.

1 And it has gone to the extent that
2 four of those New Yorkers who have
3 outstanding applications have filed a
4 class-action lawsuit against your
5 administration.

6 So I really very much encourage you to
7 stop allowing New Yorkers to starve and start
8 bringing back the processing times that we
9 expect in this city.

10 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you for your
11 analysis.

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

13 Well, throughout the day there will be
14 some questions -- not necessarily to you,
15 Mr. Mayor, but to others who are here -- that
16 will need some follow-up on. So we'll make
17 sure to get follow-up, and any follow-up
18 questions we'll circulate with all of the
19 members here.

20 We go to Assemblyman Ra, five minutes,
21 the ranker on Ways and Means.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, Chair.

23 Mayor, thank you for being here.

24 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: I always have to
2 start on a light note and say it's great to
3 have a Met fan as the mayor of New York City
4 again. And hopefully -- hopefully this is
5 our year and it ends with you presiding over
6 some type of celebration in City Hall.

7 I want to ask about NYPD staffing.
8 And in particular, as you know, there was a
9 report back in the fall regarding response
10 times, you know, for crimes and other
11 emergencies. And I'm just wondering, where
12 are you in terms of staffing in the NYPD, and
13 is there any plans for additional classes and
14 that type of thing to increase the force?

15 MAYOR ADAMS: Well, I think it's a
16 combination. And when you look at the, as I
17 stated, almost 27,000 jobs, we have about an
18 8 percent vacancy in New York City
19 government. The City Council has about a
20 14 percent. The comptroller's office has a
21 14.5 percent.

22 Every corporation that I sit down and
23 speak with across the country are talking
24 about the availability of employees. That

1 one last question, and this dovetails a
2 little bit into what my colleague
3 Mr. Tannousis was talking to you about.

4 Obviously we have this -- the main
5 proposal related to bail in this budget is
6 the least-restrictive language. Do you think
7 that's sufficient, or is there more that
8 needs to be done to fix that law from your
9 point of view?

10 MAYOR ADAMS: I think there's a number
11 of things we can do, and I outlined some of
12 them. Number one, we have to really consider
13 the hemorrhaging of lawyers. We're at a
14 dangerous level. We're losing attorneys in
15 the district attorney's office, we're losing
16 attorneys as defense attorneys, and justice
17 is being able to have your rightful time in
18 court and having the right counsel to do so.

19 So we have to do a real analysis of
20 what our criminal justice system has been
21 failing for a long time. I probably visited
22 Rikers and spoke with correction officers and
23 inmates more than any mayor in history, to
24 see the bottom of the problem -- what I like

1 to say, the downstream problem. If we want
2 to go upstream, then we must make sure that
3 we can get cases through the court system and
4 make sure that those who are dangerous
5 repeated extreme recidivists are not allowed
6 to return to our streets.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, Mayor.

8 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So, Mayor, I am
10 next. And first I have two questions from my
11 colleague who's not a member of the
12 committee. So I'd like to ask on
13 Assemblywoman Zinerman's behalf.

14 With current issues with public safety
15 and low academic achievement of New York City
16 scholars, we were encouraged to hear about
17 your plan to make free space available to
18 qualified nonprofit agencies which give
19 students more time for academic rigor and
20 keep them in a safe and secure environment.
21 Can you explain the process to accessing
22 space and tell us when the initiative will be
23 rolling out?

24 MAYOR ADAMS: We call -- we call it --

1 I believe your colleague is talking about the
2 extended use of public school buildings. I
3 was able to do this as the borough president.
4 It really shocks me that at 7 a.m. we tell
5 our children, welcome to the school; at
6 3 p.m., get out and don't come back until the
7 next day.

8 Schools don't belong to one
9 individual. It is part of the resources of
10 our communities. And so we believe we should
11 open the schools where we are going to pick
12 up the cost for the school safety agents, for
13 insurance, for cleaning the building.
14 nonprofits should be using their sweat
15 equity, not trying to figure out how to pay
16 for the school building. These are public
17 resources, and they should be used.

18 The chancellor has currently put in
19 place a procedure that is going to allow
20 these nonprofits to come in, they can use the
21 gyms, the pool rooms, the school office
22 spaces. It's a real win/win. And he's going
23 to roll out the exact procedure for access.

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Great. And a

1 question that I share some support of, I
2 guess, I have at least two community gardens
3 in my district, so I understand that the
4 Senate has advanced a bill to give community
5 gardens free access to water. And we're
6 wondering if the city is in support of a
7 program that would provide free access to
8 water so downstate urban farms can continue
9 to grow healthy foods and support your
10 healthy food initiative.

11 MAYOR ADAMS: And that's the goal, you
12 know. I don't think it's lost on anyone that
13 I'm probably a boring person to have dinner
14 with because I'm always talking about healthy
15 food nowadays.

16 But we are really looking into leaning
17 how to be proactive around access to healthy
18 food, urban farming, rooftop gardens. This
19 is something that this administration is
20 really proud of -- everything from the
21 Plant-Powered Fridays to Meatless Mondays to
22 the healthy food options in our hospitals.
23 They are now on a default menu, and we're
24 finding overwhelmingly the number of people

1 who take a default menu keep that default
2 menu.

3 It's about really being proactive in
4 how do we address our healthcare crisis and
5 how do we look towards food. And we're going
6 to be rolling out more initiatives around
7 access to healthy food and urban farming in
8 our communities.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

10 And now an issue that I've been very
11 concerned with. If you follow the news, you
12 know that Medicare Advantage plans have been
13 roundly denounced by consumer advocates as a
14 bad bait-and-switch. I represent many
15 retired city workers who, like others, are
16 struggling to keep up with inflation. Yet
17 despite the court decisions in their favor
18 and the City Council last month not voting in
19 support of legislation to push this plan
20 through, it does seem that the city is still
21 committed to move ahead with the plan to
22 force retirees who cannot afford the \$191 a
23 month -- not really a choice -- to switch to
24 the Medicare Advantage plan.

1 And I wonder if you could address what
2 the city's plan is at this point.

3 MAYOR ADAMS: Yeah, and I tell my
4 retirees all the time, when they talk about
5 their healthcare plan, they're talking about
6 my healthcare plan. You know, I'm a retired
7 cop, and I'm not going to do anything that's
8 going to endanger the ability of those who
9 are on a fixed income or who have already
10 contributed to our city -- we should make
11 sure that they have the healthcare that they
12 need.

13 We've met with the union leaders two
14 weeks ago, and we're all committed to finding
15 a way of how do we deal with these increased
16 costs in healthcare without taking away those
17 benefits from our retirees. And we're going
18 to accomplish that task. We're still in
19 negotiations to find those savings, and they
20 are very eager to join us in accomplishing
21 that task.

22 And they're clear: Medical costs are
23 through the roof. Really we need to look at
24 the real differences in how it would cost to

1 get some of the surgeries that we're seeing,
2 how is this impacting on the bottom line of
3 all of our unions and all of our civil
4 servants, and really non-civil servants.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: But are you
6 willing to -- I mean, obviously it's the
7 existing unions. Are you looking at it as
8 alternative ways to fund the stabilization
9 fund and to not -- and to give retirees a
10 real choice that they can stay on Medicare
11 without having to pay this additional monthly
12 fee, close to \$2,000 a month -- I mean, a
13 year?

14 MAYOR ADAMS: Yeah, there are two RFPs
15 that are out. And those RFPs are now being
16 looked at by those unions that represent
17 other members. They will do an analysis, and
18 we will come back to the table.

19 But we are all committed to finding
20 the right healthcare savings. But there are
21 two RFPs that are out currently.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I look forward
23 to staying in touch with folks in your
24 administration so that I can reassure my

1 constituents that they can receive the
2 healthcare they need without being forced to
3 pay extra.

4 MAYOR ADAMS: No, well, that's why,
5 you know, we have former Senator Diane
6 Savino, you know, who's a long-time labor
7 leader and advocate for many of these issues.
8 She's keeping a close eye on this.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Good. Because
10 I know that there often is that push-and-pull
11 between existing current city workers and
12 retirees who don't have that same seat at the
13 table. That's something -- when I chaired
14 Governor Employees here in the Assembly, I
15 sponsored numerous bills to ensure that the
16 retirees retained the same health benefits
17 that current workers have.

18 So thank you for continuing to work on
19 this issue.

20 I believe that --

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Unfortunately
22 there's so much other things going on at the
23 moment in the Capitol, I am the
24 representative for the Senate for the

1 continuation of the hearing. So thank you
2 very much for being with us.

3 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you. Good to see
4 you all.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, thank you,
6 Mr. Mayor. See you back in Brooklyn and the
7 city. And thank you for your staff for being
8 here.

9 MAYOR ADAMS: Thank you. Thank you.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

11 (Off the record.)

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So I know I'm
13 sure there are some members who would like to
14 talk with the Mayor. If there are any
15 conversations, please take them out in the
16 hall so we can continue.

17 (Off the record.)

18 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We are now
19 ready to continue with the hearing. We will
20 hear from the mayors, the big-city mayors of
21 New York State: Mayor Mike Spano, Yonkers;
22 Mayor Evans, Rochester; Mayor Walsh,
23 Syracuse; and Mayor Sheehan of Albany.

24 I'm not sure people realized -- are

1 any of the mayors here? We'll take a mayor.

2 (Laughter.)

3 (Comments off the record.)

4 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We are going
5 to -- we are going to have to take a short
6 recess while we wait for additional -- our
7 additional witnesses to arrive.

8 So the hearing is in temporary recess
9 now.

10 (Brief recess taken.)

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: (Mic off;
12 inaudible.)

13 Mr. Mayor, please go ahead.

14 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: Thank you,
15 Chair Weinstein, Chair Krueger, members of
16 the legislative fiscal committees, for
17 inviting me to these joint hearings to
18 discuss the state budget. It's nice to be
19 here back in person with all of you, and
20 appreciate you accommodating the schedule.

21 So at the time of my first visit to
22 the committees in 2018, the City of Syracuse
23 faced a starkly different environment. The
24 city's fiscal condition was perilous, and

1 most people saw Syracuse as a municipality
2 slipping toward bankruptcy. Through smart
3 strategy, hard choices, good fortune and the
4 strong support of our local, state and
5 federal partners, I'm pleased to report that
6 those days are in our rearview mirror.

7 Syracuse is on a path towards fiscal
8 sustainability. Our population is growing
9 again -- for the first time in 70 years, as a
10 matter of fact. And Micron's commitment to
11 New York means the largest economic
12 investment in the nation's history is coming
13 right to our region.

14 I am grateful to this Legislature for
15 its support at each stage of Syracuse's
16 journey. Throughout my five years as mayor,
17 New York State has been a reliable partner to
18 Syracuse. I'm particularly appreciative of
19 the members of our local delegation,
20 including Senator May -- nice to see you,
21 Senator, and thank you for hosting me in your
22 office today -- Senator John Mannion,
23 Assemblyman Bill Magnarelli, Assemblywoman
24 Pam Hunter, and Assemblyman Al Stirpe.

1 As Syracuse embarks on an era of
2 growth, we face new and different challenges.
3 Without proper investment and effective
4 policy, the shortage of quality, affordable
5 housing we have faced will only magnify.
6 Inequities in opportunity that have plagued
7 us for decades will widen, subjecting even
8 more children, families and seniors to
9 poverty. The condition of our ailing
10 infrastructure will further decline. And
11 while our fiscal status has improved, it will
12 backslide unless the structural deficit
13 Syracuse and other New York cities face is
14 corrected.

15 In these times, Syracuse needs its
16 strong partnership with New York State as
17 much as ever. We welcome the much-needed
18 investment included in Governor Hochul's
19 Executive Budget for the City of Syracuse.
20 Funding for job readiness, through Syracuse
21 Build, our construction careers program, and
22 Syracuse Surge, our strategy for inclusive
23 growth in the new economy, will help to break
24 cycles of poverty. State money for a

1 revolving loan fund State money for a
2 revolving loan fund for small businesses and
3 flexible financing for mixed-income
4 development will strengthen housing and our
5 economy. And the Governor's pledge of
6 funding for the construction of public
7 housing will lift up neighborhood that has
8 suffered injustice and disinvestment.
9 Respectfully, I urge the Legislature to enact
10 these provisions.

11 I applaud Governor Hochul's commitment
12 to build 800,000 units of new housing in
13 New York State in the next 10 years.
14 Syracuse and Onondaga County must be home to
15 tens of thousands of those units to meet the
16 demand we are expecting in our community. I
17 encourage the Legislature to listen to your
18 local leaders and to work with the
19 administration to involve all municipal
20 governments -- urban, suburban, and rural --
21 in meeting the need we face for quality,
22 affordable housing.

23 In my annual State of the City address
24 three weeks ago, I said that Syracuse's great

1 calling now is to achieve next-level
2 growth -- to ensure that our decisions and
3 actions in the pivotal months and years
4 before us create sustainable growth and
5 opportunity for all. We can and must achieve
6 growth that is inclusive, intentionally
7 creating opportunity for women, people of
8 color, veterans, the LGBTQ+ community, and
9 others historically left behind.

10 Today I ask for New York State's
11 assistance in critical areas that will help
12 us achieve next-level growth: Violence
13 interruption, housing, transportation,
14 infrastructure and city finances.

15 In cities all over the state and
16 country, crime is a topic of grave concern.
17 The COVID-19 pandemic created economic
18 disruption and mental health crises that
19 contribute to rising crime rates. Syracuse
20 ended 2022 with overall crime up 10 percent,
21 largely driven by an increase in property
22 crime. Violent crime rose at a lesser rate:
23 3 percent. Homicides, which have the most
24 devastating and lasting consequences on

1 families and society, by the grace of God
2 fell by 38 percent.

3 Yet any hope for an extended reprieve
4 from lives lost to violence has quickly faded
5 following three homicides already this year.
6 This included the heart-wrenching murder of
7 Brexialee Torres-Ortiz, an 11-year-old girl
8 who was killed in a drive-by shooting on a
9 Sunday evening as she walked home from a
10 neighborhood store. Three teenage boys have
11 been arrested for that crime.

12 Our community continues to grieve the
13 loss of Brexi and to find ways to stop the
14 killing. Last year, I started Syracuse's
15 first Mayor's Office to Reduce Gun Violence.
16 The office regularly convenes the individuals
17 and organizations engaged in violence
18 interruption, and they are working with a new
19 level of coordination, cooperation and
20 partnership.

21 Based on their input, we have released
22 a new community violence intervention plan
23 and will begin implementing it this year. It
24 will go after the leading cause of deadly

1 violence in Syracuse -- conflicts between
2 gangs and groups of young people. The office
3 will focus on four major contributing
4 factors: Entrenched cognitive and behavioral
5 conditions; school absenteeism and limited
6 career opportunity; high poverty levels; and
7 lack of mental health support.

8 There will be counseling, conflict
9 management, mentoring, and job and school
10 reentry programs. Through the coordinated
11 efforts of our community violence
12 intervention partners, we will find an
13 enduring path to peace on our streets.

14 Neighborhood street cameras, or COPS
15 cameras, are essential to public safety. The
16 equipment aids in response to emergencies and
17 plays a key role in virtually all major
18 criminal investigations and successful
19 arrests in the city. Our constituents and
20 our police are in full agreement: We need to
21 expand the network of cameras in our city to
22 increase neighborhood safety and bring more
23 violent perpetrators to justice.

24 Our legislative and funding priorities

1 agenda for this year seeks funding for these
2 and other crime-reduction programs. I urge
3 the Legislature to commit resources to these
4 immediate and long-term intervention efforts.

5 Syracuse and other cities across
6 New York have long faced a crisis-level
7 shortage of affordable housing. The upheaval
8 of the pandemic worsened conditions, as we
9 all know. In Syracuse, we can now foresee an
10 even more consequential housing development:
11 spiking demand in response to unprecedented
12 economic growth anticipated in the years
13 ahead.

14 Our signature neighborhood
15 revitalization program, the Resurgent
16 Neighborhoods Initiative, launched in 2019,
17 has given Syracuse a head start in being
18 prepared for what's to come. There are
19 currently 84 units of new construction,
20 owner-occupied single and two-family houses,
21 completed or underway. We have 24 more
22 shovel-ready sites identified for
23 construction this year and next.

24 With funding included in the

1 Governor's Executive Budget for the new
2 15th Ward, the Syracuse Housing Authority can
3 begin the first phase of redeveloping its
4 aging public housing near the south side of
5 Syracuse with energy-efficient, quality, new
6 public housing and mixed-income development.

7 These actions will help address the
8 immense housing challenges and opportunities
9 we face, but they will not be enough. So we
10 are creating a new tool, the Syracuse Housing
11 Trust Fund, to begin to close this gap for
12 city residents in three ways. It will
13 support home repair and improvements; it will
14 expand flexible financing for homeowners; and
15 it will increase mixed-income development to
16 deconcentrate poverty.

17 The Housing Trust Fund will be
18 centered on equity, to confront
19 discriminatory practices of the past. We
20 expect funding in the Governor's Executive
21 Budget will help seed the new fund, but we
22 will also need the help of the Legislature
23 and our federal partners to establish a
24 sustainable funding stream.

1 Syracuse is working to have the right
2 infrastructure to manage and respond to
3 growth. Today I will report to you about
4 efforts in traffic safety and traditional
5 infrastructure like water pipes, sewers, and
6 roads.

7 Since becoming mayor, my team and I
8 have been on a relentless push to make
9 Syracuse a safer place for pedestrians,
10 bicyclists and drivers. We launched the
11 city's first sidewalk snow removal program
12 and began a municipal sidewalk maintenance
13 program. We're also piloting new
14 traffic-calming measures, including speed
15 humps, speed cushions, and reduced lane
16 widths to slow traffic and increase safety on
17 our streets. While much progress has been
18 made, we still have a long way to go.

19 A few weeks ago I announced Syracuse's
20 goal to become a Vision Zero city. Vision
21 Zero is a strategy to eliminate all traffic
22 fatalities and severe injuries while
23 increasing safe, healthy, and equitable
24 mobility for all. As a first step, we will

1 bring legislation to the State Legislature
2 this session to introduce speed cameras and
3 red-light cameras in school zones. Using
4 legislation this body already authorized, we
5 will also move ahead with bus stop-arm
6 cameras in Syracuse, in coordination with the
7 Syracuse City School District.

8 I want to commend the Legislature on
9 two road infrastructure programs that have
10 been instrumental to our success in improving
11 the condition of Syracuse streets. The State
12 Touring Routes and Pave Our Potholes programs
13 provide vital funding to Syracuse and have
14 helped us consistently pave more than
15 quadruple the miles of roads that we
16 reconstruct compared to when I took office.
17 Funding for these programs, which are in the
18 Governor's Budget, should be increased in the
19 upcoming spending plan.

20 On a bigger scale, the Legislature
21 previously approved more than \$1 billion in
22 funding for the first phase of construction
23 of the Interstate 81 Viaduct project. Once
24 the current legal challenge is resolved, the

1 community grid will improve transportation in
2 Syracuse and Central New York, strengthen the
3 city, and create thousands of good-paying
4 jobs.

5 Is that time or -- oh, had the timer
6 right in front of me the whole time. That's
7 okay.

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: That is time.
9 Despite us having time, but --

10 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: That's okay.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We're going to
12 go first to the Senate.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Great. We're
14 going to have Rachel May ask questions first.
15 Thank you.

16 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: Great.

17 SENATOR MAY: Yes, hi, Mayor.

18 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: Senator.

19 SENATOR MAY: Great to see you.

20 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: Nice to see
21 you.

22 SENATOR MAY: And first, in my role as
23 the chair of the Cities 2 Committee now,
24 excited to work with you on a lot of the

1 issues that you brought up.

2 You didn't get to talk about I-81;
3 that was my first question. Where are we
4 now? What are the next steps? The judge has
5 allowed something to go forward, but not the
6 tearing down of the viaduct yet.

7 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: So we're still
8 reviewing Judge Neri's decision, which came
9 down yesterday. It does appear to create
10 uncertainty for the project. While certain
11 elements of the project are able to move
12 forward per the decision, certain parts --
13 namely, anything impacting directly the
14 elevated viaduct -- are not.

15 You know, I think per the
16 environmental review process, all of the
17 project needs to be reviewed holistically.
18 And so to parse it out, again, creates
19 uncertainty I think certainly for us in the
20 city, but I suspect New York State DOT as
21 well.

22 So I know our attorneys are reviewing
23 the decision, as are New York State DOT
24 attorneys. We're going to continue to move

1 everything forward that we can. But given
2 the comprehensive nature of the environmental
3 review, we continue to feel confident that
4 that environmental review is sufficient, and
5 we're hopeful that we're able to ultimately
6 prove that and proceed with the entirety of
7 the project.

8 SENATOR MAY: Okay, thanks.

9 Bus rapid transit, is there a need in
10 the budget, anything we need to be advocating
11 for here to make sure that that happens? Or
12 have we got the resources we need?

13 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: Yeah, thank
14 you, Senator. I know you and I are both
15 passionate about establishing a bus rapid
16 transit system in Syracuse, much like we have
17 right here in Albany. And based on our most
18 recent conversations with Centro, it does
19 appear that they have the resources they need
20 to begin implementing a BRT system. That, at
21 last projection, is anticipated to be put
22 into service around 2026, which will be the
23 year after I'm termed out of this job -- but
24 will be happy to be a rider nonetheless.

1 So as I understand it right now, it
2 appears Centro has everything they need, but
3 I think you and I have both been around long
4 enough to keep a close eye on that. And I
5 would just ask that you and your colleagues
6 be prepared to do whatever else may be
7 necessary to ensure that we have a robust
8 public transportation system in Syracuse.

9 SENATOR MAY: Okay, thank you.

10 I wanted to get to a bigger question,
11 and I'm sorry the other Mayors aren't here at
12 the same time. But as I think about my role
13 and the upstate cities in particular, you
14 talked about deconcentrating poverty as a
15 goal in some of the mixed-income housing
16 developments.

17 But do you have an opportunity to talk
18 to the communities surrounding the city?
19 Because you can't just deconcentrate poverty
20 in the city; it is already concentrated in
21 the city. So how much of a conversation is
22 going on, and what -- is there anything that
23 I can do, that we can do as a Legislature
24 that we need in the budget? Is there

1 anything that you can think of that we can do
2 to advance the idea of deconcentrating
3 poverty regionally around Syracuse and/or
4 other upstate cities?

5 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: Yeah, it's
6 certainly something that's important and is
7 necessary. And I applaud Governor Hochul as
8 well as you and many of your colleagues for
9 raising this issue. The reality is for far
10 too long poverty has been concentrated in our
11 cities and urban centers. And there has been
12 exclusionary zoning that has ensured that
13 certain types of housing, whether it be
14 low-income housing, high concentrations of
15 housing, cannot go into suburban communities.

16 So it's a conversation that's long
17 overdue. I think the question is as a
18 municipal official, you know, I value having
19 local control over those decisions. And I
20 think, you know, as evidenced by our track
21 record, the City of Syracuse and most cities,
22 many cities, especially the larger ones, have
23 been ready and willing to do our part to
24 deconcentrate poverty but to also ensure that

1 everyone has access to quality affordable
2 housing.

3 Not every municipality has done that.
4 And so we do need to figure out a way to hold
5 those municipalities accountable, while
6 striking that right balance between home
7 rule, local control -- but ensuring that
8 everybody does their fair share. And so my
9 conversations with the Governor and with our
10 other colleagues -- I sit on the executive
11 committee of the New York Conference of
12 Mayors -- is that whether we like it or not,
13 this is a conversation that is long overdue,
14 that there does need to be increased
15 accountability on behalf of all
16 municipalities on the issue of housing.

17 But as to the right mechanism, whether
18 it's what the Governor is currently proposing
19 with the housing pact or something other than
20 that, where it's more of a carrot approach --
21 maybe perhaps incorporating or using existing
22 state funding to incentivize the right type
23 of behavior -- you know, I think there's
24 still room for discussion. And that's why I

1 encourage you all to have those discussions
2 with local leaders. But we shouldn't allow
3 that issue to go away. It's only going to
4 become more acute certainly in Syracuse, but
5 throughout the rest of the state. And we're
6 anxious for our suburban counterparts to do
7 their fair share.

8 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

9 I noticed, speaking of that, in your
10 budget priorities support for taxing
11 nonprofits if they are renting space to other
12 entities, that kind of thing. I know the --
13 do you know what proportion of the land mass
14 of Syracuse is off the tax rolls now?

15 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: Yeah, it's over
16 50 percent. So it is a challenge.

17 You know, we value our nonprofit
18 partners, institutions that add so much value
19 to the community. But it does -- it does
20 create a burden on municipal services. And
21 we have examples of nonprofit institutions
22 that recognize that, like Syracuse
23 University, who has willingly entered into a
24 service agreement with us that was recently

1 expanded. We appreciate that.

2 But, you know, specific to this
3 request, it's just making sure that as
4 nonprofit institutions are buying real estate
5 and leasing some of that real estate to
6 for-profit entities, that we have the
7 appropriate regulatory procedures in place so
8 we can tax it accordingly.

9 SENATOR MAY: Are there other things
10 the state should be doing to support cities
11 that bear this disproportionate burden of,
12 you know, hosting the hospitals and the
13 universities and the government buildings and
14 the highways and everything else that's off
15 the tax rolls?

16 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: Well, one of
17 the things I didn't get to in my comments was
18 of course the issue that I know you all are
19 well aware of, which is AIM funding. And I
20 want to thank the Legislature for recognizing
21 the fact that AIM funding has not been
22 increased in I think at least 14 years. And
23 that is a very direct way that the state
24 could help assist with that burden directly

1 with municipalities.

2 And, you know, again understanding
3 that there are other things that the state
4 wants to see from municipalities in terms of
5 housing, public safety and other things,
6 perhaps there's a way to better tie any
7 increases in aid to ensuring that those
8 priorities are being addressed by
9 municipalities. I think that may be a
10 different way to look at the conversation.

11 But when you look at the state budget
12 and state funding for a lot of other
13 institutions, school districts -- which we
14 certainly are supportive of -- to not
15 increase AIM aid over that period of time
16 really places an undue burden on cities.

17 SENATOR MAY: Okay. And we have
18 passed a number of bills to beef up code
19 enforcement in the state. What's the state
20 of code enforcement in Syracuse? How do you
21 feel that it's going?

22 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: We certainly
23 appreciate the support the Legislature has
24 provided in helping us add more tools to our

1 toolkit. It is certainly helping. We are
2 fully implementing our lead ordinance
3 enforcement right now. And -- but it's an
4 ongoing challenge, as evidenced by the
5 actions we had to take in Supreme Court just
6 last week relative to the Green National
7 properties.

8 We have, you know, some significant
9 slumlords in our city that are -- that are
10 preventing people from accessing safe,
11 quality, affordable housing. So I think to
12 date, the Legislature has been very
13 receptive, as the Governor has, of new --
14 looking for new tools to expand ways in which
15 we can hold property owners accountable. But
16 we'll certainly take the opportunity to take
17 a look and see if there's anything more that
18 can be done.

19 SENATOR MAY: Okay, thank you. I sure
20 appreciate your being here. I wanted to let
21 you know our national championship Syracuse
22 University Soccer Team is here. I was
23 supposed to be introducing them on the floor
24 right now -- but that's not going to happen.

1 But really proud of a lot of what
2 Syracuse is offering to the world these days.
3 With your leadership, I think the city is
4 moving in the right direction --

5 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: Thank you,
6 Senator.

7 SENATOR MAY: -- and I want to thank
8 you for all the work that you do.

9 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: Appreciate your
10 support.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to
13 Assemblyman Thiele, three minutes.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Mayor Walsh, how
15 are you? It's good to see you today.

16 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: Hi,
17 Assemblyman. Good to see you.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: I wanted to
19 follow up a little bit with regard to the
20 housing compact proposal. You referenced it
21 a little bit and were somewhat diplomatic, I
22 think, with regard to some of the mandates
23 that are in that proposal.

24 And as you said, we all share the goal

1 of increasing housing opportunities. I think
2 we all recognize, especially after the
3 pandemic, that a problem that was already a
4 problem now in many places is crisis
5 proportions. And, you know, NYCOM, which
6 will testify today, had a strongly worded
7 statement about how that proposal really
8 erodes home rule.

9 And in some of my discussions I've
10 heard about, well, you know -- and you kind
11 of referenced it -- you know, we need
12 incentives, not mandates. Carrots, not
13 sticks.

14 I was wondering -- I think, you know,
15 it's different in different parts of the
16 state, what works and what doesn't work. But
17 from your perspective as a big city mayor in
18 upstate New York, other than increased
19 funding for housing projects and perhaps
20 there's the need for infrastructure funding
21 also, what other kinds of incentives or what
22 kind of things do you think the state should
23 be focused on that would provide the tools
24 that you need to meet these targets?

1 And my second question is is one of
2 the things that also struck me about the
3 proposal, is that it talks about building
4 800,000 units. It talks about building
5 housing. It doesn't really talk about
6 affordability.

7 So what incentives do you think we
8 could provide to build housing and, in
9 particular, affordable housing, housing that
10 ensures that everybody can live in their
11 community?

12 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: Yeah, there's a
13 lot there. I'll try to be brief.

14 But I think it's important to start
15 with something that I hope that we can all
16 agree on, which is the status quo is
17 unacceptable and unsustainable. And so,
18 again, while I certainly value home rule, I
19 appreciate that the Governor is raising this
20 issue and coming forward with a proposed
21 solution. Is it the perfect solution? I
22 think, you know, that can be debated and
23 should be debated. And I'm happy to be a
24 part of that.

1 But I think that we know that there
2 are certain municipalities that are simply
3 using exclusionary zoning to keep certain
4 types of housing out of their communities.
5 And I don't think that's appropriate.

6 In terms of ways in which we can
7 incentivize it, again, you know, it has to be
8 a way that changes current behavior. That's
9 why I had suggested, you know, perhaps
10 looking at AIM aid or other financial support
11 that the state is already providing or that
12 we would like you to provide more of, and
13 tying that to specific actions that address
14 these specific needs.

15 You know, I think that engaging with
16 counties and other municipalities in looking
17 at how we can commit to the appropriate
18 growth in the right parts of the county --
19 understanding that maybe it's not appropriate
20 for every municipality, but it certainly
21 needs to be spread across more than just the
22 large cities.

23 So those are some of the areas that I
24 think that we need to look at, but we can't

1 ignore it.

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: That couldn't
4 have been 10 minutes.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: You're not
6 10 minutes on this.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Local
8 governments?

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: No, this is
10 cities.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Only cities?
12 Okay.

13 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yeah, sorry.

14 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: That's how I
15 felt about my comments, Assemblyman.

16 (Laughter.)

17 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you.
18 Thanks.

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: You're right,
20 not 10 minutes.

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I don't think the
22 Senate has any additional questions for you.
23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So Assemblyman

1 Sayegh, three minutes.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN SAYEGH: Thank you,
3 Madam Chair.

4 Mayor, welcome to Albany.

5 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: Thank you.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN SAYEGH: I looked at your
7 programs. One, COPS security cameras, we're
8 looking at initiatives that may be statewide
9 that address the crime. And what has come to
10 our attention from many small businesses,
11 especially in urbanized areas, was the need
12 for more advanced camera security systems --

13 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Nader --
14 Nader, can you use your microphone?

15 ASSEMBLYMAN SAYEGH: Oh, sure.

16 -- security systems inside and outside
17 the stores.

18 And I see the COPS program is one of
19 your initiatives. How is that working, and
20 how long has it been in existence?

21 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: So the COPS
22 cameras, which are street surveillance
23 cameras, have been in place for about a
24 decade or so. And, you know, early on, as

1 you can imagine with any type of new
2 surveillance, they were met with some
3 uncertainty in the community but now are
4 widely embraced by every neighborhood. Every
5 neighborhood that I go to, they are asking
6 for more cameras, new cameras.

7 The challenge for us is, you know,
8 they are great assets. As I mentioned, they
9 have -- we use our cameras -- I think
10 virtually every homicide that has been solved
11 by our incredible Syracuse Police Department
12 has been with the aid of these cameras.

13 So -- but the challenge is as we
14 procure them, there of course are additional
15 costs beyond procurement that -- in order to
16 operate the system, to update the system.
17 We're at a point now where the cameras that
18 we first bought are ending -- you know, are
19 at the end of their useful life.

20 So I think that it's providing
21 support, capital support for additional
22 procurement of new cameras, but also ensuring
23 that we have operational support that we can
24 manage these systems, keep them state of the

1 art. But they are an invaluable tool for our
2 police department, and our community
3 understands that and appreciates that, to
4 your point.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN SAYEGH: Thank you, Mayor.

6 And secondly, on the housing compact,
7 in follow-up to a question by my colleague --

8 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: Housing?

9 ASSEMBLYMAN SAYEGH: The Housing
10 Revitalization Initiative in Syracuse. With
11 the Governor's proposal to expand affordable
12 housing, has there been any concerns from
13 single-family neighborhoods with regards to
14 this initiative?

15 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: No, sir.

16 As a matter of fact, we are -- we are
17 in the process of overhauling our citywide
18 zoning code for the first time in -- since
19 the 1960s. So as part of that, there are
20 opportunity -- we're going to be
21 incorporating new opportunities for accessory
22 dwelling units and for increased density.
23 But that's been part of a -- you know, a
24 comprehensive community engagement process

1 where we've engaged with all those
2 neighborhoods.

3 But -- and just to be clear, from my
4 perspective in the City of Syracuse, there's
5 nothing concerning about the housing compact.
6 We will exceed the expectations in there.

7 When I speak about, you know,
8 reservations, it's as a municipal official
9 that values local control. But the City of
10 Syracuse will exceed any expectations or
11 requirements within that compact.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN SAYEGH: Thank you very
13 much.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you,
15 Mayor. So there are no further questions.
16 Thank you for being here with us.

17 SYRACUSE MAYOR WALSH: Thank you all.

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very
19 much.

20 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So now we're
21 going back to our scheduled list. Mayor
22 Adams was briefer than was anticipated, and
23 that is because there are so many things
24 happening today that many members have not

1 been able to attend today's hearing.

2 So now I would like to call, as a
3 panel, Mayor Spano, the City of Yonkers
4 mayor; Mayor Evans, the mayor of the City of
5 Rochester; and Mayor Sheehan, the mayor of
6 the City of Albany.

7 And while they are taking their seats,
8 I just wanted to acknowledge that
9 unfortunately Mayor Brown from Buffalo could
10 not be with us today. Today is the
11 sentencing of the shooter, the murderer at
12 the Tops Supermarket in Buffalo, and he felt
13 that -- he rightfully felt that he needed to
14 be with his -- the residents of Buffalo
15 today.

16 So just some ground rules. You each
17 have 10 minutes to make your presentation,
18 and then members of -- after the three of you
19 have given remarks, then there will
20 probably -- I know there will be questions
21 from the legislators.

22 So why don't we start with the
23 Honorable Mike Spano, the mayor of Yonkers.

24 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Thank you,

1 Chairwoman Weinstein, Chairwoman Krueger,
2 Senator Krueger, of course the members of our
3 own delegation from Yonkers, Senator Shelley
4 Mayer and my good friend Assemblyman Nader
5 Sayegh.

6 I'm up here, I'm going to be brief, I
7 promise. The things with the ask are the
8 ones you've heard me ask about over and over
9 again, every year, for I don't know how many
10 years. But we're going to ask for additional
11 education aid and of course hope that we can
12 adjust the school aid formula.

13 You know, Yonkers has done well over
14 the last couple of years because all of
15 you've decided you're going to fully fund the
16 formula, and that has been good for us. We
17 still believe that formula needs some
18 tinkering. I mean, just in the past 10 years
19 or so since the Campaign for Fiscal Equity,
20 we under that formula didn't realize some
21 300 -- over \$300 million in revenue that, had
22 that formula been fully realized, I think we
23 would have gotten.

24 But that being said, I hope that you

1 look at the Regional Cost Index. You know,
2 Yonkers is in Westchester County, highest
3 per-capita income, highest median price for
4 homes. And you'd all be surprised to know
5 that our regional cost index, we're listed
6 with like Utica. And meanwhile, New York
7 City/Long Island is in one region, and
8 Yonkers North is in another region.

9 That could give us some significant
10 relief if that is addressed, so I ask that
11 you please look at that.

12 I also -- like I said, in interests of
13 time, I'll rush through. We're rebuilding
14 our schools. We're in the process of
15 building one new school. You've given us the
16 authorization to build three, with the change
17 in legislation that Senator Shelley Mayer was
18 able to put forth. We thank you for that.

19 But we still have several hundreds of
20 millions of dollars in repairs that still are
21 needed in our schools. And as you know, the
22 reimbursement is such that local property
23 taxpayers cannot afford to make those
24 repairs. So if there's any help that could

1 be given to us, we've been asking for a
2 \$100 million block grant that could be
3 provided to us to help us move and get these
4 schools rebuilt. But again, that's something
5 we're going to continue to ask for.

6 You know, our local share of education
7 has always been significant. If you take my
8 sister cities of Rochester, Buffalo and
9 Syracuse and take their local shares of
10 education, add them all up, the City of
11 Yonkers still spends about \$800 more per
12 pupil. And so whatever we can do with that,
13 that would be greatly appreciated to us.

14 You know, healthcare, I don't know if
15 anyone's been talking about it. If they
16 haven't, they should be. Fifteen percent,
17 our healthcare has gone up for this year. We
18 spent \$170 million on healthcare. So that is
19 a \$26 million increase that we're going to
20 see. Twenty-six million dollars is 6 percent
21 of my property taxes. That's three times
22 higher than your property tax cap of
23 2 percent. That's just healthcare.

24 So any kind of help we can get on that

1 would be very, very much appreciated.
2 Because again, it leaves little for the
3 classroom if I have to just pay the
4 healthcare bill. It leaves little for the --
5 you know, the many other things that we have
6 to contend with. You know, labor contracts,
7 healthcare, and the list goes on and on. So
8 I'll throw that out to you.

9 And of course I will end by talking
10 about Yonkers Raceway. And we have a license
11 coming up. Again, I hope that Yonkers is
12 considered for full gaming. We support full
13 gaming in the City of Yonkers. We know it's
14 good not just for Yonkers, good for the
15 region. It would provide lots of jobs,
16 especially for people that reside in the
17 Bronx, reside in Mount Vernon, reside in
18 Yonkers. And we want to see that type of
19 measure put forth as soon as you can.

20 And I hope that while you're putting
21 the legislation together, remember, Yonkers
22 is used to getting that 19.5 million in the
23 host community aid. And we'd like that to be
24 the floor and then go up from there. At

1 least the legislation is kind of mum on that
2 situation. I know the Governor did put the
3 dollars in the budget, so I'd appreciate it
4 if we can keep them.

5 And with that, I know there's a lot of
6 items in the budget that are great, lots of
7 proposals, and I'm looking forward to our
8 discussion as we move on. Thank you.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

10 Mayor Evans.

11 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Yes, thank
12 you, Chairwoman Krueger and Chairwoman
13 Weinstein and all the members of the Ways and
14 Means and Finance Committee, and all the
15 Assembly and Senate members for allowing us a
16 little bit of time today to talk about some
17 of the priorities that are important in our
18 city.

19 I'll start off by saying I always like
20 to talk about the good first. And I'll be
21 brief as well. I'm a preacher's kid, so I
22 use the five B's of public speaking -- be
23 brief, brother, be brief. So I will be
24 brief.

1 Rochester is attracting lots of
2 private investment and state-supported
3 investment, and we thank you for those
4 investments. It's having a major impact on
5 our community, and we want to continue to see
6 those type of investments in Rochester. We
7 have had large projects such as our National
8 Museum of Play, our Inner Loop East
9 investments, they're all generating
10 tremendous private development, including the
11 expansion of the Strong Museum, which we
12 celebrate with its completion in the newly
13 renovated Neighborhood of Play. General
14 Motors' announcement of \$68 million in a new
15 Rochester manufacturing facility. All these
16 things are excellent.

17 And while we build our future, we also
18 must also confront our challenges. We can't
19 shirk from them, we cannot run away from
20 them, we have to talk about our challenges.
21 And Rochester is like cities across New York
22 City and the nation: Our greatest challenge
23 continues to be gun violence. The city
24 continues its aggressive strategies of

1 prevention and intervention and suppression.
2 And we reduced homicides last year, in my
3 first year in office, but that number is
4 still too high.

5 A spirit of collaboration with law
6 enforcement and all our partners at the
7 local, state and federal levels has helped us
8 target the most violent offenders and taken
9 illegal guns off the streets. And the state
10 funding through the Gun Involved Violence
11 Elimination initiative and our SNUG outreach
12 program is absolutely critical. That's in
13 this budget. We want to see that continue
14 and even be expanded.

15 However, all these things will never
16 be truly effective unless we address the
17 challenges with the whole family, working to
18 zero in on firearms, which there's way too
19 many of them in this country and in New York.
20 We have to continue to redouble our efforts
21 there.

22 I'm very excited in this Executive
23 Budget to see the numerous investments in
24 public safety initiatives, including youth

1 employment programs -- we need to keep kids
2 so doggone busy that they don't have time to
3 even think about wanting to pick up a gun.
4 And by doing that, that is one of the best
5 crime-prevention programs that we ever could
6 have.

7 Youth justice and gang prevention
8 programs as well as SNUG outreach programs,
9 economic development investments, including
10 funding through our Regional Economic
11 Development Councils, the Downtown
12 Revitalization Initiative and the NY Forward
13 and funding for infrastructure through the
14 BRIDGE-NY, PAVE NY, the Consolidated Highway
15 Improvement Program, or CHIPS, and Pave our
16 Potholes programs -- these all give us unique
17 opportunities to put people to work and keep
18 them away from violence or thinking about
19 picking up a gun.

20 I also appreciate the commitment in
21 the Governor's proposed budget to fund
22 housing, to create and preserve affordable
23 homes, support the operation of shelters and
24 supportive housing units, and provide rental

1 subsidies and reduce lead exposure risk for
2 the housing stock.

3 And as a former school board
4 president, I applaud the commitment to care
5 for and educate our children through an
6 increase in school aid, including funding to
7 establish high-impact tutoring to assist
8 students recovering from pandemic-related
9 learning losses.

10 But for Rochester we really want to
11 look at three things. One is an increase in
12 AIM aid. I know that this is something that
13 you all have heard many times, but it is
14 absolutely critical for Rochester. And also
15 funding to fully eliminate lead pipes around
16 Rochester City homes and support for the rest
17 of Rochester's ROC the Riverway initiative.

18 With the rest of my time I will just
19 talk about the first two. We believe that if
20 we get an increase in AIM aid -- which has
21 been at the same level since 2012 of about
22 \$88.2 million -- that we can help to disrupt
23 the poverty that we see in Rochester.

24 Of the five poorest zip codes in

1 New York State, if you look at the top five
2 poorest zip codes in New York State, three of
3 them are in the City of Rochester. Three of
4 them are in the City of Rochester. And we
5 are home to the top -- if you look at the top
6 25 poorest zip codes in New York State, five
7 of them are in the City of Rochester.

8 So we have extreme poverty levels. So
9 an increase in AIM aid will allow us to be
10 able to equitably address many of the
11 challenges that we face, including, including
12 gun violence. And the dollar amount that
13 that will represent for Rochester might be
14 small for the state, but it would be huge in
15 terms of the impact that it would have on our
16 city. And will help us to better fight
17 violence, extend weekday and evening hours at
18 our recreation centers, provide jobs -- I
19 have a goal to provide jobs for every city
20 youth who wants one. That would help us to
21 be able to do that. It will allow us to
22 expand the work of our Financial Empowerment
23 Centers. And it will allow us to be able to
24 truly transform families.

1 The second piece I wanted to talk
2 about is we have a goal, which has been
3 recognized nationally, to be lead-free by
4 2030. We have already started to replace
5 every single lead service line in our
6 community. That's a \$200 million project.
7 We have pushed local dollars, we have used
8 money from the American Rescue Plan Act, but
9 we still have a long way to go.

10 So I am advocating \$48 million in the
11 current year and a similar level of funding
12 in future years so we can achieve this goal.

13 No one in America, in the richest,
14 most powerful country in the world, and in
15 one of the most progressive states in the
16 country -- no city, including Rochester,
17 should ever have to worry about having lead
18 in its drinking water. It is a public health
19 issue, but it's also an economic development
20 issue. They go hand in hand. And that is an
21 investment that we want to ask for your
22 support in.

23 So in closing, I again thank you for
24 the opportunity to speak with you today on

1 behalf of the people of Rochester, and I look
2 forward to answering any questions that you
3 may have.

4 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

5 And now to Mayor Sheehan, the mayor of
6 Albany, a familiar face to all of us.

7 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: Great, thank
8 you. And I want to thank Chairpersons
9 Krueger and Weinstein for inviting us here.
10 I also want to acknowledge the hard work of
11 the Albany team of Assemblymembers Fahy and
12 McDonald and our Senator Breslin.

13 I join you every year, and have since
14 2014, to make the case that Albany is treated
15 like no other city. And you have listened.
16 I am thankful to the Senate and Assembly for
17 supporting our Capital City funding that we
18 have asked for for the last six consecutive
19 years. I'm also thankful to Governor Hochul,
20 who for the last two years has included this
21 crucial funding for the Capital City in her
22 Executive Budget.

23 So I again want to acknowledge and
24 thank you for the support and the recognition

1 and the acknowledgment of the need for the
2 Capital City to have access to this funding.
3 And what we are asking for this year is to
4 make it permanent. We need to make sure that
5 we keep police officers and firefighters on
6 the streets, that we pick up garbage, that we
7 have safe drinking water -- all of the things
8 that my fellow mayors have talked about.

9 And we would have certainty in our
10 budget if we could make this funding, which
11 has been acknowledged and I think we've
12 demonstrated -- and you'll look at our slides
13 and see that we've been very good stewards of
14 it -- to make it permanent and tie it to the
15 tax cap.

16 So we're asking for two things: Make
17 it permanent, make the Empire State Plaza
18 pilot permanent, and then tie those to
19 whatever the increase is based on the tax cap
20 calculation each year. That will help us to
21 provide the certainty that our residents need
22 and that we need to build a strong budget.

23 I have worked in good faith with this
24 body to -- and with the Governor's office --

1 to ensure that we are good stewards of our
2 taxpayer dollars, and I think we've
3 demonstrated that we've been able to do that.
4 We've grown our budget at less than 2 percent
5 every year since 2013, and that includes the
6 outsized increase that we had with respect to
7 the ARPA funding that all of us received and
8 that is one-time funding.

9 And so, you know, we want to ensure
10 that we are able to bring some basic fairness
11 to our taxpayers. And any way that you look
12 at it -- and we've provided a number of
13 slides and a number of ways of showing the
14 amount of nontaxable property in the City of
15 Albany, the amount of that that is owned by
16 the state. Fewer -- 36 percent of the
17 property in the City of Albany is taxable. I
18 share the challenges that Mayor Walsh has --
19 his is at about 50 percent.

20 But 36 percent is taxable. And many
21 of those are low-income individuals living in
22 formerly redlined neighborhoods that are
23 paying those property taxes.

24 And I know that we had an increase in

1 our -- all of us have had increases in our
2 sales tax, but I just want to remind this
3 body that 8 percent of that was due to
4 inflation. So, you know, we're seeing upward
5 pressures on our own workforces. We
6 completed a pay equity study because we had a
7 number of nonunion employees who were not
8 being paid equitably. And especially in the
9 state capital, where a talented workforce can
10 come and walk across the street and get a
11 great job with the state, we had to make sure
12 that we were being competitive in our
13 salaries.

14 So all of those are factors that add
15 to the challenges that we have as cities.
16 But I also want to assure you that we are
17 working to grow our tax base. And so with
18 our ARPA money, I am proud to say that we
19 took \$25 million of our ARPA funding, we
20 worked with the community to set priorities,
21 and we did a competitive grant process, and
22 75 percent of that money is going directly
23 into our formerly redlined neighborhoods to
24 create affordable home ownership

1 opportunities, affordable rental
2 opportunities, and to provide direct services
3 in our neighborhoods of the highest need.

4 And we believe that we are going to
5 see continued increases in our tax base as we
6 work to stabilize and to support every
7 neighborhood in the City of Albany.

8 I also want to demonstrate that in the
9 City of Albany, our state aid does impact
10 what we are able to do for those who are
11 living below the poverty level. Certainly
12 the situation in Rochester is dire. But when
13 you look at the City of Albany, when I became
14 mayor our poverty rate was about 25 percent.
15 We've been able to drive that down. But when
16 you still look at the state aid per capita of
17 people living in poverty in the City of
18 Albany, we are treated like no other city.

19 And so again, I'm not looking for an
20 increase, but I'm looking for a permanency
21 and then the ability for the amount of
22 funding that we get from the state to grow
23 within that 2 percent tax cap.

24 I'm excited about all of the growth

1 that we are seeing in the Capital Region and
2 all of the growth that we are seeing in a
3 number of different opportunities at our port
4 and outside of the City of Albany. But we
5 have to ensure that we're connecting that job
6 growth to our residents. And so as we think
7 about this budget and the funding that is in
8 this budget, I do want to commend the fact
9 that there is funding for summer youth
10 employment, for violence reduction -- all of
11 the things that we have been investing our
12 dollars in that we need the state investing
13 alongside us to ensure that we are making
14 those investments.

15 And so again, I want to point out that
16 we have worked with you and we're grateful
17 for all that you have done for the City of
18 Albany. We need to make it permanent. We
19 need to have it grow at a reasonable rate.
20 And we will continue to work alongside you to
21 make this a Capital City that you can all be
22 proud of.

23 And so I again look forward to your
24 questions and to sharing our thoughts and

1 ideas, of which my fellow mayors and I have
2 many that we would love to share with you.

3 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

4 We go to Assemblyman Braunstein.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you,
6 all three of you. And I appreciate the fact
7 that you were brief and got right to the
8 point. It's helpful to us so we understand
9 exactly what your priorities are.

10 I'm going to ask all three of you --
11 we'll start with Mayor Evans -- the Governor
12 has proposed housing growth targets, I
13 believe for all three of your cities. It's
14 at 1 percent. Do you feel that you're going
15 to reach those growth targets? And if you
16 have any opinions on the Governor's proposal
17 for local zoning overrides should you not.

18 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Yeah, I think
19 for us we will not only meet those targets,
20 we will also exceed them. My administration
21 has made building high-quality affordable
22 housing a priority. I think it's something
23 that's very important.

24 But we also think that other areas and

1 municipalities should do the exact same
2 thing, because Rochester has had to bear
3 the -- I don't want to say burden, because
4 it's something that we should do, it's the
5 right thing to do -- bear the responsibility
6 for most affordable housing having to be
7 built in the city. And that shouldn't just
8 be a issue in the City of Rochester. Others
9 should also take up that mantle, not because
10 it's a must-do -- I think that it's something
11 that they absolutely must and should do. But
12 I don't think that in terms of the targets
13 that are there it will be hard for us to
14 reach, because it's something that we are
15 invested in already as a city.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you.

17 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Listen, I think
18 the Governor really did the right thing when
19 she put this in the budget and made this a
20 priority. This is certainly something that
21 we have had to deal with. While Yonkers will
22 meet these numbers, will exceed these
23 numbers -- I mean, just since 2012 we've
24 built over 12,500 new units, 2,000 of them

1 affordable, and then another thousand through
2 the inclusionary units.

3 And so we have really worked hard to
4 make this work for us, but we, like some of
5 my sister cities, are kind of surrounded by
6 communities that aren't doing the same thing.
7 And I think that we have to figure out a way
8 how we can bring them in. AIM -- I'm glad
9 you brought up, Mayor, brought up the AIM.
10 You know, in 2011, Assemblyman Nader -- I
11 mean, I was sitting in that chair when we
12 were -- had just spun up Yonkers for the last
13 time, \$20 million, and then they went and
14 they lost that, and they've been level since.

15 And, you know, AIM is that
16 recognition, it's that old, you know,
17 profit-sharing, right, that recognition of
18 that partnership we have. And if we're going
19 to encourage local municipalities to take
20 part in this, you know, maybe part of the
21 look is not just saying, okay, you know, you
22 can get some relief on property taxes --
23 because you don't pay them, it's revenues
24 that come to us and we're going to have to

1 figure out how -- what to do when those
2 revenues are gone.

3 And so we need some help. Much like
4 you guys did a long time ago when you did the
5 old Economic Development Zones, right,
6 Assemblyman Seal -- Zeal -- Thiele.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: I'll never forget
8 what --

9 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Only known each
10 other 30 years, right?

11 But, you know, you think about
12 those -- where the state actually picked up
13 those property taxes for 10 years. And, you
14 know, and maybe there has to be some type of
15 something that acts kind of like that
16 mechanism so it helps a municipality, gives
17 them a carrot rather than a stick. But at
18 the same time, they do have to, you know,
19 catch up. Because we have been bearing the
20 burden, and now that will change.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: So you favor
22 more of a carrot approach than a stick
23 approach?

24 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: I think we have

1 to try the carrot first, like we always
2 should do. But always know that, you know,
3 if we have to, then the stick is there, ready
4 to be used.

5 But I think we haven't tried that
6 enough yet.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you.

8 Mayor?

9 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: So the City of
10 Albany will have no problem meeting the
11 1 percent growth. And I think that there is
12 a long and disgraceful history of
13 exclusionary zoning in areas that surround
14 the City of Albany as well as the City of
15 Troy and Schenectady -- we are cities
16 surrounded by suburbs -- and that there is a
17 need for affordability at all levels in all
18 communities surrounding the City of Albany.
19 And so continuing to concentrate affordable
20 housing, low-income tax credit projects in
21 our formerly redlined neighborhoods I think
22 does a disservice not only to our broader
23 community who's in need of more affordable
24 housing, but that the conversation that the

1 Governor has spurred with the proposal that
2 she has, which gives localities a broad
3 breadth of opportunity to make it possible to
4 build additional housing before the stick is
5 implemented -- three years -- I think is an
6 important conversation for us to be having as
7 we look at policies.

8 That said, I do think that there are
9 policies in addition to what my colleagues
10 have mentioned, but, you know, when you look
11 at what you legislate with respect to
12 affordability. To do a 4 percent low-income
13 tax credit project, you have to have
14 affordability at 20 percent, 40 percent,
15 60 percent, 80 percent.

16 We have developers who would be
17 willing to set aside 10 percent, 15 percent,
18 20 percent of the units in a market-rate
19 housing development for people living at 40,
20 50, 60 percent of area median income -- but
21 there is no way for them to access a tax
22 credit or any way to offset the cost of that
23 set-aside other than to charge higher rents
24 and fees to those who are paying the market

1 rate.

2 So I think that this is an opportunity
3 for us to really think about what we're
4 trying to create -- equitable, sustainable
5 communities in our cities and in our suburbs
6 where we don't have one locality that is
7 bearing the burdens and the challenges of
8 affordability while the rest of the
9 surrounding area gets a pass.

10 And so I think that this conversation
11 has started. I know that there was a mention
12 of the strongly worded statement of NYCOM.
13 I'm the first vice president of NYCOM, and I
14 can tell you that I wasn't happy with that
15 strongly worded statement. I do believe that
16 we need to spur this conversation and look at
17 decades and decades of exclusionary zoning
18 that kept certain individuals and elements --
19 and I put that in air quotes -- but that was
20 intentionally drafted in order to prevent the
21 affordability that we need now in every
22 neighborhood, certainly in the Albany area.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you.

24 That's my time, Chair.

1 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.
2 To the Senate.

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.
4 Senator Jeremy Cooney.

5 SENATOR COONEY: Thank you,
6 Madam Chair. And it's great to see all of
7 our mayors here. And appreciate all of the
8 work you're doing, especially in these
9 challenging times.

10 I know I only have a few minutes, but
11 I wanted to direct my questions to my mayor,
12 Mayor Evans.

13 And thank you for giving us a book of
14 priorities that needs to get done. And
15 you're right, all of these things are
16 important for my hometown, your hometown, and
17 our City of Rochester.

18 But I want to talk about something
19 that's not in your priorities, and I know
20 that you have strong opinions about, which is
21 youth employment. We've got a great SOOP
22 program, Summer of Opportunity Program in the
23 City of Rochester. But you have a vision for
24 expanding it beyond just the summer months.

1 I wonder if you could talk a little about
2 what that means and how you might need some
3 resources to be able to do that.

4 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Yes. So, you
5 know, we have a very robust summer program,
6 and the goal is to expand that during the
7 school year. Because all the data shows,
8 Senator, and you know this, that if a young
9 person has a job, they are going to stay out
10 of trouble and they're going to be a great
11 blessing to their parents because they're
12 going to be so doggone tired by the time they
13 get home from going to school, going to work
14 or doing sports that they're not going to
15 have time to get into trouble.

16 So we believe that any young person in
17 the City of Rochester that wants a job, we
18 want to be able to provide them with a job.
19 And if they are not even old enough to get a
20 job, we want to give them pre-employment
21 opportunities where they can get a stipend to
22 be prepped to be able to get a job.

23 So that is what that vision is. That
24 vision is to be able to expand the Summer of

1 Opportunity during the school year to be able
2 to give them those types of jobs -- and then,
3 secondly, to be able to give them the
4 opportunity to be in a pre-employment-type
5 prep job if they are not old enough to have
6 that job yet or if they have not acquired a
7 skill to be able to get a job.

8 We believe that that would be
9 transformational for them in terms of setting
10 them on the right trajectory and for the rest
11 of their lives.

12 SENATOR COONEY: I couldn't agree more
13 with you, Mayor, because I know this is also
14 a public safety strategy.

15 And I'm sure the mayors of Albany and
16 Yonkers would agree that when youth are
17 employed and are busy during those critical
18 afternoon hours, this is an opportunity to
19 avoid other mischief that may happen.

20 I will end by saying that one way that
21 we can help make that dream happen in terms
22 of youth employment year-round is to increase
23 AIM aid.

24 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Absolutely.

1 SENATOR COONEY: And I know that's
2 something that you feel very passionate about
3 and my colleague feels passionate about. So
4 we will do our best to continue to have that
5 conversation as a legislative body.

6 Thank you for coming all the way here,
7 Mayor. Appreciate it.

8 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Thank you,
9 Senator.

10 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

11 We go to Assemblyman Thiele, three
12 minutes.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Thank you. And
14 welcome to all the mayors, especially my
15 former colleague Mayor Spano. It's good to
16 see you again.

17 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Good to see you,
18 Assemblyman.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: And we've heard
20 about AIM today and we've also heard about
21 the housing targets. I'm going to give
22 proper attribution, because this is something
23 Chairman Braunstein mentioned to me while we
24 were just sitting here listening and chatting

1 a little bit.

2 As was mentioned, AIM funding really
3 hasn't been increased since I think 2009.
4 Last year in the Assembly one-house bill we
5 calculated just what the cost of living
6 increase would have been over that period,
7 and we tried to add I think \$210 million to
8 AIM, which would have been a 25, 30 percent
9 increase. Didn't make the cut. I think the
10 Senate had something similar.

11 And then we have the housing targets.

12 So my question, and I ask you to kind
13 of react to this, is that the housing
14 targets, instead of if you having your
15 zoning, your land-use authority overruled if
16 you didn't meet the targets, how about the
17 incentive being that you would get this
18 increase in AIM funding if you met the
19 targets, as an incentive for local
20 governments to meet those targets?

21 I mean, we haven't been able to talk
22 the Executive -- in almost 15 years -- into
23 this, but maybe in the context of the housing
24 compact, this might be the proper incentive.

1 What do you think?

2 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: Well, I think
3 in looking at who gets AIM, you know, that
4 would have to be a deeper dive. You know,
5 we've talked as mayors about counties, you
6 know, really looking at these goals. But,
7 you know, as cities and villages, we get AIM,
8 the towns are --

9 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Cities, towns and
10 villages get AIM; counties don't, City of
11 New York doesn't.

12 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: Right. And so,
13 you know, how that -- what percentage that is
14 of their budget I think is something that
15 would need to be looked at as to whether or
16 not, you know, that's truly going to be an
17 incentive for them to move forward.

18 But we think everything should be on
19 the table. And if there's going to be a
20 carrot, you know, we've all just said we're
21 going to blow the numbers out of the water,
22 so -- yeah, we'd love that carrot (laughing).

23 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Okay, thanks.

24 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: I certainly can

1 agree with the mayor.

2 I mean, like I said, you know, revenue
3 sharing as we all knew it was kind of like a
4 recognition from New York State of this
5 partnership that we had in terms of educating
6 our kids, policing our neighborhoods, and
7 protecting the quality of life.

8 It has been -- even though that period
9 of time when we've stayed flat our revenues
10 to New York have gone up over 30 percent, and
11 yet AIM aid stays exactly flat.

12 And then this ask, which I think is --
13 listen, I think this discussion that the
14 Governor is having for us is an incredible
15 discussion. We need to have it. We need to
16 do something about it, and it is a crisis.
17 But I still think that we need to have more
18 carrots in the soup, if you will.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Okay. Thank you.

20 I'm out of time, Mayor. I would
21 have -- maybe we can talk offline. Thank
22 you.

23 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: That's right,
24 thank you.

1 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

2 We go to Senator Brouk.

3 SENATOR BROUK: Thank you so much.

4 And welcome, Mayor Evans, for your second
5 welcome here, your second {inaudible}.

6 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Thank you.

7 SENATOR BROUK: So glad to have you
8 here. And I just want you, in front of some
9 of your colleagues, to hear how grateful we
10 are for your leadership. I think everyone
11 living in the City of Rochester has seen the
12 shift in having your leadership, and we're
13 really grateful for it {inaudible}.

14 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Thank you.

15 SENATOR BROUK: {Mic off.} I know you
16 probably talked about it, but we're talking
17 about it, and it's AIM aid, it's AIM funding.
18 But one thing I think is really important for
19 people to understand is what Rochester's
20 going through right now, and that this wasn't
21 something that happened yesterday or
22 {inaudible} years ago, right?

23 So can you give us some of the
24 realities that the City of Rochester is

1 facing in terms of our poverty rate?

2 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: I think -- as
3 I said, and I think it's important for people
4 to understand, that for a city the size of
5 Rochester -- for the top 25 poorest zip codes
6 for New York State, for Rochester to have
7 five of those zip codes is unbelievable for a
8 city our size. And the top five poorest zip
9 codes in New York State, for three of them to
10 be in the City of Rochester tells you what
11 we're dealing with.

12 And over the years, per capita, we've
13 had the highest number of homicides per
14 capita when adjusted for population. So it
15 shows you the challenges that we're dealing
16 with.

17 And then nationally, on the national
18 stage, we have a lot of things to be proud
19 of -- Kodak, Bausch & Lomb, all those
20 things -- but we have some embarrassing
21 things to be -- that we are not proud of,
22 which is the level of extreme poverty when
23 you look at the -- we're just behind
24 Cleveland in childhood poverty in terms of

1 what we're dealing with in Rochester.

2 So -- and we're all one state, so this
3 is something that should concern everyone
4 regardless of what area you live in. Because
5 to have a city the size of Rochester that are
6 dealing with that level of challenge really
7 puts into context why more increased funding,
8 increased resources works.

9 And there's no mistake, there's no
10 mistake between a high level of violence and
11 a high level of poverty. They're directly
12 linked, they are directly correlated. And
13 you can't have one without the other. They
14 drive each other, and we need -- and we've
15 been working to try to break that up.

16 SENATOR BROUK: I appreciate that.
17 And I think put a period on that sentence on
18 the fact that these are things that Rochester
19 is facing that other cities do not face at
20 this level.

21 Can you speak, in our last 40 seconds,
22 about what an increase in AIM funding to
23 actually get to a more equitable rate would
24 mean for Rochester and where that funding

1 would probably be able to go.

2 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: I mean, one of
3 the biggest things is making sure that we can
4 truly invest in our young people, that we can
5 spend more money on preventative programs.
6 We know that we can't transform or change
7 violence by arresting our way out of it. We
8 have to look at the whole family. But those
9 things cost money.

10 But I consider those to be front-end
11 investments to be able to expand recreation
12 centers, to be able to expand library hours,
13 to be able to make sure that any young person
14 that wants a job gets one, to make sure that
15 we can invest more in workforce development
16 opportunities that will allow people to move
17 up the economic ladder. All those things
18 will go a long way for transforming our
19 community and bringing down our poverty rate.

20 SENATOR BROUK: Thank you so much.

21 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Thank you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

23 We go to Assemblyman Reilly, ranker on
24 Cities, for five minutes.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you,
2 Madam Chair.

3 Thank you, Mayors, for your testimony.

4 I wanted to focus on the GIVE, Gun
5 Involved Violence Elimination initiative, and
6 tying that into the supports that are in the
7 Governor's budget. But also wondering if the
8 expansion of the New York State Police
9 Forensic Investigation Division -- being able
10 to submit, from your police departments, the
11 ability to investigate and ask for DNA
12 connections to criminal possession of a
13 weapon when that's the sole crime.

14 Currently the policy of the State
15 Police is that if the sole crime is involving
16 criminal possession of a firearm, they will
17 not collect that and accept those
18 submissions.

19 Do you think that's something that can
20 help combat crime in your communities?

21 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Listen, any time
22 we can have more resources brought to bear
23 for us to help solve crime, which is what --
24 and I'm not really familiar entirely with

1 everything you're talking about, but I am
2 familiar with what you're talking about --
3 would be something we'd be addressing.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: So just to give a
5 little background. For instance, say there's
6 an individual -- there's four individuals in
7 a vehicle and a gun is found in the car.
8 Currently there would be no possibility of
9 submitting that to State Police to see who
10 that gun belonged to in the car. So under
11 the exception, all four would be charged with
12 it.

13 The ability for law enforcement to
14 submit that to the State Police, local law
15 enforcement, to get a DNA match would help
16 exonerate the three that the gun did not
17 belong to and potentially help in the
18 prosecution of that -- the person who had the
19 illegal firearm. That's what the basis for
20 this is.

21 And I think that's something that is a
22 missed opportunity in all the initiatives
23 that we have in combating gun violence in our
24 cities. So that's why I'm asking that

1 question. And I'm hoping that you can carry
2 that message on and maybe talk to your law
3 enforcement officials and see if they
4 could --

5 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: I will do that.

6 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: Yeah. I mean,
7 I will say that the crime analysis center --
8 we have a new one in Albany, but that ties
9 together all of our law enforcement agencies
10 in the region, the State Police, federal
11 resources -- is a game-changer.

12 And so anything that we can do -- but
13 the work that they can do with ballistics to
14 map a gun to a crime that might have happened
15 in Rochester or in Yonkers, we are making
16 incredible headway. We had a homicide on
17 Thursday and by Friday we had the car down in
18 New York City, we had the gun, and ultimately
19 the individual turned themselves in to the
20 police.

21 That's because of the investment that
22 the state has made and that the Governor is
23 continuing to propose to make in this budget,
24 and it's critically important. It allows us

1 to be fast, it allows us to send a strong
2 message to the community that we care about
3 their safety but that we also are going to
4 find individuals who engage in illegal
5 activity with guns, and we are going to do
6 everything that we can and work together to
7 make sure that we get them off the street.

8 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: And I think
9 that your question really speaks to as well
10 the collaborative nature that is necessary
11 between State Police and localities. And
12 we've been blessed in Rochester to have that
13 great relationship.

14 But I think also anytime that you can
15 find and ensure that innocent people are not
16 swept up into the criminal justice system is
17 also extremely important to be able to really
18 deliver justice. So if you're able to
19 eliminate an individual who might get a CPW
20 charge that was not involved with that, that
21 is good, because we need to keep as many
22 people as possible from touching the criminal
23 justice system unnecessarily, because we know
24 what that leads to for the rest of their

1 life.

2 So if that is something that is a tool
3 that is able to be used, it's something that
4 we would definitely welcome and would be
5 interested in learning more about, for sure.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you so
7 much.

8 And just one last point on it. The
9 ability is of course because the DNA database
10 is with those that were convicted of felonies
11 and misdemeanors in the Penal Law, so this
12 could potentially help stop someone from
13 going further down the road and committing a
14 shooting, because we'd be able to identify
15 them before that happens if a gun is found
16 and that's the only charge.

17 So that -- I think it's a really
18 important piece and I thank you for your
19 contributions. Thank you.

20 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Thank you.

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

22 We go to Assemblyman Otis.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Hi, there, friends,
24 and thank you for your great advocacy. As

1 being a mayor, I can say all of you are doing
2 a good job fighting for your communities, as
3 you do every year.

4 What I would like to ask about today
5 is to hear -- we have limited time, but if
6 the three of you could discuss where you are
7 in terms of your cybersecurity -- prevention,
8 protection, what help you're getting from the
9 state, where the state could play a bigger
10 role in helping you in this important area.

11 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: We have had at
12 least two just in the -- two cyberattacks
13 probably in the last year or so. We have
14 been met with a lot of support from the
15 Governor's office, from the state and the
16 agencies. They've been working with us.

17 We don't like to brag about these
18 attacks because of the nature of these
19 attacks, and they tend to get you more
20 attention if you want to make big press out
21 of it. And so -- but a tremendous amount of
22 effort and dollars need to be made in
23 investments in local governments in
24 cybersecurity. I know that New York State

1 has started in that direction. We very much
2 appreciate the continued support.

3 But we're moving along in a very
4 positive direction. But it's scary every
5 day.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: And you could use
7 more financial resources to help with that.

8 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Absolutely can
9 use the financial resources.

10 I don't want to take up all their
11 time.

12 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: And I would
13 just say I think cybersecurity is one of the
14 not-talked-about topics that it needs to be
15 talked about more, because you don't realize
16 how much of a problem it is until you're hit.

17 But we were part of -- and I don't
18 know the exact name of it, but the state
19 consortium where they are assisting us with
20 cybersecurity issues. And we've also
21 invested money from our local share to also
22 invest in that. But any further investment
23 will go I think an absolutely long way, and I
24 think we need to be as preventative as

1 possible in this space because by the time it
2 happens, it's too late and the damage has
3 probably already been done.

4 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: Yeah, we are
5 part of that as well, and I want to commend
6 the Governor for opening up that center in
7 collaboration with New York City.

8 My CTO has told me that that has saved
9 us tens of thousands of dollars because
10 they're investments that the state is making.
11 So, you know, whether it's the state making
12 those investments on our behalf or giving us
13 the funding in order to be able to make them,
14 I think that that center is helping us to
15 think about it more holistically.

16 But every town and village needs this
17 type of protection too. I get, you know -- I
18 mean, you want to start with the bigger
19 municipalities. But it is an opportunity for
20 the state to really lead on this and to make
21 sure that we're making smart investments as
22 opposed to doing it one-off, you know, sort
23 of village by village and town by town,
24 because the damage can be pretty significant

1 with respect to these attacks.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Very good.

3 And in my nine seconds left, on a
4 different topic -- just to invite you to
5 share with us in writing where you are on
6 water infrastructure improvements, just so
7 we're up to date, would be helpful.

8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

10 We go to Senator May, chair of the
11 Upstate Cities Committee, for 10 minutes.

12 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

13 And greetings, everybody. It's great
14 to see you here. Sorry I had to step out for
15 a ceremonial function, but I'm happy to be
16 back.

17 I wanted to ask you all a few
18 questions about -- number one, about the
19 Governor's housing proposals. And I know in
20 Syracuse we have concentrated poverty that is
21 almost the worst in the country. And so
22 making sure that we've got affordable housing
23 being developed outside of the city is really
24 important.

1 And I'm just wondering if you all are
2 in conversation with surrounding communities
3 on that kind of topic about how do we -- how
4 do we put in place a plan that actually
5 spreads the affordable housing around through
6 the region and not just in our cities.

7 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Recently
8 Governor Hochul put together a roundtable in
9 Westchester. It was something that was long
10 overdue, and something that needs to happen
11 and needs to happen into the future.

12 We will meet all the thresholds; we
13 will exceed the thresholds. But there are
14 neighboring communities that won't have --
15 won't get there unless of course we can -- we
16 can figure out a way to speak with them, to
17 have them hear our language and let them know
18 that, you know what, this is good for your
19 community because this is housing for your
20 kids.

21 Because especially in places like
22 Westchester, the prices of homes are
23 outpacing what our kids can afford, and
24 they're forced to move elsewhere. So that's

1 why, if we can sell it to them like that, I
2 think we can make a big difference.

3 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: But it's also
4 a fairness and equity issue. You know,
5 there's been exclusionary zoning for years.
6 There are some towns in the state where they
7 write the language so that way you'll never
8 be able to build an affordable housing
9 complex because they don't want those people
10 there.

11 And I think that we need to push those
12 conversations, because nine times out of 10
13 when you have some of those municipalities
14 that end up having and open up affordable
15 housing, what happens is those people
16 don't -- those people don't go in and destroy
17 those neighborhoods. They find out that they
18 care about the same things, their neighbors
19 care about that they're moving next to --
20 quality education, good jobs, and what's best
21 for their kids and their community.

22 And I think that this kind of
23 illustrates that, or an attempt to illustrate
24 that. In Rochester we've been doing

1 affordable housing for a long time; we'll
2 exceed those targets. But it's time for
3 people who have resisted it for years to
4 think about it from an equity, from a
5 justice, from a fairness perspective.

6 And I think it's something that I hope
7 people will embrace. I know it won't be
8 easy. But it's something that I think is
9 long past due.

10 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: And I think
11 that, you know, building on that, we have to
12 stop making it really easy to focus on
13 low-income neighborhoods and buy up
14 properties and do more low-income housing and
15 continuing to perpetuate redlining with our
16 state policies and our federal policies
17 around how these are funded and how they're
18 taxed.

19 Because what we need in our
20 lower-income neighborhoods is market-rate
21 housing as well. We have neighborhoods that
22 want the same amenities that our suburban
23 neighborhoods have -- access to grocery
24 stores, to retail. They want the same things

1 and yet, because of the concentrations of
2 poverty, it's almost impossible to be able to
3 attract those amenities to these
4 neighborhoods.

5 And so we need the balance. It's
6 not -- we're not talking about
7 gentrification, but we're talking about
8 creating the opportunity for housing to
9 happen in a more organic way, in the way that
10 people want to live and interact with their
11 neighborhoods and with their communities.
12 And we have to also acknowledge and recognize
13 that if you go outside the city limits of
14 Albany, there are still people who are in
15 need of -- you know, as the mayor said, these
16 are our kids. These are nurses, these are
17 schoolteachers, these are firefighters that
18 struggle to find affordable housing.

19 And so looking at our tax policies and
20 looking at the incentives that are put in
21 place, I would love to see an opportunity for
22 us as a state to -- instead of just doing
23 9 percent LIHTC credits for an entire
24 project, to be able to look at how do we use

1 those tax incentives to create mixed-income
2 housing opportunities: 20, 30 percent of the
3 units affordable and the rest market-rate.

4 How do we really build that
5 organically? Because those are the types of
6 policies that can create healthy
7 neighborhoods. And we have examples in our
8 communities where we've been successful at
9 doing this -- attracting market-rate housing
10 right alongside affordable housing. And it
11 is creating changes in neighborhoods.

12 But we really need incentives to be
13 able to do that because otherwise builders
14 are not going to be interested in investing
15 in our communities because they can't make
16 the numbers work.

17 SENATOR MAY: Thank you. Thank you.
18 I look forward to working with all of you on
19 these issues, because you're singing my tune.

20 A map recently came out in Onondaga
21 County, around Syracuse, that outside of the
22 city only 1 percent of the urbanized land is
23 zoned for multi-family housing -- 1 percent.

24 So it is -- you know, we have to do

1 that kind of mapping, too, and get the data
2 and make sure we can tell this story of
3 exactly what is allowed and isn't allowed and
4 why.

5 I wanted to ask also about code
6 enforcement. So one of the things we've
7 learned, I think, about affordable housing,
8 the difference between upstate and New York
9 City is a lot of the issue upstate is that we
10 have apartments but they aren't livable
11 apartments or they aren't -- people shouldn't
12 be living in those apartments. And I did
13 hear you speak about the lead issue, which
14 is -- I'm so glad that that's something
15 you're really focused on. We are in Syracuse
16 too.

17 But other code enforcement issues:
18 What do you need from the state to make it
19 easier to enforce your codes? We have passed
20 some laws recently, some bills recently that
21 should give you more tools. But what else
22 can we do for you to make it easier to make
23 the housing livable?

24 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Honestly,

1 Senator, more AIM aid.

2 We just hired an additional code
3 officer. And so we have enough code officers
4 to provide day -- daily support, and now we
5 have enough to go Saturday and Sunday. But
6 we don't have enough for evenings. We don't
7 have enough for -- you know, and that -- if
8 you don't have a 24-hour kind of push and
9 support, it just doesn't -- it doesn't bode
10 well for us. We can't have the impact that
11 we want to have.

12 But the laws are there to be enforced;
13 we just don't have the power, the manpower to
14 make it work.

15 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Yeah, we've
16 doubled the number of code enforcement
17 officers that we have in the City of
18 Rochester, but we also tie code enforcement
19 with our legal department. Because one of
20 the things landlords understand is court,
21 state Supreme Court: You don't want to do
22 what you need to do, we'll take you there to
23 get it moved.

24 But we also need dollars to make sure

1 that if the landlord is not taking care of
2 the property, the city needs to be able to go
3 in and do that while we're waiting, and that
4 takes more dollars. So any resources or
5 investments that we can make in that area to
6 support good-quality housing to have those
7 type of funds where you can go in and put in
8 a furnace if one is not there, to make sure
9 that people aren't displaced, because there
10 may not be a place for them to go to. I
11 think that those types of investments are
12 critical for us in the cities.

13 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: I do want to
14 thank you for the legislation that was passed
15 last year. I know that John McDonald carried
16 some legislation for the City of Albany, but
17 it applied to multiple cities.

18 We have landlords that were evicting
19 people from apartments that didn't have valid
20 residential occupancy permits. Nobody should
21 be evicted from an apartment that's not a
22 legal apartment. So you helped us fix that.

23 I think in addition to what my
24 colleague said, Codes Court is slow, they're

1 overburdened. We recently asked OCA for more
2 court time, and they have -- look, the
3 City Court judge who works on this for us is
4 phenomenal, she's great -- but she's only one
5 person. So I do think looking at the OCA
6 budget and looking at the opportunity for us
7 to put more court resources -- because now
8 that we have all these code inspectors and
9 that we're doing all this work, we're
10 creating more cases, but they still take a
11 really long time, they languish, and that
12 hurts our residents.

13 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: The mayor's a
14 hundred percent right. They're throwing them
15 to the back of the docket, and that's a real
16 problem for us.

17 SENATOR MAY: That's helpful to know.

18 And my last topic, just briefly, is
19 about food deserts, which plague a lot of our
20 upstate cities, I think, where people just
21 can't get the fresh food that they need.

22 I don't know if you all -- if any of
23 you has a great idea or something that's
24 working that is bringing in fresh food to

1 communities that are struggling for that.

2 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Well, we used
3 some of our American Rescue Plan Act for --
4 particularly for food desert healthy
5 accessibility. We're trying to look at
6 getting nonprofit grocery stores, but also
7 attracting some of these stores to understand
8 that they need to operate in these areas
9 where we have these deserts.

10 If you look at what happened in
11 Buffalo, you know, when that Tops shooting
12 happened, there was no place for anyone --
13 anywhere for them to go. And you have some
14 of the most densely populated areas of the
15 state without a grocery store. That's --
16 that's shameful in the 21st century.

17 SENATOR MAY: I agree.

18 Okay, I look forward to working with
19 all of you. Thank you.

20 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

21 Assembly.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to
23 Assemblyman Sayegh.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN SAYEGH: Thank you very

1 much, Madam Chairlady.

2 Welcome, Mayors.

3 Mayor Spano, you've sat in this seat
4 as a member of the Assembly, so you know the
5 legislative process. And I sat in the other
6 seat you're dealing with, education, for many
7 years. And as a former educator my entire
8 life, and as a school board president, I know
9 what happens when there's funding concerns.
10 And you brought up earlier the Yonkers
11 special circumstance because of what we all
12 feel is a funding inequity.

13 And it's sad to say, last week I
14 witnessed the 20th year that as
15 administrators and educators and parents,
16 people came up to Albany to lobby for
17 equitable funding for Yonkers. And when I
18 looked at the legislation that we sponsored,
19 there was one bill that tells the
20 Education Department, start using the most
21 recent Census data. We're still using the
22 2000 Census data.

23 And what that does is really truly
24 shortchange not only Yonkers but urban

1 settings across the state that deal with
2 special education populations, English
3 language learners, and of course the need to
4 renovate buildings that are often a hundred
5 years or more old. And we know, with the
6 pandemic, how dangerous that is.

7 There is legislation that would change
8 the funding formula, tell the Education
9 Department to start utilizing the most recent
10 2020 Census data, and special legislation
11 with regards to Building Aid that really
12 allows more equity in allowing us to build
13 new schools.

14 What is your opinion of the impact
15 these changes will have not only on Yonkers
16 but communities, other big cities in New York
17 that have the same concerns we do?

18 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Assemblyman,
19 thank you. And those would go a long way.
20 And that, along with the Regional Cost
21 Index -- like I said before, Westchester
22 County, highest median income, highest local
23 property and home sales. And so then you
24 have the City of Yonkers, 75 percent of our

1 kids live at or below the rate of poverty.

2 And so we look really wealthy, but
3 we're not. And then we have a formula that
4 says yeah, but you have the same cost of
5 living as you may have -- no disrespect -- in
6 upstate New York. It's not the same cost of
7 living. We have the same cost of living as
8 what they have in Long Island, but they
9 haven't in New York City. And that, just
10 that change alone would bring in the city an
11 additional \$13 million.

12 And so with your changes, we hope to
13 solve the problems.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN SAYEGH: But I also got to
15 say I witnessed the commitment the City of
16 Yonkers has made to education -- major
17 increases in funding. So now more than ever,
18 changes in the way we fund is crucial.

19 Thank you, Mayor.

20 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

21 Senate?

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Just
23 checking.

24 Senator Martinez? Senator Martinez is

1 good.

2 I did have one question.

3 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Sure.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

5 First off, thank you very much, all of
6 you, for being here. And we also talked
7 about the impact of poverty on your
8 communities, as did the previous mayor.

9 So one of the cuts in the Governor's
10 budget is to do away with the FMAP funding to
11 localities. Now, technically it's the
12 counties, not cities. But I'm just curious
13 if any of you think that that actually has a
14 significant impact on your city's ability to
15 provide mental health services to people.

16 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: You know,
17 Senator, I don't know exactly what the total
18 dollars we're talking about is. But I do
19 know this. We are looking down '25. Federal
20 funding runs out. We've already seen our
21 revenues plateau. Sales taxes are down.
22 There is higher costs in labor costs.
23 Healthcare is through the roof. So we have a
24 storm coming our way. And any cut, even if

1 it's a dollar, is going to hurt us
2 significantly.

3 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: And I think
4 cities are tied to their counties at the hip.
5 So anything that affects the county,
6 particularly in mental health services -- we
7 do a little bit of mental health services,
8 but we rely on the county to do most of those
9 services. So any cut to counties will
10 absolutely have an impact on cities.

11 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: I mean, we
12 don't provide any mental health services. We
13 rely on the county to do that. But we're
14 partnering really closely with the county,
15 and we're trying to innovate and address the
16 needs that our community is telling us -- you
17 know, whether that's around people who are
18 struggling with addiction, people who are
19 struggling with mental health issues.

20 I mean, just today two of my DGS
21 workers who were picking up recycling came
22 upon a woman who had actually hung herself
23 outside on a tree. They saved her life.

24 But this is happening on our streets.

1 And so the need for those services, the need
2 for street treatment is great. And so I
3 would rely on my county to tell me how
4 they're going to fund that. But I will tell
5 you what we are asking our county to do is to
6 provide street treatment teams, to provide
7 much more case management, to push into our
8 schools and to address the mental health
9 needs of our community.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And you triggered
11 a second question, Mayor Sheehan.

12 So the state has created a 988 phone
13 number that is supposed to be there and
14 available for people in mental health crises
15 and suicidal -- and I'm curious whether the
16 rollout in any of your areas has proved to
17 you that this is an effective model or not
18 quite yet or not really up yet.

19 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: I don't have
20 any data on that. So we haven't gotten the
21 feedback. Again, I think that would happen
22 more at the county level.

23 You know, we really have focused --
24 we're spending some of our ARPA dollars on

1 pushing case management into our
2 underserved and underresourced communities
3 to provide quick turnaround so that we can
4 prevent the more serious mental health
5 crises.

6 You know, oftentimes it starts with "I
7 can't pay my rent, I can't find my kids'
8 birth certificates so I can't get them
9 registered for school, I got a notice from
10 DSS that they're cutting my benefits" -- and
11 people don't know where to go. So we're
12 focused on that, to prevent that escalation
13 into what can be even more of a crisis for
14 people.

15 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Senator, we're
16 trying to get the county to even work with us
17 even more, especially in Yonkers. And our
18 homeless is probably -- is where you'll find
19 most of Westchester's homeless.

20 We put in place, using federal
21 dollars, Project Connect. And we worked with
22 one of the local not-for-profits. It's high
23 in intensity, basically going into the
24 community, a few people at a time, sitting

1 with someone who's unhoused, and saying, Hey,
2 how can -- you know, what's going on? Let's
3 get you a room. Let's get you to a bed.
4 Let's get you -- let's check your
5 medications. Let's see what's going on in
6 your life. And then they're able to get a
7 lot of people off the streets.

8 But this was an initiative put by the
9 city, which is not our mission -- because we
10 have enough stuff that we have to pay for as
11 well. And we do pay county tax itself.

12 So we're trying to sell that to the
13 county. We're in the process of working with
14 County Executive Latimer, in hopes that we'll
15 get that program to continue and maybe even
16 be a statewide model.

17 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: I was going to
18 say, you know, we invented something called
19 the Persons in Crisis team in the City of
20 Rochester. They're a co-responsibility with
21 our police department, which is absolutely
22 critical.

23 I've been around a long time in the
24 City of Rochester; I was the school board

1 president. I've never seen the mental health
2 crisis like I've seen it today. And a report
3 just came out I think yesterday from the CDC,
4 highest levels of young girls that have
5 contemplated suicide in the last week. I
6 mean, we have a severe mental health crisis
7 on our hands.

8 I think we have to use every tool in
9 our toolbox -- that 988 number, counties
10 working with cities -- because I think we're
11 paying a price, be it the COVID epidemic or
12 whatever else, for just our turning a blind
13 eye to a lot of the serious mental health
14 challenges that we have in our communities.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Thank
16 you all very much.

17 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Thank you,
18 Senator.

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to
20 Assemblywoman Jackson, three minutes.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Thank you,
22 Chair.

23 So Mayor Spano, I just want you to
24 know I spend a lot of time in your city

1 because I get my nails done there, I used to
2 spend a lot of money in the casino there,
3 unfortunately. I do not do that anymore.

4 But I do want to ask, what are some of
5 the negative impacts you've seen on casinos
6 for the community? I know you just, you
7 know, made mention to us again that that's
8 something you would be interested in.

9 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: You know, we
10 have not seen a huge negative impact on the
11 casino in Yonkers. It's run well. MGM is a
12 world-class entertainment venue. We work
13 very well with the police department, the
14 State Police. It provides good, solid
15 middle-class jobs for the community, some
16 2,000 jobs. When it of course becomes a full
17 gaming facility, we'll have 6,000 jobs. It
18 could be as much as -- one of the numbers I
19 heard was 12,000, but I think it's going to
20 be more in the six range.

21 And -- but the negative part to the
22 community, no, if you're not -- if you come
23 to Yonkers you're not going to find -- you
24 know, what you might find around other

1 casinos around the country, you're not going
2 to find in my city. And so it's been so far
3 a real positive experience.

4 But I do understand the pitfalls, and
5 we do have to keep our eyes out.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Gotcha. Thank
7 you.

8 Mayor Sheehan, I see that you're
9 asking to keep the 15 million Capital City
10 funding. I hope some of that goes to pave
11 the roads in downtown. My car would thank
12 you if the roads get paved.

13 I was also looking for an apartment
14 here, and I see that the price -- like the
15 rental prices are similar to what I'm seeing
16 in New York City. Can you speak to like why
17 that may be right now?

18 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: So, you know,
19 we don't have enough housing.

20 You know, there was a question about,
21 you know, the Governor's proposal doesn't
22 speak specifically to affordable housing, but
23 when there is more housing on the market, we
24 do tend to see that rates then -- rental

1 rates will then normalize. And so, you know,
2 right now we have a little bit of a blip
3 because we had a bunch of housing that was
4 built, and now we're in a bit of a lull. But
5 we do have 1500 more units of affordable
6 housing that are in the pipeline, and so
7 we're going to be seeing that come online
8 over the next three years.

9 We aim to pave the streets. We paved
10 State Street. And then we had a water main
11 break, so, you know -- that's why we're
12 always here asking for funding.

13 But I will say that the additional
14 CHIPS money and the federal funding, we are
15 doubling what we're spending on streets, but
16 we're doing that because we have the
17 \$15 million. If we didn't have that funding,
18 you know, it really curtails our ability to
19 truly be a capital city and to address some
20 of the challenges that you're talking about.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Thank you.

22 Mayor Evans, if we -- how many
23 students would you say or young people would
24 you say are unemployed right now in your

1 city?

2 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: I would say
3 probably -- and this is ballpark -- probably
4 that want to work, I would say like
5 40 percent probably.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Forty percent.

7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

9 We go to Assemblyman Brown.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Thank you,
11 Madam Chair.

12 Thank you, Mayors, for being here.

13 Regarding the Governor's density
14 housing compact, I was a little surprised,
15 even pleasantly so -- I heard Mayor Sheehan
16 mention this 30 percent taxable units,
17 30 percent of her base is taxable units. And
18 yet every one of the mayors said that they
19 could possibly achieve the 1 percent goal of
20 increased housing.

21 Let's talk about the white elephant in
22 the room. There's only \$250 million towards
23 infrastructure. As a current deputy mayor
24 and as a guy who paved a lot of roads in my

1 construction business, that will barely do a
2 couple of cities, let alone the entire state.
3 Construction's easy; you get developers. How
4 are you going to deal with all the electric
5 and sewer and roads and curbing and every
6 aspect of that? The money is just not there.
7 Where's it going to come from if the taxable
8 base isn't there?

9 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Assemblyman,
10 that is, like you said, the elephant in the
11 room.

12 But the conversation has started. The
13 conversation has to happen. The conversation
14 at this point hasn't been happening. And the
15 only people really doing anything about
16 housing has been the cities.

17 And so we're willing to do our part,
18 continue doing our part. We need partners.
19 And I'm just hopeful that the Legislature, as
20 you convene, will maybe take the Governor's
21 proposal, which I think is a smart idea, and
22 shape it, mold it into maybe even a better
23 idea. But it's the right direction.

24 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: And I think,

1 you know, we work with developers to have
2 them offset some of those costs.

3 We've also invested more in our water
4 and sewer infrastructure -- actually double
5 in our water and sewer infrastructure over
6 the last 10 years than was invested in the
7 prior 25 to 30 years.

8 So, you know, this is a city that used
9 to house 136,000 people. We're about
10 100,000. And we're growing, but -- you know,
11 I'm an eternal optimist. So, you know, we
12 have tremendous infrastructure, which is why
13 we're attracting development in our city.
14 But we need to make sure that it's affordable
15 for the development community, and I think
16 that that goes back to our tax policies and
17 tax incentives that happen at the state
18 level.

19 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: And I think if
20 we found a way to also use this -- use this
21 to attract other private investment, that
22 will -- that could help with some of the
23 other issues that might come up. But I think
24 that your question also gets to the point of

1 making sure cities get more dollars to be
2 able to do a lot of those ancillary things
3 that may come along with that housing
4 proposal, because I don't think that you can
5 look at that just in isolation without
6 talking about infrastructure and the other
7 things that it will take to meet that goal.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Cities,
9 villages and all municipalities should get
10 one.

11 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: That's right.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Thank you,
13 Mayors.

14 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Thank you,
15 Assemblyman.

16 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to
17 Assemblywoman Hyndman.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Hi. Good
19 afternoon.

20 I'm asking this question for a
21 colleague who's not here. I represent
22 Queens, so -- I think this question is for
23 the mayor of Rochester. Just give me a
24 second here. Sorry.

1 We understand the need for increases
2 in AIM aid. However, how much revenue would
3 a residency requirement for all city
4 employees generate -- i.e., police and fire?

5 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: How much ---

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Revenue would
7 your city generate if you had a residency
8 requirement for policemen and firefighters?

9 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Oh, good
10 question.

11 I don't know that answer off the top
12 of my head. We have a residency requirement
13 in the City of Rochester for all city
14 employees with the exception of fire and
15 police because of the state law. But if
16 there was a residency requirement it probably
17 would generate a lot of revenue. But I don't
18 know what the exact dollar amount will be off
19 the top of my head.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: How much of
21 your city police force and fire department
22 live outside the City of Rochester?

23 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: I would say
24 probably a majority.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Majority.

2 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Probably a
3 majority.

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay.

5 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: But all other
6 city employees -- our biggest bargaining unit
7 is AFSCME, and almost all of them are
8 required to live within the city. And that
9 requirement does not apply to police or fire.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay. Thank
11 you.

12 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Assemblywoman,
13 if I can, our lowest-paid employees, CSEA
14 workers and our Teamsters, they live in
15 Yonkers. Our highest-paid employees live
16 out, in the outskirts of Yonkers, in
17 Westchester and counties above and below.

18 I would love for there to be a law
19 that would say you'd have to stay within the
20 city, especially law enforcement. I think
21 that is the best thing we could do. It's not
22 a financial, it's a state of mind. And I
23 think that would be -- but I don't know that
24 we can legally do that. I've been told it's

1 not legal. But --

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: It's a state
3 law?

4 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: -- it is
5 something that we'd love to see.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: There's a bill
7 for that? Okay. Thank you.

8 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Thank you,
9 Assemblywoman.

10 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

11 We go to Assemblywoman Clark, three
12 minutes.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMEN CLARK: Thank you,
14 Chairwoman.

15 I will keep two of you out of the hot
16 seat and put my wonderful mayor into it,
17 although I am hoping these are not hard
18 questions because we share so many priorities
19 for the wonderful City of Rochester.

20 First -- and you probably covered this
21 in your testimony, but of the top five
22 poorest zip codes in the State of New York,
23 how many of them are in the City of
24 Rochester?

1 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Three.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMEN CLARK: Thank you.

3 When we look at AIM funding and we
4 understand that Rochester -- you know, we put
5 out a report this year, we've always sort of
6 associated with our lack of parity across our
7 upstate colleague cities as a way of us
8 really struggling to get extreme poverty, you
9 know, sort of solved or move the needle on it
10 in any way in the community. But what we've
11 tied it to now is also our high levels of
12 violence, probably the highest per capita in
13 the State of New York.

14 Is there a way that we could look at
15 AIM funding that would hold harmless all
16 these other communities but also finally get
17 us up onto a much more level playing field?

18 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Yeah, and it
19 would just be giving us the per-capita amount
20 that our -- that our peer cities are getting.
21 And that would get us where we are, and it's
22 not taking away anything from anyone else.

23 And at a minimum, that would bring
24 Rochester to the level that would allow us to

1 do some transformational change without it
2 costing the state much money. It would be a
3 rounding error, actually, as we say in
4 accounting terms.

5 I think that that is a solution for
6 us, and it doesn't take away anything from
7 anyone else, because I'm not interested --
8 with my colleague cities, I know that they
9 deal with similar challenges. We don't want
10 to take anything away from anyone else, we're
11 just asking to make sure that we get the same
12 parity at the same level that others are
13 currently getting. And that takes nothing
14 from anyone, and that allows us to be able to
15 do what we need to do.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMEN CLARK: And I think we
17 did do it in Foundation Aid with our school
18 districts; we held harmless everyone but
19 started to finally put the dollars in that
20 other districts were not getting in a much
21 more fair way.

22 My last question has to do with PIC,
23 our Person in Crisis team. I think what
24 we've done in Rochester is a national

1 example. I think we really are showing our
2 commitment to understanding both our mental
3 health crisis and I think tied to our
4 substance abuse crisis.

5 What would be helpful to you for the
6 longevity of the PIC team? Are there things
7 that we could do at the state level to really
8 change that model so that you could put --
9 you know, it wouldn't be -- it would be
10 something we could really grow in a
11 sustainable way?

12 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Yeah, I think
13 if we could get reimbursement for it, if we
14 were able to get reimbursement for providing
15 those mental health services, it would be
16 great, because currently those are dollars
17 that we don't get reimbursed for so we have
18 to find dollars to pay for those therapists
19 and folks that we are doing.

20 And we're doing it because it's just
21 the right thing to do. Those PIC workers
22 save lives, particularly when we have such a
23 major mental health crisis in our city as we
24 have throughout the country. So finding a

1 way for us to be reimbursed for the services
2 that are provided through the PIC teams would
3 be very helpful.

4 ASSEMBLYWOMEN CLARK: Wonderful. I
5 look forward to working with you on that.

6 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Thank you.

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

8 There are no further questions for this
9 panel. Thank you, Mayors.

10 ALBANY MAYOR SHEEHAN: Thank you so
11 much.

12 ROCHESTER MAYOR EVANS: Thank you.
13 Thank you very much.

14 YONKERS MAYOR SPANO: Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And we've been
16 joined by Assemblyman Pretlow.

17 Just making sure we're treating you
18 good, Mike.

19 Next we'd like to ask the Comptroller
20 of the City of New York, Brad Lander, and the
21 speaker of the New York City Council,
22 Adrienne Adams, to please come down.

23 As we've said earlier, the budget
24 hearings are later this session than prior

1 sessions because of the election year, so
2 there are a lot of things happening at this
3 moment, so a lot of Senators and
4 Assemblymembers are in other locations.

5 Madam Speaker, if you can go first.
6 And then just -- I'm not sure if people were
7 here, if you both were here. We announced
8 you each have 10 minutes to make a
9 presentation, and then we will go to the
10 members for questions.

11 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you
12 very much. Good afternoon, Chair Krueger,
13 Chair Weinstein, Ranking Minority Members
14 O'Mara and Ra, and all members of the Senate
15 Finance and Assembly Ways and Means
16 committees.

17 I'm New York City Council Speaker
18 Adrienne Adams, and thank you so much for
19 providing me with the opportunity to discuss
20 the Governor's Executive Budget for state
21 fiscal year 2024, and its potential impact on
22 New York City. I would also like to thank
23 Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and
24 Assembly Speaker Heastie.

1 For too long, New York City has been
2 overly relied upon to balance state budgets.
3 Whether elimination of our Aid and Incentive
4 to Municipalities allocation over a decade
5 ago that now provides localities outside of
6 the City over \$700 million, or the diversion
7 of \$200 million in city revenues to fund
8 hospitals in other parts of the state,
9 New York City has absorbed inequitable
10 treatment.

11 Last year we began to shift this
12 dynamic to reflect a new era of collaboration
13 between the state and city -- a path we must
14 continue. The city's economic outlook is
15 uncertain due to a slower pandemic recovery
16 than other parts of the country. Federal
17 COVID relief funding has enabled the city to
18 avoid the most difficult fiscal decisions,
19 but its expiration has quickly approached.

20 The Governor's Executive Budget
21 includes some welcome investments and
22 policies, yet we also have concerns. While
23 the net impact of changes in the Governor's
24 budget increases support for the city's

1 financial plan in our current fiscal year, it
2 would cost the city nearly \$1 billion
3 annually in the subsequent two fiscal years.
4 When these budgetary actions are coupled with
5 our increasing costs related to welcoming the
6 arrival of more people seeking asylum, our
7 fiscal health is severely impacted.

8 The City appreciates the attention to
9 help us provide shelter for asylum-seekers.
10 That is sorely needed. Yet the announced
11 \$1 billion in funding for shelter services
12 for asylum-seekers with the Executive Budget
13 only reflects reimbursement up to that level
14 for 29 cents on every dollar.

15 Maximizing access to these funds would
16 require expanding the list of eligible
17 reimbursable expenses beyond emergency
18 housing to include the diverse services we're
19 providing to support asylum-seekers.

20 On housing, the Executive Budget
21 includes several policies intended to
22 increase housing production in our city and
23 around the state. This includes legislation
24 we support to eliminate the required

1 floor-to-area ratio that has restricted
2 housing development, authorize legislation of
3 basement apartments, and expand conversion of
4 commercial buildings to housing.

5 The council has prioritized developing
6 and preserving more deeply affordable
7 housing. To be successful, more state
8 funding will be required than is currently in
9 the Executive Budget. This should include
10 funding for NYCHA, the city's largest
11 landlord, that has been chronically
12 underfunded, resulting in hazardous
13 conditions for residents. State funding for
14 NYCHA is currently absent in the
15 Executive Budget, but it is critical.

16 We also support the proposed housing
17 voucher program to help people facing
18 homelessness and efforts to expand supportive
19 housing development as critical health and
20 safety investments.

21 I must also note the need for
22 increased city and state efforts to preserve
23 and expand homeownership. Affordable
24 homeownership is one of the best avenues to

1 grow community stability and wealth that
2 helps curb New York City's significant Black
3 population decline by increasing housing
4 opportunities.

5 We do have concerns about some of the
6 details related to local zoning changes and
7 overrides in the Governor's budget that could
8 possibly undermine the ability to negotiate
9 more affordable housing and community
10 benefits. We look forward to continued
11 conversations on these issues.

12 On education, the proposed
13 \$600 million increase in overall school aid
14 to the city -- largely the result of fully
15 funding Foundation Aid -- is a critical step
16 forward. While federal COVID stimulus
17 funding aided students' educational recovery
18 from the pandemic's effects, these temporary
19 funds are disappearing and make it imperative
20 to enhance education funding.

21 Our school system's enrollment
22 declines have presented budget challenges,
23 creating concerns about the proposal to allow
24 new charter schools in New York City.

1 As our city has experienced,
2 investments in pre-K yield large dividends
3 for our children and families, while the
4 Executive Budget includes funding to expand
5 pre-K around the state, New York City is not
6 guaranteed access to these funds. We would
7 hope that our foresight on early childhood
8 education through 3-K and pre-K is rewarded
9 with needed state support.

10 Our public higher education
11 institutions are pivotal vehicles of
12 opportunity. The \$94 million increase in
13 recurring operating funds and over
14 \$600 million in capital investment into CUNY
15 are certainly welcome. Yet we look forward
16 to partnering with you to expand these
17 proposals to meet the system's five-year plan
18 and budget request, moving investments closer
19 to a New Deal for CUNY that avoids tuition
20 increases.

21 I'm encouraged by parts of the
22 Governor's budget related to healthcare, even
23 as concerns about the proposal to stop
24 providing local governments with the federal

1 funding enhancements to cover Medicaid costs
2 remain. We urge the State Legislature to
3 more closely examine the proposal so
4 localities avoid significant funding losses.

5 Given the mental health crisis we face
6 in the pandemic's aftermath, the Governor's
7 foundation of mental health investments is
8 exciting. And I look forward to partnering
9 with you and the Governor to advance a
10 comprehensive set of evidence-based mental
11 health solutions.

12 We also see opportunities to invest in
13 proven safety solutions that prevent crime
14 before it occurs, to make us safer, including
15 intervention programs, crime victim and
16 trauma recovery services, pretrial and
17 recidivism reduction programs, and funding
18 for the public defenders and DAs.

19 Lastly, New Yorkers rely on mass
20 transit, and the city has been proud to fund
21 the MTA with \$1.3 billion annually. The
22 Executive Budget includes proposals to
23 strengthen the MTA, but others transfer major
24 costs of supporting the system to the city.

1 Shifting fiscal responsibility for
2 paratransit access, student MetroCards and
3 Payroll Mobility Tax payments are estimated
4 to cost the city \$526 million in fiscal year
5 '24. Now is an inopportune moment to shift
6 financial responsibility for mass transit,
7 given our other additional obligations and
8 economic uncertainties.

9 As the center of our considerations
10 are the working families and New Yorkers who
11 comprise the backbone of our city and state,
12 we certainly look forward to working with
13 you, our partners, our valued partners in the
14 State Legislature, to enact a budget that
15 equitably supports our city and state. We
16 look forward to continued conversation and
17 working in the trenches with all of you.

18 Thank you for your consideration and
19 for your time.

20 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you,
21 Madam Speaker.

22 Now to the comptroller, Brad Lander.

23 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Good
24 afternoon, Chair Krueger and Weinstein, to

1 the other chairs and members of the
2 committee, which includes many good friends,
3 including my own Assemblymember,
4 Assemblymember Simon.

5 I'm honored to join Speaker Adams on
6 this panel, my first in-person Tin Cup Day,
7 to discuss the state's executive budget for
8 fiscal year 2024 and its implications for the
9 City of New York.

10 We are lucky, for starters, to be in a
11 far better shape than we were at the peak of
12 the pandemic, when we worried about whether
13 anyone would want to live, work, visit, ride
14 the subway in New York City again. But today
15 we face a new set of questions: How do we
16 nurture a thriving and better-shared economy?
17 How do we confront the skyrocketing costs
18 facing working families in New York City?
19 And how do we prepare for future crises and
20 challenges?

21 The Governor's proposed budget
22 contains many positives but falls short in
23 critical areas, where we urge the Legislature
24 to push for change. We urgently need to

1 build more housing at all income levels, but
2 scaling up production alone won't protect
3 tenants in the Bronx from eviction or house
4 help homeless families. Indexing the minimum
5 wage is important, but it will only help a
6 significant number of working families if we
7 first raise the base. And, perhaps most
8 important for the City of New York itself,
9 new resources for asylum-seekers should not
10 be offset by more than \$1 billion in
11 cost-shifts and revenue reductions.

12 New York City has thrived for
13 centuries by welcoming immigrants, and we
14 continue that tradition by providing shelter
15 and services to the newest New Yorkers -- but
16 the responsibility to provide a safe haven
17 for those seeking asylum is a national
18 obligation, and the duty to provide shelter
19 for all who seek it is found in the New York
20 State Constitution.

21 So we welcome the Governor's
22 commitment to funding nearly 30 percent of
23 shelter costs for asylum-seekers. However,
24 as the Speaker said, the city is on pace to

1 spend approximately \$4 billion over the
2 two-year period, so the state's \$1 billion
3 cap on aid falls short of 30 percent. The
4 city cannot and should not cap the number of
5 asylum-seekers who arrive. Similarly, the
6 state should not cap the funding to provide
7 shelter.

8 We also need to collaborate, city and
9 state, much more successfully to move people
10 out of shelter and into permanent housing.
11 For asylum-seekers that means scaling up an
12 all-hands effort to help people file asylum
13 applications, obtain work authorizations, and
14 find jobs. The state could help enormously
15 by passing the Access to Representation Act
16 to fund that right to counsel. And for
17 everyone in the shelter system, that means
18 rapidly expanding pathways to permanent
19 housing. The Legislature could help
20 enormously by increasing the shelter
21 allowance, still set at \$215 per month for a
22 single adult, and by passing the Housing
23 Assistance Voucher Program, with a meaningful
24 share of the vouchers set aside for homeless

1 families.

2 On public education, I also applaud
3 the Governor and the Legislature for the
4 culmination of your long-overdue effort to
5 fully fund Foundation Aid across the state.
6 It is truly great.

7 Unfortunately, in this budget new
8 inequities arise in funding for education.
9 As the mayor said this morning, unlike other
10 municipalities, New York City is not equally
11 reimbursed for tuition assistance to charter
12 schools and, alone among any city in the
13 country, we are required to pay their rental
14 costs without full state reimbursement. This
15 already adds up to \$2.9 billion in
16 non-reimbursed costs for New York City for
17 existing charters. The proposal to add
18 85 new ones and 20 zombie charters would cost
19 the city at least an additional \$1.2 billion
20 in increased tuition assistance and lease
21 payments by the phase-in time. The
22 Legislature should reject this proposal.

23 And while lower student-teacher ratios
24 is a goal I strongly support, we can't

1 possibly achieve last year's state mandate to
2 reduce class size without new resources from
3 the state as well.

4 Arguably the most critical budget
5 debate you'll be facing is around mass
6 transit. With farebox revenues severely
7 diminished by remote and hybrid work, the
8 state must put in place new, reliable sources
9 of revenue. I support the proposals for the
10 Payroll Mobility Tax and to dedicate new
11 casino revenues to transit. And we must
12 implement congestion pricing in a timely
13 manner to fund the capital improvements that
14 our system requires -- new signals, more
15 accessible stations.

16 We should not, however, impose a fare
17 hike that would disproportionately impact
18 low-income and working-class New Yorkers
19 already suffering the skyrocketing costs of
20 inflation.

21 And it is both unfair and
22 unsustainable, as the Speaker said, to impose
23 an additional more than \$500 million cost on
24 the City of New York to fill the MTA's budget

1 hole -- none of the other 12 counties served
2 by the MTA are being asked to bear the cost
3 of regional transit service.

4 Asking the city to increase our share
5 for Access-a-Ride from 50 percent to
6 100 percent is especially infuriating.
7 Access-A-Ride was launched in 1990 under the
8 Americans with Disabilities Act precisely
9 because the subways were inaccessible -- and
10 33 years later, we're still decades away from
11 an accessible system.

12 So I offer this friendly amendment
13 when the MTA makes 100 percent of the subway
14 stations available, New York City can pick up
15 100 percent of the cost of Access-A-Ride.
16 Till then, let's split it 50-50.

17 Overall, this Executive Budget
18 consistently undercuts New York City's fiscal
19 condition. Unfunded mandates, cost and
20 revenue shifts will cost New York City over a
21 billion dollars in FY '24, rising to more
22 than \$2 billion when fully implemented.

23 I'd now like to speak about a few of
24 the policy considerations that are in the

1 budget. First, on the minimum wage. While I
2 was delighted to see the Governor call for
3 New York to join the 18 other states that
4 index their minimum wage to inflation, the
5 Governor's proposal unfortunately does not
6 address the fact that inflation has eroded
7 the purchasing power of the \$15 minimum wage
8 already. We got there in 2019. But
9 inflation since then has eroded purchasing
10 power below what was \$13 an hour in 2019
11 inflation-adjusted dollars. And the
12 Governor's proposal would also cap future
13 inflation-based increases at just 3 percent a
14 year, even though inflation last year was
15 over 6 percent -- which means the new wage
16 won't keep up with prices. In 2024 it would
17 result in only a meager 45-cent raise per
18 hour.

19 Instead, I support the Raise the Wage
20 Act put forward by Senator Ramos and
21 Assemblymember Joyner, which would step the
22 wage up for what was lost over the last
23 couple of years, based on inflation as well
24 as the worker's share of labor productivity,

1 to \$21.25 downstate and \$20 an hour upstate
2 by 2026.

3 We also strongly support the local
4 enforcement provisions of the Raise the Wage
5 Act, which would allow municipalities like
6 New York City and others around the state to
7 supplement the New York State Department of
8 Labor in doing critical enforcement.

9 There will be a cost to raising the
10 minimum wage for both the state and the city
11 for our own lowest-paid workers and human
12 service workers, but it is a cost worth
13 bearing.

14 It was so wonderful to hear so much
15 discussion today of affordable housing. As
16 you know, as someone who spent my entire
17 professional career before entering elected
18 office working on affordable housing, I'm
19 delighted that the affordable housing crisis
20 is front and center. Removing barriers to
21 residential development through a framework
22 of regional housing assessments is an
23 important step in ensuring that localities
24 across the state build their fair share of

1 new multifamily housing.

2 And good regional planning can
3 genuinely engage residents in that
4 conversation. Whether they'd like to be
5 having it or not, it can help make sure that
6 transit, that schools, that environmental
7 protections are in place. So the
8 \$250 million initial investment in
9 infrastructure support and \$20 million in
10 planning grants are a good start.

11 I also support proposals to legalize
12 basement units and to remove the
13 state-imposed 12 FAR cap.

14 But let's be clear. New market-rate
15 development, even if equitably distributed,
16 will not solve the affordability crisis.
17 With median asking rents in New York near
18 \$3500 a month, new supply will do little to
19 prevent evictions in the Bronx, where the
20 seven highest neighborhoods in New York City
21 for eviction are located. With less than a
22 1 percent vacancy rate for units that rent
23 below \$1500, new market-rate construction
24 alone won't help homeless families move into

1 affordable homes.

2 A comprehensive affordable housing
3 package must also include passing good-cause
4 eviction and the Housing Access Voucher
5 Program to re-house families currently living
6 in shelters.

7 A comprehensive approach to New York
8 City's housing challenges must also include a
9 plan for comprehensive property tax reform,
10 to replace our opaque and unfair system with
11 one that is fair, transparent,
12 revenue-neutral, and reserves affordable
13 housing exemptions for genuinely affordable
14 housing. Building on the New York City
15 Advisory Commission on Property Tax Reform,
16 we've outlined a path forward so residents of
17 Southeast Queens and the Northeast Bronx and
18 Staten Island don't have three to four times
19 the effective tax rate that my neighbors and
20 I do in brownstone Brooklyn and much of
21 Manhattan.

22 We'll be back later this session with
23 an unusually broad coalition of
24 Councilmembers Kevin Riley, Joe Borelli,

1 Nantasha Williams, Justin Brannan, to push
2 for a real focus on property tax reform this
3 session.

4 I'll also be back, together with
5 Mayor Adams' administration, to advance
6 legislation in our Capital Process Reform
7 Task Force. We've got nine bills that will
8 help make it possible for us to get our
9 bridges and schools and roads built in less
10 time and for less money. Three of those nine
11 bills are in the Executive Budget, but
12 there's six more that I really hope we can
13 pass, including one that will let us stop
14 having a contract public hearing on every
15 single city contract over \$10,000, even
16 though no one comes 99 percent of the time.
17 Not sexy, but really important.

18 Thank you very much for the
19 opportunity to testify. It's an honor to be
20 with you on this busy day.

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.
22 Thank you both for being here.

23 And I'd like to go to the chair of our
24 Cities Committee, Assemblyman Ed Braunstein,

1 for 10 minutes.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you.

3 And thank you both for traveling up
4 here to join us today. We appreciate it.

5 I just want to touch on the legalizing
6 of basement apartments. As far as I
7 understand it, couldn't the City Council
8 legalize basement apartments now?

9 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS:
10 Legalizing -- and thank you for the question.
11 It's great to see you.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: You too.

13 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: The issue
14 with legalizing basement apartments -- well,
15 we've had a pilot in place, and the
16 comptroller can speak more expansively on
17 this, since it was --

18 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I was the
19 sponsor.

20 (Laughter; overtalk.)

21 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: He was the
22 sponsor of that legislation.

23 But I will just -- I'll preamble that
24 just by saying that there was a pilot

1 initially in Brooklyn three years ago now
2 that needed -- it still needs -- I'll just
3 put it this way. Funding was pulled from
4 that pilot program, which we looked -- the
5 two of us looked to expand it, in Brooklyn
6 first and then looking at Richmond Hill,
7 Queens, in my district, to do that, since we
8 have an enormous number of basement
9 apartments -- which are illegal, people have
10 died in flooding in basements.

11 So with that I'll --

12 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: The question
13 is, couldn't you legalize basement apartments
14 now?

15 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: The short
16 answer is no, not cleanly. There's a set of
17 things that are in state housing law that
18 make it difficult to do. I can't remember
19 whether it's you can make a two into a three,
20 but not a one into a two, or vice versa.
21 That change would require state law --

22 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: So can I
23 interrupt? The Multiple Dwellings Law is the
24 concern. So you could legalize basement

1 apartments, but the mayor's proposal says
2 we're just not going to withstand the
3 Multiple Dwellings Law. Which as far as I
4 understand says you have to have two forms of
5 egress, you have to have ceiling heights.

6 And I don't know -- I just don't
7 understand how we're going to make basement
8 apartments safer by not withstanding the
9 Multiple Dwellings Law. Or make them legal.
10 Like you could make them legal now, correct?

11 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: So the
12 proposal I put forward, which is a little
13 different -- I mean, I support the
14 legislation that the Governor has proposed.
15 But I put forward a proposal we might -- you
16 might like to discuss, to use the Loft Law as
17 a model.

18 Because right now there's a bunch of
19 units that can't be made legal, they don't
20 have a second means of egress. But we could
21 at least require that there be a backflow
22 preventer to prevent flooding and a smoke
23 detector to prevent fire. But today we're
24 playing Don't Ask, Don't Tell because that

1 unit can't be made legal.

2 So I've proposed using the Loft Law as
3 a model to say, okay, that's not a legal
4 multiple dwelling, but we're going to
5 recognize that it is an occupied basement
6 unit. You need to put in that smoke
7 detector, you need to put in that backflow
8 preventer, we'll use something like the Loft
9 Board to adjudicate disputes when you have
10 them.

11 There still needs to be a long-term
12 plan to improve those units to provide that
13 second means of egress. But let's not leave
14 people in harm's way in the meantime. So be
15 glad to talk more about that.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: I mean, I'm
17 just -- I'm talking about the Governor's
18 proposal and the mayor's proposal. And, you
19 know, the argument put forth is that you
20 can't legalize basement apartments. But
21 we've seen from the pilot program that you
22 can.

23 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: It's really,
24 really hard.

1 (Overtalk.)

2 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Well, if
3 there's issues with the multiple dwellings
4 limit, we could have a conversation about
5 that. But just saying we're not going to
6 withstand the Multiple Dwellings Law is a
7 concern that I have.

8 And my other question is if we were to
9 make changes to the Multiple Dwellings Law,
10 would this be something where Councilmembers
11 decide on a district-by-district basis if
12 they're going to have basement apartments?
13 Or is this something that's just going to be
14 citywide?

15 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: This
16 wouldn't be district by district, this would
17 be citywide.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. So, I
19 mean, I think there's potential to work
20 together. But my concern is just not
21 withstanding the Multiple Dwellings Law. I'd
22 like to know exactly what that entails. I'd
23 like to hear from the fire department to
24 know, if we're lowering ceiling heights, that

1 that's safe.

2 So, you know, I don't know if this is
3 something that's right for the budget, but
4 it's definitely something we could talk
5 about. So thank you.

6 This is for Comptroller Lander. Just
7 first of all, I think it's funny that you
8 reference your unusually broad coalition with
9 the comprehensive property tax reform. That
10 is definitely true. You're moving forward
11 pushing something similar to what the
12 De Blasio commission recommended, am I
13 correct?

14 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Generous to
15 call it the De Blasio commission, when it was
16 released on his third-to-last day in office
17 after eight years.

18 But if -- yeah, the New York City
19 Advisory Commission on Property Tax Reform
20 appointed by then-Mayor de Blasio and
21 then-Speaker Johnson. Yes, we proposed some
22 adjustments to it. For example, we think
23 there might -- you know, it might make sense
24 to look at phasing it in based on sale or

1 enabling people to defer what they owed till
2 sale so folks who are house-rich and
3 cash-poor would have some options.

4 But broadly, the basic idea that there
5 should be the same effective tax rate for a
6 homeowner regardless of what neighborhood
7 you're in or what property type you have,
8 that we need a thoughtful approach to
9 protecting -- you know, giving something for
10 homeowner occupants and something to protect
11 low-income folks --

12 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: I
13 wholeheartedly agree. I mean, the co-op side
14 represent -- in Northeast Queens pay some of
15 the highest effective property tax rates in
16 the city.

17 I would like to work with you and your
18 coalition. But it would be helpful to have
19 something driven from the city. You know,
20 coming up to Albany and asking us to impose
21 changes to the tax system is a lot more
22 difficult than to have something come up from
23 the city as a request or a home rule.

24 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I hear that.

1 I will say that Councilmembers Borelli
2 and Riley and I met with the mayor first.
3 And, you know, the mayor indicated that they
4 agree that change needs to be made and that
5 they're working on some proposals to bring
6 forward. We're going to put ours forward in
7 the meantime. This has to be done in
8 collaboration.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: And, you
10 know, I thought it was interesting you
11 brought up the alternative procurement --
12 what is it? What is the term you use here?

13 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yes.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: You know,
15 we've looked at some of that progressive
16 design-build. And, you know, I think it's
17 interesting that you're supportive. It
18 certainly lends credibility to the mayor's
19 team pushing some of these changes.

20 And, you know, I wholeheartedly agree
21 that, you know, DDC and the mayor's team that
22 are pushing this really want to do the right
23 thing and reduce costs and speed up
24 timelines. We do have concerns about

1 starting a project without a price,
2 circumventing some of the comprehensive
3 bidding processes -- you know, blind bids
4 and, you know, qualified bidders. If I had
5 my preference, this would be something that
6 we did outside of the budget.

7 But it's certainly something that, you
8 know, we want to pursue to allow them to
9 speed up these projects and save money, but
10 we just want to make sure that we're thorough
11 and do it in a way that, you know, protects
12 some of the anti-corruption protections that
13 we have in place. So I look forward to
14 talking with you about how we can do this,
15 but do it properly and in a deliberative way.

16 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I
17 wholeheartedly agree and would welcome the
18 conversation. Each of those alternative
19 delivery methods is not right. You know,
20 they've got a set of circumstances they're
21 appropriate in, and there's oversight needed
22 to make sure that you're -- you know, we're
23 getting best value.

24 That is the goal. The goal is not

1 only to speed it up; the goal is to make it
2 more efficient, and that means better on
3 price and better on time. And we'd have to
4 be judged by that holistically.

5 There are some easy things, though,
6 because having a hearing on the contract for
7 every project over \$10,000, that adds a
8 couple of weeks to everyone needlessly.
9 That's not in the Executive Budget, it's one
10 of the other six proposals.

11 But I welcome the chance to sit down
12 and talk about the --

13 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Absolutely.
14 So I look forward to staying in touch. Thank
15 you.

16 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

17 Senate?

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Good afternoon.

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Or Senator.

20 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So Senator. No
21 disrespect, but the rest of the Senate seems
22 to be quite engaged in another scene in the
23 next building. And I think many of my
24 colleagues want to be here to ask you many

1 questions, and it's left to me to try to
2 summarize in all of 10 minutes.

3 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: We're honored
4 that you're here, so --

5 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you both.

6 So Speaker Adams, we appreciated very
7 much in your testimony your making the case
8 for us not to rush forward with new tax
9 incentives and abatements that actually the
10 City of New York needs to pay for, without
11 getting the input of the City Council -- and
12 I believe the comptroller as well -- to
13 recognize that we don't always know
14 everything up here. And when we're going to
15 spend your money, your tax money, I do
16 believe very much that the City of New York
17 ought to have a say in that.

18 So do you have any sense of a
19 time frame for your having an evaluation and
20 perhaps coming forward with a proposal?
21 Would it be before we end session in June,
22 for example?

23 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: You know,
24 we really don't have a time frame per se,

1 Senator. And it's great to see you also.

2 We really don't. We understand that,
3 you know, the city certainly is facing a lot
4 of uncertainty when it comes to our fiscal
5 future. And like you said, we just would
6 really appreciate being at the table and
7 being a part of the conversation. Because it
8 is a tremendous part of what we do. Looking
9 forward into the interests of the city, our
10 main objective is just to make sure that we
11 maintain a working partnership with you.

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

13 So it ties into, I believe, a question
14 I may have for Comptroller Lander, because we
15 have worked together on trying to make more
16 sense of the property tax system as it exists
17 in New York.

18 And you have pointed out in several I
19 think reports or analyses that with our goal
20 of increasing the number of housing units
21 that are there and that are actually
22 affordable, that if we actually made fair the
23 New York City property tax system, we would
24 probably, if we did it right, see a dramatic

1 decrease in the cost for rental housing for
2 lower-income New Yorkers who actually pay a
3 disproportionate share of their rent as
4 actual property taxes by their landlords.

5 Do you still believe that that is a
6 major solution for us to get our arms around?

7 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Absolutely.
8 You know, it is true broadly in our system
9 that even though I have focused on the
10 inequities between different homeowners,
11 which are severe -- and to be clear, my
12 neighbors and I are the beneficiaries of
13 that, but it's unfair and needs to be
14 changed -- there is also a significant gap
15 between what rental properties are taxed and
16 what homeownership properties are taxed.

17 And that means if you're a developer
18 considering building on a site, if you build
19 it as condos, you'll pay about 30 percent
20 less in taxes than if you build it as
21 rentals. So one element of comprehensive
22 property tax reform would be to reduce the
23 rental -- the base rental property tax rate
24 on new rental housing by about that

1 30 percent, and that will serve as an
2 incentive.

3 You know, that's not necessarily by
4 itself enough to get you deeply affordable
5 housing. And I really agree with what the
6 speaker said also about the need for some new
7 genuinely affordable homeownership programs
8 as well. If we all -- you know, if we kind
9 of look to the history of Mitchell-Lama and
10 say that was so great, but we could be doing
11 it again -- and we've actually offered a
12 model in place of the 130 percent AMI
13 proposal in the old 421-a or the 485-w.
14 Let's have that be the place we put a new
15 version of Mitchell-Lama: Resale-restricted,
16 genuinely affordable cooperative
17 homeownership.

18 But yes, you know, reducing the base
19 rental rate is a critical element. And if
20 you have more detailed questions, this is
21 Executive Deputy Comptroller Francesco
22 Brindisi, who knows a lot more than me and
23 just about anybody else on the kind of ins
24 and outs of property tax reform.

1 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Maybe we can talk
2 about that afterwards.

3 Something that didn't get as much
4 attention up here as I thought it might was
5 the proposal I think -- I believe by the
6 Mayor and City Planning, to allow for the
7 transition from commercial to residential.
8 And the Governor put that into her budget.

9 I don't think either of you touched on
10 that in your testimony. Do you have
11 positions on that proposal?

12 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: I was
13 going to let my CFO -- defer to my CFO. But
14 the definitive answer, Senator, is yes. We
15 look forward to that.

16 Most certainly any time that we can
17 turn over buildings, properties that are not
18 being used appropriately, we feel that it
19 needs to be used for affordable housing,
20 particularly at this time. We are so far
21 behind in building affordable housing in the
22 city. We've got to catch up. Be it with the
23 small percentage of these buildings that
24 we're talking about and looking at for

1 conversion purposes -- we've got to start
2 somewhere. And we are all for it.

3 And this is Tanisha Edwards. She is
4 my CFO of finance.

5 NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: Thank you,
6 Madam Speaker. Thank you, Senator Krueger.

7 Yes, the Speaker proposed a housing
8 plan a few months ago, and that's one of the
9 things that is talked about in the housing
10 plan, in creating more affordable housing,
11 the conversion from commercial space to
12 residential space.

13 So just rolling back the timeline --
14 at least pushing it forward for these
15 buildings to be able to be converted from the
16 sixties to the seventies to now 91, it's a
17 big deal for us. And offering that tax
18 incentive we think will go a long way. And I
19 think the Governor estimates that will create
20 about 120 million square feet.

21 You know, so we're excited and we're
22 hoping that with that conversion, that will
23 translate into affordable housing. So we're
24 really excited about that.

1 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I support it,
2 but I'm going to give you what I think is
3 some straight talk about it.

4 I think very few buildings will
5 convert as a result of this program. The
6 cost of doing it, plus the fact that you lose
7 rentable square footage when you go from
8 commercial to residential, plus the challenge
9 that you've got a lot of buildings that still
10 have tenants with leases in them, I just --
11 so I think if we were actually serious about
12 this we would come up with a tear-down model
13 that lets some Class B and C office buildings
14 be torn down and rebuilt residentially with a
15 bit of an FAR boost and affordability
16 requirements. I still don't know that we
17 would get a ton of it, but we'd get a lot
18 more than I think with the conversion
19 program.

20 That said, it's better than nothing,
21 so I do support it.

22 (Laughter.)

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

24 So obviously housing is on everybody's

1 mind -- and I know I have a few minutes left.
2 The Governor's proposal also allows people
3 who are in the pipeline for 421-a to have an
4 extra four years to complete their projects.
5 I have to say that did not go over very well
6 with most of my conference. We're concerned
7 that these are not people who were held up
8 during the COVID era but actually people who
9 all rushed to get in before the deadline.

10 And that would cost you technically
11 even if it's four more years of a program
12 I -- speaking for myself, none of us thought
13 was a very good one, it's four more years
14 where you actually give up your property tax
15 revenue.

16 Would it be fair to say that you would
17 also both have concerns about extending these
18 deadlines by another four years?

19 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: They are
20 certainly concerns all around.

21 You know, that said, there should be a
22 way for there to be some type of compromise
23 to work things out for all concerned,
24 especially given the gravity of the situation

1 do, we survive because there is a functioning
2 MTA. And I don't think any of us could
3 imagine our city without a functioning MTA.

4 So I'm in search of better answers,
5 because I need to be able to make sure that
6 for both of you we have a functioning MTA.
7 Does -- do either of you have additional or
8 different proposals on how to raise the money
9 they need? Since the mayor pretty much
10 zeroed out all the proposals so far being
11 made.

12 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I will offer
13 that there's one thing the Governor has
14 proposed that I could live with, even though
15 it's unfair to the city.

16 Every other municipality is getting
17 20 percent of the casino revenue from a
18 casino in their locality for their own city
19 budget. This proposal says that it will take
20 New York City's share and put it to the MTA
21 above the 526 million. I don't support the
22 526 million, but I could live with our share
23 of the casino revenue paying for the subway
24 system. So that's at least some new revenue

1 that New York City is forgoing.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Do you want to
3 close down, Speaker Adams?

4 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: I just
5 said to the comptroller, "I could live with
6 that."

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You could live
8 with that. Okay. So now we just have to get
9 them the rest of the money.

10 Well, I don't know if we want to build
11 them a casino -- that's another discussion.

12 (Laughter.)

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: My time is up.

14 But no, I don't want to.

15 So thank you both very much for your
16 testimony.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to
18 Assemblyman Ra, ranker, five minutes.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you,
20 Comptroller, Speaker. Thank you for being
21 here with us today.

22 I want to ask about -- and this is
23 something that I know I read about prior to
24 the hearing, but it's also listed on the

1 chart on the back of your testimony,
2 Comptroller -- regarding this pay-and-pursue
3 proposal and the impact on the city's
4 finances. It's one of the -- you know, the
5 listed new mandates or cost-shifts that both
6 you and the mayor have detailed in this
7 budget.

8 Do you know how those figures are
9 arrived at in terms of what the financial
10 impact is?

11 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: The number
12 the -- so, you know, we estimate -- or the
13 OMB estimates that it will cost the city 111
14 million in FY '24 and increase to 380 million
15 by FY 2030. Pay and pursue is a set of
16 managed care reforms that will require plans
17 to pay claims billed by providers and limit
18 reviews. That number is provided by OMB and
19 we have not double-checked it or scratched it
20 further.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: I'm curious, if
22 possible, if you could follow up later on,
23 just in terms of how they arrived at it.
24 Really because I know at the state level they

1 are saying they believe it will apply to less
2 than 3 percent of all claims.

3 So really my curiosity is, is it based
4 off of that? Is it based off of an
5 understanding that it's going to affect more
6 claims than that?

7 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: We'll
8 follow up and get back to you.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Yeah, because
10 obviously for an entity like New York City,
11 that is -- you know, and growing to
12 \$380 million, that's a big chunk out of your
13 budget that you, you know, weren't
14 necessarily expecting to be losing.

15 So thank you for that.

16 The one other question I had, if you
17 have this information, is regarding -- back
18 to the MTA, but totally separate from the new
19 contribution and all of that, but what a lot
20 of people I think are forgetting with the
21 payroll tax increase, that a lot of our
22 governments pay that. Particularly
23 downstate, because they tend to be larger
24 than maybe some of the villages or towns

1 upstate that may not have the payroll to meet
2 that.

3 So do you know what the city's MTA
4 payroll tax, you know, cut currently is that
5 they pay and what it would be if the increase
6 were to go through?

7 EX. DEP. COMPTROLLER BRINDISI: The
8 tax increase is from .34 to .5, so it's about
9 50 percent of the -- it would go up by about
10 40 million. The city's -- the city's payroll
11 tax.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: It would go up by
13 40 million?

14 EX. DEP. COMPTROLLER BRINDISI: Yup.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. Thank you.
16 That's all I have.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I don't think
19 you're going to give me another 10 minutes,
20 are you?

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we'll go to
22 Assemblyman Reilly, ranker on Cities.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you,
24 Madam Speaker.

1 Thank you, Madam Speaker and
2 Mr. Comptroller, for coming and for your
3 testimony.

4 First I want to say, as a
5 Staten Islander -- I think I can speak for
6 the 500,000 of us -- thank you for the
7 efforts on the property tax. Especially my
8 colleague and neighbor, Joe Borelli.

9 So I moved to Staten Island in 2003,
10 and my taxes have gone up from 1800 to 6800
11 in that time period. Which is astonishing,
12 right? But -- so once again, I thank you for
13 that. And I'm sure there are others in
14 Staten Island that are in a deeper hole than
15 I am when it comes to their taxes.

16 So I just want to switch gears here
17 and talk about speed cameras. In the current
18 budget they're looking to expand them to the
19 MTA bridges and tunnels. Over the years,
20 they've expanded from a 20-camera pilot
21 program in 2014 to now we're over 2,000
22 planned cameras in New York City. And now
23 they're operating 24 hours a day in a
24 quarter-mile circumference from a school, not

1 on the street the school exists.

2 The reason why I'm asking about this
3 and laying the foundation is that we talk
4 about the MTA. Who's going -- has there been
5 a discussion about where the revenue from
6 those speed cameras over the bridges and
7 tunnels are going to go? Are they going to
8 the city, or will they be going to the MTA?

9 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: I just
10 asked the comptroller if he was in
11 discussions to determine where that revenue
12 was going. I'm not in those discussions.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Okay. All right.
14 So piggybacking on that with the speed
15 cameras, since they've expanded
16 exponentially, the revenue they've brought in
17 has grown tremendously.

18 Over the years I've introduced a bill
19 that would create a school safety fund. And
20 the school safety fund would be all the speed
21 camera and now the school bus camera
22 revenue -- for passing a stopped school bus.
23 They would go into this pool, and it would
24 only be able to be used to put sidewalks by

1 schools, to do NYPD initiatives by schools,
2 DOT initiatives. So basically like an MTA
3 lockbox.

4 There hasn't been any traction on it.
5 And right now the money that comes from those
6 speed cameras goes into the New York City
7 General Fund.

8 Would you support the idea of a school
9 safety fund so that that money can be
10 directed? Because right now we have a lot of
11 the public, especially in New York City, they
12 look at the speed cameras as a revenue
13 generator. And it's very hard to argue with
14 them considering how fast the program has
15 grown and the money going into the city's
16 general fund.

17 Can you just touch on that?

18 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS:
19 Assemblymember, that idea to me is certainly
20 appealing. It makes a lot of sense, given --
21 and we just had a very huge transportation
22 and infrastructure hearing yesterday around
23 safety, particularly the safety of
24 schoolchildren in school areas.

1 And for me, those conversations are
2 most welcome. So thank you for that. I
3 would love to speak more about that.

4 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I think
5 there's also some things that could be done
6 to strengthen the program to really achieve
7 safety.

8 The vast majority of people, if they
9 get a ticket or a couple of tickets, you
10 know, pay them and I think think about how
11 they can avoid the next one. But if you look
12 at about the top 1 percent of folks that get
13 those camera violations, they are people
14 getting 50 of them. They're really driving
15 in ways that anyone would say, "I'm horrified
16 by that, that driver is going to kill or
17 injure someone."

18 But we don't ever -- there's never a
19 license suspension. We could make a more --
20 a program that had kind of escalating
21 penalties -- not with the goal of extracting
22 additional revenue, but of getting the most
23 dangerous drivers to either change their
24 behavior or stop putting their neighbors at

1 risk.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: So what about
3 increasing the number of members in the
4 New York City Police Department to enforce
5 traffic violations? Because if we do more
6 speeding enforcement by the NYPD, there now
7 is the opportunity for the person who's
8 driving to be held responsible and their
9 license could be suspended.

10 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I mean, my
11 experience is that people don't go to the
12 Academy to write speeding tickets, so I don't
13 think it's probably the best use of
14 additional officers.

15 And the cameras actually tell you who
16 the most reckless driver -- if you look, it's
17 an extremely --

18 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: I'm going to
19 interrupt you. The camera doesn't tell them
20 that. The camera tells you the registered
21 owner. That's the problem.

22 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Well, fair
23 enough. But --

24 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: So the issue --

1 and I will tell you that when a police
2 officer goes into -- as a former police
3 officer, you will have enough that would want
4 to do traffic enforcement, especially in the
5 local precincts, and that could be a
6 stepping-stone to the highway unit. So
7 therefore, you would get buy-in. And I
8 guarantee you there will be people waiting to
9 take those jobs. Just saying.

10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

12 We go to Assemblyman Epstein for three
13 minutes.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you all
15 for being here. And I appreciate you coming
16 up to Albany.

17 And to you, Speaker Adams, I just
18 wanted to kind of go back to the basement
19 apartment issue, if we could, because I
20 really do appreciate your support.

21 And we all know less than a year and a
22 half ago we lost 11 New Yorkers to flooding
23 after Hurricane Ida in these basement
24 apartments. And, you know, I think as

1 Comptroller Lander said, you know, the issues
2 of the MDL were really becoming real
3 restrictions.

4 And so I'm wondering, are there things
5 that you think we should be doing? I know we
6 have the bill that the Governor's proposed
7 and the mayor this morning again reiterated
8 his support. You know, there are specific
9 provisions of the MDL -- parapet walls,
10 stairs, they require ceiling heights in a
11 private home that you can't do because of the
12 MDL. There are all these basic provisions.

13 Would you want authority like
14 provision by provision? Or do you want
15 broad-based authority to give to the Council
16 to be able to create a law that you guys
17 would enforce on the city level?

18 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: That's a
19 great question, and thank you very much,
20 Assemblymember.

21 You know, with -- and I'm going to
22 defer again to the comptroller on this,
23 because this really -- the genesis of this
24 really was his baby, so to speak. I believe

1 that the pilot that went forth in East
2 New York was a terrific pilot because it
3 standardized for each location, each unit,
4 regulations were set for each unit, but they
5 were all identical regulations. That meant,
6 you know, the height, the width, the
7 electricity, the plumbing, the sprinkler
8 system, the fire system -- all of those
9 things were the same. So they were uniform,
10 that's the word I'm looking for. They were
11 uniform.

12 So in taking a look at that, I think
13 that that was the model to go with. And I
14 will defer to the comptroller to expand on
15 that. But for me, basically the funding ran
16 out and it was no more.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Yeah, I only
18 have a minute left, so if I can take back the
19 time for a second.

20 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: That's
21 fine.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: No, I appreciate
23 the comptroller's support. And I know
24 we've -- him and I have been working on

1 basement issues probably for 15 or 20 years.

2 So I appreciate your support for NYCHA
3 on the ERAP. You know, just in my district
4 alone, tenants have \$20 million in rent
5 arrears in public housing, and we need that
6 funding. You know, whatever support you can
7 give to help us make sure that my residents
8 don't get evicted because they can't afford
9 to pay. You know, pushing the Governor to do
10 something about that would be really, really
11 critical.

12 The other program -- I know you
13 mentioned HAVP, the state Section 8 program.
14 I'm wondering what you're using to support
15 that and how we can make sure that happens
16 this year.

17 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: We're
18 going to continue -- in the Council we're
19 going to continue to do legislatively
20 everything that we can to support our -- our
21 hearings for public housing have been
22 monumental thus far, and we have a fantastic
23 chairperson. We're going to continue to do
24 our part.

1 We just need to make sure that --
2 someone said it best the other day -- we're
3 not just throwing money at NYCHA, but we
4 actually do know where that money is going.

5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

7 And now this looks all very
8 embarrassing for all of us, but Helene had to
9 go one direction for a little while, and I
10 actually have to go another direction. But
11 we have the extraordinary Assemblymember
12 Braunstein who --

13 (Laughter.)

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- we're leaving
15 in charge of the Assembly and the Senate.
16 So, like, don't do a coup or anything, okay?

17 (Laughter; inaudible overtalk.)

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You won't have
19 enough time to change the Constitution to do
20 away with the Senate, that's all I know.

21 (Laughter.)

22 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Thank you,
23 Senator.

24 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you,

1 Senator.

2 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: New Chair,
3 can I offer one sentence in response to the
4 Assemblymember's piece?

5 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Go ahead.

6 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: On this issue
7 of a way that the city and the state could
8 work together on HAVP, I think there's an
9 interesting idea. You know, there's these
10 warehoused units where landlords say they
11 have some costs to bear -- redo a kitchen or
12 a bathroom -- that wouldn't be borne by the
13 rent-stabilized rent.

14 One intriguing model would be to put
15 together a city -- use city capital dollars
16 and say, you know what, we'll pay the cost of
17 that kitchen or bathroom repair, we'll pair
18 it with one of these HAVP vouchers, but
19 you've then got to take somebody who's in a
20 homeless shelter or one of these new
21 asylum-seekers or somebody that's -- you
22 know, and house one of them.

23 So there might be some intriguing ways
24 to have the state and the city work together

1 to really help HAVP drive some pathways out
2 of homelessness.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you.

4 Assemblywoman Hyndman.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Five minutes.

6 (Laughter.)

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you so
8 much for being here. Comptroller, I really
9 agree with casino revenue paying for the MTA,
10 especially because Resorts World in Queens
11 has been doing so well.

12 I am -- and Speaker Adams, you know
13 how our Community Board 12 and 13 will be
14 when we talk about turning basements into
15 apartments and so forth. And it is
16 concerning that sometimes in the Council
17 lately when a councilmember has said they
18 don't want zoning or rezoning in their
19 district, the Council with override that.

20 So how will you navigate that if the
21 state does decide to give that responsibility
22 to City Council for the Multiple Dwellings
23 Law? And Council, district by district, will
24 be able to recommend, you know, change in the

1 ULURP process; how will you navigate that
2 should it come to the city?

3 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Great
4 question, and thank you.

5 I've put forth -- and this is all
6 incorporated in my Fair Housing framework
7 that I've put together, and it includes a
8 land-use and planning toolkit for the entire
9 Council to use as a model when it comes to
10 discussing and moving on affordable housing.

11 What we've seen in the past is -- the
12 way that we do things, it's piecemeal, it's
13 been in silos. And what this -- what my
14 initiative takes into consideration is the
15 operation of all entities together. So as
16 long as we start with all entities -- the
17 community; the quote, unquote, building,
18 builder; the member; and our land-use unit
19 and others that know what the land-use
20 process is about. If we bring those forces
21 together instead of operating as has been
22 done in the past -- one entity will come in
23 and say, I know what's best for your
24 community, and then work outside.

1 What my proposal does is bring
2 everybody together to collaboratively start
3 up-front, because as we know, our communities
4 have felt that people come in and tell us
5 what we want instead of being a part of the
6 process going forward.

7 So to answer your question, the way to
8 get to that is collaboratively and not just
9 one entity working in a silo and then telling
10 another what it is they want to do.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Does anyone
12 recall the amount of money it would take to
13 convert one basement into being an accessory
14 dwelling unit, per -- because most basements
15 have, especially where we live, you know,
16 smaller windows, one exit.

17 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: This was the
18 primary challenge of these New York pilots
19 and the reason why we hoped to do 40 homes
20 but I think only eight wound up happening.
21 It was over \$100,000 a unit --

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Per house?

23 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: The city was
24 providing subsidy, and so that's what made

1 the program work.

2 But yes, adding a second means of
3 egress -- if you don't have one, digging the
4 entire, you know, floor out to provide a
5 larger ceiling height, it got to be
6 expensive. It's why I believe this kind of
7 Loft Law-like model, at least to provide some
8 basic safety protections to everyone, is
9 valuable. But it's a big part of the
10 challenge, as the cost was high.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you.

13 Assemblymember Simon.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: I'm not going to
15 be as good to you as I was to the mayor,
16 where I didn't ask about things I didn't
17 agree with.

18 (Laughter.)

19 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: You're my
20 Assemblymember, so --

21 (Laughter; overtalk.)

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Yeah, and you
23 know the things we have agreed and not agreed
24 on.

1 So -- but this is actually just an
2 issue -- we've talked a lot about housing.
3 We've talked about taxes and know that there
4 are a mess of inequities because of the way
5 things happened. And I think, Speaker, your
6 comment about it being sort of haphazard or
7 one-offs all the time, it's just a jumble of
8 things that don't work together, is something
9 that is really a problem that is hurting so
10 many of our residents and our businesses as
11 well.

12 We really do need to do something
13 about affordable homeownership. We do need
14 to investigate Mitchell-Lama again. We do
15 need to get more federal money into housing.
16 And we do need to keep people safe. It
17 strikes me that a lot of the programs we've
18 been doing before ended up harming the goal.
19 Right? 421-a did not give us affordable
20 housing. It brought us way too much
21 gentrification, and you know in Atlantic
22 Yards, which was relying on that in large
23 part, we've had massive displacement of
24 African-Americans from the area.

1 So I feel like one of the challenges
2 we have in this budget process is that the
3 Governor puts out a budget, people say they
4 don't like this, they don't like that -- but
5 there really isn't a space to actively work
6 together to work on these issues.

7 And what I would like to get is a
8 commitment from both of you to actually sit
9 with us and figure this out in a way that
10 isn't going to harm people and is going to --
11 you know, real estate is everything in
12 New York City, as you know. The schools --
13 in downtown Brooklyn, they -- it was a bad
14 rezoning. It wasn't that they shouldn't have
15 rezoned, but it was lame-brained. And now we
16 have nothing affordable. Schools everywhere
17 that nobody needs them, and the kids are
18 traveling like crazy to places where they
19 only have a school there because it was a
20 real estate deal.

21 How can we get away from that? So
22 that our schools are where they need to be to
23 serve the kids that they need to serve.

24 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Well, I

1 will just respond to, you know, your initial
2 question, can we get together to talk about
3 these things. I'm so glad you asked. I
4 would love that. And I think it's absolutely
5 necessary.

6 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Of course I
7 will as well.

8 I will refer people to -- the Speaker
9 mentioned the planning toolkit that her
10 office put out, which I think is a really
11 thoughtful approach. I mean, it takes it
12 from the Council's power rather than from
13 what would it look like to have a more
14 comprehensive or citywide system, but it
15 deploys it with a real thoughtfulness on a
16 lot of these questions.

17 I do think we should have in New York
18 City some kind of comprehensive planning
19 which asks those kinds of questions at the
20 citywide scale that would take either charter
21 reform or a state law. But I think it will
22 be a good idea, because given growth targets
23 is meaningful, but you've got to supplement
24 it with real planning that engages

1 communities and thinks about infrastructure,
2 that addresses fairness.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you.

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: And you know my
5 feeling that we don't plan, we zone and
6 develop and that's why we're in the problem
7 we're in. So thank you.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you.

9 Assemblymember Jackson.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Yay!

11 (Laughter.)

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: I have to
13 first say to my Speaker, happy National Black
14 Girl Magic Day.

15 (Laughter.)

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Thank you for
17 making that resolution possible in the
18 City Council. We unfortunately did not do
19 that here, but I won't speak on that anymore.

20 All right, so Comptroller, thank you
21 for being here. You put out a good report
22 not too long ago about unemployment for
23 adolescents. And I just want, if possible,
24 if you or Speaker Adams could speak to what

1 it would mean to our economy if we had more
2 young people working. And what -- if there
3 is a possible negative cost to our city for
4 that same purpose.

5 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Well, I
6 will start by saying one of the -- thank you.
7 Of the best things that I like to see during
8 the summer -- during the summer -- is that
9 SYEP program where our youth are able to do
10 what it is that makes them happy for the
11 summer.

12 But it's not enough. It's not long
13 enough. And we've also seen employers that
14 want to continue to build with those students
15 and they're not able to do that because we
16 simply cut the program off way, way too --
17 the city cuts the program off way, way too
18 soon.

19 So if we could expand that I would say
20 year-round -- my own granddaughter loved SYEP
21 last year. And it was a fantastic thing for
22 a building block to come into employment. If
23 we could continue that, that would be
24 fantastic.

1 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Amen.

2 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS:

3 Comptroller?

4 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: No, no, I
5 totally agree that that report -- you know,
6 the cost of what it means to have young
7 people who -- you know, obviously there's a
8 whole set of issues for them if they don't
9 have some productive activity.

10 But just what it means over time to
11 have pathways. Like all the data shows that,
12 you know, people who have some set of
13 connections, who get a job, who have somebody
14 who can give them a reference, have a chance
15 to work their way up, then that's what will
16 make our city better.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Thank you.

18 And then -- so I don't fully
19 understand the -- we say we have a need for
20 housing, but then we also have a vacancy
21 rate. Can you just explain to me how this
22 works? If we have so many high vacancy --
23 such a high vacancy rate, then why do we need
24 to build more housing?

1 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: I'm going
2 to let you take that one.

3 (Laughter.)

4 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Both -- I
5 mean, a few things are true. We don't have
6 an overall high vacancy rate in New York
7 City. The vacancy rate is low, and that's
8 why rent stabilization increases.

9 What we do have right now are these
10 warehoused units where, you know, some tens
11 of thousands of units, probably around
12 70,000, are being held off the market even
13 though they're rent-stabilized because what
14 the landlords are saying is that the costs
15 that they need to redo the bathroom or
16 kitchen to make it rentable isn't enough to
17 pay back the money that they would need to
18 borrow to put it back in service. And so,
19 you know, we need every one of those units
20 back online. That's why we've got a couple
21 of ideas for how to do it.

22 But even beyond that, we do need more
23 units as well, supply and demand. We have
24 created a lot more jobs over the last decade

1 than housing, and that is not all of the
2 problem, but it is part of it.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you.

4 Thank you.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Thank you.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN:

7 Assemblymember González-Rojas.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Hello.

9 Thank you both so much for being here.

10 My first question is for the
11 comptroller. Hi, Brad. I'm curious how much
12 is spent in New York City for the New York
13 City Cares program to provide medical care to
14 our undocumented neighbors.

15 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: (to Executive
16 Deputy Comptroller Brindisi.) We looked at
17 this last year, but I don't remember it. Do
18 you?

19 I'm going to look it up while we --
20 because we did a study on it and we actually
21 looked it -- I'll look it up.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: As
23 you're looking it up, is the city
24 administration working with the Governor on

1 the 1332 federal waiver to expand access to
2 people who would be otherwise eligible for
3 the Essential Plan but are not because of
4 their immigration status? Because there's a
5 real opportunity to be part of that waiver
6 and capitalize on the \$9.3 billion of the
7 unused federal funds for the Essential Plan.

8 And I'd love to see the state and the
9 city partner on that. But tell us first if
10 you have the number on the coverage.

11 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I
12 wholeheartedly support what you -- you know.
13 But I don't know whether the mayor is working
14 with the state on it.

15 You know, we did the Coverage For All
16 study last year -- (pause). So, you know, we
17 did a study of what the implications of
18 Coverage For All would be and found that it
19 would net \$710 million, I think, to the city
20 in savings from labor productivity and mostly
21 from saved lives. So it's a huge benefit.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Yeah,
23 thank you.

24 And Madam Speaker, did the

1 City Council pass a resolution on healthcare
2 coverage for undocumented immigrants?

3 NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: Hi, this is
4 Tanisha Edwards.

5 For undocumented immigrants, I think a
6 little over a year ago, yes, the Council did
7 pass a resolution on it.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Do you
9 remember what it stated?

10 NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: I do not.
11 I can follow up with you.

12 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: I'm having a
13 little more -- it's estimated that coverage
14 for all would result in 46,000 new
15 Essential Plan enrollees, at a net cost of
16 \$345 million. But with that overall benefit
17 of savings, it was \$710 million as a result
18 of saved lives and increased labor
19 productivity.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Thank
21 you. And in fact if we submit -- include
22 this in the 1332 waiver to the federal CMS
23 office, we can get that paid for by the
24 federal government and cost the city and

1 state zero dollars. So just want to make a
2 plug for that.

3 And just lastly, in my 30 seconds, the
4 cost for our asylees, does any of that
5 include healthcare costs or is it
6 predominantly housing and the staff support
7 for that?

8 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: So the state
9 is paying the Medicaid costs right now. And
10 that's valuable. I was at one of the HERRCs
11 recently where there's an enrollment site.
12 So we are doing vaccination, we're giving
13 people screenings and then enrolling them
14 in --

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: New
16 York City Cares?

17 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: In New York
18 City Cares or --

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS:
20 Emergency Medicaid, probably.

21 All right, thank you so much.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you.

23 And now Assemblymember Mamdani to
24 close this panel.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Thank you,
2 Chair.

3 Hello, Comptroller. Hello, Speaker.

4 Comptroller, I wanted to first start
5 with something from your testimony, and I
6 just wanted to ask it to you directly, which
7 is that in the Governor's Executive Budget
8 she effectively proposes raising the fare
9 from 2.75 to \$3.

10 Do you support that fare hike?

11 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: No.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Okay. And would
13 you support the Legislature finding a
14 different source for the \$245 million a year
15 that that fare hike would create?

16 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yes. I hear
17 there's a great Fix the MTA package that
18 identifies ways of fully funding the MTA so
19 we can not only not have a fare hike, not
20 only not stick New York City with a
21 half-billion dollars of cost, but actually
22 get to six-minute service on our subways and
23 buses, make our buses either free or at least
24 more accessible, and also make the long-term

1 investments our system needs.

2 So that is the right path forward.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Thank you so
4 much.

5 And Speaker, I wanted to pose the same
6 question to you about the Governor's proposal
7 to raise the fare from 2.75 to \$3. Do you
8 support that fare hike?

9 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: I do not.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Okay. And would
11 you support the Legislature finding that
12 \$245 million a year through a different
13 source?

14 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Anywhere
15 we can find it elsewhere, I would support
16 that, yes.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Thank you very
18 much.

19 Speaker, I just wanted to now go on to
20 a different topic. So last month you
21 denounced Eric Adams' proposed modifications
22 to the New York City budget, which slashed
23 funding for CUNY, for libraries, social
24 services, and universal pre-K, stating that,

1 quote, We will not allow our city to be
2 damaged by the undermining of city agencies
3 and services that meet the essential needs of
4 all New Yorkers.

5 However, you did not let the
6 modification come to a vote in the City
7 Council, which effectively allowed them to be
8 enacted. I'm trying to understand this
9 contradiction. Why did you choose to do
10 this?

11 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Yeah,
12 thank you for the question, Assemblymember.

13 We had extreme difficulty with the
14 preliminary budget information as it stood,
15 with the modification as it stood. And we
16 chose as a Council, collaboratively, not to
17 vote on it. If we would have voted one way
18 or the other, it would have been a stamp
19 either way, one way or the other, and the
20 funding would have -- there would have been
21 more flexibility in the use by the
22 administration of that funding.

23 So we chose not to participate in a
24 vote at all. And I don't know if my CFO

1 wants to elaborate any more on that.

2 NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: I do.

3 That's exactly right. You are right,
4 the City Charter does specify that without
5 Council action, at least with an expense mod,
6 the modification is deemed approved.

7 But as the Speaker said, in the mod it
8 was very difficult for Councilmembers to have
9 a vote either way --

10 ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: I'm sorry, I'm
11 going to jump in just because there's only
12 14 seconds left.

13 NYC COUNCIL CFO EDWARDS: Okay.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Just to state my
15 understanding was that by not voting in the
16 mod -- on the mod, rather, you were able to
17 preserve about \$17 million in nonprofit
18 funding. But by allowing the mod to take
19 action, almost \$300 million was cut from
20 schools, 168 million from CUNY, 42 million
21 from public libraries, 257 million from
22 health, 190 million from youth services and
23 62 million from housing.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you,

1 Mr. Mamdani. Your time is up.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN MAMDANI: Thank you very
3 much, Chair Braunstein.

4 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: So that
6 concludes this panel. Thank you all for
7 coming up today and testifying and waiting
8 around for a little bit. We greatly
9 appreciate it. Thank you.

10 NYC COUNCIL SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you
11 very much.

12 NYC COMPTROLLER LANDER: Thank you
13 very much.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Next panel,
15 we will have Peter Baynes, executive
16 director, New York State Conference of
17 Mayors, joined by Steve Acquario, executive
18 director, New York State Association of
19 Counties.

20 Okay. Once again, we are being joined
21 by Peter Baynes, executive director, New York
22 State Conference of Mayors, and Steven
23 Acquario, executive director of New York
24 State Association of Counties. Thank you

1 both for joining us.

2 You will each have 10 minutes to
3 present your testimony. Thank you.

4 MR. ACQUARIO: Thank you.

5 MR. BAYNES: Thank you, all the
6 members that are here. I know your break is
7 about to begin, and I appreciate you all
8 being here.

9 Again, I'm Peter Baynes from the
10 New York Conference of Mayors. Just so you
11 know who we are, we since 1910 have
12 represented the 62 cities and 530 villages in
13 New York State.

14 I'm going to just highlight three or
15 four of the main points of our testimony, and
16 look forward to some questioning as well.

17 In terms of the current year budget
18 we're in right now, it was a very positive
19 budget for local governments. There was
20 growth in transportation funding, economic
21 development funding, and we were very
22 appreciative of that.

23 In the Executive Budget, however, it's
24 basically just a continuation of those

1 programs at those levels. While it's helpful
2 that the programs are continued, much more
3 was expected from our membership, especially
4 in a year with a \$7 billion increase in
5 spending in the Executive Budget.

6 You've heard a lot today about AIM
7 funding, and that is always and again today
8 will be what I talk about first. AIM funding
9 used to be known as revenue sharing. It's
10 really aid from the state to assist in
11 municipal operations.

12 You know, the Governor's theme of this
13 budget, which we concur with, is public
14 safety and affordability. We think that our
15 members at the city and village level are on
16 the front lines of ensuring both those things
17 in New York State. On the public safety
18 arena, you know, obviously police but also
19 fire, and road safety, code enforcement --
20 those are all functions of our members.

21 On the affordability front, it's
22 really about property tax affordability in
23 New York. And again, our members are doing
24 all they can to control property taxes.

1 But AIM funding was created as a way
2 to support those two efforts at the local
3 level.

4 So for all the reasons you heard today
5 from the big city Mayors from upstate, you
6 know, AIM is a critical important program for
7 them for all the things that they do in both
8 the public safety and property tax control
9 realm, but also in the housing realm that we
10 talked about today. There's so much that our
11 cities do and all of our municipalities do
12 that AIM is a recognition of that.

13 It has not gone up in 14 years. We
14 urge you this year to finally get that
15 program going, whether it's in the form of
16 AIM or a new program that has new factors
17 involved with getting the money out the door.
18 But something to get that general purpose aid
19 going again to local governments.

20 The second issue, not surprisingly, is
21 the housing growth issue, which first and
22 foremost I'll say that our members believe
23 that the Governor's well-intentioned with her
24 proposal, and most of our mayors share her

1 goals and really want to work with the
2 Governor and all of you to move forward in
3 addressing the housing shortage in New York.

4 We do have one fundamental problem
5 with the proposal as written, and that is
6 allowing for the overriding of local
7 democracy. We think that's the wrong way to
8 go. We also think it won't work well, it
9 will add another layer of review and
10 litigation and delay to the housing
11 development process.

12 You know, housing -- as all of you
13 know, housing development growth, it's a
14 complex issue with many factors and many
15 players. Local officials may -- they don't
16 make these decisions in a vacuum when it
17 comes to housing. Not every community has
18 developable land or buildings. Some have
19 maxed out because of other previous efforts
20 at growth in their municipality. Some have
21 limited infrastructure or insufficient demand
22 or builder appetite because of real estate
23 market forces.

24 So those are all factors involved in

1 whether a municipality approves growth --
2 housing growth and it actually happens. So
3 those things all have to be taken into
4 account.

5 You know, you heard from the mayors
6 today they are all doing amazing work in the
7 housing arena, including in affordable
8 housing. I just want to make sure you know
9 that there's a large what I call community of
10 the willing among local governments around
11 the state within our membership. Over the
12 last 10 years, two-thirds of our members have
13 had growth in housing in their communities,
14 and they want to do more. And there's some
15 that didn't have growth but are trying to
16 have housing growth.

17 So we think a collaborative,
18 carrot-based approach -- which is going to
19 cost some money, especially from the state
20 side of the ledger -- is the way to go to try
21 to achieve the housing growth that we all
22 know is so important.

23 We support many of those incentives
24 that are included in the Governor's budget.

1 There's \$250 million in infrastructure
2 funding. There's another \$20 million for
3 planning grants. Those are really good, but
4 we need a lot more for, again, reasons that
5 have been cited. And when it comes to the
6 infrastructure realm, \$250 million statewide
7 will not go very far. And planning grants
8 and redoing comprehensive plans and zoning,
9 as you all probably know, is time-consuming
10 and expensive. So we'd urge additional
11 funding for that.

12 We support the Governor giving local
13 governments tax incentive tools at local
14 option. We are supportive of the concept of
15 using state funding as a motivator, as a
16 carrot, to get municipalities -- especially
17 those that haven't been as aggressive in
18 expanding their housing options -- to do the
19 right thing.

20 We also think, rather than the state
21 overriding local zoning, local governments
22 should be given more power to, in effect,
23 override their own local zoning, to
24 streamline the zoning approval process so

1 things can move along more quickly.

2 Mayor Sheehan from Albany alluded to
3 the state's low-income housing tax credit.
4 We think there are things that can be done
5 there that will bring more developers to the
6 table when it comes to building new housing.

7 We also think New York has been slow
8 to tap into the power of tax increment
9 financing, because of the way the law is
10 written here in New York. We think a
11 mixed-use housing developments tax increment
12 financing could be a viable option if it's
13 amended, because in New York right now only
14 the property tax growth backs tax increment
15 financing. We need to include sales tax
16 growth to help that financing scheme.

17 The third item I'll mention is kind of
18 municipal infrastructure writ large. As you
19 have heard today, municipal infrastructure --
20 water, sewer, roads -- is critically
21 important, not just to housing but to
22 economic development.

23 The Legislature and the Governor have
24 been very supportive in this area. As I said

1 last year, there were increases in
2 transportation funding, economic development
3 funding. There's been \$500 million increases
4 each year in additional water improvement
5 grant money. But much more needs to be done.
6 We all know that the demand is greater than
7 the supply right now.

8 Transportation funding, the CHIPS
9 program's been relatively static, but funding
10 has been added to that. Which has been
11 helpful, but we need all of that additional
12 funding to be built into the CHIPS base so
13 that municipalities can budget that from year
14 to year.

15 I do want to make a pitch for the 37
16 cities who have contracts with the state
17 where those cities take care of state
18 arterials that run through their cities, and
19 then the state reimburses them for that
20 effort. Their reimbursement rate has not
21 been increased since 1987. We are asking for
22 an inflationary increase for that. New York
23 City is one of those 37 cities. It would
24 cost \$17 million for the state to do an

1 inflationary adjustment for that.

2 I mentioned water and sewer and the
3 funding that goes toward that. Many of you I
4 know were particularly forceful in making
5 that happen, especially Assemblyman Otis, and
6 we appreciate that. It's helped many
7 municipalities, but there are a lot of
8 municipalities that aren't -- they aren't
9 accessing that money. We want to find a way,
10 either by adding more money to that program
11 or coming up with some formulaic program that
12 ensures that water -- that state funding goes
13 to every municipality that has water and
14 sewer pipelines within it.

15 So before I get into another topic and
16 get cut off, I'll stop there and look forward
17 to your questions. Thank you.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you.

19 Mr. Acquario.

20 MR. ACQUARIO: Thank you to the
21 members of the Legislature for permitting the
22 local governments to bring the concerns from
23 the community to the state's capital.

24 And on behalf of the 57 counties and

1 the five boroughs of New York City, we
2 appreciate this opportunity.

3 The counties in New York have many
4 issues to consider in the budget. We are the
5 state's administrative arm and are
6 responsible for implementing numerous state
7 programs, as well as financing a large share
8 of these programs.

9 Counties in New York, including
10 New York City, have fiscal requirements under
11 state law that most counties across the
12 nation do not have. The extra
13 responsibilities placed on counties by the
14 state show up in our local budgets and the
15 levels of taxation.

16 The long trend of the state imposing
17 significantly higher costs on its local
18 governments compared to these other states is
19 a major part of the affordability crisis we
20 face in New York. In fact, it's not unusual
21 for a typical homeowner in our state to spend
22 half of their mortgage on property taxes.
23 For many homeowners, far more of their
24 mortgage payment is dedicated to property

1 taxes than it is to paying down its principal
2 or interest.

3 This is in a low-interest rate
4 environment. As interest rates rise and
5 property taxes increase, housing and rental
6 affordability will slip through the fingers
7 of more and more families in New York.

8 When high costs are imposed on local
9 governments by the state, the affordability
10 crisis gets worse, not better. For renters
11 and homeowners alike, we have the same
12 outcome when local government costs grow:
13 affordability is increasingly threatened.

14 While there are many proposals that
15 the counties of New York support in the
16 Governor's Executive Budget, I'm going to
17 focus most of my remarks on just one -- the
18 shifting of Medicaid costs back to local
19 taxpayers. These costs -- these cost-shifts
20 will overwhelm everything else that's
21 positive in this state's budget that sits
22 before you for county taxpayers.

23 Specifically, as Mayor Adams mentioned
24 earlier today, the intercepting of federal

1 Medicaid savings. The Governor is proposing
2 a most unusual method of using an
3 administrative action, which is most unusual,
4 to intercept \$625 million in federal Medicaid
5 savings that currently, and for a long time,
6 have been received by the counties and
7 New York City to help pay for the state's
8 Medicaid program. This intercept would be
9 effective April 1, 2023, in the middle of the
10 counties' fiscal year.

11 What does this action really mean,
12 though? The state is choosing to raise the
13 counties' Medicaid cap. Without the federal
14 funds, the state is choosing -- or forcing --
15 the counties and the city to pay more into
16 the Medicaid program. It's just that simple.

17 The budget document presents this as
18 a, quote, utilize available federal funding.
19 That's what's in your Yellow Book:
20 \$625 million is designated as "utilize
21 available federal funding," with a reference
22 that would cost the counties \$280 million and
23 the city \$345 million, or \$625 million total.

24 As a proposed administrative action,

1 there's no appropriation. There's no
2 Article VII language to review -- for you to
3 review, for us to review. The budget simply
4 states that there's \$625 million in available
5 federal revenue to be used to fill the
6 state's budget holes in the Medicaid program.

7 The proposal is presented as if this
8 is found money, found federal funds that are
9 being leveraged to fund the Medicaid
10 expansion. To be blunt, these dollars are
11 being diverted or taken from local taxpayers
12 and used for state purposes.

13 This action leaves an immediate
14 \$625 million hole in county budgets and, as
15 Mayor Adams mentioned, the City of New York's
16 budget. These are not found resources.

17 For 20 years the federal government
18 has provided an enhanced federal Medicaid
19 share to the states and to localities in
20 New York. These state has always passed
21 these savings through to the counties and
22 New York City, consistently during this
23 period. The counties have used these federal
24 funds to pay for local services and reduced

1 property taxes, as is intended by the
2 Congress. These savings have been shared
3 with counties on the proportionate share paid
4 into the Medicaid program each time an extra
5 share of federal funds has been received and
6 provided for by the Congress. Every Governor
7 since 2003 has proposed these savings using
8 the exact same formula. Today's proposal is
9 ending this practice.

10 The minimum four-year cost to local
11 taxpayers by this administrative action is
12 between 2.5 billion and 2.9 billion,
13 according to the Executive Budget. By making
14 it an administrative action, it bypasses your
15 role. It bypasses the Legislature's direct
16 involvement and authority as a separate and
17 coequal branch of government. We strongly
18 encourage the Legislature to reject this
19 concept in its entirety in your budget
20 negotiations with the Governor.

21 Based on our analysis, this single
22 cost-shift to local taxpayers is the largest
23 revenue action proposed in the executive
24 Medicaid budget. Let me repeat that. The

1 intercepting of the federal funds, this shift
2 to local taxpayers, is the largest revenue
3 action proposed in the executive Medicaid
4 budget, and one of the largest in the entire
5 state budget. It's also the single largest
6 and most abrupt cost-shift -- effective in
7 several weeks, if approved -- to county
8 taxpayers in recent memory. By state fiscal
9 year 2027, the state's cost-shift from this
10 action is equivalent to an average property
11 tax increase of 7 percent, and as high as
12 14 percent in some counties.

13 It's the strong view of the counties
14 of New York that Congress intended these
15 federal savings be shared with the counties
16 proportional to the amount they contribute
17 towards the non-federal Medicaid match. For
18 the past 20 years, the state has shared these
19 funds proportionally, based on our analysis
20 of savings we have received during this
21 period when an enhanced federal Medicaid
22 match was enacted by the Congress.

23 Enacted in 2011, the Medicaid
24 statutory cap for the 62 counties is

1 7.6 billion. The Medicaid statutory cap for
2 the 57 counties outside of New York is
3 2.25 billion. This has saved counties and
4 local taxpayers billions of dollars since its
5 enactment by you and made housing more
6 affordable in New York.

7 If this cost-shift goes into effect,
8 the state will have reneged on the local
9 governments' Medicaid cap, which was put in
10 place in 2015 to help local property
11 taxpayers. This is 100 percent an
12 affordability issue, as this action will
13 directly result in service cuts and property
14 tax increases which will negatively impact
15 every person in the state, whether they rent
16 or own.

17 Counties and local taxpayers greatly
18 appreciate the relief provided by the state,
19 and this is why the Legislature must tell the
20 Executive to continue to share these federal
21 funds with the counties.

22 We thank you for your time.

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

24 Assembly first.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you.

2 Assemblymember Thiele.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Good afternoon,
4 gentlemen. And thank you for your patience.
5 It's a long day. I want to talk -- I guess,
6 Peter, primarily to you -- about these
7 issues. I want to talk about AIM and I want
8 to talk about the housing compact.

9 Let me start with the housing compact.
10 You know, this is really I think an
11 unprecedented intrusion by state government
12 on local home-rule powers, particularly with
13 regard to land use. And, you know, I think
14 we -- as you I think have said in your
15 statements, we all recognize that there's a
16 housing crisis that needs to be addressed,
17 and you basically, you know, I think have
18 focused on the need for incentives, you know,
19 to try to accomplish this. You also talked
20 about streamlining the process.

21 So what kind of incentives -- what
22 would you -- you know, in the Assembly and
23 the Senate in their one-house, what kind of
24 incentives do you think could help to -- help

1 generate more -- I should say affordable
2 housing. To me one of the things that's
3 lacking in this proposal is it just talks
4 about building housing, it really doesn't go
5 to the issue of affordability.

6 MR. BAYNES: Yeah, I mean in terms of
7 incentives, as always, money talks, I think,
8 the most. You know, financial incentives
9 from the state would be the greatest, whether
10 it's a program of aid that comes to them when
11 certain goals are met or other preexisting
12 programs, whether there's a factor in the
13 application for funding that they've met
14 certain housing goals. You know, I think
15 that would help.

16 Our members also need their own tools
17 that I alluded to -- you know, tax exemptions
18 might help. I think things need to be done
19 to help the developers get across the finish
20 line financially for it to make sense to them
21 to do housing developments in certain parts
22 of especially upstate New York.

23 So again, I think money is the most
24 important incentive that could be held out

1 there.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Let me talk about
3 that a little bit more, and related to --
4 really to the AIM discussion. And Chairman
5 Braunstein and I have been kind of talking
6 about this back and forth as we've listened
7 to, you know, the various witnesses testify
8 today, and I'm going to give full attribution
9 to Chairman Braunstein because he brought
10 this up.

11 But the idea of -- you know, we've
12 been trying in the Legislature -- you know,
13 there hasn't been an increase in AIM, as
14 you're painfully aware, since I think 2009.
15 It's been more than a decade, that's for
16 sure. We've tried rather valiantly in the
17 last couple of years. Both I think the
18 Assembly and Senate one-houses had proposed
19 increases in AIM. I think on the Assembly
20 side we had proposed if you just took the
21 cost of living adjustment from 2009 until
22 today, I think it came to like \$210 million.
23 It's a big number. It's a pretty big number,
24 anyway.

1 So anyway -- and again, full
2 attribution to Ed -- if we came up with kind
3 of a subset of kind of the AIM program where,
4 you know, we can't seem to get it -- you
5 know, an increase in AIM which would just be,
6 you know, without any strings attached. But
7 if we had this separate category that would
8 be, you know, a substantial pot of money for
9 local governments that met the targets, and
10 maybe some sort of formula that would be on a
11 per-unit basis of the housing that was
12 produced, would -- what would you think about
13 something like that?

14 MR. BAYNES: I think that's a good
15 idea. Especially if it's done in conjunction
16 with giving local governments more tools to
17 get the job done. Especially, again, in this
18 community of the willing that's out there,
19 that they're trying to get housing growth
20 but, for a variety of reasons beyond their
21 control, aren't able to do it. So, you know,
22 I think that would be good.

23 Mayor Sheehan made the point like if
24 it was just a part of the AIM program and AIM

1 growth, villages, for the most part, villages
2 and towns --

3 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: It's not going to
4 be an incentive for villages.

5 MR. BAYNES: -- they don't receive
6 enough money for it to be --

7 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: That's right,
8 after hearing Mayor Sheehan, I'm thinking we
9 would need to come up with a formula like
10 related to the housing generation, and to
11 make it a number that would be a true
12 incentive. So her point was well-taken, and
13 we'll think about it even more about -- you
14 know, it's one thing for cities, because that
15 would be a pretty big number for them. But
16 for villages and smaller towns, you need
17 something that would truly be an incentive
18 that would move them to participate.

19 You also talked about --

20 MR. BAYNES: If I could just -- I'm
21 sorry, you mentioned affordability at the
22 beginning of your comments. If I could just
23 make a point that I didn't make in my verbal
24 testimony.

1 The Governor cites six states that
2 have done the kinds of state intervention
3 that she is proposing. She cites those
4 states as having done it and as a reason to
5 do it. They've done it, it's working there.

6 And in our conversations with those
7 six states, the people who have my job in
8 those six states, the jury's certainly still
9 out on whether it's working. And they all
10 mentioned the same thing, that when there has
11 been housing growth, it really has done
12 nothing to help affordability. So I think
13 that has to be kept in mind in whatever's
14 done. If it's really about affordable
15 housing, you know, you've got to keep your
16 eye on the prize on that, because I don't
17 think the way it's written right now
18 necessarily would drive affordable housing.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Well, every area
20 of the state is different, which I think is
21 one of the problems with this proposal,
22 because it doesn't recognize that every area
23 of the state is different.

24 But in my area, you know, all of the

1 multifamily housing are luxury condominiums.
2 And if we built 3 percent more of them and
3 just let the market forces take -- go to
4 work, they'd still be luxury condominiums
5 that got built. So, you know, there is --
6 part of this is that there -- the marketplace
7 isn't working on providing affordable
8 housing. And there has to be some
9 incentives, I think, that alter those market
10 forces.

11 You talked a little bit about, you
12 know, maybe streamlining the process and, you
13 know, giving some flexibility to local
14 governments because we provide in the Town
15 Law and the Village Law and the City Law, you
16 know, what the process is if it's a
17 subdivision or a site plan or a special
18 permit or a variance or change of zone. But
19 one of the things that's in the Governor's
20 proposal is basically SEQRA would be out of
21 the picture. You know, SEQRA would not apply
22 to any of these zoning actions that are
23 proposed in the housing compact.

24 Is that -- you haven't talked about

1 that, but you've talked about streamlining.
2 Is that something that you would support or
3 some sort of --

4 MR. BAYNES: That is actually an idea
5 that we threw out to the Governor's staff in
6 the fall and -- but I will admit, our members
7 have mixed emotions about it.

8 And it depends on the specific
9 instances when it doesn't apply, and what the
10 backstop is -- you know, there still has to
11 be some minimal level of environmental
12 review. I think that's open to debate --
13 what is sufficient, when should that waiver
14 or partial waiver take effect. So, you know,
15 I think that has to be revisited in the
16 Governor's proposal.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: And maybe both
18 you and Steve might be able to comment on
19 this. Part of my experience, at least
20 locally, when it comes to affordable housing
21 projects where you have to increase density
22 and things of that nature, is that a lot of
23 times it isn't the local zoning code that's
24 the issue. Sometimes it's the county

1 sanitary code. And, you know, at least in
2 Suffolk and in Nassau County, those things
3 are in place because we get our drinking
4 water from underground aquifers, there's a
5 good reason for that.

6 You know, the Governor's proposal
7 doesn't speak directly, anyway, to what a
8 local government does when the sanitary code
9 is really -- you know, and that gets to the
10 need for infrastructure money too, by the
11 way. But any comment on that particular
12 issue?

13 MR. BAYNES: Yeah, when we were
14 looking at possible ways of streamlining the
15 process, you know, in Massachusetts what they
16 tried to do was there's a two-thirds vote
17 requirement I think to override -- to locally
18 override zoning. They were going to lower
19 that to a majority vote, but it ended up not
20 getting through the legislature.

21 So I asked my counsel, Do we have --
22 and you would know this as a municipal
23 attorney -- do we have analogous provisions
24 where you could just lower a two-thirds vote

1 to a majority vote? And he couldn't really
2 think of one. He did say there is the county
3 review process, which you're alluding to now.
4 I don't know if that tends to hold up the
5 process or not.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: I wouldn't -- I
7 don't think to say it holds it up is -- it's
8 not that it holds up the process, it's just
9 that in protecting drinking water the
10 sanitary code standards are just more
11 stringent than the zoning code standards are.

12 MR. BAYNES: Yup. Yeah, that's just
13 the reality --

14 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: Yeah, just the
15 reality. And, you know, there -- you know,
16 not all zoning -- not all zoning regulations
17 are exclusionary. You know, sometimes they
18 were designed to protect water quality or
19 they were designed to preserve farmland for
20 the agricultural community. You know, there
21 are a whole host and a variety of reasons
22 sometimes why zoning regulations are enacted.

23 So thank you. Appreciate it. I see
24 my time is running out here. Thanks.

1 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you,
2 gentlemen.

3 I'm going to go first for the Senate.
4 Nice to see you both. Appreciate your
5 testimony, which I got here a little late,
6 but I had time to read both testimonies.

7 So there was a story a few days ago in
8 the press about a report that came out
9 showing that the IDAs are giving away the
10 equivalent of \$1.8 billion a year in your
11 school tax money. Now, as I understand it,
12 that means everybody else picks that up with
13 the -- if there are exemptions made by the
14 IDAs that translate to a loss of that much
15 money. And I think there was a breakdown by
16 county, not necessarily by city.

17 What's your opinion about what we
18 should be doing about that?

19 MR. ACQUARIO: Well, I think you
20 started it last session when you passed
21 legislation that requires IDAs to provide
22 written notification on tax exemptions to the
23 affected local government. So that was a
24 good first step.

1 We have to see how that gets
2 implemented. These local governments are
3 notified of any tax exemption that's issued
4 by an IDA and required to give a comment on
5 that exemption. So that was a good first
6 step.

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: But that doesn't
8 necessarily save you money, it just lets you
9 say "I don't love this." You think we should
10 do it.

11 What's the second step?

12 MR. ACQUARIO: I don't have an answer
13 to that right now. We can look into that and
14 get back to you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Do you have an
16 opinion?

17 MR. BAYNES: Not to pass the buck, but
18 most IDAs are county IDAs. I mean, they
19 serve an important role, so you have to
20 strike a balance between what they're trying
21 to achieve and the impact it has on taxes in
22 the short-term and the long-term.

23 So I think greater transparency
24 between the IDA and the municipalities that

1 are impacted is an important first step. And
2 then whether you need to go further to have
3 more involvement in the decision-making by
4 the impacted taxing districts is something
5 that would have to be looked at.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And you both
7 referenced, I think, continuing reduction
8 in -- let me make sure I got it right -- a
9 reduction in sales tax revenue. Is that
10 correct, or do you actually see an increase
11 in sales tax revenue this year?

12 MR. ACQUARIO: Increase.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Saw an increase.

14 So do you think that things are sort
15 of working themselves out between the shift
16 to internet sales with them supposedly paying
17 the tax and your not having bricks-and-mortar
18 stores to sell as much product as we used to
19 have pre-the world of Amazon and other major
20 market sellers?

21 MR. ACQUARIO: Well, it's cyclical.
22 It's certainly gaining in importance and
23 collections with the internet sales tax.

24 Dave, you want to answer the Senator's

1 question more about the trend of internet
2 sales tax and is that replacing brick and
3 mortar?

4 MR. LUCAS: I think that's been a
5 problem. It's interesting to note that for
6 the first time in NYSAC and their legislative
7 program, our agenda in 2002 was to tax
8 internet sales, because we were seeing what
9 was happening in the local communities with
10 brick-and-mortar stores and the retail.

11 So it's been a longstanding problem
12 for the counties and for downtown areas, for
13 municipalities, that the retail centers were
14 being hollowed out by bigger competitors.
15 They had a good business model, but they also
16 had a tax advantage. So for 20 years we had
17 worked to get that implemented, and finally
18 in 2019 that happened.

19 But your downtowns look different
20 today. There's not as much retail, there's
21 more services being provided -- not all those
22 services are taxable -- and as Steve pointed
23 out, in 2022 we did have a sales tax
24 increase. But for the 57 counties, sales tax

1 was up about 6 percent, New York City was up
2 about 20 percent. The 57 counties didn't
3 even keep up with inflation. So you have to
4 really think about the economic activity that
5 was occurring. People were still buying
6 things, but they were paying more for what
7 they were buying. And we're seeing that
8 trend continue into 2023 right now.

9 MR. BAYNES: If I could just add on
10 the sales tax issue, Steve is right, it's
11 very cyclical.

12 But also for a good chunk of our
13 members and some of the towns across the
14 state, the cycle is always down, because they
15 don't get any sales tax. There are -- I
16 don't know the number, you know, the
17 percentage of towns and villages that don't
18 get sales tax. Villages on Long Island, none
19 of them get sales tax. You combine that with
20 no increase in AIM funding, and that's why
21 we're here today asking for that AIM funding
22 increase. Because sales tax just isn't --
23 doesn't ever bail them out like it can during
24 a boom period with sales tax revenue.

1 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So I think
2 everybody's been talking about the FMAP issue
3 and the Governor's proposal that I think you
4 described very well -- it's not exactly that
5 it's taking it away from you all, and yet
6 it's taking it away from you all.

7 And the reference -- I've heard
8 several people reference they don't believe
9 that was the intent of Congress. So do we
10 have -- I'm on your side of this. So do we
11 have anything that we can find in writing or
12 even request from our congressional
13 delegation clarifying what they intended that
14 FMAP for? I think that would really be a
15 helpful, so to speak, document for winning
16 this fight.

17 MR. ACQUARIO: Certainly. And I've
18 never heard anybody say that it was not the
19 intent of Congress. So this is the first I'm
20 hearing it.

21 I think what we can look at as a
22 matter of fact is the 20-year -- ever since
23 the United States provided an enhanced
24 federal Medicaid share to the states, ever

1 since that was done, every state, every
2 governor in New York State has shared that in
3 proportion to the way the counties and
4 New York City spent. That's all the
5 precedent we need and the intent that we need
6 from our level of governing.

7 But we will work with Senator Schumer,
8 we've worked with Senator Schumer on the
9 Affordable Care Act. David Lucas and
10 myself -- David is the intergovernmental
11 relations director and finance director at
12 NYSAC -- we directly worked with Senator
13 Schumer on this legislation.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And I'm old
15 enough, as are all of you -- not going to
16 comment on everybody in this room -- that we
17 remember when the state said, We're not going
18 to continue to apply new costs to the
19 counties and localities as Medicaid costs
20 increase.

21 Do you see this as a violation of that
22 understanding and agreement?

23 MR. ACQUARIO: Without question. You
24 are raising -- excuse me, the state is

1 proposing to raise the counties' local
2 Medicaid cap. You're taking away
3 \$600 million from the current Medicaid cap.

4 We are meeting our obligation right
5 now to pay our statutory share -- I think
6 it's \$7.6 billion. We're doing that through
7 local resources and federal resources. That
8 equals the Medicaid cap. Those two revenue
9 streams meet that. It's that simple.

10 This is devolving into the old days of
11 property taxpayers paying more and more of
12 Medicaid. We thought we were beyond this.
13 We made the case, you made the case, all of
14 you here made that case and passed those laws
15 in 2012 -- 2005 and again in 2012 -- to stop
16 it. Here we are reopening that policy issue.
17 It's the wrong direction.

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Doesn't it
19 frighten us that we've all been doing this
20 that long?

21 (Laughter.)

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: That's another
23 discussion. I don't mean to use up my extra
24 time, I'm sorry.

1 You know what, I'm going to cede back
2 my two minutes. Thank you all very much for
3 your testimony, as always, because you always
4 bring a perspective to things that are very
5 helpful I think to all of us no matter where
6 we come from, because you're speaking on
7 behalf of the local governments who actually
8 deliver most of the services in the state to
9 our constituents. So thank you.

10 MR. ACQUARIO: Thank you.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Back to the
12 Assembly.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you.

14 Assemblymember Ari Brown.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Thank you.

16 Thank you, gentlemen, for being here.

17 I'm not surprised, I'm glad to hear
18 that we're all on the same page when it comes
19 to the Governor's housing compact and the
20 unfairness to try to take away our home rule.

21 I just had one question for -- is it
22 Mayor Baynes also?

23 MR. BAYNES: No. No.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Mr. Baynes.

1 You mentioned something about local
2 municipalities should have the power to
3 override their own zoning. What did you mean
4 by that?

5 MR. BAYNES: What I meant was rather
6 than the state being empowered to do that,
7 give local governments more discretion within
8 their own comprehensive plan and the zoning
9 they've established, make it easier for them
10 when it comes to affordable housing, if they
11 so decide, to make an exception to their --
12 to those plans so that they, locally, are
13 making the decision for their community.

14 Maybe contrary to what their general
15 policy is on zoning, but not to have the
16 state be, in essence, doing that, which is
17 what's been proposed.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: That's
19 certainly fair.

20 I just wanted to ask also, on a
21 separate issue, someone had mentioned the
22 idea -- you are all familiar that the IDAs
23 don't decrease the tax base, they're just
24 ramping it up to a 10- or 15- or 20-year

1 PILOT from where it began. It's not like
2 what we saw try to be done in New York City,
3 a freebie, you know, no taxes for anybody,
4 big tax abatements. They're not abatements.
5 But we are aware that they're just ramping up
6 at a slower pace, yes.

7 MR. BAYNES: Right. Yes.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Thank you,
9 gentlemen. I know there's a lot more time; I
10 yield that to whoever needs it.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you.

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

13 Actually, Chair Martinez.

14 SENATOR MARTINEZ: Thank you,
15 Madam Chair.

16 Good afternoon, gentlemen. Good to
17 see you. I just want to say, one, thank you
18 for being here today and expressing your
19 concerns after the Governor released her
20 budget. And I'm sure I've spoken to many of
21 you already that I stand with you in many of
22 your concerns that you have as chair of
23 Local Government.

24 One of the questions I do have -- and

1 I'm not sure I missed it or not, because I
2 know many have asked about the FMAP funds.
3 But in what way will the cities and our
4 counties be able to balance their budgets
5 without cutting any type of critical
6 resources such as your social services or
7 public services? Have you even thought about
8 that, if this does go through? I know it's a
9 little premature. But obviously this is a
10 big issue which all of us -- well, I'm
11 fighting to make sure, you know, that that
12 doesn't happen.

13 But in the event that it does, how do
14 you plan on balancing your budgets?

15 MR. ACQUARIO: Well, thank you,
16 Senator. It's -- again, this is a revenue
17 stream that's been coming to the counties and
18 New York City for 20 years. Every time the
19 federal government has raised the federal
20 Medicaid share to New York State, it has
21 always shared it with its local government,
22 immediately. Because of its mid-budget year
23 impact, counties will have to fill the hole.

24 In the first year alone, that will

1 come from a combination of a reduction in
2 services and a use of reserves. This is
3 because we have not been allowed -- we're not
4 allowed to raise property taxes, nor would we
5 want to, midyear. With an already adopted
6 budget for next year and the outyears,
7 counties will have to consider tax increases
8 and, without question, reduction of services.

9 SENATOR MARTINEZ: And I'm going to
10 also assume that depending on the county,
11 it's going to affect the county differently
12 whether you're a larger county or a smaller
13 county. Have you analyzed what that would be
14 between sizes of counties?

15 MR. ACQUARIO: Well, let me just give
16 the Legislature some preliminary estimates.

17 In Suffolk County, \$31 million impact.
18 In Monroe County, a \$23 million impact. In
19 Nassau County, \$30 million impact. Rockland
20 County, an \$8 million impact. Albany County,
21 where we sit, \$8 million impact. Erie
22 county, \$26 million.

23 It's a substantial amount of money for
24 the larger counties. And for the smaller

1 counties like Clinton, our northernmost
2 county on the border, almost \$2 million. So
3 it affects small counties and large counties
4 in a proportionate way.

5 SENATOR MARTINEZ: I appreciate that.

6 And I know that my chair on the
7 Assembly side also mentioned the housing
8 proposal and the impact that it will also
9 have on our localities. Obviously we know
10 that there is a housing issue; that's no news
11 to anyone. And we also know that the issue
12 of affordability is also an issue. How will
13 this proposal affect the counties and our
14 cities if we move forward with this?

15 MR. ACQUARIO: Well, I'll just answer
16 very briefly for the counties. Since we're
17 not specifically mentioned in the
18 legislation, we do have a role, but our
19 county planning and land use policies and
20 programs -- we have extensive planning units
21 at the county level and also, as Peter
22 mentioned, and Assemblymember Thiele was
23 asking about, we have wastewater and drinking
24 water roles.

1 So there is a role for the county
2 governments in this which is not currently
3 contemplated. This is, quite frankly, a
4 local issue best addressed locally, without
5 state intervention, of home-rule authority.
6 So it's truly a ground-up process.

7 SENATOR MARTINEZ: What do you foresee
8 if the state does control local authorities?

9 MR. BAYNES: I mean, I just say to
10 people, think about your own -- where you
11 live, your property, your neighborhood. Do
12 you really think somebody in Albany, a state
13 review board, has any concept of what works
14 in your community because they've set a
15 target? It's just -- no matter how
16 well-intended that might be, there's no way
17 that can work.

18 There's nothing more democratic in
19 New York State than local land-use
20 decision-making. Right? And to interfere
21 with that, to violate that, I think even if
22 you have good intentions, it's going to have
23 bad results.

24 SENATOR MARTINEZ: Do you think the

1 counties and cities have the ability to meet
2 those targets as it is laid out in the
3 Governor's plan?

4 MR. BAYNES: We -- I mean, we looked
5 at the data over the last 10 years, you know,
6 from the 2010 Census to the 2020 Census, to
7 look to see how much growth in housing units
8 have there been in all of our municipalities.

9 You know, the smaller cities upstate,
10 outside of the MTA region, I think there are
11 44 of them, their average housing growth was
12 almost 1 percent. Those are the people I'm
13 talking about that are -- they're trying to
14 do it. They don't really need the state to
15 come in and tell them to do it, they need the
16 state to come in and help them to do it.

17 So there are other communities, if you
18 go around rural New York, in small, rural
19 communities there aren't jobs, there's no
20 demand for housing. There's actually more of
21 a demand to tear down vacant and abandoned
22 properties.

23 So you just can't come up with a
24 formula that works for every community. It's

1 not possible.

2 SENATOR MARTINEZ: And just one more
3 question. What incentives -- if this plan
4 were to go and move forward, what type of
5 incentives would you be looking for from the
6 state to assist in making sure that you meet
7 the targets?

8 MR. BAYNES: Well, I think the biggest
9 impact of housing growth in a community is
10 the impact on the infrastructure of the
11 community -- the roads, water and sewer
12 systems. And the Governor has advanced what
13 I would consider seed money in that regard,
14 \$250 million. That sounds like a lot, and we
15 appreciate it, but it's not nearly enough.

16 So that would be the greatest thing
17 the state could do, is make more money
18 available for infrastructure work. And
19 you're going to need a lot more money for
20 planning work, for redoing zoning -- I mean,
21 it's going to be a full-employment act for
22 planning and zoning consultants. I mean, I
23 don't know if there are enough of those folks
24 in New York State that could help our people

1 all go through, for example, the TOD around
2 the MTA stations rezoning. I don't think
3 there's a capacity in New York to even do
4 that.

5 But really it's about money to help
6 with infrastructure. Things that will bring
7 the developers to the table -- that might be
8 property tax exemptions, it might be, like I
9 said, adjusting the state's low-income
10 housing tax credit. It really -- it's a
11 multifaceted problem that needs a
12 multifaceted solution, not just "Local
13 governments, you've got to fix this."

14 SENATOR MARTINEZ: And if I'm correct,
15 I think someone mentioned zoning and helping
16 with the zones. Is that something -- I know
17 I said one more question; I'm going to ask
18 probably this last one.

19 If the state had a program to assist
20 our localities with zoning, would that be
21 something that would be something we could
22 consider?

23 MR. BAYNES: I think if they did that
24 right now without doing anything else, that

1 municipal officials would be beating their
2 door down. I mean, our members need help
3 with that.

4 Again, two-thirds of our members are
5 trying to -- they've shown that they're
6 growing their housing stock and want to do
7 more. We think facilitating their work is
8 the best thing they can do -- model local
9 laws. You know, a statewide office that
10 really helps them on the ground with that
11 process would be very helpful.

12 SENATOR MARTINEZ: I appreciate that.
13 Thank you all for coming here today.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to
16 Assemblyman Ra for five minutes, ranker.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

18 Thanks for being here with us today.

19 So the housing compact -- and, you
20 know, we've talked a lot about, you know, the
21 targets and the state basically allowing for
22 these appeals to override the local
23 decision-making. Which, you know, I'm
24 completely against and I think is not the

1 right approach to this issue.

2 But there's also -- I mean, those
3 targets, if this whole proposal were to go
4 forward, those targets, we wouldn't have to
5 worry about them at all because in most of
6 the places I represent, you get one of those
7 zones around the half a mile of the railroad
8 station, you'll be well above the target
9 already. And I'm sure, you know, you're
10 aware, in particular -- I'm in Nassau, so
11 we're basically all within that Tier 1, which
12 contemplates 50 units per acre in those
13 half-mile radiuses. I happen to live within
14 one of those half-mile radiuses.

15 But what is the impact -- if we were
16 to have that type of density in Nassau County
17 or, you know, any of these other downstate
18 counties, what's the impact on emergency
19 services, on water service, on sanitation, on
20 our local schools? And I think related to --
21 you know, part of this I think is things that
22 would be of concern to the counties as well,
23 correct?

24 MR. BAYNES: Yeah, I mean, I've talked

1 to individual mayors in the downstate area.
2 One in particular, in Westchester, was
3 explaining to me how if -- they were in I
4 think Tier 2, but even with the Tier 2
5 rezoning for TODs, they -- it would have
6 basically allowed for a 30 percent increase
7 in the housing stock in their
8 half-square-mile village. And they just
9 don't have the infrastructure to support
10 that.

11 So again, every MTA stop, Long Island
12 Rail Road, Metro-North, is different. The
13 community they're in is different. There are
14 all kinds of implementation issues where you
15 have a half-mile around it, a Metro-North
16 stop encompasses five villages and three
17 towns. And how does that rezoning all
18 happen? So it's just another reason why that
19 kind of mandated zoning doesn't work.

20 MR. ACQUARIO: So not to mention
21 health and human services, which is a county
22 function as well. So we have to be mindful
23 of that.

24 But I think, look, the end result

1 here -- and I think we all need to thank the
2 Governor for starting the discussion. When I
3 convened 20 counties last September around a
4 table and I asked them for their number-one
5 issue that they were facing, upstate or
6 downstate, it was affordable housing. So how
7 we get there, you're hearing from the local
8 governments, is what matters most. And
9 providing resources to the local governments
10 to help them do their jobs, whether it's land
11 use planning, water, wastewater, zoning
12 assistance, local law assistance. That's
13 what we're asking for. But the end result
14 is, how do we address the housing crisis that
15 the state finds itself in?

16 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Sure. And I think,
17 you know, at the end of the day, this should
18 be about finding a way to work -- and the one
19 thing I'll say, you know, I'm not sure --
20 yes, we're having this conversation, but that
21 50 units per acre is not within the ballpark
22 of reasonable for Nassau County.

23 And as this idea -- you mentioned, you
24 know, all villages -- yeah, the train station

1 that I live within half a mile of sits within
2 a village. I don't live within that village.
3 So how that all works, I don't know. It's --
4 I think it's a one-size-fits-all approach
5 that shows no recognition of just the
6 realities of how different each of our
7 communities are. But just --

8 MR. ACQUARIO: Let me just add, in the
9 most rural parts of our state -- I was up
10 last week in the Adirondacks. They mentioned
11 the exact same issue that you have. It is
12 regulated by the Adirondack Park Agency, but
13 they're unable to meet the requirements up
14 there as well, in the most rural parts of the
15 state.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: So just with my
17 remaining time, if you can just comment.
18 Because transit-oriented developments do
19 happen. You know, villages, towns are doing
20 this on their own, but they're doing it in a
21 way that fits within the character of their
22 local community. I assume a lot of your
23 members have been doing that type of
24 development, correct?

1 MR. BAYNES: Sure, the president of
2 our organization, the mayor of
3 Rockville Centre, he's done tremendous work,
4 won awards for what they've done around their
5 rail station.

6 So it's definitely being done. ADUs
7 are -- there are people trying to incentivize
8 those as well and enable those in their
9 communities.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

12 Senator Tom O'Mara, ranker.

13 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you.

14 Good afternoon, gentlemen. Sorry I
15 joined you late. There've been a few
16 distractions around here today, but those
17 seem to be over for now. I have read your
18 testimony; thank you for that.

19 You know, it seemed that we went
20 through a decade of Governor Cuomo of just
21 decimating local governments. And, you know,
22 kind of was optimistic last year to see in
23 Governor Hochul's budgets maybe some light at
24 the end of that tunnel with some relief

1 coming that hadn't come in a decade. Now
2 it's like a complete about-face here with
3 this, with the enhanced Medicaid payments
4 being taken away.

5 Mr. Acquario, you said it's a little
6 over \$600 million, that hit. And you had
7 previously sent me a breakdown county by
8 county; I thank you for that. My counties
9 are saying that that's like underestimated by
10 about 20 percent. Do you have anything you
11 can add on what I'm hearing locally?

12 MR. ACQUARIO: Well, it's the Health
13 Department's responsibility to distribute the
14 revenue back-and-forth to the counties and
15 credit the counties.

16 What's been happening for the past
17 seven years is the state has been sharing a
18 portion of what is owed from the federal
19 government. We estimated that they were
20 sharing 80 percent and keeping 20 percent.
21 And the state just never reconciled the
22 difference for the past seven years.

23 So we're owed actually another
24 billion-two looking back for seven years. So

1 not only are they intercepting the 625 going
2 forward, starting this year in a matter of
3 weeks, but we're also owed another
4 \$1.2 billion or so going back seven years to
5 reconcile what was actually owed to the local
6 governments. That's the reason your counties
7 in your district said it's underestimated.

8 SENATOR O'MARA: Okay. Right. Thank
9 you for bringing that reconciliation issue
10 up, because that's what I was going to get to
11 next.

12 What are counties left to do with this
13 kind of a hit of not getting paid
14 \$1.2 billion, now another 600-plus million?
15 Is there any choice but to raise property
16 taxes?

17 MR. ACQUARIO: Well, we have two
18 choices: It's raise taxes or cut services.
19 And cutting services or raising taxes is two
20 things that local governments don't want to
21 do. It's a dangerous thing to be doing right
22 now. We have so many things that we're
23 trying to face -- an affordability crisis.
24 It's unimaginable that we're even speaking

1 about counties paying more in Medicaid in
2 2023.

3 SENATOR O'MARA: With all the unfunded
4 mandates that hit counties, really, what do
5 counties have left to cut? I mean, they've
6 been cut for 20 years. What's left? You got
7 any ideas? What can they -- what are they
8 going to be able to cut to cut into this kind
9 of an impact?

10 MR. ACQUARIO: Well, we have to pay
11 the state's bills first. And I didn't even
12 mention 18-B. Why are we talking about local
13 taxpayers paying for the counsel for the
14 poor? This is a state constitutional
15 obligation. It's outrageous that local
16 governments are being asked to provide
17 counsel for the poor when it's a federal
18 constitutional responsibility on the states.

19 SENATOR O'MARA: Oh, absolutely. And
20 you're ahead of me today, Steve, because you
21 keep getting into issues that I wanted to
22 talk about.

23 But do you have a breakdown of what
24 the total impact to counties is going to be

1 with putting this additional hourly rate on
2 top -- it's a massive increase in the rate,
3 which some was due, don't get me wrong. But
4 to do it all at once is a huge hit. So you
5 gave me the breakdown by county of the eFMAP;
6 do you have something like that available or
7 can you get us a breakdown of what we think
8 this is going to really impact the counties
9 with, providing this? And that again is
10 going to be thrust on the property taxpayer.

11 MR. ACQUARIO: Yes, and I think that's
12 something that we have to address and fix, if
13 you will. We're looking just shy of \$100
14 million for the counties. We estimate
15 between 85 million to -- 65 million the first
16 year and then 85 million for the 57 counties.
17 So we'll try to get a breakdown by county on
18 that.

19 SENATOR O'MARA: Yeah, that would be
20 helpful, because I'm sure I'm going to start
21 hearing those numbers from my counties as
22 well.

23 MR. ACQUARIO: Another 100 million
24 inside New York City as well.

1 SENATOR O'MARA: Okay. All right.

2 Peter, I ran out of time. Sorry. But
3 I'm with you on the zoning issues. Just --
4 it's another attack on local government,
5 local control that is the wrong direction
6 from where we should be going in Albany. So
7 I'll be advocating on behalf of those issues
8 for you as well. So thank you.

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.
10 Assembly.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Before we go to
12 our next questioner, I wanted to acknowledge
13 that we've been joined by Assemblywoman
14 Walker, Assemblywoman Shimsky, Assemblywoman
15 Levenberg, and Assemblyman Jacobson.

16 And now we go to Assemblyman Reilly
17 for five minutes.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you,
19 Madam Chair --

20 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Actually, I'm
21 sorry -- I'm sorry, you only get three
22 minutes, because you're the Cities ranker and
23 not the --

24 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: But we have

1 mayors.

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Huh?

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Do you need a
4 mic?

5 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: No, I was saying
6 that we have -- it's the Conference of
7 Mayors. I thought that was Cities as well.

8 (Off the record.)

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: No, we kind of
10 worked it out in advance. Okay?

11 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: All right, fair
12 enough. I'll be quick.

13 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Try and make it
14 in five minutes.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Okay.

16 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I mean in three
17 minutes.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: All right. I'll
19 stick to the three, that's fine. Thank you.

20 Mr. Baynes, I saw in your written
21 testimony that you highlight the municipal
22 employee recruitment and retention. And in
23 there you start talking about the
24 opportunities of having a wider pool of

1 candidates. You mentioned the 212 waiver for
2 Retirement and Social Security Law, and
3 raising the cap from the 35,000 limit for
4 pensioners. Specifically in here it says for
5 retired teachers.

6 When you talk about raising the cap,
7 what limit do you think is suitable? And
8 what kind of cost savings come along with
9 that if the cap, the 212 cap, is raised? So
10 basically what number do you think it should
11 be, and what kind of cost savings do you
12 think it will --

13 MR. BAYNES: Well, all we're asking
14 for is the same treatment the schools are
15 getting. So the schools already have a
16 waiver, during COVID they were given a waiver
17 for retired teachers, they could come back --
18 I don't know if there is a cap at all.

19 So what we're saying is we're finding
20 with our members they're having the same
21 problem filling positions. They have retired
22 village managers, city managers that still
23 live in the community that could come back
24 and help them get through periods when

1 they're having a hard time, you know,
2 recruiting and retaining employees. So we're
3 just asking -- it's not just schools -- what
4 we're saying is it's not just the schools
5 facing that recruitment and retention
6 problem, it's also the municipalities.

7 So whatever's being done for the
8 schools in that regard, we'd like to see it
9 be done for municipalities.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: So, I mean, I'd
11 love to get -- especially, I'm sure, with the
12 counties it will be the same thing. I'd love
13 to get more information and see what cap
14 you're looking at, what you think may be
15 reasonable. Because I know that we -- you
16 know, there's the ability of keeping a
17 safeguard, right, because we still have a
18 211 waiver where you have to get special
19 permission over a certain amount of money,
20 over the \$35,000 cap.

21 So I think it's very critical that we
22 determine what the needs for each
23 municipality and each county may be in
24 hiring, and to weigh that with what kind of

1 savings they'll make because they won't have
2 to give health insurance -- because the
3 retiree already has health insurance --
4 something like that. So I think more
5 analysis may help us with that.

6 MR. BAYNES: Okay, we'll be happy to
7 do that.

8 I should also mention we're in favor
9 as well of the Governor's proposal for
10 continuous recruitment in civil service.
11 That's a problem we're hearing all across the
12 state, is the civil service exams aren't
13 being offered. So the Governor has advanced
14 a proposal that would keep -- there would be
15 continuous testing going on for civil service
16 positions to help municipalities and the
17 state fill the vacant positions they have.
18 So it's a related issue that we support as
19 well.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you so
21 much.

22 Look at that, in the three minutes.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So you didn't
24 need the five.

1 (Laughter.)

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: He gave us three
4 seconds back.

5 Senator May for three minutes and
6 three seconds.

7 (Laughter.)

8 SENATOR MAY: Thank you. Thank you.

9 Mr. Baynes, I have one quick question
10 for you. I'm curious about this proposal for
11 the municipal operational aid. Do you have a
12 specific idea of how that 100 million would
13 be spent and how it would be allocated among
14 municipalities?

15 MR. BAYNES: We do not.

16 I mean, what -- the point we're trying
17 to make is after 14 years of AIM not being
18 increased, we certainly think that doesn't
19 mean it doesn't need to be done -- it needs
20 to be done more than ever.

21 But there seems to be some inherent
22 problem with AIM being attractive to
23 governors approving it. Because what we've
24 been told every year is the Senate and

1 Assembly -- and you've evidenced it by
2 putting it in your one-house budgets. It
3 gets in there, gets to the negotiating table,
4 and whoever the Governor may be at the time
5 says, No, not doing it.

6 So there's -- we're just trying to
7 find a new approach if that isn't going to
8 happen. Maybe it's -- maybe it's somehow
9 trying it into this housing issue. Or maybe
10 we need a new program altogether, and that's
11 what we allude to there. Something that goes
12 toward municipal operations.

13 SENATOR MAY: Okay, that's helpful.
14 Thank you.

15 So I want to get back to the zoning
16 issue, because in Syracuse or Onondaga county
17 outside of Syracuse, multifamily housing is
18 allowed by right on 1 percent of the land,
19 only 5 percent allows enough density to
20 support a walkable neighborhood or transit, a
21 quarter of the land is zoned for
22 single-family housing of an acre or more.
23 This doesn't serve young people who want
24 walkable communities, people who work -- the

1 future Micron employees we're going to be
2 trying to attract. It doesn't support --
3 it's a vision of the past, of what the good
4 life is like that came from an earlier time.
5 And the people who are sitting on the zoning
6 boards aren't the future people, they're the
7 past people.

8 So how do we get the surrounding
9 communities to look at their zoning codes,
10 not just to say, oh, we have to preserve the
11 character of the community -- because those
12 of us in Syracuse who are dealing with some
13 of the worst concentrated poverty in the
14 country hear that as just, Oh, we don't want
15 you in our communities.

16 How do we make this a conversation of
17 the whole and not just the individual local
18 government saying, We need to control what we
19 have here?

20 MR. BAYNES: Well, I really think it
21 has to come from the bottom up. It's got to
22 come from the community. There have to be
23 people expressing the view you expressed so
24 eloquently. And that's what drives change at

1 the local level.

2 I just don't think the state can have
3 a blanket approach to all those communities.
4 There's some villages I'm sure in Onondaga
5 County that are doing the right thing, but
6 some towns are doing what you described. But
7 there has -- the motivation has to come from
8 within, I think, to make it happen.

9 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very
11 much.

12 Assembly.

13 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman
14 Manktelow.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: Thank you,
16 Madam Chair.

17 Thanks, Steven, thank you for being
18 here.

19 I was reading through your testimony,
20 and I do like that I see the support of NYSAC
21 as far as the Joseph P. Dwyer funding across
22 the state, so thank you for that. As a
23 veteran, and as the ranker on the Veterans
24 Committee, I thank you.

1 And also I saw support for the
2 increased investment for the tax credits for
3 the farmers that NYSAC supports. Thank you
4 for that as well.

5 One of the questions I'd like to ask a
6 little bit about is real property taxes.
7 What's NYSAC's position as far as the excess
8 foreclosure proceeds that are done across the
9 state?

10 MR. ACQUARIO: Well, the -- thank you,
11 Assemblyman. It's nice to see you as well.

12 We don't know why it's being proposed
13 right now. We're of course talking about in
14 rem foreclosure. When individuals do not pay
15 their property taxes, the counties often --
16 well, in many instances make the local
17 governments whole. As part of that process,
18 the counties then have to go through a
19 lengthy foreclosure process, ultimately
20 selling those parcels.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: I'm familiar
22 with the process.

23 MR. ACQUARIO: We have several issues
24 with it. We are submitting technical changes

1 to the Governor by the end of this week.

2 We oppose it right now.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: You oppose it?

4 MR. ACQUARIO: We oppose it as
5 written.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: Would you
7 share those changes with us? Is that
8 possible?

9 MR. ACQUARIO: Of course.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: I'd like to
11 see them, because I know back in my home
12 county, Wayne County, I know there's concerns
13 from the Tax Department as well there, from
14 the Treasurer's office.

15 MR. ACQUARIO: Pretty much every
16 county weighed in with us, the treasurers,
17 that were opposed to this.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: Okay. All
19 right, I appreciate that.

20 My second question is, as I looked at
21 the CHIPS funding and the Marchiselli funds
22 all being level, I know that looking at the
23 roads in our villages, our towns, our
24 counties, our communities, even our state

1 roads, we have a serious issue with
2 infrastructure. And if we're going to start
3 building affordable housing, if we're going
4 to grow our communities, what do we need to
5 do to up that number? What can we do, and
6 what is either one of your positions on that?
7 I think I already know, but I want to know
8 what your thoughts are on infrastructure.

9 MR. ACQUARIO: Well, I'll start, give
10 some time to Peter. I think we need a
11 scheduled increase in our water, drinking
12 water, and our roads and infrastructure,
13 sewer. Everything needs to be a scheduled
14 increase. This is a massive road system that
15 we have, 85,000 or 115,000 in local-road
16 miles. We have bridges that need constant --
17 need to upgrade.

18 So the state making a continued
19 investment in this program for us is welcome
20 and appreciated.

21 MR. BAYNES: Yeah, I agree with Steve.
22 You know, water, sewer, roads -- they're all
23 too integral to the success of communities
24 and the state economically, quality of life.

1 They're too valuable to be dealt with in an
2 ad hoc basis.

3 So, you know, a scheduled commitment
4 from the state to local governments is really
5 critical to make that work.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: Well, I
7 appreciate your comments. And thank you all
8 for being here, because we know how vital it
9 is for our school buses, our first
10 responders -- it just -- it ties everything
11 together. So thank you for your time.

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Liu's
14 joined us.

15 Might you have any questions,
16 Senator Liu?

17 SENATOR LIU: Madam Chair, I have
18 joined you since 9:30 this morning. And I've
19 been going back-and-forth to conference as
20 well as to the vote that we had this
21 afternoon in session, and to explain my vote.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I did not mean to
23 misstate anything. Yes, you are a loyal
24 member of this committee --

1 (Laughter.)

2 SENATOR LIU: And I think we have the
3 potential tonight to achieve the goal.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We'll see that
5 tonight. But did you have any questions for
6 our guests?

7 SENATOR LIU: Not for this panel.
8 Thank you, Madam Chair.

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very
10 much, Senator Liu.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we'll go to
12 Assemblyman Otis, three minutes.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you.

14 A question for both of you,
15 cybersecurity. What could New York State be
16 doing more to help municipalities or counties
17 in terms of protecting themselves from
18 cybersecurity threats?

19 MR. BAYNES: I mean, that's a tough
20 issue. As we all know, I mean, an attack can
21 happen in Suffolk County, we know it can
22 happen in just about any municipality in the
23 state.

24 We, Steve and I, and the Association

1 of Towns, we sponsor an insurance reciprocal,
2 New York Municipal Insurance Reciprocal, that
3 has over 900 municipalities as members. They
4 all have that concern. So we have concerns
5 from both angles, it's just our normal
6 members and members of the reciprocal. We've
7 had productive conversations with the state,
8 with ITS and with DHSES, and they want to do
9 as much as they can. They have limited
10 resources, so at this point most of its going
11 to the larger municipalities.

12 We'd like to see an approach that
13 makes sure the -- you know, we have
14 1500 small local governments in New York --
15 that they are getting the same kind of
16 attention. We've offered the three
17 associations to help coordinate an effort to
18 help all those smaller local governments be
19 prepared for cyberattacks before they happen,
20 rather than just trying to help them after
21 the fact.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you, Peter.

23 Steve?

24 MR. ACQUARIO: Just a quick response.

1 Make a significant and ongoing
2 investment in the joint state operations
3 center, the JSOC. Very important that the
4 state centralize and coordinate cybersecurity
5 funding, resources, computerization
6 assistance. It's an extremely important
7 threat to our society and to our governments.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: So the state is,
9 for some counties and some big cities,
10 offering end-point security, that whole
11 thing. Would you like to see that expanded
12 to a broader group of --

13 MR. ACQUARIO: Without question.

14 MR. BAYNES: Yes.

15 MR. ACQUARIO: Incredibly important.
16 Yes.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you very
18 much. And thank you, both of you, for your
19 many years of dedicated work for counties,
20 villages and cities.

21 MR. ACQUARIO: Thank you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

23 There are no more Senators with
24 questions, so we're going to go to

1 Assemblyman Eachus.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you,
3 Madam Chair.

4 Thank you, gentlemen, for coming and
5 giving your testimony.

6 My name is Chris Eachus. I'm in the
7 99th District, which is Orange County and
8 Rockland County. And I want you to know
9 right away I'm all for home rule, and I'd
10 much rather approach you with the issues
11 about affordable housing with a carrot than
12 with a stick, no question about it. So --
13 and I've heard from municipal leaders that
14 there is no more space, especially down in
15 Rockland, to fulfill the needs or the
16 requirements that we have.

17 I would like to talk to you to about
18 IDA. It was brought up. I'm well aware of
19 how IDAs work. We, by the way, have five
20 IDAs in our county alone. And I do
21 understand what a PILOT is and so on like
22 that. And Mr. Acquario, you are really
23 correct when you said we informed the
24 municipalities. But you don't -- or they

1 don't, the IDAs do not inform all the taxing
2 entities -- the school districts, the fire
3 departments, and so on like that, which are
4 also affected by these PILOTS.

5 And so I'm going to propose a --
6 something to go forward where these IDAs
7 should inform all the taxing entities that
8 are there. Are you okay with that?

9 MR. ACQUARIO: Yes.

10 MR. BAYNES: Yes, we'd support that.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Okay, great,
12 thank you.

13 The second question that I actually
14 have is it says in here something about
15 establishing nine regional EMS organizations.
16 In Orange County we have a wonderful EMS
17 Center and all. How did you come up with
18 nine regional EMS?

19 May I preface that with our EMS is
20 under attack -- we are losing them, they're
21 going bankrupt, you know, they're not getting
22 volunteers, the whole deal. So I understand
23 that. But I just wanted a better explanation
24 of the nine EMS regional organizations.

1 MR. BAYNES: I mean, that was proposed
2 by the Governor. I'm not familiar with how
3 they got the nine or what the nine are
4 comprised of. We as an organization
5 generally, even sitting next to Steve
6 Acquario, we like local government services
7 to be controlled locally. We're not the
8 biggest proponents of regionalism.

9 But I think in this EMS realm it's
10 such a big problem. It inherently crosses
11 borders by its very nature. We do think
12 there needs to be some regional approach to
13 fixing the problem that every community's
14 facing right now.

15 MR. ACQUARIO: Well, I'd like to just
16 add to Peter's response. This is an
17 extremely important issue here. Last year
18 you did a -- made an important step towards
19 this in allowing the ambulance companies to
20 bill Medicaid and bill insurance companies.
21 That is going to be very important to us. We
22 are taking reports from the most urban parts
23 of the state, in Nassau and Suffolk County,
24 that this is a huge problem, to the North

1 Country and everywhere else in between.

2 Volunteer recruitment is also a
3 problem here, so please spend some time on
4 this issue through the rest of the session.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: I certainly will.

6 MR. ACQUARIO: Thank you.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: The last thing I
8 have is you are okay with us expanding the
9 tobacco tax, but then you want us to do away
10 with the flavors. And it seems like a give
11 and a take there.

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: That's -- we're
13 going to have to wait to find out --

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: People should
15 stop smoking cigarettes.

16 (Laughter.)

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we go to
18 Assemblyman Epstein, three minutes.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

20 Thank you both for being here.

21 Do you know if any of your localities
22 applied for the first RFP for the ADU money?
23 We allocated 85 million last year. I think
24 the Governor's HCR gave out the first

1 portion. Do you know if anyone applied and
2 received that funding?

3 MR. ACQUARIO: I don't know.

4 MR. BAYNES: I'm not familiar with
5 that. I would imagine some of our members,
6 if the money was available, some of our
7 members applied for it.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Is it possible
9 to get that to me later, to find out who did?

10 MR. BAYNES: Sure.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Because I think
12 the question we're talking about is housing
13 and how do we get more housing across the
14 state. And I appreciate your focus on
15 affordability. But so then we put in
16 85 million for ADUs, and if people are
17 applying then we need to, you know, expand
18 that funding source. If people aren't
19 applying, that's good to know as well, and
20 why they didn't apply.

21 So and, you know, we also mentioned,
22 you know, the Governor's put money aside for
23 infrastructure for housing. You know, I
24 don't think 250 million is enough, but we

1 need to figure out what would be helpful to
2 build the infrastructure you need to build
3 the housing. Is there a way to kind of get
4 that information in a -- you know, obviously
5 not to the dollar, but what we really need to
6 be talking about for infrastructure to build
7 the housing we need.

8 MR. BAYNES: Okay, we'll get that
9 together for you.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And maybe think
11 about the ways that money could come. So you
12 mentioned AIM before. Maybe AIM isn't the
13 right -- or CHIPS isn't the right place. But
14 what is the vehicle, and how does it help?

15 Like, you know, we need the housing,
16 we all acknowledge that we need the housing.
17 You know, 1.2 million people with 400,000
18 units, obviously we're lopsided. We're in a
19 bit of a crisis. So how do we get there and
20 what do we need to do to get there, is really
21 I think what we're all trying to grapple
22 with. But unless we're all talking to each
23 other, we're never going to get there.

24 MR. BAYNES: Well, as Steve said

1 earlier, and I agree a hundred percent, the
2 Governor, by putting this bold plan out
3 there, has done a service by bringing this
4 issue forward. I mean, I've been at this
5 table 15 years or so; I don't remember it
6 ever really being an issue to talk about.
7 But it was certainly a need.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Yeah, so maybe
9 what we can be doing is thinking about like
10 what would be -- what are those other
11 approaches. If the mandate statewide,
12 one-size-fits-all, doesn't work -- and I hear
13 what you're saying, but we're all saying we
14 need to do it and we need to incentivize it
15 being done. You know, do we -- if you do an
16 ADU ordinance, is there a financial gain? If
17 you do something around, you know,
18 transit-oriented development, is there some
19 kind of resource? Is it that approach, then,
20 that works for you all?

21 Like what is the approach that works?

22 MR. BAYNES: I think that kind of
23 approach where there's a clear connection
24 between the money you're receiving and the

1 goals you're achieving -- you know, the
2 appropriate goals -- I think that makes a lot
3 of sense.

4 What we've been doing at NYCOM since
5 the proposal came out is trying to put
6 together sort of a menu of incentives and
7 options along the lines of what you're
8 talking about, and we'll certainly be getting
9 that to all the members of the Legislature.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

11 MR. ACQUARIO: Let me just say,
12 Assemblymember, real quick here, I don't
13 think there was an appropriation behind that
14 ADU. There was never a grant program. So
15 maybe the state should do something like
16 that.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: HCR released
18 money --

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.
20 We go to Assemblywoman Levenberg.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEVENBERG: Are we on?
22 Okay. Thank you. Sorry I actually missed
23 the testimony. I tried to do a little
24 catch-up here. But just to comment on a

1 couple of things -- thank you, Madam Chair.

2 The -- I wanted to give a shout-out to
3 Senator May in terms of the -- what -- you
4 know, again, and also Assemblyman Epstein --
5 what is the actual solution. I heard a
6 couple of my former colleagues from local
7 government, and I just came from local
8 government very recently, talk about, you
9 know -- for especially somebody who's
10 actually in a Tier 2 region in TOD -- that
11 what would be helpful would be to give goals
12 with specific deadlines and consequences, but
13 then give the localities the ability to
14 figure out how to achieve those goals.

15 And I think, you know, that what we've
16 certainly been hearing from our colleagues
17 here that made many of these -- the targets
18 in the TOD in that half-mile radius are
19 unrealistic. But I do think that, you know,
20 we need to consider the fact that zoning and
21 home rule, while it seems like something
22 that's a given and it is great, is what got
23 us here in the first place, what got us to
24 this period of unaffordability, to redlining,

1 in many cases, and other ill housing
2 situations that we now find ourselves in as a
3 state.

4 And, you know, I think that the
5 Governor's potential -- you know, her -- what
6 she's put out there is extremely bold and
7 potentially unrealistic. But, you know, I
8 think we would welcome, Mr. Baynes, whatever
9 suggestions, you know, you are hearing. But
10 it can't just be for these willing
11 communities. Because not all communities are
12 willing to look some of these issues in the
13 face and actually figure out ways to fix
14 them.

15 And also, you know, we have to admit
16 that our suburbs just don't look at even
17 climate change realistically. And making our
18 communities more walkable and bikeable and
19 accessible by other public transportation is
20 something that we need to acknowledge also
21 adds to affordability and livability. So I
22 think that we have to figure out other
23 solutions.

24 My other question is not specific to

1 the housing issue as much, but I would like
2 to know how many counties -- this has to do
3 with sales tax. How many of the counties
4 actually share a portion of their sales tax
5 back with their municipalities? I'd really
6 like to know that, because I know that that's
7 come up with this sales tax.

8 Do you know that?

9 MR. ACQUARIO: Yes. Well, the vast
10 majority of them do.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEVENBERG: The vast
12 majority. But not all.

13 MR. ACQUARIO: No, not all.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEVENBERG: Okay. I
15 would love to -- if I could find out what
16 that -- what that actual number is.

17 MR. ACQUARIO: Absolutely. We can
18 give you a chart.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEVENBERG: I'd really
20 like to have that information.

21 And of course many of the other
22 proposals that you include here are
23 critically important, I think. And thank you
24 for your testimony.

1 MR. ACQUARIO: Thank you.

2 MR. BAYNES: Thank you.

3 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

4 We go now to Assemblywoman Shimsky.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Thank you so
6 much, Madam Chairs.

7 It's good to see my friends from NYSAC
8 and the Council of Mayors here today.

9 We've got obviously a certain level of
10 issues that we've been hearing from our local
11 governments about the housing compact and
12 transit-oriented development. One question I
13 have for you is, what have you considered
14 vis-a-vis especially the transit-oriented
15 development and its impact on affordable
16 housing? In many of my communities the most
17 affordable housing in town is close to the
18 train stations. And obviously building
19 high-rises without thought to their
20 affordability is going to reduce our
21 affordability overall.

22 MR. BAYNES: I mean, as I alluded to
23 before, we have -- we have communities
24 downstate that have tapped into the

1 attractiveness of transit-oriented
2 development and are working to achieve that.

3 So I think it's just a matter of
4 incentivizing more communities to do it, so
5 that -- I mean, they're never going to do it
6 if it does not make sense for their
7 community. But sometimes just to get across
8 the finish line, it's some support from the
9 state to do that.

10 So again, a mandate's not going to
11 work, but we need more of it, more TODs. And
12 I think there are municipalities out there
13 that want to go down that road.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: I'm glad you
15 brought up -- alluded to the infrastructure
16 piece, because one of the big issues is going
17 to be sewers, which is one of the most
18 cost-intensive things that local governments
19 do in terms of infrastructure. And as we all
20 know, all kinds of infrastructure programs to
21 help our municipalities, including the road
22 and bridge funds and so on, are not keeping
23 pace with what our local governments need.

24 If we were thinking about how much

1 infrastructure development money we may need
2 year over year for the next several years, I
3 think there's 250 million in this year's
4 budget -- which sounds like a lot of money
5 until you start doing the back of the napkin.

6 MR. BAYNES: Right.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: What do you
8 see as a more realistic number for funding --
9 if not this year, because people still have
10 to design. But this year and especially in
11 future outyears, what that investment should
12 probably look like.

13 MR. BAYNES: Yeah, it definitely will
14 begin with a B and not an M.

15 (Laughter.)

16 MR. BAYNES: You know, that's for
17 sure. I mean, the 500 million that's put
18 into the Clean Water infrastructure Act every
19 year, that is well over-subscribed for. So
20 that just shows you that it's going to need
21 to be multiples of that to be successful.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Okay, great.
23 That's all I have.

24 Thank you, Madam Chairs.

1 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

2 I believe that we have no other
3 legislators with questions. So thank you.
4 Thank you all for being here with us today.

5 MR. BAYNES: Thank you.

6 MR. ACQUARIO: Thank you.

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very
8 much on behalf of the Senate.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And now we are
10 going to go to Panel D: New York State
11 Election Commissioners Association;
12 Fair Elections for New York; and Brennan
13 Center for Justice at NYU School of Law.

14 And just as a reminder as you're
15 coming down the stairs, that it is -- for the
16 panel, you each will have three minutes.

17 After the panel's finished,
18 legislators -- all legislators -- any
19 legislator who wants to ask a question will
20 have three minutes. And again, when you ask
21 the question, it's for the question and the
22 answer, so please leave time if you're
23 asking.

24 Before you begin, I just want to

1 reiterate, because this is the public group,
2 your testimony was received, it was
3 distributed to all the members a couple of
4 days ago, everybody has it. Keep an eye on
5 the clock. Three minutes goes pretty fast if
6 you -- particularly if you start to read and
7 not just hit the highlights of your
8 testimony.

9 So yes, if you can begin.

10 MR. CZARNY: Thank you.

11 My name's Dustin Czarny. I'm the
12 Democratic Caucus Chair for the New York
13 State Election Commissioners Association.
14 But I'm here today on behalf of the entire
15 association, as we have quite a bit of
16 agreement from our Republican and Democratic
17 caucuses on funding that is vitally needed
18 for county boards of elections, which was
19 left out of the Governor's budget.

20 We are asking today for \$10 million in
21 capital funding and \$10 million in Aid to
22 Localities. And the reason we are asking
23 that is it's a similar level of investment
24 that this body made in 2019 when we converted

1 over to the early voting and electronic poll
2 books.

3 The capital funding that we are asking
4 for is needed because we are getting
5 next-generation precinct scanners, the
6 scanners that are in the polling places,
7 these are coming online over the next year.
8 The New York State Board of Elections will be
9 certifying new precinct scanners, and we --
10 many counties do not have the funds to be
11 able to purchase this. And many of our
12 scanners in our election polling places are
13 up to 15 years old. So it is time to move on
14 to the next generation and serve our voters
15 better.

16 Also our electronic poll books now are
17 getting to be four to five years told. These
18 iPads usually have a shelf life of about five
19 to seven years. So over the next few years
20 we're going to have to start replacing those
21 poll pads as well.

22 The Aid to Localities funding would go
23 to help us staff up our polling -- or our
24 boards of elections offices to be able to

1 deal with the upcoming presidential election
2 and also the new reforms that this body has
3 put in place -- specifically, the 10-day
4 registration. The new deadline is going to
5 be an enormous hurdle for us to meet, and we
6 can do so with properly trained, full-time
7 staff. And Aid to Localities funding will
8 help minimize some of the burden that a --
9 the minimum staffing bill that was passed by
10 the Senate -- that I hope will be passed by
11 the Assembly -- and full-time commissioners
12 that are vitally needed in these counties.

13 And finally I want to wrap this up and
14 say that New York State is -- the reason I
15 always come before you every year and ask for
16 money is New York State is one of the few
17 states that does not provide annual funding
18 to cover their elections. I believe it's
19 less than 20 -- maybe it's less than 15
20 states now -- that New York is one of that
21 don't provide any dedicated money to their
22 county boards of elections.

23 This money is needed because we run
24 your elections as well. We run State Supreme

1 Court elections, we run ballot props. And we
2 need to look at having annual funding to
3 offset those costs.

4 Thank you. That's my time.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

6 Go ahead, yes.

7 MS. WHARTON: Good afternoon.

8 Thank you for the opportunity to
9 testify in support of funding the Public
10 Campaign Finance Program, otherwise known as
11 the PCFP. My name is Karen Wharton, and I
12 facilitate the Fair Elections for New York
13 Coalition, and I'm very happy to say that I'm
14 also a constituent of Chairperson Weinstein.

15 In 2020 we successfully advocated for
16 the passage of the country's most significant
17 finance reform law since the Supreme Court's
18 2010 decision in Citizens United. This
19 created a PCFP that allows candidates to run
20 for office without relying on the power of
21 big-money donors at any stage.

22 The program is voluntary and allows
23 legislative and statewide candidates who opt
24 in and who meet all the requirements to

1 receive a multiple match on small
2 contributions they raise from their
3 constituents. Lawmakers of diverse
4 backgrounds have already initiated the
5 process of opting in.

6 This program is needed and must be
7 fully funded this year. Big money dominates
8 campaign financing. In 2022, the 200 biggest
9 donors in New York gave almost \$16 million to
10 state candidates. They gave more than
11 200,000 of the state's smaller donors, who
12 gave \$250 or less. So if money talks,
13 200 people have a greater voice in our
14 elections than 200,000. That is not
15 democracy. That's a rigged system.

16 People's impression is that the
17 influence of the rich and the big
18 corporations is silencing ordinary voices.
19 They see this in the many newly constructed
20 apartment buildings partly subsidized by
21 public dollars but with rents that are just
22 too damn high. The perception is that pay to
23 play is rampant and that our votes don't
24 count.

1 Democracy includes voting, determining
2 who is on the ballot, how resources are
3 allocated and to whom. The PCFP gives
4 regular folks a significant say in who is on
5 the ballot because it reforms how campaigns
6 are financed. People can now give small
7 donations to their candidates of choice and
8 have it be worth as much as the big donors.
9 Programs like the NYIC in New York City and
10 Connecticut prove that more people
11 participate in our democracy as small donors
12 under these systems. They feel more
13 connected and engaged with their local
14 representatives.

15 Now, President Johnson signed the 1964
16 Civil Rights Bill because it was the right
17 thing to do. So I call on you to do the
18 right thing today for our state, our
19 democracy, by funding this program.

20 Thank you.

21 MS. PINO: Good afternoon, Chairs
22 Weinstein and Krueger and members of this
23 Legislature. My name is Marina Pino, and I'm
24 counsel at the Brennan Center for Justice.

1 Thank you for this opportunity to testify in
2 support of funding for our democracy's
3 infrastructure in this budget.

4 We commend this body for championing
5 crucial democracy reforms. You have made
6 New York a leader in fighting race-based
7 voter suppression and provided a blueprint
8 for campaign finance reform nationwide. With
9 its launch last November, the state's
10 groundbreaking new small-donor public
11 financing program is the best solution this
12 country has ever seen to counter the damage
13 that Citizens United has done to our
14 democracy. Thanks to your leadership,
15 candidates have begun opting into this
16 voluntary program.

17 The time is now to send a clear
18 message of reaffirmed, steadfast support for
19 reducing the outsized influence of wealth in
20 our elections by adequately funding this
21 program. The Executive Budget admirably
22 meets the Public Campaign Finance Board's
23 request of \$14.5 million for administrative
24 needs, including a well-trained agency staff

1 and software buildout costs, all of which
2 will set the program on a strong foundation
3 heading into the 2024 elections.

4 However, more resources are needed for
5 adequate public matching funds. The
6 Governor's proposed \$25 million is a start,
7 but we urge you to go farther. This
8 investment will give prospective participants
9 and voters who wish to engage as small donors
10 greater confidence in this program and will
11 help realize its promise to empower a greater
12 diversity of New Yorkers as donors and
13 meaningfully bring more constituents' voices
14 into our politics.

15 A recent data analysis shows that in
16 legislative elections the program could have
17 increased the financial power of small donors
18 six-fold, from 11 percent of all donations in
19 2022 to 67 percent. This increase is
20 entirely due to small donors who reside in
21 each candidate's legislative district.

22 Public financing, together with this
23 Legislature's other enacted voting reforms,
24 puts the state at the forefront of expanding

1 voter participation and strengthening
2 everyday New Yorkers' trust in their elected
3 government.

4 Last year New York emerged as a
5 national leader in restoring legal
6 protections against race-based voter
7 discrimination through the John R. Lewis
8 Voting Rights Act of New York. This
9 Legislature must ensure that the final budget
10 includes \$5 million for enforcing this law as
11 well as the voting and elections database
12 needed to realize the act's full promise.

13 And the final budget must include
14 designated funds to support reforms you have
15 advanced to reduce barriers to voter
16 registration.

17 To fully deliver all these reforms,
18 this Legislature must also prioritize
19 strengthening and funding election
20 administration across the state. We support
21 the bipartisan requests from local election
22 officials for more state funding. Along with
23 these resources, we urge you to enact
24 legislation to bring national best practices

1 to our state's election administration.

2 Thank you for your continued efforts
3 to boost our state's democracy. The Brennan
4 Center is ready to be of service, and I would
5 be glad to answer any of the questions you
6 may have. Thank you.

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you all.

8 We have a few members with questions.
9 We go first to Assemblywoman Walker.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALKER: Thank you.

11 Thank you for your testimony today.

12 I just have a few questions. What do
13 you believe with respect to poll worker
14 training? Do you believe that there's an
15 appetite for having local training at the
16 local board of election levels?

17 MR. CZARNY: Yes. In fact that is how
18 most poll workers are trained, at the local
19 board of elections levels.

20 We have worked as an association to
21 share best practices amongst the county
22 boards, and a lot of the training has been
23 somewhat standardized based on the electronic
24 poll books that we brought in in 2019.

1 There's three different vendors, so we can't
2 have a one-size-fits-all training. But the
3 electronic poll books have changed the way
4 we've done election inspector training, and
5 so it has to be done at the county level.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALKER: Awesome.

7 For the New York State Public Campaign
8 Finance Program, since its implementation are
9 you aware as to how many candidates may have
10 applied to participate in the program?

11 MS. WHARTON: Yes, Assemblymember. To
12 date, there have been about 15, maybe
13 16 members who have opened the PCFB
14 authorized account and therefore indicated
15 their intent to opt in, or at least they've
16 taken the first step.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALKER: Okay. And in
18 your estimation, I know you wrote it in your
19 testimony, but how much funding do you
20 believe would be necessary for us to --
21 needed in order to keep the program in place?

22 MS. WHARTON: So there are two
23 components. There's the administrative cost,
24 what keeps the program actually running, and

1 there is the matching fund for future
2 payouts.

3 And the board, the agency responsible
4 for this program, has asked for \$14.5 million
5 in the budget this year for administrative
6 costs. So that includes hiring personnel to
7 work with candidates to iron out any issues,
8 as well as bringing in -- building out their
9 technology, the infrastructure to support
10 this program.

11 And then there is the second
12 component, the second part, which is the
13 matching funds for future payouts, and that
14 is \$100 million that the board has asked for.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALKER: Okay. And also
16 with respect to my last -- I'll combine the
17 two questions. With respect to the John
18 Lewis Voting Rights Act, are you aware of
19 whether or not the Attorney General has also
20 made the request for the \$5 million that you
21 mentioned in your testimony?

22 And since I wasn't here for the
23 beginning of this hearing, do you think that
24 election fraud should be bail-eligible?

1 That's a joke.

2 (Laughter.)

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALKER: You can get
4 back to me with your response.

5 MS. PINO: I'm happy to supplement in
6 writing the response to your question,
7 Assemblywoman Walker.

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And when you do
9 that, please share with myself and Senator
10 Krueger so we can share with --

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Everybody.

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: -- all of the
13 members who are participating.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALKER: Awesome. Thank
15 you.

16 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to the
17 Senate.

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.
19 Senator Rachel May.

20 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

21 And thank you for your testimony.

22 Two questions I have. One is about
23 early voting. We've had several years of it.
24 What reforms would you like to see to boost

1 participation and make it, you know, more
2 effective?

3 MR. CZARNY: Well, I mean, I'm wearing
4 two hats today as the Democratic caucus chair
5 and representing the association as a whole.

6 The Democratic caucus is very much in
7 favor of early voting, has been, and in favor
8 of other reforms like the portable polling
9 place bill that you have put forward and has
10 passed the Senate twice now, which will give
11 us some flexibility.

12 One of the things that we are also
13 asking for changes as a bipartisan
14 association is to not have early voting
15 limited to cities first. There's a -- the
16 rule is that you have to put it in your
17 highest-locality city.

18 We have asked for that to be a 10,000
19 or more voter, because many counties,
20 especially counties -- I use Herkimer as an
21 example. It has Little Falls, which has like
22 4300 voters in it, and they have to put their
23 early voting center in it when it really
24 doesn't help the county as a whole. So we

1 ask for a limit on that.

2 Those are some of the reforms that
3 we're advocating for.

4 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

5 And then I'm happy to hear you talk
6 about having finance reform. I'm really
7 pleased to start running in that system.

8 There is a proposal to consolidate
9 elections into even years, and I'm wondering
10 if any of you can talk about how that would
11 boost participation or save costs.

12 MR. CZARNY: So I think that -- I
13 think it's a worthy proposal, worthy of
14 continuing discussion on moving the elections
15 to even years.

16 I get a little worried about ballot
17 length. I do get a little worried about
18 drop-off of races from the top to the bottom
19 if everything is on every two years.

20 And I do know that there's
21 constitutional issues with cities and county
22 constitutional offices and Supreme Court and
23 justice -- judicial contests. So we will
24 always have an election every year. It's

1 just the number of people in different
2 elections.

3 I would love to see a transition of
4 especially some of the more populous races
5 like county legislatures or county, you know,
6 executives, clerks, these kind of things that
7 could maybe benefit from even-year elections
8 as opposed to odd-year elections, without
9 having to deal with the constitutional issues
10 of transferring cities and other things.

11 SENATOR MAY: Okay, thanks. I think
12 I'm going to try to cut off at seven minutes
13 because I only have three minutes to --

14 (Laughter; overtalk.)

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: She's fabulous,
16 but she also only gets three minutes.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Three minutes.
18 We're in the three-minute public session.

19 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

20 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you,
21 Rachel.

22 Assembly?

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We have
24 Assemblyman Jacobson, three minutes.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Thank you,
2 Madam Chair.

3 And good to see you. The commissioner
4 was here last year, I don't think the other
5 two were. But good to see you this year.

6 We have made significant and
7 long-overdue election reforms since 2019 but
8 implementing these changes does not happen by
9 itself. I represent parts of three
10 counties -- Orange, Dutchess and Ulster.
11 Each of the counties I represent have had to
12 hire additional workers, particularly for the
13 programs for correcting absentee ballots, for
14 counting the absentee ballots prior to the
15 election, and for the additional early voting
16 sites.

17 Also there's been a need to upgrade
18 the equipment. On-demand printers are great,
19 it avoids errors, but the printers are worn
20 out. Same thing with the scanners, the ones
21 that count the votes. We have problems that
22 they're getting older, and we need new ones;
23 the software is much better.

24 I've proposed an additional

1 \$20 million of additional money in the state
2 budget, \$10 million for personnel, 10 million
3 for equipment. It would be distributed as in
4 the past, according to the enrollment in each
5 of the counties. And I'd like to know what
6 you think of that as a proposal and whether
7 it makes sense. Obviously we'd always like
8 more, but I'd like to hear.

9 MR. CZARNY: I -- this mirrors our
10 proposal as well, so I think it's a great
11 proposal.

12 But -- and it is absolutely needed.
13 We are at a time where our equipment is
14 starting to fail. These precinct scanners
15 have a life of about 10 years; some of them
16 are 15 years old now. Some of them are
17 getting -- even the ones that were replaced a
18 few years ago, they're starting to get to the
19 end of their useful life.

20 And the new scanners at the polling
21 place level will make it better for the
22 voters because they can accept the ballots
23 quicker, read them faster, and allow lines to
24 move through.

1 The on-demand printers save money on
2 ballot costs; are green, because we're not
3 printing up ballots that are unused because
4 we have to guess how many ballots are going
5 to be used. And before the on-demand
6 printers we would have to --

7 ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Have you found
8 this in all the counties, the need for more
9 workers, the need for more equipment?

10 MR. CZARNY: Absolutely. It's a
11 resounding chorus from our commissioners that
12 we need more workers and we need capital
13 funding.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: And I've only
15 got 20 seconds. I mean, you guys can chime
16 in also, I'm not trying to -- I have two
17 bills to reform the Board of Elections. One
18 is A919 that would make all commissioners
19 full-time, and the other, A111, which would
20 allow applications for absentee ballots to be
21 delivered on the day of Election Day. Right
22 now you have to go to court.

23 I want to know how you feel about
24 that.

1 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So they can
2 respond -- since it's not part of the budget
3 now, they can respond to those questions
4 afterwards.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: I have five
6 other bills, but I didn't try.

7 (Laughter.)

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We're going to
9 go to the Senate now.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Walczyk.

11 SENATOR WALCZYK: Thank you,
12 Madam Chair.

13 And we've been joined by Senators
14 Martins, Rolison, and Rhoads as well.

15 Dustin, how important is it to have
16 bipartisan -- to keep the bipartisan nature
17 of board of elections?

18 MR. CZARNY: I think it's vital. It
19 is what we've built the bedrock of our
20 electoral system on. And I believe that some
21 of the failures that have come about -- and
22 I've got to say there've been fewer and fewer
23 failures as we've gone about -- is resources,
24 we need resources. It's not about the

1 bipartisan structure.

2 But what the bipartisan structure does
3 is it provides confidence to the voters and
4 confidence that the correct work is going in
5 to determine the winner and believe the
6 results of the elections.

7 I had a race that had 10 votes
8 decided. Senator Mannion won that race. But
9 no one questioned the outcome of it, because
10 bipartisan workers were there at every step.

11 SENATOR WALCZYK: Should party chairs
12 be able to also serve as commissioners on
13 board of elections?

14 MR. CZARNY: So our association
15 doesn't have a standing on this, so I'm going
16 to give my personal opinion. I don't believe
17 so. I would never want to do that myself.
18 It's really hard to do that when there's
19 primaries, to be able to serve as a party
20 chair, which is delegating candidates, and
21 then also commissioner, that should be there
22 for all candidates.

23 SENATOR WALCZYK: Should elections
24 commissioners be full-time across the state?

1 MR. CZARNY: I do believe that.

2 SENATOR WALCZYK: Even in a county
3 like Hamilton County, where there's only 4600
4 registered voters?

5 MR. CZARNY: Even in a county like
6 Hamilton County. Because --

7 SENATOR WALCZYK: Why?

8 MR. CZARNY: Because we have an
9 expanded calendar, which requires a lot of
10 voter registration, and in those counties
11 there are smaller amounts of workers as well.
12 And the full-time commissioners in those
13 smaller counties are actually doing voter
14 registration and some of the other work that
15 is needed.

16 You need a commissioner there to make
17 decisions. Year round, we have an expanded
18 calendar and we need full-time commissioners.

19 SENATOR WALCZYK: Okay, appreciate
20 your comments.

21 So on -- this is more to the panel. I
22 know you had some testimony on public
23 campaign finance. So Lieutenant Governor
24 Benjamin was indicted on a campaign finance

1 bribery scheme. What should this Legislature
2 be putting forward, and what funding should
3 the Governor be considering in this budget to
4 prevent such egregious abuse of taxpayer
5 money in the future?

6 MS. PINO: So this program is the
7 strongest response we have to outside
8 spending and the grip that wealthy donors
9 have on our elections.

10 These funds are necessary right now
11 for candidates, voters and small donors who
12 wish to engage as such to trust that this
13 program is going to --

14 SENATOR WALCZYK: I'm not talking
15 about the funds, I'm talking about what
16 policies should we be considering to make
17 sure that those funds aren't abused the way
18 that Lieutenant Governor Benjamin abused
19 them.

20 MS. PINO: Thank you, Senator.

21 So this -- there are safeguards built
22 into the program to ensure that -- and this
23 also goes back to funding. When we talk
24 about administrative funds, the

1 \$14.5 million, this is to ensure that there
2 is a strong, well-trained agency staff, which
3 would include candidate liaisons to work with
4 candidates throughout the election cycle to
5 ensure that they're in compliance throughout
6 the entire program.

7 MS. WHARTON: May I chime in?

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm sorry, the
9 time is up.

10 Assembly.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I do not
12 believe at this time we have any further
13 Assemblymembers.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Well, we have
15 another Senator, Senator Rolison.

16 SENATOR RHOADS: Rhoads.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Oh, excuse me, I
18 apologize. (Indicating.) Rolison, Rhoads.
19 Not you, Senator. Senator Rhoads.

20 SENATOR RHOADS: Thank you,
21 Chairman -- Chairwoman, sorry.

22 With respect to voter identification,
23 free voter ID, why would that be or not be a
24 good idea?

1 MR. CZARNY: So, Senator, the
2 Democratic caucus would oppose voter ID; the
3 Republican caucus and commissioners support
4 voter ID.

5 SENATOR RHOADS: What's the rationale,
6 if you don't mind my asking. What's the
7 rationale behind it? What's wrong with
8 having somebody establish who they are when
9 they go to vote?

10 MR. CZARNY: So voter ID, as
11 implemented throughout New York State, has
12 shown -- or, I'm sorry, throughout the
13 United States, has shown a harmful, you know,
14 impact to voters that are elderly that may
15 not have the correct voter ID and also
16 college-age voters that may not have the
17 correct voter ID. We've seen it implemented
18 in a way that is harmful and prejudicial to
19 certain types of voters. We see it in Texas
20 where they allow a gun license for voter ID
21 but not a student ID issued by the state.

22 It's also a cost problem as well --

23 SENATOR RHOADS: If I can ask you,
24 when we actually pass legislation we have the

1 ability to control what the criteria are. So
2 in theory, what's the downside to --

3 MR. CZARNY: There's also usually a
4 cost prohibition. You know, a driver's
5 license will cost up to a hundred dollars to
6 get --

7 SENATOR RHOADS: What if it's free?

8 MR. CZARNY: "What if" is a big
9 question, and it's usually not.

10 And so -- and also we do have a
11 tremendous amount of data showing that there
12 is very little voter fraud. Infinitesimal
13 voter fraud. The amount of money that would
14 be spent to implement this type of voter ID
15 legislation would be harmful, it would be
16 onerous, and it would not actually have any
17 real benefit to the system that is already in
18 place.

19 The signature checks, the bipartisan
20 checks of elections commissioners are -- have
21 proven over time to be very -- work very well
22 in New York. We have little voter fraud.
23 And I don't see the need for it.

24 SENATOR RHOADS: Two years ago I had a

1 dead person vote in my ED.

2 MR. CZARNY: I'm sorry, so the dead
3 person showed a -- I'm sorry, which -- who
4 voted in your ED, a dead person?

5 SENATOR RHOADS: This was in
6 Nassau County.

7 MR. CZARNY: Okay. And was that an
8 absentee ballot?

9 SENATOR RHOADS: What's that?

10 MR. CZARNY: Was that an absentee
11 ballot, Senator?

12 SENATOR RHOADS: It was.

13 MR. CZARNY: So voter ID would not
14 actually help that particular situation,
15 since in-person voter ID would not have
16 helped that.

17 SENATOR RHOADS: We can't say there --
18 we can't say there isn't fraud, even if we
19 may disagree as to the volume of it.

20 MR. CZARNY: But I said -- I said -- I
21 said a little amount. I never said it was
22 perfect. No system designed by humans is
23 perfect.

24 SENATOR RHOADS: Just if I can --

1 because my time is limited. You spoke about
2 concerns about ballot length yet seem to
3 suggest that you think that moving town and
4 county elections to even-number years somehow
5 is a good idea.

6 When you have an election for town
7 supervisor, town clerk, receiver of taxes,
8 councilman, county legislature, county clerk,
9 county executive, how does that -- how does
10 that not create a concern for you with
11 respect to length of the ballot and
12 overshadowing issues that come up in local,
13 town and county elections?

14 MR. CZARNY: The time is up. I'll
15 happily provide a written response to you on
16 that.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

18 SENATOR RHOADS: I appreciate it.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Sorry. Thank
20 you. Assembly? Oh, we're going to continue,
21 I'm sorry.

22 Okay, we also have Senator Martins
23 who's joined us.

24 SENATOR MARTINS: Thank you.

1 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Oh, there you
2 are. I knew you were somewhere.

3 (Laughter.)

4 SENATOR MARTINS: (Mic off.)
5 Appreciate it. Thank you very much for the
6 opportunity.

7 Thank you for your testimony today.

8 I'm going to follow up on that last
9 question.

10 MR. CZARNY: Okay.

11 SENATOR MARTINS: I come from local
12 government. I served in the village
13 government years ago before coming to the
14 Senate. And I am concerned about all of the
15 elections moved to even-number years. I hear
16 from my colleagues in government, whether
17 they be county or town, that sometimes there
18 are issues that are specific to the town, the
19 county, the locality, that would be
20 overwhelmed perhaps by national issues or
21 statewide issues and therefore not get the
22 attention that they necessarily need, as a
23 concern.

24 Can you give me your thoughts about

1 why that would probably not be a good idea or
2 where you draw that line in moving elections
3 from odd years to even years?

4 MR. CZARNY: So I want to be clear,
5 the association as a whole has not made the
6 recommendation. So my thoughts here are my
7 personal thoughts on this.

8 However, I did say that it's worthy of
9 discussion. I'm not saying that I'm for all
10 of this. However, I hear this same argument
11 when it comes to moving village elections to
12 November; a lot of villages use that same
13 argument.

14 And in my county we've had five
15 villages move their elections to November.
16 And that didn't seem to happen. They are
17 still making choices -- in fact, it's
18 increased competition and it's also increased
19 activism at the village level.

20 So I do not believe that more voters
21 voting will actually overwhelm them. In fact
22 I think it has a beneficial benefit, that if
23 more people are actually choosing our
24 government officials, it reflects the voting

1 populace as a whole and we have better
2 government as a whole.

3 SENATOR MARTINS: (Mic off.) I
4 appreciate the context. My experience has
5 been quite the opposite, that when you have a
6 local district, whether it's a village or a
7 town, whatever it happens to be, you're
8 dealing with Main Street issues, not
9 necessarily with national issues, and keeping
10 the focus on what's important to those
11 localities so that those issues {inaudible}
12 are overwhelming locally.

13 I wanted to ask you -- you know, there
14 is a tremendous amount of voter apathy when
15 it comes to elections in certain districts.
16 And I find, for example, in Nassau County
17 where I come from that there are certain
18 races, for example, that happen to have a
19 much higher percentage of voter turnout than
20 perhaps even some of our districts
21 immediately to the west.

22 I am on the Nassau/Queens border, and
23 perhaps you can give me an idea of why there
24 is such a dramatic drop-off on the Queens

1 side of that line that there is on the Nassau
2 side.

3 MR. CZARNY: Well, I'm not from that
4 area, so I can't speak to the local issues.

5 But I do think ballot drop-off is an
6 issue inside of a ballot itself as well as
7 starting from the top of the ticket down --

8 SENATOR MARTINS: Not ballot drop-off,
9 the reduction in the number of people who are
10 actually voting on the city side of the
11 Queens/Nassau line as opposed to the other.

12 MR. CZARNY: I'll have to get you
13 that; I promise I will.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We do have
16 Assemblyman Brown.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Thank you,
18 Madam Chair -- Chairman -- Chairwoman.

19 To continue what the two Senators were
20 addressing about the voting issues, are you
21 aware that most villages do not run under
22 party lines, Republican, Democrat, or
23 independent? Putting them in the same year
24 would force them to fall into what exact

1 category -- the "nothing" party? Where would
2 they fit on the ballot line?

3 MR. CZARNY: I'm glad you asked that
4 question. Because the five villages in
5 Onondaga County that moved to November, four
6 of them do not run on partisan elections as
7 well. They fit on the ballot, we have plenty
8 of space now that we don't have a ton of
9 recognized parties. And they saw way more
10 participation. Even though they weren't in
11 the partisan categories, they had their own
12 ballot lines, the independent nominating
13 petitions, and they had a ton of
14 participation and they did not get forced
15 into partisan elections.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Would you
17 agree that there's a possibility -- for
18 example, I'm still the deputy mayor of my
19 village. I have a Democrat on my board; I
20 happen to be a Republican. We work to serve
21 the community. What if someone just assumes
22 that we're all Republican or Democrat and
23 that skews their opinion of the fairness of
24 how an election should be run?

1 MR. CZARNY: I -- so I don't believe
2 inherently being a Democrat or Republican is
3 bad. In fact, I think it's pretty good. And
4 I think having party identification helps the
5 voters make choices.

6 I also don't believe that they have to
7 be in the party as well. Having more choice,
8 having more participation is where I always
9 tend to land. And I believe in village
10 elections and in local elections you can have
11 a balance without -- and I don't believe just
12 the time of the election will change that.
13 And having more people participate is always
14 better.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Let me ask you
16 one last question.

17 MR. CZARNY: Sure.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: With the
19 exception of saving the board of elections'
20 time or having to spend another couple of
21 weeks arranging this, what would be the
22 benefit of moving it, moving the days?

23 MR. CZARNY: Oh, it's only one minute.

24 Okay, yes, if you move village

1 elections to November, it's actually a
2 100 percent cost savings to the village
3 itself. And it's actually a way better use
4 of taxpayer money because we are already
5 holding elections every year.

6 So if -- when we moved these five
7 villages to November, they saved 100 percent
8 of their costs because the board of elections
9 was already running elections and it was
10 really no added burden to us.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: So it seems
12 like we're in agreement we should leave it up
13 to the villages to decide their own budgets,
14 which since they do that anyway, to decide if
15 they want to have that cost savings.

16 I thank you all for that enlightened
17 opinion.

18 MR. CZARNY: I -- I would -- I'd say
19 the question is worthy of discussion and I
20 think having that is a good discussion.

21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, thank you.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate, if you
24 have anybody.

1 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. I
2 think there is me left.

3 Hi. So I'd like to follow up on my
4 colleague's question about fraud in campaign
5 finance and what the research shows us about
6 which models actually end up with bigger or
7 lesser problems. I guess I'll admit there
8 are always problems. Somebody's always going
9 to try to break the law, and hopefully we
10 catch them when they break the law.

11 But what's your experience -- I think
12 it was the Brennan Center who had done
13 research -- no, I'm sorry, it was you.
14 Either one -- research on what we've learned
15 from around the country about the different
16 models of campaign contributions and people
17 violating the law.

18 MS. WHARTON: So thank you for that
19 question. What I'd like to say is that the
20 New York City program worked. It worked very
21 well because it catches or it caught someone
22 that it presumed was making like an
23 infraction.

24 So I don't see the fact that someone

1 was caught -- or was accused of fraud, right,
2 as being a problem. I think it indicates
3 what a wonderful system they have there. And
4 I think that the Public Campaign Finance
5 Board has been speaking with the New York
6 City Campaign Finance Board to learn about
7 best practices.

8 So I think that the example was
9 actually a very good one in terms of what the
10 Public Campaign Finance Board can actually do
11 to protect taxpayers' dollars.

12 Now, with respect to what studies have
13 shown, I would have to ask -- refer to the
14 Brennan Center for that. But thank you for
15 bringing that question back.

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Hi.

17 MS. PINO: Thank you, Senator. And
18 I'm happy to submit to the entire committee
19 here our reports on this issue.

20 I will say that, you know, public
21 financing is working across the country.
22 There are at least 15 states and 21
23 municipalities who have been using public
24 financing programs to help boost and empower

1 a greater diversity of constituents and
2 meaningfully bring their voices into our
3 democracy. And I'm happy to supplement with
4 those -- with that research as well.

5 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you both.
6 I think it will be very interesting. If you
7 could get it to Helene and I, we will get it
8 to everybody on the committees. Thank you.

9 I'm going to cede back my 32 seconds.
10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And we have
12 Assemblyman Manktelow.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: Thank you,
14 Madam Chair. And I'm sorry for the
15 last-minute question.

16 But, you know, we sit up here and we
17 talk about millions and millions and billions
18 of dollars, and yesterday in my office I had
19 two women there with children with special
20 needs, and their concern is daycare. They
21 don't have enough daycare in Rochester.

22 So we're looking at public financing.
23 So we have public financing here, we have
24 families that need daycare here. If I have

1 to choose between one or the other, which one
2 do I choose?

3 MS. WHARTON: Thank you so much for
4 that question. I actually love it.

5 You don't have to choose. You do not
6 have to choose. Basically there are a couple
7 of things going on here. And when we look at
8 democracy, the people of New York are paying
9 for the lights to be on, they're paying for
10 this building, they're speaking money,
11 they're paying your salaries, all of that.
12 So it's an investment, right?

13 The only part -- the only point in the
14 diversity process where we're left out is in
15 the public campaign finance side, where we
16 have ceded that portion of democracy to
17 wealthy folks. Right?

18 Now, I believe, I believe that the
19 discussion that you're having with your
20 constituents, that the public campaign
21 finance system, if people were more involved
22 in the system, we probably wouldn't have to
23 be making these kinds of choices. Right?
24 Because we would be electing folks who would

1 be here from the get-go advocating for those
2 programs to be implemented.

3 So thank you.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: I appreciate
5 that answer. Just one question.

6 So just really quick -- I only have
7 one minute left. So if I was to ask that
8 same question to those two women that were in
9 my office, what answer do you think they
10 would give me?

11 MS. WHARTON: I'm thinking that they
12 would probably say "Give me my program."
13 Right? Let's be honest, they'll say "Give me
14 my program." They probably don't know
15 anything about public campaign financing --

16 ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: That's my
17 point. Most people do not know about public
18 financing of campaigns yet. And when they
19 see that come out, there's going to be grave
20 concern.

21 Are we doing anything to educate the
22 public on public financing of campaigns?

23 MS. WHARTON: Actually, thank you,
24 because that is where the budget comes in.

1 We need you to fund the program, to
2 fund administrative costs fully so that the
3 board can actually embark on an education
4 campaign.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: So part of
6 that financing would make sure we contact the
7 residents of New York State to let them know
8 that they're contributing to public finance.

9 MS. WHARTON: That -- yes, that it
10 is -- we're utilizing public dollars for
11 public good.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: All right, I
13 appreciate it. And it was a tough question,
14 but I was thinking about those two ladies and
15 it really bothered me to -- you know, what do
16 I tell them. So thank you for your
17 testimony, both of them. Thank you.

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. I
19 think there are no more Senators waiting to
20 ask questions.

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And no more
22 Assemblymembers. So thank you, and just a
23 reminder that I think a couple of times
24 you had a couple of questions you need to

1 send us answers to. So just remember to send
2 them to the two chairs, and we'll make sure
3 all members receive them.

4 MR. CZARNY: Thank you for your
5 service to voters.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you all so
7 much.

8 MS. WHARTON: Thank you so much.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So now we go to
10 Panel E, which is our last panel:
11 Nassau County Village Officials Association;
12 Riders Alliance; and Immigrant ARC.

13 MR. SEROTA: Folks, I'm going to try
14 and read through my statement very quickly.
15 I'm in a little bit of a doghouse, before we
16 start. I'm here with my wife. We didn't
17 spend much Valentine's Day yesterday. She
18 took the day off, and I'm in the doghouse.
19 She didn't realize when we left our house
20 this morning that we'd be here at this hour.
21 So hopefully I'll move along.

22 Chairpersons Krueger, Weinstein and
23 Assemblyman Ra and Senator O'Mara and other
24 honorable members of the Legislature. Thank

1 you for giving the Nassau County Village
2 Officials Association an opportunity to
3 participate in today's hearing.

4 My name is Daniel Serota. I'm the
5 mayor of the Village of Brookville and the
6 immediate past president of the NCVOA. The
7 NCVOA has 64 villages in Nassau County and
8 represents 475,000 people. The size of our
9 villages vary greatly, with some having
10 populations of less than 1500 residents and
11 others -- like the villages of Hempstead and
12 Freeport, with tens of thousands of
13 residents -- that would be considered fairly
14 large cities if they were designated as such
15 under the applicable statute. Some of our
16 villages have their own police departments,
17 as I do in Brookville. Two of them have
18 power plants. In other words, there's no one
19 size that describes Nassau County villages.

20 Today's hearing involves local
21 government. And, in the opinion of many
22 leaders of the NCVOA who have been deeply
23 involved in local government for many years,
24 there's no greater threat to this

1 continuation of local government -- as the
2 state has fostered it and protected it for
3 nearly a hundred years -- than
4 Governor Hochul's housing plan, spelled out
5 in Parts F and G of Article VII bills S4006
6 and A3006.

7 Today I'm here to make two specific
8 requests. First, I ask that given the
9 widespread, historic and unprecedented scope
10 and effect the Governor's housing proposal
11 would have on local governments throughout
12 the state, that this matter be excluded from
13 budget considerations, discussions and
14 negotiations. This proposal would affect the
15 status of tens of thousands of existing homes
16 and requires the mandatory rezoning of tens
17 of thousands of acres on Long Island alone,
18 without SEQRA standards and procedures, by
19 the Governor's fiat, and it affects the
20 quality of life and character of hundreds of
21 communities.

22 Given how this housing proposal has
23 been included in the budget -- without
24 in-depth statewide community studies, no

1 comprehensive public hearing program, no
2 publicized input from all affected groups,
3 including the NCVOA, and no known publicized
4 economic impact benefit -- this housing
5 proposal should not be lumped in and be part
6 of legitimate and important reoccurring
7 budget issues that involve funding for
8 education, healthcare, public protection,
9 transportation, and the normal operations of
10 state government.

11 Please, please exclude this from the
12 budget. The housing issue is very important.
13 It deserves a thorough discussion, public
14 hearings, and input throughout the state.

15 I guess my time's up. Thank you for
16 your consideration.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

18 Riders Alliance next.

19 MR. PEARLSTEIN: Good afternoon.

20 Thanks so much. My name is Danny Pearlstein.
21 I'm the policy and communications director
22 for the Riders Alliance. We are New York
23 City's grassroots organization of subway and
24 bus riders fighting for better transit.

1 As we heard this morning, there is a
2 significant dispute about the source of funds
3 to save public transit in and around New York
4 City. I want to focus on the use of those
5 funds, except just to say that the
6 Executive Budget provides a firm foundation
7 to keep buses and trains running and, you
8 know, without that we are certainly up a
9 creek.

10 But I want to focus on the use of
11 funds, because keeping buses and trains
12 running on its own, with the level of
13 ridership we have today, is not sustainable
14 long into the future, and we need to do what
15 we can to grow ridership. That's why we're
16 supporting a plan to increase the frequency
17 of bus and train service. That's a plan
18 supported by the governor's and mayor's own
19 New New York panel, which came up with
20 Initiative 19 last December, urging the
21 maintenance of the frequency of rush-hour
22 service that we have today while adding to
23 the frequency and reliability of off-peak
24 service.

1 It's a proposal that has the broad
2 support of the Climate Action Council, which
3 in its scoping plan called for improving
4 public transit service as a means of reducing
5 vehicle miles traveled, as well as
6 electrifying everything. We need to use the
7 existing transit infrastructure we have today
8 to bring more people on board.

9 More frequent service is estimated at
10 increasing ridership approximately 15
11 percent. It also has major safety benefits
12 which relate closely to the other priorities
13 identified in the Executive Budget, including
14 less time waiting on platforms and at bus
15 stops, where riders report feeling less
16 comfortable than they do on buses and trains.

17 Bringing more people into the system
18 by making it more time-competitive with other
19 ways of getting around, which means more eyes
20 on the system, more safety in numbers like we
21 had from 1990 through 2019, where crime
22 plummeted while policing also decreased
23 significantly as ridership soared; as well as
24 just less anxiety and frustration from long

1 waits, which is why we have the support not
2 only of those panels I said but also of
3 Transport Workers Union Local 100,
4 representing 46,000 people who operate and
5 maintain buses and trains and are on the
6 front lines every single day, in particular,
7 wary of assaults from unhappy transit riders.

8 Beyond that, there's a major equity
9 benefit. There's been enormous discussion
10 throughout this hearing obviously about the
11 housing crisis we face. The way it has, you
12 know, played out in the city is that people
13 are living further and further from work.
14 Commutes are getting longer, commutes are
15 involving more transfers. More off-peak
16 commuting as more office workers stay home,
17 but a greater percentage of people are
18 commuting off-peak and are waiting 12, 15, 20
19 minutes on multiple legs of a commute, often
20 waiting longer just to get on the bus or the
21 train than they are on the buses and trains
22 that they're riding.

23 So for all those reasons, we support
24 what we think is a fairly modest investment

1 in the grand scheme of the state budget --
2 \$300 million above what the Governor's
3 proposing to the MTA, to increase the
4 frequency of buses and trains, reversing the
5 cuts that we've seen in 2019 and 2010, and
6 going even beyond that to run trains
7 regularly every -- you know, well under
8 10-minute waits, approaching six-minute waits
9 throughout the day, throughout the week.

10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

12 And finally, Immigrant ARC.

13 MS. AKINNAWONU: Hello. My name is
14 Funmi Akinnawonu. I'm the advocacy and
15 policy manager at Immigrant ARC. We're a
16 member-based organization, and our membership
17 includes over 80 immigration legal-service
18 providers. We work on access to counsel and
19 access to justice issues for immigrant
20 New Yorkers.

21 And we're here today because there is
22 a crisis in immigration representation across
23 this country that is felt particularly
24 acutely in the State of New York because --

1 not only because of the volume of cases
2 pending in our local immigration offices, but
3 because this state remains a top destination
4 for immigrants, both newcomers and long-time
5 immigrants alike. And the increased
6 enforcement of policies under the Trump
7 administration, combined with the pandemic
8 delays, have created a really untenable
9 backlog in our immigration courts.

10 New York has led the country in
11 investments in legal services for immigrant
12 communities, but current services are at
13 capacity and we have new needs, including the
14 needs of Afghan and Ukrainian refugees to new
15 arrivals of asylum-seekers from the southern
16 border, and ongoing needs of immigrant
17 communities which cannot be met. And this
18 means that thousands of New Yorkers who are
19 seeking help are being turned away each
20 month.

21 So as part of the CARE for Immigrant
22 Families Coalition, we urge the New York
23 Legislature to include the Access to
24 Representation Act in the FY 2024 budget, a

1 first-in-the-nation law that would create a
2 right to counsel for immigrant New Yorkers
3 and fund counsel in immigration deportation
4 proceedings.

5 To fund the first year of
6 implementation of the ARA, we ask the state
7 to allocate \$55 million. We also urge the
8 state to increase funding for both
9 affirmative and defensive immigration legal
10 services to \$35 million through the
11 Liberty Defense Project within the Office of
12 New Americans, and to allocate \$10 million in
13 rapid response immigration legal services to
14 address the needs of newly arrived migrants.

15 Today there's no guaranteed right to
16 counsel in immigration proceedings in the
17 U.S., despite the fact that immigrants in
18 deportation proceedings face really serious
19 consequences like separation from their
20 families or deportation to a place where they
21 could face death or abuse or persecution.

22 There's a staggering difference in
23 outcomes for those who have representation
24 versus those who don't. Immigrants with

1 attorneys are 3.5 times more likely to be
2 granted bond if they are in detention; they
3 are 10.5 times more likely not be deported
4 than those without representation. And for
5 those not in detention, 60 percent of
6 immigrants with lawyers win their cases
7 compared to 17 percent of those without a
8 lawyer.

9 The clear disparity in the difference
10 between those who have representation and who
11 don't in the outcome of their cases presents
12 a due process issue that is fixable. So we
13 are asking New York State, which has a long
14 history of welcoming immigrant New Yorkers,
15 to address this issue.

16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

18 There are a number of questions from
19 the Assembly and the Senate. We'll start
20 first with Assemblyman Ra.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

22 Mayor, thank you for being here and
23 for your patience, and thank you to your wife
24 for accompanying you here today.

1 So with regard to the zoning proposals
2 in the budget -- and I know your village has
3 a police department. So, I mean, even that
4 increase -- you know, if you were to have to
5 have some zoning with the density of, say,
6 the transit-oriented proposal, what does that
7 look like relative to services like your
8 police or water and that type of thing --
9 sewer, all that?

10 MR. SEROTA: Thank you for the
11 question.

12 We don't know. We don't know the
13 answers to this. Most of the communities on
14 the North Shore in Nassau County do not have
15 sewers, we have septic systems. We have a
16 terrible water crisis on the North Shore of
17 Long Island. We have many wells that are out
18 of service because they are contaminated with
19 Freon. This past two summers when we had the
20 heat waves, there's no water in our area in
21 the morning to take showers or to flush the
22 toilet -- excuse my language.

23 So these are all questions we don't
24 have the answers. There's been no studies.

1 Listen, I wear many hats. Besides the mayor,
2 I'm the police commissioner, I'm a real
3 estate developer. This is a great idea, but
4 it's one size doesn't fit all. We have to
5 figure out a way, with your help and the
6 local governments' help, and private
7 business, to figure out where this works,
8 where it doesn't work.

9 And I -- from sitting here for all
10 these hours, I think this committee is all on
11 the same page here, that we'll all work
12 together and figure out a way to go forward
13 with this.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: And, you know, if you
15 can talk just from the perspective of the
16 entire association, you know, I think about
17 one size doesn't fit all, and that's exactly
18 the problem here. I think about, you know,
19 Rockville Centre Mayor Murray has, you know,
20 won awards for the development he's done
21 there. Mineola's done a lot around their
22 train station.

23 So your members, right, are finding
24 ways to increase housing stock by trying to

1 do it in targeted areas and keeping the basic
2 character of their communities intact while
3 doing it.

4 MR. SEROTA: Correct.

5 And the Village of Farmingdale also
6 has done a wonderful job, Westbury. There
7 are places where it works, and it's terrific.
8 No one is opposed to the whole concept; it
9 just has to be figured out, and we all need
10 to work together on that.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Carrot rather than a
12 stick.

13 MR. SEROTA: Yes.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate.

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

17 First, Senator Rhoads.

18 SENATOR RHOADS: Thank you again,
19 Mayor Serota.

20 I'm a little puzzled, to be perfectly
21 honest, as to why this particular panel is
22 together, because there's so many divergent
23 issues here that we could spend some time on
24 each.

1 But I do want to touch upon the
2 housing proposal again. I know that you kind
3 of got cut off at the end, but the big ask
4 here is that this should be removed from the
5 budget process, I'm assuming, because the
6 issues are so complex and complicated.

7 When we're talking about the
8 Governor's proposal, if fully implemented,
9 it's 50 units per acre. When you're talking
10 about a half-mile zone -- I credit
11 Senator Martins for doing the math on this --
12 when you do 50 units, it's 200 -- I'm sorry,
13 502 units per half-mile radius, so a mile
14 circumference -- you're talking about
15 25,000 housing units within a mile around
16 every train station in Nassau County. That's
17 50 train stations in Nassau County. You're
18 talking about 1.25 million housing units.
19 Doubling the population -- even if it's just
20 one person per unit, doubling the population
21 of Nassau County.

22 What kind of impact would that have on
23 sewer, on water, on police, on fire, on
24 schools, on everything?

1 So I certainly understand your point
2 that this has to be removed from the budget
3 process. Do you have any other thoughts on
4 that?

5 MR. SEROTA: Well, as one of the hats
6 I just mentioned, I'm a real estate
7 developer, and you have to go through SEQRA.
8 This completely gets rid of that.

9 And like I said, we don't have the
10 water now. Where would all of the sewage go?
11 We don't have sewers in the majority of the
12 areas where we live.

13 So these are all environmental
14 questions. We're all environmentalists. We
15 want to do what's right. But there's been no
16 study, there's been no thought, where did
17 this come from? Where did 3 percent come
18 from? Where did -- why wasn't it 4 percent
19 or 2 percent? And where -- nobody knows
20 anything about this. It came out of
21 someplace. And it needs a lot of time and
22 consideration, and nobody has the answers to
23 it right now.

24 And again, we're not opposed to it.

1 We're opposed to sticking it in the budget.
2 We want to work together. There is a housing
3 crisis, and we have to figure out how to work
4 together to get it.

5 SENATOR RHOADS: Right time and right
6 location; we should be listening to those
7 that are closest to the ground and have the
8 best knowledge of our communities to make
9 sure that that can happen.

10 MR. SEROTA: Yes.

11 SENATOR RHOADS: I certainly agree.
12 Just one question with respect to
13 transportation. When was the last time
14 that -- to your knowledge, Mr. Pearlstein,
15 that there's been an audit of the MTA?

16 MR. PEARLSTEIN: The MTA answers to
17 many outside sources. Right? The MTA
18 answers to the State Comptroller, the MTA
19 answers to the district attorneys, the
20 Attorney General. The MTA has many different
21 auditing-type bodies that oversee it as well
22 as, you know, private consultants they've
23 hired on various projects and of various
24 things, like to figure out how riders would

1 come back after the pandemic. That was, you
2 know, one piece of analysis.

3 SENATOR RHOADS: Well, let me ask,
4 only because we're running out of time, are
5 we dealing with an issue where we need more
6 money or better management, in your opinion?

7 MR. PEARLSTEIN: We need more money to
8 keep buses and trains running on a daily
9 basis that millions of people ride. I think
10 that's not in question.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

12 We go to Assemblyman Thiele.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN THIELE: No, I --

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay,

15 Assemblyman Thiele is good.

16 We go to Assemblyman Brown, three
17 minutes.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Thank you,
19 Madam Chairperson.

20 Thinking of my village of Cedarhurst
21 again, one square mile, the train tracks run
22 right through. The 50 units per acre would
23 encompass my entire village. I have 2200,
24 2500 residential units; it would go up to

1 25,000. I have 7,000 residents, going up to
2 70,000? Unmanageable.

3 I'm on the South Shore. Mr. Mayor,
4 you're on the North Shore -- bucolic,
5 beautiful. We talk about character of
6 villages. Our Senator talked about Rockville
7 Centre's TODs. I did all those TODs for them
8 when I was the vice-chair of the IDA there.
9 Worked beautifully. They begged me to do
10 Phase 2, and we did.

11 How would that affect you in your
12 beautiful Brookville, bucolic, beautiful
13 Brookville, with two-acre zoning? What would
14 that look like? So everybody should know.

15 MR. SEROTA: Well, I just stated some
16 of the problems. We don't have sewers. And
17 our groundwater is contaminated already.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Pardon me,
19 Mr. Mayor. I meant the character, the visual
20 character, the aesthetics. How would that
21 look in your village?

22 MR. SEROTA: Listen, to have all those
23 extra homes, people decide to move there
24 because they like what they want, they want

1 what they like, and they would -- it would --
2 the quality of life we have, just two main
3 roads, we couldn't handle the traffic, we
4 couldn't handle the trucks that come in and
5 out, and it would be devastating to our way
6 of life.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: So, Mr. Mayor,
8 you had mentioned you have no sewer system in
9 your community, you just have septic systems.
10 Where would all the effluents go if they
11 proposed this?

12 MR. SEROTA: Into the ground, which
13 goes into our aquifer, to where we drink our
14 water.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: We couldn't do
16 on a multifamily unit, so we're talking tens,
17 perhaps a hundred million or 200 million to
18 develop a system that possible will work?

19 MR. SEROTA: I would think a lot more
20 than that.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Exactly. So
22 we're talking about billions of dollars of
23 infrastructure, and all we're getting is
24 \$250 million for the entire state for

1 infrastructure. Would you think we would
2 probably need some more for sewers alone?

3 MR. SEROTA: Yes, Assemblyman.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN ARI BROWN: Thank you,
5 Mr. Mayor. I appreciate it.

6 And thank you all for your time.

7 I yield the rest of my time.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

9 Senator Martins.

10 SENATOR MARTINS: Thank you,
11 Madam Chairwoman.

12 First of all, I just want to welcome
13 Mayor Serota. Mayor Serota is a mayor in my
14 district. I thank you very much for being
15 here, Mayor, and I appreciate you and your
16 wife, Cherie, for being here as well.

17 The question was asked. There are
18 consequences, obviously, of a top-down
19 approach to anything, whether it be housing,
20 whether it be, you know, all kinds of
21 infrastructure improvements, the need for
22 localities and local communities to ask
23 questions, make decisions for themselves.

24 Can you talk about that as not only

1 the mayor of the Village of Brookville but,
2 you know, representative of the 64 villages
3 in the Nassau County Village Officials
4 Association?

5 MR. SEROTA: Sure. Thanks for the
6 question, Senator.

7 We all have rules, all of us. Our
8 State Constitution sets them out, our
9 country's Constitution. And I'll give you
10 Brookville's example. We have our building
11 department, someone wants to do an addition
12 to their home, they have to follow the rules,
13 they have to make sure they go to the health
14 department, and things have to be followed.

15 For the life of me, I don't see how
16 you can get rid of a SEQRA study on something
17 as massive as this. And again, I don't want
18 to repeat what I said before, but we're all
19 environmentalists. And to have something
20 that obliterates state law with SEQRA to
21 build all of these things -- again, the NCVOA
22 is not opposed to this, but it has to be done
23 thoughtfully and logically and with some
24 semblance of teamwork with the Assembly, with

1 the Senate, and with the Governor and all the
2 local governments together, to figure out how
3 we can solve the housing crisis.

4 SENATOR MARTINS: I appreciate that.
5 Thank you, Mayor.

6 Mr. Pearlstein, I have the Long Island
7 Rail Road main line that comes right through
8 my district. I fully understand the
9 importance of the MTA when it comes to the
10 vitality not only of the downstate economy
11 but the entire State of New York's economy.

12 But I do ask the question, would you
13 agree that there has to be an audit, an
14 accountability when it comes to the MTA?
15 Because every time they want additional
16 funding -- and it's in the billions, every
17 time, things like the MTA payroll tax, now
18 congestion pricing, and all of the other
19 investments that we're making as a state,
20 don't you believe that we would all be best
21 served by having an audit and holding those
22 who are making these decisions accountable?

23 Because as someone said during the
24 congestion pricing hearings, you can give the

1 MTA a trillion dollars and they'd still come
2 back and ask for more.

3 I'd like to hear your comment.

4 MR. PEARLSTEIN: The MTA system is
5 estimated at a trillion-dollar cost. And so
6 what former Chair Prendergast said is that,
7 you know, if you had a private entity with a
8 trillion-dollar asset, they would be
9 investing roughly 5 percent of the value of
10 that asset, you know, every year, which would
11 be \$50 billion a year.

12 And the MTA isn't. Right? The MTA is
13 investing, you know, 5 to 7 billion in
14 capital every year and has an \$18 billion
15 annual budget.

16 So it's not. The reason we needed
17 congestion pricing is we hadn't, you know,
18 upgraded many systems in the subway for 60,
19 70, 80 years. The reason we need money now
20 is that ridership is --

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm sorry, I have
22 to cut you off. Sorry.

23 SENATOR MARTINS: Thank you. We'll
24 follow up.

1 Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

3 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to
4 Assemblyman Manktelow.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: Thank you,
6 Madam Chair.

7 It's for the Riders Alliance.

8 You said that ridership was down. Why
9 is that?

10 MR. PEARLSTEIN: Ridership is down
11 owing to changing patterns in the workforce,
12 mostly due to work from home.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: So if we want
14 to see you succeed, what can we do? Well,
15 you talked a little bit about the safety
16 aspect of it. You said the riders don't feel
17 safe sometimes?

18 MR. PEARLSTEIN: Yeah, I mean,
19 there's -- you know, there's been widespread
20 coverage of this, obviously. The subway is
21 one of the most visible places in the
22 United States with respect to crime,
23 homelessness, et cetera.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: So if we were

1 to add safety measures, letting the riders
2 feel safer, do you think ridership would go
3 up?

4 MR. PEARLSTEIN: No. Police
5 Commissioner Bratton, who was the
6 commissioner in 1990, said that, you know,
7 ridership is roughly what it was now in 1990
8 when crime was between six and 10 times
9 higher. So no. I mean, crime is somewhat
10 above what it was in 2019, but it's coming
11 back down. And, you know, the expectation is
12 that will continue as ridership grows.

13 The problem is the MTA is built around
14 this idea of, you know, 6 million subway
15 riders a day, and we only have 4.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: So if we're
17 going to have 4 now because everybody -- or
18 some people are working from home, if we're
19 going to throw more money at the MTA like the
20 Senator just talked about, what are we going
21 to do to get more ridership then?

22 MR. PEARLSTEIN: Well, running more
23 service will bring in riders. I mean,
24 there's a, you know, sort of a benchmark

1 estimate, and this has been evaluated that it
2 would add probably about 15 percent to MTA
3 riders -- to increase the service levels, you
4 know, roughly 50 percent, that we'd get
5 15 percent more riders.

6 The issue really is that there are
7 4 million people who have to ride transit
8 every day. If we string those people along
9 or we make them wait longer because we cut
10 service, that, you know, has a tremendous
11 impact not just on 4 million lives and their
12 families, but on the city's and the state's
13 economies, which depend on a
14 well-functioning, dense urban core in
15 New York City that thrives on public transit.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: And to just
17 piggyback on what the Senator just said, we
18 do need to see an audit to really see where
19 the dollars are going to go.

20 Because we can keep throwing money,
21 dollar after dollar after dollar, but if we
22 don't know what we're trying to accomplish,
23 we don't know what the end goal is and what
24 the true cost is and what the transparency of

1 that cost is, how can we make the decision
2 here on how much to keep throwing at it?

3 MR. PEARLSTEIN: Yeah, I think,
4 respectfully, the way that people have looked
5 at this is they've said, Well, what happened
6 to the \$15 billion in federal aid that the
7 MTA received, you know, in 2020 and 2021?

8 And the answer is: Payroll. Right?
9 The MTA runs, you know, a 12 or \$13 billion
10 payroll. It was a few billion dollars in
11 fuel expenses, energy expenses. That money
12 has to come from somewhere. It came, almost
13 half, from transit riders back in 2019, and
14 now it's only about a quarter to a third.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: Well, I think
16 we all want to see New York grow, and
17 New York City is part of New York State. And
18 we're here to support you and help you grow.

19 So, you know, I'm just offering
20 support from upstate side that we have to
21 grow all of New York.

22 MR. PEARLSTEIN: Thank you.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: So thank you
24 for your testimony. Thank you for all of

1 your testimony.

2 Thank you, Madam Chair.

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

4 Oh, one more Senator. Senator

5 Walczyk.

6 SENATOR WALCZYK: Thanks, Madam Chair.

7 Riders Alliance, how you doing?

8 So your ask is 300 million above what
9 the Governor is proposing?

10 MR. PEARLSTEIN: That's right.

11 SENATOR WALCZYK: And in the
12 Governor's proposed Executive Budget, Aid to
13 Localities for the MTA was 892.2 million. So
14 you're saying about 1.2 billion is what we
15 should be sending to the MTA from New York
16 State?

17 MR. PEARLSTEIN: That's right. But
18 you're also leaving aside the city money.

19 SENATOR WALCZYK: I'm sorry?

20 MR. PEARLSTEIN: You're leaving aside
21 the money from the city, which is the 500
22 that we heard about this morning.

23 SENATOR WALCZYK: Correct, yup.

24 I don't know if you're aware, DOT Aid

1 to Localities is proposed by the Governor for
2 642 million. Do you believe that there
3 should be parity between those two?

4 MR. PEARLSTEIN: You know, I don't
5 know if it's relevant. I mean, the federal
6 government is spending 40 percent more per
7 year now on infrastructure in New York,
8 highway infrastructure, than it was before
9 the Jobs Act passed.

10 And so, you know, there are ways of
11 moving some of this money around, but
12 primarily that was a highway bill. That's a
13 lot of new highway money. The federal
14 transit money that came in for operations, at
15 least, has run out, and this is primarily
16 what we're replacing.

17 SENATOR WALCZYK: It's relevant to me.
18 I represent a rural district that doesn't
19 have any ridership within the MTA region. Is
20 it fair for upstate New York to bail out the
21 MTA or should New York City be paying for
22 their own mess?

23 MR. PEARLSTEIN: So again -- and you
24 know, I don't presume to speak for the

1 committee or its staff, but my understanding
2 is that the downstate MTA region sends money
3 upstate, you know, on balance. Right? I
4 mean ...

5 SENATOR WALCZYK: So just to run those
6 numbers back again, the Governor is proposing
7 in her DOT budget Aid to Localities at
8 642 million. You're proposing that we send
9 in Aid to Localities to the MTA double that.
10 That wouldn't be parity, right, and the money
11 would be headed in the opposite direction,
12 from what you're saying.

13 MR. PEARLSTEIN: Right, and I think
14 that's the difference between equity and
15 parity. Right? We have to look at what's
16 fair, what the needs are of the particular
17 entity. Right? It's like saying, well, why
18 don't we give every agency the same amount of
19 money, and the answer is because the agencies
20 have different needs, the localities have
21 different needs.

22 SENATOR WALCZYK: Sure. Okay, I'll --
23 to the immigration group that's here. So
24 your Justice for All report blames a lot on

1 the last federal administration, which was a
2 while back. But I read a good portion of
3 your report. Are all of those problems
4 resolved now that we have a new federal
5 administration?

6 MS. AKINNAWONU: They are not.

7 SENATOR WALCZYK: Why not?

8 MS. AKINNAWONU: There is need to do a
9 great deal of immigration reform.

10 But when we look at the backlog in
11 immigration cases, the lack of capacity
12 amongst our immigration legal service
13 providers means that a lot of people are not
14 able to get the help that they need. It
15 leads to a lot of continuances, which
16 exacerbates the backlog. It leads to a lot
17 of people who could probably -- who might
18 have a form of relief that would take the
19 case out of the backlog to not even be able
20 to seek it because they have no one to give
21 them that sort of assistance.

22 So there are things that New York
23 State can do to address this. But of course
24 there are still major problems with the

1 immigration system as a whole.

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

4 I think we are done on this side.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And the
6 Assembly is done.

7 So thank you three for being here till
8 the end of our hearing.

9 This is going to end the hearing today
10 on local governments. Tomorrow we will be
11 starting, at 9:30, the joint budget hearing
12 on mental health.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you,
14 everyone.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: The hearing is
16 concluded.

17 (Whereupon, at 5:30 p.m., the budget
18 hearing concluded.)

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