

**ANNUAL PLAN SUMMARY 2009-2010**

**BRONX PUBLIC HEARING**

**DEPARTMENT FOR THE AGING**

234 East 149th Street  
Bronx, New York  
October 30, 2008  
9:58 A.M.

PANEL:

COMMISSIONER EDWIN MÉNDEZ-SANTIAGO, NYC Department for the Aging

Jorge Romero, DFTA Assistant Commissioner

Linda Whitaker, DFTA Assistant Commissioner

Evelyn Laureano, DFTA Advisory Member and Neighborhood SHOPP

Karen Taylor, DFTA Bureau of SeniorCenters

Alan Hom, DFTA Long Term Care

2 MR. ROMERO: Good morning and  
3 welcome. My name is Jorge Romero. I'm  
4 assistant commissioner at the  
5 Department for the Aging.  
6 This is one in a series of annual  
7 public hearings conducted in each of  
8 the city's five boroughs. The purpose  
9 of this annual hearing is to provide an  
10 overview of the Department's service  
11 activities and to provide the public  
12 with the opportunity to share their  
13 experiences and recommendations through  
14 oral and written testimony. Public  
15 testimony will be transcribed and  
16 forwarded to the Department's  
17 leadership team and advisors for their  
18 consideration.  
19 Are there any members of the  
20 audience who need the help of a translator?  
21 And now I would like to introduce  
22 the commissioner of the New York City  
23 Department for the Aging, Mr. Edwin Méndez-Santiago.

2 THE COMMISSIONER: Good morning.  
3 It's my pleasure to welcome you to what  
4 is our last public hearing this year.  
5 We've already held our sessions in the  
6 other boroughs on the Department's plan  
7 regarding the state's fiscal year for 2010-2011.  
8 I would like to begin with just a  
9 few comments and, first of all, always  
10 recognize and appreciate the  
11 hospitality of Lincoln Hospital and  
12 Jose Sanchez and his staff for letting  
13 us use this really wonderful place.  
14 Today joining me here on the dais  
15 are members of my executive staff.  
16 Beginning way to my left are Alan Hom  
17 and Karen Taylor. You have met  
18 Mr. Jorge Romero. To my right is  
19 Assistant Commissioner Linda Whitaker.  
20 And I'm very proud to introduce our  
21 Bronx representative on the Department  
22 for the Aging advisory counsel, Evelyn  
23 Laureano. And joining us on the dais  
24 is another advisory counsel member,

2 Ms. Doris Williams. You have to be up  
3 here. You're part of -- we'll get you  
4 a chair.  
5 So we're very pleased to be here.  
6 And as you heard from Mr. Romero, we  
7 are always anxious to share everything  
8 that happens today. It's why we have a  
9 court transcriber here that will record  
10 all that's said, and this will be  
11 posted on our web site along with the  
12 transcription for all the other  
13 hearings. We ask any speaker who has a  
14 written presentation who would like  
15 that to be part of the public record to  
16 share it with us so we can also make  
17 that available on our web site. That  
18 way, those of you from the Bronx can  
19 visit our web site and learn and read  
20 what your colleagues in the other  
21 boroughs raise as areas of concern and  
22 share your ideas with the rest of the city as well.  
23 Today, the Department is really  
24 here to listen to you and have your

2 comments not only on our plan, but on  
3 issues that we know that are of concern  
4 across the city, particularly as we  
5 modernize our aging network to reflect  
6 the growing longevity of our city, the  
7 number of seniors that continue to  
8 increase and also the growing diversity  
9 among our elder population. When I say  
10 "diversity," I mean it in the full  
11 extent of the definition.  
12 Remember that many of our  
13 programs begin to serve seniors as  
14 early as age 60, but we also serve  
15 seniors as they age in place up to ages  
16 90 and above, so we need to really look  
17 at a full continuum of services. But  
18 also, we need to make sure that our  
19 services are delivered in a culturally  
20 and linguistically competent manner and  
21 also address the diversity in terms of  
22 issues such as aging population and  
23 really reflect our entire city.  
24 Let me begin by giving you some  
25 updates on the Department for the Aging

2 modernization process which we know you  
3 are very interested in and we've  
4 discussed in this very room on a number  
5 of occasions.  
6 As you know, the case management  
7 request for proposal process was  
8 completed, awards were announced. A  
9 transition process is in place that  
10 we're happy to report has been really  
11 -- although we met some challenges --  
12 doing well. And I want to share with  
13 you, particularly in these times of  
14 serious economic concerns, that the  
15 Department invested an additional  
16 \$5.6 million into our case management  
17 system. For us, this is an  
18 unprecedented 36 percent increase in  
19 case management which went from  
20 16.7 million in fiscal '08 to over  
21 22.7 million in fiscal '09. This  
22 increase in case management funds will  
23 help us establish this new, modern  
24 network that will begin to  
25 comprehensively address the in-home

2 needs of over 22,000 older adults in  
3 our system.  
4 Our home-delivered meals RFP was  
5 recently issued, and we have ten active  
6 awards. Those should be announced  
7 within the next few days. The  
8 home-delivered meals modernization is  
9 really striving to redesign our system  
10 to make it much more efficient so that  
11 we build in the capacity to serve more  
12 seniors.  
13 Since I know this has been an  
14 issue of concern, let me highlight that  
15 in this redesign, we are not cutting  
16 meals. We are creating a structure  
17 that will help us serve even more meals  
18 and also allow the consumer the choice  
19 of what type of meal that person would  
20 like. If they want a frozen meal, that  
21 will be made available to them. If  
22 they would prefer to continue with the  
23 hot meal delivered every day, that is  
24 their prerogative. That's all they  
25 have to say.

2 But also part of this redesign in  
3 modernizing our system is to allow for  
4 the first time our home-delivered meals  
5 consumers the choice for meals that  
6 meet whatever health care issue they  
7 have. Currently, if you're a diabetic  
8 and you need a diabetic meal, that is  
9 not available in our system, and that's  
10 something we are going to change. And  
11 of course, we continue to meet  
12 religious dietary needs such as kosher.  
13 Now let me turn to senior centers  
14 because I know that has also caused  
15 some anxiety. The Department has not  
16 closed any senior centers. There's a  
17 lot of fears about this, but let me  
18 repeat it. We have not closed any  
19 senior centers, and our intention with  
20 the request for proposal that will come  
21 out within the next week or so is not  
22 to close centers, but it's to help  
23 centers really become stronger and,  
24 again, being able to address a growing  
25 population, the diversity of the

2 population and becoming more relevant  
3 to the senior population of today that  
4 has demonstrated to us their interest  
5 in activities that promote health and  
6 wellness, and that's what we seek to do  
7 in this RFP.

8 Many of our senior centers -- and  
9 we have some of the best in the nation  
10 right here in the city and in the  
11 Bronx -- already are headed in that  
12 direction and provide services that  
13 include music, dancing, visual arts and  
14 other kinds of cultural events as well  
15 as promote physical activity through  
16 walking clubs, tai chi and others as  
17 well as pay attention to brain health  
18 through programs like working with  
19 Sudoku or playing the Wii. All of  
20 those programs are headed in the  
21 direction that we want every senior  
22 center to have so that every center in  
23 the city will have the ability to  
24 promote physical, mental and creative  
25 health for today's population of older

2 adults.

3 As you know, Mayor Bloomberg is a

4 tremendous supporter of our

5 initiatives, but he has taken this an

6 additional step forward and asked every

7 city agency to examine how they work

8 with the older population through an

9 initiative called The All Ages Project.

10 This is a project that we're working

11 closely with the New York City Council

12 and the New York Academy of Medicine to

13 promote what's called a senior-friendly

14 city or others have called livable

15 communities that really look at not

16 only preserving for older adults our

17 safety net programs, but giving all

18 older adults across the city increased

19 opportunities for social engagement.

20 Just a few examples of the way we

21 are working in this city's All Ages

22 environment. We're collaborating with

23 a number of city agencies to improve

24 services for older adults.

25 Since we're being hosted here at

2 Lincoln Hospital, that's a part of the  
3 Health and Hospitals Corporation, let  
4 me share with you that HHC is one of  
5 our more active partners, and we have a  
6 number of programs where we're linking  
7 the local HHC facility with our senior  
8 centers so that the doctors and our  
9 staff at the senior centers can work  
10 together to promote good health, make  
11 sure that the older adult understands  
12 what the doctor has said to them.  
13 For example, with diabetes, when  
14 you get the diagnose of diabetes, it  
15 could be very confusing, so that having  
16 that linkage between the medical  
17 facility and the community facility to  
18 reinforce what the physician is saying  
19 allows the older person as a consumer  
20 to be empowered, know what that means  
21 and begin to practice the kind of  
22 healthy life-style changes that will  
23 help their medical treatment.  
24 We are also partners with the  
25 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

2 and the Mental Health Association of  
3 New York City to work with seniors  
4 across the city and educate them about  
5 depression so that we can help get them  
6 into treatment as early as possible.

7 Many of us here remember a time  
8 when the medical community did not  
9 understand and because they had some  
10 ignorance about older people assumed  
11 that an older adult with depression  
12 could not get treatment. We know  
13 that's not true, that treatments do  
14 work and help older people with  
15 depression. And through this  
16 collaborative project, we are trying to  
17 identify older adults with symptoms of  
18 depression as early as possible so we  
19 can get them connected to treatment  
20 very quickly.

21 Then some other initiatives,  
22 we're working with a large group of  
23 agencies across the city to focus on  
24 concerns with the Hispanic community's  
25 disparities in health care so that we

2 can create programs that will help us  
3 overcome those barriers and improve the  
4 health status of Latino older adults.  
5 A very similar program in Harlem,  
6 again, working with multiple partners  
7 is the Harlem Healthy Eating and Living  
8 program or HEAL that our department is  
9 very proud to be a part of.  
10 Finally, two quick examples of  
11 how older adults have demonstrated to  
12 us their interest in modernization and  
13 wellness. One is our annual Age and  
14 Action event at which more than 10,000  
15 seniors attend. And again, at Age and  
16 Action, the focus is on active aging  
17 and on promoting health and wellness.  
18 Then finally, just a few weeks  
19 ago we held our seventh annual senior  
20 stroll where more than 120 walking  
21 clubs from all five boroughs with over  
22 2,300 seniors joined us in Staten  
23 Island to celebrate their achievements  
24 through their walking clubs over the  
25 past year, but it was really an example

2 of how older adults are embracing  
3 activities that promote healthy  
4 life-styles and give them opportunities  
5 to really continue to be as healthy as  
6 possible throughout their age course.  
7 Let me end by just sharing with  
8 you that our department continues to  
9 win a number of awards on many of our  
10 creative programs.  
11 I see some foster grandparents  
12 here today. We're very proud that both  
13 our grandparents resource center and  
14 our foster grandparents programs won  
15 national awards from the National  
16 Association of Area Agencies on Aging.  
17 The grandparents resource center won an  
18 achievement award for its project in  
19 helping to educate different levels of  
20 government about the particular issues  
21 of grandparents, particularly as they  
22 navigate the complex Department of  
23 Education system.  
24 The foster grandparents program  
25 we're very proud of won an award for

2 developing best practices in volunteer  
3 programs.  
4 Then finally, our Alzheimer's and  
5 caregiver resource center won a  
6 national award for its collaborative  
7 work with the New York City Police  
8 Department and its missing persons  
9 bureau in working to improve services  
10 for caregivers when someone in their  
11 life with dementia has become lost.  
12 This is an excellent time to  
13 remind you that tomorrow is not only  
14 Halloween, but we're holding the 24th  
15 annual mayor's conference on  
16 Alzheimer's at the Marriott in  
17 Brooklyn, and we urge you all to  
18 attend. The theme of our Alzheimer's  
19 conference again stresses collaboration  
20 and it's about building bridges between  
21 health care and social services.  
22 Let me end on one note, that the  
23 mayor is making a speech today about  
24 the economic circumstances and the  
25 services that are available in the city

2 to help older adults and others of low  
3 income during these trying times. The  
4 Department runs the Senior Citizen Rent  
5 Increase Exemption program. The income  
6 limit for eligibility there has gone up  
7 to \$28,000. Any older adult that has  
8 an income of 28,000 or less and lives  
9 in a rent stabilized apartment can take  
10 advantage of this program and not have  
11 to pay any increases in rent. With  
12 your help, we can continue to spread  
13 the word and get people who are  
14 eligible to apply. They can simply  
15 call 311 and they will be connected to  
16 us. There are currently 44,000 older  
17 adults taking advantage of the senior  
18 citizen rent increase program here in  
19 the City of New York, but many more are  
20 eligible, and we want to spread the  
21 word.  
22 Then finally, it's cold today.  
23 It's a reminder that winter is around  
24 the corner. We want to remind people  
25 of the availability of the HEAP program

2 that assists older adults with their  
3 utility costs. Again, by calling 311,  
4 we can help you in any borough to  
5 either get a speaker visit your senior  
6 center or help you individually in  
7 applying to these programs.

8 One final note and we will turn  
9 this forum over to you, this is an  
10 important time for those of you that  
11 have Medicare D or are eligible for  
12 Medicare D. From November 15th through  
13 December 31st, this is the one time in  
14 the year that the federal government  
15 allows you to change plans. You need  
16 to examine your plan, make sure your  
17 plan is still the best one for you. If  
18 you're new to Medicare D, again, this  
19 is a time that you can enroll. We have  
20 staff that are experts in this field  
21 that can help you in making the best  
22 choice for you. And I remind you that  
23 the best plan that's good for your  
24 neighbor may not be the best plan  
25 that's good for you because each one of

2 the plans -- and they can be confusing  
3 -- cover different medications, so you  
4 need to make sure you pick a plan that  
5 includes the medications that your  
6 doctor has prescribed for you. We can  
7 help you with that, and we have over 18  
8 sites across the city that are open to  
9 assist you personally so you don't have  
10 to travel downtown for that. Again,  
11 you can call 311 and in any language  
12 just mention Medicare and they'll give  
13 you the address of the agency closest  
14 to you.

15 So let me close by again saying  
16 how thrilled we are to see such a large  
17 turnout. We are here to listen to you.  
18 We know we're facing some difficult  
19 financial situations, but I'm confident  
20 that working together with our elected  
21 officials, our not-for-profit  
22 providers, the advocate communities and  
23 the Department, we can overcome these  
24 challenges. Thank you and I look  
25 forward to your testimony.

2 MR. ROMERO: The panel that  
3 consists of the Department's executive  
4 staff are here to listen to the  
5 comments made by the speakers. This is  
6 not a question-and-answer forum. I  
7 would like to remind today's speakers  
8 that to provide all individuals with an  
9 actual opportunity to speak, each  
10 registered speaker is allotted five  
11 minutes to present their oral  
12 testimony. The electronic timer will  
13 turn red signaling that your speaking  
14 time has expired and also a beep will  
15 come out telling you that your time has  
16 expired. If anyone here would like to  
17 testify and has not registered, the  
18 on-site registration will be closed at  
19 10:40 a.m. Also, please leave a copy  
20 of your testimony at the front table  
21 with the panelists. If you do not have  
22 a copy to leave today, please pick up a  
23 DFTA self-addressed envelope and mail  
24 us a copy of your testimony.  
25 Our first speaker today is the

2 borough president of the borough of the  
3 Bronx, Adolfo Carrion, Jr.  
4 BOROUGH PRESIDENT CARRION: Good  
5 morning, everyone. Thank you very much  
6 for this opportunity, Commissioner.  
7 Before I begin my formal remarks,  
8 let me just greet my fellow Bronxites  
9 and thank you all for coming out to  
10 speak on these important matters.  
11 Since I'm also coming up in  
12 years, I have to use my visual aid here  
13 to make sure that I read this testimony  
14 correctly.  
15 Good morning, Commissioner  
16 Méndez-Santiago, members of the  
17 Department for the Aging staff, Bronx  
18 seniors, advocates for Bronx seniors  
19 and citizens of the Bronx.  
20 Commissioner, it's always a  
21 pleasure to welcome you to the Bronx.  
22 I'm here today -- and I will cut  
23 to the chase. I'm here today to  
24 express my concern about vital services  
25 for our senior citizens and the

2 programs they have depended on for  
3 decades. This year, senior programs  
4 have already been cut by three percent  
5 and are facing an additional two and a  
6 half percent reduction with another  
7 five percent cut expected next year.  
8 Additionally, there are 111  
9 senior programs funded by my office  
10 that could be eliminated on July 1,  
11 2009 as a result of a proposed  
12 initiative by the Department for the  
13 Aging to issue a citywide request for  
14 proposals to consolidate senior centers  
15 and programming. The administration  
16 wants to use borough president senior  
17 funds to pay for this new initiative,  
18 one I would argue could hurt senior  
19 programming in all of the boroughs of  
20 New York City. We cannot afford as a  
21 borough to lose 111 programs and many  
22 more throughout the city, nor can we  
23 afford to improperly or hastily  
24 overhaul the delivery of these critical  
25 services without first discussing need

2 and the potential repercussions of  
3 these actions.  
4 We have been told that senior  
5 centers would close under the new plan  
6 yet to be proposed.  
7 My question -- obviously, it's  
8 not a Q and A here -- I present to you  
9 for consideration is, is this true?  
10 And if it is, how many centers will  
11 close? What is the agency's plan for  
12 servicing these seniors, many of whom  
13 will not or cannot walk several blocks  
14 to another center post this new  
15 initiative?  
16 As you know, many seniors have  
17 established relationships at their  
18 centers, and continuation of these  
19 relationships is essential to our  
20 senior population.  
21 So I ask, what is your agency  
22 doing to make sure that our seniors can  
23 continue to maintain these  
24 relationships? If the centers closed  
25 or merged, can you assure me and the

2 people of the Bronx that in our  
3 multilingual city, seniors will  
4 continue to have bilingual staff so  
5 that these needs can and will be  
6 understood?  
7 Many Bronx seniors live in  
8 Housing Authority developments, and  
9 there I fund 28 programs for seniors at  
10 these centers. What efforts are  
11 currently underway to keep these  
12 centers open?  
13 To put this into perspective,  
14 here are a few examples of our senior  
15 programs in the Bronx that my office  
16 presently funds but may face  
17 elimination:  
18 Pregones Theater has been funded  
19 to visit senior centers and through  
20 their performances empower our seniors  
21 to report domestic violence. This  
22 education outreach effort must continue  
23 until domestic violence is eradicated.  
24 Church Alive ministries sponsors  
25 a program that works with immigrant

2 seniors providing English as a second  
3 language and civics classes to our most  
4 recent arrivals to our city. Many  
5 seniors are still able and want to work  
6 to support their families but would be  
7 unable to find employment if they  
8 lacked training and basic English  
9 language skills.

10 Other programs, VISIONS/Services  
11 For the Blind and Visually Impaired  
12 assists 125 seniors at seven centers in  
13 our borough. Seniors with eye disease  
14 or vision loss receive the special  
15 services and considerations that their  
16 handicap warrants.

17 Seniors throughout the Bronx will  
18 surely suffer without the services that  
19 they are presently receiving and depend  
20 on including food, transportation, case  
21 assistance, minor home repairs,  
22 landlord-tenant advice and guidance,  
23 information and referral services,  
24 senior trips, nutrition and health  
25 programs and the many other programs

2 that you know we collaborate on so  
3 closely to provide.  
4 I would support a request from  
5 the Department for the Aging for  
6 additional funding for a request for  
7 proposal for senior centers but cannot  
8 support the unreasonable seizure of  
9 borough president funds that support  
10 important programs for our seniors in  
11 Bronx County, and I know that my  
12 colleagues in the other boroughs share  
13 the same sentiment.  
14 I call upon the administration to  
15 reverse its claim that borough  
16 president discretionary funds are under  
17 the jurisdiction of the Department for  
18 the Aging. These funds have always  
19 been under the jurisdiction of the  
20 borough presidents. The borough  
21 presidents' offices have historically  
22 placed funds into the Department for  
23 the Aging budget so that they could  
24 directly contract with  
25 neighborhood-based senior programs.

2 The proposed change in funding and the  
3 distribution of senior funding is, in  
4 my estimation, simply unacceptable.  
5 The administration must make this  
6 funding permanent without a reduction  
7 in the number of senior centers or  
8 programs in the Bronx.  
9 In another 20 years, 20 percent  
10 of the residents of our city will be  
11 seniors. It is essential that we as  
12 their protectors provide the essential  
13 services that our seniors need to  
14 survive in our society. It is our  
15 responsibility to them as the builders  
16 of our society to make sure that their  
17 needs are addressed, and I submit this  
18 respectfully, this testimony.  
19 I think you know how I feel, and  
20 we work together. I also understand  
21 the need to build efficiencies, the  
22 need to ensure that utilization of this  
23 existing service pool, the whole  
24 universe out there is where it ought to  
25 be. We have to maximize the limited

2 resources we have. We understand the  
3 fiscal constraints we're living under,  
4 but I do believe that this removal of  
5 the role of the borough presidents as  
6 chief executives of the boroughs is  
7 really unacceptable and that we ought  
8 to figure out a way to make this work  
9 much more collaboratively. I think it  
10 will be much more productive. We're on  
11 the ground, we're in the neighborhoods,  
12 we visit these programs on a constant  
13 basis. I think the best arbiters of  
14 how things are going are the people in  
15 these neighborhoods who are working  
16 with us, certainly, and we, as elected  
17 officials, working with them. So I  
18 beseech you to reconsider this and take  
19 this message back to Mayor Bloomberg  
20 and this administration.  
21 Thank you all very much, have a  
22 wonderful holiday season and let's keep  
23 up the fight.  
24 MR. ROMERO: Sandra Boyle,  
25 Emerald Isle Immigration Center.

2 MS. BOYLE: Good morning,  
3 everyone. My name is Sandra Boyle,  
4 director at Emerald Isle Immigration  
5 Center. I'm here today representing  
6 our agency which since it was founded  
7 20 years ago has provided  
8 strength-based and community-building  
9 social services that promote immigrant  
10 welfare and address vital needs often  
11 overlooked by the general community.  
12 We are often the first agency to help  
13 an immigrant circumnavigate a US  
14 federal agency. Through one-on-one  
15 counseling, public seminars and  
16 outreach material, EIIC provides  
17 citizenship application aid, general  
18 immigration counseling, legal aid,  
19 educational services, employment  
20 referrals and mental health outreach.  
21 The current economic crisis has  
22 and will continue to have a ripple down  
23 effect and potentially crippling effect  
24 on small nonprofit organizations such  
25 as ourselves. We are already seeing

2 signs of economic slowdown.

3 We have worked to cultivate the

4 trust we have with seniors in both our

5 offices as they come to expect that we

6 can provide them the answers they need.

7 Nowhere is this more apparent than the

8 move we have made to our new office on

9 Katonah Avenue in the Bronx in an area

10 where the nearest senior center is four

11 miles away and in a community where the

12 65 plus age group is already a

13 significant portion of the population.

14 Our office move was made possible with

15 funds received by the Bronx borough

16 president. We are now able to cater to

17 groups of seniors which was not

18 possible before. In fact, this

19 morning, 50 seniors, 50 of our seniors

20 are not here because they attended an

21 event hosted by the Consulate of

22 Ireland, and these are all clients who

23 have all received our help over the

24 last year and are regular attendees of

25 our many expanding programs. Our

2 social group, our weekly knitting  
3 group, our seniors computers classes,  
4 our book club and a card group will  
5 convene starting in November.  
6 New clients who seek our services  
7 usually have questions on social  
8 security and Medicaid application  
9 assistance, passport assistance, green  
10 card renewals and naturalization  
11 applications, assistance with  
12 applications for the bilateral social  
13 security agreement which exists between  
14 the US and Ireland, helping a senior  
15 figure out if they qualify for  
16 additional financial aid.  
17 Funding for immigrant services  
18 are tough enough to solidify in this  
19 current fiscal crisis. Compounding  
20 these funding challenges are the  
21 possibility of the elimination of  
22 additional funds for extended services  
23 for seniors. We have already witnessed  
24 a 35 percent cut for the fiscal year.  
25 This seniors-focused revenue stream has

2 been the equivalent of seed funding  
3 since the first year we received it in  
4 1989, and it is now in jeopardy as the  
5 city seeks to overhaul how it funds  
6 senior services entirely. The funding  
7 we have received for Bronx seniors has  
8 allowed us to build many of our other  
9 services and every penny counts toward  
10 a portion of the staff who interface  
11 with seniors from the dedicated senior  
12 counselor, the social worker, general  
13 administration, reception time and the  
14 time of our immigration counselors and  
15 attorney. Every dime counts.

16 Recent comments about  
17 across-the-board budget cuts planned  
18 for next year give us even more cause  
19 to be concerned and increased our  
20 uncertainty in how we will continue to  
21 provide services to our seniors, a  
22 growing demographic in our  
23 constituency, and we are here today to  
24 appeal that the funding allocation and  
25 distribution continue to be filtered

2 directly to providers by the Bronx

3 borough president's office.

4 MR. ROMERO: Eleanor Edelstein

5 from Council Member Oliver Koppell's

6 office.

7 THE COMMISSIONER: While she goes

8 up, we asked the administration to try

9 to stop the testing of the alarm to at

10 least noon where we're scheduled to be

11 here. Hopefully, they will be able to

12 stop it.

13 MS. EDELSTEIN: Good morning,

14 everyone. Good morning, Commissioner

15 and members of the panel.

16 I'm Eleanor Edelstein. I'm

17 representing Council Member Oliver

18 Koppell who regrets he can't be here

19 because of a committee meeting down at

20 city council, but he wanted me to share

21 his thoughts with you.

22 Firstly, the councilman would

23 like to praise DFTA for the invaluable

24 services the agency has provided for

25 seniors in my district and throughout

2 the city. Meals-On-Wheels, senior  
3 centers and case management services  
4 have made it possible for many seniors  
5 to stay in their communities and enjoy  
6 more healthful, satisfying and socially  
7 engaging lives.

8 In view of the importance of  
9 these services to the increasing  
10 numbers of senior citizens in the city,  
11 I am dismayed by the cuts to senior  
12 programs that have already taken place  
13 and are proposed for the future.

14 Although we are all aware of the fiscal  
15 crisis, it is unconscionable to balance  
16 the budget on the backs of our most  
17 vulnerable citizens.

18 The city has already instituted a  
19 three percent cut to all senior  
20 programs. There has been a cut to the  
21 food allowance at senior centers at a  
22 time when food prices are increasing,  
23 and \$1.2 million has been cut to  
24 funding allocated for rent and  
25 equipment at senior centers. A further

2 across-the-board cut of two and a half  
3 percent, as requested by the mayor,  
4 would be devastating.

5 The proposal to rescind the  
6 borough president's discretionary  
7 funding for senior services is equally  
8 disturbing. The centralization of the  
9 funding process will result in the  
10 reduction of services, including  
11 everything from a senior center closing  
12 to loss of operational costs of vans  
13 and meals to cuts in Alzheimer programs  
14 and other critical services.

15 In my district, one senior center  
16 is almost entirely dependent upon  
17 funding from the borough president's  
18 office for its rent. Another would  
19 have to seriously curtail its  
20 transportation services since it has  
21 been receiving funds from the borough  
22 president for its van.

23 We have already seen the  
24 destructive effect centralization has  
25 had on both Meals-On-Wheels and the

2 case management program. 3,500  
3 undercounted homebound elderly clients  
4 have lost services during the case  
5 management transition process. My  
6 office has received a number of calls  
7 concerning this problem.  
8 Also, because the city will not  
9 add the new funds which have been  
10 promised to the case management  
11 program, newly hired case managers will  
12 be fired resulting in increasing  
13 caseloads up to 100 people per case  
14 manager or putting homebound elderly on  
15 waiting lists. As a result, many  
16 seniors will not be able to receive  
17 Meals-On-Wheels, because under the new  
18 restructuring, only case management  
19 agencies can certify a senior for these  
20 services. Already, about 250 seniors  
21 are on waiting lists for  
22 Meals-On-Wheels.  
23 I oppose the centralization of  
24 Meals-On-Wheels in the Bronx because of  
25 the change from daily hot meal delivery

2 to frozen meals about which my office  
3 has received many complaints. There  
4 will be a further increase in frozen  
5 meals, I'm afraid, as the reimbursement  
6 to agencies have been cut to \$7 a meal  
7 and it will be impractical for them to  
8 serve hot meals on a daily basis.

9 I'm also dismayed by the  
10 potential closing of senior centers in  
11 NYCHA buildings, depriving thousands of  
12 poorly elderly New Yorkers of meals,  
13 services and a place to socialize. I  
14 have already received a petition from a  
15 NYCHA senior center in my district  
16 describing the detrimental effects such  
17 closing would have on its elderly  
18 clientele.

19 Overall, the major restructuring  
20 of aging services by DFTA is occurring  
21 too fast with insufficient funding and  
22 a disregard for the needs of an  
23 increasingly diverse and low income  
24 elderly population.

25 The community-based network of

2 senior services has been one of its  
3 major strengths. We see this network  
4 eroding as more and more services are  
5 centralized. We have already seen that  
6 an overwhelmed and impersonal  
7 bureaucracy cannot adequately meet the  
8 needs of this population. We urge DFTA  
9 to take another look at its so-called  
10 modernization and not to throw out the  
11 baby with the bath water.

12 Thank you very much.

13 MR. ROMERO: State Senator

14 Malcolm Smith's office.

15 MR. JORDAN: Good morning once

16 again to our distinguished chair and to

17 the other commissioners that are here.

18 This is my third time coming

19 around to the panel here. This is just

20 more of a follow-up. I'm a volunteer

21 liaison. My name is Alonzo Jordan from

22 State Senator Malcolm Smith's office in

23 Queens.

24 This caught my attention because

25 one of the hats I wear, I go out and do

2 liaison work. I work for one of the  
3 directors there called Savina Brooks  
4 (phonetic). She is in charge of a lot  
5 of the media attention that deals with  
6 the senator.

7 So I looked into the yellow  
8 packet that the Department of Aging  
9 has, and I was perusing through it.

10 And on page 16 where it says Supportive  
11 Service Needs for the elderly, the  
12 description is Housing. What caught my  
13 attention was reading -- I will read  
14 it. The housing preferences of older  
15 persons are to age in place and to  
16 maximize privacy, autonomy, choice,  
17 familiarity and flexibility, and it  
18 gives a footnote there where you could  
19 find out what flexibility means. It  
20 then says, Appropriate housing and  
21 residential stability are vital to the  
22 well-being of older New Yorkers.

23 However, many have inadequate incomes  
24 to pay for housing costs, competing  
25 health care expenditures and physical

2 limitations that must be addressed by  
3 in-home care or structural  
4 modifications.  
5 If you go to the back, you have a  
6 quotation there for 35. It gives us  
7 the example of what that means or a  
8 footnote where you got that suggestion  
9 for Housing. It says, 35, in the back  
10 of page 40, it says, Prosper, Vera,  
11 Living Arrangements For Older New  
12 Yorkers, Project 2015.  
13 I believe I discussed with the  
14 commissioner on the first hearing in  
15 Borough Hall in Brooklyn about the  
16 graph you have here.  
17 Then there is a piece of paper, a  
18 copy that I gave you, the panel, which  
19 reads as this, and then I will sum it  
20 up. It says, Branch Brook Park Manor  
21 announces that from October 21, 2008 to  
22 October 22nd, 2008 from 10:00 a.m. to  
23 3:00 p.m. applications will be  
24 available for a waiting list for  
25 prospective tenants interested in

2 residing in a Section 8 senior citizen  
3 building known as Branch Brook Park  
4 Manor. Then it gives the eligibility  
5 requirements. Applicants must be 62  
6 years of age or older or 55 years of  
7 age and handicapped or disability and  
8 mobility impaired. Then it gives the  
9 income for the applicants. At the  
10 bottom is a notice in bold print. For  
11 those seniors that have a problem  
12 reading, it says, Applications can be  
13 obtained on October 21, 2008 and  
14 October 22, 2008 from 10:00 a.m. to  
15 3:00 p.m. at 1 Branch Brook Plaza which  
16 is in Newark, New Jersey. It gives a  
17 zip code.  
18 And what caught my attention, I  
19 was at a church. I read this in  
20 something called Epic Times Magazine.  
21 I read it in there. It's mostly seen  
22 in the Manhattan area. It's like The  
23 Voice, and it reaches over 200,000  
24 readers. What got my attention -- it  
25 sounds good by the description, but the

2 only problem was the date of the  
3 newspaper was October 23rd. So I said,  
4 it's something to make a mental  
5 footnote to be aware for our seniors  
6 from the 21st to the 22nd, and the  
7 newspaper is dated the 23rd. It's not  
8 a national newspaper. It's Epic Times.  
9 I wanted to bring that to the  
10 attention for anybody that's in the  
11 media area for DFTA. This may be a  
12 problem. Maybe they weren't aware.  
13 It's a fact that the deadline was the  
14 22nd and it was printed in the  
15 October 23rd newspaper.  
16 I thank you very much for your  
17 time.  
18 MR. ROMERO: Mark Bones of  
19 Missions.  
20 MR. BONES: Good morning,  
21 everybody, Commissioner and Deputy  
22 Commissioner. Thank you for this  
23 opportunity to testify.  
24 My name is Mark Bones, and I am  
25 the assistant director of community

2 outreach coordinator for VISIONS which  
3 provides services for people who are  
4 blind and visually impaired, a  
5 not-for-profit agency that last year  
6 served over 3,800 across New York City.

7 For VISIONS, two-thirds of the people  
8 that we serve are over the age of 60,  
9 and a vast majority of our clients are  
10 either poor or have limited incomes.

11 In a city of immigrants and their  
12 children, our clients often speak  
13 languages other than English,  
14 especially Spanish, Cantonese and  
15 Russian. They have multiple  
16 disabilities and are from a population  
17 that have a high incidence of  
18 diabetes-related retinopathy or  
19 glaucoma.

20 There are a lot of good things in  
21 the annual plan, and we commend DFTA on  
22 their commitment to reaching and  
23 serving a diverse elderly population.

24 It's what we feel that we do at VISIONS  
25 also every day. We also applaud the

2 plan in that it recognizes the special  
3 needs of the growing elderly population  
4 with sensory impairments that has  
5 vision loss and hearing loss.

6 In New York City, there are an  
7 estimated 34,000 elders age 65 or over  
8 who are blind and 217,000 who are  
9 visually impaired, and these numbers  
10 are not expected to go down with the  
11 aging of the population. These numbers  
12 are expected to double to half a  
13 million New Yorkers in the next  
14 20 years.

15 The plan, however, does have some  
16 issues or VISIONS has some issues with  
17 the annual plan, and we would like to  
18 make some recommendations. We think  
19 that the DFTA should make a long-term  
20 commitment to the New York City  
21 Coalition on Aging and Vision Project  
22 and fund an ongoing resource center on  
23 vision and aging.

24 We also feel that the plan  
25 unfortunately shifts the burden off of

2 the city and onto not-for-profits and  
3 its partners to perform at the same  
4 level with less revenue and increasing  
5 expenses, and we feel that that's  
6 unreasonable.

7 For example, the borough  
8 presidents have already been notified,  
9 as Adolfo Carrion just testified, that  
10 its DFTA program funding will be funded  
11 for only this last year and will be cut  
12 as of June 30th, 2009.

13 For our organization, VISIONS has  
14 already absorbed a \$32,000 loss plus a  
15 three percent across-the-board cut this  
16 year in DFTA funding. So of course,  
17 with regard to DFTA's plans to  
18 eliminate the borough president's  
19 funding, we strongly oppose it.

20 VISIONS right now is at risk of  
21 losing almost \$10,000 in the Bronx and  
22 over \$77,000 across the five boroughs  
23 through this loss of borough president  
24 funding, funding that we have received  
25 in the Bronx for over 20 years.

2 And what will happen with that  
3 reduced funding? What will happen to  
4 the services? There will be an  
5 increase in falls from blind seniors,  
6 hip fractures, home fires, and home  
7 care expenses for the blind and  
8 visually impaired seniors will  
9 skyrocket. This is going to be a drain  
10 on the New York City and the state  
11 budget, and we ask DFTA to not be  
12 pennywise and pound foolish. A  
13 reduction in these medical and home  
14 care costs more than covers the expense  
15 of an extensive outreach effort and  
16 service delivery for these vulnerable  
17 populations, the majority of whom are  
18 people of color. DFTA should be  
19 allocating more, not reducing necessary  
20 funding for outreach for services to  
21 blind, visually impaired seniors. So  
22 essentially, we ask in a world of  
23 budget cuts and limited resources that  
24 DFTA not make cuts that will negatively  
25 affect the blind, one of our most

2 vulnerable population.  
3 With that, please restore all the  
4 funding distributed by the borough  
5 presidents. And in closing, we ask  
6 you, Commissioner, again, with this  
7 budget crisis that you allow VISIONS to  
8 remain a full community partner with  
9 you and your staff to navigate this  
10 crisis to ensure quality decisions are  
11 made and that the impact on the aging  
12 and vision loss community is minimized.

13 Thank you.

14 MR. ROMERO: Julia  
15 Schwartz-Leeper, Riverdale Senior  
16 Services.

17 MS. SCHWARTZ-LEEPER: Good  
18 morning. Thank you and everyone at  
19 DFTA for giving me this opportunity. I  
20 really come not just representing  
21 Riverdale Senior Services, but many of  
22 the other providers who I have spoken  
23 to who really don't even have the time  
24 to leave their offices to come here  
25 today.

2 I'm Julia Schwartz-Leeper. I'm  
3 the executive director of Riverdale  
4 Senior Services which currently holds  
5 three DFTA contracts, a transportation  
6 contract, a social adult day program as  
7 well as a well-established senior  
8 center contract.  
9 DFTA has supported our programs  
10 for 35 years. The vision and  
11 leadership of DFTA in partnership with  
12 our own leadership has allowed RSS to  
13 provide quality services to thousands  
14 of seniors for all these 35 years. The  
15 RSS senior center provides  
16 comprehensive services for seniors  
17 through the support DFTA has provided  
18 as well as support through many  
19 different partnerships with other  
20 agencies and support from our own  
21 community.  
22 We are a wellness center and have  
23 been for many years. We have a  
24 community health nurse on staff and we  
25 focus all of our programs around the

2 goal of healthy aging. Our mission is  
3 to allow people to stay in their own  
4 homes and communities as long as they  
5 desire and to avoid unnecessary  
6 hospitalizations, physician visits and  
7 institutionalization.

8 I heard in the news yesterday  
9 that a new study determined the three  
10 key elements for healthy aging. Is  
11 this a surprise to us? Eating well,  
12 staying active and being social. Every  
13 single activity at our centers is  
14 focused around these principles.

15 For the past two years, RSS has  
16 received city council funds targeted at  
17 healthy aging. These funds have  
18 allowed us to continue the programs we  
19 do and include other sites and to  
20 expand our hours into the afternoon and  
21 evening.

22 We are all concerned about how we  
23 reach the incoming seniors, people who  
24 are still working who may not be able  
25 to come at our usual hours in the

2 morning, and we have been really  
3 successful in adding these afternoon  
4 and evening programs with no increased  
5 staff but by just stretching the staff  
6 even further.

7 Many of us are concerned about  
8 the potential loss of discretionary  
9 funding. In addition to the special  
10 programs I mentioned above, these funds  
11 received by the city council and the  
12 borough president make our budgets  
13 whole. They pay for rent, gas for our  
14 bus and food for our meals. Without  
15 these additional funds, we could not  
16 stay open. All of our resources would  
17 be devoted to just things like rent and  
18 utilities and non-negotiable costs.

19 Since I have come to my  
20 organization, I have renegotiated every  
21 single contract; what I mean by that is  
22 contracts with our food distributors  
23 and our utilities and everybody we do  
24 business with to save every penny. But  
25 if we have all these budget cuts, we

2 would only be able to pay for things  
3 like rent and utilities and there would  
4 be nothing left for classes or  
5 services.  
6 What's the point of having a  
7 center with no services or class or a  
8 bus when we can't afford the gas?  
9 Across-the-board cuts do not address  
10 the individual needs of our programs.  
11 We all work really closely with the  
12 borough president's office and our  
13 council people to account for every  
14 dollar we spend.  
15 For RSS, borough president funds  
16 pay for gas and insurance for our bus,  
17 but in other centers these funds are  
18 used to pay a large portion of their  
19 rent.  
20 The borough presidents' funds  
21 also support organizations like BRICA,  
22 the Bronx Regional Interagency Council.  
23 And as a member of their board, I have  
24 also been asked to talk to you.  
25 Organizations like BRICA are a group of

2 volunteers who join together to ensure  
3 that services throughout the borough  
4 are coordinated and comprehensive for  
5 all seniors and their families. We  
6 educate one another so that we know how  
7 best to help our clients. Services are  
8 confusing and complex, and it is  
9 critically important that we ensure  
10 that services are easily accessible to  
11 seniors. The commissioner has always  
12 been very supportive of BRICA, and we  
13 welcome him on a regular basis so that  
14 we can dialogue together about how we  
15 can all work together to meet our  
16 mutual goal of serving seniors in the  
17 city.

18 Most importantly, we all know  
19 that all of these community services  
20 are a bargain for taxpayers. We  
21 provide invaluable services for a  
22 fraction of what institutional care  
23 costs or what care at a hospital costs.  
24 We cannot afford to limit community  
25 services which keep seniors healthy and

2 reduces their need to use more costly  
3 medical and institutional services.  
4 Community services like ours reduces  
5 Medicare and Medicaid costs, and we  
6 cannot afford to lose those savings.  
7 Please do not ask us to do more and  
8 serve more with less. It is  
9 truthfully, as one said before, penny  
10 wise and dollar foolish.  
11 Thank you so much for your time.  
12 MR. ROMERO: Providencia Miro,  
13 East Concourse Senior Center.  
14 MS. MIRO: Good morning. Thank  
15 you. Commissioner, I think this  
16 meeting has been running always in  
17 English and it's a lot of people here  
18 that they don't speak English. Anyway,  
19 I'm going to try to do my best.  
20 I'm Providencia Miro. Right now,  
21 I'm one of the people that attend the  
22 East Concourse Senior Center, 236 East  
23 Tremont Avenue. I'm seeing what's  
24 going on in this center every day. We  
25 have about 70 people that they go over

2 there every day. Most of that, they  
3 have breakfast in the morning, they  
4 have lunch, they have service from  
5 different agencies in the area.  
6 You know, sometimes you have some  
7 problem and you call for the telephone.  
8 And what do they do in the telephone?  
9 They put music that you can hear, music  
10 all day long. Don't laugh. It's true.  
11 It is true. You go to an emergency for  
12 the ambulance. And what do they do?  
13 Music. Don't laugh, Commissioner.  
14 The people sitting over here, he  
15 work very hard with all his personnel  
16 that we have the service that we  
17 deserve because this is not free. We  
18 work very hard, especially myself. I  
19 raised my children in this area, in the  
20 South Bronx, the beautiful South Bronx,  
21 and now I deserve to have some peace  
22 and entertainment and happiness. And I  
23 will pray and we have some hope that  
24 this center don't be touched for  
25 nothing, because that area only have

2 that one. Then you have to have  
3 service for another one that you have  
4 to walk about ten blocks in the  
5 weather.  
6 So Commissioner, I need your  
7 help. I have been helping the agency  
8 for many years. I'm a retired woman,  
9 and I help and volunteer a lot of years  
10 now. It's time for me to rest because  
11 I am a very sick woman.  
12 And another thing that everybody  
13 forget to say, those centers, they  
14 running another program in the  
15 afternoon for our children. They have  
16 after school center for most of them  
17 and they have those children getting  
18 from school while their mother working  
19 and father working and they help them  
20 do their homework. They have  
21 entertainment and all the stuff for the  
22 seniors. They forget about the  
23 children. It's our children too.  
24 Well, I'm not going to speak too  
25 much more. If I start speaking, you're

2 going to start laughing.

3 You shocked what's happened with

4 the older generation after we work and

5 we struggle here in this area,

6 especially in the South Bronx. I have

7 been living in the South Bronx.

8 Sometimes I go to Manhattan, but please

9 do something that you have to do. It's

10 your position. Okay.

11 Thank you very much.

12 MR. ROMERO: Thank you.

13 Peggy Lee, The Family Center.

14 MS. LEE: Good morning. Thank

15 you. My name is Peggy Lee. I am a

16 67-year-old grandparent, and I live in

17 the Hunts Point section of the Bronx.

18 I am here today to talk about a program

19 that is helping keep my entire family

20 together.

21 Many people here today are

22 speaking out about meals programs and

23 senior citizen centers, but I hope the

24 Department for the Aging will remember

25 the many of us who have been served by

2 the grandparent caregiver support  
3 program at The Family Center.  
4 I am a second time around  
5 caregiver grandparent. I had never  
6 expected to be raising children again,  
7 but my grandchildren had no place else  
8 to go. In 1999, I became the caregiver  
9 of my son's two children because they  
10 could no longer or they were unable to  
11 care for them. When I took the  
12 children in, Rebecca was 11 and Jason  
13 was five. I felt overwhelmed. My son  
14 has no means to care for the children  
15 and the natural mother is not in the  
16 picture.  
17 That year I had not yet retired.  
18 I was working in the city insurance  
19 department. A coworker told me how  
20 much The Family Center's program for  
21 grandparent caregivers had helped her.  
22 The Family Center for grandparent  
23 caregivers is the only one like it in  
24 the whole city.  
25 The center has been very helpful

2 in so many ways. I now attend their  
3 group for grandparents like me caring  
4 for grandchildren. That group has  
5 helped me to understand and deal with  
6 these youngsters, to understand their  
7 issues better and sheds light on some  
8 kids' problems. I hear other  
9 grandparents' stories and see the  
10 brighter side, that it is not as bad as  
11 it seems. Most of all, it helps me to  
12 know that I'm not alone.

13 I have had three workers at The  
14 Family Center. My individual social  
15 worker, Maggie, has helped me  
16 understand that even when they are  
17 difficult, all these children need is  
18 love. Basically, that is what they are  
19 looking for. She helps me to remind us  
20 that there are no secrets and that we  
21 are all in this together as a family.  
22 The children's natural mother has  
23 never filed any papers for custody of  
24 her children. My son has been unable  
25 to care for them. At one point, the

2 boy's aunt -- the children's aunt said  
3 she would take the children, but later  
4 she moved to Florida.  
5 When we finally exhausted every  
6 possibility, we had to go to court so  
7 that the law would recognize me as the  
8 children's responsible guardian. The  
9 Family Center attorney guided me  
10 through that.  
11 Sometimes all of us fall on hard  
12 times. My family does not get any  
13 financial help. The Family Center  
14 helped us out with some expenses, and  
15 at school time, they helped me to get  
16 the children ready for school.  
17 I hope you will think of me and  
18 these grandchildren as you consider  
19 your priorities. I thank God that I  
20 was able -- that I was led to The  
21 Family Center. Without this unique  
22 program, there is no nobody who is  
23 there to help support a second time  
24 around grandparent like me. I truly do  
25 not know what we would have done. When

2 you support such a program, you support  
3 me.

4 I thank you for this opportunity  
5 to tell my family's story.

6 MR. ROMERO: Traci Lester, Reach  
7 Out and Read.

8 MS. LESTER: Good morning. My  
9 name is Traci Lester. I'm an executive  
10 director for Reach Out and Read of  
11 Greater New York, and I'm here today to  
12 speak with you about the children.

13 Reach Out and Read is a pediatric  
14 literacy program, and our mission is to  
15 make literacy promotion a standard part  
16 of pediatric primary care so that  
17 children grow up with books and a love  
18 of reading.

19 We train doctors, pediatricians  
20 and nurse practitioners to counsel  
21 families about the importance of  
22 reading aloud and how it impacts their  
23 children. We work with children as  
24 young as six months of age up through  
25 five years of age.

2 You may wonder why I'm standing  
3 here today before you to speak about an  
4 early literacy program, but I'm here to  
5 say we don't provide Meals-On-Wheels  
6 and we don't provide vision services,  
7 but what we provide is something less  
8 tangible and extremely important.  
9 And as you heard, being social is  
10 a key part to longevity. We provide an  
11 opportunity for seniors to counsel  
12 children and serve as role models and  
13 develop healthy and lasting  
14 relationships, and that happens in the  
15 pediatric clinics, 36 hospitals and  
16 health centers in the Bronx.  
17 Presently, we serve 54,000 children in  
18 the Bronx. Our support from the Bronx  
19 borough president allows us to partner  
20 with the Department for the Aging  
21 foster grandparent program. We place  
22 foster grandparents in pediatric  
23 clinics throughout the Bronx to work  
24 with families and mentor young children  
25 and talk with parents about why reading

2 aloud to their children makes a  
3 significant impact on their development  
4 in later years. The foster  
5 grandparents are helping to promote  
6 reading readiness for thousands of  
7 children here in the borough.  
8 The funding we receive allows us  
9 to purchase literacy materials and  
10 provide materials for the foster  
11 grandparents in the clinics throughout  
12 the city. The change that we're  
13 discussing today would significantly  
14 impact Reach Out and Read by adding an  
15 additional administrative burden  
16 through the request for proposal  
17 process.  
18 Presently, we have a very small  
19 staffing structure, but we work with  
20 hundreds of foster grandparents  
21 throughout the region and thousands of  
22 children throughout the Bronx. We  
23 would not be able to administer an RFP.  
24 The Bronx borough president's funding  
25 allows us to contract, subcontract with

2 senior agencies in the city who  
3 administer the grant for us.  
4 We know that working with recent  
5 immigrants, with children who are  
6 coming from foster care, families whose  
7 members have been recently  
8 incarcerated, we work with the  
9 uninsured and the working poor, we know  
10 that sometimes the foster grandparent  
11 is the one constant the children  
12 experience. If families take the time  
13 out to read to their children every  
14 day, it actually will impact them later  
15 on.

16 We're asking that the request for  
17 proposal process be reconsidered for  
18 small organizations like us that may  
19 not be able to access the funds should  
20 that change occur.

21 MR. ROMERO: Thomas Lifrieri.

22 MR. LIFRIERI: Good morning,  
23 everybody, from the San Gennaro Senior  
24 Center in the Bronx.

25 Borough president funding has

2 been helping us for years, and we have  
3 a lot of problems.  
4 Our doors are open to all  
5 seniors. In our center, we have what I  
6 call senior seniors. We have a lot of  
7 people that are in their late 80s,  
8 early 90s, and the borough president  
9 has been helping us for the last ten,  
10 15 years. Now there's rumors that some  
11 of these centers are going to close.  
12 These people cannot travel far,  
13 and we also have -- our rent has to be  
14 paid. We have bills. And with these  
15 rumors that the senior citizen centers  
16 are going to be closing, it is very  
17 hard. It's bad. What do you tell  
18 these people? They have to travel a  
19 mile or two out of the way because I  
20 don't know of any other senior centers  
21 that are close to us.  
22 So Mr. Chairman, I'm hoping for  
23 something to help us. This is very  
24 bad. Like I say, we have a lot of  
25 people in their 80s and 90s that need

2 help. We need all the help we could  
3 get, and I hope to keep our doors open  
4 so any seniors that want to come up are  
5 welcome to come up. I thank you all,  
6 and have a good day.

7 MR. ROMERO: Heather Waters,  
8 Millennium Art Academy.

9 MS. WATERS: Good morning. I  
10 also represent both the children and  
11 the seniors. I'm the intergenerational  
12 program director at Millennium Art  
13 Academy which is one of the high  
14 schools on Stevenson campus, and we  
15 run, thanks to the generosity for the  
16 aging, many programs that is part of  
17 our founding principle as a school.  
18 Since Millennium Art Academy  
19 opened in 2003, we have been engaging  
20 seniors and teens in mutually  
21 beneficial cultural, academic and  
22 socially conscious programs that have  
23 been proven to greatly enhance the  
24 quality of life for both elders and  
25 students. We have kept kids out of

2 gangs. We've gotten them to come to  
3 school. Our graduation rate has gone  
4 up. We have received two As on our  
5 last two school report cards, and one  
6 of the fundamental reasons for that are  
7 these volunteer programs with the  
8 seniors.

9 Our fear is that if the funding  
10 is cut, we would have to lose these  
11 programs. And I do this for a living,  
12 and I'm nervous that -- as a director  
13 from Riverdale said, it's about healthy  
14 eating, it's about being active and  
15 it's about being social. And we are  
16 serving two groups of society that are  
17 somewhat on the periphery, and they are  
18 our future. And it is our senior  
19 population that is willing to share  
20 their wisdom, share their compassion  
21 and develop these young people who are  
22 going to eventually lead us. It's  
23 unbelievable the impact on both groups  
24 that these programs have.  
25 And right now, our newest program

2 is about growing food and bringing it  
3 back to the community. We work with  
4 three nursing homes and we work with  
5 three senior centers in the Sound View  
6 area. So our only request is please  
7 don't cut the funding. It's just --  
8 it's unavailable. It's our future.  
9 Thank you.

10 MR. ROMERO: Brad Silver, Bronx  
11 Jewish Community Council.

12 MR. SILVER: Good morning. Good  
13 morning, Commissioner and department  
14 liaison staff. Bronx Jewish Community  
15 Council went into incorporation in  
16 1972. It has been the Jewish agency  
17 concerned with the antipoverty movement  
18 in the borough, and we remain the  
19 largest Jewish sponsor provider of  
20 ending poverty services. And from the  
21 day that we opened our doors, we have  
22 served everyone in the community and  
23 continue to do so.  
24 We are a community-based  
25 organization. We received our first

2 Department for the Aging contract, I  
3 believe, in 1982, and one of our major  
4 contracts was consolidated in the  
5 Department for the Aging in 1992.  
6 We have a model of service which  
7 has a series of community offices that  
8 are accessible to people in various  
9 neighborhoods across the borough, and  
10 last year we served 3,593 separate  
11 individuals with an average of three or  
12 four visits each.  
13 People come in to take care of  
14 their benefits, to have their tax  
15 stimulus forms filled out. Last year,  
16 over 700 people at our community  
17 offices had tax stimulus forms filled  
18 out and it helped a number of them pay  
19 their bills, pay their rent and take  
20 care of their various needs.  
21 The poverty statistics in the  
22 Bronx are significant. In 2005, the  
23 Bronx made up 13.7 percent of the  
24 city's distribution population over the  
25 age of 60. However, 32.5 percent of

2 those people live below the poverty  
3 line, and 40 percent of the Bronx  
4 population 65 plus in 2005 was living  
5 between 150 and 200 percent of the  
6 poverty level.

7 These seniors need services,  
8 access to services. They need to be  
9 able to come into a community office  
10 and have their various forms filled  
11 out, to try and figure out why the  
12 hospital is billing them for various  
13 kinds of things, to understand what's  
14 happening with the communications  
15 they're receiving. Sometimes they need  
16 to come into our office at Holland  
17 Avenue and get emergency food from our  
18 food pantry. Sometimes they need help  
19 with eviction because they're about to  
20 be evicted.

21 And it's interesting to note that  
22 in our community board seven office  
23 which is located on Bainbridge Avenue,  
24 that our director there calculated for  
25 every dollar we spend on programs in

2 that office, that 7 to \$8 is returned  
3 to the community in savings.  
4 The Department for the Aging in  
5 an effort to create efficiencies has  
6 been consolidating their programs, and  
7 they seem to be less interested in  
8 funding the kind of walk-in services  
9 that we provide. Last year, the  
10 Department eliminated a group of  
11 programs which included a contract of  
12 over \$300,000 to the Bronx Jewish  
13 Community Counsel. Some of those  
14 dollars were restored by the city  
15 council, but not all of them.  
16 We have also seen our other  
17 contracts at the Department of  
18 Aging dwindle. We have been home  
19 delivery meal providers. We have been  
20 home care providers. We have been a  
21 case management agency. And over a  
22 period of time, the Department has  
23 consolidated contracts so that there  
24 are less and less providers giving  
25 people less and less choice.

2 Today, seniors have a choice of  
3 who provides their medical services.  
4 They have a choice of -- children have  
5 a choice of which choice schools they  
6 go to. But in the Department scheme,  
7 there seem to be less and less choices  
8 available to seniors, and some of these  
9 choices are geographically restrictive.  
10 We think that although everybody is  
11 talking about efficiency of scale, that  
12 this is a mistake and that  
13 community-based services need to be  
14 preserved.  
15 Just one more sentence which is  
16 that we are and have been for over  
17 20 years the recipient of a very large  
18 grant from the Bronx borough president  
19 and that eliminating Bronx borough  
20 president funding starting in July will  
21 mean that we will have to close a  
22 significant number of our community  
23 offices and may mean that the food  
24 pantry operation which serves over a  
25 thousand people a month, over half of

2 them seniors, will likely close in  
3 community board 11 and that it should  
4 be noted that the two largest food  
5 pantry operations closest to us have  
6 already closed. This is a significant  
7 problem, and I don't think it's on  
8 anybody's radar screen.  
9 And I would urge you,  
10 Commissioner -- you and I have had many  
11 conversations -- I would urge you to  
12 please take another look at your plan.  
13 Thank you.

14 MR. ROMERO: Lydia Garcia, Casa  
15 Boricua Senior Center.

16 MS. GARCIA: Good morning,  
17 everyone. Good morning, Commissioner  
18 Méndez-Santiago, Dr. Laureano, our  
19 executive director from Neighborhood  
20 SHOPP.

21 My name is Lydia Garcia, and I am  
22 serving vice-president of Casa Boricua.  
23 We are here to represent Casa Boricua  
24 Senior Center, to express our concern  
25 for the budget cuts to all the centers.

2 Senior centers are more than a service  
3 to their community. Senior centers are  
4 unique to the senior population, the  
5 population that for many years served  
6 to build a family, to build a future,  
7 to build our city, the population of  
8 the years past and today.

9 We are looking for a place where  
10 we can go and forget about worries,  
11 worries that come with old age, aches  
12 and pains and a weak pension that have  
13 not survived, most of all our  
14 loneliness. The centers provide  
15 programs where seniors feel productive,  
16 and we share our worries as well as our  
17 visions.

18 Many seniors need to have meals,  
19 and the center provides these. But  
20 especially for those people -- and they  
21 can help themselves -- these programs  
22 include classes which are now suffering  
23 from the cuts, because we have broken  
24 sewing machines that we have not  
25 replaced, because they cannot buy the

2 material fabrics for the people to make  
3 their gowns and dresses that they show  
4 at the fashion shows which they have  
5 yearly. We have programs, we have  
6 computer classes which really also --  
7 now we need some computers and the  
8 health programs that helped so much for  
9 us to keep well and keep on going. We  
10 have exercise programs, activities,  
11 trips, dominoes, tournaments, a  
12 billiard room and we have dancing,  
13 trips, talent shows, fashion shows,  
14 bingo and socialization, which is very  
15 important to keep the seniors from  
16 getting depressed.

17 Senior centers are not a gift to  
18 the senior population, more a service  
19 that we feel we deserve after so many  
20 years of our work.

21 There are millions to spend in  
22 the world, to send to the rich bankers,  
23 millions to send to foreign countries,  
24 millions to spend floating to space.

25 And how come there is no money to help

2 other senior centers, no money to keep

3 the important programs open for the

4 population that have built this

5 country, a population that deserves

6 consideration?

7 We are here to say, No more.

8 Look for money somewhere else, but do

9 not cut our senior funds. Do not close

10 our centers. We ask our commissioner,

11 please understand that we're here

12 because we need our centers open. Hear

13 our voices, and please take all these

14 concerns and worries to the higher

15 authority, utmost of all, Mayor

16 Bloomberg.

17 Thank you for being here. Thank

18 you for listening to us little people

19 of these senior centers which this is a

20 home away from home for many of us.

21 Thank you.

22 MR. ROMERO: Marcella Brown,

23 William Hudson Senior Center.

24 MS. BROWN: Good morning,

25 Commissioner. It's good to be here.

2 Good morning to my seniors all over the  
3 Bronx. We are so happy that we can be  
4 here this morning to speak to the  
5 commissioner.

6 First of all, we want them to  
7 know that we are in sync with our  
8 borough president. We don't need  
9 nobody else to do his job because he  
10 has been doing a hell of a job for the  
11 seniors of the Bronx, and we want that  
12 to continue. We thank DFTA for  
13 everything they have done for us, but  
14 we know our place, and our place is  
15 here in the Bronx and our borough  
16 president knows us.

17 Let me introduce myself. My name  
18 is Marcella Brown, and I'm the  
19 president of the oldest senior citizen  
20 center in the country. That's the  
21 Hudson Senior Citizen Center at 169th  
22 Street and Webster Avenue. And we are  
23 here today to tell you we've been  
24 struggling a long time and we don't  
25 want to -- we are not going to give up

2 now.

3 I'm not even going by the paper

4 that's here that say all the things I

5 wanted to say, but I came before you

6 today to say we are celebrating our

7 65th anniversary, and we are not having

8 no fund-raiser. We are having a big

9 celebration at our center.

10 And not only that, as I said

11 again, number one, the first in the

12 nation, and that's not a small job. So

13 it took a whole lot of us, people

14 before me and people who will come

15 after me to keep the center going, and

16 we need you to continue to give us the

17 funds and let our borough president

18 continue to do the job that he has been

19 doing. We know there's a lot of things

20 that our centers need and Miss Smith is

21 sitting here, and she can tell you from

22 DFTA we are here and doing the best we

23 can. We are living in Housing

24 Authority development facilities, and

25 we thank God for them.

2 I have been the president for  
3 almost 40 years, and I too live in a  
4 New York City Housing Authority  
5 project.  
6 So we want you to know we seniors  
7 ask one question, how could we survive?  
8 God bless you and we thank you so  
9 much for coming to listen to us this  
10 morning.  
11 MR. ROMERO: Cameron Geliss,  
12 JASA/JPAC.  
13 MS. GELISS: Good morning,  
14 everyone. My name is Cameron Geliss,  
15 and I am the community outreach  
16 coordinator for JASA as well as the  
17 program coordinator for the Institute  
18 For Senior Action partnership.  
19 I have two things I just want to  
20 touch on really briefly this morning.  
21 First, I am really pleased to share  
22 with all of you a very exciting new  
23 initiative of JASA's JPAC department,  
24 the IFSA partnership. JPAC is the  
25 Joint Public Affairs Committee for

2 older adults which for 30 years now has  
3 been fighting for rights, protections  
4 and entitlements for older adults and  
5 their families.

6 The IFSA partnership is a new  
7 two-week course based on JPAC's  
8 successful ten-week Institute For  
9 Senior Action which over the past  
10 14 years has trained over 650 seniors  
11 in leadership and advocacy skills. The  
12 IFSA partnership is funded by the New  
13 York Foundation and provides JASA with  
14 an opportunity to reach out and train  
15 older adults in Brooklyn and in the  
16 Bronx.

17 In bringing this two-week program  
18 into the outer boroughs, JASA is  
19 thrilled to be providing an opportunity  
20 to make a real impact on public policy  
21 to older adults who are interested in  
22 advocacy, but who, for any number of  
23 reasons, are not able to attend our  
24 ten-week course that we had in  
25 Manhattan.

2 Our first training was just held  
3 this last October 24th at the JASA  
4 office in Fordham Plaza with 11  
5 participants participating throughout  
6 this borough. It was a smashing  
7 success. Participants learned about  
8 the legislative process from State  
9 Senator Eric Schneiderman in the  
10 morning, and then I taught a second  
11 session on techniques of social action  
12 in the afternoon in partnership with  
13 the JPAC director Molly Krakowski.  
14 Following this session, I  
15 received an e-mail from two of our  
16 participants, and they wanted to  
17 mention that the insights from Senator  
18 Schneiderman and actually getting to  
19 hear from a politician about what  
20 actually was taking place in Albany was  
21 eye popping to them. They described  
22 how impressed they had been by the  
23 wealth of knowledge that had been  
24 bestowed on them by the staff during  
25 the session.

2 Our second session is scheduled  
3 to take place a week from tomorrow, on  
4 November 7th. We will be having  
5 presentations from New York State  
6 Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz and  
7 Michael Sanchez who is the social work  
8 supervisor for JASA's East Bronx case  
9 management program. During the second  
10 session, students will be learning  
11 about senior benefits and entitlements  
12 as well as public speaking and reaching  
13 out to their elected officials.  
14 The Brooklyn trainings will be  
15 taking place on November 17 and 24 at  
16 the Senior Alliance Senior Center in  
17 Brighton Beach, and we already have ten  
18 students registered to attend this  
19 class.  
20 In addition to providing what we  
21 are calling the mini-IFSA trainings,  
22 the grant enables JASA to strengthen  
23 the impact of the trainings through  
24 senior internship placements in local  
25 elected officials' offices

2 and community organizations, hopefully  
3 further engaging older adults in public  
4 policy. Once our internships are in  
5 place this spring, we hope to  
6 facilitate meaningful experiences for  
7 IFSA graduates from any of our classes  
8 and provide additional training and  
9 support, of course, to them as  
10 necessary.

11 The New York Foundation grant  
12 requires that we train 20 older adults  
13 throughout Brooklyn and the Bronx in  
14 the course of this year and that we  
15 create ten to 12 internship placements.

16 The interest, however, has been so  
17 great that we have already scheduled a  
18 second round of trainings for both  
19 boroughs coming this spring. We will  
20 be at Co-op City here in the Bronx and  
21 then we will be in the Borough Hall  
22 area of Brooklyn again this spring, and  
23 we expect to graduate close to, if not  
24 over, 40 new IFSA graduates by the end  
25 of May.

2 We are really excited to have  
3 this opportunity to experiment with  
4 these smaller trainings and to be able  
5 to come out finally after such a long  
6 wait for so many people into the outer  
7 boroughs as well as to have the senior  
8 internships and are eager to expand and  
9 grow this program in the future.  
10 It is certainly our hope as the  
11 Department for the Aging in partnership  
12 with the city look forward that you  
13 keep in mind the importance of new and  
14 innovative programs like this one.  
15 We too, just along with -- I know  
16 it's been said many times -- also are  
17 very grateful to receive monies from  
18 the Bronx borough president. It helps  
19 to fund the younger disabled members  
20 program of the Co-op City Handicapped  
21 Adult Association that provides access  
22 to handicapped accessible  
23 transportation through funding, again,  
24 provided through the borough president,  
25 and we really feel that these funds

2 afford flexibility to the agency to  
3 apply these funds to address the unmet  
4 needs of seniors in the Bronx and that  
5 we certainly feel that the loss of  
6 these funds would negatively impact on  
7 the most vulnerable seniors in the  
8 Bronx.

9 Thank you all very much.

10 MR. ROMERO: Ada DeCastro, Bronx  
11 River Senior Center.

12 MS. DECASTRO: Good morning,  
13 Commissioner, good morning, DFTA staff.

14 I am here to speak not only as a senior  
15 center director from Bronx River Senior  
16 Center, but also as a senior citizen  
17 myself. I see both sides of the fence.  
18 I sit on both sides of the fence, and I  
19 also have witnessed a lot of things  
20 that go along with loneliness as I sit  
21 down and the seniors trust me with  
22 their most intimate and personal  
23 problems. I am an ear to them and I  
24 have cried along with them along with  
25 their sorrow because we have people

2 that have become widows and widowers.  
3 Just out of the blue sky, they lose  
4 their mate. Maybe for 50 years, they  
5 have been married, or 55 years. All of  
6 a sudden, they turn around and find  
7 themselves without their partner, and  
8 some of them have never visited a  
9 center before. All of a sudden,  
10 they're left alone. They have to cook  
11 for themselves, they have to take care  
12 of themselves. They're still not in  
13 the greatest of health. They come in,  
14 they wander into the center, never been  
15 there, don't know what to do, cry, I  
16 miss my partner, I miss my partner. I  
17 have to get them involved so that they  
18 can meet other people and find another  
19 way of life, so they could get used to  
20 being alone and get a meal, because  
21 some of them don't even want to eat  
22 after they lose their partners. They  
23 go on a hunger strike, the depression.  
24 So what are we supposed to do,  
25 let them go fall between the cracks?

2 No, I don't think that they deserve  
3 that. I think they have been in this  
4 country for too much of a long time,  
5 and they raised their children.  
6 In our Bronx River Senior Center,  
7 we are situated on NYCHA grounds in a  
8 NYCHA building. We serve the community  
9 which have had different parts of  
10 buildings. We even have senior citizen  
11 complexes within our reach. These  
12 people depend on this center. Some  
13 people want to come into the center at  
14 5:30 in the morning when the custodian  
15 is there doing his work. When it's  
16 snowing, he opens the door, he lets  
17 them in, he buys them a sandwich while  
18 they're waiting for breakfast. We  
19 provide breakfast, we provide lunch for  
20 these people.  
21 Some of them are living alone.  
22 They have Alzheimer's, but they don't  
23 want to be put away yet so they still  
24 have a little bit of flexibility to get  
25 to the center which is right on the

2 grounds, so they will come in. We know  
3 who they are. We check up on them. If  
4 they don't show up, we try to find out  
5 why.  
6 I mean, they say Medicare is  
7 being cut down so if we don't have the  
8 funding to provide exercises and the  
9 Department of Aging wants us to go in a  
10 different direction, if we get these  
11 cuts, how are we supposed to provide  
12 these programs to keep people healthy?  
13 So then they are not going to end up  
14 staying independent out in the  
15 community, because that's supposed to  
16 be our mission. Our mission is not  
17 going to be met because we're not going  
18 to have the things to do it with.  
19 So we're asking you -- the  
20 borough president of the Bronx knows  
21 exactly what are the problems and which  
22 center needs what, which needs each  
23 center has. So I feel that this power  
24 should be left in his hands so that he  
25 could continue to make these decisions

2 and help to support our programs the

3 way he has been doing in the past.

4 Thank you very much.

5 MR. ROMERO: At this time, we

6 will take a five-minute minute recess

7 and we will come back in five minutes.

8 (A recess was taken.)

9 MR. ROMERO: We call this meeting

10 into order again. Take your seats.

11 Our next speaker is Solomon Smart from

12 CAB East Concourse Senior Center.

13 MR. SMART: It's still morning,

14 so good morning. My name is Solomon

15 Smart. Since 2004, I have been a

16 director of the East Concourse Senior

17 Center, and we're proud to have nearly

18 300 members. On average, we see about

19 70 of them a day.

20 We have done many wonderful

21 things, one of which has been our work

22 with the Pregones Theater which

23 receives all of its funding from the

24 borough president's office. They came

25 and did a wonderful workshop with our

2 seniors and they developed a play. The  
3 name of the play was Where Did They Go,  
4 originally written by one of our  
5 members where she explores where is  
6 this person that she used to know that  
7 she saw in the mirror. And hopefully,  
8 all of us will grow old enough to look  
9 in the mirror one day and wonder where  
10 that young person went.

11 Our center does many vital things  
12 with our borough president money,  
13 including paying for staff hours and  
14 essential programs that are geared  
15 towards health and wellness, and it's  
16 understood there's a bottom line.  
17 Money has to be saved and resources  
18 must be maximized. We've already taken  
19 a three percent cut. We've taken a two  
20 and a half percent proposed cut. We're  
21 prepared to absorb a five percent cut  
22 for fiscal year 2009 which the mayor is  
23 proposing, and we accept the challenge  
24 to move forward in a direction that  
25 maximizes our ability to provide

2 quality programming focusing on the  
3 health and wellness of seniors. We  
4 accept these challenges. Nonetheless,  
5 it seems more and more that there is a  
6 slow choke hold being placed on the  
7 budgets of senior programs, and seniors  
8 undoubtedly are our most important  
9 population.

10 Many of our seniors in East  
11 Concourse, they've come to me and said  
12 it plain and simply, they work all of  
13 their lives, and once they retired,  
14 they are left hanging in a limbo that  
15 they described as too poor to be rich  
16 and too rich to be poor where they are  
17 unable to qualify for many services yet  
18 they're unable to pay for them  
19 themselves.

20 And these senior centers we all  
21 know provide a vital place for them to  
22 come socialize and have wonderful  
23 activities such as a Pregones Theater  
24 workshop. And currently, we're doing a  
25 dance workshop with the Dance Wave, a

2 group out of Brooklyn. And my heart as  
3 director is in the arts. The arts is a  
4 wonderful way to develop health and  
5 wellness through dancing, through  
6 theater, through singing. We can  
7 enhance their mind, karate,  
8 self-defense. That is an art.  
9 It takes money to do these  
10 things, and the borough president funds  
11 provide a vital resource for us to be  
12 able to pay qualified and quality  
13 consultants who can draw out of our  
14 seniors what is already inside of them,  
15 what is just waiting to pop.  
16 I as a director can only do so  
17 many things, so I pray that the fears  
18 of our seniors will not be realized,  
19 that they work all of their lives only  
20 to be cut short in the end while  
21 there's money to give to people who  
22 take advantage of the system; whereas  
23 our seniors who earned the right for  
24 benefits, for resources, they seem to  
25 be left last.

2 Thank you.

3 MR. ROMERO: Doreen Bermudez,

4 SAGE.

5 MS. BERMUDEZ: Good morning. We  
6 went from morning to afternoon. Thank  
7 you, Commissioner, and I would like to  
8 thank everyone that is here from the  
9 Department for the Aging for holding  
10 this public hearing.

11 Services and Advocacy for Gay,  
12 Lesbian and Transgender Elders has a  
13 mission to ensure that seniors access a  
14 full array of services that provide for  
15 the whole person. This is especially  
16 relevant in regards to addressing the  
17 annual plan's focus on full inclusion  
18 of the needs of New York City seniors.  
19 While our program is a very small part  
20 of New York's wealth of senior  
21 services, we believe that our model of  
22 programming is entirely relevant.  
23 The SAGE structure is already  
24 rooted in the notion that it's vital to  
25 acknowledge diversity in all its forms

2 while participating in New York City's  
3 senior delivery system. Our five-year  
4 strategic plan directly addresses  
5 tactics by which SAGE identifies and  
6 strengthens ties between LGBT seniors  
7 and the elder community at large.  
8 Concurrently, we promote diversity  
9 within our own community and develop  
10 services that speak to those needs. An  
11 example of those are our SAGE Harlem  
12 NORC program and a Latina women's  
13 support group in East Harlem.  
14 The current models of senior  
15 services in New York City serve an  
16 increasingly diverse aging population  
17 using outdated systems and limited  
18 utilization methods.  
19 SAGE supports the Department for  
20 the Aging commitment in keeping seniors  
21 empowered by helping them to stay in  
22 their homes. Historically, our  
23 programming reflects a similar  
24 emphasis. While developing and  
25 providing services that allow seniors

2 to remain at home, we acknowledge the  
3 need to connect them to the community  
4 as well. Again, our strategy plan  
5 reflects these goals, introducing a new  
6 generation of service programs focused  
7 on both outreach and support for those  
8 who will provide program delivery,  
9 providing leadership for the LGBT  
10 community from within the community,  
11 facilitating member-driven initiatives,  
12 forming coalitions with other LGBT  
13 organizations, working with other  
14 senior organizations by providing  
15 sensitivity training to promote safe  
16 bases for LGBT elders to participate  
17 outside of SAGE, empowering our seniors  
18 by providing them with information,  
19 offering on-line programs, computer  
20 programs, making information available  
21 regarding any issues pertaining to the  
22 needs of our senior citizens.  
23 SAGE's current membership is, in  
24 fact, quite reflective of New York's  
25 seniors. They are independent, expect

2 to receive fully sensitive and  
3 culturally competent services.  
4 We know that this is very hard,  
5 and we certainly don't envy your shoes,  
6 Commissioner, but we urge you to be  
7 inclusive of the LGBT elderly  
8 community. Thank you again.

9 MR. ROMERO: Nicos Nicolaides,  
10 HANAC.

11 MR. NICOLAIDES: Good afternoon,  
12 Commissioner. My name is Nicos  
13 Nicolaides, and I am the director of  
14 the HANAC Extended Service Programs.  
15 HANAC is a community service agency  
16 providing senior, immigrant and youth  
17 services.

18 HANAC's information referral and  
19 recreational program has provided  
20 social services and recreational  
21 activities to Bronx senior citizens for  
22 the past 31 years. An average of 200  
23 seniors visit our center every month  
24 and receive social services in  
25 reference to social security, SSI,

2 Medicaid, Medicare, food stamps,  
3 housing, entitlements, escort services,  
4 et cetera.  
5 Every Thursday, about 40 seniors  
6 come to our center and have lunch  
7 through a pilot program from 1:00 p.m.  
8 to 4:00 p.m. During these hours, our  
9 seniors have the opportunity to get  
10 together, play games, listen to music  
11 and participate in dance and exercise  
12 sessions. We organize lectures and  
13 holiday parties that our members enjoy  
14 very much. The most important part of  
15 these gatherings is that our seniors  
16 come to a familiar and friendly  
17 environment where they feel comfortable  
18 socializing with others who speak the  
19 same language and have the same  
20 interests and background.  
21 We take our members to at least  
22 12 trips a year, to conferences with  
23 issues concerning senior citizens, to  
24 museums, theaters and other educational  
25 and fun places.

2 The loss of funding for our  
3 center from the borough president's  
4 office will lead to the closing of our  
5 program and the provision of its  
6 essential services to our clients, most  
7 of whom do not speak English, live  
8 alone, are frail due to their age and  
9 health conditions. The only place that  
10 they can turn for assistance and a  
11 little companionship is our center.  
12 These seniors who depend on this  
13 program deserve to see it continue.  
14 Thank you for the opportunity to  
15 testify.

16 MR. ROMERO: Rebecca Baker.

17 MS. LAMB: I'm not Rebecca Baker.

18 I'm Gerri Lamb from the Castle Hill  
19 Senior Center. I thank you for this  
20 opportunity.

21 Mr. Romero I know quite well and,  
22 of course, first things first,  
23 Commissioner, I know you were there at  
24 our ribbon cutting and I have seen you  
25 on many, many occasions representing

2 the New York City Housing Authority  
3 until April 8, 2008 as the citywide  
4 chair in many, many different areas of  
5 the entire city.

6 I do know that the Housing  
7 Authority bailed DFTA out in 2004  
8 because when the mayor came in, he  
9 wanted to close 37 senior centers.

10 It was not a few years back when  
11 NYCHA bailed DFTA out with funding and  
12 continues to give to DFTA funding, and  
13 I agree that DFTA has taken on running  
14 of 100 senior centers citywide and  
15 absolutely deserve to be compensated  
16 for their service.

17 I would like to also enter into  
18 this testimony that it was millions of  
19 dollars and it continues to be millions  
20 of dollars and it rises every year. I  
21 don't know what the situation between  
22 DFTA and the New York City Housing  
23 Authority is at this particular point  
24 because we are in a tremendous deficit,  
25 but they should be more -- better

2 stewards of their money also and they  
3 would be more able to continue to fund  
4 DFTA at the same rate and even higher  
5 if they weren't so bad at spending  
6 dollars. They lost nearly \$100 million  
7 with a check cashing company where they  
8 paid our rents and they weren't able to  
9 get back but 17 million from 100  
10 million, so money lost. And then we as  
11 seniors lose because then we find  
12 ourselves at a place where money is  
13 being cut from all others.  
14 The borough president's dollars  
15 have been instrumental in our centers  
16 for many, many years.  
17 I will give you a good example of  
18 how every time something works,  
19 something happens and it's pulled. We  
20 used to have what was called midnight  
21 basketball which was tremendous around  
22 the city. They took the money from the  
23 borough president's budget, and then we  
24 had a proliferation of guns all over  
25 the city. Drugs and gangs became more

2 viable in our communities, but they  
3 took that program away. And if they  
4 take the funds from the borough  
5 president's office as it funds our  
6 centers today, it's going to cause  
7 severe problems, not only for the  
8 seniors, but for the youth as well.  
9 I am so pleased that we have this  
10 opportunity, Commissioner, to speak to  
11 you and to talk about -- the other  
12 centers are talking about dollars. I  
13 just happen to wear two hats where I  
14 know where millions of dollars from  
15 another source, from the HUD source  
16 through the New York City Housing  
17 Authority comes from. I hope that  
18 they're not threatening to cut you  
19 further, and that's the reason why  
20 you're looking at condensing and  
21 closing NYCHA centers.  
22 I don't know how we do this,  
23 where we get a copy of the minutes.  
24 And do we get your responses at our  
25 community centers? We would appreciate

2 that because we need to know what  
3 you're thinking and what you heard and  
4 what you proposed to change at these  
5 hearings.  
6 I would like to sum up and say  
7 that we hope that the Department for  
8 the Aging will stand up to Mayor  
9 Bloomberg who now wants a third term  
10 and say to the mayor, We need more, not  
11 less. We don't want to condense  
12 because the senior population is  
13 growing steadily. We need more money  
14 and we deserve more services. And if  
15 these dollars are coming from the other  
16 agencies to support DFTA, then they  
17 should be checked closely and continue.  
18 We would not ever take money from DFTA.  
19 We talked about taking the money from  
20 the police department which is well  
21 over a hundred million dollars through  
22 the New York City Housing Authority,  
23 Sanitation, all of these other agencies  
24 that don't truly do the service within  
25 public housing, but DFTA and all of

2 these centers do. And I thank the  
3 staff that come not only to Castle  
4 Hill, but to all of the centers that  
5 represent seniors throughout this city  
6 and do a wonderful job.

7 I also say again that the money  
8 for midnight basketball was taken away  
9 and we had all of these gangs and guns  
10 and stuff, and we hope and pray that  
11 this money will not be taken from the  
12 borough president. As was said  
13 earlier, the borough president knows  
14 his or her borough and is more able to  
15 direct DFTA in getting those funds  
16 where they need to be gotten so that  
17 seniors can get the services.

18 So we at Castle Hill support the  
19 borough president of the Bronx and say  
20 no cuts to the borough presidents  
21 citywide and hope that the commissioner  
22 will stand with the mayor and say to  
23 him that I represent -- he will be like  
24 Solomon who said to the Lord, Lord  
25 Jesus, how will I guide these people?

2 How can I? I'm not looking for riches  
3 and I'm not looking for a higher  
4 salary. I just need to be able to  
5 guide and direct my people.  
6 Commissioner, we are your people,  
7 and we are looking to you for guidance  
8 and direction. And even though the  
9 mayor is a \$42 billionaire -- yes,  
10 billionaire -- I thought it was four.  
11 He got it, but he don't have to worry  
12 about us. We have to worry. We work  
13 hard and we live from check to check,  
14 whether it be SSI, whatever of sorts it  
15 is, that's what we live on. So he  
16 doesn't worry. We have to worry. And  
17 we look to you as our number one  
18 worrier because I know you have some  
19 evenings where you can't sleep, but  
20 we'll be praying for you.  
21 Thank you so much.  
22 THE COMMISSIONER: To remind all  
23 of our speakers, we do respond. Make  
24 sure we have your address. There will  
25 be a response in general to all of our

2 hearings, but we do respond to each  
3 individual speaker in writing, so make  
4 sure you sign up so we have your  
5 address and name and can mail you a  
6 response in the next few weeks.

7 MR. ROMERO: Dr. Evelyn Laureano,  
8 Neighborhood SHOPP.

9 DR. LAUREANO: Buenos Dias,  
10 Buenos Tardes by now. It's good  
11 afternoon. My name is Evelyn Laureano,  
12 and today I'm wearing two hats. I have  
13 had the privilege to listen to all my  
14 colleagues who have testified before  
15 me, but I also need to represent my  
16 organization, Neighborhood Self Help By  
17 Older Persons Project. We have been  
18 around since 1980 and we exist only  
19 because the Bronx borough president who  
20 was then Stanley Simon believed in  
21 Neighborhood SHOPP, believed in the  
22 vision that Abe Markman and Maggie  
23 Garvin had back in 1980, and we opened  
24 our doors only because of the  
25 discretionary grant fund that came

2 through the Bronx borough president.  
3 A lot has happened since 1980.  
4 We have grown considerably, but we want  
5 to talk about the importance of  
6 discretionary funding from the office  
7 of the Bronx borough president. With  
8 our program, we serve primarily Latino,  
9 African-American and West Indian  
10 Caribbean older adults. We provide  
11 senior center services.  
12 You heard Lydia Garcia speak very  
13 eloquently about the kinds of services  
14 provided at senior centers. We also  
15 have a case management program,  
16 community services, leadership  
17 training, benefit and entitlement  
18 assistance programs, elder abuse and  
19 crime victims services, health  
20 promotion activities and transportation  
21 services, and we serve over 3,500 older  
22 Bronx residents living in almost every  
23 community board district in the Bronx.  
24 Most of these programs are funded  
25 through contracts with DFTA and other

2 government agencies. However, our core  
3 program, the Senior Network Program,  
4 depends almost entirely on Bronx  
5 borough president discretionary funds.  
6 In fact, as I mentioned earlier, the  
7 Senior Network Program was the catalyst  
8 for the creation of the agency in 1980,  
9 and with the \$170,000 grant that was  
10 provided from the Bronx borough  
11 president, we were able to open our  
12 doors. Without this startup and  
13 continuing support, Neighborhood SHOPP  
14 as an organization would probably not  
15 exist. That's why discretionary  
16 funding is so critical to  
17 community-based organizations. They  
18 provide support for innovative and  
19 creative programming that responds to  
20 the emerging needs of the elderly in  
21 areas that do not have viable or  
22 traditional funding streams.  
23 This comprehensive, targeted and  
24 proven program, the SHOPP Senior  
25 Network Program Model, consists of

2 activities conducted at locations where  
3 seniors live, go to church or socialize  
4 in a community center and are aimed at  
5 enhancing older adults' quality of life  
6 and capacity to live independently. We  
7 engage older adults in the planning,  
8 development and implementation of a  
9 specially tailored program of  
10 activities and services which address  
11 linguistic and cultural preferences and  
12 these include outreach, assessment of  
13 individual needs, increased access to  
14 benefits and entitlements, educational  
15 and recreational activities. And the  
16 commissioner has witnessed our annual  
17 fashion show, and that's really  
18 highlighting the programs of our senior  
19 network.

20 In addition to that, we have a  
21 transportation program, a minivan that  
22 is totally funded through the Bronx  
23 borough president.

24 Whenever I talk about SHOPP and  
25 its unique approach to services, people

2 want to know how it is funded. You  
3 see, inherent in the uniqueness of the  
4 SHOPP model is the reality that  
5 traditional funding streams are just  
6 not available for programs such as  
7 ours. That is why Neighborhood SHOPP  
8 relies on the borough president  
9 discretionary grant year after year.  
10 This grant enables the agency to  
11 provide services to an underserved  
12 segment of our borough, older people of  
13 color, in a manner that is distinct,  
14 innovative and effective.  
15 The elimination of borough  
16 president discretionary funding means  
17 that over 1,500 SHOPP participants  
18 would lose critical services that help  
19 them to remain in their communities.  
20 Social isolation would increase as  
21 SHOPP activities would no longer be  
22 made available on site at Section 202  
23 senior housing buildings like SEBCO,  
24 Thessalonia Baptist Church or in NYCHA  
25 community centers like in Sedgwick

2 Houses. Our transportation program  
3 would have to be totally discontinued  
4 and SHOPP participants who rely on this  
5 critical service for weekly grocery  
6 shopping would be out of luck.  
7 Apart from the loss of vital  
8 services to our elderly participants,  
9 staff layoffs would have a devastating  
10 blow to the organization since most of  
11 the funding does go to pay the salaries  
12 and health insurance benefits of direct  
13 service workers.  
14 We understand the need for DFTA  
15 to comply with the city's procurement  
16 policies. However, if it is DFTA's  
17 intention to incorporate these monies  
18 into the new senior center RFP, major  
19 consideration should be given to ensure  
20 opportunities for community-based  
21 organizations like Neighborhood SHOPP  
22 who rely on this funding to support  
23 innovative and nontraditional models of  
24 service to culturally and  
25 linguistically diverse older adults.

2 Thank you for this opportunity to  
3 express our concerns.

4 MR. ROMERO: Sister Margaret  
5 McDermott, Tolentine Zeiser Community  
6 Church.

7 MS. SANCHEZ: Good morning. I'm  
8 not Sister Margaret. My name is  
9 Elizabeth Sanchez. I'm the new program  
10 director for the past year, but I came  
11 to speak on her behalf.

12 Good morning -- good afternoon,  
13 Commissioner Méndez and distinguished  
14 guests, senior program directors, DFTA  
15 staff and clients. I'm happy to have  
16 this opportunity to address you and,  
17 first of all, to have the opportunity  
18 to serve the seniors in our community.

19 I want to thank the borough  
20 president for his support to our center  
21 for all the years that he has helped us  
22 and ask for continued support for the  
23 funds that we receive. Without this  
24 money, we would not be able to pay our  
25 rent, put gas in the van and offer the

2 activities to our seniors.  
3 We know the climate that we find  
4 ourselves in, and it is very difficult.  
5 Money is very tight, and we are very  
6 concerned about the new request for  
7 proposal, and we believe that it should  
8 be put off until a later time in the  
9 year and at least this will save us  
10 some money for now.  
11 I would like to thank everyone  
12 again from Sister Margaret. Thank you.  
13 MR. ROMERO: Marie Spivey, BCPC.  
14 MS. SPIVEY: Good afternoon. I'm  
15 Marie Spivey, and I am from the Bronx  
16 Community Pride Center. It is the only  
17 recognized LGBT organization in the  
18 Bronx. We receive funding from the  
19 borough president's office. And as  
20 everyone before me has said, the  
21 funding is very vital. Some needed  
22 functions we will not be able to  
23 provide without the funding, so we are  
24 asking the commissioner and anyone else  
25 who can help us to keep the funds

2 going, not to cut funding.

3 Thank you very much.

4 MR. ROMERO: Brad Stewart, Aging

5 in America Community Services.

6 MS. STEWART: Good afternoon. I

7 must first say it's a pleasure for me

8 to be here. I'm just here to let you

9 know that since I started --

10 MR. ROMERO: Ma'am, would you

11 tell us your name, please.

12 MS. STEWART: I'm sorry. My name

13 is Olive Stewart -- I'm sorry about

14 that -- from the senior center.

15 As I was saying, it's a pleasure

16 for me to be here this morning. I'm

17 very happy to be here.

18 That center I'm going to, I read

19 about heaven and I heard about heaven,

20 and let me tell you something, that

21 center is like a heaven to me.

22 Commissioner, I ask you, please,

23 before you read my paper, please don't

24 cut my sentence off, please.

25 The reason why I like to go to

2 the center is that I was going out of  
3 my mind. But the center, you meet  
4 other people, you can get your hot  
5 meals. You have a lot of outlets,  
6 activities to keep my mind up. Without  
7 this center, what would I do? I would  
8 be like a ship without a sail.  
9 We also get to know other people.  
10 We just look forward to going. A lot  
11 of people don't have friends or family.  
12 But when they reach there, they have a  
13 lot of friends. They can talk and get  
14 themselves happy, because there are  
15 times when you have so many problems  
16 that it could not feed all by  
17 themselves. But at least when it comes  
18 to our center, we are so friendly  
19 there. They sit and say whatever be  
20 the case, and then you try to figure  
21 out with them. So it's very good for  
22 us to meet up at a place.  
23 So Commissioner, I'm pleading  
24 with you again and I repeat myself,  
25 it's like heaven there. And if you cut

2 that, what will I be? What will I do?  
3 Because when I'm home at nights, I do  
4 not even sleep. I'm looking forward to  
5 go to my center. Then what would I do?  
6 I don't want to be going crazy, so  
7 please help us out and let us go on.  
8 Thank you.

9 MR. ROMERO: Louisa Greco,  
10 Providence Rest Foundation.

11 MS. GRECO: Good afternoon to  
12 everybody. Thank you for letting me  
13 come up.  
14 Providence nursing home which is  
15 owned and operated by an order of nuns,  
16 this is the Sisters of St. John, the  
17 Baptist nursing home located in the  
18 Country Club area of the Bronx  
19 overlooking the beautiful Eastchester  
20 Bay. It is a 200-bed facility. Our  
21 mission is to minister with respect and  
22 dignity to each individual by providing  
23 the highest quality of care, and that's  
24 exactly what we do. We provide the  
25 best quality of care. Our residents

2 are happy, our facility is immaculate,  
3 our grounds provide great joy to our  
4 residents. It is open to anyone to  
5 come and visit at any time.  
6 I am here to talk to you about  
7 our adult day care program. Our adult  
8 day care program -- our individuals who  
9 attend our adult day care program  
10 receive all the services provided in a  
11 nursing home, but they continue to live  
12 at home because transportation is  
13 provided. Our program is designed to  
14 meet individual needs of its  
15 registrants and provides a warm, caring  
16 and safe environment. Registrants are  
17 able to enjoy the companionship of  
18 others while participating in  
19 activities that promote wellness and  
20 independence. Our registrants are  
21 provided with a variety of health care  
22 services, including physicians, skilled  
23 nurses, health education, social  
24 service.  
25 You all know the drill basically.

2 We need the borough president's money.

3 It's as simple as that. You've all

4 heard it, you all said it.

5 I'm going to say one thing.

6 We're all vying for the same funds.

7 We're all writing grants. We're all

8 looking on the net. We're all trying

9 everything we possibly can do to help

10 our seniors.

11 I am the fundraiser for the

12 nursing home, and I can say just one

13 thing. Private sector does not care

14 about the elderly. They give more

15 money to dogs and cats, and it's a very

16 sad thing, but it's reality. We need

17 your money. It's as simple as that.

18 Thank you.

19 MR. ROMERO: Dorothy Mason,

20 Castle Hill Senior Center.

21 Alvin Purse, Castle Hill Senior

22 Center.

23 Judith Richburg, Aging in

24 America.

25 MS. RICHBURG: Good afternoon,

2 Commissioner Méndez-Santiago and  
3 members of the panel. Good afternoon.  
4 It is indeed an honor to have an  
5 opportunity to speak and also to stand  
6 in support with the other directors and  
7 administrators who love and care for  
8 the community of senior centers and the  
9 people that they serve.  
10 Certainly, Aging in America  
11 Community Services, as the director of  
12 senior center -- my name is Judy  
13 Richburg -- we run from skilled nursing  
14 facilities servicing the very frail to  
15 the most active. Our senior center  
16 includes the Bay Eden Senior Center,  
17 and you heard from Olive Stewart a  
18 moment ago, as well as the senior  
19 center at 1500 Pelham Parkway.  
20 We have a number of satellites,  
21 Tilden, Mechler Hall, Glebe House and  
22 Sue Ginsburg. And through a  
23 congregated service initiative, we  
24 service 12 other small sites, so we are  
25 vested in this community.

2 But certainly, the funding that  
3 Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrion  
4 provides meets a need, a need that is  
5 just so strong in these communities  
6 that in order to communicate, what I  
7 would say is that yes, rent will not be  
8 paid in some of those smaller centers.  
9 The lights will go off, and  
10 approximately 27,250 meals will not be  
11 served.  
12 In order to support the food in  
13 the local neighborhoods, we have a  
14 local reverend. His name is Reverend  
15 Parish. He comes from Mount Vernon.  
16 Actually, he grows food, fresh  
17 vegetables in Goshen, New York. And I  
18 had an opportunity to meet him. He  
19 said, I will come to the Bay Eden  
20 Senior Center and serve vegetables. He  
21 came. About 250 seniors took carts of  
22 vegetables home. And we opened it up  
23 also to the community because it is a  
24 community center. But 250 seniors  
25 received food. And he said to them, I

2 didn't realize that you were hungry  
3 here.  
4 And the seniors said, Yes, we  
5 are. We are hungry in the Bronx. We  
6 need your food.  
7 And he came three more times last  
8 year, and this year he came again and  
9 serviced some of the other sites.  
10 Certainly, the reason I bring  
11 this up is so we can put a face to the  
12 need.  
13 I was speaking to a local manager  
14 of a store at CVS, and he told me that  
15 at the end of the month, the number of  
16 cans of cat food and dog food that are  
17 sold increased. I said, Today? I  
18 really couldn't believe it.  
19 He said, Yes, today, it  
20 increases.  
21 Now, why would that be?  
22 And he says, It is the seniors  
23 who are buying it.  
24 We must do something. Something  
25 must be done.

2 Yes, we stand with you, we stand  
3 with you knowing that all across  
4 America, we must make cuts. We must  
5 tighten our belts, and we are doing the  
6 things that one should do when it's  
7 impending, when it's coming.  
8 But however, what do you say to  
9 97-year-old Ms. Williams who comes  
10 every day to get her meals, that we  
11 will no longer be able to provide a hot  
12 meal for you but we are going to be  
13 bringing in different types of services  
14 because we can't serve as many people  
15 as possible, or Phil who at 101 stayed  
16 with us until just last week when his  
17 children decided that it was better for  
18 him to move with them in New Jersey?  
19 So we are not only a place for  
20 socialization, but we are a haven for  
21 those whose family members are not  
22 nearby and whose family members cannot  
23 immediately care for them. We provide  
24 that care. I know that when I go into  
25 these senior centers, I feel better

2 because of the seniors that I  
3 encounter.  
4 And lastly, I want to add a quick  
5 story about a Ms. Dispers who is blind  
6 and she can't cook food because she  
7 almost started a fire in her apartment,  
8 so she walks holding onto the rail from  
9 her NYCHA apartment around the corner  
10 into the Bay Eden Senior Center. So  
11 the case assistance providers helped  
12 her to get food, helped her to get  
13 Access-a-Ride, helped her to get her  
14 Medicaid reinstated and helped her to  
15 connect to her son who is disabled and  
16 living in a halfway house who is often  
17 hospitalized.  
18 Also, what about Joe? And I'm  
19 not talking about Joe The Plumber. But  
20 Joe is a tradesman, and he would have  
21 no place to go is what he told me if  
22 the senior center in his neighborhood  
23 is closed.  
24 Thank you so much.  
25 MR. ROMERO: Doris Williams,

2 DFTA's advisory counsel.

3 MS. WILLIAMS: Good afternoon.

4 I'm Doris Williams and I'm an advocator

5 for seniors, youths, grandparents and

6 education.

7 It has been brought to my

8 attention and as a recipient of home

9 care services that some home attendants

10 are stealing from the elderly and

11 disabled. It is disgraceful that folks

12 have worked hard most of their lives to

13 accumulate personal items or are on

14 fixed incomes have to be subjected to

15 these unfortunate conditions.

16 Some attendants want to only come

17 in, sit and watch television and/or be

18 on their cell phones regardless of what

19 the plan or care is. The concept of

20 this program is great, for it seems to

21 have been designed to create jobs and

22 have the elderly remain at home in

23 their familiar surroundings. However,

24 if things keep disappearing, the home

25 will no longer be familiar. After the

2 aides have taken their things or find  
3 that you have work for them to do or  
4 places and appointments to go to, they  
5 ask to be removed from the case.

6 It's my suggestion that the  
7 agencies who employ these people do a  
8 complete check on them, ask them how  
9 they plan on being an asset to the  
10 agency and clients. Also, explain the  
11 plan of care to them and have them  
12 commit to fulfilling them. If the aide  
13 complains too often about their  
14 clients, the situations should be  
15 checked out. Maybe it's not always the  
16 client that is the problem.

17 There is a brochure titled Money  
18 Wise with an article that reads Just  
19 Say No to Senior Scams, and inside of  
20 it contains a paragraph on caregiver  
21 fraud. It states that home-based  
22 health aides, housekeepers and cooks  
23 sometimes steal from the older people  
24 they are serving.

25 Some of my friends have told me

2 that they have fired from two to four  
3 aides, one of whom is suffering from  
4 emphysema and on oxygen. She told me  
5 they have stolen all of her linen by  
6 placing them at the end of the hallways  
7 and removing them when they leave.  
8 Many more friends of mine have similar  
9 complaints, and if asked and I have  
10 more time, I will look into them.  
11 I would like to add that the  
12 large empty bags that the aides bring  
13 to work and leave with them full be  
14 eliminated. It should not be allowed  
15 or some way the client can be assured  
16 that the bags doesn't contain any of  
17 their possessions.  
18 A few weeks ago, the New York  
19 Post had an article in it about an aide  
20 that was cashing checks from a couple  
21 of people, one a 100-year-old,  
22 thousands of dollars, and this person  
23 was arrested in the process.  
24 Most folks think that the old  
25 adults should eat, drink and be merry.

2 Not so. Experts say the key to  
3 longevity is exercise for the brain,  
4 body and spirit. I being a 73-year-old  
5 young senior say, Give us the key.  
6 In closing, I don't want to sound  
7 like these services aren't appreciated,  
8 for they are, and the aides who work  
9 long hours and have clients that  
10 require physical assistance and  
11 companionship should be paid more and  
12 monitored periodically.  
13 Thank you for this opportunity to  
14 address these important issues.  
15 MR. ROMERO: I would like to  
16 thank our speakers for sharing their  
17 views this morning. I would like to  
18 thank the staff who helped coordinate  
19 this event. The Department will issue  
20 a formal response to the testimony  
21 presented at this year's annual  
22 hearings which will be posted on our  
23 web site in late November. We  
24 encourage everyone to visit our web  
25 site at [www.nyc.gov/aging](http://www.nyc.gov/aging) for the

2 latest news, press releases and

3 services.

4 This hearing is officially

5 closed.

6 (TIME NOTED: 12:24 P.M.)

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2 CERTIFICATION

3

4 I, Victoria Gilgurd-Karen, a

5 Notary Public in and for the State of New

6 York, do hereby certify:

7 THAT the foregoing is a true and

8 accurate transcript of my stenographic

9 notes.

10 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have

11 hereunto set my hand this 8th day of

12 November 2008.

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16 VICTORIA GILGURD-KAREN

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