



**Testimony of Marricka Scott, Deputy Commissioner for Intergovernmental and Legislative Affairs
NYC Department of Social Services**

**Before the Report and Advisory Board Review Commission
July 13, 2022**

Good afternoon, Chairperson and members of the Report and Advisory Board Review Commission. My name is Marricka Scott and I am the Deputy Commissioner for Intergovernmental and Legislative Affairs for the Department of Social Services (DSS). Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony before the Commission on the Department's reporting requirements. Reporting on our agencies' work is important: this process makes us better in many regards and allows for the public and our partners to be informed of our services and operations.

While we value transparency, there are times when reporting requirements raise administrative burdens. Moreover, several of the reports we will discuss today have grown outdated and fail to capture the dynamic work of our dedicated and hardworking staff and providers across the Department of Social Services, Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS).

To address and alleviate these reporting requirements, we request the Commission's assistance in ensuring our reports are efficient and deliver key and actionable information to better serve New Yorkers. With that said, we will be updating you with a brief description of some reports that we believe are either outdated, superfluous, and ineffective in achieving the goals and objectives of DSS/HRA/DHS, and which should be waived.

DHS Outreach; Transitional Housing Report (LL 19 of 1999)

Local Law 19 of 1999 requires a series of reports on our agencies' work to support New Yorkers experiencing homelessness, including efforts to transition these New Yorkers to housing. This report is outdated and does not adequately represent the meaningful way DSS currently captures this information. Moreover, the report does not effectively speak to the outreach activities that DSS/DHS engages in. Given our goal on addressing homelessness, and considering the report was first implemented over two decades ago, the information required by this report is antiquated.

Additionally, this report is duplicative in that the required information is published elsewhere. Placements from shelter, which are required by LL 19, are also reported on the [DHS quarterly dashboard](#) and in the Mayor's Management Report (MMR). Similarly, length of stay for the sheltered population is reported out in the MMR. These other reports also put the data in better context than the report required by LL 19, by including information about the census and other important factors.

Additionally, the monthly [HOME-STAT dashboard](#) provides information on street placements. The quarterly information reported in the LL19 report just aggregates those monthly unduplicated numbers. A more meaningful unduplication for a period beyond a month happens in both the Preliminary MMR and the MMR. Similarly, the HOME-STAT dashboard includes information about the overall caseload – including numbers, client gender, and client age – to better contextualize the population data. Additionally, the caseload is better separated to reflect those experiencing street homelessness and in other settings against those in transitional and permanent housing. In summary, these other reports are more accurate representations of the types of outreach activities and services taking place across the five boroughs, meaning that comprehensive updates on our work would continue, which reinforces our request to waive the duplicative reports required by LL 19.

Homeless Diversion Teams Report (LL 75 of 1995)

Local Law 75 of 1995 requires the Department to report quarterly on activities related to homelessness diversion teams. The requirement for this report dates back nearly three decades. What information was relevant to the Council has likely changed from then to now. Since then, significant strides have been made in transforming the DHS intake process to ensure an effective, humane and respectful assessment takes place for clients, and we are no longer requiring interviews at HRA centers. As we improved our services over time, HRA’s homelessness diversion unit shifted to focusing efforts on interventions to preventing eviction through rent arrears support, and the formal diversion reporting was therefore discontinued.

Along with DHS providing information on its website pertaining to unsheltered outreach as mentioned earlier in our testimony, the homelessness prevention efforts of DHS and HRA are formally reported to the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance in a Biennial Homeless Services Plan, which includes detailed sections on outreach services and homelessness prevention services, among other things. For these reasons, we believe that the report under LL75 of 1995 should be discontinued.

Emergency Feeding Program and SNAP Application Distribution Report (LL 80 of 2005)

Local Law 80 of 2005 requires the Department to report on the number of applications distributed to each emergency feeding program, such as food pantries or soup kitchens. We believe that this report should be waived as it is outdated and does not reflect the actual SNAP outreach taking place at these emergency feeding program locations – and in fact reports no data as we no longer distribute paper applications and instead encourage applications via Access HRA, our online services portal. Additionally, there is no correlation between providing an application or providing Access HRA information and subsequent submission of an application, and no mechanism to statistically track this information. It is important to consider the great strides that we have made to bring our services online through Access HRA, which increases our reach and New Yorkers’ accessibility to critical benefits.

Workplace Injuries Report (LL 41 of 2004)

Local Law 41 of 2004 requires the Department as well as all other City Agencies to record and report information regarding workers’ compensation claims filed by employees for injuries sustained while on duty. However, there is another local law, LL 22 of 2020, which contain the

same reporting requirements. As a direct result, the reporting benefit of LL 41 of 2004 is outdated and repetitive in nature. Therefore, this Department is requesting that its reporting obligations under local law 41 of 2004 be waived to address duplication concerns.

Heads of Household Aged 16-24 Report (LL 51 of 2012)

Local Law 51 of 2012 requires the Department to collect and report data on a semiannual basis, related to access of individuals aged sixteen through twenty-four to public assistance as heads of household. The reporting requirements of this law are overly burdensome and outdated; leading to our request to waive the report. The required data points in this report are unclear and hard to meaningfully interpret as produced. The data required by this local law is not effective and does not represent the work that HRA currently engages in to assist New Yorkers in need.

Closing

We appreciate the opportunity to present these reports and the Committee’s consideration to waive them. Our teams carefully reviewed these reports and their many requirements, and we strongly believe we will be able to balance transparency and efficiency by waiving them, particularly as we consider the many reports that DSS/HRA/DHS already issues to keep New Yorkers informed on our work. We share the Committee’s goal to thoughtfully consider the reporting burdens placed on agencies, and we look forward to further collaboration. Thank for the opportunity to testify.