

HEARING REGARDING

November 15, 2018

BEFORE:

TRANSCRIBERS AND COURT INTERPRETERS:

APPEARANCES:

On Behalf of the Petitioner:

None

On Behalf of the Respondent:

None

Additional:

None

I-N-D-E-X

Petitioner <u>Witness</u>	<u>Direct</u>	<u>Cross</u>	<u>Redirect</u>	<u>Recross</u>
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None noted.

Respondent <u>Witness</u>	<u>Direct</u>	<u>Cross</u>	<u>Redirect</u>	<u>Recross</u>
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None noted.

E-X-H-I-B-I-T-S

Petitioner <u>Exhibit No.</u>	<u>Document</u>	<u>Identified</u>	<u>Received</u>
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None noted.

Respondent <u>Exhibit No.</u>	<u>Document</u>	<u>Identified</u>	<u>Received</u>
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None noted.

1 JORDAN DRESSLER: Good evening. And welcome
2 to the City of New York's first public hearing on the
3 city's Universal Access to Legal Services Program. My
4 name is Jordan Dressler. I am the Civil Justice
5 Coordinator with New York City's Office of Civil Justice
6 at the Human Resources Administration. I'm joined
7 tonight by Sara Zuiderveen, Deputy Commissioner for
8 Homelessness Prevention at HRA. And Jaclyn Moore,
9 Executive Director for the Office of Civil Justice.
10 Just a few words about HRA, we're part of the city's
11 Department of Social Service. And we have the largest
12 social services agency in the United States, assisting
13 more than three million New Yorkers annually throughout
14 the administration of 12 public assistance programs.
15 Every day, in all five boroughs, HRA staff and programs
16 work to ensure our services and benefits provide low
17 income New Yorkers the assistance they need through a
18 wide range of supports. Including cash assistance,
19 employment services, SNAP, rental assistance and
20 eviction prevention, including the provision of housing
21 legal services for New York City tenants in need
22 administered by the Office of Civil Justice. OCJ was
23 established at HRA through legislation, enacted by the
24 City Council and signed by Mayor de Blasio in August of
25 2017. And our office is tasked with overseeing,

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1 managing, and monitoring the city's civil legal services
2 programs for New Yorkers in need. Since 2014 we have
3 made great strides in increasing services, increasing,
4 enhancing, and making more efficient the delivery of
5 civil legal services to low income New Yorkers facing
6 legal issues that may jeopardize the essentials of life,
7 including issues such as housing, immigration, and
8 employment. The subject of this hearing is the city's
9 Universal Access to Legal Services Initiative, a
10 progress implementation, achievements and challenges so
11 far as we look at the first year of operation and
12 considerations for OCJ and other system stakeholders as
13 we all proceed with implementation. City Local Law 136
14 of 2017, which was sponsored in the City Council by
15 Councilmembers Vanessa Gibson and Mark Levine, and was
16 signed into law by Mayor de Blasio in August of 2017, a
17 bit more than one year ago, was truly historic and made
18 New York City the first city in the United States to
19 commit to making free legal services available to all
20 tenants facing eviction in housing court or
21 [unintelligible 00:22:16] administrative proceedings.
22 This groundbreaking legislation, known as the Universal
23 Access Law, tasks OCJ with implementing a program that
24 would achieve this historic milestone by 2022. Now, one
25 year later after enactment, we have made significant

1 process towards reaching this goal. Earlier this week
2 OCJ issued its first progress report on implementation
3 of Universal Access and our tenant legal services
4 programming. The copy is upfront if you haven't
5 received one. In City Fiscal Year 2018, the first year
6 of our phase and implementation plan, the HRA's baseline
7 budget included \$77 million of funding for tenant legal
8 services programs. In Fiscal Year 2018 OCJ's legal
9 services programs for tenants provided legal
10 representation, advice, and assistance, to 33,000
11 households across New York City, including approximately
12 26,000 households facing eviction proceedings in New
13 York City Housing Court. In total, over a dozen non-
14 profit organizations, ranging from large city-wide legal
15 services providers to smaller borough and community-
16 based groups, provided free legal services last fiscal
17 year benefiting over 87,000 New Yorkers. In fact, as of
18 the end of the last fiscal year, 246,369 New York City
19 residents, that is nearly a quarter of a million New
20 Yorkers, have received free legal representation,
21 advice, or assistance, in eviction or other housing
22 related matters since the start of the de Blasio
23 administration through tenant legal services programs
24 administered by HRA. We are also realizing steady gains
25 in the proportion of tenants who face eviction in New

1 York City housing court with the assistance of a lawyer.
2 This growth followed dramatic increases in legal
3 representation for New York City residents who are
4 already taken place in housing court during this
5 administration. In 2013 roughly one-percent of tenants
6 facing eviction in housing court had legal
7 representation. In contrast, our analysis found that in
8 2016 more than one in four facing an eviction case in
9 court in New York City, 27-percent was represented by a
10 lawyer. As of the end of the fiscal year 2018, that's
11 June of 2018, the legal representation rate was even
12 higher. In the last quarter of this year, 30-percent of
13 tenants who appeared in eviction cases in housing court
14 citywide were represented by counsel. And an additional
15 four-percent of such tenants received legal advice or
16 other assistance through OCJ's tenant legal services
17 programs. Meaning that city-wide, an estimated 34-
18 percent of tenants appearing in housing court for
19 eviction cases, more than one in three received legal
20 services. In the neighbors targeted to receive
21 increased availability of legal services during this
22 first phase of legal access the findings were even more
23 striking. Looking at the first 15 zip codes included in
24 legal access, lawyers represented 56-percent of tenants
25 appearing in housing court in their eviction proceedings

1 in the last quarter of fiscal '18, and an additional
2 two-percent received free legal advice or brief
3 assistance through OCJ programs. Meaning that 58-
4 percent of tenants appearing in eviction cases in
5 housing court in these targeted neighborhoods received
6 legal services. We are seeing positive results for New
7 Yorkers in need. As detailed in the report for
8 completed cases in fiscal '18, 22,000 New Yorkers who
9 tenancies were threatened by eviction, were able to stay
10 in their homes after OCJ funded lawyers represented them
11 in court. In housing court eviction cases resolved by
12 OCJ's legal services providers, 84-percent of households
13 represented in court by lawyers were able to remain in
14 their homes, not only saving thousands of tenancies, but
15 also promoting the preservation of affordable housing,
16 and neighborhood stability. These indicators are
17 consistent with other findings reflecting changing
18 dynamics and a more level playing field for New York
19 City tenants in need. As access to legal services for
20 city tenants has increased, evictions across the city
21 have decreased. In 2017 residential evictions by City
22 Marshalls declined by approximately 27-percent compared
23 to 2013. A period during which New York City
24 substantially increased funding legal services for low-
25 income tenants. Over the four-year period of 2014

1 through 2017, an estimated 70,000 New Yorkers remained
2 in their homes as a result of those decreased evictions.
3 The impact of this work is also being felt beyond New
4 York. Our city is at the forefront of a growing
5 movement in which government through judiciary, legal
6 providers and non-profits, advocates, academics, Bar
7 associations, and importantly tenants and residents, are
8 coming together to increase access to justice for
9 tenants facing eviction and create a fair and even
10 playing field in our courts. Cities such as Newark, New
11 Jersey, and San Francisco, California, have taken New
12 York City's lead, and have adopted their own versions of
13 universal access or right to counsel legislation. And
14 other jurisdictions, including the city of Los Angeles,
15 and the State of Massachusetts, are exploring their own
16 initiatives to increase access to legal services for
17 tenants facing eviction. So, to ensure that we
18 continue to serve New Yorkers effectively, and with
19 cities across the country following our progress, it is
20 important that we get it right. A critical part of that
21 process is this public hearing and hearing from you
22 today about your own experiences with the initiative,
23 what you believe is working, and where you may think
24 there is room for improvement. So, a few words about
25 how tonight's hearing will go. We thought we had two

1 microphones, we have one microphone. So, at the end of
2 my comments I'm going to relinquish this microphone and
3 it's going to go there. So, you'll have to--I'm going
4 to speak up, but when you start your comments I'd ask
5 you just to say your name, and your affiliation. We
6 have interpreters here who we're going to call up in a
7 moment to make themselves known, and anybody who needs
8 an interpreter in those languages can take advantage of
9 that. In fact, let's do that now before we get into the
10 ground rules.

11 MALE SPEAKER: [Foreign Language 00:29:02]

12 FEMALE SPEAKER: [Foreign Language 00:29:11]

13 MALE SPEAKER: [Foreign Language 00:29:23]

14 MALE SPEAKER: [Foreign Language 00:29:52]

15 MALE SPEAKER: [Foreign Language 00:30:04]

16 FEMALE SPEAKER: Good evening, I'm
17 [unintelligible 00:30:19] the Cantonese interpreter.
18 [Foreign Language 00:30:23]

19 JORDAN DRESSLER: Thank you. A few words
20 about how tonight's hearing will go. This hearing is
21 public and anyone who wishes to be heard on the topic of
22 Universal Access and Housing Legal Services to speak.
23 We will not be answering questions or will be asking any
24 questions of speakers. This is an opportunity for the
25 public to be heard. If you would prefer not to speak in

1 public, and would rather submit a statement in writing,
2 we're collecting all written statements and will make
3 them part of the record of this hearing, which we will
4 make available to the public on our website, which is
5 www.NYC.gov/civiljustice. That will be available in the
6 future. Written statements can be submitted to OCJ
7 staff at the sign-in table. Also, we will be making a
8 transcript of all of tonight's statements and will be
9 making that available on the website as well.

10 [Unintelligible 00:31:46] speakers up based on a sign-in
11 sheet, if you want to speak but are not on the list yet,
12 please give your name to our staff upfront at the sign-
13 in table, just outside this auditorium, and we will add
14 your name to the list. In order to ensure that everyone
15 who wants to speak will have an ample opportunity to do
16 so, we must limit speakers to three minutes apiece. If
17 you are approaching the end of your time, one of our OCJ
18 team members will hold up a sign saying one-minute,
19 meaning that you have one-minute left. Again, if you
20 speak a language other than English and need an
21 interpreter, let our staff know at the sign-in table so
22 we can help you with this. And we have interpreters
23 here. Now, ready to begin. I'm going to call a few
24 names at a time, when you hear your name, please line up
25 or have seats right in the reserved seats right at the

1 front. So, our first name is Assembly Member Harvey
2 Epstein. And again, just a reminder for the sake of the
3 transcript, if before you begin you could simply say
4 your name and your affiliation. Thank you.

5 HARVEY EPSTEIN: Hi, thank you. And thank you
6 for having this first public hearing. And thank you for
7 all the people who were able to make it here in the snow
8 and the rallies, and a lot of the things that are going
9 on right at the same time. So, I've submitted my
10 written testimony so you have [unintelligible 00:33:10].
11 But I want to just talk about this work and how critical
12 it is. Before I [unintelligible 00:33:18], I've been a
13 legal services provider, and still see myself as a legal
14 services provider, and this work is critical for
15 communities. And we're not just about the evictions,
16 but it's about neighborhoods, my neighborhood where I
17 live, where I raise my kids, where I see everyday
18 friends and neighbors who can't stay. And so eviction
19 prevention is a critical piece. And [unintelligible
20 00:33:38] the City Council it is important we advocate
21 to push forward for our right to counsel. It's a
22 critical step that New York City has taken. However,
23 there's a piece that we need to think about in how the
24 communities play a role, how a right to counsel isn't
25 just about individuals and households, it's about

1 neighborhoods and communities, [unintelligible 00:33:58]
2 really makes a difference in the work that we do. And
3 [unintelligible 00:34:02] community organizations who
4 are in neighborhoods to understand the struggles and
5 work in a collective manner to make a difference in
6 peoples' lives. And those people [unintelligible
7 00:34:12] laws, that's a critical piece that we've got
8 to do. Part of that would be what do people know about
9 their rights, how do we inspire people to get educated.
10 It requires a key educational component that community-
11 based organizations have been doing in our city and our
12 state. So, why wait to do that. We need, we need to
13 expand this opportunity to think about the organizers
14 that are out there, support the organizing work, the
15 education work. [Unintelligible 00:34:41] for me it was
16 like the neighborhood that I live in and represent on
17 the 74th Assembly District. We're on the Eastside of
18 Manhattan. We have seen the displacement that is
19 happening, whether in neighborhoods like [unintelligible
20 00:34:52] or the East Village. And unless we get into
21 those building and the less we get into those
22 neighborhoods and understand the struggles, we're not
23 going to be able to make a difference long term.
24 Finally I will applaud the work the Office of Civil
25 Justice is doing around bringing this [unintelligible

1 00:35:08], and I hope that we can expand this to issues
2 beyond housing, [unintelligible 00:35:13] across the
3 state and be able to do it in housing statewide, because
4 that's what we're talking about, we're talking about
5 communities that are facing displacement, and they
6 aren't just in this neighborhood, but in neighborhoods
7 all over our state, we're seeing issues of
8 gentrification and displacement. And I encourage you to
9 continue to have partners around the state who are
10 talking about these issues. [Unintelligible 00:35:34]
11 we're talking cause it's in Westchester and Buffalo and
12 East Syracuse, the issues that you're having right here
13 in New York City are happening all over New York State.
14 Thank you for your time. I appreciate the opportunity
15 to testify today. [Applause]

16 JORDAN DRESSLER: Thank you. Next up we're
17 going to call up Roger Maldonado, Andrew Scherer, and
18 Alison King.

19 ROGER MALDONADO: Good evening. My name is
20 Roger Maldonado. I am here in my capacity as President
21 of the New York City Bar Association and I'm accompanied
22 by Alison King and Andrew Scherer, co-chairs of the City
23 Bar Association's Ci-Civil Right to Counsel Task Force.
24 We have submitted written testimony which we'll
25 summarize, but I first wanted to share a personal note.

1 I began my career as a lawyer in the housing unit of
2 South Brooklyn Legal Services, which in many ways was an
3 ideal job. We did everything from individual
4 representation to class actions, to appeals, but there
5 was one aspect of the job that I really, really hated,
6 and the reasons it bothered me so much are really
7 pertinent to tonight's hearing. South Brooklyn would do
8 its intake for cases to be--which we represent tenants,
9 through a hotline. And on that hotline we would receive
10 phone calls from many, many more people than we could
11 represent. And for each person that we would turn down
12 I knew that had we taken the case we would have made a
13 difference. We would have been able to keep them in
14 their apartments, if not for the long term, certainly on
15 conditions that were much better for them, much more
16 favorable, and probably with rent reductions as
17 warranted. And I also knew that no matter how much
18 advice we gave them, that advice would not stick with
19 them the minute they were confronted by the landlord's
20 attorney in the hallway, or the brief glance that they
21 had in front of the judge. So, it is with deep personal
22 pleasure, that on behalf of the City Bar Association I
23 thank the City of New York and all those responsible for
24 passage of the legislation that will now give indigent
25 New York residents the right to counsel in eviction

1 proceedings. [Applause] The City Bar Association's task
2 force has three charges. One of which is to advocate
3 for eff--effective implementation of the, of the right
4 counsel of the lawsuit. We need to share our nine
5 minutes, so I may go a wee bit above the three minutes,
6 but we'll stick to nine.

7 MALE SPEAKER: We'll make it up together.

8 ROGER MALDONADO: But the, the idea is to not
9 just focus on making sure, as you put it, Mr. Dressler,
10 that this works right, because if it works right what
11 really should be happening is that this legislation
12 should be expanded so as to cover additional persons who
13 are not now going to be covered by the legislation, but
14 who still cannot afford an attorney to represent them in
15 eviction proceedings. And more importantly, it should
16 be expanded to other jurisdictions beyond New York City
17 and frankly, it should be expanded to all of the areas
18 where a fundamental right is at stake and where
19 [unintelligible 00:39:14], that right, that benefit,
20 may, may be lost or never attained. The, the task force
21 has begun its work and it beginning to interview
22 persons, meet with persons, you will be meeting with the
23 task force soon, I know, but there are certain issues
24 and certain principles that have already emerged. And I
25 am going to mention just three and I'm going to leave it

1 to Andy and Alison to talk to you a bit more in detail
2 about the work of the task force. Issue number one is
3 the absolute need to ensure that representation of these
4 tenants who are entitled to a right to counsel happen at
5 the earliest possible moment. Because if not, if these
6 persons who have a right to counsel show up in housing
7 court without knowing that they have this right, they
8 will be targeted and they will be spoken to by the
9 [unintelligible 00:40:13] attorney prior to the time
10 that they have been informed of their right to be
11 represented. And that right [unintelligible 00:40:20]
12 that still haunts me from my days in legal services will
13 happen all over again. Secondly it is incredibly
14 important, and I echo the assemblyperson on this, that
15 there be information that is provided to all persons who
16 are eligible to have a right to counsel. The right does
17 them no good if they are not aware of the fact that they
18 have this entitlement. And also, they need to
19 understand the enormous importance of having an attorney
20 and what a difference it can make in the outcome of the
21 proceeding. And, you know, my final point is ironically
22 data. This, in order for this incredible groundbreaking
23 experiment to be able to be expanded, you are going to
24 have to demonstrate to the City of New York, to other
25 jurisdictions, and to many, many other persons across

1 the United States where this is working. And in order
2 to do so, we have to figure out what data needs to be
3 analyzed, which means what to collect, how to collect
4 it, and who to disseminate it to so that they can use it
5 effectively to not only make the current legislation
6 work, but to make it, to expand it so that it benefits
7 all those persons who truly are in need of legal
8 representation. Andy?

9 Andrew Scherer: [Unintelligible 00:41:46] do
10 the rest of our testimony because Alison has a sore
11 throat and doesn't--isn't ready to speak. So, just to,
12 I want to just give up general words, which is that it's
13 just amazing to be standing up here one year into the
14 rollout of this [unintelligible 00:42:04]. It really is
15 a monumental achievement that is run by incredible
16 advocacy from people in the communities throughout New
17 York City and it has the potential to really be
18 transformative in this city. If done right, it's, I
19 think it's already beginning to change the culture of
20 the court, it has the potential to stem the tide of
21 displacement and gentrification in the city's
22 communities, if done right and people are provided legal
23 services, work closely with the community organizations
24 throughout the city we will have more potential for
25 major transformation in this city. [Unintelligible

1 00:42:44] about our task force, we're not ready to make
2 specific recommendations. Roger started to speak about
3 some of the principles. I want to just talk about some
4 of the other principles that we have generally agreed
5 to. We've not yet settled on anything in particular to
6 recommend. One is that facilities, the courthouse, the
7 number of judges, really need to be adequate to sort of
8 [unintelligible 00:43:11] different kind of court than
9 it used to be when it was one side represented and the
10 other side not. [Unintelligible 00:43:19] to say has to
11 put sufficient resources into this to really make it
12 work. The [unintelligible 00:43:25] the provide their
13 services need to pay well enough so that their staff can
14 stay, learn, grow, and do their work, so that the people
15 who are doing the work can be trained. There needs to
16 be, there need to be resources put into community
17 organizations so that they can continue to work, to grow
18 the advocacy that needs to be done in conjunction with
19 the right to counsel. There's a need for much better
20 communication in all respects between the city and the
21 people who need the service between the city and the
22 providers. We're working in that direction but more
23 needs to be done, we need to take full advantage of
24 technology, we need to, Roger spoke about this, we
25 really need to decide what kind of data is--okay, great.

1 So, [unintelligible 00:44:23] let me just go through the
2 rest. We're going to end up supporting the set of
3 amendments to the law, we're looking into the ethical
4 issues that arise when attorneys speak to unrepresented
5 litigants and what the limits are and what they can say,
6 working with the Bar Association a lot and combinations
7 for people who have English as--non-English speakers,
8 people who have disabilities. But I just want to close
9 my emphasizing something that you said, Jordan, and that
10 Roger said, honestly people in a lot of places in this
11 country are now looking at New York City and we've got
12 an obligation to get this right for the whole
13 [unintelligible 00:45:10] of New York City, but also
14 [unintelligible 00:45:13] and we've got discussions
15 going on all over the country. I am going to hand in
16 testimony from the National Coalition for Civil Right To
17 Counsel as well, because there's a, there's a real
18 national interest in what's going on in New York City.
19 Thank you very much. [Applause]

20 JORDAN DRESSLER: Thank you. Our next speaker
21 with be assembly member Richard Gottfried. And then
22 following assembly member Gottfried, I'd ask Amber
23 Marshall, Lina Diaz [ph 00:45:46], Caroline Roe [ph
24 00:45:48], Jeanette Cepeda, and I'll apologize in
25 advance if I'm mispronouncing anyone's name, and

1 Katherine Groot [ph 00:45:58] to try and take seats up
2 here in the front. You'll be following. Thank you very
3 much.

4 RICHARD GOTTFRIED: Good evening. My name is
5 Richard Gottfried, I represent the 75th Assembly
6 District in Manhattan, which includes the neighborhoods
7 of Chelsea, Hell's Kitchen, Midtown, and part of the
8 Upper West Side, and [unintelligible 00:46:21]. Thank
9 you for this opportunity to testify about the Right to
10 Counsel program in housing court. This truly wonderful
11 program, and that wasn't in my written testimony, the
12 truly wonderful, but it really is. [Unintelligible
13 00:46:41] in 2017 with this law some, but not all, low
14 income tenants have the right to have a lawyer provided
15 to them. Those are pretty important words. I think
16 we've always had a right to have a lawyer in housing
17 court, but the right to have a lawyer provided to you is
18 an amazing new thing. So, [unintelligible 00:47:14].
19 Before the Right to Counsel was enacted, landlords tried
20 to evict over 230,000 tenants a year. Most of those
21 tenants were low income people, and [unintelligible
22 00:47:30] people of color and [unintelligible 00:47:33].
23 The program has quickly, has quickly made a difference
24 in the lives of many people. Since the implementation
25 of Right to Counsel, evictions are down 24-percent from

1 2014, [unintelligible 00:47:49] are down 10-percent from
2 2014, and people aren't getting [unintelligible
3 00:47:54] because of evictions. The program contributes
4 to preserving affordable housing in stable communities
5 by keeping people out of court and out of, out of
6 homeless shelters. But there are too many people who
7 cannot access the program because of the income level
8 required. The next step is to expand and to strengthen
9 the program, you know, city council [unintelligible
10 00:48:29] work with them. Vanessa Gibson and Dan Aiello
11 have introduced legislation to increase the income level
12 from 200-percent of poverty to 400-percent, and to
13 expand the type of cases covered by the Right to Counsel
14 program to include a variety of administrative
15 proceedings and appeals. These are, will be important
16 steps forward. But more must be done to increase
17 outreach and tenant awareness. The city needs to
18 finance efforts by various community organizations to
19 educate tenants about when, about when they're entitled
20 to legal representation and it continues to be a
21 challenge to get the word out to tenants about the Right
22 to Counsel in housing court and how to find out if they
23 are eligible and where to go. As part of the Right to
24 Counsel Program New York City's tenant support unit
25 knocks on doors to get the word out and that's

1 important. But more pulled out outreach and education
2 is needed. It can best be provided by neighborhood-
3 based groups with a history of tenant organizing, as
4 well as by the tenant support unit. And increased
5 funding to those groups is needed to do that. So, the
6 public [unintelligible 00:49:59] efforts if funded by
7 the city would help tenants learn of their right.
8 Efforts such as subway ads, mass mailing, email, and
9 social media, and hotline would all be very effective.
10 After all our Right to Counsel Program has proved its
11 effectiveness, it truly has been an amazing step forward
12 and it should be expanded and strengthened. Thank you.

13 [Applause]

14 AMBER MARSHALL: Good evening, my name is
15 Amber Marshall. I am the Civil Vice President from the
16 Association of Legal Aid Attorneys. I am here today
17 along with a coalition of unionized legal service
18 providers, the Association Legal Aid Attorneys, 1199
19 SEIU, and Legal Services Staff Association. We have
20 prepared joint remarks that we have submitted along with
21 all of our oral testimony. Today I would like to take
22 my time to focus on two main issues related to the
23 experience of my members as we do this work. I myself
24 have been representing individual tenants in Bronx
25 Housing Court since January of 2015. And as the roll-

1 out has occurred over the past year, we in my office,
2 and throughout the city have realized that there are a
3 few ways that our work can be easier to provide the
4 services efficiently to our tenants, our clients, and to
5 also make sure that our grants are run efficiently. One
6 of the ways that we are seeking changes is creating
7 funding structures within our grants that allow us to
8 hire social workers and paralegals. Our organizations
9 are unable to hire social workers and without them, we
10 must choose between helping our clients navigate
11 complicated systems within governments, at non-profits,
12 at hospitals, and we honestly lack the experience to
13 navigate these systems. If we don't have the time to do
14 so, we have to tell our clients that they have to do it
15 on their own. I have personally had cases if a client
16 had a social worker to help them get an ID or a social
17 security card, we could actually get their child onto
18 public assistance and get their cases resolved quicker
19 through the FEPS Program. We've had cases where these,
20 the failures to get these identification documents have
21 dragged on the housing court cases for three additional
22 months, four additional months. Additionally, our
23 members struggle with providing adequate resources for
24 clients who are facing domestic violence and who are,
25 and who are struggling with suicidal ideation. In the

1 past year I have had two members come to me and say that
2 they were not able to find the referrals for clients who
3 were actually on the phone and talking about committing
4 suicide. As a result of instances like these, our
5 members are dealing with significant amounts of
6 secondary trauma. I've been connecting my members with
7 mental health services for their own personal use.
8 Furthermore, without the ability to hire paralegals, we
9 are forced to engage in extended and time consuming
10 benefits advocacy that results in our failure to meet
11 litigation deadlines, extending cases even further.
12 Right now, in one borough, my members have reported that
13 their average experience case handler has handled 17
14 more cases through October this year than the entire
15 prior year. They are justifiably concerned about their
16 quality of representation, and they are working longer
17 and longer hours, and it's not sustainable. With the
18 assistance of paralegals we would be able to meet our
19 deadlines and get the benefits issued sooner and resolve
20 cases sooner. Finally, we are facing a significant
21 amount of attrition in each of our boroughs. We have
22 had attorneys leave one office in one week three at a
23 time. Which means that all of our cases must be
24 transferred, which reduces our ability to take on new
25 clients and continue to administer this grant. Right

1 now, my members are being forced to choose between doing
2 the work that they love, and starting a family, or
3 paying off debt, or their own mental health. So, as
4 this grant is, as universal access is implemented and
5 rolled out, we ask that you take these funding concerns
6 and constraints seriously and find a way that we can
7 adequately service the tenants in New York City so that
8 access to justice means actual justice. Thank you.

9 [Applause]

10 JORDAN DRESSLER: You guys are done, right?
11 Oh, we were going to give you--[unintelligible 00:55:56]

12 JUDITH GOLIDNER: Hi, I'm Judith Goldiner. I'm
13 the attorney in charge of the Civil Law Reform Unit at
14 the Legal Aid Society. And it's a privilege to be here
15 to speak for the society today. The society, as long as
16 I've been in the society, and for much longer, obtaining
17 right to counsel in housing court was really just a
18 dream and we are very excited to be part of the reality
19 of making it, making this a reality for long-income
20 tenants in New York City. And we're excited that we're
21 already seeing the benefits of that in reduced number of
22 evictions, in the success that our attorneys are having
23 in maintaining tenants' homes, and in the reduction in
24 the number of people that are entering shelter because
25 of housing court cases. However, we are concerned about

1 ongoing sustainability. We want to make sure that we
2 can continue to both represent tenants outside of the
3 zip codes, as well as representing tenants on important
4 issues such as group HP cases, HP cases and harassment
5 cases, which are the kind of cases which make it
6 possible to keep tenants in their homes, as well as
7 representing people when they're being sued themselves.
8 Without being able to represent tenants in those kind of
9 cases, our ability to stem the displacement crisis that
10 we're facing in New York City is going to be reduced.
11 We also would urge the city to support covering, as my
12 colleague from Legal Aid said, covering social workers,
13 covering paralegals, covering different kinds of cases.
14 So, it's very important that appeals for example be
15 covered, and appeals not just of housing court cases,
16 that's very important, but appeals Article 78 from
17 [unintelligible 00:57:50] administrative hearings and
18 other such cases, if we can't do those kind of appeals,
19 then landlords are going to take advantage of that.
20 And, you know, we already see that. In addition, we, we
21 need to see our clients in a holistic way. It's not--
22 many of our cases that are not housing cases are
23 essential to maintaining housing. If we can't do those
24 income generating cases, cases to get tenants on
25 unemployment benefits, disability benefits, other kinds

1 of public benefits, if we can't deal with their consumer
2 debt, and other of those problems, they're not going to
3 be able to pay their rent and they're not going to be
4 able to stay in their apartments. There's much other
5 information in our testimony, but we really appreciate
6 the opportunity to be able to come here today and to
7 work with the city moving forward on improving the
8 program and expanding the program and to keep making it
9 sustainable over time. Thank you. [Applause]

10 LINO DIAZ: Thank you for your time. My name
11 is Lino Diaz. I'm a union member and a delegate with
12 Legal Services Staff Association [unintelligible
13 00:59:20] UAW2320, and I'm a housing staff attorney at
14 Queens Legal Services and--which is a part of Legal
15 Services NYC. The Legal Services Staff Association is a
16 wall to wall union that represents all non-management
17 employees at Legal Services NYC and Mobilization for
18 Justice. Thank you for your time tonight. I would like
19 to talk with you about three issues we have seen during
20 the roll-out process of UAC, and this is extremely
21 important because we don't want this program to
22 reinforce the societal issues that it's trying to
23 combat. So, first and foremost, we lack the core
24 structures required to talk to people with a semblance
25 of confidentiality. In Queens we only have access to

1 one room in the courthouse in which we do intakes for
2 UAC. As a result, we are forced to result to talking to
3 people about their issues in the crowded hallways, which
4 creates two types of confidentiality issues. First, is
5 that as legal services providers, we are required to
6 collect a large amount of sensitive data from clients,
7 and doing so in public spaces creates safety concerns
8 for that information. And one can overhear it, putting
9 that client at risk for identity theft or worse. As you
10 can imagine, trying to get a client's social security
11 number is hard enough when it's back at the office, it's
12 a lot harder when it's in the courthouse surrounded by a
13 multitude of people. And secondly, we are potentially
14 asking people to discuss their cases, including possible
15 defenses or lack thereof in front of people who are
16 either unrelated to the proceeding, or could have an
17 adverse relationship with our clients. Which is a
18 terrible situation in which to create a client attorney
19 relationship. Secondly, the UAC roll-out has forced us
20 as legal service providers to turn away potentially
21 meritorious cases for the sake of meeting the demand of
22 UAC cases. We're supposed to be preventing evictions,
23 but forcing us to prioritize certain zip codes instead
24 of giving us the discretion of denying services to
25 unmeritorious cases, or being forced to let preventable

1 evictions slip through the cracks. To that end we've
2 seen clients who we've represented in multiple
3 proceedings in the past, but don't fall within the UAC
4 zip codes be forced--well, we see them going down the
5 road that we're most worried about, which is going into
6 court unrepresented and likely going to be evicted. And
7 it's preventable. And also we're watching UAC create a
8 two-tiered system for client services. UAC cases can
9 only be adjourned in Queens at three-week intervals, and
10 that's a maximum. We've seen it as low as two weeks
11 depending on what the court is dealing with at the time.
12 And we're forced to pick those dates. And that is an
13 issue for two reasons. First of all, because as a
14 result we don't necessarily have enough time to deal
15 with all of the issues that are arising, but secondly,
16 because when somebody comes in with a private attorney,
17 they don't have that limitation. So, they can choose
18 any date on the calendar moving forward in order to get
19 the time that they need to properly represent their
20 client, while we're forced to choose these dates which
21 can be at most three weeks, but as little as two weeks,
22 and we have to be prepared by the next court appearance,
23 otherwise it's going to be problematic for us and for
24 our clients. Sorry, this is a really frustrating thing.
25 And we can't allow people who are already underserved

1 and underrepresented to receive [unintelligible
2 01:02:13] representation for the alleged state of
3 judicial economy. Especially when the lack of time
4 creates more ROCs down the line or [unintelligible
5 01:02:20] cause, sorry if I'm using that term loosely,
6 thus plotting against the efficiency argument. And
7 [unintelligible 01:02:26] providers see between 20 and
8 30 people and are expected to appear right away for
9 special zip code clients with no investigation and
10 little information on the background of the case itself.
11 While this is not an issue necessarily for people who
12 are at their first appearance, if somebody is on their
13 second, third appearance, or are on an order to show
14 cause, we still have to try to do something for them,
15 even though we have no idea what's going on. And it's
16 not a good idea for anybody involved. It doesn't make
17 us look good, it doesn't make our clients look good, it
18 just cuts against the very issues we're trying to fight
19 for. So, many staff attorneys have questioned whether
20 the terms that we're required to practice under are
21 grounds for malpractice, and it's certainly a
22 justifiable concern. And while UAC is a tremendous step
23 forward for New York City's low-income tenants, for it
24 to be truly realized as that you work to provide private
25 space in the courthouse and eliminate procedures that

1 contribute to UAC recipients receiving a lesser version
2 of representation. Thank you. [Applause]

3 CAROLINE ROE: My name is Caroline Roe and I'm
4 a union member and delegate with the Legal Services
5 Staff Association and I'm a staff attorney of
6 Mobilization for Justice. The Legal Services Staff
7 Association is a wall to wall union that represents all
8 non-management employees at Mobilization for Justice and
9 Legal Services NYC. Thank you for your time tonight. I
10 am here tonight to tell you about a client that my
11 office served through UAC. Sylvia is a 49-year-old
12 woman with a disability. She and her husband live with
13 their one adult child and two minor children. She was
14 sued for a non-payment event in September of 2016. Her
15 case was initially settled in November 2016. Her
16 attorneys had to file three OSCs for more time to pay
17 her [unintelligible 01:04:18] due to delays and mistakes
18 in obtaining a one shot deal and FEPs. Her case was not
19 resolved until May, eight months after it started. She
20 was sued again for a non-payment in late, in late 2017.
21 Sylvia's case illustrates two problems with UAC. First,
22 attorneys representing tenants in non-payment cases
23 spend a significant amount of time doing advocacy and
24 follow-up with HRA and HRA contractors such as Bronx
25 Works, Help USA, and others. HRA is paying attorneys

1 from outside, outside agencies to turn around and
2 advocate with HRA's own staff to receive the assistance
3 that our clients need. Second, UAC does not provide
4 adequate funding for mandatory staff. Sylvia's problems
5 could have potentially been resolved sooner if she'd had
6 a social worker or a paralegal to help her navigate
7 HRA's bureaucracy. It is an inefficient use of funding
8 for attorneys to spend hours at HRA helping clients
9 apply for UAC and following up on applications.
10 However, because universal access is not fully funded,
11 recipient organizations like mine have to decide which
12 necessary staff will not get hired. Problems of
13 prioritizing staff attorneys which does not leave enough
14 money to hire necessary non-attorney staff. In short,
15 employees are being paid attorney salaries to do tasks
16 that could be done at a lower cost by a social worker or
17 paralegal. In addition, clients often have underlying
18 issues with benefits or need services that cannot be
19 addressed with current staffing. For example, many
20 clients make very little money, but do not qualify for
21 public assistance. Or they're receiving public
22 assistance and it has been shut off. Even if a client
23 can come up with the money to cover one month's rent,
24 get a one shot deal, and have their case closed, there
25 are still no guarantees that they won't fall back into

1 arrears, and in fact this happens frequently.
2 Unfortunately, housing attorneys don't have the time or
3 the resources to assist with the root causes of the
4 client's inability to pay the rent and can only focus on
5 the case at time. Although Sylvia's 2016 non-payment
6 case was resolved, she has since been sued again. The
7 intersection of these two issues causes many tenants to
8 be sued for non-payment of rent repeatedly. Many
9 tenants are plagued by the instability and
10 unpredictability of public benefit's programs. UAC
11 clients often have suspended, terminated, or inadequate
12 benefits. They are often unable to resolve the problems
13 themselves. Increased efficiency and decrease
14 bureaucracy from HRA and OCA and increased funding from
15 non-attorney UAC staff would improve the long-term
16 housing stability of New Yorkers that we are serving.
17 On behalf of my union, I ask that you work to fully fund
18 the true cost of UAC, so that [unintelligible 01:07:02]
19 organizations can hire the full set of support staff who
20 are needed to provide us with the quality of services
21 that we want to provide to tenants. Thank you.

22 [Applause]

23 JEANETTE CEPEDA: My name is Jeanette Cepeda,
24 and I'm a union member with the Legal Services Staff
25 Association and a housing staff attorney at Brooklyn

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1 Legal Services, which is part of Legal Services NYC.
2 The roll-out and implementation of the Universal Access
3 Law has been both an exciting new change for civil legal
4 services providers, and a challenge. Tonight, I would
5 like to talk to you about the challenges I and other
6 Legal Services Staff Association members are experience,
7 are experiencing as legal services providers during the
8 roll-out and expansion of UAC, specifically around
9 provider experience, our experience, and infrastructure.
10 One of the important challenges our members face is
11 discrimination by court staff, HRA employees, and
12 members of the [unintelligible 01:08:05] bar.
13 Discussions about our race, gender, sexual orientation,
14 and our bodies are rampant in court. For example,
15 assuming that I am the tenant and not an attorney, court
16 staff has asked me to locate my attorney when checking
17 in on my client's cases. In addition, some court staff
18 have attempted to chase me out of designated attorney
19 areas. One HRA employee commented on the length of my
20 skirt in contrast with the size of my hips. HRA staff
21 have also inquired if I were pregnant. And when I
22 informed them that I was not, went on to comment about
23 my recent weight gain. I have experience members of the
24 [unintelligible 01:08:47] bar test the elasticity and
25 length of my curl by pulling it with his hands.

1 Finally, I have witness court staff give female
2 attorney, attorneys, especially those of colors,
3 inappropriate looks, complete with them licking their
4 lips. Court staff, including court officers, and other
5 HRA employees, have witnessed this behavior and failed
6 to address it. One result of the discrimination that
7 our members face in court, as well as the increased case
8 loads, and work presented by UAC, is that our members
9 have been quickly burning out and transferring into
10 different practice areas, or leaving the practice
11 altogether. Although the funding provided has allowed
12 provider organizations to increase in size and hire at
13 an unprecedented rate, additional funding is required to
14 fully fund the work and support, of support staff, who
15 provide invaluable service to our clients. More funding
16 is required to hire paralegal, secretary, and process
17 server staff, as they help ensure the best quality of
18 service to our clients and help assess client issues and
19 provide assistance with difficulties attorneys and
20 client experience. If the program is not adequately
21 funded, our legal services providers will be unable to
22 keep up with the demands of the UAC practice, will burn
23 out quickly, and seek opportunities elsewhere. And when
24 advocates leave just as they started to learn the
25 practice, to be replaced by inexperienced new advocates,

1 tenants are the ones to suffer. Low-income New Yorkers
2 deserve better than that. One of the other issues our
3 members are facing is within the infrastructure of the
4 courthouses and the inability of OCA has had in
5 providing private physical space in the courthouse.
6 Part of ensuring adequate representation of clients is
7 building confidence and trust. For example, while
8 meeting with a client in what was supposed to be a
9 private space, a landlord's attorney barged in, in an
10 attempt to use the same space as a private space for him
11 to make a phone call. This prompted an abrupt pause to
12 the client meeting, while my supervisor engaged in an
13 argument with him about whether he was allowed to use
14 the space while we were using it. This occurred because
15 the space is not marked private for use of UAC, and it
16 is shared with other core personnel and HRA staff.
17 Private meetings with clients are increasingly difficult
18 to do so due to the lack of private space in the
19 courthouse. We face challenges in ensuring we do not
20 violate client, client privilege, and often have to
21 request adjournments for the sole purpose of scheduling
22 our clients to meet with us in our office. Oftentimes
23 because of capacity issues, a private client meeting
24 does not occur until a date closer to the adjournment
25 date, leaving staff without enough time to work out some

1 issues in between court dates. I urge you to implement
2 measures to prevent and redress discrimination,
3 including mandatory anti-bias training for all court
4 staff and HRA staff, to ensure private space for client
5 meetings within the courthouses, and to fully fund the
6 work so that our employer organizations can hire the
7 full set of support staff who are needed for us to
8 provide quality services to our tenants. Thank you.
9 [Applause]

10 ALFRED TOUSSAINT: Yes, good evening. Miss
11 Miller will not be speaking. It's just going to be me
12 from CAMBA. All right. Thank you for the opportunity
13 to speak today. My name is Alfred Toussaint and the
14 Program Manager at CAMBA Legal Services. CAMBA Legal
15 Services is a, is proud to be one of the legal services
16 providers in the Universal Access for legal services for
17 tenants facing eviction in Brooklyn, and Staten Island.
18 CAMBA Legal Services is also a member of LEAP, a
19 coalition of 17 New York City legal service providers.
20 Many of the LEAP members are also members of the
21 Universal Access providers. CAMBA Legal Services
22 congratulates the city and the mayor for adopting the
23 universal access for tenants facing eviction. We also
24 would like to thank the administration for implementing
25 the law and our partners for working with us to make our

1 right to counsel a reality for New York City tenants.
2 We also would like to congratulate and thank the right,
3 the Right to Counsel Coalition, community-based
4 organizations, tenants, tenant organization across the
5 city, whose hard work, diligence, and persistence make
6 this legislation possible. Right to Counsel is already
7 making a huge difference in the lives of tenants. And
8 we see that work every day. Congratulations to the
9 Office of Civil Justice on releasing the Year One
10 Implementation Report on Universal Access and Legal
11 Services. This is really nice, this is a really nice
12 opportunity to take a step back, and take a note on our
13 collective accomplishments. These accomplishments
14 include, but are not limited to, the huge increase in
15 legal services to tenants in the housing court. For
16 example, in 2013, only one-percent of tenants in the
17 housing court were represented. While this past year
18 alone, 30-percent of tenants had attorneys representing
19 them in their housing court cases. This enormous
20 increase in tenant representation has helped level the
21 playing field somewhat for New York City tenants in the
22 housing court. This tremendous accomplishment would not
23 have happened if not for the hard work, dedication,
24 collaboration, and all--in all the stakeholders elect,
25 elected officials, city courts, tenants, tenant

1 organizers, legal service providers, and community
2 organizations, among others. While is it, while it is
3 important to celebrate our shared accomplishments, it is
4 also important to learn from the growing pains and bumps
5 in implementation so that we can continue to move
6 forward effectively. There is still much work to be
7 done. While 30-percent of tenants are represented, 70-
8 percent are still not. As a community based legal
9 services provider, CAMBA Legal Services, and our LEAP
10 partners, feel very strongly that a community-based
11 approach to implementation of right to counsel is
12 critical. Some of the components that we, that we
13 believe are key to the full implementation are as
14 follows. The first is tenant awareness, outreach, and
15 education. It is critical in the long-term success for
16 right to counsel. Many tenants never make it to housing
17 court and give up their apartments through intimidation.
18 While tenant representation in housing court is on the
19 rise, we already see landlords resorting to other means
20 to get tenants to give up their apartments. Tenants
21 must--

22 MALE SPEAKER: [Unintelligible 01:16:36]

23 Finish your sentence.

24 ALFRED TOUSSAINT: And the last component, we
25 just want to make sure, is neighborhood-based intake.

1 We want to be able to do some, some type of in, intake,
2 in the community even before tenants reach housing court
3 to just alleviate a lot of the congestion that we
4 already spoke about today. Thank you very much.

5 [Applause]

6 Katherine Groot: Good evening. My name's
7 Katherine Groot. I am a member of the Association of
8 Legal Aid Attorneys Local 2325 of the United
9 Autoworkers, and a staff attorney at CAMBA Legal
10 Services. I think the Office of Civil Justice for the
11 forum this evening. We recognize Right to Counsel as a
12 monumental piece of legislation. We are proud to be a
13 part of its efforts and hope it's the first step to
14 bringing civil Gideon to New York City. We believe that
15 continued success to Right to Counsel requires that the
16 program evolve in response to the lessons learned in the
17 trenches and we hope you heed our concerns and
18 suggestions. As legal services providers we endeavor to
19 provide each client with high quality legal services.
20 We are concerned, however, that the lack of discretion
21 afforded to attorneys and the client quotas imposed by
22 the Right to Counsel contract requires to make
23 compromises that we're not comfortable with. First, I
24 echo my colleagues concerns regarding the roll-out to
25 Right to Counsel by zip codes. Currently Right to

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1 Counsel requires legal services providers to represent
2 tenants who reside in specified Right to Counsel zip
3 codes over those who do not. One of the best ways to
4 preserve affordable housing in this city is to stop
5 landlords from illegally deregulating rent stable--rent
6 stabilized housing stock. Unfortunately, we're forced
7 to turn down tenants who do not reside within specified
8 zip codes, including those who reside in rent stabilized
9 apartments. This practice jeopardizes affordable
10 housing in zip codes not currently included in this
11 program. By the time Right to Counsel adds these zip
12 codes it will be too late. This concern also extends to
13 tenants residing in NYCHA and HUD, HUD project-based
14 apartments, as well as tenants with vouchers in other
15 housing subsidies. Second, we believe the quotas
16 imposed by Right to Counsel are unrealistic and
17 unattainable. Our caseloads have increased to a degree
18 that negatively impacts our client centered practice.
19 Finally, we believe the housing court buildings, which
20 are the initial point of contact between legal services
21 providers and tenants, must be upgraded to both meet the
22 tenants' needs, as well as Right to Counsel. The
23 physical infrastructure of housing court alienates
24 tenants, particularly those with disabilities and other
25 limitations based on the long lines to enter the

1 buildings, lack of seating in the court parts, long
2 waits to see a judge, and a complete lack of private
3 spaces to preserve client confidentiality. Court
4 facilities must be upgraded to ensure that tenants are
5 treated with dignity and respect from the moment they
6 enter the courthouse. Additionally, I want to echo the
7 importance of support staff including paralegals and
8 social workers. Thank you for your time. [Applause]

9 JORDAN DRESSLER: Okay, our next group will be
10 Larry Wood, Randy Dillard, and Marika Dias. [Applause]

11 LARRY WOOD: Gong me at three minutes, cause
12 I'm not taking their time. All right, ready? Good
13 evening [unintelligible 01:20:39] and HRA staff, thank
14 you for this opportunity. For the record my name is
15 Larry Wood. I serve as the Director of Organizing at
16 the Goddard Riverside Law Project. I've also served as
17 both President of Housing Court [unintelligible
18 01:20:52] for the last 25 years. On behalf of Goddard
19 Riverside and the West Side and Harlem communities we
20 serve Right to Counsel is actually an issue we've worked
21 on for well over a quarter century. And I want to say I
22 was thrilled about a year and a half ago [unintelligible
23 01:21:08] got a call where he had a bunch of
24 [unintelligible 01:21:09] at a press conference where
25 the mayor was going to announce a [unintelligible]

1 01:21:13] tax to fund senior housing but I got a call
2 [unintelligible 01:21:17] saying that he's going to
3 announce his support for Right to Counsel.
4 [Unintelligible 01:21:23] to a press conference this
5 morning. And it was just incredible to hear that that
6 was going to happen. My first exposure to housing court
7 was [unintelligible 01:21:33] ladies and I can't express
8 my horror, disappointment, and anger over witnessing how
9 the court functions. The vast majority of tenants were
10 underrepresented, [unintelligible 01:21:46] tenants in
11 the hallways [unintelligible 01:21:52]. It was just
12 abysmal and so depressing, it really pissed me off as
13 well. That's why I joined the housing court
14 [unintelligible 01:21:57] been fighting for this for a
15 long time. It's so unfair and just to see how the court
16 was virtually failing [unintelligible 01:22:10]
17 protecting tenants. Instead [unintelligible 01:22:14]
18 were cogs [unintelligible 01:22:15] housing court as an
19 eviction [unintelligible 01:22:17] collection agency for
20 landlords. [Unintelligible 01:22:21] much has changed,
21 there have been a lot of improvements as a result of a
22 lot of [unintelligible 01:22:25] and advocacy work over
23 the decades. But we still have a long way to go.
24 Goddard Riverside cannot thank the Right to Counsel
25 Coalition, the City Council, and the de Blasio

1 administration for their historic steps in passage and
2 implementing the law so far. But I'd also like
3 [unintelligible 01:22:44] there's a lot of room for
4 improving and strengthening the law, particularly in the
5 area of public education and outreach. [Unintelligible
6 01:22:51] full support both of the Right to Counsel's
7 entire [unintelligible 01:22:55] recommendations. But
8 [unintelligible 01:22:59] outreach and education
9 component. It is at it stands tens of thousands of
10 tenants who have these new rights don't know about it
11 and it appalls me to hear that landlord attorneys are
12 still badgering tenants in court, and attempting to
13 dissuade them of exercising this right and they don't
14 get worse terms if they did so. It is also so upsetting
15 to hear that tenants that maybe show up in court and
16 give up their homes [unintelligible 01:23:30] potential
17 rights [unintelligible 01:23:32]. So, we still have a
18 lot of work to do. That's the right card. Tenants must
19 know and understand the law before they ever get into
20 court. And with some help from other community-based
21 organizations [unintelligible 01:23:49] are a key other
22 part of [unintelligible 01:23:55]. [Unintelligible
23 01:23:58]. Thank you. [Applause] Next.

24 RANDY DILLARD: I am blessed to be here. My
25 name is Randy Dillard and I'm with the Right to Counsel

1 Coalition, and like I just said I am blessed to be here.
2 Because I am one of the tenants who had a lawyer and me
3 and my family was saved from not going to a shelter.
4 And I am also blessed to work with a bunch of remarkable
5 people to help pass this bill for the right to counsel.
6 And I was [unintelligible 01:24:39] I would like to see
7 the Right to Counsel [unintelligible 01:24:44] lookin'
8 right here. [Laughter] Okay. Well, [unintelligible
9 01:24:50] enough tenants who have the right to know that
10 they have rights. And that many who do have it are too
11 intimidated to use it. The city has to make
12 [unintelligible 01:25:10]. But that law is based on who
13 makes it to [unintelligible 01:25:17]. But with the
14 Right to Counsel it will change. [Unintelligible
15 01:25:21] will have a right to know about the Right to
16 Counsel. In the [unintelligible 01:25:31] zip codes,
17 [unintelligible 01:25:31] and households are reached are
18 about 75-percent rent stabilized. And in order for
19 Right to Counsel to be truly universal everyone needs to
20 know about it and understand the [unintelligible
21 01:25:55] to address other housing issues like
22 inadequate service [unintelligible 01:26:00].
23 [Unintelligible 01:26:03] are in the history of tenants
24 [unintelligible 01:26:08] in community service are
25 trusting community partners and [unintelligible

1 01:26:15] to be the outreach and education
2 [unintelligible 01:26:20] is critical to the success to
3 the Right to Counsel. However, instead of the
4 partnership where we're supporting goals,
5 [unintelligible 01:26:33] have taken up the work
6 [unintelligible 01:26:40]. We hope that you support
7 [unintelligible 01:26:43] and to help fund organizing
8 growth within our community because their lives are
9 sometimes put in danger with harassments and all these
10 hours going in and help following tenants' associations
11 and we really appreciate that if you help support
12 bringing the poverty level from a 200-percent up to 400-
13 percent. Thank you. [Applause]

14 JORDAN DRESSLER: Thank you. Before you
15 begin. Our next group will be Elise Brown, Mark Hess,
16 Jenny Laurie, and Estefania Trio [ph 01:27:34]. Thanks.
17 Just remember to say--

18 MARIKA DIAS: Good evening. I'm Marika Dias
19 from Legal Services NYC, a citywide legal services
20 organization that is one of the organizations providing
21 right to counsel representation in all five boroughs.
22 Legal Services NYC is an approved of the Right to
23 Counsel NYC Coalition, a truly first coalition of
24 tenants, tenant organizers, advocacy groups, and legal
25 services organizations, which fought for and won the

1 Right to Counsel for [unintelligible 01:28:04] tenants
2 facing eviction. I applaud the city administration and
3 council members for following the lead of NYC tenants
4 and passing the Right to Counsel legislation, and I
5 really do commend the city's office of civil justice for
6 its tireless work in close collaboration with legal
7 services organizations and the coalition to ensure the
8 best possible implementation of this groundbreaking
9 legislation. As the data in the first annual progress
10 report by OCJ demonstrates, the Right to Counsel
11 initiative is already succeeding, even just one year in.
12 There's already been a reduction in number of tenants
13 evicted, DHS data tells us that there has been a
14 reduction in the number of shelter entries resulting
15 from eviction, and tenants in housing court are better
16 able to defend their homes and enforce their rights
17 through aggressive litigation and eviction cases. The
18 Right to Counsel has allowed New York City's tenant
19 advocacy community to build a powerful cohort of housing
20 attorneys and advocates who are collectively shifting
21 the practice of housing law to better serve New York
22 City tenants. We have seen dramatic increase in the
23 published legal decisions favorable to tenants, thereby
24 strengthening the body of case law that upholds tenants'
25 rights, and as a more robust and powerful community in

1 housing court, tenants and tenant lawyers are
2 confronting the issues of racism and sexism that long
3 plagued New York City housing courts. And we are also
4 better to advocate from preference to housing court
5 systems and procedures in order to rectify historic
6 imbalances resulting from decades where less than 10-
7 percent of tenants litigated their cases with attorneys.
8 At the level of our own housing practice in Legal
9 Services NYC, since 2015 we have seen a 76-percent
10 increase in the volume of eviction defense cases we are
11 handling. And housing staff has increased by 300-
12 percent since 2015 with an unprecedented 207 staff
13 members. And we are preventing more evictions than ever
14 before. And I have to say, even though the legal merits
15 of the case are no longer a factor in deciding whether
16 to provide representation and right to counsel zips,
17 this had not diminished our success rate in eviction
18 cases at all. And internal data shows that we are
19 winning just as many cases as when we used to select
20 cases using the legal merits approach. Legal Services
21 NYC advocates are dedicated to the pursuit of social
22 justice so we are honored to be part of this historic
23 moment and are committed to ensuring that the Right to
24 Counsel realizes its full potential for building tenant
25 power and making housing court a place where tenants can

1 achieve justice. And so, in that spirit, in our written
2 comments we have submitted a number of recommendations
3 and comments regarding factors that are impeding the
4 successful implementation of the Right to Counsel. Many
5 have addressed these and so, I won't have time to go
6 into them now, but they definitely are outlined in our,
7 in our written comments. This was always going to be a
8 massive undertaking to implement a Right to Counsel, so
9 I'll just conclude by saying that it, although there
10 have been many challenges, it's an undertaking that we
11 are Legal Services NYC are deeply passionate at and
12 so, we're not deterred in our resolve by the challenges
13 we've encountered. And we see them as our collective
14 opportunity to shape the city's Right to Counsel to the
15 strongest and best defender initiative that it can be to
16 fully realize the city's tenants' vision for the power
17 of the Right to Counsel. [Applause]

18 JORDAN DRESSLER: Thank you. Before we go to
19 the next group I just wanted to pause and sort of re-
20 invite any late comers, you're free to sign up to speak,
21 just come to the sign in table at the front. If there's
22 any need for language interpretation, just raise your
23 hand and we'll come and make sure. Okay. With that
24 Elise Brown.

25 ELISE BROWN: Yes, I'm Elise Brown. I'm the

1 Director of Housing Litigation at Mobilization for
2 Justice. And it really nice to be right after Marika
3 because it's, we are similarly sort of standing in front
4 of the fire hose that is, is Universal Access to
5 Counsel, but energized about it and would say that our,
6 our results are the same. It was very difficult for our
7 staff to move from a evaluation of a case on a merits
8 basis to just taking what we found. And I would say we
9 do, we do universal access in the Bronx, and we have
10 never had one conference in a room with a client. All
11 of our intakes and conferences are in the midst of the
12 melee which is Bronx Housing Court. But we similarly
13 have had good results. We, our, our success rates in
14 saving, saving apartments if anything has gone up, and
15 we have doubled in staff. We have now have a bricks and
16 mortar office as of today in the, in the Bronx. We
17 signed the lease today. And it's, it's an exciting time
18 for us. It's a monumental, monumental, when I looked
19 back to prepare my testimony on part of the, the
20 administration, the city council, the Right to Counsel
21 Coalition that we've been part of since its inception,
22 the court system is like a huge ship that has to turn
23 around. And I give the Office of Civil Justice a lot of
24 credit for, for, the, the politics that must go into, to
25 getting more onboard, which they are coming onboard, and

1 also to the Office of Civil Justice. So, I would
2 meliorate the statements of my staff regarding need for
3 funding for, for paralegals and social workers because
4 our clients are poor, they've been, you know, had
5 trouble at the hands of many institutions and often have
6 many problems and often disability and other life
7 circumstances weigh in on their, on where they found
8 themselves in housing court. And it is a tremendous
9 challenge to, to have been here and working during this
10 time and trying to manage it. And I spend pretty much
11 all my waking days thinking about numbers and Right to
12 Counsel and did I get the data and it's, it's, it's been
13 truly a challenge but if anybody can rise to its New
14 Yorkers and so, and that means the, the City Office of
15 Civil Justice, the legal services providers, the tenant,
16 the organizers, we can do it right. And there are ways
17 to do it better and we'll get there. So, that's it.
18 [Applause] Thank you.

19 MARK HESS: Hi, good evening. My name is Mark
20 Hess, I'm a supervising attorney in the tenant's right
21 unit in the New York Legal Assistance Group. First off
22 thank you for having us. The ground-breaking UA program
23 has already made an incredible impact on the lives of
24 low, low income New Yorkers and access to counsel has
25 exponentially increased the chances that tenants will be

1 able to stay in their homes, or at least be given the
2 time that they need to find alternative housing and
3 avoid homelessness. Now, I would like to speak tonight
4 about two issues that we think will improve UA and make
5 the right to counsel even more meaningful. First, NYLAG
6 sees [unintelligible 01:36:02] tenants who are not
7 completely covered under the program, without broadening
8 the definition of covered proceeding under UA there is a
9 risk that the representation provided in housing court
10 will only shepherd clients to an inevitable eviction.
11 Even though there's a legal remedy that could enable
12 them to remain in their NYCHA apartments. NYLAG also
13 encourages OCJ to expand UA to cover appeals and NYCHA
14 HPD and DHCR Section 8 voucher terminations. Second,
15 unfortunately the housing courts simply do not have the
16 space necessary for attorneys to confidentially and
17 comfortably provide intake and legal counsel to tenants,
18 a problem which will continue to grow as implementa--
19 implementation expands annually. Housing court's ruling
20 participa--participat--participation in effectuating
21 right to counsel has been critical to its success.
22 However, dedicated spaces essential to making this
23 program work and the solution must be sensitive to the
24 needs of litigants who are current, who currently must
25 travel multiple floors over the course of a day to

1 obtain assistance. Most providers and their clients
2 need spaces free from the chaos of housing court.
3 Moreover, childcare and spaces that are friendly to
4 young children are imperative. Many clients who are
5 forced to bring young children to court because they
6 cannot afford or do not have the time to find adequate
7 childcare. Clients are then forced to perform two
8 tasks, caring for their child and discussing sensitive
9 legal issues. Which is an untenable way to start the
10 representation. I'd also just like to refer OCJ to the
11 stories of clients that we've represented, just to show
12 how impactful this work has been. NYLAG really
13 appreciates the opportunity to be part of the
14 implementation of UA, which will provide a road map to
15 cities across the country in revolutionizing access to
16 justice when low income housing is threatened. With a
17 few minor tweaks we believe the program will realize its
18 full potential as it expands to cover all of New York
19 City. We look forward to continuing our strong
20 partnership with OCJ and we're happy to provide more
21 information if need. Thank you. [Applause]

22 ESTAFANIA TRUZILLO: Hi everyone, my name is
23 Estafania Truzillo organizer of the Flatbush Tenant
24 Coalition. Thank you for letting us talk.

25 [Unintelligible 01:38:46] for a lot of the tenants that

1 we work with in Flatbush in Brooklyn, so a lot of the
2 tenants that we work with are immigrants, working class
3 people of color. [Unintelligible 01:39:00] that say
4 Right to Counsel is a right cause a lot of our tenants
5 get confused with universal access, but Right to Counsel
6 is a right. [Unintelligible 01:39:10] that I also want
7 to say is that not only is Right to Counsel right now
8 available for tenants to stop evictions, but we're also
9 using it to build power. And why I mention building
10 power, because [unintelligible 01:39:26] by different
11 names as well because our city allows landlords to have
12 different names and LLCs. But he bought a building at
13 115 [unintelligible 01:39:42] Brooklyn and he sent
14 everyone to housing court. There's 89 units. So,
15 there's so many laws in place right now in this city and
16 in our state that allow landlords to get away with it,
17 such as sending tenants, all the tenants in one building
18 to court. They did not know their right to counsel
19 because Right to Counsel was not available then.
20 Imagine what could have happened if they knew that Right
21 to Counsel was available or even before that, right.
22 Because we use Right to Counsel, like I said, not to
23 stop, not only to stop evictions, but to build power,
24 it's to get rid of the fear. Getting rid of the fear to
25 organize and to fight back, not only against the lack of

1 repairs, but other tactics that landlords use against
2 tenants. Another thing that I want to mention is we, as
3 an organizer, a lot of this work that has led to the
4 passing of Right to Counsel it was because of tenants.
5 [Unintelligible 01:40:42] this was a tenant that
6 [unintelligible 01:40:43] that led to this right. And I
7 thank [unintelligible 01:40:46] for organizing groups.
8 And I think that there's a lot of frustration from
9 lawyers who feel that they should be allowed to pick
10 cases. But if we allow that, what are we saying as a
11 city, that only certain groups of people deserve to have
12 representation? I don't think so. I think all tenants
13 if they know about this right, and they're in the zip
14 codes, they should have a right to a lawyer, because
15 enough is enough. And we need to stop this homelessness
16 crisis. There are already conversations right now about
17 [unintelligible 01:41:20] and the mayor is not talking
18 about Right to Counsel and how it can be used to stop
19 evictions. [Unintelligible 01:41:27] payer to fight
20 back to stay in their homes. Thank you. [Applause]

21 JENNY LAURIE: Hard act to follow. My name is
22 Jenny Laurie, I'm the Executive Director of Housing
23 Court Answers. Housing Court Answers was founded in the
24 early 1980s to work with tenants in the housing court
25 that were unrepresented. We currently have information

1 tables in all five county housing courts and we serve
2 about 30,000 people a year in the five county housing
3 courts, and about 10,000 people over a hotline that we
4 run for eviction prevention services. Housing Court
5 Answers is very proud to have played a supporting role
6 in the Right to Counsel Coalition, which fought to pass
7 this law last summer. And to notice that when we
8 started this work, and when Housing Court Answers was
9 first founded, just a very small percentage of tenants
10 had representation in housing court and to now,
11 according to your report, 30-percent of tenants have
12 represent--have representation in court. And the other
13 thing that we were advocating for was eviction
14 prevention, and it seems like Right to Counsel has
15 really done a great job on that. And my favorite piece
16 of data is we just organized a couple events where we
17 invited a Marshall to come and speak about evictions.
18 That was an interesting, they were interesting events.
19 But Danny Weinheim, who probably does more evictions
20 than anyone in the boroughs, told the room of advocates
21 and legal service providers that they were doing a great
22 job, and it was said it was making his job easier
23 because he used to do 15 evictions a day, and now he
24 does only three evictions a day. So, I think to me that
25 meant that Right to Counsel is a tremendous suc--

1 success. [Applause] Yeah. I would echo what my
2 colleagues have said about the needs for social workers,
3 paralegals, smaller caseloads, and more support for
4 attorneys working. And I would also urge that OCJ
5 pressure the courts to adapt more to this, to Right to
6 Counsel. Still not all the judges are making it clear
7 to tenants that they have a right to counsel, they're
8 not controlling the landlord attorneys in the way they
9 obviously could, and they could have a lot more to say
10 about how the space is used in housing court. But I
11 just want to congratulate you, and congratulate all of
12 us on the first year. I think it's really amazing. And
13 I've spent much of my career working towards this and
14 I'm really happy to be here. So, thank you. [Applause]

15 JORDAN DRESSLER: Our next two speakers, and
16 at this point our final two speakers, but we will remain
17 open through nine in case there are any late comers.
18 Wesley Paul and Mia Baker.

19 WESLEY PAUL: Hello? RTC is a good thing for
20 the tenants. Okay. But we shouldn't ignore the
21 [unintelligible 01:45:20], which is, which is, the, the,
22 to move the housing from [unintelligible 01:45:31]. And
23 all these things are because the tenants that take good
24 service. [Unintelligible 01:45:40] most of the, of the
25 rooms is for, is for eviction. Tenant and only get one

1 room for [unintelligible 01:45:40]. And [unintelligible
2 01:45:57] talking about that is a, is a victory.
3 [Unintelligible 01:46:02] we will remove the courthouse
4 from Livingston to [unintelligible 01:46:08] where,
5 where the tenant will have better service and the court
6 will be very, have very tenant friendly. But also, RTC
7 is good. And we know it. But why we not
8 [unintelligible 01:46:38]. A lot of tenant in New York
9 City don't know about their rights. A lot of tenants in
10 New York City are [unintelligible 01:46:51] when it
11 comes to defending their rights. And also, we have to
12 dissect that. No? The immigrant tenants don't know
13 about their rights. Even though we explain it to them
14 they don't want to take action for fear of retaliation
15 from the landlord. Now we know, we know that we have,
16 we have RTC and also we need outreach to do a lot of
17 outreach and that's what we've been working on in RTC
18 and in FTC [ph 01:47:38]. Okay? Thank you very much.
19 I do have to do more or to say more. And I hope that, I
20 hope that a lot of, a lot of, a lot of us, you know,
21 really do what we, what we need to do in this
22 predicament which is the tenant is not aware of what we
23 call their rights. Okay, thank you very much.

24 [Applause]

25 MIA BAKER: Thank you. Yes. What's that?

1 Good evening. My name is Mia Baker and I am a staff
2 attorney with the Urban Justice Center's Safety Net
3 Project, one of the legal service providers currently
4 representing tenants under the Right to Counsel law in
5 the Bronx. We stand by the written comments of the
6 Right to Counsel Coalition and agree that this law has
7 the potential to transform housing courts from a one-
8 sided forum that routinely oversteps agreements made
9 between litigants with vastly unequally bargaining power
10 to a more balanced forum with the capacity to dispense
11 justice and to have a broad impact on housing rights.
12 We applaud the efforts by the city and the courts that
13 have taken to implement Right to Counsel law and we
14 thank OCJ for providing this forum to provide continued
15 dialogue how to best implement this new and important
16 right. I'd just like to quickly discuss my experiences
17 practicing in Bronx Housing Court and also amplify and
18 reiterate everything that the previous speakers have
19 said. We couldn't agree more. Safety New Project
20 currently conducts intakes in the Bronx Housing Court
21 twice a month on alternating Fridays. In the Bronx,
22 intakes are conducted in the hallways outside of the
23 courtrooms. There is very little room, there's limited
24 desk space available, you're constantly bumping into
25 people, getting jostled, it's pretty much a fire hazard.

1 This creates ethical problems for client confidentiality
2 and also negatively effects attorney credibility because
3 it's just a whole crowd, a sea of people, and then
4 someone's coming forward saying hi, can help you with
5 your housing case. They don't, they don't know who we
6 are, we're not in a space that seems official in any
7 way. In addition, as people have mentioned, tenants are
8 unaware that they're entitled to an attorney, and they
9 don't trust a complete stranger appearing, claiming to
10 be on their side. Because of this chaotic situation, as
11 well as the adherent emotional trauma of being forced to
12 defend one's home, tenants are often confused and
13 distrustful, and attempt to handle the cases on their
14 own. Sometimes this results in tenants refusing an
15 attorney, other times tenants enter into settlement
16 agreements with landlord's attorneys, which they later
17 ask the courts not to enter, and this can take all day.
18 As a solution, we urge the courts to set aside a
19 designated ADA compliant area, that not only protect
20 tenant privacy and the attorney client privilege, but
21 also lends credibility to attorneys practicing under the
22 Right to Counsel law and signals to tenants that legal
23 service provider is a potential ally. Next, we are
24 often called into courtrooms to appear on behalf of
25 tenants on the record that we are still processing an

1 intake for. Without having adequate time to evaluate a
2 case and to obtain all pertinent information, appearing
3 for tenants we have just met may lead to inadequate
4 representation and at worse malpractice. While we
5 understand and appreciate the goal of ensuring that
6 every client has representation at the earliest moment,
7 we would support an effort to automatically grant
8 adjournments in such situations to allow for sufficient
9 time to investigate and process a case. Also, it is
10 known that HRA often plays a role in the successful
11 resolution of many of our cases. With that being said,
12 communication with HRA can be difficult. Our calls are
13 too often not answered or not timely returned. Thus, to
14 ensure Right to Counsel is as successful as possible we
15 would urge the HRA to create a liaison office
16 specifically for those legal service providers having
17 some sort of hotline that legal service providers can
18 call into and not have to wait along with everybody else
19 calling the HRA. And finally, we, we also would like to
20 support outreach and distribute information to tenants
21 about their right under this law, specifically we would
22 suggest that tenants get some sort of information sheet
23 when they go to the answer window in housing court.
24 Thank you. [Applause]

25 JORDAN DRESSLER: Sandra Contreras out of

APA International
551 Fifth Avenue, Suite 630 ~ New York, NY 10176
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1 Riverside.

2 SANDRA CONTRERAS: Good evening. I'll try to
3 keep it short since I think I'm the last person.

4 JORDAN DRESSLER: You're the second to last
5 person. Can you say your name?

6 SANDRA CONTRERAS: My name is Sandra
7 Contreras. I'm a tenant organizer with Goddard
8 Riverside. I felt the need to come up because I am a
9 social worker, who is also a tenant organizer, so I felt
10 uniquely positioned to comment on some of the issues
11 that have come up in the previous testimony. Again, I
12 really want to give a big shout out to the tenant
13 leaders that made Right to Counsel the strong
14 legislation that it is at present. As many people have
15 mentioned this evening there are things that we can do
16 to make it better. It is an amazing tool to build, let
17 me put it this way, we educate the tenants, we do
18 outreach with the tenants, they give us so much
19 information about the intersectionality of their issues.
20 A lot of people have mentioned them here. We're working
21 in very complex systems. And one of the things that
22 drew me to housing after graduating from social work
23 school was housing is such an important social
24 determinant of health. And I, I hope that that's what
25 the administration was trying to address is that by

1 bettering the conditions that our tenants are in by
2 keeping them in their homes, keeping families together,
3 making sure that those homes are in good repair, we can
4 build a better city. What I do on a day to day basis
5 working with tenants, I still tend to think of it
6 actually as group social work because when people see
7 that by accessing the right to counsel, by making tenant
8 associations, and by not being afraid of their
9 landlords, it builds their group self-esteem. So,
10 there's a real tangible benefit that you can see when
11 you work with tenants that they know that they are
12 backed up by neighborhood based legal services
13 providers. And I just want to say I stand in solidarity
14 with the testimony of the Right to Counsel Coalition, as
15 well as with some of the issues that the legal service
16 providers have mentioned. We need to look at tenants,
17 especially lower income tenants, in a holistic fashion,
18 and I believe that we can do that by improving the
19 funding from the city for things like social work and
20 paralegals that can help best, help our tenants best
21 navigate very complex systems that because of the issues
22 that they may be facing in their lives, they may not be
23 equipped to do otherwise. Thank you so much. And good
24 night. [Applause]

25 JORDAN DRESSLER: Thank you. Katherine Groot.

1 Oh. Okay then with that, there the last speaker who
2 signed up, we're--fair is fair, we said we'll be open
3 till nine. We are going to certainly give it quite a
4 bit more time to make sure there's any late comers,
5 anybody who felt that they were not able to complete,
6 feel free to sign up again. You're under no obligation
7 to do so. I think at this point I want to say to
8 everybody thank you, thank you for your input, thank you
9 for your feedback, thank you for taking the time, and
10 making the effort, particularly on a night like tonight.
11 And thank you for your continued support for Universal
12 Access. [Unintelligible 01:56:20] [Applause] Wait, do
13 we have one--speak of the devil. [Unintelligible
14 01:56:33] Thank you. Can I have everyone's attention,
15 please? We're starting over. Okay. I'd like to call
16 two folks, [Unintelligible 01:59:06]. [Applause]
17 [Unintelligible 01:59:25]

18 NOVA LUCERO: Hello, my name is Nova Lucero.
19 I am a tenant organizer with the Northwest Bronx
20 Community and Clergy Coalition. [Unintelligible
21 01:59:40] are here late because we were just marching to
22 the, to the RSA's office at 123 William Street in
23 protest of them actively lobbying against stronger rent
24 laws. So, sorry we're late. I have lived in the Bronx
25 all my life, and I still see to this day that there is a

1 need for representation in court. The people that we
2 work with every day, that we help organize into tenant's
3 associations still find housing court intimidating, are
4 still harassed by their landlords going to court, even
5 though they've [unintelligible 02:00:23] actively saying
6 that this is their fault. Also, Right to Counsel is
7 very important to, in order to really help tenants have
8 more support and have more confidence in housing court,
9 but also in terms of like putting landlords and real
10 estate in general like on notice about how bad the
11 housing crisis is and how poor they're treating like
12 their fellow human beings. And so, one thing that we
13 wanted to [unintelligible 02:00:53] is that the need is
14 so high still for housing court representation, we talk
15 to tenants all the time that are too scared to even talk
16 to attorneys often, and so we need more support in
17 general, better outreach. That's something that they're
18 working on but I know there was previously a promise to
19 do like subway ads in order to increase people to not
20 only like accept the help, but also to look for it. So,
21 that's something that I'm really interested in seeing,
22 and that's a lot of my neighbors and I are interested in
23 seeing. Or I think--thank you. In general I think that
24 the more than we see on the street in terms of like
25 fancy posters, like seeing the Mayor's office do a lot

1 of ads for a lot of cultural affairs things, and I think
2 those are also really great. But if we don't have like
3 the same attention paid for Right to Counsel not only
4 will people like continue to be displaced but the power
5 like the imbalance is going to continue between
6 landlords and tenants. And the most efforts that we
7 have available that we see will show that the
8 administration cares more about landlords and about
9 profit than about people. And that's definitely not the
10 message that we want to send. We want to send a message
11 that people are more important than profit, and that
12 housing is really important for us to be able to lead
13 better lives and have that stability. And so,
14 [unintelligible 02:02:29] about where our 30-percent of
15 our tenants right now are being represented by an
16 attorney and 97-percent of those receiving legal
17 services [unintelligible 02:02:42] are able to remain in
18 their homes. So, [unintelligible 02:02:46] evictions
19 conducted by City Marshalls have jumped 27-percent from
20 2013, so we do need [unintelligible 02:02:56] but also
21 like proof that this has been effective. So, we'd like
22 to make sure that we do a better job at advertising in
23 particular. Thank you. [Applause]

24 SERGIO CUERAS: My name is Sergio Cueros. I'm
25 with the [unintelligible 02:03:15]. [Unintelligible]

1 02:03:15] I moved to this state, to the city, in 1999, I
2 must have been like 21, 22. [Unintelligible 02:03:27]
3 taken care of. Now when I [unintelligible 02:03:32].
4 Okay. [Unintelligible 02:03:38] despicable, they just
5 want to [unintelligible 02:03:40] you. [Unintelligible
6 02:03:44] representation now. I've got representation
7 and I'm [unintelligible 02:03:51]. And now it feels
8 good to have someone [unintelligible 02:04:00].
9 [Unintelligible 02:04:04] basically. [Unintelligible
10 02:04:08] take care of, take care of my problems and
11 they were never solved. Now it feels like we have some
12 backing, some back up. [Unintelligible 02:04:17] cause
13 some of these, some of these landlords in housing court
14 they're nasty. They [unintelligible 02:04:23]. We're
15 nothing. Okay? [Unintelligible 02:04:30] this is what
16 landlords without [unintelligible 02:04:37], without
17 proper laws tenants are at their mercy. In the last ten
18 years we've been at their mercy. They've taken us,
19 they've taken us for a ride and no one's paid attention.
20 Now it's time to start, now, now the tenants will get
21 their rights. [Unintelligible 02:04:52-02:05:09].
22 Landlords take it out on so much as a \$2700
23 [unintelligible 02:05:16]. And continue [unintelligible
24 02:05:23]. And let me tell you something,
25 [unintelligible 02:05:28], I don't care. You know?

1 [Unintelligible 02:05:33] Okay? [Unintelligible
2 02:05:42-02:06:03] Thank you. [Applause]

3 JORDAN DRESSLER: The floor will rest for now,
4 but [unintelligible 02:06:24]. We have a speaker.
5 Zenaida Bolshakov [ph 02:06:30] And just a reminder it's
6 three minutes to speak and we'll let you know at the
7 one-minute mark. Thank you.

8 MALE SPEAKER: Just speak your name and where
9 you're from.

10 ZENAIDA BOLSHAKOV: Hi, my name is Zenaida
11 Bolshakov [ph 02:07:46], I live in the exquisite and
12 elegant Hell's Kitchen for 12 years on an 80/20. And
13 we've had construction on both sides of us, Mercedes
14 House across the street took six years of my 12 years
15 that I've lived there. And we have three other new
16 buildings. So, I've had a lot of jackhammering in my
17 history. But, there's an Off Broadway theater being
18 built, it's going to open in the next month over
19 January, next door to our back door, which is on 53rd
20 Street. And I was sued a couple of years ago because I
21 asked for a lock on a door that works. It's always left
22 open either by delivery, deliverers, or tenants, or
23 porters, whatever, and I was sued for harassing the
24 landlord because I asked for security. So, I have a
25 two-bedroom apartment, I have 523, are you jealous? So,

1 anyway, they [unintelligible 02:08:58] to 16 months two
2 days ago and they sued me, I'm not sure, a week or so
3 ago. But I did have HRA give me an attorney for legal
4 services the last time before they dropped it because
5 they wanted me to do probation and I asked probation for
6 what, it's oh, everybody gets probation for a year or
7 two. They offered me three months. I said maybe you've
8 noticed no, I'm bold face with an exclamation point.
9 So, I didn't have to do any probation or sign anything
10 to say that I broke all ten commandments and that I'm
11 naughty. But then they sued me because they want my
12 two-bedroom apartment apparently. So, but the legal
13 services guy, the last--we were sent to a trial part and
14 he called me the night before and asked me, he didn't
15 want me in the courtroom when the landlord testified.
16 And I said, how am I going to know what they concoct.
17 So, that was weird but they settled that day, they
18 dismissed it that day, or they withdrew it that day.
19 So, I'm happening. Now I'm starting another round. And
20 your people at 854 are rather nice and pleasant and not
21 too ambitious, but I'm happy. Thank you. [Applause]

22 JORDAN DRESSLER: Thank you.

23 (Whereupon, the foregoing matter went off the record at
24 9:00 p.m.)

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