

1 NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
DIVISION OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

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4 NEW YORK STATE COMMUNITY SERVICES  
BLOCK GRANT ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

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7 Minutes of meeting, held via videoconference, on Thursday, May  
8 19, 2022:

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10 PRESENT:

- 11 DENIS WILSON, CHAIRMAN
- 12 MANUEL ROSA
- 13 ROBERT VANDERBLES
- 14 JACKIE ORR
- 15 DANIEL MASKIN
- 16 CHARLIE QUINN
- 17 MAURICE REID
- 18 MIKE BOBBITT

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1           MR. ROSA: (Audio begins mid-sentence) -- and at  
2 the same time, it reminds us that there is a lot of work  
3 for us to do as a collective, as a network, to enhance the  
4 relationships among many members of the families of our  
5 communities. It's just really, really sad.

6           Matt, were you able to put up the secretary's  
7 note, by any chance? I don't know if he hears me.

8           MR. CIOTTI: One minute, I'm getting it pulled up  
9 for you.

10          MR. ROSA: Over the weekend -- Secretary  
11 Rodriguez, over the weekend, sent this to everyone at DOS,  
12 and I thought since the community action agencies are also  
13 part of the DOS family, that I would read his statement.

14          "To say what happened in Buffalo yesterday was  
15 horrific and tragic is an understatement. I am so deeply  
16 saddened by the events that have unfolded. But in this  
17 time of great pain, I want to send my condolences and  
18 support to the families who lost loved ones, the Buffalo  
19 community, and to our DOS families in Western New York.

20          "It is incomprehensible that what should have  
21 been a routine day of shopping and running errands,  
22 something we all do every day, turned into such a tragic  
23 and senseless end for so many people.

24          "Our hearts are with you. Robert Rodriguez."

25          Thank you, Matt.

1           And so for all of us who are working on this on a  
2 daily basis, for all of us who continue to strive for a  
3 more equitable society, I thank you for the work you're  
4 doing and ask again that we keep in mind this tragedy, not  
5 as a reminder of what we're lacking, but in reality, what  
6 we need to strive for as a community. And I thank you for  
7 your indulgence in allowing us to share a moment to raise  
8 this -- raise our collective consciousness for the work  
9 that we have to do moving forward.

10           So to this, I thank you, and to all the members  
11 of the network, I thank you. And for the leadership of the  
12 past, the Andreas, and the Jeromes, and Adrians of the  
13 world, thank you again for your leadership as well. And  
14 Jackie. So thank you and let's hope for better days ahead.

15           Continuing my report. I want to acknowledge that  
16 DOS did receive its (indiscernible) grant award for the  
17 rest of fiscal year 2022. We have money now for the third  
18 and fourth quarters of the year. As such, there was a  
19 slight increase in terms of the amount of money that we did  
20 receive, almost \$200,000 more from last year -- over last  
21 year's allocation. Which means that that triggers a set of  
22 amendments that are going to be needed in order to  
23 accomplish the 90 percent distribution of the dollars.

24           Just to let you know, to forewarn you that those  
25 papers are going out -- those documents are going out next

1 week from our AIU, and if you need any assistance to  
2 complete those, please let your analyst know or let our  
3 office know.

4           Again, I apologize for having to do this. There's  
5 no way around it. I know it's a pain, especially when  
6 there's such a little bit amount of money, but again, we  
7 need to distribute the money in order to stay within the  
8 State plan of the 90 percent distribution.

9           In addition to that, I also want to acknowledge  
10 that the passage of HR 5129, which is the authorization of  
11 the CSBG Act, took place last Friday at the House of  
12 Representatives. It's now being forwarded to the Senate.  
13 Again, thanks to many who had been pushing for this, and I  
14 know Adrian Fossett has been working hard on lobbying for  
15 this on behalf of New York State and Capt. David Bradley.

16           It's still not law, but within the authorization  
17 was the increase to 200 percent of the FPL, which is a good  
18 thing, but we need to have the Senate act on it in order  
19 for it to move forward. So we will just keep an eye on it  
20 as well.

21           With reference to the annual report, we have now  
22 submitted all the corrections for FFY 2020 and we're  
23 waiting to get feedback on that, and we have submitted the  
24 documents and the modules for FFY 2021, and that's under  
25 review as we speak.

1           We've been informed by the Office of Community  
2 Services HHS that New York State will be evaluated, the  
3 CSBG program; on August 22nd, it will be here. We are  
4 awaiting the engagement letter to see exactly how that is  
5 going to rollout. It is going to be done remotely, not in  
6 person. So we do know that (indiscernible) that -- but the  
7 experience with other states was that they asked for  
8 specific documentations pertaining to the state plan, and  
9 also the work that we do on our monitoring and the fiscal  
10 work. We'll get more particulars probably sometime in June  
11 when we get the letter, which is anticipated about two  
12 months before the actual visit. So we'll keep the Advisory  
13 Council and the network abreast of any progress on and  
14 information on it as well. We don't know if they're going  
15 to reach out to any of the agencies at this point.

16           I want to remind everybody again that the 19th of  
17 May, CAZ (phonetic) expenditures need to be completed by  
18 the 30th of September. This time around I'm going to ask  
19 that if there any agencies that have (audio interference),  
20 that they will not -- I repeat, will not spend their 100  
21 percent allocation of the CAZ dollars, so please let us  
22 know. We'll try to work with you, but if you've come to  
23 the conclusion that it might be a very difficult challenge  
24 to spend the 100 percent, then we would like to know.

25           We had a meeting with OCS about two weeks ago.

1 That was the first question out of the mouths of the people  
2 from OCS, so you know what's happening with (audio  
3 interference). Obviously, NYSCAA -- there's been a lot of  
4 folks are putting together webinars on how to spend the  
5 money. There are videos on how to do that. Those will  
6 continue, but again, if you need help, please let us know  
7 and we will try to work with the (indiscernible) agency.  
8 Letters are going out on a monthly basis just to remind  
9 people that the deadline is fast approaching.

10 And I'm going to ask Matt now to bring up the  
11 proclamations, if you don't mind. You'll have to make it  
12 bigger for me, Matt, please, because I can't read it.  
13 Thank you. Thank you, thank you.

14 Obviously, May is Community Action Recognition  
15 Month. Secretary Rodriguez has been an enormous advocate  
16 for CSBG since his arrival at DOS. He has asked that I  
17 read two proclamations today, and also, to make everyone  
18 aware, all the agencies, that individual proclamations and  
19 certificates of recognition will be going out to each  
20 agency over the next week.

21 So for now, I'm going to read the first one, so  
22 not -- just follow me if you can, and forgive the -- I'm  
23 just going to read the first one in its entirety.

24 "Whereas, 2022 marks the fifty-eighth anniversary  
25 of the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) of

1 1964, the purpose of which was to enhance access to  
2 education, training, and employment opportunities to all  
3 individuals and families living in poverty; and

4 "Whereas, community action agencies were created  
5 under the EOA to enhance the capacity of communities to  
6 utilize innovative approaches in addressing the root causes  
7 of poverty; to develop and implement programs designed to  
8 serve poor and low-income communities through the maximum  
9 feasible participation of individuals served; and to  
10 broaden resources dedicated to the elimination of poverty;  
11 and

12 "Whereas, the New York State Department of State  
13 serves as a partner in the community action movement  
14 through its designation as the State Economic Opportunity  
15 Office, and as the administrative agency for the Community  
16 Services Block Grant program in New York State and"  
17 (Indiscernible) (audio interference). Thank you.

18 "Whereas, Committee Action Agencies provide  
19 vital services to low-income New Yorkers, including but not  
20 limited to, housing, emergency assistance, child and adult  
21 care, food and nutrition programs, energy assistance  
22 programs, immigration integration services, as well as  
23 education and employment training programs to assist  
24 families and communities across New York State to alleviate  
25 the causes and conditions of poverty by building financial

1 independence and economic stability; and

2 "Whereas, New York State Department of State  
3 recognizes New York State Community Action Network and the  
4 dedicated community action agencies and their committed  
5 employees, whose work and services are the driving force  
6 behind building opportunities and increasing access to  
7 programs, services and activities that will lead to self-  
8 sufficiency and economic stability for all New Yorkers."

9 Matt? All the way up. Thank you.

10 "Now, therefore, today we recognize and express  
11 our gratitude to the community action agencies and the  
12 Community Services Block Grant Advisory Council for their  
13 extraordinary efforts and service to the State of New York  
14 and their contributions to the ongoing efforts to  
15 strengthen and enhance the success of the Community Action  
16 Network. It is my pleasure to present this certificate of  
17 recognition to the Community Services Block Grant Advisory  
18 Council in honor of Community Action Month, with best  
19 wishes for continued success. Robert Rodriguez, Secretary  
20 of State."

21 And go to the next one. And go all the way up  
22 to -- okay. I'm just going to read the last two.

23 "Whereas, the New York State Community Action  
24 Association, Inc. delivers exemplary assistance and  
25 guidance to the Community Action Network; by providing

1 training and technical assistance to interactive learning  
2 courses and developing a resource library; supporting and  
3 coordination of various workgroups to address a variety of  
4 issues faced by the Community Action Network; hosting the  
5 Annual Professional Development Conference and regional  
6 convenings; and keeping the Community Action Network,  
7 across New York State, connected to national partners and  
8 informed on national trends while assisting to alleviate  
9 the causes and conditions of poverty by building financial  
10 independence and economic stability for families and  
11 communities.

12 "Now, therefore, today we recognize and express  
13 our gratitude to the New York State Community Action  
14 Association, under the leadership of Jackie Orr, Executive  
15 Director, for their extraordinary efforts and service to  
16 the State of New York and their contribution to the ongoing  
17 efforts to strengthen and enhance the success of the  
18 Community Action Network.

19 "It is my pleasure to present this certificate of  
20 recognition to the New York State Community Action Network  
21 Association, Inc. in honor of Community Action Month."  
22 Again, Robert Rodriguez, Secretary of State.

23 So all the agencies should be receiving a  
24 certificate of recognition that is appropriate for each  
25 agency, recognizing each agencies efforts.

1           On behalf of Secretary Rodriguez, I want to thank  
2 the Advisory Council, its members, Denis Wilson and his  
3 leadership team, and Dan Maskin, and Jackie Orr, and  
4 colleagues over at NYSCAA for their extraordinary work.  
5 And with that, I thank you and hand the meeting back to  
6 Denis.

7           CHAIRMAN WILSON: Okay. Manny, thank you very  
8 much.

9           Next on the agenda, we're going to hear lots of  
10 changes to the open meetings law from Rob.

11           Rob, please.

12           MR. VANDERABLES: Oh, thank you, Denis.

13           Hi, everyone, this is Rob Vanderables. Did we  
14 already do attendance and determine quorum? Did I miss  
15 that when I was in the other meeting?

16           CHAIRMAN WILSON: At this point, we don't have a  
17 quorum unless it's changed. Does anybody know if we've  
18 achieved a quorum yet?

19           MR. CIOTTI: We had a few more people join from  
20 the Advisory Council, Denis, but we haven't met quorum.

21           CHAIRMAN WILSON: Okay. We don't have a quorum,  
22 or we do?

23           MR. CIOTTI: We don't.

24           CHAIRMAN WILSON: Okay, thank you.

25           Rob, that's the answer. We don't have a quorum

1 yet.

2 MR. VANDERABLES: Okay. All right. So today, as  
3 of right now, the Advisory Council cannot take any formal  
4 action, but you can all listen to me talk.

5 So in case you're unaware, I'm Rob Vanderables;  
6 I'm from the Office of General Counsel. One of my  
7 divisions is the Division of Community Services, and I want  
8 to bring the Council's attention to some changes to the  
9 open meetings law applicable to public bodies.

10 So beginning next month, some rules are going to  
11 change -- the rules that we've gotten used to during the  
12 pandemic. And so what is going to change is that a member  
13 of a public body attending my videoconference from a  
14 location not available to the public will only be  
15 permissible in extraordinary circumstances, and that  
16 procedure is only going to be available if that public body  
17 holds a hearing, deliberates on public comments, and passes  
18 a resolution and procedures implementing that flexibility.

19 So that's why I'm here to talk to the Advisory  
20 Council, to go over these potential changes, and give a  
21 heads up to the Advisory Council that, you know, working  
22 with DCS -- I and DCS will be presenting a proposed  
23 resolution and procedures, and noticing the next meeting to  
24 also include that hearing, so that the Advisory Council can  
25 decide whether or not it would want to adopt those

1 procedures.

2           And so just -- now, let me back up a little bit  
3 and just remind everyone what's been allowed before and  
4 what is still allowed. So a public body can meet in  
5 person, all in one room, where that meeting is open to the  
6 public. That is still something that is okay. A public  
7 body can meet by videoconferencing. Has to be  
8 videoconferencing, can't just be by phone. We're still  
9 operating under the flexibilities, phone calls allowed.  
10 Past June, phone call only is not going to be allowed under  
11 any circumstance.

12           So a public body can, past June, meet by  
13 videoconferencing, so long as each location where that  
14 public body is meeting through videoconferencing is  
15 available and open to the public. In extraordinary  
16 circumstances -- I'm sorry, was there a question? Let me  
17 keep going. So in the event that there are extraordinary  
18 circumstances, a member of the public body, assuming that  
19 this resolution and procedures are adopted, could appear by  
20 videoconferencing in a location not available to the  
21 public. The public body still has to have a quorum of  
22 individuals in locations open and available to the public.

23           The kinds of extraordinary circumstances --  
24 consider the examples are illness, disability, child-  
25 rearing responsibilities, those are the kinds of

1 extraordinary circumstances that are contemplated by the  
2 new statute.

3 And then finally, if there is a disaster  
4 emergency in place, and the public body determines that the  
5 circumstances necessitating the emergency declaration  
6 impair the ability to hold an in-person meeting, then the  
7 in-person meeting requirements can be suspended.

8 And then finally, if videoconferencing is used by  
9 a public body, that videoconferencing has to be noticed in  
10 the meeting. It must be recorded, with the link posted on  
11 DOS' website within five days, be available for five years  
12 after and you know, the -- it has to be transcribed upon  
13 request.

14 Then finally, any member of the public body that  
15 is meeting remotely in an area not open to the public, that  
16 has to be noted in the meeting minutes.

17 So as I mentioned, for the next meeting of the  
18 Advisory Council, I can work with DCS to notice that  
19 meeting as a hearing so that the Advisory Council can hear  
20 any public comments on proposed resolution and proposed  
21 procedures to implement these flexibilities.

22 Does anyone have any questions? Great. Thank  
23 you so very much.

24 All right, Denis, back to you.

25 CHAIRMAN WILSON: Okay. Thank you very much,

1 Rob. Appreciate it.

2 MS. ORR: There was -- I'm sorry, this is Jackie.

3 Rob, there was a question in the chat that said,  
4 do these rules pertain to community action agent board  
5 meetings? So I think would be helpful if you talk about  
6 what meetings these relate to.

7 MR. VANDERABLES: So Jackie, this is related to  
8 public bodies. That's a defined term in the open meetings  
9 law. And so because we are so fortunate to have a wide  
10 variety of eligible entities -- formal name for community  
11 action agencies -- including some public entities, you  
12 know, the answer does depend on the community action agency  
13 at issue. And so the best thing to do is for those  
14 community action agencies that have questions about the  
15 applicability of the open meetings law is to consult their  
16 own council, because while CSBG funding is first and  
17 foremost always in our mind, the variety and flexibility of  
18 funding within our network and the different kinds of  
19 organizations that we have necessitate an organization  
20 reaching out to their own counsel who's fully familiar with  
21 everything going on in that organization to get the proper  
22 advice.

23 MS. ORR: Okay. All right. Thank you for that.

24 MR. VANDERABLES: Yep.

25 CHAIRMAN WILSON: Okay. Next, Jackie. Give us a

1 updates on NYSCAA -- okay. Jackie is going to give us  
2 updates on NYSCAA. Jackie is going to give us updates on  
3 NYSCAA. Jackie?

4 MS. ORR: All right. Great. Thank you, Denis.

5 And thank you, Manny, and thank the Secretary for  
6 that proclamation. I think this may be one of the first  
7 time's NYSCAA's office received a proclamation, so I will  
8 share that with the staff, and we definitely appreciate  
9 that.

10 So I will be brief this morning. I know the  
11 Advisory board members -- Advisory Council board members  
12 have received the report, and a lot of the rest of you know  
13 what we do at NYSCAA, so I'll just give some highlights.

14 We are still doing a lot of our e-learning. We  
15 have NYSCAA learn, which is our e-learning platform. We  
16 now have a total of 10 courses on that platform open to  
17 community action agency staff and board members. And right  
18 now, we have over 2,100, what we call users, which is  
19 great. That has grown -- that continues to grow, but it  
20 really grew a lot in '20 and '21, and it does grow now, but  
21 just a little more slowly over the last several months.

22 We still hold introduction to ROMA trainings.  
23 That has always been very popular within the network. We  
24 now do them virtually, which has made it even easier for  
25 Community Agency staff to attend them.

1           They are offered over three days, three hours per  
2 day, and with new staff coming in and out of community  
3 action agencies and for staff -- existing staff -- who want  
4 a refresher, they, as we say, sell out within a very short  
5 period time, so we typically have been offering them every  
6 other month. And not only does it give new agency staff  
7 the opportunity to learn about ROMA, but it also gives our  
8 ROMA certified trainers the opportunity to train -- every  
9 certified ROMA trainer has to do a ROMA training once in  
10 the course of a year in order to maintain in their  
11 certification. So these trainings really help our  
12 certified trainers maintain their certification.

13           We also are continuing to do ACEs trainings. You  
14 may remember the Adverse Childhood Experience training. We  
15 were trained -- there 9 -- 25 community action agency staff  
16 that were trained in 2020, almost two years ago, it would  
17 have been in the Fall of 2020, and 19 have become  
18 certified. And we are doing trainings. Not only are the  
19 staff doing trainings in their own communities and for  
20 their own agencies, but we've also been doing the trainings  
21 to the Community Action Network, again virtually, and we  
22 have been holding them every other month as well, (audio  
23 interference) opportunity for community action agencies to  
24 learn about adverse childhood experiences in trauma and  
25 resilience. We're also available to go individually to a

1 community action agency to provide specific training for  
2 their staff.

3 We also continue to hold the webinars, and we  
4 will be holding our networkwide webinars based on the needs  
5 of the network. And we always do a (audio interference)  
6 training and technical assistance survey, so we have a  
7 sense of we know what the needs are -- training needs  
8 are -- for the network. So we are continuing to do those.

9 We also have a ROMA alliance that is made up of  
10 community action agency certified ROMA trainers as well,  
11 certified ROMA implementers, and we -- the group meets  
12 quarterly. And out of this group came the smaller  
13 workgroup that was formed to develop community action plan  
14 templates for the network.

15 So far, we developed and disseminated eight  
16 community action plan templates, and they're really used as  
17 a way for community action agencies, as they submit their  
18 community action plan to the Department of State, they can  
19 use those templates as guidance as they develop their  
20 plans.

21 One of the things that has really grown at NYSCAA  
22 is our peer group, and what we call affinity groups. So  
23 for many, many years, we've had our finance, and HR, and IT  
24 cap10, which is one of our databases, and cap60, another  
25 database. We've always had those affinity groups meet and

1 discuss, and we have a listserv where folks can email each  
2 other with questions. But there has been some desire and  
3 some request from the network, so we have formed other  
4 affinity groups.

5 We now have one for frontline direct service  
6 staff. We have another that we just recently started that  
7 has met twice for community action agency staff who work in  
8 senior related programs, and then most recently we have --  
9 there was a request to have a affinity group for executive  
10 assistants. So that group has met once. And we actually  
11 now also have what we call our childcare think tank. We  
12 have a group of folks who are meeting to discuss childcare  
13 within each of our communities.

14 We continue also to do emerging leaders; we have  
15 an emerging leader institute. This is a huge year. We  
16 have, I think, a total -- over 50 individuals. We have 35,  
17 I believe, in our ELI 1.0, which means it's their first  
18 year, and then 19 folks from last year continued into our  
19 second year. We met for the first time in April in person,  
20 and that was our first seminar. We have another seminar  
21 scheduled in July, which is going to be virtual, and then  
22 our last one is going to be in October, which we hope is  
23 going to be able to be in person.

24 NYSCAA is still working closely with DOS around  
25 monitoring, so we have a monitoring workgroup comprised of

1 DOS staff, as well as community action agency  
2 representatives, and we're looking at DOS monitoring  
3 processes and current tools, and really creating a  
4 framework -- a foundational framework around DCS  
5 monitoring.

6 NYSCAA also -- we continue to produce our monthly  
7 newsletters. And we're now going to be finalizing our  
8 property report, which typically comes out -- it's May --  
9 that typically comes out earlier in the year, usually about  
10 March, which you may remember that the 2020 census data was  
11 delayed until they got to -- the Census Bureau got a chance  
12 to sort of review data. So that is going to be out in  
13 June, so all the agencies will be getting that, and it will  
14 be posted on our website.

15 We've been doing some work under CARES funding as  
16 well. We've been having this motivational interviewing  
17 course with two professors at the University of Buffalo who  
18 will run this course for us. It's a 10-week motivational  
19 interviewing course. We've had 20 staff at a time attend  
20 that, so we're starting our fourth one in -- next month.  
21 So we'll have -- by the time we're done, we'll have 80  
22 staff who have been certified and gone through that course.

23 We are in the process of doing -- we have two  
24 reports. One is done, but we're combining them together,  
25 so we're going to be releasing them as one report. So

1 we're now -- one of our staff people at NYSCAA has been  
2 having complications with the network of our -- what we  
3 did, and how we responded to COVID, and what changes in  
4 service delivery was made, and what of those have  
5 continued. We're really excited about that. We're getting  
6 tons of information from all of you at community action  
7 agencies. It's going to be a fabulous report. We're  
8 really looking forward to that release, and that will  
9 probably be in August.

10 We also, under our CARES grant, are doing a  
11 series of webinars. We recently did one called Digital  
12 Wellness, which was very well attended. It was talked  
13 about achieving presence, purpose, and productivity in an  
14 era of constant connection, and I know we all feel all that  
15 burden, so to speak. And now we are going to be doing two  
16 webinars coming up in June -- so next month -- on  
17 compassion fatigue. So we've heard a lot about that.  
18 We -- our partners in New Jersey have spoken about that as  
19 well.

20 And then we have -- are continuing our social  
21 justice committee. We're working with a DEI consultants  
22 with that group of folks, and we're in that process now of  
23 looking at DEI, making changes in practice and policies  
24 within our agencies.

25 And NYSCAA still continues to be the lead for

1 Region 2, which is New York, New Jersey and Puerto Rico and  
2 the US Virgin Islands. We held the regional meeting in  
3 February, and with the support of OCS, and the Department  
4 of State, and the Department of Community Services in New  
5 Jersey, and we highlighted some of the great work of  
6 community action agencies, and that was -- got a lot of  
7 good feedback about that. In fact, it was so positive,  
8 that next year, we're going to do it again, even though it  
9 was sort of -- the regional meeting this year was required  
10 as part of our federal grant; next year is not required.  
11 But because we got such positive feedback, we're going to  
12 do another one this winter, also being held virtual.

13 NYSCAA also has a number of communities and  
14 practices where folks get together and focus on a certain  
15 issue and share resources with each other and best  
16 practices. So we have four of them, one focused on trauma  
17 and formed agencies; one around leadership; one focused on  
18 data; and another one with a focus on best practices and  
19 evidence-based practices. A couple of those groups are  
20 going to be presenting at our conference in September that  
21 we hope is going to be in person. And so that's the last  
22 thing I want to say.

23 We are planning for our annual professional  
24 development conference, and right now we have it scheduled  
25 for the end of September, and we're looking to do it at the

1 Hyatt Regency in Rochester. So we have a request for  
2 proposals out to the network and beyond and where -- we do  
3 this with our sister association, the New York State  
4 Weatherization Director's Association. So we're looking  
5 forward to that conference.

6 And Denis, I turn it back to you. That's all I  
7 have.

8 CHAIRMAN WILSON: Okay. Anybody got any  
9 questions for Jackie?

10 Wonderful presentation, Jackie. Thank you very  
11 much.

12 Next on the agenda is some old business;  
13 compensation for community action employees. Dan Maskin is  
14 going to lead that.

15 Dan? Good morning.

16 MR. MASKIN: Thank you, Denis. I think this is  
17 going to be more of a collective approach, but we've been  
18 having some pretty spirited discussions in our weekly  
19 NYSCAA directors listserv, really about the issue of wages  
20 and the irony that we are poverty fighting organizations,  
21 yet the wages that we pay people might do more to keep our  
22 employees in poverty or be eligible for poverty programs,  
23 and what strategies we can deploy -- what strategies we can  
24 deploy to see if we can start turning that around.

25 Charlie, you and I had talked about you providing

1 some information during this section of the agenda, so I'll  
2 turn it over to you.

3 MR. QUINN: Sure. I have more loudness than I  
4 have actual information. And I would like to urge the  
5 Advisory Council and the Department of State to move toward  
6 putting into the state plan, and to work with the New York  
7 State legislature to set a floor for wages and salaries  
8 CSBG funds are used to pay staff. Make a floor for  
9 salaries, make a floor for medical benefits, a floor for  
10 retirement benefits.

11 As Dan pointed out, many of our staff throughout  
12 the state are eligible for the services that our agencies  
13 provide.

14 Manny, when you read off the proclamations from  
15 Secretary of State, the mention of CSBG in New York was  
16 part of it, and it's about moving people out of poverty.  
17 But really, what we've done over the years through our  
18 contracts, through our state plan, we've allowed poverty  
19 salaries that are sanctioned by New York State, and the  
20 Department of State to say that it's okay to keep people  
21 living in poverty. And it's really a matter of justice,  
22 racial equity, gender equity.

23 Most of the people that work at our agencies, we  
24 hire from the communities that we serve, and quite frankly,  
25 they don't look like me. Their skin is darker, they -- a

1 lot of people are foreign born, and a lot of them are  
2 women. And we are preventing them from rising up out of  
3 poverty by continuing to pay wages that really are not  
4 conducive to self-sufficiency.

5 New York State, when it has contracts in other  
6 areas -- if we were building bridges and courthouses with  
7 state funds, we would be requiring prevailing wages be paid  
8 to the workers, and a lot of those workers would be mad.  
9 And it's right, and it's just that they get paid the  
10 prevailing wages so they can support themselves, support  
11 their families. The people who work with CSBG funds  
12 deserve nothing less.

13 In the weatherization department, we have groaned  
14 in the past when we've been required to pay Davis-Bacon  
15 wages to weatherization workers, and really, we should have  
16 been glad about it. The administrative hurdle, okay, it's  
17 an administrative hurdle, but we're paying people wages  
18 that help them get to a better place in life.

19 I think we should look at our network, figure out  
20 how many people are getting paid wages that put them at a  
21 threshold, that keeps them -- not federal poverty wages,  
22 but keeps them from a living wage in New York State in the  
23 counties that we live. And it's not going to be an  
24 overnight fix, but I think we should be quickly moving down  
25 the path where we say anybody who works for community

1 action is going to be making a decent wage.

2 If we're hiring people out of our community, we  
3 need to be getting them to a better place. And more  
4 than -- not more than -- in addition to helping out the  
5 people that we serve, it's going to help out the network in  
6 our agencies.

7 The wages we pay are too low. They contribute to  
8 the staff turnover we have at our agencies. It makes it  
9 much more difficult to provide the services to our  
10 communities when things keep spinning around. It makes our  
11 individuals -- agencies weaker; it makes our network as a  
12 whole weaker. We need to create longevity in the network.

13 Over the past couple of weeks, Gov. Hochul's been  
14 rolling out her proposed budget -- not a proposed budget,  
15 her budget for the state. And the priorities that she set  
16 in there, childcare, housing, substance use disorder  
17 treatment, green jobs, gun violence, these are all things  
18 that the CSBG network addresses, and it should be funded  
19 that way, and the people that are doing the work should be  
20 paid as though these are priorities of New York State  
21 government. I think I'll end it there.

22 CHAIRMAN WILSON: Thank you, Charlie.

23 Dan, is there more from you or --

24 MR. MASKIN: No, that's -- I think Charlie said  
25 it very well.

1           CHAIRMAN WILSON: Okay.

2           MR. MASKIN: We really need to start focusing our  
3 attention beyond recruitment. It's the right thing to do.

4           CHAIRMAN WILSON: Is there anybody else who would  
5 like to render an opinion or has any comment -- questions  
6 or comments? Okay.

7           Thank you, Charlie and Dan.

8           We'll move on to new business. Discretionary  
9 funds to address rural agencies.

10          MR. MASKIN: Denis, excuse me, I just wanted to  
11 go back to one thing, a clarification. Charlie, maybe you  
12 can help out. But at one point, we were talking about this  
13 issue as a regular agenda item for the Advisory Council --

14          CHAIRMAN WILSON: Yes.

15          MR. MASKIN: -- and I'm not sure we wanted to  
16 take that any further today, but I think it's worth  
17 mentioning that that's something that we've talked about.

18          MR. REID: Yeah, I certainly thank you for that.  
19 I was on mute, unfortunately. I certainly believe that  
20 there should be a regular reporting on this process because  
21 it's -- it's very unfair for us to pay those wages and ask  
22 people to do the kind of job that they're expected to do.

23          CHAIRMAN WILSON: So is it agreed by everybody  
24 that we want to keep it on the agenda for each meeting?

25          MR. BOBBIT: I would support that, yeah. Are you

1 calling it a question, a vote, or to get a pulse?

2 CHAIRMAN WILSON: We don't really have a quorum,  
3 so we can just get a consensus. I mean, is anybody opposed  
4 to it? I don't see anything wrong with keeping it on the  
5 agenda myself. I don't want to make that determination  
6 alone.

7 MR. BOBBIT: Again, I think it's a good idea to  
8 continue to discuss it.

9 CHAIRMAN WILSON: All right. So why don't we  
10 keep it on the agenda, and there's no harm for doing that,  
11 and look for updates at each meeting. Thanks, Dan, for  
12 bringing it back to that.

13 We will, then, turn it over to Dan again to talk  
14 about discretionary funds to address the needs of rural  
15 agencies. Dan.

16 MR. MASKIN: I don't know how I got so popular on  
17 the agenda. There were many people that were involved in  
18 that conversation, and I think we had some very good  
19 discussion. I think probably the real problems that  
20 rural -- that agencies in rural communities are facing, in  
21 communities in Upstate New York or rural New York are  
22 facing require massive amounts of resources, and I don't  
23 think -- and I think it goes beyond the scope of what the  
24 discretionary portion of CSBG could provide. But  
25 nonetheless, we talked about maybe smaller or more

1 localized initiatives and impacts that may be possible.  
2 And please, anybody else, again, anybody else that was on  
3 the call, feel free to jump in, or not.

4 CHAIRMAN WILSON: No further discussion?

5 MR. ROSA: This is Manny. I just want to build  
6 off of what Dan was talking about. (Audio interference) is  
7 that -- that are serving the (indiscernible) (audio  
8 interference) with those issues (audio interference) and  
9 access to healthcare, things like that. (Indiscernible) to  
10 continue, if you will, so that we can explore what it is  
11 that we can do with CSBG, whether it's discretionary or  
12 innovative (audio interference) addressing some these  
13 matters. I guess with the help of not just the network,  
14 but to the leadership of the network as well. So it was  
15 the first attempt, really, to get a handle on those  
16 challenges, and we hope to continue that discussion.

17 Knowing -- and Dan is right, knowing that  
18 sometimes it will take more than just CSBG dollars, but at  
19 least starting to raise the attention of stakeholders about  
20 the issues that are being faced in rural counties across  
21 the board. So we hope to continue that discussion moving  
22 forward.

23 CHAIRMAN WILSON: Okay. Thank you, Manny. Any  
24 further discussion on the topic from anybody?

25 Okay. Is there any other old or new business

1 that is not on the agenda that anybody wants to bring up?

2 MR. QUINN: I want to bring up, I think, new  
3 business.

4 CHAIRMAN WILSON: Go ahead, Charlie.

5 MR. QUINN: I want to bring up what happened in  
6 Buffalo last weekend, and we did just have a discussion  
7 earlier this morning with some of the executive directors.  
8 It highlights the problem of racism in our state. Jerome  
9 Underwood has done incredible work up in Rochester getting  
10 his governments to recognize racism as a public health  
11 crisis, and what happened in Buffalo clearly demonstrates  
12 how big a problem it is.

13 But aside from that horrible tragedy, day to day  
14 it is a problem for the people that we serve. Racism in  
15 our country, in our state has a history of lynchings, just  
16 like what happened last week, and more sinister ubiquitous  
17 things like redlining, where the communities that we serve  
18 are outlined by those redlines, and the effects are still  
19 felt today.

20 The word racism does not appear anywhere in our  
21 state plan, and I think the Advisory Council and the  
22 Department of State should figure out a plan, how we're  
23 going to work it into community action collectively to make  
24 sure that we are addressing it as a root cause of poverty  
25 and taking it head on.

1           CHAIRMAN WILSON: Okay. Charlie, thank you very  
2 much.

3           Anybody else have any comments? Okay. We still  
4 don't have a quorum, so we can't adopt the minutes from the  
5 previous meeting.

6           MR. BOBBIT: Actually Denis, I have another  
7 item -- new business.

8           CHAIRMAN WILSON: Okay. Go ahead.

9           MR. BOBBIT: I'll keep it quick. I have alerted  
10 the network. This is just a friendly reminder. The USC is  
11 going to host our second CBO/MWBE exchange. It'll be a  
12 virtual meeting held on May 24th. So this is an  
13 opportunity to meet and greet with state certified MWBE  
14 vendors, so I just wanted to remind the network. If you  
15 need any more information about registration, you can shoot  
16 me an email, and it's free and made available to the  
17 network. And thanks to DOS, Katheryn Trainor will do a  
18 presentation as part of the event.

19           CHAIRMAN WILSON: Oh, great. Well, thank you,  
20 Mike, for that announcement, and appreciate it very much.

21           Anybody else?

22           MS. ORR: Yeah, Denis, just before we close, I  
23 just wanted to go back to what Charlie was saying about  
24 acknowledging racism in the state plan. I think probably  
25 DOS is going to want to have a group review the state plan

1 as they've done in the past, so I'm thinking, Manny, it  
2 might be good for us to keep this in the forefront of our  
3 minds so then when we review the state plan and make  
4 changes in it, before we get to the public hearing part,  
5 that we think about how this can be integrated into the  
6 state plan.

7 MR. BOBBIT: That's a good suggestion.

8 CHAIRMAN WILSON: Good idea.

9 MR. ROSA: I will do that, and Charlie, thank you  
10 again for the follow-up. I think everybody feels the same  
11 sentiment whether we express it outwardly or not. Maurice  
12 has been a teacher to me over the years and talks about  
13 racism as a public health issue, so there are many ways for  
14 us to keep this at the forefront of our discussions, quite  
15 frankly, and not be afraid to raise it, which is also very  
16 important because, obviously, for many of us, this has been  
17 a lifelong struggle whether we've been victims, or we've  
18 seen victims.

19 So there's a lot of work to do, and we will try  
20 to incorporate that even under the current plan to see what  
21 we can do to move this forward. So thanks again for that.

22 CHAIRMAN WILSON: Thanks again to you, Manny.

23 MR. MARTIN: Denis?

24 CHAIRMAN WILSON: Yes?

25 MR. MARTIN: This is Michael Martin with Native

1 American Community Services (indiscernible).

2 CHAIRMAN WILSON: Yes, Michael.

3 MR. MARTIN: Thanks, Charlie, for pointing it out  
4 before. I was trying to figure out how to address it.  
5 It's still a little raw. Unfortunately, our staff's been  
6 directly impacted. I had one staff member just alone,  
7 whose uncle, cousin, and her aunt. And you know, it's a  
8 societal issue, racism itself, but the idea of supremacy,  
9 that one is greater than the other. And we have to focus  
10 on our common humanity, because as human beings, no matter  
11 where we live on this planet, we all have the same basic  
12 needs, right? We all need clean air to breathe, we need  
13 clean water to drink, we need food to eat, to sustain us.  
14 You want shelter and warmth from the cold. We all want a  
15 sense of belonging and to be valued, and we all smile in  
16 the same language.

17 I want to also raise up the point about the  
18 compensation for the frontline people that are working in  
19 this field as well. Trying to address the underlying  
20 issues that create separation, and division, and the idea  
21 of have or have nots, and I'm better than you, the  
22 separation, the segregation, all of those factors that  
23 create the divide, and people can't see the commonality.  
24 And they focus on the differences, unfortunately what they  
25 can see, which is usually skin color and all. We need to

1 see each other as human beings striving for the same thing.  
2 We need to lift each other up and support each other.

3 I encourage the work of the network, of the  
4 community action organizations, and everyone involved, to  
5 look for how we can continue to do that, to help people  
6 find that commonality, because if we can see how much more  
7 we have in common to be our part, maybe that will make a  
8 difference when we go down this path and try to find  
9 solutions.

10 I went to the vigil on Tuesday, and one of the  
11 best things I heard out of that was, you know, when people  
12 talk about these tragedies happen in different parts of the  
13 country, this community's strong, that community's strong,  
14 the speaker said, we can't be Buffalo strong. To be  
15 strong, we have to be united.

16 And segregation's a real issue in our Buffalo and  
17 Western New York Community, as it is in many other parts of  
18 the state. And those simple dividing lines create these  
19 different views of people that are just fallacies in nature  
20 that don't really exist, but in perception's mind, allow  
21 these things to fester. The underlying conditions that led  
22 to this, and obviously in other parts of the state; the kid  
23 came from Conklin. What she said was we need to be Buffalo  
24 honest. We need to have those real conversations and find  
25 solutions, and I think we're still struggling to figure

1 out -- we're just another list on the nationwide pandemic  
2 that's become these mass shootings, race and hate violence,  
3 and we're all looking for solutions going forward.

4 So I wanted to thank you for acknowledging that,  
5 and I want to encourage everybody to be part of the  
6 solution, and don't let those ten people's lives go in  
7 vain. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN WILSON: Thank you, Michael.

9 Anybody else?

10 MS. HAYNES: Yes, can I just say one thing? Hi,  
11 I'm Brandi Haynes from the CAO here in Buffalo. I just  
12 want to say thank you to everyone for your kind words, and  
13 your thoughts and prayers. I actually grew up in Cold  
14 Spring, that's the neighborhood where Tops is from -- I'm  
15 sorry, where Tops is located. My entire family lives in  
16 that neighborhood, and my parents were at that Tops two  
17 hours before the shooting.

18 We are heavily affected here, but we are standing  
19 Buffalo strong. I want to say, thank you, Michael, and  
20 Manny, and everyone for your kind words, and all of the  
21 other CAP agencies that have reached out to us and offered  
22 support. Thank you to Nancy and DOS staff.

23 And right now, we're just working to support that  
24 community. That grocery store is, for right now, closed  
25 indefinitely, so that community does not have another

1 grocery store for miles. And that community is in the  
2 middle of a food desert, which is one of the things that we  
3 fight for every day is food justice for low-income  
4 communities. So we are working together with a number of  
5 other organizations.

6 What I will say is this has brought a number of  
7 nonprofits and community-based orgs together through this  
8 tragedy to work together, to work to break down silos, and  
9 just support each other in this cause.

10 So after I hop off this call, I actually have a  
11 private meeting with a very large foundation here to kind  
12 of work together and put resources together for those  
13 folks. So I would just ask that you just keep us in your  
14 prayers and your thoughts, and just keep doing the awesome  
15 work that everyone does every day.

16 CHAIRMAN WILSON: Everybody will do that, I'm  
17 sure. Thank you.

18 Anybody else? Okay.

19 So let's reconfirm. We do have a quorum at this  
20 point in time?

21 MR. BOBBIT: We don't have a quorum.

22 CHAIRMAN WILSON: I'm sorry, I thought you said  
23 one more person joined and we had a quorum. Okay. So we  
24 can't adopt the minutes, and we don't even need to adjourn  
25 the meeting because we can't vote to adjourn it. So the

1 meeting was called to order by -- I guess, or welcomed by  
2 me, and I will thank everybody for attending, and I guess  
3 at this point, close the meeting. I look forward to seeing  
4 everybody in the near future. Thank you.

5 IN UNISON: Thank you.

6 (Meeting concluded)

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

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Date: May 28, 2022

<b>\$</b>	<b>9</b>	29:21
<b>\$200,000</b> 3:20	<b>9</b> 16:15	<b>advocate</b> 6:15
<b>1</b>	<b>90</b> 3:23 4:8	<b>affected</b> 34:18
<b>1.0</b> 18:17	<b>A</b>	<b>affinity</b> 17:22,25 18:4,9
<b>10</b> 15:16	<b>ability</b> 13:6	<b>afraid</b> 31:15
<b>10-week</b> 19:18	<b>abreast</b> 5:13	<b>agencies</b> 2:12 5:15,19 6:18 7:4,18 8:4,11 9:23,25 14:11,14 16:3,20,23 17:17 19:13 20:7,24 21:6,17 23:12, 23 25:6,8,11 26:9 27:15,20 34:21
<b>100</b> 5:20,24	<b>access</b> 7:1 8:6 28:9	<b>agency</b> 6:7,20 7:15 9:25 14:12 15:17,25 16:6,15 17:1,10 18:7 19:1
<b>19</b> 16:17 18:18	<b>accomplish</b> 3:23	<b>agenda</b> 10:9 22:12 23:1 26:13,24 27:5,10,17 29:1
<b>1964</b> 7:1	<b>ACES</b> 16:13	<b>agent</b> 14:4
<b>19th</b> 5:16	<b>achieved</b> 10:18	<b>agreed</b> 26:23
<b>2</b>	<b>achieving</b> 20:13	<b>ahead</b> 3:14 29:4 30:8
<b>2</b> 21:1	<b>acknowledge</b> 3:15 4:9	<b>air</b> 32:12
<b>2,100</b> 15:18	<b>acknowledging</b> 30:24 34:4	<b>AIU</b> 4:1
<b>20</b> 15:20 19:19	<b>act</b> 4:11,18 6:25	<b>alerted</b> 30:9
<b>200</b> 4:17	<b>action</b> 2:12 6:14 7:4,13,18 8:3,4,11, 15,18,23,25 9:4,6,13,18,20,21 11:4 14:4,11,12,14 15:17 16:3,15,21,23 17:1,10,13,16,17,18 18:7 19:1 20:6 21:6 22:13 25:1 29:23 33:4	<b>alleviate</b> 7:24 9:8
<b>2020</b> 4:22 16:16,17 19:10	<b>activities</b> 8:7	<b>alliance</b> 17:9
<b>2021</b> 4:24	<b>actual</b> 5:12 23:4	<b>allocation</b> 3:21 5:21
<b>2022</b> 3:17 6:24	<b>addition</b> 4:9 25:4	<b>allowed</b> 12:3,4,9,10 23:18
<b>21</b> 15:20	<b>address</b> 9:3 26:9 27:14 32:4,19	<b>allowing</b> 3:7
<b>22nd</b> 5:3	<b>addresses</b> 25:18	<b>amendments</b> 3:22
<b>24th</b> 30:12	<b>addressing</b> 7:6 28:12 29:24	<b>American</b> 32:1
<b>25</b> 16:15	<b>adjourn</b> 35:24,25	<b>amount</b> 3:19 4:6
<b>3</b>	<b>administrative</b> 7:15 24:16,17	<b>amounts</b> 27:22
<b>30th</b> 5:18	<b>adopt</b> 11:25 30:4 35:24	<b>analyst</b> 4:2
<b>35</b> 18:16	<b>adopted</b> 12:19	<b>Andreas</b> 3:12
<b>5</b>	<b>Adrian</b> 4:14	<b>anniversary</b> 6:24
<b>50</b> 18:16	<b>Adrians</b> 3:12	<b>announcement</b> 30:20
<b>5129</b> 4:10	<b>adult</b> 7:20	<b>annual</b> 4:21 9:5 21:23
<b>8</b>	<b>adverse</b> 16:14,24	<b>anticipated</b> 5:11
<b>80</b> 19:21	<b>advice</b> 14:22	<b>apologize</b> 4:4
	<b>Advisory</b> 5:12 8:12,17 10:2,20 11:3, 19,21,24 13:18,19 15:11 23:5 26:13	<b>applicability</b> 14:15
		<b>applicable</b> 11:9
		<b>approach</b> 22:17

<b>approaches</b> 7:6	<b>behalf</b> 4:15 10:1	<b>calling</b> 27:1
<b>approaching</b> 6:9	<b>beings</b> 32:10 33:1	<b>calls</b> 12:9
<b>April</b> 18:19	<b>belonging</b> 32:15	<b>CAO</b> 34:11
<b>area</b> 13:15	<b>benefits</b> 23:9,10	<b>CAP</b> 34:21
<b>areas</b> 24:6	<b>big</b> 29:12	<b>cap10</b> 17:24
<b>arrival</b> 6:16	<b>bigger</b> 6:12	<b>cap60</b> 17:24
<b>assist</b> 7:23	<b>bit</b> 4:6 12:2	<b>capacity</b> 7:5
<b>assistance</b> 4:1 7:20,21 8:24 9:1 17:6	<b>Block</b> 7:16 8:12,17	<b>Capt</b> 4:15
<b>assistants</b> 18:10	<b>board</b> 14:4 15:11,17 28:21	<b>care</b> 7:21
<b>assisting</b> 9:8	<b>BOBBIT</b> 26:25 27:7 30:6,9 31:7 35:21	<b>CARES</b> 19:15 20:10
<b>association</b> 8:24 9:14,21 22:3,4	<b>bodies</b> 11:9 14:8	<b>case</b> 11:5
<b>assuming</b> 12:18	<b>body</b> 11:13,16 12:4,7,12,14,18,21 13:4,9,14	<b>CAZ</b> 5:17,21
<b>attempt</b> 28:15	<b>born</b> 24:1	<b>CBO/MWBE</b> 30:11
<b>attend</b> 15:25 19:19	<b>Bradley</b> 4:15	<b>census</b> 19:10,11
<b>attendance</b> 10:14	<b>Brandi</b> 34:11	<b>certificate</b> 8:16 9:19,24
<b>attended</b> 20:12	<b>break</b> 35:8	<b>certificates</b> 6:19
<b>attending</b> 11:13 36:2	<b>breathe</b> 32:12	<b>certification</b> 16:11,12
<b>attention</b> 11:8 26:3 28:19	<b>bridges</b> 24:6	<b>certified</b> 16:8,9,12,18 17:10,11 19:22 30:13
<b>audio</b> 2:1 5:19 6:2 7:17 16:22 17:5 28:6,7,8,12	<b>bring</b> 6:10 11:8 29:1,2,5	<b>CHAIRMAN</b> 10:7,16,21,24 13:25 14:25 22:8 25:22 26:1,4,14,23 27:2, 9 28:4,23 29:4 30:1,8,19 31:8,22,24 32:2 34:8 35:16,22
<b>August</b> 5:3 20:9	<b>bringing</b> 27:12	<b>challenge</b> 5:23
<b>aunt</b> 32:7	<b>broaden</b> 7:10	<b>challenges</b> 28:16
<b>authorization</b> 4:10,16	<b>brought</b> 35:6	<b>chance</b> 2:7 19:11
<b>awaiting</b> 5:4	<b>budget</b> 25:14,15	<b>change</b> 11:11,12
<b>award</b> 3:16	<b>Buffalo</b> 2:14,18 19:17 29:6,11 33:14,16,23 34:11,19	<b>changed</b> 10:17
<b>aware</b> 6:18	<b>build</b> 28:5	<b>Charlie</b> 22:25 25:22,24 26:7,11 29:4 30:1,23 31:9 32:3
<b>awesome</b> 35:14	<b>building</b> 7:25 8:6 9:9 24:6	<b>chat</b> 14:3
<hr/>	<b>burden</b> 20:15	<b>child</b> 7:20
<b>B</b>	<b>Bureau</b> 19:11	<b>child-</b> 12:24
<hr/>	<b>business</b> 22:12 26:8 28:25 29:3 30:7	<b>childcare</b> 18:11,12 25:16
<b>back</b> 10:5 12:2 13:24 22:6 26:11 27:12 30:23	<hr/>	<b>childhood</b> 16:14,24
<b>based</b> 17:4	<b>C</b>	<b>CIOTTI</b> 2:8 10:19,23
<b>basic</b> 32:11	<hr/>	<b>circumstance</b> 12:11
<b>basis</b> 3:2 6:8	<b>call</b> 12:10 15:18 17:22 18:11 28:3 35:10	<b>circumstances</b> 11:15 12:16,18,23 13:1,5
<b>beginning</b> 11:10	<b>called</b> 20:11 36:1	
<b>begins</b> 2:1		

**clarification** 26:11  
**clean** 32:12,13  
**close** 30:22 36:3  
**closed** 34:24  
**closely** 18:24  
**cold** 32:14 34:13  
**colleagues** 10:4  
**collective** 2:3 3:8 22:17  
**collectively** 29:23  
**color** 32:25  
**combining** 19:24  
**comment** 26:5  
**comments** 11:17 13:20 26:6 30:3  
**committed** 8:4  
**committee** 7:18 20:21  
**common** 32:10 33:7  
**commonality** 32:23 33:6  
**communities** 2:5 7:5,8,24 9:11  
 16:19 18:13 21:13 23:24 25:10  
 27:20,21 29:17 35:4  
**community** 2:12,19 3:6 5:1 6:14  
 7:4,13,15 8:3,4,11,12,15,17,18,23,  
 25 9:4,6,13,18,20,21 11:7 14:4,10,  
 12,14 15:17,25 16:2,15,21,23 17:1,  
 10,13,16,17,18 18:7 19:1 20:6 21:4,  
 6 22:13 24:25 25:2 29:23 32:1 33:4,  
 17 34:24,25 35:1  
**community's** 33:13  
**community-based** 35:7  
**compassion** 20:17  
**compensation** 22:13 32:18  
**complete** 4:2  
**completed** 5:17  
**complications** 20:2  
**comprised** 18:25  
**concluded** 36:6  
**conclusion** 5:23  
**conditions** 7:25 9:9 33:21  
**condolences** 2:17

**conducive** 24:4  
**conference** 9:5 21:20,24 22:5  
**Conklin** 33:23  
**connected** 9:7  
**connection** 20:14  
**consciousness** 3:8  
**consensus** 27:3  
**constant** 20:14  
**consult** 14:15  
**consultants** 20:21  
**contemplated** 13:1  
**continue** 3:2 6:6 17:3 18:14 19:6  
 27:8 28:10,16,21 33:5  
**continued** 8:19 18:18 20:5  
**continues** 15:19 20:25  
**continuing** 3:15 16:13 17:8 20:20  
 24:3  
**contracts** 23:18 24:5  
**contribute** 25:7  
**contribution** 9:16  
**contributions** 8:14  
**convenings** 9:6  
**conversation** 27:18  
**conversations** 33:24  
**coordination** 9:3  
**corrections** 4:22  
**council** 5:13 8:12,18 10:2,20 11:3,  
 20,21,24 13:18,19 14:16 15:11 23:5  
 26:13 29:21  
**Council's** 11:8  
**counsel** 11:6 14:20  
**counties** 24:23 28:20  
**country** 29:15 33:13  
**couple** 21:19 25:13  
**courses** 9:2 15:16  
**courthouses** 24:6  
**cousin** 32:7  
**COVID** 20:3

**create** 25:12 32:20,23 33:18  
**created** 7:4  
**creating** 19:3  
**crisis** 29:11  
**CSBG** 4:11 5:3 6:16 14:16 23:8,15  
 24:11 25:18 27:24 28:11,18  
**current** 19:3 31:20

---

**D**

---

**daily** 3:2  
**Dan** 10:3 22:13,15 23:11 25:23 26:7  
 27:11,13,15 28:6,17  
**darker** 23:25  
**data** 19:10,12 21:18  
**database** 17:25  
**databases** 17:24  
**David** 4:15  
**Davis-bacon** 24:14  
**day** 2:21,22 16:2 29:13 35:3,15  
**days** 3:14 13:11 16:1  
**DCS** 11:22 13:18 19:4  
**deadline** 6:9  
**decent** 25:1  
**decide** 11:25  
**declaration** 13:5  
**dedicated** 7:10 8:4  
**deeply** 2:15  
**defined** 14:8  
**DEI** 20:21,23  
**delayed** 19:11  
**deliberates** 11:17  
**delivers** 8:24  
**delivery** 20:4  
**demonstrates** 29:11  
**Denis** 10:2,6,12,20 13:24 15:4 22:6,  
 16 26:10 30:6,22 31:23  
**department** 7:12 8:2 17:18 21:3,4  
 23:5,20 24:13 29:22

**depend** 14:12  
**deploy** 22:23,24  
**desert** 35:2  
**deserve** 24:12  
**designation** 7:14  
**designed** 7:7  
**desire** 18:2  
**determination** 27:5  
**determine** 10:14  
**determines** 13:4  
**develop** 7:7 17:13,19  
**developed** 17:15  
**developing** 9:2  
**development** 9:5 21:24  
**difference** 33:8  
**differences** 32:24  
**difficult** 5:23 25:9  
**Digital** 20:11  
**direct** 18:5  
**directly** 32:6  
**Director** 9:15  
**Director's** 22:4  
**directors** 22:19 29:7  
**disability** 12:24  
**disaster** 13:3  
**discretionary** 26:8 27:14,24 28:11  
**discuss** 18:1,12 27:8  
**discussion** 27:19 28:4,16,21,24 29:6  
**discussions** 22:18 31:14  
**disorder** 25:16  
**disseminated** 17:15  
**distribute** 4:7  
**distribution** 3:23 4:8  
**divide** 32:23  
**dividing** 33:18  
**division** 11:7 32:20

**divisions** 11:7  
**documentations** 5:8  
**documents** 3:25 4:24  
**dollars** 3:23 5:21 28:18  
**DOS** 2:11,13,19 3:16 6:16 18:24 19:1,2 30:17,25 34:22  
**DOS'** 13:11  
**drink** 32:13  
**driving** 8:5

---

**E**

---

**e-learning** 15:14,15  
**earlier** 19:9 29:7  
**easier** 15:24  
**eat** 32:13  
**economic** 6:25 7:14 8:1,8 9:10  
**education** 7:2,23  
**effects** 29:18  
**efforts** 8:13,14 9:15,17,25  
**ELI** 18:17  
**eligible** 14:10 22:22 23:12  
**elimination** 7:10  
**email** 18:1 30:16  
**emergency** 7:20 13:4,5  
**emerging** 18:14,15  
**employees** 8:5 22:13,22  
**employment** 7:2,23  
**encourage** 33:3 34:5  
**end** 2:23 21:25 25:21  
**energy** 7:21  
**engagement** 5:4  
**enhance** 2:3 7:1,5 8:15 9:17  
**enormous** 6:15  
**entire** 34:15  
**entirety** 6:23  
**entities** 14:10,11

**EOA** 6:25 7:5  
**equitable** 3:3  
**equity** 23:22  
**era** 20:14  
**errands** 2:21  
**evaluated** 5:2  
**event** 12:17 30:18  
**events** 2:16  
**evidence-based** 21:19  
**examples** 12:24  
**exchange** 30:11  
**excited** 20:5  
**excuse** 26:10  
**executive** 9:14 18:9 29:7  
**exemplary** 8:24  
**exist** 33:20  
**existing** 16:3  
**expected** 26:22  
**expenditures** 5:17  
**experience** 5:7 16:14  
**experiences** 16:24  
**explore** 28:10  
**express** 8:10 9:12 31:11  
**extraordinary** 8:13 9:15 10:4 11:15 12:15,17,23 13:1  
**eye** 4:19

---

**F**

---

**fabulous** 20:7  
**faced** 9:4 28:20  
**facing** 27:20,22  
**fact** 21:7  
**factors** 32:22  
**Fall** 16:17  
**fallacies** 33:19  
**familiar** 14:20

<b>families</b> 2:4,18,19 7:3,24 9:10 24:11	<b>forefront</b> 31:2,14	<b>governments</b> 29:10
<b>family</b> 2:13 34:15	<b>foreign</b> 24:1	<b>grant</b> 3:16 7:16 8:12,17 20:10 21:10
<b>fast</b> 6:9	<b>foremost</b> 14:17	<b>gratitude</b> 8:11 9:13
<b>fatigue</b> 20:17	<b>forewarn</b> 3:24	<b>great</b> 2:17 13:22 15:4,19 21:5 30:19
<b>feasible</b> 7:9	<b>forgive</b> 6:22	<b>greater</b> 32:9
<b>February</b> 21:3	<b>formal</b> 11:3 14:10	<b>green</b> 25:17
<b>federal</b> 21:10 24:21	<b>formed</b> 17:13 18:3 21:17	<b>greet</b> 30:13
<b>feedback</b> 4:23 21:7,11	<b>fortunate</b> 14:9	<b>grew</b> 15:20 34:13
<b>feel</b> 20:14 28:3	<b>forward</b> 3:9 4:19 20:8 22:5 28:22 31:21 34:3 36:3	<b>groaned</b> 24:13
<b>feels</b> 31:10	<b>forwarded</b> 4:12	<b>grocery</b> 34:24 35:1
<b>felt</b> 29:19	<b>Fossett</b> 4:14	<b>group</b> 17:11,12,22 18:9,10,12 20:22 30:25
<b>fester</b> 33:21	<b>foundation</b> 35:11	<b>groups</b> 17:22,25 18:4 21:19
<b>FFY</b> 4:22,24	<b>foundational</b> 19:4	<b>grow</b> 15:19,20
<b>field</b> 32:19	<b>fourth</b> 3:18 19:20	<b>grown</b> 15:19 17:21
<b>fifty-eighth</b> 6:24	<b>FPL</b> 4:17	<b>guess</b> 28:13 36:1,2
<b>fight</b> 35:3	<b>framework</b> 19:4	<b>guidance</b> 8:25 17:19
<b>fighting</b> 22:20	<b>frankly</b> 23:24 31:15	<b>gun</b> 25:17
<b>figure</b> 24:19 29:22 32:4 33:25	<b>free</b> 28:3 30:16	
<b>finalizing</b> 19:7	<b>Friday</b> 4:11	<hr/> <b>H</b> <hr/>
<b>finally</b> 13:3,8,14	<b>friendly</b> 30:10	<b>hand</b> 10:5
<b>finance</b> 17:23	<b>frontline</b> 18:5 32:18	<b>handle</b> 28:15
<b>financial</b> 7:25 9:9	<b>fully</b> 14:20	<b>happen</b> 33:12
<b>find</b> 33:6,8,24	<b>funded</b> 25:18	<b>happened</b> 2:14 29:5,11,16
<b>fiscal</b> 3:17 5:9	<b>funding</b> 14:16,18 19:15	<b>happening</b> 6:2
<b>fix</b> 24:24	<b>funds</b> 23:8 24:7,11 26:9 27:14	<b>hard</b> 4:14
<b>flexibilities</b> 12:9 13:21	<b>future</b> 36:4	<b>harm</b> 27:10
<b>flexibility</b> 11:18 14:17		<b>hate</b> 34:2
<b>floor</b> 23:7,8,9	<hr/> <b>G</b> <hr/>	<b>Haynes</b> 34:10,11
<b>focus</b> 21:14,18 32:9,24	<b>gender</b> 23:22	<b>head</b> 29:25
<b>focused</b> 21:16,17	<b>General</b> 11:6	<b>heads</b> 11:21
<b>focusing</b> 26:2	<b>give</b> 11:20 14:25 15:1,2,13 16:6	<b>health</b> 29:10 31:13
<b>folks</b> 6:4 18:1,12,18 20:22 21:14 35:13	<b>glad</b> 24:16	<b>healthcare</b> 28:9
<b>follow</b> 6:22	<b>good</b> 4:17 21:7 22:15 27:7,18 31:2, 7,8	<b>hear</b> 10:9 13:19
<b>follow-up</b> 31:10	<b>Gov</b> 25:13	<b>heard</b> 20:17 33:11
<b>food</b> 7:21 32:13 35:2,3	<b>government</b> 25:21	<b>hearing</b> 11:17,24 13:19 31:4
<b>force</b> 8:5		

**hears** 2:7  
**hearts** 2:24  
**heavily** 34:18  
**held** 21:2,12 30:12  
**helpful** 14:5  
**helping** 25:4  
**HHS** 5:2  
**highlighted** 21:5  
**highlights** 15:13 29:8  
**hire** 23:24  
**hiring** 25:2  
**history** 29:15  
**Hochul's** 25:13  
**hold** 13:6 15:22 17:3  
**holding** 16:22 17:4  
**holds** 11:17  
**honest** 33:24  
**honor** 8:18 9:21  
**hop** 35:10  
**hope** 3:14 18:22 21:21 28:16,21  
**horrible** 29:13  
**horrific** 2:15  
**host** 30:11  
**hosting** 9:4  
**hours** 16:1 34:17  
**House** 4:11  
**housing** 7:20 25:16  
**HR** 4:10 17:23  
**huge** 18:15  
**human** 32:10 33:1  
**humanity** 32:10  
**hurdle** 24:16,17  
**Hyatt** 22:1

---

**I**

---

**idea** 27:7 31:8 32:8,20

**illness** 12:24  
**immigration** 7:22  
**impacted** 32:6  
**impacts** 28:1  
**impair** 13:6  
**implement** 7:7 13:21  
**implementers** 17:11  
**implementing** 11:18  
**important** 31:16  
**in-person** 13:6,7  
**include** 11:24  
**including** 7:19 14:11  
**incomprehensible** 2:20  
**incorporate** 31:20  
**increase** 3:19 4:17  
**increasing** 8:6  
**incredible** 29:9  
**indefinitely** 34:25  
**independence** 8:1 9:10  
**indiscernible** 3:16 5:6 6:7 7:17  
 28:7,9 32:1  
**individual** 6:18  
**individually** 16:25  
**individuals** 7:3,9 12:22 18:16 25:11  
**indulgence** 3:7  
**information** 5:14 20:6 23:1,4 30:15  
**informed** 5:1 9:8  
**initiatives** 28:1  
**innovative** 7:6 28:12  
**institute** 18:15  
**integrated** 31:5  
**integration** 7:22  
**interactive** 9:1  
**interference** 5:19 6:3 7:17 16:23  
 17:5 28:6,8,12  
**interviewing** 19:16,19  
**introduction** 15:22

**involved** 27:17 33:4  
**irony** 22:20  
**Islands** 21:2  
**issue** 14:13 21:15 22:19 26:13 31:13  
 32:8 33:16  
**issues** 9:4 28:8,20 32:20  
**item** 26:13 30:7

---

**J**

---

**Jackie** 3:14 9:14 10:3 14:2,7,25  
 15:1,2,3 22:9,10  
**Jerome** 29:8  
**Jeromes** 3:12  
**Jersey** 20:18 21:1,5  
**job** 26:22  
**jobs** 25:17  
**join** 10:19  
**joined** 35:23  
**July** 18:21  
**jump** 28:3  
**June** 5:10 12:10,12 19:13 20:16  
**justice** 20:21 23:21 35:3

---

**K**

---

**Katheryn** 30:17  
**keeping** 9:6 27:4  
**kid** 33:22  
**kind** 26:22 34:12,20 35:11  
**kinds** 12:23,25 14:18  
**knowing** 28:17

---

**L**

---

**lacking** 3:5  
**language** 32:16  
**large** 35:11  
**law** 4:16 10:10 11:9 14:9,15

**lead** 8:7 20:25 22:14**leader** 18:15**leaders** 18:14**leadership** 3:11,13 9:14 10:3 21:17  
28:14**learn** 15:15 16:7,24**learning** 9:1**led** 33:21**legislature** 23:7**letter** 5:4,11**Letters** 6:8**library** 9:2**life** 24:18**lifelong** 31:17**lift** 33:2**limited** 7:20**lines** 33:18**link** 13:10**list** 34:1**listen** 11:4**listserv** 18:1 22:19**live** 24:23 32:11**lives** 34:6,15**living** 7:3 23:21 24:22**lobbying** 4:14**localized** 28:1**located** 34:15**location** 11:14 12:13,20**locations** 12:22**long** 12:13**longevity** 25:12**lost** 2:18**lot** 2:2 6:3 15:12,14,20 20:17 21:6  
24:1,8 31:19**lots** 10:9**loudness** 23:3**loved** 2:18**low** 25:7**low-income** 7:8,19 35:3**lynchings** 29:15

---

**M**

---

**mad** 24:8**made** 15:24 17:9 20:4 30:16**maintain** 16:10,12**make** 6:11,17 23:8,9 27:5 29:23 31:3  
33:7**makes** 25:8,10,11**making** 20:23 25:1**Manny** 10:7 15:5 23:14 28:5,23  
31:1,22 34:20**March** 19:10**marks** 6:24**Martin** 31:23,25 32:3**Maskin** 10:3 22:13,16 25:24 26:2,  
10,15 27:16**mass** 34:2**massive** 27:22**Matt** 2:6,25 6:10,12 8:9**matter** 23:21 32:10**matters** 28:13**Maurice** 31:11**maximum** 7:8**means** 3:21 18:17**medical** 23:9**meet** 12:4,7,12 17:25 30:13**meeting** 5:25 10:5,15 11:23 12:5,14  
13:6,7,10,15,16,17,19 18:12 21:2,9  
26:24 27:11 30:5,12 35:11,25 36:1,  
3,6**meetings** 10:10 11:9 14:5,6,8,15**meets** 17:11**member** 11:12 12:18 13:14 32:6**members** 2:4 3:10 10:2 15:11,17**mention** 23:15**mentioned** 13:17**mentioning** 26:17**met** 10:20 18:7,10,19**Michael** 31:25 32:2 34:8,19**mid-sentence** 2:1**middle** 35:2**Mike** 30:20**miles** 35:1**mind** 3:4 6:11 14:17 33:20**minds** 31:3**minute** 2:8**minutes** 13:16 30:4 35:24**modules** 4:24**moment** 3:7**money** 3:17,19 4:6,7 6:5**monitoring** 5:9 18:25 19:2,5**month** 6:15 8:18 9:21 11:10 16:6,22  
19:20 20:16**monthly** 6:8 19:6**months** 5:12 15:21**morning** 15:10 22:15 29:7**motivational** 19:16,18**mouths** 6:1**move** 4:19 23:5 26:8 31:21**movement** 7:13**moving** 3:9 23:16 24:24 28:21**mute** 26:19**MWBE** 30:13

---

**N**

---

**Nancy** 34:22**national** 9:7,8**nationwide** 34:1**Native** 31:25**nature** 33:19**necessitate** 14:19

**necessitating** 13:5

**needed** 3:22

**neighborhood** 34:14,16

**network** 2:3 3:11 5:13 8:3,16,25  
9:4,6,18,20 14:18 15:23 16:21 17:5,  
8,14 18:3 20:2 22:2 24:19 25:5,11,  
12,18 28:13,14 30:10,14,17 33:3

**networkwide** 17:4

**newsletters** 19:7

**nonetheless** 27:25

**nonprofits** 35:7

**note** 2:7

**noted** 13:16

**notice** 13:18

**noticed** 13:9

**noticing** 11:23

**notes** 32:21

**number** 21:13 35:4,6

**nutrition** 7:21

**NYSCAA** 6:3 10:4 15:1,2,3,13,15  
17:21 18:24 19:6 20:1,25 21:13  
22:19

**NYSCAA's** 15:7

---

**O**

---

**OCS** 5:25 6:2 21:3

**October** 18:22

**offered** 16:1 34:21

**offering** 16:5

**office** 4:3 5:1 7:15 11:6 15:7

**ongoing** 8:14 9:16

**open** 10:10 11:9 12:5,15,22 13:15  
14:8,15 15:16

**operating** 12:9

**opinion** 26:5

**opportunities** 7:2 8:6

**opportunity** 6:25 7:14 16:7,8,23  
30:13

**opposed** 27:3

**order** 3:22 4:7,18 16:10 36:1

**organization** 14:19,21

**organizations** 14:19 22:20 33:4  
35:5

**orgs** 35:7

**Orr** 9:14 10:3 14:2,23 15:4 30:22

**outlined** 29:18

**outwardly** 31:11

**overnight** 24:24

---

**P**

---

**paid** 24:7,9,20 25:20

**pain** 2:17 4:5

**pandemic** 11:12 34:1

**papers** 3:25

**parents** 34:16

**part** 2:13 21:10 23:16 30:18 31:4  
33:7 34:5

**participation** 7:9

**particulars** 5:10

**partner** 7:13

**partners** 9:7 20:18

**parts** 33:12,17,22

**passage** 4:10 6:25

**passes** 11:17

**past** 3:12 12:10,12 24:14 25:13 31:1

**path** 24:25 33:8

**pay** 22:21 23:8 24:3,14 25:7 26:21

**paying** 24:17

**peer** 17:22

**people** 2:23 6:1,9 10:19 20:1 22:21  
23:16,20,23 24:1,11,17,20 25:2,5,19  
26:22 27:17 29:14 32:18,23 33:5,11,  
19

**people's** 34:6

**percent** 3:23 4:8,17 5:21,24

**perception's** 33:20

**period** 16:5

**permissible** 11:15

**person** 5:6 12:5 18:19,23 21:21  
35:23

**pertain** 14:4

**pertaining** 5:8

**phone** 12:8,9,10

**phonetic** 5:17

**place** 4:11 13:4 24:18 25:3

**plan** 4:8 5:8 17:13,16,18 23:6,18  
29:21,22 30:24,25 31:3,6,20

**planet** 32:11

**planning** 21:23

**plans** 17:20

**platform** 15:15,16

**pleasure** 8:16 9:19

**point** 5:15 10:16 26:12 32:17 35:20  
36:3

**pointed** 23:11

**pointing** 32:3

**policies** 20:23

**poor** 7:8

**popular** 15:23 27:16

**portion** 27:24

**positive** 21:7,11

**posted** 13:10 19:14

**potential** 11:20

**poverty** 7:3,7,10,25 9:9 22:20,22  
23:16,18,21 24:3,21 29:24

**practice** 20:23

**practices** 21:14,16,18,19

**prayers** 34:13 35:14

**presence** 20:13

**present** 8:16 9:19

**presentation** 22:10 30:18

**presenting** 11:22 21:20

**pretty** 22:18

**prevailing** 24:7,10

**preventing** 24:2  
**previous** 30:5  
**priorities** 25:15,20  
**private** 35:11  
**problem** 29:8,12,14  
**problems** 27:19  
**procedure** 11:16  
**procedures** 11:18,23 12:1,19 13:21  
**process** 19:23 20:22 26:20  
**processes** 19:3  
**proclamation** 15:6,7  
**proclamations** 6:11,17,18 23:14  
**produce** 19:6  
**productivity** 20:13  
**professional** 9:5 21:23  
**professors** 19:17  
**program** 5:3 7:16  
**programs** 7:7,21,22,23 8:7 18:8 22:22  
**progress** 5:13  
**proper** 14:21  
**property** 19:8  
**proposals** 22:2  
**proposed** 11:22 13:20 25:14  
**provide** 7:18 17:1 23:13 25:9 27:24  
**providing** 8:25 22:25  
**public** 11:9,13,14,16,17 12:4,6,12, 14,15,18,21,22 13:4,9,14,15,20 14:8,11 29:10 31:4,13  
**Puerto** 21:1  
**pulled** 2:8  
**pulse** 27:1  
**purpose** 7:1 20:13  
**pushing** 4:13  
**put** 2:6 24:20 35:12  
**putting** 6:4 23:6

---

**Q**

---

**quarterly** 17:12  
**quarters** 3:18  
**question** 6:1 12:16 14:3 27:1  
**questions** 13:22 14:14 18:2 22:9 26:5  
**quick** 30:9  
**quickly** 24:24  
**QUINN** 23:3 29:2,5  
**quorum** 10:14,17,18,20,21,25 12:21 27:2 30:4 35:19,21,23

---

**R**

---

**race** 34:2  
**racial** 23:22  
**racism** 29:8,10,14,20 30:24 31:13 32:8  
**raise** 3:7,8 28:19 31:15 32:17  
**raw** 32:5  
**reach** 5:15  
**reached** 34:21  
**reaching** 14:20  
**read** 2:13 6:12,17,21,23 8:22 23:14  
**real** 27:19 33:16,24  
**reality** 3:5  
**rearing** 12:25  
**receive** 3:16,20  
**received** 15:7,12  
**receiving** 9:23  
**recently** 18:6,8 20:11  
**recognition** 6:14,19 8:17 9:20,24  
**recognize** 8:10 9:12 29:10  
**recognizes** 8:3  
**recognizing** 9:25  
**reconfirm** 35:19  
**recorded** 13:10

**recruitment** 26:3  
**redlines** 29:18  
**redlining** 29:17  
**reference** 4:21  
**refresher** 16:4  
**Regency** 22:1  
**Region** 21:1  
**regional** 9:5 21:2,9  
**registration** 30:15  
**regular** 26:13,20  
**REID** 26:18  
**relate** 14:6  
**related** 14:7 18:8  
**relationships** 2:4  
**release** 20:8  
**releasing** 19:25  
**remember** 16:14 19:10  
**remind** 5:16 6:8 12:3 30:14  
**reminder** 3:5 30:10  
**reminds** 2:2  
**remotely** 5:5 13:15  
**render** 26:5  
**repeat** 5:20  
**report** 3:15 4:21 15:12 19:8,25 20:7  
**reporting** 26:20  
**reports** 19:24  
**representatives** 4:12 19:2  
**request** 13:13 18:3,9 22:1  
**require** 27:22  
**required** 21:9,10 24:14  
**requirements** 13:7  
**requiring** 24:7  
**resilience** 16:25  
**resolution** 11:18,23 12:19 13:20  
**resource** 9:2  
**resources** 7:10 21:15 27:22 35:12

**responded** 20:3  
**responsibilities** 12:25  
**rest** 3:17 15:12  
**retirement** 23:10  
**review** 4:25 19:12 30:25 31:3  
**Rico** 21:1  
**rising** 24:2  
**Rob** 10:10,11,13,25 11:5 14:1,3  
**Robert** 2:24 8:19 9:22  
**Rochester** 22:1 29:9  
**Rodriguez** 2:11,24 6:15 8:19 9:22 10:1  
**rolling** 25:14  
**rollout** 5:5  
**ROMA** 15:22 16:7,8,9 17:9,10,11  
**room** 12:5  
**root** 7:6 29:24  
**ROSA** 2:1,10 28:5 31:9  
**routine** 2:21  
**rules** 11:10,11 14:4  
**run** 19:18  
**running** 2:21  
**rural** 26:9 27:14,20,21 28:20

---

**S**

---

**sad** 2:5  
**saddened** 2:16  
**salaries** 23:7,9,19  
**sanctioned** 23:19  
**scheduled** 18:21 21:24  
**scope** 27:23  
**Secretary** 2:10 6:15 8:19 9:22 10:1 15:5 23:15  
**secretary's** 2:6  
**section** 23:1  
**segregation** 32:22  
**segregation's** 33:16

**self-** 8:7  
**self-sufficiency** 24:4  
**sell** 16:4  
**seminar** 18:20  
**Senate** 4:12,18  
**send** 2:17  
**senior** 18:8  
**sense** 17:7 32:15  
**senseless** 2:23  
**sentiment** 31:11  
**separation** 32:20,22  
**September** 5:18 21:20,25  
**series** 20:11  
**serve** 7:8 23:24 25:5 29:14,17  
**served** 7:9  
**serves** 7:13  
**service** 8:13 9:15 18:5 20:4  
**services** 5:2 7:16,19,22 8:5,7,12,17 11:7 21:4 23:12 25:9 32:1  
**serving** 28:7  
**set** 3:21 23:7 25:15  
**share** 3:7 15:8 21:15  
**shelter** 32:14  
**shoot** 30:15  
**shooting** 34:17  
**shootings** 34:2  
**shopping** 2:21  
**short** 16:4  
**silos** 35:8  
**simple** 33:18  
**sinister** 29:16  
**sister** 22:3  
**skin** 23:25 32:25  
**slight** 3:19  
**slowly** 15:21  
**smaller** 17:12 27:25  
**smile** 32:15

**social** 20:20  
**societal** 32:8  
**society** 3:3  
**solution** 34:6  
**solutions** 33:9,25 34:3  
**sort** 19:12 21:9  
**speak** 4:25 20:15  
**speaker** 33:14  
**specific** 5:8 17:1  
**spend** 5:20,24 6:4  
**spinning** 25:10  
**spirited** 22:18  
**spoken** 20:18  
**Spring** 34:14  
**stability** 8:1,8 9:10  
**staff** 15:8,17,25 16:2,3,6,15,19 17:2 18:6,7 19:1,19,22 20:1 23:8,11 25:8 32:6 34:22  
**staff's** 32:5  
**stakeholders** 28:19  
**standing** 34:18  
**start** 22:24 26:2  
**started** 18:6  
**starting** 19:20 28:19  
**state** 4:8,15 5:2,8 7:12,14,16,24 8:2, 3,13,20,23 9:7,13,16,20,22 17:18 21:4 22:3 23:5,6,7,12,15,18,19,20 24:5,7,22 25:15,20 29:8,15,21,22 30:13,24,25 31:3,6 33:18,22  
**statement** 2:13  
**states** 5:7  
**statute** 13:2  
**stay** 4:7  
**store** 34:24 35:1  
**strategies** 22:23  
**strengthen** 8:15 9:17  
**strive** 3:2,6  
**striving** 33:1

**strong** 33:13,14,15 34:19**struggle** 31:17**struggling** 33:25**submit** 17:17**submitted** 4:22,23**substance** 25:16**success** 8:15,19 9:17**sufficiency** 8:8**suggestion** 31:7**support** 2:18 21:3 24:10 26:25 33:2  
34:22,23 35:9**supporting** 9:2**supremacy** 32:8**survey** 17:6**suspended** 13:7**sustain** 32:13

---

**T**

---

**taking** 29:25**talk** 11:4,19 14:5 27:13 33:12**talked** 20:12 22:25 26:17 27:25**talking** 26:12 28:6**talks** 31:12**tank** 18:11**teacher** 31:12**team** 10:3**technical** 9:1 17:6**templates** 17:14,16,19**ten** 34:6**term** 14:8**terms** 3:19**thing** 4:18 14:13 21:22 26:3,11 33:1  
34:10**things** 17:21 25:10,17 28:9 29:17  
33:11,21 35:2**thinking** 31:1**thought** 2:12 35:22**thoughts** 34:13 35:14**threshold** 24:21**time** 2:2,17 5:18 16:5 18:19 19:19,21  
35:20**time's** 15:7**today** 6:17 8:10 9:12 11:2 26:16  
29:19**tons** 20:6**tools** 19:3**topic** 28:24**Tops** 34:14,15,16**total** 15:16 18:16**tragedies** 33:12**tragedy** 3:4 29:13 35:8**tragic** 2:15,22**train** 16:8**trained** 16:15,16**trainer** 16:9**trainers** 16:8,12 17:10**training** 7:2,23 9:1 16:9,14 17:1,6,7**trainings** 15:22 16:11,13,18,19,20**Trainor** 30:17**transcribed** 13:12**trauma** 16:24 21:16**treatment** 25:17**trends** 9:8**triggers** 3:21**Tuesday** 33:10**turn** 22:6 23:2 27:13**turned** 2:22**turning** 22:24**turnover** 25:8**typically** 16:5 19:8,9

---

**U**

---

**ubiquitous** 29:16**unaware** 11:5**uncle** 32:7**underlying** 32:19 33:21**understatement** 2:15**Underwood** 29:9**unfair** 26:21**unfolded** 2:16**UNISON** 36:5**united** 33:15**University** 19:17**updates** 15:1,2 27:11**Upstate** 27:21**urge** 23:4**USC** 30:10**users** 15:18**utilize** 7:6

---

**V**

---

**vain** 34:7**valued** 32:15**Vanderables** 10:12,13 11:2,5 14:7,  
24**variety** 9:3 14:10,17**vendors** 30:14**victims** 31:17,18**videoconference** 11:13**videoconferencing** 12:7,8,13,14,  
20 13:8,9**videos** 6:5**views** 33:19**vigil** 33:10**violence** 25:17 34:2**Virgin** 21:2**virtual** 18:21 21:12 30:12**virtually** 15:24 16:21**visit** 5:12**vital** 7:19**vote** 27:1 35:25

---

**W**


---

**wage** 24:22 25:1

**wages** 22:19,21 23:7 24:3,7,10,15,  
17,20,21 25:7 26:21

**waiting** 4:23

**wanted** 26:10,15 30:14,23 34:4

**warmth** 32:14

**water** 32:13

**ways** 31:13

**weaker** 25:11,12

**weatherization** 22:4 24:13,15

**webinars** 6:4 17:3,4 20:11,16

**website** 13:11 19:14

**week** 4:1 6:20 29:16

**weekend** 2:10,11 29:6

**weekly** 22:18

**weeks** 5:25 25:13

**welcomed** 36:1

**Wellness** 20:12

**Western** 2:19 33:17

**wide** 14:9

**Wilson** 10:2,7,16,21,24 13:25 14:25  
22:8 25:22 26:1,4,14,23 27:2,9 28:4,  
23 29:4 30:1,8,19 31:8,22,24 32:2  
34:8 35:16,22

**winter** 21:12

**wishes** 8:19

**women** 24:2

**Wonderful** 22:10

**word** 29:20

**words** 34:12,20

**work** 2:2 3:3,8 5:9,10,22 6:7 8:5  
10:4 13:18 18:7 19:15 21:5 23:6,23  
24:11 25:19 29:9,23 31:19 33:3  
35:8,12,15

**workers** 24:8,15

**workgroup** 17:13 18:25

**workgroups** 9:3

**working** 3:1 4:14 11:21 18:24 20:21  
32:18 34:23 35:4

**works** 24:25

**world** 3:13

**worth** 26:16

**wrong** 27:4

---

**Y**


---

**year** 3:17,18,20 16:10 18:15,18,19  
19:9 21:8,9,10

**year's** 3:21

**years** 13:11 16:16 17:23 23:17  
31:12

**yesterday** 2:14

**York** 2:19 4:15 5:2 7:12,16,24 8:2,3,  
13,23 9:7,13,16,20 21:1 22:3 23:6,  
15,19 24:5,22 25:20 27:21 33:17

**Yorkers** 7:19 8:8