



**New York City Council Speaker Adrienne E. Adams
2023 State of the City Address
Remarks as Prepared for Delivery
March 8, 2023**

Wow, just incredible. Thank you, Karina. I'm honored to be introduced by you.

You are a prime example of why we do this work and who we do it for.

Thank you all for being here today in the Soundview neighborhood of the "Boogie Down" Bronx at the Justice Sonia Sotomayor Houses and Community Center. It's fitting as Justice Sotomayor is the first woman of color and Latina to serve on the Supreme Court.

It was important to hold my State of the City here in the district of Council Member Amanda Farias, as the chair of our Economic Development Committee and co-chair of our Women's Caucus.

The issues and challenges facing communities across this district are exactly those we must address to advance our city.

I want to thank Council Member Farias, and the leaders and residents of NYCHA and the Sotomayor Houses for welcoming us here today.

I also want to acknowledge some of our city's leaders, who have joined us today.

Our citywide elected officials – Mayor Eric Adams, Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, and Comptroller Brad Lander.

Our Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson, who welcomes us to the borough.

Our Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso, Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine, and Queens Borough President Donovan Richards.

Also Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark and Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz – thank you all for being here today.

And I'm so grateful to my Council leadership team, whose partnership and support has been invaluable.

Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala, Majority Leader Keith Powers, Majority Whip Selvena Brooks-Powers, and Council Members Justin Brannan, Gale Brewer, and Rafael Salamanca.

And of course, my predecessor, former Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito. I am honored to be part of our club of Council Speakers who represent firsts. It is notable that it was women who broke these barriers of representation.

And I want to thank our partners in labor, our social-service providers, our non-profits, and community-based organizations for all you do on the frontlines in our city.

Three years ago, when the pandemic upended our world, workers kept going and kept us going.

As we learned to rely on each other for our health and safety, it became clearer than ever who we depend on to survive.

We relied on restaurant and grocery store workers to feed us, delivery workers to allow us to remain safely at home, municipal workers to keep our city running, and healthcare workers, who confronted great dangers every day, to keep us healthy – and still do today.

Let me be clear: workers run this city.

They put the people of this city over everything.

And so should we.

On Friday evenings during the pandemic's early days, applause rang out across the city as New Yorkers came together to symbolically thank our frontline workers.

Now, it's time we show our gratitude with action.

The way we fulfill our obligation to essential workers is by enacting policies that ensure New York City is a place where everyone can thrive.

Working people have told us exactly what they need to make this a reality.

As a government, it's time to deliver.

New Yorkers need access to economic opportunity through work or entrepreneurship, affordable housing, educational pathways to advancement, and community investments that keep us healthy and safe.

We need to deliver these fundamentals.

Economic Mobility.

Housing.

And Healthier and Safer Neighborhoods.

Those are my focus to advance the State of the City.

Proposals in a speech are meaningless if they are not consistent with budget decisions.

Our budgets must match, investing in early childhood education programs like 3-K; our libraries as neighborhood resource hubs, our world-class CUNY institutions as centers of opportunity, and our city agencies and its workers who deliver essential services to our communities.

This is why our Council has advanced a budget vision that prioritizes our people over everything.

New Yorkers are the City's greatest assets, and we must invest in them.

Today is fittingly International Women's Day, and it is the beginning of Women's History Month. As the first women-majority and most diverse Council in city history, we have made history – not only through our representation, but through the policies we've advanced.

Together, we've begun to address issues that have blocked women and people of color from pathways to opportunity for too long.

Women are the cornerstone of society and the backbones of our families. When women are healthy and have access to opportunity, our children, families, and communities thrive.

We are transforming the decades-old approach of government that excluded many of us, to one that centers everyone's needs.

Every New Yorker benefits from this inclusive approach.

Last year, the Council passed the New York City Abortion Rights Act, 12 pieces of legislation that safeguard and increase access to abortion and reproductive healthcare.

Here in New York City, the decisions a woman or birthing person make about their body will always belong to them.

That requires not only legal protection, but resources to ensure our values exist in practice.

Legislation by Council Member Carlina Rivera expanded free access to abortion medication in our city for the very first time.

It was this Council that allocated \$1 million in funding to ensure that those unable to afford abortion care can access it – marking the largest allocation of municipal funds for this direct support by any city in the nation.

In response to years of data that Black New Yorkers are eight times more likely than white New Yorkers to die from pregnancy-related issues, our Council passed historic legislation to address racial disparities in maternal health.

More New Yorkers in underserved neighborhoods now have access to free, culturally competent doula care and other health services, because of the leadership of Council Members Althea Stevens, Crystal Hudson, Jennifer Gutierrez and Julie Menin. Especially for pregnant Black, Brown, and Indigenous people – this is the difference between life and death.

This Council has confronted racial and gender wage disparities through legislation by Council Members Carmen De La Rosa, Farah Louis, and Nantasha Williams.

We invested in community-based solutions, including the creation of our state’s first trauma recovery centers to stop cycles of violence in this city.

And the leadership of this Council, with a record-number of new mothers in Council Members Jennifer Gutierrez, Carlina Rivera, Pierina Sanchez and Julie Won, and a new father in Council Member Kevin Riley, has helped put New York City on a path to expand childcare and prioritize early childhood education.

We will continue to advance solutions for New Yorkers whose needs have too often been marginalized, because when we respond through this lens of equity, all New Yorkers win.

This means focusing on the needs of women, who make up 60% of our city’s frontline workforce, and people of color, who are three out of every four frontline workers.

By centering women of color, who sit at the intersection of multiple marginalized communities, we can zone-in on comprehensive solutions that address the root of our most pressing challenges.

This benefits us all.

It’s time that our vision and our investments are aimed at the people whose work improves our lives and our city.

This year, we will push forward a budget that delivers for our communities and our working families.

Here in New York City, our diversity is our strength.

We are home to people from over 150 different countries who contribute to our great city as artists, educators, social workers, small business owners, and so much more. Whether lifelong New Yorkers, immigrants and transplants who arrived years ago, or recent migrants seeking asylum, the shared joys and struggles we uniquely experience as New Yorkers are what unite us.

For us to succeed, we must build a city that works for everyone, and *that* hinges on investing in historically underserved communities that have lacked equal access to economic mobility.

Civil service has been a pathway to upward mobility and the middle class for decades, especially for Black New Yorkers, including my own family.

That link has weakened over time, and we must restore it.

Our city workers keep our communities afloat. They maintain the conditions of our streets, manage the delivery of food assistance and housing vouchers, ensure our service organizations get the funding they need to help families, and everything else in between.

Their work touches every aspect of our lives.

That's why we must address the severe understaffing across city agencies with urgency. It has created a domino effect, and now New Yorkers who rely on essential services are feeling those impacts in real time.

When a New Yorker can't access their SNAP food benefits because of agency delays, a family is left hungry. When a CityFHEPS housing voucher is slow to be processed, a family faces eviction. This is the cruel reality our neighbors face, which not only hurts them and the stability of our communities, but also hurts our city.

We cannot wait for the last domino to fall. The City must act now to fully fund and staff our city agencies.

That starts with the city budget, which must include investing in our essential agencies, and helping expedite the ability to hire.

In addition to fighting for this as a budget priority, we will work together with Mayor Adams to hold hiring events across the city that connect people to jobs and help staff up our agencies.

At the same time, we must ensure civil service career pathways are opened to New Yorkers whose life trajectory would change most with these newfound opportunities.

Last year, I called for expanding pipelines to civil service for those in our correctional system. Since then, we have enacted several laws and will pass more to make these a reality.

We will work with our partners in labor to eliminate barriers to entry for civil service jobs, identifying positions that do not require a degree and removing unnecessary qualifications.

Our public servants – whether in municipal employment or non-profit jobs – help us address the vital issues facing our city. They are critical to the functioning of our society and the health of our democracy. We need more mental health workers, nurses, public defenders, and housing attorneys that help people avoid eviction.

It's why our Council supported nurses in their contract campaigns, and why we are advocating for mental health workforce investments and seeking increased funding for public defenders and civil legal service providers.

We know these are some of the most challenging careers, and among the most important for our city to achieve our goals of equity and access. We're grateful to have these frontline perspectives reflected every day in our own Council Members Shaun Abreu, Tiffany Caban, and Mercedes Narcisse.

To our public servants – thank you for all that you do. You are the unsung heroes of New York City.

I call on every New Yorker looking for opportunity and seeking purpose-driven work to join the ranks of these leaders. Come help ensure a healthier and brighter future for New York City.

We owe our frontline workers a debt of gratitude – and we can begin to pay it off with resources that bolster their workforce.

Our Council will help establish the inaugural Social Work Fellows program, similar to NYC Teaching Fellows, that covers tuition and offers graduates a pipeline into our city's mental health workforce.

To truly expand opportunity to people of color, low-income New Yorkers, and immigrants, our budgets must prioritize increased investments into CUNY.

Its institutions are engines of opportunity for so many New Yorkers, and we must significantly deepen our funding, not reduce it.

As Karina said in her inspiring introduction, I proposed CUNY Reconnect in my last State of the City to reach working New Yorkers who earned credits but left without a degree.

When I attended York College, I saw firsthand how the fulfillment of promise empowered my own father, a long-time union worker, to return and graduate with a degree in economics *years* after he began.

We delivered on this proposal, and since the program launched, it has surpassed our initial goal of reaching 10,000 New Yorkers. As of today, CUNY has welcomed over 16,000 returning students, of which 60% are women and an overwhelming 82% belong to our Black, Latino, and AAPI communities.

We've opened the dam, and now people are rushing back to fulfill their promise – to themselves, to their children, and to their dreams.

Especially for working women of color like Karina, CUNY Reconnect offers a second chance.

The overwhelming success of this program makes clear: we need to fully fund CUNY and expand programs like CUNY Reconnect.

As we make higher education more accessible, we must also invest in workforce development for our young people who are out-of-work, no longer in school, or exposed to the justice system.

I'm excited to announce that the Council will fund a multi-million-dollar expansion of workforce development centers from one site in NYCHA's Johnson Houses in East Harlem to three more in the Bronx's Sedgwick Houses, Brooklyn's Red Hook Houses, and Queens' own South Jamaica Houses!

With this investment, we can clear the waiting list of 3,000 young people eager to build careers.

Our efforts to move more New Yorkers into the workforce also includes connecting those in our shelter system to municipal jobs.

And in solidarity with workers everywhere, this year, the Council will enact legislation to ban non-compete agreements for good. Workers will now have the freedom to leave jobs that trap them in low wages, and instead go where they are most valued.

Just as workers have our backs, we have theirs.

There is also far more the City can do to expand access to good-paying jobs with low barriers to entry that offer New Yorkers opportunities to advance.

The industrial sector offers mid-to-high wage jobs that often do not require a college degree. People of color make up 80 percent of this workforce, making the industrial sector a leading pathway to equitable economic mobility.

Let's double down on connecting workforce development and apprenticeships to these investments that strengthen working families and communities of color.

The City has invested in city-owned industrial campuses like the Brooklyn Navy Yard, Brooklyn Army Terminal, South Brooklyn Marine Terminal, which hosts an offshore wind farm, and Hunts Point Terminal Market right here in the Bronx.

Yet, New York City lacks a broader coherent economic development strategy to cultivate industrial growth.

We have the workforce and available land, but growth will demand coordinated commitments and investments.

As a first step, the Council will advance updates to the outdated 1961 manufacturing zoning in the citywide text amendment to help maximize the potential benefits of industrial businesses for our city.

We are sitting on industrial goldmines that have been neglected.

From Bushwick and Sunset Park, to Long Island City and Hunts Point, Council Members Jennifer Gutierrez, Alexa Aviles, Shahana Hanif, Lincoln Restler, Julie Won and Rafael Salamanca, along with Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso, know this issue well.

In my own district in Jamaica, there's the old Elmhurst Dairy site – a sprawling 15-acre dairy plant that closed its doors seven years ago. The city and state should work together to reactivate vacant sites like this to create living wage jobs and catalyze emerging industries and entrepreneurship.

How would our pandemic response have differed if we had the capacity to manufacture essential goods right here in our own city? We would have been better prepared to keep New Yorkers safe, and saved taxpayer dollars from the exorbitant prices we paid to acquire PPE.

Let's learn from our past and equip ourselves for the future.

This will require the City and State to advance an economic development strategy that attracts and retains industrial businesses. The City can start by devoting resources to connect businesses with incentives and workforce development programs.

As part of these efforts, the Council will advance legislation to require citywide industrial planning for businesses, so we can transition away from fossil fuels towards green energy, support job growth and citywide needs.

By supporting industrial growth, the City can better address equity, entrepreneurship, and small business development.

New York City is full of innovative people, who work hard to turn their dreams into reality. It is fitting to be in the Bronx on the 50th Anniversary of Hip-Hop, one of our city's greatest innovations that has spread across the globe.

What started off as block parties right here in the Bronx launched industries and facilitated generational wealth for so many Black and Brown entrepreneurs. We know the innovations of our people extend wider, and yet many of our best ideas never see the light of day.

Too many entrepreneurs and MWBEs lack access to capital from traditional banks. That's where the value of Community Development Financial Institutions, or CDFIs shine, as institutions that advance equitable lending. Our Council will work in partnership with them and organizations like The Black Institute to create programs that specifically support under-represented entrepreneurs, MWBEs, and small businesses.

Innovators and MWBEs benefit from access to CDFIs. Our Council will pass legislation requiring the City to create a central portal that fosters these connections.

We are intent on creating pathways to self-sufficiency, and we will extend this support to entrepreneurs with past justice system-involvement. We should support entrepreneurship, as it is often the best available economic opportunity for those with old legal records.

There is immense potential everywhere in our great city. To maximize it, we need to go to the communities that are ripe with talent but underrepresented in spaces of formal entrepreneurship.

Over 1,600 NYCHA residents reported owning their own small businesses in 2021, a nearly 500% increase in just a decade.

Research shows there are far more businesses than reported, but because of barriers to formalization, they remain unregistered.

The challenges are many: lack of access to capital and technical support, as well as NYCHA's underutilization of the program that allows residents to generate income without increasing their rent.

The next best thing could be at NYCHA and likely is – let's harness the entrepreneurial spirit and connect talent with resources.

We have what it takes to double the number of resident-owned small businesses over the next five years.

Here's where we start.

We can partner with organizations already working with resident entrepreneurs to eliminate barriers.

The City can also provide additional support for cooperatives, incubators, and other business development opportunities specifically for our NYCHA innovators.

This would make it possible for residents like Alice, who runs a cupcake business out of her Bronx apartment, to make her small business official.

Like Alice, many NYCHA residents have been forced underground. But our investments can help bring them to the surface so they can flourish.

As we expand economic opportunity for our public housing residents, we must confront the dire building conditions at NYCHA as well.

That must be part of our housing agenda, and is central to mine.

For years, residents have raised alarms, and yet still suffer from heat and gas outages, lead contamination, and deteriorating conditions of buildings.

Insufficient funding from all levels of government is the cause of this harm.

NYCHA needs greater funding from all levels of government.

Yet, I also want to start a conversation that residents lead, around an idea that could contribute to a more sustainable future for public housing in our city.

Despite its cash deficits, NYCHA is land-rich.

Today, I am announcing an idea that could improve residents' living conditions while increasing housing supply by constructing *new* public housing apartments for existing residents.

It would utilize unused, open space on NYCHA land to develop new, higher-density buildings that residents are moved into *directly* from their existing units.

Let me be clear. Whether this advances should be decided by tenants.

But if desired by residents, a pilot program could combine all existing city, state, and federal financing tools into a single NYCHA building to develop new public housing units. The priority would be new apartments for NYCHA residents.

To spread out the costs, this higher-density building would include other city and state-funded affordable and mixed-income units. Ground floor usage could be reserved for community or healthcare centers, grocery stores, childcare centers, or other storefronts.

I'm under no illusion that this is an easy or straightforward idea. In fact, this ambitious task would require resources and close coordination from DC, Albany, and Gracie Mansion.

But I present it even with its complexities, because we can't keep tinkering around the edges of the status quo and expect to deliver transformative change that residents deserve.

A challenge of this scale requires bold and innovative solutions.

Creating healthier and more sustainable housing is possible, as long as we place NYCHA residents in the driver's seat and commit as government.

This Council is prepared to meet the affordable housing crisis head-on.

Last year, we approved over 40 land use projects to create more than 12,000 units of housing, with more than 60 percent being affordable.

This year, we know our efforts must expand to meet the scale of the challenge.

In the coming weeks, we will introduce the Fair Housing Framework bill that establishes local affordable housing production goals.

This means the City would institute clear expectations that highly resourced neighborhoods, with good access to jobs, schools, and public transportation, contribute to affordable housing production in ways that have too often been lacking.

We also know that zoning changes are needed to increase housing.

My housing agenda includes support for state efforts to help us advance office conversions, eliminate the 12 FAR cap to increase density, and utilize MIH to produce more affordable housing where we currently cannot.

Several Council Members have expressed support for neighborhood rezoning studies in their districts to promote greater housing development.

Majority Leader Keith Powers and Council Member Erik Bottcher for Midtown, as well as Council Member Kamillah Hanks for the north shore of Staten Island, all demonstrate how Council leadership is addressing our housing crisis.

Today, I want to propose ways we can increase affordable housing production across the five boroughs through the forthcoming Citywide Zoning Text Amendment.

Many areas of the City have overly restrictive zoning that limits our ability to produce more affordable homes. The current levels of affordability simply don't cut it for many working families.

We can incentivize development that accommodates deep affordability by permitting increased density for just these projects.

We should also update MIH to require the deeply affordable option. Alongside this, we must increase the proportion of units dedicated for the lowest-income households to 25 percent.

Addressing the housing crisis also requires preserving our existing affordable housing stock. Smart policies can ensure rent-regulated units don't sit vacant at a time when the need for housing is so dire.

And when we talk about housing, we can't forget homeownership.

Homeownership used to be a part of our story. But these days, it feels closer to a pipe dream.

The New York Times recently reported that over the last two decades, the city's Black population has decreased by almost 10 percent, driven out by skyrocketing costs and the elusive dream of owning a home.

This exodus is deeply concerning, and why we must expand homeownership opportunities if we are serious about preserving our city's diversity.

We will work with the City to expand homeowner programs for more families, and partner with the State to fund a new initiative modeled on the Mitchell Lama program. And we will elevate CDFIs as partners to support new homeownership opportunities.

As we support opportunities for homeownership, we must work to prevent homelessness.

The use of CityFHEPS housing vouchers is one of our most effective solutions to keep New Yorkers in their homes and move existing shelter residents into permanent housing.

Our Council will soon pass legislation to remove barriers to CityFHEPS so that more New Yorkers can access stable housing.

It's a universal human truth: we need to have our basic needs met before we can reach for higher levels of success.

I'm proud to announce that this year, our Council will help expand guaranteed income programs that support New Yorkers facing some of the greatest challenges.

We will work with organizations like the Bridge Project, Children's Defense Fund, and Chapin Hall to support programs that provide monthly financial assistance payments to vulnerable young people and low-income mothers with infants.

These efforts have shown great promise in helping people out of poverty and into stability.

As part of our work to make our city's transit system more accessible, we will expand Fair Fares to offer half-priced bus and subway rides to New Yorkers with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level, nearly doubling the number of low-income New Yorkers eligible to benefit.

Our working families, particularly in Black, Latino and Asian communities, urgently need early childhood education programs to support their families and advance their careers.

We must work to correct the course that has weakened our 3-K system.

Our Council's Black, Latino and Asian Caucus, led by Council Members Kevin Riley and Oswald Feliz and Education Committee Chair Rita Joseph, have recently put forward important solutions that we must enact.

The Department of Education should restore the hollowed out Early Childhood Education division and promptly reimburse providers for their services.

3-K must also be revamped and expanded with a newly designed contract, so that all children have extended programming.

We've got to make 3-K better match the workdays of our working parents. And we can fund a new labor contract to ensure salary parity across the early childhood workforce, compensating providers fairly for the work they do to care for our most precious assets.

There is also more the City can do to provide life-saving education for our youth, while creating pathways to opportunity.

As warm weather approaches, New Yorkers will seek relief and recreation in the water at our pools and beaches. Yet, as of 2020, a total of 16 Council districts lacked a public pool.

We can change this.

Our Council will pursue legislation with Parks Chair Shekar Krishnan to expand year-round public access to pools under the control of the Department of Education.

We will also make budget investments to provide free swimming programs that help keep New Yorkers safe, support healthy recreation, and open pathways to lifeguard training.

Some of us can recall when Black families were excluded from public pools – often the only access we had to enclosed water. And so today, when one out of three Black students can't swim, while only about one out of 10 white students cannot, access to public pools and swimming programs must be considered a matter of justice.

The Council will also require the City to identify locations for new public pools in environmental justice communities that lack access.

There is a lot of work ahead to create healthier communities.

In my first State of the City address, I reaffirmed our need to prioritize the inclusion and well-being of our older adults and nearly 1 million New Yorkers with disabilities.

One year later, we accomplished exactly what we said we were going to do.

Our Council passed several bills to equally prioritize these New Yorkers in our housing and workforce, and through citywide plans to expand accessibility and opportunity.

Ensuring access to healthcare means going directly where the need is greatest.

So this year, with Health Chair Lynn Schulman and Consumer and Worker Protection Chair Marjorie Velazquez, we're going to partner with our deliveristas to set up a mobile healthcare hub and bring services directly to workers!

In order to improve health through food access, the Council will expand funding for healthy food markets to serve more NYCHA developments. And we will ensure the City develops plans to expand farmers' markets year-round and increase participation in summer meals in every borough.

The conversation about health must also account for the mental health and overdose crises we face across our city.

Prevention, treatment, and harm reduction efforts at the community-level are key to reducing record-high numbers of drug overdose deaths that disproportionately harm Black and Brown communities. Our Council is in agreement with Mayor Adams: the harm-reduction programs of Overdose Prevention Centers in our city need more City and State support.

We will partner to help our city emerge healthier.

In the coming days, we will release a roadmap to mental health that adds to existing solutions that must be pursued. Thanks to the leadership of our Mental Health Committee Chair Linda Lee, our city will have a course of action to expand community-based mental health models, while supporting our workforce and schools.

Our health and safety are intertwined, and that is most evident in the victims of violence and traffic-related incidents. The trauma inflicted on families and communities has not been adequately acknowledged or addressed, and we must respond to it.

Last year, a record number of children were killed due to traffic violence, and deaths were the highest since the first year of Vision Zero.

Our Council has urged the City to make more equitable investments in street safety infrastructure for communities most impacted by traffic violence, through solutions like daylighting and traffic calming measures.

The City cannot ignore our outer-borough neighborhoods and leave behind our children and families most at-risk. With the leadership of our Transportation and Infrastructure Chair, Majority Whip Selvena Brooks-Powers, we will come fully prepared to protect our families during this budget.

Here and across the country, people have come to realize that public safety is multi-dimensional and requires holistic solutions. The policies relied upon in our past have not stopped cycles of violence nor prevented intergenerational trauma in our communities.

A failure to prevent and respond to harm effectively leaves people less safe. Short-term responses don't solve long-term problems.

Our AAPI, Jewish, and LGBTQIA+ communities, along with too many others, have experienced increased hate violence these last few years.

A pride flag was burned last month. Yet another synagogue was defaced.

Council Members Eric Dinowitz and Sandra Ung are consistent voices in denouncing this hate.

Violence against any of us makes all of us less safe.

We can't keep going in circles. Prevention, safety, trauma recovery, and victim services must go hand-in-hand.

As a Council, we have sought to address public safety through the lens of what is proven to work and can truly deliver safety. We have increased investments in community programs to prevent and respond to violence and hate crimes.

Our Council will continue to focus on expanding community safety solutions that prevent violence before it occurs, protect New Yorkers and our neighborhoods, and stop cycles of crime.

Everything I've outlined today is critical to supporting our goals of safer and healthier communities.

Progress is possible with the right policies and investments.

The last issue I want to touch on is one that holds a special place within the institution of the Council, as well as for me personally.

Seven years ago, in this same address, former Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito made the clarion call to explore the closure of Rikers Island and create borough-based facilities. The City Council demonstrated leadership by approving a plan to shift our jail system from Rikers by 2027.

We began to make progress. But since the earliest days of the pandemic, we have only seen the situation on Rikers worsen.

The population has increased, largely because lengths of stays for people awaiting trial have gone up.

More than half of those detained have a mental health diagnosis, and the number of people diagnosed with a serious mental health condition has risen 27% in the last year.

People who work there, and those detained, are exposed to violence and trauma that maintain cycles of violence rather than interrupting them.

Week after week, we see someone lose their life on Rikers at levels that are nearly unprecedented.

This is inhumane.

We cannot allow ourselves to become numb to tragedy or ignore the pain this inflicts on families and communities.

My mother was a correction officer on Rikers Island. It was a civil service job that contributed to our family's stability, and she was dedicated to serving the women in her custody.

When the Council in our previous session discussed the closure of Rikers, I asked my mother what she thought about it. She told me, "Baby, they should have closed that place a long time ago."

Rikers is no longer serving our city.

It undermines the stated mission of DOC to create safe environments that provide those within its care a path to successfully re-enter their communities.

The conditions at Rikers are only creating harm for everyone there.

Advancing the closure of Rikers is more urgent now than ever before – for both public safety and human rights.

We must deepen the support and use of pre-trial and alternative-to-incarceration programs.

Through appropriate interventions and mental health treatments, we can stop the revolving door. Success here will require efforts to ensure the courts utilize these programs and eliminate case delays.

We can reduce recidivism by offering supportive housing with re-entry programs and targeted opportunity programs that promote successful reintegration.

An all-of-the-above approach will be necessary to move us towards the closure of Rikers by 2027.

Our Council will be a focused change-agent for the solutions and investments needed to make us safer and finally close Rikers. We cannot allow Rikers to continue undermining public safety in our city.

My mother's service on Rikers was to help the women in her care return to their communities and access all of what I've talked about today.

She knew that with the right opportunities and support, the women whose safety she took responsibility for could succeed.

That's what they wanted.

That is what all of us as New Yorkers want – the chance to succeed.

We can help New Yorkers reach success when we focus on their needs as workers, entrepreneurs, students, parents, families and communities.

It is economic mobility, it is housing, and it is healthier and safer neighborhoods that will get us there.

As the first majority-women Council, we are committed to the people of this city over everything.

We represent those on the frontlines, deep in the trenches, teaching our young people, nursing our loved ones, and fighting for what we believe every New Yorker deserves.

And that's what we will continue to do.

The state of our city holds immense promise.

By working together to deliver for our workers, families, and communities across every borough, New York City can continue to be a lighthouse for progress.

We can and we will make clear the way forward for us to succeed, together as the people of this incredible city.

Thank you very much!