HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

OF THE

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

A regular meeting of the Health and Human Services Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, on Thursday, October 8th, 2009 at 2:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:
Legislator Kate Browning, Chairperson
Legislator John Kennedy, Vice-Chair
Legislator Tom Barraga
Legislator Jack Eddington
Legislator DuWayne Gregory

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:
George Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature
Sarah Simpson, Assistant Counsel to the Legislature
Barbara LoMoriello, Deputy Clerk of the Legislature
Marge Acevedo - Aide to Presiding Officer Lindsay
Jack Caffey - Aide to Presiding Officer Lindsay
Patrick Heaney, Commissioner/Economic Development
Brendan Chamberlain - County Executive Assistant
Steve Tricarico, County Executive Assistant
Linda Bay, Aide to Minority Caucus Leader Losquadro
Paul Perillie, Aide to Majority Caucus Leader Cooper
Diane Dono - Senior Budget Analyst/Budget Review Office
Craig Freas - Budget Analyst/Budget Review Office
Dennis Brown - Division Bureau Chief/County Attorney's Office
Greg Blass, Commissioner/ Department of Social Services
Linda O'Donohoe, Asst. to the Commissioner/Dept of Social Services
Mark Clavin - Family & Child Services/Department of Social Services
Matt Miner, Deputy Commissioner/ Dept. Of Health Services
Dot Kerrigan - 4th Vice-President/AME
Debbie Alloncius - Legislative Director/AME
Ginny Salerno - Executive Director/Long Island 2-Day Walk
Christopher Frey - Director of IT & Walk Operations
Gregory Noone - Program Manager/Thursday's Child of Long Island
Ev Rainy Georgio - Representing Thursday's Child
Ray Boneta - Representing Thursday's Child
Jessie Rock - Representing Every Child Matters
Vivian Hart - Executive Director/Pronto of Long Island, Inc.
Frank Sinisi - President of the Board/Pronto of Long Island, Inc.
Marcia Spector - Executive Director/SNAP Long Island
Diane Cahill - Autism Speaks/New York State Advocacy Chair
Deanna Marshall - Director/Suffolk County Office of Women Services
Nancy Keating - Suffolk County Office of Women Services
Lori Green - Chair/Suffolk County Women's Advisory Commission
Ana Figueroa - Long Island Head Start

Michael Haynes - Long Island Cares, Inc.
Other Interested Parties
Verbatim Transcript Prepared By:
Alison Mahoney - Court Stenographer

(*The meeting was called to order at 2:15 P.M.*)

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
We'll start the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Barraga.

Salutation

Good afternoon. Okay, we will do public portion. We have some -- a couple of Legislators who have some pressing engagements, so we will try and get through the public portion and we will do the agenda before the presentation. We shall start with Ginny Salerno.

MS. SALERNO:
Thank you. Thank you all for your support of the Long Island 2-Day Breast Cancer Walk which has taken place for the last six years right here in Suffolk County, and I'm here today to ask you to continue your support.

LI 2-Day is a unique fund-raising organization. We operate at the highest levels of fiscal efficiency; we have no office. Volunteers, including myself, do everything out of our homes and our cars. When we need to purchase items, we go to local businesses and ask for in-kind donations; when we can't get in-kind donations, we appeal to their community spirit and we get the cheapest price possible. By operating under an extremely lean posture, we are able to give our beneficiary organizations approximately 98 cents of every dollar raised, nearly 2.5 million in six years.

(*Legislator Gregory entered the meeting at 2:17 P.M.*)

These funds directly affected the lives of your constituents. Please see the attached fact sheet for the complete list of local grassroots organizations supported by LI 2-Day and how with direct financial assistance, we have helped to relieve the pain and suffering of so many citizens of Suffolk County from the trials and tribulations of dealing with the diagnosis of breast cancer.

In 2009, 280 walkers raised $400,000; not a bad amount for such a downturn in economy. Costs, goods, services continue to rise. Our sponsors do their best but have had to cut back on their charitable giving to keep their businesses running and their employees employed. We completely understand, but continue -- to continue our on annual event, we need operating capital. There are 18 of you on the Suffolk County Legislature; if each of you appropriated a small stipend of $2,000 for LI 2-Day, collectively you would offset our operating costs by $36,000. One important lesson that we have learned is that we can accomplish anything if we ban together make the difference.

Nearly 2.5 million has been put back into our local economy, saving Federal, State and local governments these funds. In most cases, LI 2-Day funded necessary services not provided by the government, private industry or insurance companies. At budget time, I ask you, please, set aside grant money for LI 2-Day so together we can continue to fill the large funding in service gaps to the vast population of breast cancer patients, survivors and their families on Long Island. If you have any questions, suggestions of local businesses that you know of that would like to support on organization such as ours, please contact me.

Thank you for permitting me to speak to you today. Thank you for the consideration and appropriation of funds for LI 2-Day, and thank you for helping us to continue to service the residents of Suffolk County. Our motto and commitment is to Long Island, what's raised here stays here. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Thank you, Ginny. You do a great job. Greg Noone next.

MR. NOONE:
You have a new microphone. Good afternoon. On behalf of the clients and staff of Thursday's Child, I offer this committee a brief report of our AIDS Services Access Program.

Two decades have passed since Sharon "Didi" Kelley founded Thursday's Child. This extraordinary woman instilled in us the values of caring, dedication and compassionate in our actions. Twenty years have gone by and we have much to be proud of, yet much work remains to be done.

Incorporated as a non-profit charity in 1991, the mission of Thursday's Child is to develop, to coordinate and to provide services to people living with and affected by HIV and AIDS. Didi named this agency after the familiar nursery rhyme that begins, "Monday's Child is fair of face"; the rejoinder for Thursday's Child is, "Has far to go." People living with AIDS still have far to go. We struggle each day to take expensive medicines with dreadful side effects. Stigma, fear, discrimination and self-loathing are chronic conditions that, left untreated, cause pain, suffering and death, but Didi chose a name that speaks to the hope and the promise of a better tomorrow. When people gather in common cause there is hope. Didi opened her home to those who were shunned by their own families. She showed us by her actions and by words that caring and compassion trump sickness and death.

I'm here today to thank this committee for supporting Thursday's Child. The passion and commitment to service remains our highest priority. There are presently 230 active client files kept at our small office located in Patchogue. I am not pleased to report that the requests for services continue to outpace our capacity to provide them. There are days when we are overwhelmed.

Submitted to you are several documents. One is the contract between the Suffolk County Department of Health Services and Thursday's Child; it clearly states our original goal of providing 60 units of service each month. It is anticipated that by the end of this year, our agency will exceed our stated goals by over 50%; this is due to a combination of factors including increased awareness of our programs, increased community outreach and the addition of our office assistant, an extraordinary person whose skills include professional office management combined with a superb personal touch that is welcoming to our clients. Ms. Patty {Svonick} is sitting next to me here today, she's a welcome addition to Thursday's Child.

The monthly reports for June, July and August contain service numbers that even shocked me. Also submitted for your information is the New York State data showing that there are now over 5,700 Long Islanders who are living with HIV and AIDS. Accept my sincere gratitude for allowing Thursday's Child to serve this targeted population on behalf of the County of Suffolk. We strive each day to fulfill our standards of providing basic, humane and essential services, design to uphold dignity and preserve self-respect.

I also wish to thank the County employees and workforce, the good men and women at the Departments of Health Services, Social Services, Probation, Corrections and your Legislative staffs who diligently work for the public good. There exists a positive working relationship between Thursday's Child and Suffolk County government, from the Comptroller's Office to the Contracts Unit to the Commissioner's Response Unit at Social Services. Let the record state that Suffolk County workers are the finest and most professional.

I look forward, with your support, to continue serving people living with HIV and AIDS in Suffolk County to the best of my ability. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you, Greg. And thank you on behalf of the Suffolk County workers. Ev Rainy Georgio?

MS. GEORGIO:
Good afternoon.

MR. CAFFEY:
Hold the button down.

MS. GEORGIO:
Good afternoon. My name is Rainy Georgio. I would like to say thank you for your time and patience in giving me the opportunity to thank you all for giving aid to those who are all in need of help. Thank you for a job well done.

Today I am here to speak on an agency that desperately needs your help, Thursday's Child. Thursday's Child is a non-profit agency whose mission is to develop, coordinate and to provide to 6,000 people living with HIV and AIDS on Long Island. Thursday's Child has been able to subsidize their clients' needs through personal and corporate donations, matching grants, private foundations, grants and fund-raisers have accepted to stand and serve their cause. Keep Thursday's Child's door open, please help them to serve the people with HIV/AIDS in a dignified manner. These services, including housing, emergency, financial assistance, counseling and education to increase public awareness, all age appropriate.

From 1995 to 2007, Federally-funded grants allowed Thursday's Child to provide Long Islanders living with AIDS. Food, shelter, clothing are priorities served in a sensitive and honest approach. I don't have to tell you about the cost of living increase daily; Long Island is one of the most highest in the United States. Remember, HIV/AIDS is not a respecter of persons, it has impacted us all in one way or another. Thank you for supporting Thursday's Child in any way you can. And to you, Thursday's Child, and my dear friend Greg Noone, I thank you for a job well done and know that we all continue to pray for a cure. To those of you surviving with HIV/AIDS, have far to go; you are Thursday's Child. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Thank you. Next we have Jessie Rock.

MS. ROCK:
Hi, good afternoon. My name is Jessie Rock and I'm the Campaign Director for the Long Island Branch of Every Child Matters. And last year I addressed the full body of this Legislature as we received a proclamation for Step-Up For Kids Day, and so I'm back again, this is an annual event that's going on. There are about 50 events taking place in over 35 states nationwide.

Every Child Matters, we're a national organization that's nonpartisan, non-profit. And the point of Step-Up For Kids Day is not only to celebrate and recognize our children, but also to call for solutions to the problems and issues that they face. So it's difficult to disagree with the statement that every child matters, but to take a stand and to keep that sentiment in mind when you're making policy decisions is something that's very inspiring and very necessary. So I view all of us as a community, and I know that children, youth and families provide a solid base for community building.

So as part of Step-Up For Kids Day -- and we also had an event at the Nassau County Legislature on Monday in front of their full body. But I would like to highlight a few statistics to give a picture of how children are faring on Long Island, on the local level. So I'd like to frame it in this way. If every child on Long Island really matters, then what should we know? And so I'm going to read you

a few statistics, but I also want to take a minute so we all realize that these are not just numbers, these are people. And numbers have a way of sort of glossing over the fact that -- glossing over the people that they represent.

All right, in 2008 there were about 9,500 reported cases of child abuse and neglect in Suffolk County, and those are just the reported cases and that's just Suffolk County. In 2006, 93,000 children in 259,000 families turned to soup kitchens, food pantries and other emergency food programs on Long Island, and estimates are that this year those numbers have increased by about 30%. In 2007, there were about 38,000 uninsured children in Suffolk County. And finally, every day young adults on Long Island and across the country age-out of the Foster Care System, too often with insufficient or too little support to move forward with their lives successfully.

So finally, one of -- the purpose of Step-Up For Kids Day is really to say that, you know, we don't passively accepts these statistics, that we want to do something proactive about solving these issues and addressing these issues. So part of what we did was we had -- last year we had a hands campaign, we had almost 26,000 kids trace their hands across Long Island. This year we're doing eyes, here are a few examples. So we're having thousands of kids draw their eyes to give the message that we're looking to -- we're looking to all of us, including elected officials, for leadership on these issues to ensure that every child matters.

So as elected officials, you all can ensure that children and families are a Legislative priority. And as community members, we encourage voters to go to the polls with -- to vote with children, youth and families in mind. As I mentioned, we're nonpartisan, but we do take a look at elected officials records and ensure that every child does matter in terms of voting and creating legislation. So thank you very much for this opportunity.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Thank you, Jessie. You can applaud.

Applause

Next, Vivian Hart and Frank Sinisi.

MS. HART:
Good afternoon.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Before you start, there is three minutes. I know two of you are up, but it still is only three minutes.

MS. HART:
Yes, ma'am. My name is Vivian Hart and I'm the new Executive Director of Pronto. I thank the distinguished members of this committee for the opportunity to briefly present our concerns and appeal to you for assistance.

As a human service agency, Pronto has assisted the poor and needy in our County for over 40 years. I have only been with Pronto for eleven months, but have witnessed first-hand how people's lives have changed for the better because of our vital services and programs. Every day people come to our building for food, clothes and essential household items, to name a few things. Unfortunately, because of the economic downturn, we've been hit with what you could say is a double whammy; we are now servicing many more County residents and receiving much less funding due in large part to the recession.

It has come to our attention that the County DSS funding will not be available to us for the last quarter of 2009, nor will this funding be available to us in 2010. And as an increase -- we need an

increase in the County funding so that we can properly service the clients who come to our doors every day. This year we have reduced our service hours, we have reduced our work hours and we've laid off three employees. We cannot afford to layoff any other staff as it will compromise the integrity of our services. Please allow a brief explanation from Frank Sinisi, the President of the board.

MR. SINISI:
Good afternoon, Madam Chairperson.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Hold the button down.

MR. SINISI:
Thank you. I'll remember to keep my finger on the button. Thank you, Madam Chairperson. As my Executive Director has been saying things about Pronto, what has happened at Pronto is -- it's going to sound unbelievable, some of numbers that I'm going to give to you. The building that we're in now, as she said, we're in our community now for a little over 40 years. We started out of St. Ann's Church working in the basement, and then we had store front on Fifth Avenue, and from there United Way and Entenmann's Corporation, Entenmann's Bakery, many years ago, helped us get a small building on Pine Aire Drive in North Bay Shore, right on the borderline of Brentwood. And most recently, in 2005, we built a 10,500 square building that we moved into.
Last year --

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Okay. Mr. Sinisi, we did run out of time.

MR. SINISI:
Son of a gun. I was just getting good.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Did you have a question? Okay. You know, we still -- you still can come, we do have public hearings for the budget and, you know, that would be a very appropriate time for you to come back and take an opportunity. But we do have Legislator Gregory and I believe Legislator Barraga both have questions for you.

LEG. GREGORY:
Okay. Good afternoon, sir. You said that you're in jeopardy of losing -- not losing, but you not having enough funds for the end of this year and you've been cut out of the budget for next year?

MS. SINISI:
My biggest concern is possibly closing down for the months of November and December, and they're the two busiest months of the year.

LEG. GREGORY:
Okay.

MR. SINISI:
Last year we gave toys away to over 2,400 children and to -- for Thanksgiving we gave turkey, over 930 turkeys plus everything from soup to nuts for Thanksgiving, and those things aren't going to be there if we don't get any help from the County or the state.

As I say, last year we serviced 51,000 people and I thought that was a lot. This year, only for the first two-thirds of the year, we already serviced 78,000 people. And the next four months are going

to be the busiest of the year, so that number could be up to about 90,000 by the end of December, and we can't do it on the money that we presently have.

LEG. GREGORY:
How much are we talking about? You haven't mentioned a number yet.

MR. SINISI:
Well, as far as a number that we'll probably need for the remainder of the year, it's around $50,000.

LEG. GREGORY:
Thank you.

MR. SINISI:
You're welcome.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Legislator Barraga.

LEG. BARRAGA:
Don't go away, Frank.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Frank?

MR. SINISI:
Oh, you've got two questions.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Legislator Barraga has a question.

LEG. BARRAGA:
I just want to make it very clear to the members here that you are in jeopardy of possibly closing if something isn't undeveloped in terms of funding in the short-term here. Because as you pointed out, as you did last week when we spoke, you are already at, you said 78,000 through October 5th, and you've got several months to go and you could well be above a hundred thousand based on the economic conditions you're seeing and the recession that we're in. And Pronto has been there for 40 years, it really -- it not only takes care of the Brentwood community but, you know, almost 50,000, 53,000 people, but you've got people coming in from Shirley and Mastic and Wyandanch, right across the board.

MR. SINISI:
We get people as far east as Riverhead sometimes and we go into Wyandanch and Amityville and South Huntington. As a matter of fact, the Department of Social Services sends people to Pronto because they can't take care of them.

LEG. BARRAGA:
Okay. And the other thing, too, if I recall correctly, you had indicated that the funding you're getting from the State, you got something like $69,000 this year, but that funding is supposed to last two years. It's already gone, so you're not getting anything from the State in 2010.

MR. SINISI:
As far as the Department of Social Services?

LEG. BARRAGA:
Right.

MR. SINISI:
Correct.

LEG. BARRAGA:
That's correct.

MR. SINISI:
Nothing at all, not one dime.

LEG. BARRAGA:
So you've gone through a two-year allocation on those dollars for the first ten months of 2009.

MR. SINISI:
Well, I don't know if that was a two-year allocation, that money that we received.

LEG. BARRAGA:
My impression, though, is that the money you receive is supposed to go for a period of two years, and now it's -- it was just the one shot; is that right, Executive Director?

MS. HART:
It was one year.

MR. SINISI:
It was just one year.

LEG. BARRAGA:
One year. But are you slated to get anything from the State in 2010? No.

MR. SINISI:
No.

LEG. BARRAGA:
Okay. So that's a loss of another 69,000, right?

MR. SINISI:
Nothing at all is going to come in for 2010.

LEG. BARRAGA:
So your real hope for the future is to get some additional funding from the County.

MR. SINISI:
From the County --

LEG. BARRAGA:
And whatever you can raise from the private sector.

MR. SINISI:
And whatever we do in the private sector and what we may get in grants or member money from the State.

LEG. BARRAGA:
Okay. Thank you.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Madam Chair, can I just --

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Legislator Kennedy.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Sir, before you leave the podium, just two quick questions. One, I know that your organization is heavily subscribed. As a matter of fact, I can recall 20 years ago when Pronto was in some distress. Have you made any equal request to the County Executive's Office, to the administration?

MR. SINISI:
Yes. As a matter of fact, I had a meeting with Steve Levy on Monday in reference to this.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Okay. And through BRO, is there some kind of shortfall as far as what they were budgeted with? This is Department of Social Services funding and/or Health or Aging; what's the funding stream?

MS. DONO:
John, I'm sorry, I don't know the exact numbers. I'd have to look up the database in order to tell you.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Okay. This is I'm sure something that's going to be a topic in the Working Group. So if we could get some information on that agency, I would be interested in it. Thank you. Thank you, Sir.

MR. SINISI:
Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Thank you. Next, Marcia Spector.

MS. SPECTOR:
Good afternoon. My name is Marcia Spector and I'm the Executive Director of SNAP Long Island, also known as the Suffolk Network on Adolescent Pregnancy. I'm here to support Resolution 1851-09, Establishing a Teen Pregnancy Task Force. I've spoken with most of the members of the Legislature over the summer, as well as members of the Executive Branch about some concerns that we're seeing out in the communities in terms of rising rates of teen pregnancy.

SNAP was created by the County Executive and the Legislature in 1979 as a blue ribbon task force comprised of high level officials and department heads and has served as the County's designated agency for adolescent pregnancy prevention and services since 1985. Our charge has been to help Suffolk adolescents prevent premature sexual activity and pregnancy, to ameliorate the negative consequences of adolescent child-bearing, by helping pregnant and parenting adolescents become self-sufficient, responsible parents and by bringing additional pregnancy prevention resources to Suffolk County.

I previously served as the Chairperson of the original task force, as Long Island's representative to both Governor Cuomo and Governor Pataki's Task Forces on Teen Pregnancy and still serve as the Executive Director of SNAP for the past 25 years. I'm also the past President of the New York State Council on Adolescent pregnancy and I serve as New York State's representative to the National, State and Local Coalition Technical Advisory Group.

Adolescent pregnancy has decreased significantly in Suffolk County from the early 90's when over

4,100 girls became pregnant. In 2007, there were a little over 2,000 pregnancies reported, which is over a 50% drop; we've really done remarkably well in terms of reducing teen pregnancy. However, the numbers have begun to rise again, slowly but steadily, since 2005. While pregnancy rates in Suffolk County are well below the State average, at 38.3 per thousand compared with 58.4 per thousand in New York State, pregnancy rates in some of our most vulnerable communities have begun to rise pretty sharply and may signify a new trend. Rates of Gonorrhea and Clamidia have also risen sharply. These rising rates of both teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections mirror what is happening nationally, it's not just a Suffolk County issue.

Adolescent pregnancy is an extremely complex social problem. Adolescent pregnancy is rotted in a number of factors which include poverty, exposure to violence and substance abuse, family structure, parent-child connectedness, school-connectedness and academic performance, romantic partners, especially having an older boyfriend is a huge risk factor, plans for the future and the adolescent's own sexual values and attitudes. SNAP works with pregnant and parenting and at-risk adolescent in many needy communities and we have been successful in working with young people to provide positive youth development programs that do make them healthier in their decisions about sexuality issues. But the reality is the problem of adolescent pregnancy ultimately requires a much broader-based, comprehensive approach involving many sectors in our society. We know from the research that young people who grew up in nurturing families make better decisions about their sexuality and risk-taking behavior, and that's why we knew to gather together a group of high-level officials to come together to create a climate where solutions can be found, and I urge you to support this resolution.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Thank you, Marcia. I don't have any questions right now, there may be some questions when we get to the bill.

MS. SPECTOR:
I'll stay.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
But we do kind of want to go out of order, Legislator Eddington does have an appointment and we'd like to let him stay for the votes. Commissioner Blass, did you have anything specific on the agenda that you want to discuss?

COMMISSIONER BLASS:
Not on the agenda, but other miscellaneous items.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Okay. So we'll go to the agenda and then we'll talk to you afterwards.

Okay, ***Tabled Resolution*** 1714-09, Adopting Local Law No. -2009, A Local Law to prohibit the use of tanning facilities by minors (Viloria-Fisher).

MS. LOMORIELLO:
1290, Legislator Browning?

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Did I miss one? Oh, sorry. Let's go back.

1290-09 - Adopting Local Law No. -2009, A Local Law to enact a grading policy for food establishments (Losquadro). I'll make a motion to table.

LEG. EDDINGTON:
Second.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Second, Legislator Eddington. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? ***It's tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

Let's go back to ***1714-09 - Adopting Local Law No. -2009, A Local Law to prohibit the use of tanning facilities by minors (Viloria-Fisher).***
Do I have a motion?

LEG. KENNEDY:
I'll make a motion to table.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Motion to table.

LEG. GREGORY:
Second.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Second, Legislator -- what's your name, Gregory?

(*Laughter From Panel*)

LEG. GREGORY:
Or Barraga.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Sorry. So we have a second to table. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? ***It's tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

Okay, ***1757-09 - Authorizing that Resolution No. 348-2009 be rescinded which appropriated 100% State Aid from the New York State Office of Mental Health to Brookhaven Memorial Hospital Center (County Executive).*** I see Mr. Miner is up here. I will make a motion to table.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Second.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Second, Legislator Kennedy. Do you want to say anything on it?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MINER:
No, we wanted it tabled for one more session so we can get the information that Legislator Eddington had requested.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Right. So we have a motion and a second. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? ***It's tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

Introductory Resolution

1794-09 - Declaring the first week in November as "Family Caregiver Appreciation Week" in Suffolk County (D'Amaro).

LEG. KENNEDY:

Motion.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
That sounds nice.

LEG. EDDINGTON:
Second.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Motion, Legislator Kennedy. Second, Legislator Eddington.
All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? ***Motion is approved*** ***(VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

1824-09 - Declaring October 13th as "Metastatic" -- I can't say that right -- ***"Breast Cancer Awareness Day" in Suffolk County (Alden).***
I'll make the motion. Second --

LEG. GREGORY:
Second.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
-- Legislator Gregory. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions?
motion is carried. ***Approved (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).*** I'll have to get my tongue around that one.

1836-09 - Amending the 2009 Adopted Operating Budget to accept and appropriate additional 100% State Aid from the New York State Office of Mental Health to Federation of Organizations (County Executive).
I'll make a motion to approve and place on the Consent Calendar.

LEG. BARRAGA:
Second.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Second, Legislator Barraga. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carries. ***Approved and placed on the Consent Calendar***
(VOTE: 5-0-0-0).

1837-09 - Amending the 2009 Adopted Operating Budget to accept and appropriate additional 100% State Aid from the New York State Office of Mental Health to Family Service League for the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Program (County Executive). Same motion, same second, same vote. ***Approved and placed on the Consent Calendar***
(VOTE: 5-0-0-0).

1851-09 - Establishing a Teen Pregnancy Task Force (Viloria-Fisher).
I guess I'll make a motion to approve.

LEG. BARRAGA:
Second.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Second, Legislator Gregory. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carries. ***Approved (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

1859-09 - Amending the 2009 Adopted Operating Budget to accept and appropriate

additional State Aid from the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services and to transfer funding from current appropriations to Human Growth and Understanding Seminars, Inc. (HUGS) (County Executive).

LEG. KENNEDY:
I'll make a motion to approve, Madam Chair, but then I have a question as far as the transfer.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Okay. Who can answer that question?

LEG. EDDINGTON:
Second.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
So we have a motion and a second by Legislator Eddington.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Can BRO tell us?
CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Can anybody give us an answer on what the transfer is?

MR. FREAS:
I think it's just --

LEG. KENNEDY:
Is it within agency or out of agency?

MR. FREAS:
It's agency-to-agency, I believe.

LEG. KENNEDY:
So which agency is losing 45 grand, then?

MS. PERILLIE:
I don't think it was allocated to a specific agency.

MR. FREAS:
I'm going to need a minute, sir. I was trying to answer your previous question.

MS. PERILLIE:
John, I don't think it was allocated. I think it's unallocated money.

LEG. KENNEDY:
If it's unallocated funds, that's fine. If I can just -- we're going to go back to the public portion. If you guys have an opportunity to let me know. I'm always happy to see, you know, a treatment agency -- and HUGS does a very good job -- get additional funding, because God knows that it's needed. I just want to know where it's coming from, you know. If it's unallocated, that's fine; if it's from another agency, I want to know why.

MR. FREAS:
I understand.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:
Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Okay, we had a motion to approve, and the second was Legislator Eddington. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Okay, motion carries ***Approved (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

We will go back to the public portion. Matt, did you have something you wanted to say?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MINER:
I just have one CN for the next session, to lay on the table, and it's for Family Planning; it's a $200,000 grant from the State. So we'll be submitting that.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Okay.

Next -- okay, we're back to the public portion. I apologize we had to go off there. The next one is Diane Cahill.

MS. CAHILL:
Good afternoon. I'm Diane Cahill, the New York State Advocacy Chair for Autism Speaks, and I'm here today representing thousands of individuals with Autism and their families who reside in Suffolk County.

Autism Speaks is the largest national, non-profit advocacy organization in the world for Autism. We are dedicated to increasing the awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorders, funding research and advocating for the needs of those affected and their families. Autism is a complex, neurobiological disorder that typically lasts throughout a person's lifetime; it is the fastest growing developmental disability in the world. This week new numbers were reported by the CDC and published in Pediatrics wherein Autism affects one in every 91 children, making it more common than pediatric cancer, diabetes and AIDS combined.

It occurs in all racial, ethnic and social groups and is four times more likely to strike in boys than girls. At least 80 children each day are diagnosed, a new case is diagnosed within every 15 minutes and there is no medical detection or cure for Autism. While the rate of prevalence increases each day, the rate of public funding from programs and support does not. Some examples are Leukemia affects one in 25,000, receives $310 million worth of funding from the government per year. Muscular Dystrophy, one in 20,000, $175 million; Pediatric AIDS, one in 8,000, 394 million; Juvenile Diabetes, one in 500, 130 million; autism affects one in 91 children and we receive $15 million worth of funding.

Children on the Autism Spectrum demonstrate deficits in social interaction and in communication and show repetitive behaviors or interest. Symptoms range from mild to severe and vary with each child. In New York State and elsewhere, families of children with Autism have sought out treatments. No one treatment is perfect for every child, but speech, occupational and physical therapies have produced positive gains.

Children with Autism have also benefitted from psychological and psychiatric services, as well as from pharmacological interventions. Applied Behavior Analysis, which is an evidence-based, behavioral intervention, is the treatment of choice for many children with Autism. In addition, early intervention is critical to gain maximum benefit from existing therapies. While early intervention -- excuse me. With early intervention, a sizeable minority of children diagnosed with Autism are able to achieve age appropriate, educational and intellectual functioning. With good health care, children with Autism can make remarkable strides. Autism Speaks is working on a state by state initiative to mandate insurance coverage to cover diagnosis and treatments of Autism and currently we have 15 states that have passed insurance reform coverage, most recently Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Jersey.

We are actively pursuing insurance reform for Autism in New York State. Any health care reform in New York State and this country must end Autism insurance discrimination. Many New York children are not now receiving the services that would help them while others are receiving care at ruinous financial cost to their families. In the case of a child with autism, doing without care or diluting care could mean the loss of critical opportunities to ameliorate the devastating effects of the condition. Families are forced to cope with delayed, inadequate and fragmented care and often pay for costly interventions out of pocket or forgo them. Autism Speaks believes that the pertinent question in the discussion regarding individuals with Autism is not whether we can afford to provide appropriate interventions, but rather whether we can afford not to.

Of course, the cost of health care and other services is but one measure of the cost of Autism. Another measure is the emotional cost of the condition, a measure that cannot readily be quantified. Whatever calculus is used, there can be no doubt that savings lie in reducing Autism's toll. Ending discrimination against our children with Autism is not only a wise investment, it will also insure that every one of our children, including those with Autism, has the best chance to reach their full potential.

About a year ago, in Nassau County we formed --

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Ms. Cahill, your time is up, but I do want to ask you a question.

MS. CAHILL:
Sure.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
So for a child with Autism, there is -- insurance won't cover --

MS. CAHILL:
Insurance covers nothing for children with Autism.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
So if you want to have your child diagnosed to find out if they have Autism --

MS. CAHILL:
They can go to a neurologist and some of the insurance companies will pay for it and some of them won't, and once you receive the diagnosis that's it, then insurance companies don't cover anything. If I was diagnosed with cancer, I would have the opportunity to go to a doctor, be diagnosed, hopefully receive appropriate treatment and hopefully be cured; a child or an adult with Autism doesn't have that luxury.

I won't read the last two paragraphs, but what I was here today to talk about was that we formed this coalition in Nassau County a year ago. We rolled out information on education, research, medical, residential opportunities, and we're conducting a prevalent study in Nassau County in partnership with Adelphi University for the cost of $5,000. We'd like Suffolk County to join the coalition and make it an Island-wide endeavor and have Suffolk County either do their own prevalent study or perhaps join with Nassau County and do a study Island-wide. Autism is not limited to Nassau County and we'd like the County to take an interest in what's going on.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Actually, when Legislator Majijas had his public hearing, I was there.

MS. CAHILL:

Great.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
And I did express an interest. I think that that's something I would like to do here, because I see it all the time I'm in my district. I mean, we have parents calling up, we started getting Autism signs posted because some parents were concerned about their kids taking off and running across the street but, you know, that doesn't take care of the problem. I had a presentation in my district, a gentleman came up from Florida and spoke with our Emergency Service workers to talk about children with Autism and, you know, if you get a 911 call and you get to this home about red-flag in the home, what they need to be looking for when they get there. So I know the importance and I think we need to do more.

MS. CAHILL:
I've given all of you copies of our recommendations for changes in Federal, State and local policy, and some of the things you're talking about are training of workforce, not only professionals and para professionals but lunch matrons and bus drivers. We've had an incident where a bus was pulled --

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
We had bus drivers, yep.

MS. CAHILL:
-- over and the Police came and put a straight jacket on a child with Autism, you know.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
No, we did have -- the school districts participated, they had some teachers, school bus drivers, they had drivers assistants that came and they were very impressed with what they had learned and it certainly sent them back with a different idea and opinion of what they needed to do. But Legislator Kennedy has a question also.

LEG. KENNEDY:
My question goes to the statement that you had just made about the insurance coverage. Because ironically -- I shouldn't say ironically -- a constituent is reaching out right now about a dispute with an insurer and coverage for some speech therapy and things like that for a six year-old Autistic child. Your experience with your organization is that no insurers are underwriting this coverage? How is it that children are getting any kind of care at all.

MS. CAHILL:
Not in New York State they're not. In New York State they're not. Most people get those services, speech, OT and PT through their school districts; a child with Autism, from the age of 5 to 21, is covered by New York State Education.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Uh-huh.

MS. CAHILL:
So if they get it through their schools and they're looking for additional treatments in the home, they're not entitled to it through their insurance companies.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Okay.

MS. CAHILL:
But we have two out of the three tri-states that just passed insurance reform. So families now get $36,000 worth of coverage for ABA and no limit on speech, OT and PT. So a family -- when you

have a child that's diagnosed with Autism, often when you're dealing with the schools, unfortunately they can't pay for everything, the schools just can't afford it and we have to understand that. And you have a family that will go in and will have a child that's non-verbal, as well as has severe behaviors. So a family is often faced with the decision of, "Gee, do I want my child to be able to speak and communicate or do I want my child's behaviors to be modified where they can live at home and go out into the community and be accepted?", and that's a terrible trade-off. So here we would have the schools providing whatever they feel is appropriate during the day and then additional treatments can be provided through private health insurance, and this would be a very big boost. We have families that are spending 50 and $80,000. I get phone calls, as Advocacy Chair for Autism Speaks, from Congressmen and Legislators and all over the place; "I have a family that, you know, has a problem, wants a group home placement." We have no available residential placements on Long Island. Our children are being shipped to Connecticut, Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Why should our children have to live outside the communities they call home?

LEG. KENNEDY:
I'm familiar with it directly; I have DDI in my district, as a matter of fact, and I advocate for them on a regular basis, and as a matter of fact, I worked for them years ago.

MS. CAHILL:
And they're wonderful. And all of these organizations are part of this coalition. We service Nassau and Suffolk County, therefore Suffolk County should take a much more active role and we should really identify what the prevalence rate is for Long Island, because this one in 91 is a national average.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair..

MS. CAHILL:
Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Legislator Gregory has a question. No, Diane? Legislator Gregory.

MS. CAHILL:
My finger hurts holding the button.

LEG. GREGORY:
Thank you for coming today.

MS. CAHILL:
My pleasure.

LEG. GREGORY:
Autism is something that's near and dear to me; my best friend, his second child has Autism. And one of the things I've been doing, and hopefully I'll be around next year, is I've been talking with the Town of Babylon organizing -- to organize a benefit concert specifically to raise funds for Autism.

MS. CAHILL:
Okay.

LEG. GREGORY:
So whatever I can do to work with you to bring attention to this, you know, please feel free to contact me.

MS. CAHILL:
Well, Autism Speaks -- we're on Long Island, we have an office in Huntington -- is to work with our communities to do things just like that, to bring awareness, to bring the community together, to show families where they need to go, that they have someone to go to that can give them some idea of how to deal with everything. So we have a 100-Day Kit for newly diagnosed families and we have a lot of resources that I can get to everyone here. You know, we're just starting this, we're all volunteers, I have a full-time job working for an agency that services children with Autism, but we'd be very happy to work with anyone in the Legislature.

LEG. GREGORY:
Okay. Now, maybe I misheard you, but I think you said that the Nassau, you're working with them to do a prevalent study and it's -- their portion is $5,000?

MS. CAHILL:
Yes. Nassau County and Adelphi and partnering and the cost to the County is $5,000. I'd love to see Suffolk partner with a University or us come together, you know, as an Island-wide initiative and not have it be -- I mean, Tom Suozzi might not like me saying it, but I'd like it not to be the Nassau County Autism Coalition, I'd like it to be a Long Island Autism Coalition where Nassau and Suffolk County, Department of Health and all the Legislatures -- Legislators work together. And all of these organizations, I work for Eden II Programs, we had DDI at the table, we had OMRDD, LIDDSO, NSSA, NSAISA, we had parents advocates, we had -- everyone came together and we spent hundreds of hours trying to create a road map of different gaps in services that we thought we could affect change in, not a dream but what we really thought we could make some changes in within the guidelines of what's going on with the economy right now and what our limitations are, and we came up with some very reasonable recommendations and it's just the beginning. Now we have to continue our work and meet, and before we move on further, I think that Suffolk County should be part of it. And if we want to know the prevalence rate in Nassau County, we certainly want to know the prevalence rate in Suffolk County; I'm a resident of Suffolk County, I want to know that my County wants to know what's going on. And this particular topic, Autism, this is just in its infancy, so we have a lot of work ahead of us.

LEG. GREGORY:
Okay. Thank you.

MS. CAHILL:
Thank you.

LEG. GREGORY:
I'll be reaching out to you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Yeah, we will. Thank you. Next, Deanna Marshall.

MS. MARSHALL:
I have to hold it, right?

MR. CAFFEY:
Yep.

MS. MARSHALL:
If I push this and I hold it for more than three minutes, am I going to get a shock or something is going to happen to me?

MS. GREEN:
I'll push it and you --

MS. MARSHALL:
No, that's okay. Lori is coming with me because Lori is -- she had put a card in, but since the resolution has already gone through, she's not going to speak so I'll be speaking for both of us.

Madam Chair and the members of the Health Committee, I stand here as the Director of Suffolk County Women Services and the -- a member of the Suffolk County Women's Advisory Commission, as well as representing Lori who is here who is the Chair of the Suffolk County Women's Advisory Commission, and I'm also the Co-Chair of the Suffolk County HIV Commission, I have a couple of jobs that I do. But more so, we're here to thank you for the support of the Resolution 1851-2009 that is going to form the Teen Pregnancy Task Force here in Suffolk County. I don't want to be redundant since you've already done what you're going to do and I just thank you and --

MS. GREEN:
I'll say a few words.

MS. MARSHALL:
She said she wasn't going to speak; is that okay if she does at this point.

MS. GREEN:
Can I just say a quick few words?

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Sure.

MS. MARSHALL:
Okay.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
But, you know, you know you can come back on Tuesday. Next Tuesday we -- in front of all of us.

MS. GREEN:
Push and talk. Push and hold, here I go. The Suffolk County Women's Advisory Commission is very interested in teen-age pregnancy and the entire commission, including myself, would be available to be part of this task force. And if you would like, we will come back Tuesday. Thank you.

MS. MARSHALL:
Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Yes, you can. Thank you. Last but not least, Ray Boneta; did I say that right?

MR. BONETA:
Good afternoon. My name is Ray Boneta. I'm here in support of Thursday's Child. I just want to thank you for all your support and helping us. We're a very small program and I just want to say thank you for helping us and, you know, as you continue to help us in this fight against HIV and AIDS, you're providing a great deal for, you know, many families and their children, and I just wanted to say thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Thank you. Any questions?

Applause

There you go.

Okay, we do have a presentation; Mitchell Shapiro. Here at the table. Before you start, I apologize, Commissioner; you want to get back to work?

COMMISSIONER BLASS:
I will only be a minute.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Okay. Commissioner, if you want to come up. We'll let our -- our Commissioner does need to leave, so we're going to let him say what he needs to say.

COMMISSIONER BLASS:
Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee. I come with a request, a rather mundane item; I'll entitle it an Omnibus Resolution in search of some sponsors, and the issue is cars. Mundane as it sounds, it's not to our staff. They are putting in increasing mileage and the reimbursement process is taking longer. Fortunately, on that front, the County Executive has approved backfilling several Account Clerk positions in our division that handles payments to vendors. And I'm happy to report to you, too, that the child care payments to vendors are still within 30 days, as the Local Law requires. Our other vendors are climbing, though. The Account Clerks that we're getting are going to take care of that very effectively.

But on the issue of cars, I spoke to the Budget Office about this, I wanted to speak to you. We need five of them. We have a situation where some reimbursements are being now made for County employees taking care of the -- having brake jobs done on their own vehicles because of the mileage they're putting on and waiting an inordinate amount of time because of the processing of their reimbursement claims. I spoke to one employee yesterday in this dialogue that we're encouraging between the Commissioner's Office and the work force, one employee explained that they have bills from August that haven't been paid and won't be, they're told, until November, according to Audit & Control. So we expect to make a crack in that problem significantly. But just in our Special Investigative Unit, they have four vehicles, they're all very high mileage. They put two of them in the shop, one of them is teetering on whether it's ever going to come back and the other one isn't coming back at all, they were told it's being decommissioned.

So that plus the other vehicles that I'm going to be asking about and giving you more details about in the next few days; they're all related to core mission, APS, CPS and Fraud and Abuse Investigations and housing inspections. I've asked the divisions to put together the justification information and we are reviewing the high mileage reimbursement rate and comparing that to the actual purchase of vehicles. There was a time where mileage reimbursement for use of an employee's own vehicle was considered a big savings; this is not necessarily the case anymore. And especially when you consider say, for instance, a CPS worker who is called repeatedly and unexpectedly on outgoing trips to homes and families. We think that -- and we're going to review and report to you the comparison of the cost effect and reimbursement versus car requests. So that's really all I wanted to talk to you about on that front.

I do want to give you a quick report very quickly about our burgeoning problem with homelessness. In 2008, at this time in October, we had about 282 homeless families; October of this year, this month, we are up to 357. This is not yet the winter months. Also, with singles, we have 184 homeless singles who are getting shelter from the County.
And the sex offender homeless, whom we house separately, are reaching the point of saturation of our trailers. We are looking at additional sites and we are considering, because there are so few unrestricted places where they can be housed and so few motels in other housing facilities where they're welcomed to be housed, we are considering other processes in the short-term. The

additional sites is a long-term process. The placement of sex offenders in a short-term, since we're going beyond our capacity and since the State continues to release them from the correctional system into homelessness -- which is an irresponsible act on the State's part, we would contend, and I'm sure you agree and you've also said so yourselves -- we expect that the time may come where we will duplicate Nassau's practice and issue simply vouchers to them to find their own places. That's going to be a last resort, but I wanted to give you a head's up about it because we are facing a dire situation with facilities, for sex offenders as well as for homeless families. In fact, as never before -- in recent time, I should say, not never before -- but for the first time in a long time, we are housing 56 of those 357 families in motels. A real tragedy and the last resort, but yet it's because we are not yet caught up with shelter providers expanding their capacity which they're in the process of doing. So that's my report, Madam Chairman and members of the committee.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Thank you for the doom and gloom. However, you know, this is something that I keep hearing, is that we have not just the sex offenders, but there are people coming to Suffolk County, to DSS. And I know you can't turn people away when they come in, but when you say, "Well, what's your last known address," and they say, "Queens, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Nassau County"; you know, I'm afraid we're getting to the point where it's not fair that New York City is sending them out here. Nassau is sending them out here and saying, "Go to Suffolk County, maybe they can help you." You know, we shouldn't be doing something -- we should be doing something that they keep sending people out here and now we've got the burden of, you know, the expense and finding locations for them to live; it's just not fair. You know, it's a conversation I had with somebody, he said, "Well, why aren't we just turning around and taking them back to where they came from?" It's not right. You know, and I know that it sounds a little cold but, you know, we can't just keep on doing this. It's a burden on Suffolk County DSS and it's a burden on Suffolk County taxpayers to have to keep accepting from the city and from Nassau and from everywhere else. You know, at some point in time when do we say enough is enough?

And also, to get to the cars, maybe BRO can look. In Yaphank at the Police Headquarters, I drive past there very often, I see fleets of white cars sitting there. You know, if a car is sitting for too long, everything gets dried up and the car is no good anymore. We have a whole fleet of white cars sitting over at the Yaphank Headquarters; can we not transfer five cars?

MS. DONO:
For quite a number of the past few year budget cycles, we have advocated consistently for giving the Department of Social Services the vehicles that they need for their field personnel to do their jobs, particularly in Family & Children Services. So we would be very interested in trying to think outside the box and trying to come up with some solutions to help these workers who are clocking more mileage reimbursement than what it would cost to lease a car. It's not a new issue to us, we're very well acquainted with it. And furthermore, they're transporting children at risk, families at risk, they shouldn't be using their own personal cars.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
No, they shouldn't.

MS. DONO:
So we're in agreement with --

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
How many cars --

MS. DONO:
-- the plea for help.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Do you know how many cars we currently have sitting over there by Yaphank?

MS. DONO:
I do not.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Because I know we keep hearing, "Well, we can't get them striped," and I -- in fact, I saw a Police car in my district that the paint is actually off the hood it's so old. And I actually asked the officer, you know, "How many miles are on that car," and he's exceeding his miles. But we're not getting the cars striped to give them to our precincts and they're sitting there. I don't know how old those cars are, but they just don't seem to be moving, so why can't we transfer them to DSS for their use?

MS. DONO:
The car issue is anything but mundane. It's a critical tool that a lot of County workers rely on and should have a safe car in good working order to use in their daily working activities, and not have to use their own personal cars to that degree.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Well, I'm not on the Working Group, the Budget Working Group. I think you guys are?

LEG. GREGORY:
Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Okay. I think that's an issue that needs to come up with the Working Group tomorrow, to look into getting new cars.

LEG. KENNEDY:
I have a question for the Commissioner, and this is a little bit of the outside of the box type of concept, too. Not only would I look to the PD units that are unstriped yet, I'd go out to Public Works, too. I know that we have a number of the vans sitting next to the Public Works garage in Yaphank that haven't been commissioned yet, and for that matter we've got a bunch of crew cabs. Even the Health Department, I think, has some commercial vehicles; Vector, Vector Control, don't they have some of those work vehicles that we use seasonally?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MINER:
(Inaudible).

LEG. KENNEDY:
I'm sorry?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MINER:
We rotate them to other divisions.

LEG. KENNEDY:
You do rotate them to other uses?

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Other divisions.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Other divisions? Okay. Well, probably one way or the other we're going to have to find them, because it's a reasonable request. And that's the other thing I was going to ask, Commissioner. I know that I see we have minivans and other types of vehicles where it's not just our caseworker who's going, but that worker is also transporting a child or an adult or sometimes families to go

either to a facility, a health care venue, a housing venue; they're going transparent in the function of their position as well, correct?

COMMISSIONER BLASS:
That's correct. And this activity is on the increase because quantitatively and qualitatively, the caseloads are becoming more demanding. And that's also true in the Special Investigative Unit, it's also true with APS as well.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Okay, so we need not only vehicles, but we need vehicles with some capacity, too.

With the homeless, 56 families in motels right now, is that it?

COMMISSIONER BLASS:
That's correct.

LEG. KENNEDY:
And what is the dynamic? I mean, when we look at a cost per day between a shelter and a hotel; what's the spread?

COMMISSIONER BLASS:
It's far more, you're talking quite a number of dollars more for motels. But worse than that is that it's much more difficult to transition a homeless family in need of temporary shelter into permanent housing. We're still at a reasonably good rate of moving into permanent housing approximately 30 to 40 homeless per month.
And with the recent enhancement program that we're doing in partnership with the towns and the east end, as well as Islip and Babylon Towns, we're going to raise that transactions, but the intake is just becoming too heavy. And the Chairperson's suggestion about the out-of-town, out-of-County influx is there, we haven't seen it to be a significant factor, significant enough to explain these numbers, but we'll take a second look at that, at your suggestion, Legislator Browning.

But on the overall issue of permanent housing, when they're in motels it becomes much more difficult to have the supervision and the counseling and the interviewing and the placement in the transitional housing stream that is so important. It's much more problematic from a motel setting than from a shelter setting, and that's why we've asked all our providers to help us with more shelter capacity, and they are working on that but it's like shoveling against the tide now. And I'm not here expecting solutions, I'm going to try to offer some in the future, but I do want to keep this committee informed of some of the issues that are presenting themselves to the department.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Madam Chair? You bring up a good point there, Commissioner. So our current contract shelter providers are in dialogue for expanding their capacity and beds right now?

COMMISSIONER BLASS:
Yes.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Okay, fine.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
DuWayne, go ahead.

LEG. GREGORY:
Thank you, Commissioner, for coming. I'm particularly concerned about vehicles for CPS employees. I mean, they're going into a situation where, you know, there's already a problem

there and using -- people and personnel using their personal vehicles, to me that's disturbing. I think other municipalities, they have County vehicles. I mean, if I go to someone's house as an employee and obviously there's some dangerous situation there, they can -- you know, through my license plate, they can track me down where I live, you know, any personal information. I think that's -- we should reexamine that policy. I don't know if it's always been that way or --

COMMISSIONER BLASS:
Many years back. In fact, going back to ancient times when I was a Legislator myself, there was a view adopted by the Budget Office of the County -- of the Executive Branch. I believe it was Peter Cohalan, County Executive Cohalan's Office, that mileage reimbursement was a way of saving money compared to lease -- or owning a vehicle. Leasing vehicles was not commonplace in that time, that's really a more recent development. And yet -- and it didn't come into the equation then as it should now. But I concur wholeheartedly that it is an enormous imposition and risk for staff to have to use their own vehicles. And I mentioned a break job before because that was the subject of an e-mail I had from one employees because I'm encouraging employees to e-mail me with any issues and we're keeping their input private as far as their identify is concerned. This one said that -- and as we all know, having a break job done in your car is a very expensive proposition now, and that's why their reimbursement request is up to near a thousand dollars and they're waiting a long -- months for that.
And that is a terrible hardship for a person at the salary level of a CPS caseworker, and that's just an example. It goes for the Special Investigative Unit, it goes for APS, Fraud and Abuse Investigations, it goes to all the employees who are now, as a result of that long-ago policy, more and more relied upon to use their own vehicles, not only to get to and from work, but also to get their field work done, which in a County this size is enormous.

LEG. GREGORY:
Just one more question. A little off topic, but I'm just concerned. Does your department have a standard operating procedure or a policy as to how you deal with contracts, with contract agencies? Is there a set model in how you --

COMMISSIONER BLASS:
Yes, we have a Contracts Unit in the department and, of course, we work through the regular bidding process, RFP processes that are required for all County agencies in dealing with contract agencies. And we have to do that because just our Family Children Services Division alone has over 490 contracts relating to agencies that make our work possible.

LEG. GREGORY:
All right, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Thank you. And I guess we'll get back to you with an answer on the car issue. We have to talk some more anyway.

COMMISSIONER BLASS:
Definitely. And in the meantime, the sponsorship of that Omnibus -- we'll work with Budget Review, but that sponsorship of that Omnibus would be very -- greatly appreciated. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Thank you. Okay, Mr. Shapiro. It was certainly -- you came to see me and I have to tell you, it was a really enjoyable meeting and I thank you. I apologize that we've held you up so long.

MR. SHAPIRO:
It's okay, I didn't fall asleep yet.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

That's a good thing. Anyway, if you would like to begin and tell us all about yourself.

MR. SHAPIRO:
Let me first thank the committee and all the Suffolk County Legislators who have met with me so far. I appreciate the time and I appreciate the opportunity to come here and speak. Just for the record, my name is Mitch Shapiro, President, CEO and Founder of the Foundation for Site and Sound, a registered 501-C3 not-for-profit corporation operating out of Smithtown, New York. And with me is my colleague, Dave Carr, he'll tell you who he is in a minute. We're going to do a brief demonstration on things that are not life-threatening but life-altering.

First, I need to applaud all of the people who have already spoken before. And I recognize each and every one of them as a leader in the field of what they do and an appreciation for all the services every not-for-profit organization offers in the community, because each and every one of us offers something different that's so valuable. But if I was to have to ask somebody this question, if you had to lose one tool of your body that's not life-threatening, which would you choose not to lose? As an individual who is both going deaf and blind, my vision has deteriorated more so in the last six months where I can't read out of my left eye and I'm not even two months behind in just a mental idea of how much more I'm going to lose in my right eye.

I have to struggle each and every day. I'm only a volunteer, I've been volunteering for not-for-profit fourteen years now. I give my time to make life easier for other people. The mission of the Foundation for Site and Sound is to enhance the quality of life for individuals with vision and/or auditory challenges. We provide a unique product that I think is something that Suffolk County itself can benefit from and it's the Help America Hear Program where we provide hearing aids for individuals who fall through the cracks and cannot afford them. Each of these patients that apply for hearing aids, it costs us sixty-seven hundred dollars per person based on two hearing aids, something that nobody would be able to pay here on Long Island if it was to be a retail cost. With that, I just want to turn this over to Dave Carr because he is more the expert than I am. Dave?

MR. CARR:
Thanks. Hi. Thank you very much. Thank you very much for hearing us today. My name is David Carr, I'm a third-generation, board certified hearing instrument specialist. I am also the past President for the New York State Hearing Instrument Specialist.

I currently have five offices on Long Island; I am in Southampton, Greenport, Riverhead, Patchogue, and then I'm also at Montefore Medical Center in the Bronx. I currently employ 18 audiologists. Working with the hearing impaired every day, I feel it's vital for you to know that I am one of the last Medicaid providers in Suffolk County. Over the last three years, almost every Medicaid provider that provided hearing instruments to our County has dropped their accounts. Medicaid at this point in time does not even reimburse us, our cost for the hearing instruments themselves. Over the past three years, as a family practice, we have incurred a lot of cost on our own to try and provide these services because we feel it's the right thing to do to give back to the community.

Meeting Mitch Shapiro many years ago gave me the idea and us the idea to put together this program which is called Helping America Hear. And what we're able to do through fund-raising is help a small amount of people. Over the last years -- over the period of time since January, we have fit 38 children and young adults and some seniors with hearing aids through our foundation. We're hoping that the County will hear us and help work together to provide more hearing aids. It's the number three leading disability in the United States. There are over 28 million Americans with hearing loss that are not receiving help and not wearing hearing instruments; we know a big factor to that is because of the cost. When someone comes into a private practice, it generally costs them anywheres from $1,500 to $3,000 per hearing instrument depending on what they obtain retail. As Mitch said, we're able to do it through the foundation for a cost of between six to seven hundred dollars per patient with relationships that we have made with hearing aid manufacturers to be able to do this program.

Hearing loss is also not covered by most insurances, and even Medicaid, for children if it's mild or moderate. It needs to be moderate to severe or profound before the cost is picked up by the insurance company. And I would just like to show you what kind of impact and what the difference is between those hearing loses so that you can see how much an individual is actually losing, but by insurance company standard they feel that it's not that bad. Bear with me just one moment. I will show you first normal hearing, then I will show you moderate and slight moderate and these are hearing losses that they don't feel are worth paying for.

(*Played audio example of normal hearing*)

That is normal hearing. This would be a slight, high frequency hearing loss.

(*Played audio example of slight, high-frequency hearing loss*)

And this now will be moderate/slight, which is still not accepted by the insurance carriers. Actually, no, this is -- I apologize. This is severe, this is covered by the insurance carriers.

(*Played audio example of severe hearing loss*)

And you can see the devastation that's there. And that's still -- let me go back here. We'll go back to normal.

(*Played audio example of normal hearing*)

I apologize here. Let me just get this one going.

MR. SHAPIRO:
Isn't technology great?

(*Played audio example of normal hearing*)

MR. CARR:
And that's the difference. It's kind of hard to present it here, but going from normal to a male's voice, which is mine which is very strong, and then switching to --

(*Audio example of normal hearing continuing to play*)

MR. SHAPIRO:
There we go, pull the plug on it.

MR. CARR:
I apologize for that. What's happening is that the insurance carriers are setting the levels extremely high, to the point where the children are not even able to get the full education in the classroom and understand. So this is where our program comes in, is to fill in those cracks and provide the hearing aids for these children that even have slight hearing loss.

The other thing that's amazing to realize is that in Suffolk County there are schools where the children do have hearing aids that are paid by the State but have to leave their hearing aids in school and are not allowed to go home with them. The insurance carriers and Medicaid that do cover only cover one set of hearing aids every three years, so these children are going home and not being able to properly communicate with their parents, listen to the news and have a normal social life because the hearing aids are being mandatorily kept in the schools, and those are some school policies in Suffolk County. So what this program also does is it helps provide second sets of hearing

aids for the children that aren't allowed to take those out of school.

It's really a growing need because now there's also a lot more awareness in the schools about hearing loss. The hearing aid manufacturer's technology has become so advanced that they're marketing and getting the information out there about hearing loss, which is phenomenal, but there are just so many individuals in this County and throughout the State that are just not being able to be served for their hearing needs.

MR. SHAPIRO:
Let me take that one step further. Dave is talking about children, which is basically everybody's favorite thing. But let's go one step further and let's think about the aging population, let's think about your parents and grandparents, those who you want to have a normal conversation with, those who want to have conversations with their children, their grandchildren and their friends. They're limited in what they can do in life, they don't want to go outside, they're in denial. I just spoke to someone -- and I just say, it's not Suffolk County, it's in New Hampshire, and she happens to be a social worker and she's looking for hearing aids for her mother who is 70 years old, they can't afford it, it's based on the individual, but her mother cannot afford the hearing aid and she has to resort to either shouting to the person or writing. This is not what we call a quality way to live. And as you all know, what's happening in this world is that with the health care reform and everything else, it's getting tougher and tougher to have a better quality of life. And when it comes to hearing and when it comes to visual, visual effects like seeing, it's pretty tough to live in this world without one of those two senses, and even both of them. Like I said, I know because I live it every day, it's a challenge. But not everybody is like me who has that wherewithal to continue in their life and be active in everything they do and just say, "So what, we just move on." We like to help everybody we can, and without the support of the Suffolk County Legislator, Legislature -- perhaps maybe you can think of a way of working us with the Health Department or the Department of Aging, maybe there's a way we can partner and work together where we provide what you need that you don't presently already provide in this County. And that's really what I've got and Dave has something say.

MR. CARR:
I just wanted to also add, too, from being a hearing care professional and working with the population every day. From the Bronx to Patchogue to the Hamptons, I see very similar hearing losses from one end of the Island to the other. I see just as many people that can't afford hearing aids in Southampton as I do in the Bronx. You know, as a hearing care professional, I try to take care of every person that walks through my door and there's a lot of other people out there just like myself, you know, we've been trying to do what we can. And you know, three years ago, three or four years ago the State lowered the standards for hearing loss for veterans to be able to be fit with hearing instruments. They were inundated in the course of six months that they had to raise or lower the bar for hearing loss, it had to be more severe because they could just not provide that many hearing aids to the population.

We tried to work with the VA out here in Suffolk County to be an outreach center and what happened was is they just really cut the program back, so it's veterans, it's children, it's seniors. And it affects their overall well-being, as Mitchel said, to the point where it has an increase of depression and anxieties. It's been estimated that the overall health cost to untreated hearing loss is almost $10 billion because of all the other things that are related to it. Trips and falls, no awareness to a car or to a bicycle, the anxieties and the depression; all of those things add up to more and more dollars for other health care needs for the individuals with hearing loss. It's also a fact that individuals with hearing loss is making an annual income of 40% less than somebody that does not have hearing loss. So all of these things compact, compacted together really affect the community as a whole. Thank you.

MR. SHAPIRO:
One last thing in closing. I just want you to know that we have -- to this day, in five years of

operation of the Foundation for Site and Sound, we have hot sought out government funding of any kind. We have been depending mostly on individuals, corporations and any major gifts that have come. But now it's come to the time, and I'm not going to give the sob story, we all know that this is a very, very tough economy right now, but we are going to continue doing everything we can regardless because we have no agenda, we have no motives, all we want to do is raise money and give it away to the best of our ability to give something tangible back to the community; that's our only goal. Thank you for having us here today.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Thank you, Mitch. And I appreciate what you're doing and the fact that no matter who walks in your door, whether they can afford it or not, you're always willing to help them. And maybe we could talk to our Health Department and see how we can do something to coordinate with you when we do have people coming in.

With that, again, I say thank you and we appreciate you coming in.

MR. SHAPIRO:
Thank you.

MR. CARR:
Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Any questions? I'm sorry.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Not a question, Madam Chair, just a comment. Mitch Shapiro and I have known each other for quite some time, he's a constituent here in the 12th Legislative District. He and I had a very interesting conversation because I have some hearing loss myself, so it is something that goes -- yeah, she knows.

UNKNOWN LEGISLATOR:
Does your wife know that?

LEG. KENNEDY:
Yeah, she knows.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
He didn't hear you say that.

LEG. KENNEDY:
She knows. But it is welcome and commendable, the work that you do. And thank you for coming forward and let's see what we can do to promote some access. Thank you.

MR. SHAPIRO:
Thank you. I appreciate it.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
I love your sense of humor.

(*Laughter From Panel*)

MR. SHAPIRO:
Oh, I did forget, not everybody saw me. But does anybody here know what they call a blind dinosaur? "Idon'tthinkyousawus".

(*Laughter From Audience*)

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
With that, Matt, do you have anything you want to add? I know you mentioned the CN; nothing else?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MINER:
Just one brief update on the H1N1 vaccine. We did get our first shipment, it was a hundred -- a thousand viles and they'll be split pretty much equally between our health centers and our Shot-for-Tot Program. It's a live virus, it can be given through nasal application and it's for healthy individuals between the ages of two and 49. So we're starting deployment of that and we're waiting for the rest of the shipments from the State and we'll be deploying it as quickly as it comes down to us.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
While you're on that, because I know there's the issue with a lot of health care workers and nurses who are saying they don't want to take the Swine Flu shot and being forced to take the shot or lose your job. Do you have any updates on that? Because, I mean, obviously we have John J. Foley. In my personal opinion, I don't want people putting stuff in my body that I'm not so sure it's the safest thing yet.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MINER:
That's a State requirement, it's not a County requirement, it is a State mandate. We have been working with our Division Directors and with the employees and, you know, we're trying to work -- we're sensitive to the employees' concerns and are trying to work out the solution while at the same time recognizing that we have a State mandate. So we're trying to deal with it as well.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
What's the deadline on that? Is that towards the end of the month?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MINER:
I believe it's November 30th.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
November 30th is the deadline, it's either get it or lose your job?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MINER:
That's what the State says.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
No, I know, it's not the County, I know it's the State. Dotty, you work at John J Foley.

MS. KERRIGAN:
Yes, I do.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Can you come up and give me some ideas? You know, what you're hearing at John J. Foley? You have to come on the mike.

MS. KERRIGAN:
I don't have to?

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
No. You need to, yeah.

MS. KERRIGAN:
Oh, okay. My name is Dot Kerrigan, I work at John J. Foley, I'm the AME 4th Vice-President. From what I understand, there is a controversy. We stood with the nurses outside at Rabro Drive last week, some of the AME members, because all over the County and State there are health care workers that are objecting to being mandated.

We have never been mandated before at the nursing home to have the seasonal flu; it was up to us and we would sign a waiver. That's always been the case. Now, I'm not sure -- and Matt, Mr. Miner could clear this up -- if the mandate covers nursing homes. Originally the ruling was from an organization or an agency that really only regulated hospitals, certain health care facilities, not nursing homes. So I'm not understanding, I'm really not sure if that's the case right now, if it was changed or not. But as far as I understand, the nursing homes aren't under that mandate as far as the State goes.

As far as the Patient Care and Health Services, they are being asked to get the vaccine and there are objections. We're wondering if there's going to be disciplinary actions, would they lose their jobs? Because a lot of people are very concerned about that right now.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
So our health care centers, will the -- so the people at, like, Shirley and Patchogue and Coram Health Centers, they're all -- are they going to be required to get the shot?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MINER:
They are, and those three health centers happen to be hospital-staffed health centers and we've been in discussions with the hospitals as well, they're struggling with this as well. Again, this was a State mandate that all health care professionals -- I need to confirm the nursing home, I will do that for Dot and for yourself, but we are working with the divisions, with the hospitals, with the staff and trying to address this.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Okay. Yeah, I gathered. I mean, when I saw those nurses, personally, you know, I don't get sick, I've never had the flu -- fingers crossed, I'll never get the flu -- and personally I've never gotten the flu shot and I do sympathize with the nurses, I really do.

So with that, I think we're done. So I guess we are adjourned.
Thank you.

(*The meeting was adjourned at 3:43 PM*)

{ } - Denotes Spelled Phonetically