

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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December 13, 2017

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HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm
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B E F O R E: STEPHEN T. LEVIN
Chairperson

INEZ D. BARRON
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Annabel Palma
Fernando Cabrera
Vanessa L. Gibson
Corey D. Johnson
Ritchie J. Torres
Barry S. Grodenchik
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
James Vacca
Jumaane D. Williams
Laurie A. Cumbo
Ydanis A. Rodriguez

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Julie Farber, Deputy Commissioner
Family Permanency Services
Administration for Children's Services

Kathleen Hoskins, Assistant Commissioner
Office of Education Support and Policy Planning
Administration for Children's Services

Donna Linderman, University Dean
Student Success Initiatives
City University of New York, CUNY

Shirley Depena, University Director of Youth
Matters
City University of New York, CUNY J

Jasmine Edwards, Student
John Jay College

John Aderounmu, Chairperson
University Student Senate
City University of New York

Malik Meera, Student

Harriet Lassel, Director
Government Contracts and Efficacy, JCCA

Bill Baccaglioni, President & CEO
The Foundling

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[sound check, pause, background comments,
pause] [gavel]

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Good afternoon

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good afternoon.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Welcome to today's
oversight hearing on higher education opportunities
for youth aging out of foster care. My name is
Council Member Inez Barron Chair of the Committee on
Higher Education. I'm joined by the Committee of
General Welfare chaired by my colleague Council from
Brooklyn, Council Member Steve Levin. Today, a high
school diploma alone is no longer sufficient to
ensure good employment prospects for a solid middle-
class income. As the United States has shifted from
an agrarian to an industrial to a service based
economy with heavy demand for high technology, so
have the needs of the labor market. As a result,
there's a growing demand for workers with the skills
and abilities afforded by post-secondary education,
which in turn has contributed to an increasing
earnings gap between college and high school
graduates. According to an analysis of 2010 Census
data, 59% of all jobs in the economy require some
form of post-secondary education or training. By

2020, it is projected that it will increase to 65%.

However, the projection is even higher for New York State where 69% of all jobs will require some post-secondary education beyond high school. That is the long-term economic and social health of the state is dependent on New Yorkers' educational attainment.

Correspondingly, data show that individuals with higher levels of education tend to have better occupational and economic outcomes than their peers with lower levels of education. This even holds true for people with some college, but no credentials when compared to those without any college. On average, earnings increase for each higher academic degree acquired. In 2013, young adults ages 25 to 34 with a bachelor's degree earned 62% more than those with only a high school credential, and 103% more than those who did not complete high school. Considered hourly, college graduates make 98% more an hour on average than people without a degree in 2013 up from 85% a decade earlier. This substantial rise in earnings inequality tied to rising returns of educational attainment nearly doubled between 1979 and 2012. College educated individuals not only tend to have higher earnings than people without higher

education, they are far less likely to be unemployed and more likely to have health and retirement benefits with their jobs. Beyond the economic advantages afforded by higher education, people with college degrees are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs, and healthier than their less educated peers. People with higher education are also more likely to read to their children, better preparing the next generation for school. They are also twice as likely to vote as a peer with only a high school diploma, and are more likely to be civically engaged. Overall, a college education not only benefits the individual when it comes to succeeding in today's 21st Century economy, but positively impacts society as a whole. With a mission of vital importance as a vehicle to the upward mobility of the disadvantaged in the city of New York ensuring equal access and opportunity to students, faculty and staff from all ethnic and racial groups, CUNY plays a key role in elevating poor and working New Yorkers into the ranks of the middle-class. However, even getting to the point of a college application process can be challenging for some and especially for those with a history in foster care. Data showed that these

students are more likely than their peers to experience low academic achievement and grade retention, and lower high school graduation rates. They are at high risk of dropping out of school and have very low rates of college graduation. Numerous studies demonstrate that children who age out of foster care tend to have experienced more—tend to experience worse outcomes than their peers in a variety of critical areas including education, employment, criminal justice involvement, mental health, income insecurity—income security and housing. Whereas, post-secondary education has the ability to enhance these students' wellbeing as well as their transition to adulthood, and increase their chances for personal fulfillment and economic self-sufficiency. From its founding as a free academy in 1847 until the Financial Crisis of the 1970s, CUNY was committed to providing students of merit a free college education, and since arriving at the Council in 2014, have been committed to try to restore CUNY to its former glory as the free institution of New York. I've spoken extensively about how CUNY's free tuition policy made it possible for me to attend Hunter College in the 1960s. Yes, the 1960s.

[laughter] I've held hearings employing that--
exploring graduation rates and student debt.

Although CUNY asserts that 60% of its graduates leave
debt free, that doesn't account for those who dropped
out before graduation due to financial issues, all
the 40% of students that do graduate with debt.

Moreover, despite maintaining some of the lowest
tuition levels in the country, CUNY educated
relation-educated relates costs still can be
prohibitive to many New Yorkers. That is why we must
address the issue of higher education attendant among
those of the most vulnerable New Yorkers, youth
currently in and youth with a history of foster care.
It is of utmost importance that the city does all it
can to ensure that these youth have the opportunity
to succeed and thrive in school and in life. At this
hearing I'm interested in learning about all of the
programs and resources available to students through
ACS, CUNY and any other entity as well as how CUNY is
addressing issues related to persistence and
graduation rates among foster care youth. I also am
very interested in hearing about the process of which
students in foster care learn about specialized
supports available to them as a CUNY applicant, and

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take advantage of these specialized resources through
graduation. This includes the issue of tuition and
fees, housing, the costs of course materials,
transportation, meals and other education related
issues. Furthermore, I would like to know about the
demographic makeup of those students as well as learn
about outcomes related to tracking students following
graduation. I'd like to acknowledge colleagues of
the Committee on Higher Education who are present and
that Council Member Cumbo coming back from her
maternity leave working and loving her baby and--
[background comments] Council Member Gibson was here
as well? Okay, great, and now I would like to have
us hear from Chair Levin for his opening remarks.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
Chair Barron. Good morning--good afternoon everybody.
My name is Stephen Levin. I am Chair of the
Council's General Welfare Committee. I'd like to
thank you all for coming to this important hearing on
higher education opportunities for youth aging out of
foster care. I would like to thank my Co-Chair
today, Inez Barron, Chair of the Higher Education
Committee for doing this hearing with the General
Welfare Committee. I'd also like to acknowledge

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colleagues from the General Welfare Committee that
are here today: Annabel Palma of the Bronx; Barry
Grodenchik of Queens; Adrienne Adams of Queens;
Council Member Salamanca, Rafael Salamanca of the
Bronx; Council Member Vanessa Gibson of the Bronx as
well, and we expect other Council Members to join us.
Over the past four years, the Council has been very
passionate about ensuring the wellbeing of our youth
in foster care, and I'm very proud of the work that
we have accomplished so far. In 2014, the Council
passed a package of reporting bills pertaining to
foster care youth. The Council also hosted two
Foster Youth Shadow Days in the fall of 2015 and in
the spring of 2017. At the first Foster Youth Shadow
Day in 2015, Council Members met with young people
and submitted requests for legislation based on
conversations and ideas raised by those youth. In
2016, a package of eight bills were enacted into law,
which include the following: Local Law 146 sponsored
by Council Member Donovan Richards, which requires
ACS to provide a foster care experience survey. This
survey was distributed to youth last month, and we
hope to see the results of the survey by mid-year of
2018. Local Law 147 sponsored by Council Member

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Laurie Cumbo, which requires ACS to report the high school graduation rates of foster youth in care. Two pieces of legislation that I was proud to sponsor: Local Law 144, which created the Interagency Foster Care Task Force that began in June of 2017, and is ongoing. I want to thank Commissioner Farber for leading the way on that as well as Commissioner Hansell, and Local Law 142, which requires ACS to report on the educational continuity of children in foster care. I want to acknowledge all of the young people and advocates for their partnership and for all of their hard work to make all of this possible. I look forward to working with this Administration, the advocates and our youth who are in care who have aged out of care, and become advocates themselves to further improve the lives of children in fall for the foster care system over the next four years. As of September 2017 there were 8,825 youth in New York City's foster care system. During the 2015-16 school year, there were 3,966 foster care youth enrolled in New York City's public high school of which 3,353 were still enrolled at the end of the school year and on track to graduate. However, the average school attendance rate for foster youth 16 to 21 was only

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37%. These vulnerable students face a myriad of challenges that make it very difficult to succeed in high school much pursue a college education.

National statistics show that 50% of foster youth finish high school by age 18, but only 20% go onto college, and less than 10% attain a bachelor's degree. Simply put, we must do more and we must do better. Furthermore, youth who age out of foster care tend to experience worse outcomes than their peers in a variety of critical areas including education, employment, criminal justices involvement, mental health, income security and housing.

According to the 2015, ACS Report on Youth in Foster Care, the latest available data there were 652 foster youth who aged out of foster care of which only 160 completed high school and 87 enrolled in college with 22 of those individuals attaining a college degree.

At today's hearing, the committees will seek to learn more about the various educational programs available to help our city's foster youth attain a college degree, and successfully transition into adulthood.

The committees will also explored what additional supports are needed to enhance their educational needs including mentoring services to support the

overall being of the student involved in the Foster Care system, and I just want to say in addition every youth that is in care has the ability to graduate high school, enroll in college and attain a college degree. Every single youth in care has that ability, and we need to make sure that the opportunities are there and support services there and those wrap-around services. Every aspect of that is there on the part of the city of New York and our-our not-for-profit partners to be able to support our youth in care to attain-attain those advances, and I think that-I just want to make-make it clear that there's no child, there's no youth in care that doesn't have the ability to do that. Lastly, I'd like to thank the staff of the General Welfare Committee Andrea Vasquez, Senior Counsel; Tonya Cyrus, Senior Policy Analyst; Dohini Sompura, Finance Unit Head; Daniel Kroop, Finance Analyst; and the staff of the Higher Education Committee for putting this hearing together. I'd also like to thank my Chief of Staff Jonathan Boucher and Budget Director Edward Paulino, and with that, I'll turn it back over to my Co-Chair to begin the hearing.

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CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you so much
Council Member Levin, and I want to acknowledge some
people as well, Joy Simmons, my Chief of Staff and
Diwali Clay, my CUNY Liaison; Miss Ndigo Washington,
Director of Legislation; Chloe Rivera the Committee's
Policy Analyst and Jessica Ackerman the Senior
Finance Analyst, and I especially want to welcome my
colleague Adrienne Adams. She's new, recently seated
here at the Council. I'm glad to be able to be with
her today, and also new sitting in today at the
Council Mr. Paul Senegal, and so we're going to
announce the panel who's here, and he's going to
administer the oath. So, if you would announce the
panel.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And we're also joined
by Council Member Jimmy Vacca from the Bronx.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes, thank you. Is
he on both our committees?

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: He's just on mine.
[laughter] Just on mine, right, Jimmy.

COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And testifying from
ACS we have Julie Farber, Deputy Commissioner, and
Kathleen Hoskins, Associate Commissioner.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And I'm going to ask
Mr. Senegal if he would administer the oath.

PAUL SENEGAL: Okay. Please raise your
right hand. In accordance with the rules of the
Council, I will administer the affirmation to the
witnesses from the Mayoral Administration. Do you
affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
nothing but the truth in your testimony before this
committee, and to respond honestly to Council
Members' questions?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: I do.

PAUL SENEGAL: Please state your names
for the record.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Julie
Farber.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER HOSKINS: Kathleen
Hoskins and I do.

PAUL SENEGAL: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: You may begin.

[coughing]

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Okay, Thank
you Chair Barron and Chair Levin for—for your opening
comments, and we're extremely pleased to be here to
talk about all—all of the issues that—that you've
raised in your opening comments. So, good afternoon,
everyone, good afternoon members of the Committees on
General Welfare and Higher Education. I am Julie
Farber. I am Deputy Commissioner for Family
Permanency Services at ACS, which means I am over the
Foster Care part of the Child Welfare system. With
me today is my colleague Kathleen Hoskins, who is
Assistant Commissioner for the ACS Office of
Education Support and Policy Planning. On behalf of
ACS Commissioner David Hansell, thank you very much
for the opportunity to testify this afternoon. We
are very pleased to share more information with the
Council about our work to connect young people in
foster care with higher education opportunities, work
that as—as Council Barron, Council Member Barron
said, is impacting the lives of New York City's young
people in foster care with higher education
opportunities, work that as—as Council Barron—
Council Member Barron said, is impacting the lives of
New York City's young people and—and positioning the

city as a national leader in this area. Education and workforce opportunities are a central component of ACS' Foster Care Strategic Blueprint. This plan identifies our key priorities and strategies for improving case practice and results for children and families in the Foster Care System from family reunification to Kinship placement to adoption to support older youth, and we are tracking and reporting our results. As you may have seen, yesterday ACS released our Fiscal Year 17 Blueprint Status Report. I happen to have one handy, and we distributed one to all of you, and this report highlights the significant progress being made. As we continue to aggressively implement this blueprint, the reforms are yielding promising results across the Foster Care System that I will discuss and--and touch on here, and then drill down into the education and workforce readiness supports and resources that ACS offers for our youth in care in partnership with our providers and, of course, with CUNY and other key partners. ACS and the de Blasio Administration remain focused on improved outcomes for young people in foster care through significant programs and investments that are targeted to advance to goals

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that are outlined in this blueprint, and we really
thank the Council for its leadership and partnership
in this effort, and want to acknowledge Chair Levin
who—who already touched on this for his role in the—
shaping the work of the Foster Care Task Force that
Commissioner Hansell is chairing. The task force is
currently producing its report for the Council and
the Mayor containing actionable recommendations
including recommendations to further advance our work
around education and employment outcomes for young
people in foster care, and we—we look forward to
sharing that report, and working with you in the
coming months. I also would like to acknowledge my
team of dedicated child welfare professionals at ACS,
our foster care agency partners, the advocacy
community and the young people themselves who are
striving for success whose voices are essential these
initiatives, and really are the entire reason, well
all of us why—why all of us are here today. There
are few responsibilities that are more important than
caring for children, who have faced the trauma of
abuse and neglect, and have been removed from their
families. Our mission is to achieve the goals of
safety, permanency and wellbeing for every child in

foster care. This is why we've built a system that's data driven. It's evidence-based, and we're using trauma-informed practices. ACS continues to strengthen and support families and keep children with their families when safety possible. As I think you, the population of children in foster care, as Council Member Levin mentioned remains at a historic low with 8,825 children in care as of September 2017. When children must be placed in foster care, ACS works closely with our foster care provider agencies to make sure that children and families are receiving targeted services and supports. As a result, the majority of children that enter foster care return home to their families. In FY17, more than 2,000 children were reunified. Additionally, and we're—we're very proud of this and—and are going to be continually working to—to increase this, the number of children exiting Care through Kinship Guardianship otherwise known as KinGAP increased by 10.2% from 343 children last year to 378 children this year, and that's up from I think 119 children, you know, four years ago. So, there's a steady—a steady trend up, and there's more opportunity for us there. The city also successfully advocated in support of state

legislation that will keep---that will increase the availability of KinGAP for children in foster care particularly older youth. Under the current law, as you may know, Kinship Guardians were narrowly defined as having to be related by blood, you know, fictive kind did not count, and guardians could only receive payments up to the child's 18th birthday if the guardianship took place after the young was 16. So, the new law has corrected those issues, and so once the new law goes into effect, Kinship Guardianship payments will be available to all--to the guardians of all children up to age 21 as opposed to it stopping for some--some children at age 18. Additionally, the law does expand to include fictive kin, which is a good thing for kids and--and we're excited to implement that. The new law will allow more children including older youth. There's a real opportunity here for older youth to achieve permanency while remaining connected to the important people in their lives, and families will have access to more financial resources to care for children with KinGAP subsidies. In FY 2017, 899 children were adopted. ACS is working with our foster care agencies and other stakeholders to reduce the time to adoption by

streamlining a range of administrative processes.

We're extremely proud and excited that we have launched and \$11 million partnership with the Dave Thomas Foundation. The City is contributing almost \$4 million and the Foundation is contributing \$7 million and that initiative is focused on increasing the numbers of young people with special needs and older youth and sibling groups who achieve permanency through either adoption or Kinship Guardianship. So, as we make solid progress on-on these permanency outcomes, we very much appreciate the committee's focus on the vulnerable population of older youth in care. While most children and youth in foster care do return home or are adopted or achieve permanency through Kinship Guardianship, every young person's situation obviously includes its own unique circumstances, and some young people transition out of foster care to independent living. The proportion of young people in foster care age 16 and older with what we call an APPLA goal. That's the federal name for Another Permanent Planned Living Arrangement. It's what used to be called a goal of independent living. So, these are the young people who have a-- have a goal of independent living. So, the--the

proportion of young people in foster care age 16 and older dropped by 5%, which is obviously a good direction that we're heading in. These young people who are sometimes described as aging out of care, receive assistance from ACS and our community partners with medical and mental health services, housing, education, vocational opportunities.

Clearly, our goal is to connect them to the vast array of resources and supports at ACS at the Foster Care agencies and in the communities as they transition out of care and into adulthood.

Importantly, this network of supports includes the opportunity for youth to remain in care even beyond age 21. So, New York is one of the jurisdictions in the country that foster care extends to 21, and we even go beyond 21 through an exception to policy.

So, while the federal government and—and New York State funds end at 21, New York City will continue to support young people in foster care through city tax levy after age 21. ACS has successful programs underway that help young people in foster care, and who are transitioning out to advance their education and goals. I will now turn to discussing the work we are doing to plan for education success, the work

we're doing offering innovative targeted supports for young people in college, and the work we're doing building workforce readiness while creating pathways to employment. So, the office that Kathleen Hoskins runs, the Office of Education Support and Policy Planning works to engage stakeholders early and throughout a child's school career to plan for education success. The office provides training resources, direct technical assistance to front line casework staff including staff at the—our contracted provider agencies. The office also collaborates very closely, of course, with DOE, and working to promote school stability for children in foster care and supporting the educational needs of all youth involved in child welfare services. Nationally, as the Council Members mentioned, we do know that youth in foster care have poor educational outcomes than their peers, and this is why we need to double down around our supports for young people in foster care in particular. So, to tackle challenges for our city's youth in care around attendance, around school performance, high school graduation, college persistence, ACS in partnership with—with CUNY and others is implementing a range of strategies

including partnering with the DOE, our partnerships with CUNY, increasing education specialists and resources within the foster care system that are solely devoted to focusing on the educational needs of young people in foster care, and arming foster parents and caregivers and young people themselves with concrete information and resources. In 2000—in the fall of 2017, ACS and DOE partnered to create the Tiered Response Attendance Monitoring Program that enhances communication between DOE and the ACS provider agencies when students have a certain threshold of absences. This protocol covers foster youth in grades K through 8 and provides for earlier and targeted intervention to address attendance issues that can start in the lower grades, and then can lead to chronic absenteeism in high school. In addition to the protocol, we're seeing increased notifications to parents or caregivers and ACS when concerns arise regarding older children as well. So, there's a number of exciting initiatives that we want to highlight for you. In the summer of 2017, ACS in partnership with CUNY, Staten Island and with First Star, which is a national organization working to improve outcomes for older youth in foster care,

implemented the First Star Academy at CSI that is designed to support a group of rising ninth grade students successfully through high school all the way to college. So, ninth graders are identified and start the program in ninth grade, and participate in programming both during the school year and on campus during the summer, and they are in the program for their entire high school experience with the idea being that we will prepare them to enter college, and First Star has very, very impressive outcomes, and so we're very excited to have the opportunity to launch this program. So, we've enrolled 20 first students into the First Star Academy. As I mentioned, it extends through four years of high school, and this summer students worked on and improved their skills in core subject areas like Algebra and writing, and they engaged in a variety of enriching activities on campus and in the community. I had the opportunity this summer to attend one of the summer sessions, and the young people are a really impressive group of young people that are participating in the program. So, to increase the involvement of parents and foster parents, and this is critical in students' education, ACS released a Foster Parents' Guide to Education in

the fall of 2017, and I have a copy of this guide. It's a beautiful guide, and we're looking forward to sharing copies with all of the Council Members, and I think one-one of your questions, Council Member Barron, related to, you know, how do we make sure that everyone is getting the information? And so the creation of this guide is one piece of that strategy about providing information about rights, responsibilities, opportunities and services related to young people in foster care and their-and their education. We are, as I mentioned, completing a companion database by the spring of 2018 that will also ultimately will have an app moving forward where students and foster parents and parents will be able to search for educational services. So, we're-we're proud of this document. In the last three years, our foster care provider agencies have increased access point to work families by developing new education support officers with about 135 staff, exclusively devoted-devoted to education issues for children in foster care across the 27 agencies. ACS continues to track the outcomes for young people in foster care who go to college. We are very pleased to share that as of fall 2017, we have 355 young people who are

enrolled in two and four-year college programs at
CUNY, SUNY and other private school and out-of-state
programs. So, this represents almost 30% of young
people in foster care age 18 and older as an- I
think the Council Member mentioned nationally only
about 20% of young people in foster care are in
college, and we're at about 30%. We're not stopping
there, but we are, you know, in the national scale
ahead of the curve. Further, we have established
partnerships to remove financial barriers so that
young people in foster care can enter and persist in
college. We have data matches with CUNY as well as
coordination with the Higher Education Services
Corporation, and the New York State Office of
Children and Families so that we can complete a
statewide match for Tuition Assistance Program, TAP,
eligibility, and we work to make sure that all of our
students are maximizing financial aid and all of the
supports available to them. Beyond traditional
financial assistance, young people receiving ACS
services can apply for the Federal Education and
Training Vouchers, the ETVs, and receive up to \$5,000
per year until age 23 for items such as tuition,
student fees, room and board, books and supplies. In

the fall of 2017, 379 current and former foster youth received the Federal ETV funds, with assistance from ACS. In addition, the non-profit agency New Yorkers for Children partners with ACS to provide educational support for young people in foster care including college scholarships, needs based emergency funds, and a back to school package with a laptop, metro card and gift cards for textbooks. When a young person leaves foster care to attend college outside of the city, ACS provides college room and board payments up to the amount of the monthly foster care subsidy to offset costs and in FY 2017, ACS provided 37 students over the age of 21 with financial supports for dorm and meal plan fees or off-campus rent. Additionally, the program helps students who are away a college, and return to the city on school breaks by providing a foster home to the student during those times when campus may be closed. I want to move now to talk about our work and partnership with CUNY, and before I get into the substance of it, I just want to say on behalf of Commissioner Hansell and First Deputy Commissioner Eric Brettschneider, I want to acknowledge and thank our amazing partners on this initiative, Chancellor Milliken and his team at

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CUNY including Judy Bergtraum and Donna Linderman who is testifying today; Queens College President—Queens College President Felix Matos Rodriguez; the College of Staten Island President William Fritz; City College of New York President Vincent Boudreau. I want to acknowledge our partners Bill Baccaglioni, who is sitting on the end there, and will be testifying later, and the entire New York Founding team that is—you'll—you'll hear about this in—in both of our testimonies, but providing 24/7 wraparound support to the young people at CUNY, and I want to acknowledge Janine Balfour and the Conrad Hilton Foundation that is providing significant support for these efforts. Finally, I want to acknowledge Malik Meera (sp?) who is sitting there next to Bill, and he is one of the incredible students in the program who will be testify later today, and—really hearing from him is the best way to understand the impact of this program. So, in terms of the Foster and College Success Initiative, building on our higher education supports, in 2017, ACS was extremely pleased to launch Foster and College Success Initiative with two programs that are specifically designed to meet the needs of students who remain foster care while

attending college. This initiative began with a
baselined multi-year investment from the city that
builds up to \$2.7 million in FY 2019. In partnership
with CUNY and the New York Foundling, what we call
the Dorm Project supports our goal to increase post-
secondary enrollment and college graduation rates for
young people in care. We conduct outreach with
foster care agencies about the program, accepting
applications, enroll foster youth, some of whom may
be entering college for the first time or continuing
their education. The first group of 50 foster youth
who participated in the program were enrolled in
academic programs at ten CUNY colleges across the
city, and were residing in the Queens College and
College of Staten Island Dormitories. In FY 2018,
the residential component expanded to the City
College of New York. The program doubled in size to
almost a hundred students, and it will continue to
grow in FY2 019. Currently, we are serving, as I
said, almost a hundred students, 93 young people with
complete financial support, on-campus housing and
critically targeted wraparound services that you'll
hear more about from our—our partner the New York
Foundling. Students are matched with the various

CUNY programs tailored to their individual needs, and that specialize in supporting youth in foster care with academic advisement and social supports. For example, CUNY's Accelerated Study and Associate Programs, ASAP, a very well known program, is committed to graduating at least 50% of students within three years and has proven to be one of CUNY's most successful community college initiatives with students in the program graduating at a rate more than double that of similarly situated students. We currently have 37 dorm project students enrolled in ASAP and our partners from CUNY are here today and can describe more about ASAP as well as other CUNY programs that are supporting our young people in foster care. Another key component, as I mentioned of the DORM program is the provision of 24/7 wraparound support to the students. ACS has partnered with the New York Foundling to deliver comprehensive support services 24/7 to the students living on all three campuses. New York Foundling College success coaches reside on site at the dorm locations and provide success driven guidance to enhance each student's advocacy and agency skills. The coaches work with students to navigate the

complexities and challenges of being a college student. They provide assistance with workforce readiness. They connect students to internship opportunities in collaboration with CUNY as well as professional mentorship opportunities with external partners such as Goldman-Sachs and Casey Family Programs. As I mentioned, the New York Foundling is here today, and you'll also be hearing from Malik about his experience first hand in the program. The Dorm Project is an innovative approach to promoting the wellbeing of young people in foster care by helping them become educationally competitive and ready for the workforce. Highlights from the first year include students achieving As and Bs increased in both semesters. We had increases in GPA. We had increases in credits. We are also tracking obviously very closely the issue of persistence. We are very excited to report that for students who's joined the Dorm Program at the moment they began their college, they had not been in college previously, their semester to semester persistence rate is 82%, which is really significant. The overall persistence is for-for all young people in the program, which includes some young people had had already started

college before they joined the Dorm Program is 57%.

I think I have 57%. So what this—which is also

astounding when you look at persistence rates of—of

youth in foster care across the country and college,

but what the 82% says to us is that, you know, if we

get students right at the outset, we're really

producing extremely important outcomes that will have

impact on young people. So, we're really looking

forward to, you know, continuing to share more

results on that. The other program is the Foster and

College Success College Stipend Program. So, to

provide further support of students, we rolled out

the Foster and College Success Stipend Program in FY

2017. This investment opens the door of opportunity

for foster youth in college by offering a daily

stipend that students can use for essentials like

personal items, phone payments, transportation,

clothing, food, books that aren't covered, for

financial and scholarship funding. ACS has funded

more than \$1.9 million as part of the city's

baselined investment in foster and college success

programs. With this critical financial assistance,

students are not having to worry about how they are

going to afford X, Y or Z, and they're able to focus

on their studies and enjoy the college experience,
engage in on-campus activities and fully benefit from
the experience in college that we all want youth in
foster care to have. Additionally, students in the
program are gaining financial literacy skills through
tools that are designed to help them organize and
track their spending. I know want to move to talk a
little bit more, to talk about our work around
workforce readiness and creating pathways to
employment. Last year, we established a new Office
of Employment and Workforce Development Initiative.
This is again one of the priorities of our Foster
Care Blueprint, and this office is dedicated and
designed to improve youth employment outcomes by
developing programs and initiatives with our foster
care agencies, with private foundation partners, and
with our other sister agencies to advance the
Workforce Readiness Skills of our young people in
foster and prepare them for employment. So, a couple
of examples of the work that this office has done,
and this office has been prolific over the last year
and a half. In the spring of 2016, we partnered with
the Department of Youth and Community Development,
DYCD, to launch the Young Adult Internship Plus

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Program, Young Adult Internship Plus, YAIP Plus. So, you may be familiar that DYCD has an existing YAIP program so ACS worked with DYCD to develop a program that built on that model, but added the kinds of supports and services that are necessary for young people in foster care given their particular circumstances and experience of trauma. So, of the— we've had a 100 current and former foster youth who have enrolled. Ninety-percent have completed all the program requirements. More than half completed their internships and were hired into permanent jobs. An additional 30% continued to advance their educational goals. We're also very proud to report that ACS referred more than 750 youth to DYCD's Summer Youth Employment Program. We had a deep invest there. We had 50 young people at ACS itself having an SYEP placement at ACS as well. In addition to these activities, we are continuing to innovate with cutting edge models to enhance the outcomes for young people in our system. We're providing on-site TA and capacity building to our foster care agencies, and internships for youth through several partnerships, and I'll just mention a couple of them. Six of our foster care agencies are implementing the Young Adult

Work Opportunities for Rewarding Careers, YAWORC Model with intensive support and training from the Workplace Center at Columbia University. This program provides agency staff with training and hands-on technical assistance to conduct career planning, develop Career Club peer groups, utilize labor market employment strategies, and develop relationships with employers. To date more 100 youth have been enrolled in that program. ACS has also partnered with the Pinkerton Foundation to implement a mentored internship program. The foundation has provided eight foster care agencies with funding for dedicated staff and they've engaged professional development organizations to provide capacity building and training for foster care agency leadership. The goal is to have 200 young people that are in supported internships either at the foster care agencies themselves or in, you know, community locations. So, we're very excited about that program. We're also a partner in two major initiatives that are launching now. In October you may have seen that the Manhattan District Attorney announced a commitment of \$3.75 million to two agencies that work with foster youth: Graham Windham

and the Door to enhance and expand innovative programs including education and employment services for youth transitioning out of care. New Yorkers for Children, ACS and a national non-profit called Youth Villages are also partnering to implement YV Lifeset, which is a nationally recognized model to improve outcomes for older youth in care. New Yorkers for Children applied to a national competition on behalf of ACS and New York City was awarded matched funding to implement YV Lifeset in partnership with two foster care agencies over the next three years. This model will roll out to two pilot agencies in spring 2018, and we look forward to updating the Council about the impact of that program. In closing, we appreciate the opportunity to discuss higher education opportunities for youth in our system including those aging out of care. We are proud of the work we have done to create and sustain these vital programs that support youth in care and achieving their higher education and employment goals. We're pleased to partner with the City Council in our continuing efforts to improve the foster care experience of our city's youth so that each young person can successfully pursue a path of

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education enrichment, and independence. We're happy
to take your questions.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you so much.
We want to acknowledge we've been joined by Council
Members Corey Johnson, Jumaane Williams and Fernando
Cabrera, and we're going to begin the questioning
with my colleague Council Member Levin.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
Chair Barron. So, Commissioner Farber, I I-I know
that you are somewhat time limited. Do you prefer to
answer questions now and then--and then we will have
representatives from CUNY testify? Is that what you
prefer?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yes, that
would be great if that's okay.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That is okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Is that
okay? [laughs]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And then--and then
Commissioner Hoskins, perhaps you--are you able to
stay when CUNY is testify so that you can answer
follow-up questions as well.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER HOSKINS: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great. Okay, so,
[coughs] I think--so I think that was obviously very
comprehensive testimony, and so I think--I think I
guess where I would like to start is before we get
into higher education during secondary education,
the--the percentage the--the--the [pause] excuse me a
second. The attendance rate that we're looking at in
youth in care the data that we have the most recent
data has 71% attendance rate for foster--for youth in
foster care ages 11 to 15. That falls off a cliff
down to 37% among youth 16 to 21. What is accounting
for that drop-off, and whose responsibility is it
within the system to ensure that--that that--that youth
are continuing with higher attendance rates? Is it
somebody at the high school itself? Is it the foster
parent? Is it the foster care agency? Is it a
combination of the three, and how does that all work,
and--and obviously I mean I--I can't imagine that it's
anybody's position that 37% is an acceptable number.
So, what are we doing around that as a, you know,
first and foremost?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yes,
certainly. Thank you for that question because
that's obviously an issue of great concern to us. So

a couple—I'll say a couple of things, and then I'll ask Kathleen to fill in, but what's critically important to understand when young people aren't attending school is to under-understand what's underlying that, right? I mean so first of all if you have a—a second-grader that's not attending school that's probably a different issue than if you have an 11th grader that's not attending school, right? And so, Kathleen will describe the—the partnerships that we have with DOE and with our foster care agencies that the—the—it is a partnership among ACS, DOE and the foster care agencies to identify young people that are having attendance issues, and then to conference around those young people and figure out what—what the underlying issues are. Are they running away from something at the school? Are they running to something else? And then understanding what those issues are. You know, is it mental health issues? Is it, you know, a social issue at school, and—and so, it's important to understand on a case-by-case basis what's the impact, and why isn't the young person going to school. So, I'll let Kathleen talk a little bit about the systems, which are fairly intense that we have in

place for tracking attendance, and the following up
on-on individual young people.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER HOSKINS: Thank
you, Julie. So, you know, we've noticed that this
percentage it's fairly low and obviously we're
committed to increasing it. I think the first part
of where we wanted to target our intervention is
making sure that the agencies understand which kids
are falling into, you know, sort of less than 50%
attendance. So, just have the information--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing]
[shushing for quiet]

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER HOSKINS: --and
being able to target it. So, we've been working with
the Department of Education. We have a data match
that we have that details all of the kids in foster
care as they're assigned to each agency. Every month
we distribute that data to the foster care agencies,
and we have a meet them on how to sort of attack and
increase and look at what are some of the issues that
kids are facing when their attendance is low. And
then, we do individual assessments. So, we may take
an agency, we look at the data, we have them discuss
sort of what are some of the interventions that

they're putting in place for these youth. I will say we have seen some trends in terms of these students having attendance issues prior to them coming into foster care. So, we have to do a better job of identifying them as soon as they enter care. But after--after they're in, we're very committed to bringing up their attendance records. So, identification is the first piece. The second piece is working with Department of Education around informing kids of specialized programs. So, that includes a District 70 Alternative Program. So, for example, they just opened the Judith K. School this year where they're targeting as part of their school population kids in the foster care system who are either over--who over aged and under-credited or age for grades. So, for example, 8th grade students that may be 15 and 15 years old, or students who are 17--16 and 17 years old, and may not be going to school because they don't feel like they can complete because they are behind. So, we're working with District 79 to target. We also are working with agencies around transfers in schools--student transfers into transfer high schools. So, as long as they've attended high school for one year, we sort of

work with the agencies to prepare them to interview for transfer high schools, and sometimes we will—my office directly will provide direct advocacy in terms of connecting with the school, taking about the student and sort of supporting their application for transfer high school. So, that's specific for the older population.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Are you seeing—so, you know, because those numbers widely—you know, there's a discrepancy for 71 down to 37%. For youth that are—that have been in care from, you know, either before they're age 11 straight through into, you know, into perhaps in an APPLA framework, are they—are we seeing among that cohort of youth that have been in—been in care for extended periods of time, their attendance rates declining. So, not just—in other words not—not comparing two separate cohorts but the same cohort over time are seeing a decline in their attendance rates from age 15 to or 11 to 15 and then—and then 16 and older.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: [off mic] I don't have that data in front of me, but that's—

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Sorry. If you could produce.

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --that I can provide. [on mic] I don't have that data in front me, but that's certainly something that we can look and see if we can produce. I mean and--and I get where you're going with the question. You know, we--we want to look at sort the--the long stairs in care versus the young person who might have come into care at age 15--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --and there's a fair number of those young people, and some of those young people are coming into care, on what we call voluntaries.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yes.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Right, so you understand issue and--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] I understand.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --and that tends to be in a situation where a parent is having trouble managing the young person, but we can certainly look at the data for your, Council Member.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And then whose responsibility is it both within the school setting

and a foster agency to—to ensure that—that a youth in
care is getting specific supports that they need—that
they need that might be unique to them. So, for
example, you know, there's young person who was
interning in my office, and when he was in high
school, he—it was the guidance counselor at his high
school was the one that—that was—reached out to him,
was that bedrock that he needed through that time,
that very difficult time when he was in high school.
You know, is it always the guidance counselor? Is it
a—is it maybe a teacher or what is DOE doing? I mean
maybe, you know, perhaps we should have—you know, DOE
should be answering questions as well, but what is
DOE specifically doing? Who are they training? What
type of training are they doing to support youth in
care outside of maybe the, you know, D75 or 79, which
is within—just within the general high school
population. And then—and then who at the foster care
agencies is responsible? Because frankly, the foster
care agency that he was with wasn't doing that so,
you know, it did—luckily somebody picked up the ball
in his cases. But, you know, who's—who's there to be
responsible? You know, so there some redundancy in
that effort?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: So, the foster care agency case planner is absolutely responsible for, you know, tracking every kind, you know, on their--on their caseload, and their educational needs, their mental health needs, their--their medical needs, right. So, that is, you know, one, you know, very critical point of responsibility, and then obviously, the--you know, the DOE has, you know, a level of responsibility and--and functions that it implements around students that are either truant or, you know, having academic issues, and then as Kathleen mentioned, with the data match that we have monthly between ACS and DOE we are, you know, systematically every month identifying where there are attendance issues, and--and following up on those issues, and I'll have Kathleen add to that, and you can talk a little bit more maybe about the Tiered Attendance Protocol and DOE and ACS' relative responsibility is in that protocol.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER HOSKINS: Right, and that--and as Commissioner Farber mentioned before, every now in the last four years I think foster care agencies have really pushed to increase specific education support personnel.

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Right.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER HOSKINS: And they are critical in terms of making sure that every student is targeted and at least every foster care agency has at least one person, but most have multiple people working on tracking the education outcomes support the case planners sort of as a—as an expertise in support. And so, we definitely look to them to help and support the agency as a whole around education. DOE has done quite a bit to partners with us. As mentioned earlier, the Tiered Response Protocol, which is an attendance monitoring program. While it's specific through kindergarten through 8th, we've found that because our agency, my office specifically is part of that protocol and outreach for particular students, both students in Tier 2 and Tier 3, which cover to the foster care, we've been also receiving calls from high schools to say hey we have this student. We know that, you know, they're not on a tiered protocol, but we have the data match. We know they're in foster care and we sort of have, you know, maybe some concerns or let's have a collaborative case planning meeting to address whatever may be hindering attendance. Every month we

also have something called the ACDOE Collaboration meeting where schools can actually request case planning meeting and the ACS partners, which in this case would be the foster care agency come to the table to plan collectively with the Department of Education staff. Lastly, I want to mention that we've sort of had an intense rollout of professional development for DOE staff, specifically parent coordinators, but we've been doing this training across all touchpoints of schools including principals, assistant principals, guidance counselors and social workers, and we created a curriculum call Across System Collaboration. So, trying to get school staff to understand how our system works, where our touchpoints are. Particularly around kids in foster care, we've been training them on school stability, the fact that there are education point people at the foster care agencies, and for our high school students what are some of the sort of specialized programs that we've partnered with and created so when high schools are doing college planning. And in addition, high school planning for the high school application that they understand our system, understand some of the specific needs of our

kids in foster care, and can service them appropriately. So, we're sort of trying to have multiple touchpoints with the Department of Education around supporting kids in care.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And then just the last question on that matter. So, that data of 37% was from the 2015-16 school year.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Right.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is there an objective number that ACS is working towards as a target in terms of bringing that attendance rate up, and I mean are—is that something that you're continually measuring, but first off, is there an—is there an—is there a target number?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: It's certainly something we're continually measuring, and we're a fan of target setting, and—and we're looking that, but we don't have one yet to report.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, maybe you could follow up on that because obviously we want to get that—that number up, and, you know, this administration has four years to go. So, we would like to see a kind of, you know, consistent improvement.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah, I appreciate that.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Changing topics for a moment here, is there a—is there data, clear data that—that you have to show that KinGAP is—improves educational outcomes, and is that—? I mean obviously there are a myriad of benefits to KinGAP over foster care, but is there—are there specific educational outcomes that you could speak to?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: So, I don't have that off the top of my head, but we—we may have that as part of the—all the research that we've gathered around KinGAP. I mean certain it's been shown to improve wellbeing outcomes and stability and obviously reduce trauma, but I'd be happy to look at that for you and get back to you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, good to see that, and let's see, the next question again changing topics. So, Commissioner Farber were you in your testimony outlined an array of services. A lot of these are new programs just over the last year or two that have been rolled out. Partnerships with the foundations, partnership with CUNY. How—how are you ensuring that all of these programs are getting to

the—the youth—I mean the, you know, to identify which ones work best and most appropriate for each youth in care? How are you—how are you getting that information to them, and then what role does a foster care agency have with supplying that information to those youth? You know, because honestly, it ends up being kind of an alphabet soup, right? There's—everything is an acronym and, you know, there's just—since everything is new, it might just be kind of a, you know—

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: -it's not—it shouldn't just be up to them to navigate. So, how—how are we doing this in a comprehensive way, in a very user friendly way? You mentioned an app.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is there anything else specifically where the agency has some kind of responsibility there?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah, so it's a good challenge to have, right, you know, in that it's great that we have so many programs and resources and services, but it is a—a legitimate challenge to figure out how to package all of that

information for all the case planners and all of the agencies and for all of the youth themselves in a way that's understandable. So, there's a couple of different, you know, we have a multi-pronged strategy to get that information out. So, one of those strategies is this, right? This is the Foster Parent Guide to Education, and I'm excited for it. You have a palm card in front of you for it--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-hm.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: -but we're excited to-to share these printed copies when they're-when it's finalized because this take information about 30 different areas that related to educational services and supports and puts it in one place, and here's who you call, and here is, you know, where you can get information. So, that's one-one set of strategies. The other thing I mentioned is we're creating an, you know, an online clearing house that, you know, will-it will be a website mobile enabled, and then ultimately the next phase will be have it as an app where parents, foster parents and young people will be able to search for services not just on education but on, you know, all sorts of services. The other piece of providing

information, which is critical and--and you mentioned the--the role of the foster care agencies. I mean clearly it is the responsibility of the foster care agencies to receive this information, and share this information with young people and with foster parents and to help support that. Kathleen's office meets on a monthly basis with all of the education specialists at the foster care agencies. And so those are really rich packed agendas--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-hm.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --because there's a lot to share, you know, which is a good thing. We also at our Quarterly Foster Care Director's meetings have, for example, DYCD came and presented to all of our foster care directors about the YAIP Plus Program.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-hm.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: So, the--the other thing that we're--we're working on is able to contact youth directly ourselves from ACS.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-hm.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: So, one of the things that we were successful in doing after the Hackathon that we held last year was we advocated to

the state to add a field and connections where we
could add email addresses for the young people, and
when Connections was created, there was no field--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-hm.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --and so
they did it, and so that is in there, and so now we
are just now working with our foster care agencies to
have email addresses entered for all of the young
people. So, as well as--as phone numbers. So, the--you
know, and young people text, right?

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: And so,
we're looking at ways, you know, what can we get out?
You know a very brief piece of information on text,
right.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Because we
want to make sure we hit it in all directions. We
want to make sure that the foster care agencies are
providing the information. We want to go directly to
the foster parents, and we want to go directly to the
youth themselves.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right because there
are instances, many instances where, you know,

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especially with youth that are older youth that may
not be in a long-term foster home--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Right.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --scenario. I've
seen youth that are in groups homes.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You know, that
doesn't--that doesn't fly, you know, at all. There is
no parent there. So, but-but, you know, in
particular if there's a youth that's--that's, you
know, 15, 16 years old, and is a kind of, you know,
less than permanent foster situation, you know, it's--
I think, you know, we don't want to rely obviously
just on the foster parent--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Right.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --or primarily on the
foster parent--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Right.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: -to get that
information to them. They're 15 or 16 years old.
They, you know, are, you know, they're--they're
certainly capable of--of--of getting this information
on their own, and applying on their own with just the
right support--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --at the right--at the
right touch points.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah, well
certainly, though, you know, youth who are in group
homes it would be the foster care agency staff, right
that--that are, you know, running that program that
would still have the same case management and case
planning responsibility to share information with the
young person about their education. But, you know,
the opportunity to send young people information
directly--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Yes.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --you know,
in the information age through, you know, text and
email, you know, will be really powerful and
empowering.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Rights. It's the
follow-up with that kind of maintenance with that
information.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: That's right
because email addresses and phone numbers change,
and--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Right,
and also just, you know, something comes into your
email box, and if there's not the follow-up--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER:
[interposing] Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --available, if
there's not the follow-up phone call or meeting--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Right.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --you know to go
over, hey what exactly is that and how does it apply
to me?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You know, I think
that's the--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER:
[interposing] Well, that's the responsibility of our
foster care agencies, right, whoever the case planner
is--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right,

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --assigned
to that one person and then they can get technical
support from the educational specialist that works at
their agency who is going to know and be an expert on
that.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And--and just lastly
and then I'll turn it over to my co-chair, but--so
what's the accountability then measure with the
foster care agencies to ensure that they're actually
doing do that?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah, so--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] is
there, you know--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Uh-hm.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --is there
incentives, you know, is there--is there a way to make
sure that there's--when their contract is reviewed,
you know, that there's--that outcome is--is--is a
measure of quality?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah, yeah.
So, there's a couple of things. One I want to
mention is since you were one of the co-sponsors of
this bill, but an important accountability piece is
the youth survey that we're implementing. And so, we
have rolled it out in a pilot.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-hm.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: It's
actually being piloted at the New York Foundling
right now, one of our large foster care agencies, and

we'll go live to all of the foster care agencies by the end of the year, and that is a survey of all youth in care age 13 and over. I think you've seen a copy of the survey, and--and we're--we're--very excited about that. It collects information about young people's experience in foster homes, in group homes with education, with work readiness, and so, you know, a key piece of accountability is hearing from young people themselves. So, that, you know, is one--one important piece of accountability. You know, ACS as I--as I think you know has a fairly extensive, you know, provider accountability monitoring mechanism, and so education in terms of whether young people are in need of special services, receiving special services whether their foster parents are adequately engaged if they have foster parents as most of our kids since we have very few kids that are in residential placements. All of that kind of information is collected as part of the statistically representative case record review that we do, which is PAMs, and it's the PAMs review of all of our foster care agencies, and that information contributes to the score card, which, you know, which you've seen. And so, education there's a--there's a

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whole section in that review that measures agency's
performance on that, and that is tracked and
monitored.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. I turn it over
to my co-chair.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, Council
Member. I have a lot of questions so I'm going to--
I'm going to do the quick presentation--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --and if you could
give the succinct answer that would be great because
I do know you've been here for quite some time.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: How many children--
the data that we have was from 2015 that there were
369 children enrolled in college. What currently is
the number of children in foster care who are
enrolled in college?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: 355 I believe
is the number.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: 355 and how many
students, how many children in foster care are in
that age group of 18 to 21? What's the total number
of children who are in that number?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: So--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Or the
total number of children who have completed high
school, and are still in foster care?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah, so
355. Somebody faster than with the math can do this,
but is about 305 right. We have 30% of our young
people--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --over 18,
so it's what?

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, 30%?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: 2,000 and
what was the--I can't remember what the--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --what the
total number is, but we have about 30% and as I
mentioned, nationally it's typically about 20%.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: So, we're a
little bit ahead of that.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: What--what are the
demographics of the children who are in the foster
care system?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: In the—in
the overall foster care system?

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah, okay.
Thank you. I'm getting notes passed. So, the
overall demographics are—I have them on hand here,
53% African-American, 32% Hispanic, 5.5% White, 1.6%
Asian Pacific Islander--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --1.9%
other, 6.1% unknown.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, and do—do
these demographics pretty much follow the students
who are in the CUNY program? Who are in a college
program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Pretty
closely. So, the proportion of African-American
students, in the Dorm Program it's about 40% African-
American, about 40% Hispanic, 3% Asian Pacific
Islander, 10% White or 8% other or unknown.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. So, that's
not pretty closely. If you're telling me that it's
53% who are African-American and 40% of the Dorm
Program and if you're telling me it's 5% White

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totally, but 10% in the program, that's not following
the demographics.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: These are
the--these are the numbers--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] I
know they're the numbers.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I know they're the
numbers. I mean I didn't know until now--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --but I hear that
they are the numbers.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So my question to
you then becomes: What's happening--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --that more of the
students who are a smaller proportion of your total
population that double that number gets into these
programs whereas 53% of African-Americans only 40%
are in the program. What's happening?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: So, it's a
really important question. The agency is, you know,
very committed to tackling the issue of educational

opportunity for our young people of color. If it
goes--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Well,
you are not doing a good job if we have this
disparity another problem where we see there's a
mismatch. So, we need to look at how that's
happening. Perhaps these students are not getting an
equitable opportunity to apply or to know about the
program.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: It's not—it's not a
good match.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: So, one of
the things that we're—we're looking at and working on
as an agency, which also is from Council legislation,
and a priority of the Commissioner is looking at all
of the work across ACS through a race and equity
lens. We just as you—many have heard just launched a
new Division of Child and Family Wellbeing that's
headed by my colleague Deputy Commissioner Lorelei
Vargas, and they just had their National Advisory
Board meeting, and part of the work of that group,
and we have Racial Equity and Cultural Competence
Committee at ACS that has been working on tackling

these issues, but part of the work of that group is to conduct the kind of a assessment that you're talking about to identify where there are disparities and disproportionality.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, did you know that there was this disparity? Because in your presentation you said we're doing pretty well, but now, you know, that--that it's being brought to the table, did you know that there was a disparity before the questioning just now?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Well, so the other issue is that I don't have in front of me, which we need to produce is these numbers are only for the CUNY program, and so this is only for the 93 kids in CUNY, and so what I'd like to have the opportunity to do, Council Member, is to come back to you with the full--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --racial breakdowns of all 355 young people--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --that are in college because that would provide the full picture.

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CHAIRPERSON BARRON: That's good. I
would hope that when we get that, it-it does have a
closer match--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --to the numbers
that we have. I do have a lot of questions. So, I'm
going to try to do them quickly.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: The KinGAP program--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --is there-is--does
it require that a child presently be in foster care?
I've heard parents-I've heard persons say that they
would like to directly take a child who might be in
need of care, but that they have to have the child
placed in foster care before they can be a part of
the KinGAP program. Is that the truth?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: It is. For
KinGAP that is correct. Now, relative there are
other ways to assume custody of children that are
outside of the foster care system.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right, but would
they get the same financial support?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: No.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, I think that's an issues. I don't know how we are going to address that, but there are people who don't want to have a family member get placed in foster care to be able to then be able to get support, financial support to be able to provide for that child.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah, understood. I'm actually testifying tomorrow at the New York State Assembly hearing on supports for Kinship and foster parents. In—in other parts of New York State there are a lot of kin who are not becoming Kinship foster parents. Now, New York City we—we want to provide as much support as we possibly can to Kinship families, and so, you know, understanding that not every family wants that involvement, we make sure that Kinship families have all the information available to them. So, if they choose not to become kinship foster parents, they may be eligible for TANF, and all of that.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Those are means tested. You if they—if they come into becoming Kinship foster parents, they will be eligible for a lot more resources and services.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. What's the percentage of children who remain in foster care? You said most of them are adopted or returned to their families. What percent remains? Do we have that information?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Well, so, in a--in a given year so we can look at the--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: -- FY 2017, this--this chart. So, in FY 2017 on the last day of fiscal year, we had 809. Sorry, 8,966 children in care, and the numbers of kids that exited care during the year there were 2,082 that exited to reunification, 378 that exited to Kingship care, and 899 that exited to adoption. Now, obviously there's, you know, every year and every day--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right, right.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --there's kids coming in and coming out.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right. So, what's the trend that we're seeing? I know that's for one particular year. So, is there--?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah, so I mean the trend that we're seeing, which is on, you

know, in this Blueprint Report on sort if you look at
the second or third page--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --you can
see that the numbers of kids of in care has dropped
drastically. You know, it was 50,000 in 1992. Even
just ten years ago it was almost 17,000 and now we're
down to 9,000, and you can also see that the--the gap
is closing between the numbers of kids in care and
the numbers exiting care.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Thank you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: When--when children--
in your testimony you talked about fostering College
Success Initiative and you said it's for students who
remain in foster care while attending college. So,
is it a requirement that they remain in foster car?
If some students should find other opportunities or
be adopted or have some permanency, would there still
qualify to be in--?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: The Dorm
Program you're talking?

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: The Dorm Program,
right?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah. So, the program was designed for young people in foster care, but we are looking at the issue that you've raised because if a person is adopted--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --you know, then--the--what will that, you know, what would that mean?

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And you talked about a stipend, a daily stipend. Do you have the amount of that daily stipend?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah, it's \$28 a day.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And is that for every student or is it only for the students who are in the Dorm Project?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: It is not just for the kids in the Dorm Project. It's for any student that meets the, you know, the criteria of, you know, being in college and--and--and dorming. So, yes.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, and so, you talked about we're going to--you're looking at examining what can be done for students who might be

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at the point of being adopted, and are in the Dorm
Project whether or not they could remain in that
project?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: So, someone
just handed me a not that--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --that the--
for the--for the Dorm Project that the requirement is
that they begin in foster care.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh, okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Sorry about
that.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, they can remain?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yes. Yes?

FEMALE SPEAKER: [off mic] yes.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Okay. So,
I'm corrected.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, good. I'm
glad that's good. That's a good correction.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Me, too.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, in terms of the
students who don't--students who don't--students who
age out or students who had been in foster care, but
at some point returned home or whatever--

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --what kind of
entitlements do they have?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: So--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Or what programs are
available to them?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yes. So, a
couple of things. So, young people who, you know,
young people at age 18, you know, they can elect to
stay in care or they can elect to leave care.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: And so,
sometimes young people, you know, will elect to leave
dare, and then, you know, might find themselves in
need of support, and so we have a dedicated unit at
ACS. We call the Supervision to 21 Unit, Super 21,
and we have a whole unit of staff that their entire
job is to reach out to young people who have elected
to leave care--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Uh-hm.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --and to
check in on them, to offer services to them, and so
those are young people who are not in care, but we
have a unit that is, you know, dedicated to-to

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working with them, and we do have young people that
will come back to ACS and seek our support and, of
course, we're always there for that.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Can they return to
care or is it just programs and support that you give
to them?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Your people
can return to care. Yes, that is a—that is an
option.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, the program
that you described First Start at the College of
Staten Island.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: How are the students
selected for that program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: So, I'll let
Kathleen take that question.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER HOSKINS: So, we
provided the information to the foster care agency
education specialists and we allow them to sort of
talk to students about their interest in the program,
but students self-selected. So, all students were
informed. They applied, and they went through an

interview with the First Star Academy, and then were selected to participate. We first started with a catchment area that with either students in Staten Island or students who lived in Brooklyn who were fairly close to Staten Island, and then we expanded it to all students in foster care because we want to make sure at least that students would be able to-to travel and we provide transportation for the, but we first targeted students that were closest to the campus.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Great. The-the supports that are offered are they all on the college campus or are there other locations where these supports are provided? Is it only a summer program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: So, it's a year-long program. The students do meet during the school year. The summer program is sort of an intensive where they stay on campus for that portion of the program to sort of acclimate them to a college environment so they can sort of see what a college class is like, but they do meet regularly throughout the school year, and those services include tutoring, social-emotional supports, and--

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CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] They
meet as a group?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER HOSKINS: As a
group. It's a group yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Uh-hm, and then for--
for the agencies, the provider agencies that you work
with, do they have a limited--do they have a dedicated
ratio of education? What did you call them?
Education Specialists?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER HOSKINS: We find--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: A dedicated number
of them?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER HOSKINS: We find
that the larger agencies have more. So, for example,
New York Foundling indicates that they have--I think
they have about 15 or 16 education specialists
whereas the smaller agencies--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] And
what's the ratio?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER HOSKINS: I don't
have that with me right now, but we can provide that
to you.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER HOSKINS: And a smaller agency may have one or two depending on how many school age children they have.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Do you have partnerships with other colleges beyond CUNY?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER HOSKINS: So, the other large sort of place where we see kids going is SUNY, and most kids elect to stay in New York State because of their eligibility for TAP. They don't want to lose that TAP eligibility. So, they elect to go to a school within New York State. So, SUNY is another one. We have quite a bit of kids on the Long Island campuses as well as Albany, Geneseo, and some of the colleges that are close to New York City New Fault. (sic) And so, we've been working with SUNY fairly closely as we've been working with CUNY. We're talking with our New York State Office of Children and Family Services to see if we can have a similar data match, the same that we have with CUNY with SUNY, as well as working with individualized offices. So, for example the Higher Education Opportunity programs at the CUNY College—I'm sorry, SUNY colleges as well as CUNY you'll hear from today. We have close relationships with those EOP officers

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to make sure they know who our kids are in foster care if they are selected for EOP, and we talk to them on a regular basis to implement any kind of services that are provided by the SUNY colleges. So, for example, wright now the state is allowing for winter housing for students in foster care. So, if they elect to stay on campus during--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Okay.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER HOSKINS: --a winter session. So, we're working with the SUNY colleges to do that. Other schools, some private schools we may work with on an individual basis based on how many kids we have there. So, for example we talk very frequently with LIU as we have a couple of the students there. NYU also we have one or two students there. So, depending on the population, we make sure that those students understand all of the services that are available for them on campus if we don't direct relationships with the colleges themselves.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Is--is there a dedicated--is it the Educational Specialist who helps a student make application for other kinds of grants and scholarships as well?

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ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER HOSKINS: Yes it is and we sort of make sure that the--that those Education Specialists have enough information to know what's available for all students in foster care. The ECV, most agencies are aware of that. That's a longstanding federal program, but then there are certain specialized scholarships. So, for example--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER HOSKINS: --we have for undocumented students we know that certain colleges have specialized programs for them, which could include tuition supports. So, we make sure that the education specialists are aware of those sort of specific programs.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Great. Okay, well, I think that covers most of the questions. You've been here quite a while. So, I did want to respect your time as well. I know you have another engagement, but I would like to get those demographics that I asked you about, and if you could break them down by age and by ethnicity and let's see and any individuals who might indicate that they have a disability, if we could find that data. Okay. Are

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there other questions from Council Members?

[background comments, pause]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I just have one--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --one quick follow-up
or two quick follow-ups. Following up on Council
Member Barron's last point, if we could make sure
that those are for all of the various programs not
just in general, the number of youth at CUNY, but
with all of the programs that have been laid out that
you spoke of to-to make sure that we have the
demographic data for-for each program.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That would be
helpful. With-I just want to make clear because I
don't think the number was out there, and looking at
the strategic blueprint we have on the chart the
number of children adopted, reunified, discharged to
KinGAP, but we don't have the number there of youth
that-that age out within that block. Do we have a-do
we have-and I know you said in your testimony that
that number, that the percentage is decreasing, but
what-we would like to know the-the actual number-

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yes.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --as well.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: And I have
that. So, the number I saw it. I think [background
comments, pause] right. So, in Calendar 2015 it was
799--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-hm.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --and in
Calendar Year it dropped by 5% so it's 758.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. So, still then
greater than the--the number or youth that are adopted
and discharged. No, I'm sorry.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: No.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Less the number
adopted, greater than the number discharged to clear
that.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yes. Okay, with
regard to maintaining enrollment in college, that's
an additional challenge--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --and if a youth is--
is on an APPLA track, there are supports. I mean I--I
could tell you when I was in college, I came this
close to dropping out between my Sophomore fall

semester spring semester. I moved out. I moved out.
I went home and my dad told me, you're not—you're not
dropping out of college. I said okay. So I got to
move back, [laughter] and I had to get a new room.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Thanks to
you dad.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, they let me back
into my same room, but—but it was—that was—they were
very nice about that but you know, that was—that was
because—it was because my dad when home that—that
winter--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah. yeah.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --I was told, you
know, no, you know, and—and so, youth that—that don't
have a family to tell them that when they're—when
they're, you know, thinking oh, maybe I'll, you know,
maybe I want to go, you know, work on a fishing boat
in Alaska, an experience like that or an oil rig in
Alaska. That was my idea at the time. That's what I
wanted to do. [laughter] Something like that, yeah.
You know, who's—who's—who's the one intervening
there, and yeah, and what's—how are we approaching
that particular—

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Right.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --issue of preventing dropouts? Once they're enrolled making sure that they stay enrolled?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: You're reminding me of, you know, when I graduated from college and--and told my parents that I wanted to go Breckenridge, Colorado and, you know, ski for a year.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, just to go.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: And they had feelings about that. So, I mean what's critically important about our work with young people that are transitioning out of care and are not going home or--or being adopted is even if they're not achieving, you know, what we call legal permanency, it is the responsibility of our foster care agencies work with young people to identify adults in their lives who are committed to those young people. You know, whether those are relatives or friends or teachers, right, and--and so the work is around building that--that circle of support, and those adults who, you know, are committed to being in the young person's life, and then, you know, in addition to that, I mean for the young person who wants to drop out of, for example, the Dorm Program, right, there are people in

this room who are wrapped around that young person,
right, and you'll hear about this from Bill
Boccaglini, and from the--and from the CUNY team and
from the Malik about what happens when, you know, a
young person is faltering, you know, as--as we do as
humans, and, you know, in that program in particular,
you know, the Foundling staff, you know, is stepping
in and helping and serving in the role that, you
know, your dad did--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-hm.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --and
figuring out sort of what the, you know, what the
issue is, and how can we support you through this.
And so, that's what we're trying to do for all young
people, you know, because, you know, as you said, all
of our young people have incredible potential and,
you know, sometimes at a moment like what you're
describing, you know, they need that critical adult
who is going to push back--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-hm.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --and--and
provide counsel to help them get back on track. And
so that's again, you know, the--the responsibility of
the foster care agency.

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3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I just—I mean I
4 know that you've mentioned New York Foundling a
5 number of times in—in—throughout this hearing so far,
6 and I just want to make sure that, you know, the
7 other 26 agencies--

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Absolutely.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --have and—and if
10 something is working with New York Foundling that
11 that's part of the protocol for everybody because it
12 shouldn't just be the youth that I'd say are with New
13 York Foundling that getting that type of
14 intervention.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: No, certainly
16 not. I mean it's the responsibility of all 27 foster
17 care agencies when a young person is, you know,
18 faltering or doing well--

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-hm.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --for their
21 case planner to be supporting them.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because three's no
23 reason in the world at all—at all whatsoever that a
24 youth in college that is in the foster care system
25 should ever drop out of college. If they're in

college, there's--there's zero reasons why--why they
shouldn't be able to--to get through to a degree.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: We want
thank, you know, clearly that's what we want and the
programs like this are designed to support our young
people who do face some challenges, right. So there
are sometimes young people who, you know, might have a
mental health crisis, and so maybe it means that they
are not dropping out for good. Maybe it means that
they're taking a break for a semester and then
getting the support they need to come back.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That was the reason
why--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER:
[interposing] Right.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --you know, my dad
didn't let me drop out was because he didn't think
that I was going to go back--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Right.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --and I did, and I
couldn't then--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: No, that's--
that's right.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --then convince him
that I would so--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Right.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --you know, that's—I
just want to—I think that, you know, however it needs
to happen--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --that needs to
happen.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Right.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I'll leave it at
that.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Just one further
question. Can we get data from you as to the number
of students—the number of children that have remained
in foster care for a year, two, three, four, five,
six, seven without any kind of interruption? Without
coming out and going back in?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I still need to know
and get a sense of it. I see the chart about the
end, but I need to get a sense of is there a class of
students or a group of students who have extensive
time in foster care?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: There's
length of stay data.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Length
of stay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: I believe
it's included on the Flash Report on our website,
but, you know, we can also look and see, and the, oh,
and from the MMR. So, it's in the MMR length of stay
data.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, any questions?

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Yes, for my-
first of all, I-

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Council
Member Rodriguez.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: I'm sorry for
being late.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ:

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Council Member
Rodriguez, thank you. Move over so we can see you.
(sic)

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COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Like my daughters and the children of especially the professional black and Latino, we'll probably be in the position where you were when my colleague Council Member Levin was when he talked about dropping out from college because working hard--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: --your parents who are not--who are not in the same position or the reality of those foster care teenagers that they don't have that parent. They don't have a father. They are raised by--they were raised by the single mother. Their father is doing time in jail. So, we know that that is the society where we are today in 2017, and I know that, you know, my colleagues here, you know in us we're trying to be there to be the voice of the voiceless, and to be the voice of the those youngsters that we have not created a pipeline to be sure that when they go back and talk to any adults, that they get the support that they need for them to know that, you know, graduating from college should not be something out of your plan. You know, drop-out is big and, you know, CUNY is doing a great job because as in the city we've been expecting for

CUNY to do a miracle. When you are welcoming a student many of them that we at the DOE we did not prepare them. It's not that they were coming from a foster care, but it's also unfortunately they--many of them they started the first major in college and not be ready to be in college. Because they--many of them they started taking remedial course, and many of them they went through community colleges. You know, the community college, as you know, more than 80% they need remedial course like reading writing and math. So, when we talk about that group of kids that we have that they come from living in some type of foster care like what percentage of them at community---are at community college?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER [off mic] What percentage of them are--

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Yes, yes,

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --going to be going to college?

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Yes, what percentage of the universe that you have from that group goes to senior colleges, and what percentage got to community college?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: [off mic] I
don't think it's too high.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: [off mic] Do
you have that? Do you have that? [pause]

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: And I'm pretty
sure that the vast majority they go through community
college.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Well, I
mean--well 50%--

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: [interposing]
I used to be a teacher for 13 year and I know-I have
many of those students in my classrooms, too.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: [off mic]
Yeah, let's look into that.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Can you turn your
mic on, please.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: [on mic]
Okay.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: This doesn't
exactly answer your question, but 50% of the students
attend CUNY, 30% SUNY, 15% private schools and 5% out
of state now, but you're asking for the distinction

between community colleges, right? So, we can pull
that information.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Yes. So,
again, I look at CUNY. I'm a product of CUNY. You
know, CUNY opened the door to me.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: I used to be a
teacher or guidance counselor or whatever role I
played--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: --being there
working with new coming students from Latin America.
I deal with those students that they used to live in
foster care, you know, and dealing with so many
pressures in their lives. Unfortunately, they did,
they are dispatched--they were dispatched from high
school. Now, with other supports that the rest of
the jumps that they have in their life. But, you
know, one of my-my-I see that through the sick (sic)
and--and city youth matter, you know, we talk about
that a students are--they are eligible--eligible to
receive many programs. But what percentage of those
3,000 take advantage of all those programs? Like we
have, you know, they're eligible to through the Youth

Matter to have access to a full-time social worker,
MTA and Metro Card, all those services that we know
that to the state funding they are eligible, too, but
what percentage of those youngsters really get those
services?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER So, well we
can put together that information for you. I think
that's similar to what Council Member Levin was
asking essentially for sort of laying out all of
these programs, and the numbers of youth in--in all of
the programs that we've mentioned and their
demographics and all of that. So, we'd be happy to
pout that information together.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Okay, thanks.
I-I-I know that we're doing the best we can, but we
as a city are not the business--have not been in the
business to create the pipeline from UPK to higher
education to guarantee that foster care youth are
not--they are college material, and then here that
come CUNY that we expect for you guys to say we can
drive this (sic) but when we look at the number, you
know, it's not only for City. I can tell about City
College home to when I was in (sic) college.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Population of
Black and Latino been going down big time in the last
ten years.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: And those are
senior colleges. So, I know that we have friends at
CUNY, but also we have to push at DOE to be sure that
we prepare foster care youth or not to be able not to
send them through the community colleges, but also to
be sure that they go through the senior colleges.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: I mean
Education is an absolutely critical focus for us at
ACS, right? If, you know, the-the-taking the very
serious step of removing children from their parents,
you know, that's a very significant action, right
that government can take, and that if that action is,
you know, sometimes necessary for-for children's
safety then we want, you know, young people in foster
care to have the same kinds of opportunity and
benefit from the same kinds of, you know, programs
and services that are available to their peers, but
even more so because they've been removed from their
parents. And, you know, we approach this work
understanding that that is a, you know, a

responsibility and a value that if young people have been removed from their parents, and placed in foster care, you know, the-the work that we're doing to advance, you know, their wellbeing and their-and their educational achievement is absolutely critical. And particularly critical for young people of color in order for them to, you know, have a chance on an equitable playing field.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: [off mic] We have to identify within that, you know, I refuse to believe in this city aside of poverty, aside from these markets and all those programs that we have, if you come to me, and told me, you know the support that we provide to 20% of the students who passed too many times. We don't have enough focus on that percent, because also the students with people going back and they just will be because they will not be here because we're lacking those services because we have college. We have not any counseling for it who look to assist for the students in poverty in the New York City public schools when the national is an additional 205, and those kids they should exist, you know to be more support. [on mic] You know, to have all the services. You know, I don't know how we're

going to sleep and say yeah, you know, again I used—
I've been confined to school. I've been in the
classroom as long as I've been in the Council, and
been a teacher as long as I've been in the Council,
and it breaks my heart that we know that foster care
students they are not supported in the high school as
they should to be sure that we celebrate because you
know what happened to one of the top students first
again that we make it to a good college we would take
photo with them, teachers, elected officials,
parents, program directors. Because we know that if
we are not making those numbers, then we don't have
those data to share with us. So, it's more, you
know, like it's tough for those kids to stay in
college and graduate, and unless we have a better
program, a better pipeline, we will come back going
hearing to hearing, mentioning certain programs, but
without—without being to share that data say 80% of
those kids graduate from college. Fifty percent of
them, they went to senior colleges, and that happened
because we provide all the support that they needed.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: It's not—so,
this conversation is so critical to that, right, I
mean we are tracking outcomes, you know, the

Foundling is tracking outcomes, ACS is tracking outcomes, CUNY is tracking outcomes. And I think what's so important, and I think what's really been recognized I think by everybody in their comments today is that from young people in foster care to succeed in particular in high school and in college requires something extra. And it requires, you know, the kinds of programs that we're—we're talking about, and scaling those programs so we can make sure that every young person, you know, elementary school, middle school, high school and college has the kinds of extra wraparound supports to succeed.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. If there are no further questions, we want to thank the panel for coming, and doing your presentation.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I understand you do have to leave, but we expect that someone will be here to gather the other questions that might come up.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yes, we have a whole team of folks who are here--

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CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Great.
Thank you so much.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: --I can stay
a little bit longer.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh, great thank you.
[laughter] And so, now we're going to call the next
panel.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The next panel Donna
Linderman, University Dean for Student Success
Initiatives at CUNY; Shirley Depena, University
Director of Youth Matters at CUNY; Jasmine Edwards,
student at John Jay College. [background comments,
pause]

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [off mic] I'm going
to ask--[on mic] I'm going to have my counsel
administer the oath.

LEGAL COUNSEL: Please raise your right
hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole
truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony
before this committee and to respond honestly to
Council Members' questions?

DEAN LINDERMAN: I do.

DIRECTOR DEPENNA: I do.

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LEGAL COUNSEL: Please state your name
for the records.

DEAN LINDERMAN: Donna Linderman,
University Dean of Student Success Initiatives at the
City University of New York. Good afternoon members
of the City Council Higher Education and General
Welfare Committees. I am Donna Linderman, CUNY
University Dean for Student Success Initiatives.
Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about
the various ways CUNY is supporting foster care youth
in their higher education pursuits. I am joined by
Shirley Depena, University Director for Youth Matter,
a structured support system for foster care youth who
are currently or formerly in care in our SEEK CD
Programs and Jasmine Edwards, a Seek Youth Matters
student attending John Jay College of Criminal
Justice. Together, we will aim to describe the
multi-faceted strategies CUNY has established in
dialogue with our partners to ensure more New York
City foster care youth have the support they need to
move towards completion of a college degree.
Currently, there are several initiatives that provide
pipelines into and through CUNY degree programs that
reflect the university's deep commitment to ensuring

that more transition age foster care youth have significant support to earn a college degree. I will provide an overview of the CUNY ACS Fostering College Success Initiatives, FCSI a year-round residential support program for youth in care through a partnership between CUNY, ACS and New York Foundling. Ms. Depena will describe our SEEK as well as our FCI program supported by the Foster-by the Hilton Foundation. Ms. Depena will describe SEEK CD Youth Matter, which is supported by the State of New York and our Office of Student Affairs Foster Care Collaborative, which convenes CUNY, City and non-profit foster care stakeholders to discuss best practices and common issues supporting youth in care in higher education. And finally, Ms. Edwards will speak about her experience as a SEEK Youth Matters student and dorming student at Queens College. Many foster care youth have had life experiences that may have affected their K12 educational opportunity experiences, and impact their college going rates. Nationally, only 10% of transition age foster care youth go to college, and only 3% go on to earn a college degree. In New York City based on data from a report by the Community Service Society of New York

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it is estimated that no more than 24% of college age foster care youth are enrolled in college compared to 60% of students statewide, and while a college degree was recognized as an essential credential for long-term economic success, few young people who have been in foster care enroll and graduate from college.

CUNY in dialogue with our public and private partners have combined forces to create evidence based research and proven successful best practices to shape initiatives that aim to improve those statistics. These initiatives represent the university's best efforts to expand access to a wide range of potential students from diverse backgrounds, strengthen partnerships, ensure smooth transition of non-traditional college students and bolster student support structures that will raise academic success rates. So, one of the most critical needs of transition age foster care youth attending college is stable year-round housing. Launched in 2016 with support from the city of New York the Fostering College Success Initiatives aims to address this critical need by providing a college residential support program for youth in care through a partnership between CUNY, ACS and New York Foundling.

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FCSI students may reside in one of three CUNY residence halls: Queens College, College of Staten Island or City College. Students who reside at Queens and City may attend any CUNY undergraduate college. Students who dorm at CSI attend CSI. Students receive 12 months of year-round room and board and financial support to cover their full cost of CUNY attendance including textbook and transportation stipends and waiver of any tuition and fee gaps after application and financial aid. Students also receive a monthly stipend, which you heard about from the Deputy Commissioner directly from ACS for personal expenses. Acknowledging that youth in foster care may need additional supports to be successful in college, FCSI students also receive wraparound services including tutoring, mentoring and counseling within the dormitory setting through New York Foundling. FCSI students are also strongly encourages to enroll in CUNY programs that provide financial resources, structured degree pathways, advisement and academic supports such as ASAP, SEEK and College Discovery. This year FCSI admitted 93 students of which 37 are enrolled in ASAP, 10 in SEEK and 13 in College Discovery. Demographics of current

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FCSI students are as follows: 40% Hispanic, 39% Black, 3% Asian Pacific Islander, 10% White and 8% other or unknown. By gender, 44% are male and 56% female with a mean age of 20, and we are grateful to ACS and New York Foundling, our partners, and deeply appreciate the generous support for the city to launch FCSI. This is a unique and important project that considers the comprehensive needs of youth in care while pursuing their college degrees at CUNY. And in 2015, CUNY Start received a four-year grant in the amount of \$2.5 million from the Conrad and Hilton Foundation to create a supportive pipeline program for 325 transition age youth from foster care to move seamlessly through CUNY Start and ASAP, which led to the creation of the CUNY Start ASAP Foster Care Initiatives. Sorry for all the acronyms. FCI, FCSI. So, FCI serve students age 17 to 21 with active ACS foster care status who wish to pursue an associate degree at CUNY and are eligible for CUNY Start and/or ASAP. CUNY State and ASAP are two of CUNY's most successful and nationally recognized programs that have achieved remarkable results in assisting students to address deep remedial needs, perform matriculation in the case of CUNY Start and earn an

associate degree in a timely manner in the case of
ASAP. ASAP offers a structured degree pathway that
provides financial resources to remove barriers to
full-time study and comprehensive student support
services that assist students in earning an associate
degree within three years, and provide a range of
financial, academic and personal supports including
comprehensive and personalized advisement through our
counseling, tutoring and waivers for tuition and
mandatory fees, MTA and Metro Cards, and the cost of
textbooks. The program realizes more than double the
three-year graduation rates of similar students; 53%
for ASAP versus 24% for matched comparison group
students and is currently undergoing a major
expansion to 25,000 students in the coming year
thanks to the generous support of the city. CUNY
Start, which is a sister program of ASAP provides
intensive instructions and advisement for incoming
associate students with significant remedial needs in
reading, writing and/or math. CUNY Start helps
students prepare for college level coursework, reduce
or eliminate any remedial needs prior to
matriculation; foster high levels of persistence and
increase the likelihood of graduation. While CUNY

Start serves students with significant remedial needs, nearly 70% of our students enter with needs in reading, writing and math. At program completion, more than half of our full-time students exit fully proficient, and remaining students have significantly reduced their remedial needs all before matriculation. This year we were also pleased to extend FSCI to students who joined John Jay's Accelerate, Complete and Engage program, which is a baccalaureate pilot program modeled on ASAP that expanded in 2017 with support from the Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity. FCI aims to improve the rates of enrollment, retention and persistence for these students ensuring that at least 85% of students enrolled in CUNY Start complete the program and that at least 80% then move on, transition to ASAP. For those that persist in ASAP, our goal is to see at least 50% graduate within three years. FCI has established strong strategic partnerships with New York City foster care agencies in order to develop a recruitment and referral pathway that seeks to increase the number of foster care students who enroll at CUNY. To date, we've partnered with over 20 agencies and ACS and developed on-an online

referral tool to allow for fast referral to the
program. FCI provides an additional layer of
support beyond the benefits students already receive
through CUNY Start, our Eight Week Master Program and
ASAP. Additional FCI services and resources include
assistance with the CUNY admissions and financial aid
process, college navigation supports, fee waivers for
the CUNY application and CUNY Start a Master at Fees,
unlimited Metro Cards during the CUNY Start a Master
at Fees, additional free winter and summer courses
paid on campus internships, and student engagement
activities. And special events and, of course,
referrals to our foster and college success dorming
opportunity. Too, CUNY wide FCI Coordinators work
with campus based staff to support students through
the admissions and intake process. Once enrolled at
CUNY FCI team members provide those additional layers
of support to students—to ensure that students are
able to persist in addition to support provided by
CUNY Start and ASAP and, of course, the dorm services
provided by New York Foundling. FCI currently serves
116 students across ten colleges that offer ASAP and
Ace and CUNY Start and Math Start and we plan to
enroll another 60 students in spring 2018. Next year

we hope to enroll another 100 students. FCI demographics are as follows: 67% are female, 32% male, 48% are Black, 43% Hispanic and 9% Asian Other unknown students. I can say that of students who—in FCI we've done some analysis of high school mobility for those that attended in New York City and we found that almost 80% of students moved to a different zip code at least once during high school, and half of student moved two or more times. Additionally, 57% transferred to a different high school at least once during their—their DOE career. Our Office of Research, Evaluation and Program support is leading an evaluation of CUNY Start, ASAP Foster Care Initiative, and this evaluation supports program development and we hope contributes to the larger discussion on foster care youth in higher education. So, REPS is conducting a longitudinal study drawing on multiple data sources to assess how FCI programs supports effects of post-secondary outcomes for students in care. This includes designing an original—original servicing instruments and developing an online platform for data collection and program management. REPS is also facilitating three two-year research fellowships for CUNY faculty,

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conducting independent research on college access
and success of youth in care, and findings from this
work will be presented as a symposium in Spring 2019
when that analysis is done. And finally, we have a
Memorandum of Understanding with ACS between ACS and
CUNY to allow for data exchange that was mentioned
previously. So, in closing, I will just say
supporting the needs of transition age youth in care
at CUNY is a top priority for the university, for
campus leadership and the university leadership and a
reflection of our mission to help New Yorkers of all
backgrounds realize their educational goals and full
potential. We are grateful to our public and private
partners, ACS, New York Foundling, New Yorkers for
Children, and all of the foster care agencies across
the city, our college leadership and staff to support
the various programs to meet students' needs and we
reiterate our commitment to working strategically to
ensure that foster care youth know that they have a
home and a network behind them at CUNY at every step
of their college journey. We'd like to thank the
Council for your interest, and your generous support
of these efforts.

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DIRECTOR DEPENA: Good afternoon members
of the City Council's General Welfare and higher
education committees. My name is Shirley Depena. I am
the University Director for Youth Matter, a
structured support system for our SEEK and College
Discovery students at CUNY. I appreciate the
opportunity to provide testimony at today's joint
public hearing focusing on higher education
opportunities for youth aging out of foster care. As
we discussed today, young people that have been
involved with the Child Welfare system do face
significant challenges because of their experiences.
Some of these burdens include physical and
psychological trauma, lack of financial support that
includes food and housing insecurity, academic
challenges, lack of preparation and culture of low
expectations. With respect to opportunities in
higher education, foster youth are among the most
disadvantaged. For many, higher education can be a
ticket to a better life. Unfortunately, many foster
youth face unique and significant barriers in higher
education. Studies suggest that college students who
have been in foster care continue to lag behind their
peers with respect to college retention and

graduation even when compared to low-income first generation students. Foster youth who attend college may face additional hurdles once they get there. One such hurdle is the cost of living. Youth in foster care cannot succeed academically if they have basic unmet school related needs. Furthermore, many studies suggest that the most pervasive challenge is the lack of supportive relationships with adults in and out of school. SEEK And College Discovery are the opportunity programs at CUNY, and they were established about 50 years ago to provide comprehensive academic support to assist capable students who otherwise might not be able to attend college due to their educational and financial circumstances. As you may be aware, SEEK and College Discovery provide financial assistance to students by way of book stipends, and fee waivers and extra semesters of financial aid to get them through college. They also provide intensive academic support in terms of tutoring. Our tutoring support is preventive. We believe that students should start tutoring at the onset of their college career, and students in SEEK and College Discovery also have personalized counseling by their own advisor where

they are able to go to their advisor to both talk about academic needs and social-emotional. In 2015, New York State invested \$1.5 million into the 2015-2016 budget for the Foster Youth College Success Initiative FYCSI, a program designed to help foster youth in the opportunity programs at CUNY, SUNY and private colleges successfully complete college. On April 1, 2016 New York State doubled that number investing \$3 million for 2016-2017 and rose to \$4.5 million for the 2017-2018 academic year. Whereas, with Youth Matter at CUNY the Foster Youth College Success Initiative seeks to implement a structured support system to help foster youth in CUNY SEEK and College Discovery programs by providing access to academic, social, financial and psycho-social support above and beyond the support they receive from SEEK and College Discovery. In its first year of program operations, which was in 2015, Youth Matter identified approximately 60 SEEK and College Discovery students for participation in the program and began providing services. Currently, Youth Matter serves 103 SEEK and College Discovery students across 17 campuses that are a part of this population. Just to give some demographics as well,

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of the 103 students currently, 60% of—62% of our students are female, 38% of our students are male, 30% are Hispanic Latino, 2% are Asian, 56% are Black African-American, 7% are White and 5% are unknown. Most of our students are between the ages of 18 and 25; 44%, 46% are between the ages of 18 and 21, and 48% are between the ages of 22 to 25. Youth Matter provides support to students who are currently in foster care, were previously in foster care at least at the age of 13 and wards of the court. We also have 58% of our students at senior colleges with 42% at community colleges. Students in the program receive monthly Metro Cards, Campus Meal Vouchers, Housing Assistance in CUNY's residential dorms and winter and summer tuition assistance each semester if needed. Students in the Youth Matter Program are also connected to live coaches who will work individually with students on their personal, professional and career development goals. Additionally, as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker I also meet with students regularly in small groups and individual meetings to help them navigate the system of higher education and ensure they're receiving the appropriate support they need to be successful in

college and in life. The CUNY Foster Care Collaborative is another key foster care initiative at CUNY. The collaborative holds regular convenings of CUNY key staff and foster care agencies and advocates from—and advocate from across the city to discuss ways to improve the college transition and success of foster care youth at CUNY. The Collaborative has also created a one stop website detailing a range of CUNY resources, program services and supports available to students here in care at CUNY. In closing, I'd like to take the time to thank the Council for your support and collaborative effort to work to provide access and promote success in higher education for our young adults aging out of the foster care system. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss CUNY's efforts as well as the efforts of the SEEK and College Discovery and Youth Matter staff to provide much needed support to these young adults. I am happy to take your questions.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Next panelist.

JASMINE EDWARDS: Hi. Sorry—

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Hi.

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JASMINE EDWARDS: Thank you for listening to me. My name is Jasmine Edwards, and I'm currently a senior at John Jay College for Criminal Justice. Before I start, I would like to say that I'm—I got my Associate's in Criminal Law Enforcement at SUNY Farmingdale. Transferring into John Jay was smooth especially for Youth Matters because they told me in my swimming school that if you come into an opportunity program that it follows you to a CUNY or a private and that was called SEEK and College Discovery AESOP (sic). When I transferred into John Jay, they didn't have me as a SEEK student, but then when I met with Shirley Depena at the Dorm Project, she was Youth Matters, and she got me on track to being a—not on in track because I was supposed to be in it. Right, she helped me. [laughs] She helped me. She corrected the school's mistake and made sure that I was going to have all the resources that I needed, but to continue coming to CUNY was a really good decision that I made simply because of the opportunities that I was missing out going to a SUNY school. At first I assumed that going to a SUNY school would mean more opportunities because I'm leaving my comfort zone. I thought that I would

1 grown more, but then I realized that going away kind
2 of hindered me. There was a lot of opportunities
3 that I wanted that I couldn't have because it wasn't
4 made available to me being away. Coming to John Jay--
5 sorry. So, I'm in the SEEK program and I major in
6 Criminal Management, and I graduate in the spring.
7 Being in the SEEK program has helped the transition
8 simply because I'm in care and a lot of the problems
9 that I've noticed-- I was going to read this, but I
10 think that I may. I feel this, for example.

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Take your time.
13 Present it whatever way you want. You can adlib.
14 You can read. [laughter] You can do a combination.
15 Whatever is comfortable for you.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: No time limit on you.

17 JASMINE EDWARDS: I noticed--I noticed
18 that this is my, my senior year that I--I didn't
19 realize it would be the most hardest year for me.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh, yes.

21 JASMINE EDWARDS: Yes, because I'm
22 graduating, but more so because you're recognizing
23 like who you are in society at this point and you're
24 starting to realize how much support you're going to
25 need. I was one of the students in youth--in care who

1 didn't need anything extra just need a roof of my
2 head and eat some food and that was really it. I
3 wasn't looking for extra anything. So, I managed to
4 get through college without really asking for so
5 much. It was a lot of like my Agency ATCA telling me
6 like hey Jasmine, we're supposed to do that for you.
7 You should have asked us. You shouldn't do it on
8 your own, but I was just so used to be independent
9 because of the situation that I'm in. In my senior
10 year, I realized that I, you guys mentioned it
11 earlier that you kind of can't take that break that
12 you might need because you feel like you're in care
13 and you have all of these opportunities award to you,
14 and you don't really have that time to like breathe
15 and be a human being. It's kind of like you're not
16 so much a person. You're a youth in care. When
17 someone sees you you're like-you're that youth in
18 care. You've kind of like it's who you are. You
19 don't want them to forget that you're still someone
20 who has basic needs who's in care and who's not. But
21 definitely being in SEEK allowed for me to get the
22 extra support and in Youth Matters because I try to,
23 you know. Whenever I need a shoulder to cry on
24 because I'm not a crier, but I've cried a lot this
25

semester in her office. Like I was—I'm going to say really used to letting like my—my private life not get in the way of school. I was trying to keep like separated, but it wasn't until this year that I realized that they definitely--I-I can't it separated any more. Okay, okay. Is this water?

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes, it is.

JASMINE EDWARDS: I'm sorry.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Take your time.

[background comments, pause] Just need some water.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: We're so pleased that you decided that you would be a part of this panel to bring us the reality of what it is that those who are in foster care face. So, take your time. Your testimony is very important.

JASMINE EDWARDS: Well, speaking on that, thank you. [laughter] Speaking on that, I'm part of a lot of the organizations that was mentioned by ACS like Dorm Project with Foundling, my agency Youth Matters, and I'm extremely grateful for these opportunities because when I decided to come to John Jay those were like in the works. It wasn't—it wasn't liked—it wasn't a thing. So, when I came back to the city my idea was I'm going to go back into

1 foster home and I'm going to get my degree and that's
2 it, which was really kind of depressing because I had
3 spent three years away growing further, and to have
4 to return back to a foster home was—I mean I love my
5 foster mom, but I didn't want to do that. I just
6 felt like I was growing this way and going home and
7 knowing that I wouldn't be able to stay there, too,
8 it was—it was kind of confusing, but then the Dorm
9 Project came about. So, me living there allowed me
10 to like continue to grow, and that's what I might
11 surely do. So, I—I feel like it's more than just—
12 because like a lot of it is like money, you know.
13 I'm in—I'm in—I'm in John Jay. I'm a criminal
14 management student. A lot of it is they tell us it's
15 just politics, politics and I feel like it needs to
16 be less about how much it costs. Like there's a
17 bunch of different discussions that we have where
18 everything is about how much is—does it cost, and not
19 so much about the--[pause] Sorry, I blanked out.
20 Like what—what matters mostly to me is like how the
21 person is feeling, and yeah, we're receiving money.
22 Yeah, we're receiving money, and Metro Cards and this
23 and that, books are paid for in school, but the one
24 thing that I've constantly repeated this this year
25

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because I said it was really hard was having someone there to talk to you. Because it's--it's kind of like you can have supports everyone throwing money in your face, and then you realize how much money really isn't important because yeah, you're getting a stipend, but then having someone you know you can talk to down to Shirley at Youth Matters or my counselor at Sea Grave (sic) and my CSCs at the Foundling at the Dorm Project, a lot of what I needed this semester was someone to talk to especially because in my agency I'm seen as one of like the strongest like the stronger students who are going to push through, but then sometimes it--it sucks being the person who's going to get through because I--I feel like we--we tend to focus more on the students who need obvious help who look they're failing or who look like they have these things wrong with them, and people tend to forget to ask about the people who appeared. I'm sorry. [background comments, pause]
Okay, I'm so sorry.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: No need to
apologize.

JASMINE EDWARDS: I feel like we tend to
forget about the--the strong students because we

1 assume like they'll be good because they're driven,
2 and like went over to Harvard Law (sic), but it—as I
3 keep saying, like my senior year was the hardest and
4 I feel like these kind of programs will be good for
5 you coming behind me, which is why in my old school
6 in Farmingdale, my original plan was to go to law
7 school, and I took a class called Juvenile
8 Delinquency, and we had like a mock trial, and I was
9 all ears, and the question I kept asking well where
10 was the program second for this kid? Why am I
11 defending this person because we took it serious?

12
13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Uh-hm.

14 JASMINE EDWARDS: I'm like why is—like
15 where is the programs in place? Why am I defending
16 this kid now? Like why is—like I felt guilty because
17 I lost that case. [laughter] And I felt like it
18 wasn't that I lost the case. I just felt like we
19 failed the kid in general because I'm just like why
20 are we waiting until they're in a courtroom to try to
21 help this kid--

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

23 JASMINE EDWARDS: --you know, go into the
24 system or not that there needs to be programs in
25 place that will—that will—they won't even get to this

part in—in their life, and I was like well how about
you do it, Jasmine. Like instead of asking where was
the program, step back and be like at the root of
like the—the flower and help plan those, and that's
when I decided that I wanted to be an advocate for
youth in care because I—I really, really care. I
feel like because I'm youth in care, I understand
first hand what it feels like, and I fee like
sometimes I mean I can't dance, can't sing, I can't
draw, but I have a voice, and I feel like once I'm
graduated and I'm an adult, you know, and I have my
kids, I'm never going to forget all of the supportive
people that was around me, Youth Matters, SEEK, the
Foundling, my agency and I want to be one of those
people where a kid is, you know, I'm off for the
weekend, but the kid is waiting for Monday to come.
Like I got to speak to Ms. Edwards because she's—you
know, she's there to help and it's just I feel like
that's far and where we're working in. That's how I
want to wrap things up. Just saying thank you to
everyone, and I know it's not perfect and that's why
I'm here, and when I graduate next semester, I will
be joining everyone in helping assist youth in care
because they're really nice to me. Thank you.

[applause] [background comments] I'm happy to take
any questions. [laughter]

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you so much to
the panel for coming and for sharing, and I just have
a few questions, and then I'll turn it to my
colleague. So, you've decided that--let's see, Ms.
Edwards that you want to be an advocate now--

JASMINE EDWARDS: [interposing] Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --for youth in care--

JASMINE EDWARDS: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --and I'm sure that
being in this situation you've got some insights that
others who are just as committed have because they
haven't been through those kinds of experiences, and
it's interesting to hear you say that it's the child
who has the obvious kinds of perhaps signals of
needing help that will get attention. But perhaps
those who don't have those kinds of obvious needs or
is seen as a person who's the high achieving person
doesn't get perhaps the need--the assistance and the
need and the interaction. It seemed to be not just
about the program elements, but the personal
connection, the support, the mentoring, the
counseling that was so important, and--and as a member

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of the Council talking about higher education, we
always say that that's so important. It's the
supports that come in terms of the social
interactions and the social dynamics that make a big
difference. So, we're so pleased that you are going
to enter into that field, and we look forward to your
coming, and being in the field and adding your voice
to what it is that we know is going to be needed. To
Ms. Depena, I just wanted to know if you could once
again give me those demographics. I didn't see them.

DIRECTOR DEPENA: I'm sorry. I can—I can
share those with you.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, if you could
just—

DIRECTOR DEPENA: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --rattle them off
again, I'd like to make a note.

DIRECTOR DEPENA: Sure, all of them?

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --and then—Yes, go
ahead.

DIRECTOR DEPENA: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yeah.

DIRECTOR DEPENA: So, we currently have
62% females and 38% males in the program this year.

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CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And you're talking
about which particular program?

DIRECTOR DEPENA: The Youth Matter
Program.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Youth Matters.

DIRECTOR DEPENA: Those—those are the
SEEK and College Discovery students who are either
in—currently in foster care or previously in foster
care at least at the age of 13 orphaned and wards of
the court.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

DIRECTOR DEPENA: Of those students, 30%
are Hispanic Latino; 2% are Asian; 56% are Black and
African-American; 7% are White and 5% are unknown;
46% of our students are between the ages of 18 and
21; 48% are between the ages of 22 and 25 and 7% are
25 and over—older. We also have the demographics for
senior colleges versus community colleges. You know,
Council Member Rodriguez left, but he asked that
question specifically. Fifty-eight percent of our
students are at senior colleges, and 42% are at
community colleges. I also have the breakdowns of
race and ethnicity by male and female if you want
that as well.

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CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, you could send
those--

DIRECTOR DEPENA: I can.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --that--that would be
wonderful.

DIRECTOR DEPENA: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, this more
closely aligns with what was presented earlier in
terms of children who are in care. This more closely
aligns with that.

DIRECTOR DEPENA: I think it does.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right. So, these are
the Youth Matters the children who are in the SEEK
program and College Discovery?

DIRECTOR DEPENA: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, good. I'm
going to--I just want to commend CUNY. You're doing a
great job. I think the programs that--that you've
talked about are so important. Now, you said the FCI
program began with a grant in 2015 of \$2.5 million.
It's a four-year grant. What's going to happen at
the end of the fourth year?

DEAN LINDERMAN: So, the idea was really
to--to think about building a supportive pipeline

that--that the programs themselves could continue.

So, the idea of building relationships with agency partners across the city to, you know, make a more explicit and clear pathway in CUNY Start and ASAP.

The idea is that we will, CUNY will adopt this and make this just part of how we recruit for CUNY Start and ASAP and the--kind of emergence of the Dorm

Project as--as the Deputy Commissioner calls it. We all call it that actually was a very happy

intervention because that literally was the single most important thing that students--we were initially recruiting for FCI, but the Hilton Grant did not have money in it for housing. So, that was--that was kind of the missing link, but in terms of the work we're doing in FCI, our goal is to just integrate the recruitment and outreach practices we've added--we've adopted ourselves.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, as the budget cycle begins in a couple of weeks, what is CUNY planning to ask for to expand this project so that we will have a great opportunity for youth in foster care to be able to have a place where they can operate from, and again it talks to helping to develop--develop their independence.

DEAN LINDERMAN: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, what is--does
CUNY have a plan for that or--?

DEAN LINDERMAN: So, we--I mean it is
certainly CUNY's goal. We-we really want to build on
the--on this Dorm Project because it is clearly such a
critical piece. I mean you heard Jasmine say she
needs a roof over her head--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

DEAN LINDERMAN: --and through DE, and
those things you can't magically make appear in the
City of New York. So, that certainly continuing to
expand that program will certainly be part of the
ask. I can't give you an exact figure right--right
now at this moment.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

DEAN LINDERMAN: We're still in dialogue.
Part of it is also looking at the capacity of the--of
the dorms to make sure we can--we can welcome more
students in.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right. So, in terms
of housing, I understand the dorm and the ability to
be able to have that support right there and built
in, do you see the opportunity to have housing

outside of dorms or what do you think might be the
problems that might be inherent in that?

DEAN LINDERMAN: So, this isn't my area
of CUNY, but I—I knew at the very beginning when—when
the Dorm Project sort of materialized there was
dialogue between ACS and then CUNY about perhaps we
could look to see if there could be an external
resident hall. That—that is not such an easy thing
to do in New York, creating—first of all, finding a
space that is a dormitory or could become one, and
then ensuring that it—it meets all the specifications
for a safe, stable location. So, that—that was
actually part of the original explorations. I'm
looking at Bill because he was critical in—in saying
we need something like this. It—it was complicated.
Again, this isn't my area at CUNY. So, the—the
opportunity of plugging into available resident
opportunities within CUNY made more sense.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Of course.

DEAN LINDERMAN: As you're aware,
Chairperson Barron, CUNY is not first and foremost a
residential--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

DEAN LINDERMAN: We don't have a lot of
those.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

DEAN LINDERMAN: So, CUNY is interested
in expanding that capacity, but I don't want to speak
on behalf of Vice Chancellor Bergtraum or others who
are more expert on where we're at with that right
now.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right. Well, the
Mayor I think yesterday or the day before announced
some thoughts about housing that the city would
secure housing to address the homeless population.
So, while the Mayor is talking about that, we can
talk to the Mayor and--and

DEAN LINDERMAN: I absolutely agree.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --ask to have us
added onto that.

DEAN LINDERMAN: From--from--from your--from
your lips to--to--go God's ears.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

DEAN LINDERMAN: But that's the one--
that's wonderful. Also, I just, you know, wanted to
reiterate that as--as ASAP expands and--and our map--
CUNY Start Map Start programs expand, we--we really

want to make sure that those opportunities are explicit, clear and easy to access for all New Yorkers but particularly for the most vulnerable students that we're talking about today. So, that's why we take that recruitment and partnership development very, very seriously.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, you said that the initial grant did not include housing. So, what is CUNY's budget now to serve the students in ACS foster care and through the programs with the housing?

DEAN LINDERMAN: So, our—our budget for FCSI for the housing is \$3.2 million, and that supports 93 students year round after the application of financial aid and any benefits that may accrue in a program like SEEK CD or in ASAP, that budget waives any other costs for their year-round housing, dorms, transportation, textbooks anything that's not provided to—to meet their full cost of attendance needs. So that's—so that's what the \$3.2 million is intended to cover. A small piece of it covers some administration support for the program, but the vast majority of it, almost all of it goes directly to student needs.

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CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And does that include
the stipend, and what is the stipend? Is that the
same stipend as the Dorm Project or there is interest
in that. (sic)

DEAN LINDERMAN: [interposing] So, the
second is handled by ACS. That is--that is--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, thanks.

DEAN LINDERMAN: --so--so the \$28 per day
that you heard about from the Deputy Commissioner.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Uh-hm.

DEAN LINDERMAN: That comes directly from
ACS to the students.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Uh-hm. Okay.

DIRECTOR DEPENA: And I can add that for
the Youth Matter program our current budget is \$4.5
million for the 17-18 year, and CUNY has 28% of that
budget, and the rest is CUNY. I'm sorry, SUNY and
AGOP (sic) and we provide to our students we do have
housing assistance for our students. So we have a
number of students that are currently in CUNY
residential dorms that are not a part of the Dorm
Project that the Youth Matters Program fully pays
for.

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CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, and then just before I pass it to my colleague, you know, everything is relative. The ACS panel before I believe said that there was 30% of the students in foster care who were in the programs, and this exceeds the national rate, and as I read the testimony, we're far below New York State's rates. So, you know, it depends on who you're comparing it to. So, if we're comparing ourselves to rural America and other areas, that's one fact, one manner, but to look at New York State, which I think is a more equitable person to get—a more equitable entity to gauge ourselves by, they're not doing well. Not at all.

DEAN LINDERMAN: We have a long way to go.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, and for you said based on data from a report by CSS, it's estimated that no more than 24% of the college age force—college age foster youth are enrolled in college compared to 60% of students statewide. So, what is the source of that data?

DEAN LINDERMAN: So, I--I don't for the Community Service Society. They—I believe they

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pulled that from—I post data, college-data from CUNY
and so, I-I could get that to you.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: A little better--

DEAN LINDERMAN: [interposing] I could
certainly—I could certainly get that to you.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes, good, okay,
great. Thank you. Council—yes.

JASMINE EDWARDS: [coughs] Sorry. I
just want to add real fast because I meant to say it
earlier that I feel like people don't realize what
like SEEK is or any of the opportunity programs. It's
literally getting high school students who—who the
college said you won't do well in our school, they're
basically saying they're going to do well in the
school and we're going to support them. My grades
they weren't that low, but schools wanted a certain
GPA, and based off what my GPA was in high school,
the college said no you're not going to do well, but
then I got in through like a SEEK Or Opportunity
program, and I'm actually doing far better than the
students that they said were going to do well.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [laughing]

JASMINE EDWARDS: So, I have—I have a
3.572 GPA. I won two honor societies. [cheers] I

just go in. I'm sorry. Just last Thursday I got—I
got inducted into Chi Alpha Epsilon. That's the
SEEK's honor society and January 11th, I will be in
Alpha Sigma. That's a leadership society. So, I
just want to mention like I wouldn't—I really would
not be where I am today if it weren't for programs
like SEEK because I—I don't know whose day it was
[laughs] to say like oh, there's a—there's a
demographic of students who yeah their grades show
this, and they may not be able to pay for it, but
with assistance I'm sure that they will, and I
thought that's a problem, too kind of like Section 8
of high schoolers. Like I'm sure no one in here was
the same as they were in high school that they were
at the end of the college.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

JASMINE EDWARDS: So, I just wanted to
mention the—like the actual importance of what SEEK
is to SEEK students who aren't in care because there
are students who aren't in care—

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

JASMINE EDWARDS: --who have the same
issues that I have that SEEK has met.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

JASMINE EDWARDS: So, that's what I would
say.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Well, it was
[coughs] it was the collective Black legislators who
were in Albany in the--I guess it was in 1970, early
1970s, who had that understanding that GPAs are not
100% indicators of how successful people will be in a
college level. So, it was they who--it was that group
of Black legislators in the Assembly who said no,
you've got to make some provisions and some
allowances here that will allow us to bring in
students and give them support, and we'll be able to
demonstrate that yes, they are college material that
just didn't perhaps have the opportunity in high
schools or the support or the exposure to show what
their capabilities were. So, you're a great example
for that. Council Member Levin.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much
Chair Barron. I want to thank this panel. Ms.
Edwards, thank you so much for your testimony and,
you know, it is very important that you were here to
tell your story for the record so that--so that as
we're, you know, we as--overall between CUNY and the
City Council, the Administration, ACS are looking at

1 how to make the programs more effective and reach
2 more youth in care that, you know, you are providing,
3 you know, a clear guidance as to what has worked,
4 what needs improvement, but-but also just to share
5 your stories is-is brave to do that, and-and-and-and
6 very impactful. So, I want to thank you very much.
7 To this panel, I just have a-a quick questions about
8 beyond college what type of supports do these
9 programs supply to these young people once they
10 graduated because as we all know, and I could go back
11 and tell my story about after graduated, and the type
12 of support that I needed. Sure, yeah. I mean I had,
13 you know, I-I tried for six months, and then-and then
14 I had to move back in with my parents because I
15 couldn't-I couldn't-I wasn't making enough money to
16 keep my apartment and, you know, I didn't really have
17 anywhere else to go. And so, I needed that place. I
18 needed that-that six months back home to able to get,
19 you know, be able to find a job. It took a long time
20 to find a job. This is a, you know, I mean I think
21 it's probably even harder now, and-and so having-
22 having that support is-is necessary, you know, in an
23 ongoing way, and making sure that young people are
24 really able to get their feet under them is-is

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essential for everybody. So, can you explain a
little bit about what--what CUNY and all of these
programs what they said they're doing?

DEAN LINDERMAN: Sure, sure, so I'll
speak--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Beyond
graduation.

DEAN LINDERMAN: Yes, so I'll speak a
little bit about--about what we do. So, CUNY Start
helps students matriculate into a degree program.
Most of the students go into ASAP, but students can
also enter CD or--or--or SEEK--or SEEK or--or none of
those programs. Just be a matriculated student. In
ASAP we have embedded career and employment services
within the program that include opportunities for
students to create a career plan as well as a further
education plan. So, that includes a range of--of
activities including creating cover letters, and--and
a resume. Making a plan for the--for understanding
what it takes to enter into professions. Are you
going to need to move onto a Bachelor's Degree? The
answer is almost always yes. Are you going to need
to plan to go on for a graduate--a graduate degree or
professional degree. Frequently it does, and then

very importantly we try to connect students with experiential and ideally paid internship opportunities while they're in the program to start to get some—some grounding in the profession they hope to move into, and then the combination of the student's personalized advice—advisement support and career support helps the students make the transition when they're leaving the program. The majority of students that graduate from ASAP, 85% do transfer to—to a senior college and pursue Baccalaureate work, and our long-term data shows that it's sort of the gift that keeps on giving because the students have high—higher rates of transfer, higher rates of Baccalaureate completion and they complete their degrees faster. If I could just for a moment mention what CUNY is doing outside of—of any of the programs. You're going to hear about CUNY's really re-envisioning kind of workforce and career readiness. As part of our Strategic Plan Connected CUNY, which you might have heard about, and it's really about thinking how you put every student regardless of being in a special program on the path to understand what their career options are, and what you need to do to get ready to take steps towards your career of

choice. Not just going to a couple of workshops, but really making a plan to get a purposeful paid internship as you're moving through your college career. So, it is the university's goal that all students are going to have an experiential paid opportunity before they leave CUNY and a more strategic plan to be put onto the path towards a career, and to really build out our relationships with the public and private employers. So, this is an enormous piece of the Connected CUNY one of the three core student facing pillars of our Connected CUNY Plan. I'm speaking about work that is aspirational and future facing, but it's a pretty robust plan, and if you—you have interest in hearing about some of that work, I'd be very pleased to send some information from my colleague Dean Angie Kamath who's in charge of Career and Workforce. So, that's kind of a broader university focus, but Shirley I'm sure could talk about what they're doing in SEEK CD specifically as well.

DIRECTOR DEPENA: I think similarly the counseling that our students receive from the moment that they enter CUNY whether it's through SEEK and College Discovery, many of our students also transfer

from College Discovery and their associate programs
when they graduate and they come into our senior
colleges. [coughs] As SEEK students our-our
counselors work with students from the onset in terms
of finding-talking about career plans, helping them
with resumes. We do a lot of prep work and resume
writing workshops and interviewing and techniques to
help students as they are looking for internships. A
lot of internship opportunities come our way.
Jasmine actually-actually currently is working-one of
her part-time jobs through an opportunity that came
through the-the SEEK Program and the Youth Matter
Program, and she was able to success-actually both of
them, both of her part-time jobs wen through
referrals from SEEK and College Discovery and-and the
Youth Matter Program. So, we're working with our
students as well, and we're also creating our alumni
network, because as Council Member, Chairperson
Barron mentioned, SEEK and College Discovery have
been around for about 50 years. So, we have an
extensive alumni network that we are working with to
see if we can get many more opportunities for our
students.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And those
opportunities are--are--they seem to be available even
beyond a Bachelor's Degree.

DIRECTOR DEPENA: There's also the--the
GEOP program, which is the--the Graduate Education
Opportunity Program that we are--we are talking to our
students about as well because there--there are, you
know, Opportunity Programs as Jasmine spoke about
coming from SUNY there's an opportunity to go from
whether it's SUNY, CUNY, private colleges, but to get
your associate, your bachelor's and even your
graduate degree at CUNY. So, we're talking to our
students about that because it is important.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Thank you, very
much.

DIRECTOR DEPENA: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And just for the
record so that everyone will know, it's actually
called the Percy Ellis Sutton--

DIRECTOR DEPENA: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --SEEK Program and
SEEK stands for Search, Elevation--

DIRECTOR DEPENA: [interposing]
Elevation, Education and Knowledge.

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CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And knowledge right.

[laughter] And Percy Sutton was one of the spear
headers of that. I think it was Arthur Eve who was--

DIRECTOR DEPENA: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --a part of that
perhaps.

DIRECTOR DEPENA: Yes, and HEOP was
renamed after Arthur O. Eve.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right. Great.

DIRECTOR DEPENA: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Is there
any further questions? No. Okay. Great. Thank you
so much.

DIRECTOR DEPENA: Thank you.

DEAN LINDERMAN: Thank you. [pause]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The next panel first
is John Aderounmu from CUNY University Student
Senator; Bill Baccaglioni from New York Foundling;
Meera Malik from New York Foundling, and Harriet
Wessel from JCCN, and I apologize if I mispronounced
anybody's name. [pause]

LEGAL COUNSEL: Good afternoon. May you
raise your right hand--right hands. Do you affirm to
tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the

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truth in your testimony before this committee, and to
respond honestly to Council Members' questions?

MALE SPEAKER: I do.

LEGAL COUNSEL: Please state your name
for the record. [pause.]

MALIK: My name is Malik and I do.

BILL BACCAGLINI: Bill Baccaglini.

JOHN ADEROUNMU:: John Aderounmu.

HARRIET LESSEL: Harriet Lessel.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you so much
toe the panel and we are coming to the end, and we
would like to be able to make sure that we hear your
testimony. If could be succinct, we would appreciate
it. Who would like to begin?

JOHN ADEROUNMU: I'll go.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

JOHN ADEROUNMU: Greetings, Chairperson
Barron, members of the New York City Higher Education
Committee and distinguished guests. My name is John
Aderounmu and the Chairperson of the City University
of New York, University Student Senate. USS is a
student dominance body responsible for representing
500,000 students who attend CUNY. I also have the
distinct pleasure of serving as a CUNY Trustee. I

received my Master's Degree in Computer Science from
CUNY's Borough of Manhattan Community College. I'm
currently pursuing a degree in the CUNY Baccalaureate
and Interdisciplinary studies with concentration on
computer science and mathematics. The CUNY B program
consists of about 500 students who allow, which
allows the opportunity and the ability to design our
own major, and attend several colleges. I'm here
today to talk about the matters pertaining to the
oversight of higher education opportunities for youth
aging out of foster care. On behalf of all CUNY
students, we would like to thank you for your support
to the City Council, and let me continue by saying
that I appreciate the sustenance each your by this
body for the Merit Scholarship. We're hoping to have
a discussion and making-making that a baselined item
in the budget. So, it will be imagined as a non-
priority in the future. The reality is, in fact,
that program assists a lot of us students in the
purchase, the purchase of essentials such as
textbooks, Metro Cards. If for some reason, they
have their tuition card, but by some other method.
And I'm also sure you've heard about the numerous-on
numerous occasions on the facts of the ASAP Program,

the SEEK, the BMI, the ACE and many others that have gone a long way in allocating students of the burden of getting a college education vital to the upward mobility. It is of paramount importance that we enhance funding to these programs to continue to change lives. In order to assist the youth aging out of the foster care system into a life of their own making, it is important we assist in the ways we can. On behalf of CUNY students we ask that the New York City legislators take the following actions to help students get access to quality affordable higher education at the greatest urban university in the world.

1. Support the expansion of food pantries in all colleges in CUNY.

2. Support and encourage our senior colleges to create their own single stop programs, which through city funding currently helps in addressing issues of affordable housing, homelessness, metro cards for the needier students in community colleges.

3. Student emergency forms should be well advertised to all students and mostly these students.

4. That all campuses have a registered nurse at all times on campus. With healthcare at its present cost, it is important that all students should be—should have a nurse available to them on—on campus at all times.

5. Find ways to support formerly incarcerated youth specifically they shouldn't have to spend their life catching up after serving time. They should be given the same opportunities as the rest of the youth we have.

6. Support the passing of the New York State DREAM Act so that all of the undocumented youth aging out of foster care are not entirely left out of the conversation or this discussion.

Thank you for listening and holding a hearing on this matter.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Our next panelist.

JOHN ADEROUNMU: We're open to any questions.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you.

HARRIET LASSEL: Well, it's in there.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

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HARRIET LASSEL: And I will do a
shortened version. I'll skip the commercial parts
and the general audience. So, good afternoon. My
name is Harriet Lassel and I'm the Director of
Government Contracts and Efficacy at JCCA. I want to
thank the Chairs of the General Welfare and Higher
Education Committees, Council Member Steve Levin and
Inez Barron and all of the committee members for the
opportunity to testify at today's hearing. JCCA is
very appreciative of the Council's interest in higher
education opportunities for youth aging out of foster
care. So, I'm going to skip the info about JCCA,
which I think you can find from my written testimony.
You know, JCCA like many of the child welfare
agencies is committed to improving the educational
outcomes of children in our foster home and
residential programs. You've head about some of
them, by providing counseling for these young people
around educational opportunities and supports. We
empower them to envision a successful academic career
though staff, foster parent and parent trainings. We
equip adults in a child's life to be strong
educational advocates. We have a reading for our
future program that provides 100 children in foster

care with in-home one-on-one tutoring in specific
academic areas, and now it's in its seventh year and
it's had very positive outcomes. We also have a
scholarship program that young adults are eligible to
apply to continue their education and funds are
available for undergraduate and vocational education.
So the--the--the committee has already heard about the--
the challenges that face youth aging out of foster
care. So, I'm going to skip that part as well.
You've gotten many of the statistics. I do want to
focus on two issues today. The issue of housing as
it relates to higher education, and the need for
information from CUNY in reference to the Foster
Youth Success College Initiative Funds. I will--I was
going to, you know, I--in my testimony I have the
story of the young woman who's presently in our care
who you've already heard from, and I--and the housing
aspect that I wanted to talk about is that when JE
first went to school, she was very excited to get
into a school out of the city, SUNY Farmingdale, and--
and thought that experience in campus life out of the
city would be a very positive thing. But that
happened was that in a responsible way when she let
NYCHA know, New York City Housing Authority know that

here address was no longer in the city, they-they-so she could receive the correspondence related to her application, unfortunately they used this information to close her case citing an out-of-city address and enforced their policy that an individual cannot reapply for one year. Anticipating her need for permanent housing once, you know, out of the care, she made the decision to come back into the city because part of it was also to be eligible for NYCHA housing, and she's still awaiting the determination of her application while she completes her Bachelor's Degree, but does not know when she's going to live after graduation. So, we are all aware of ACS' efforts and advocacy with NYCHA to keep their priority status for youth in foster care aging out of foster care and finding ways to assist foster youth in navigating the system. We asked for the Council's help by requesting a view-a review of NYCHA policies that create obstacles for youth who want to attend college. You know, youth aging out of foster care need a coordinated response by all city agencies to help them achieve a future of hope and promise. You know, as we've already spoken about, attaining a college degree is one of the most crucial goals a

young person can achieve to help increase their future earnings and success, you know, to assure that-and to ensure that they succeed, we need to determine how NYCHA can support these young people. A college going-going culture cannot flourish if young people have to worry about where they will live during college breaks and after graduation. So, the CUNY dorm is a wonderful, wonderful program and, you know, we just need to have ongoing supports for young people. And then I just want to say that youth who age out of foster care are some of our most vulnerable citizens and especially after the supports of ACS and the non-profit child welfare agencies ends. New Your City can and must find a way to provide them with ongoing resources to ensure a positive start into independent adulthood and we all look forward to hearing about the task force that's looking at how different city agencies can help young people aging out of foster care. Great strides-great strides have also been made through the CUNY ACS partnership entitled-they all have the same names. Fostering College Success Initiative-sorry-and other programs to ensure that foster youth receive the supports they need to get in and stay in college. As

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a member of the steering committee of the Fostering Youth Success Alliance, we respectfully request that CUNY provide the critical impact data we need about the state funds that support the college, the Foster College Success Initiative. This is the funding that Shirley referred to that was 1-1/2 the first year 3 the second year and 4-1/2 going in it's third year. By having this information, we could enable, you know, the alliance of which we are a part of to continue its efforts to assure that all youth in foster care receive the financial and other supports that will help them succeed in college. Children in foster care are already navigating a host of challenges that other young people do not, and which was referenced by Council Member Levin. Lack of family support and dealing with finances, housing and health insurance by the tender age of 21. You know, as they have been in the care of New York City we are responsible for assisting them to achieve a future of hope and promise, and we have the power to create educational equity by removing barriers related to housing, and by providing, continuing to provide financial and supportive resources that will positively contribute to their ability to attend and

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stay in college. We must do no less. Thank you very
much.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Next
panelist.

MALIK MEERA: Good afternoon everyone.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Good afternoon.

MALIK MEERA: Mix and Match. My name is
Malik Meera (sic). I am a first year psychology
major at the Borough of Manhattan Community College.
I currently reside at the Towers at the City College
of New York. I've been a part of the Foster-
Fostering College Success Initiative Dorm Project for
the past four months. After achieving my GED
diploma, my educational specialist, my foster care
agency Catholic Guardian Society introduced me to the
Dorm Project. I decided to apply to the program in
the hopes of furthering my education while still
remaining in care. In addition to living in the
dorms, I've been provided with a vast amount of
resources. Some of these resources are a weekly
stipend, access to the City College facilities,
college success coaching and academic tutoring.
These resources have been a huge support over the
past four months. With the weekly stipend, I am able

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to afford the essential items—essential items rather than having to acquire a job while being a full-time—
a full-time student. I can focus on my studies. The college success coaches and tutors have influenced my person and academic growth and mindset. With their encouragement and assistance, I was able to stay focused and improve my academic standards. I personally think the foster care college success doing—excuse me—I personally think the Foster and College Success Dorm Project is the best program for the foster care youth. With an educational environment and structured foundation it has helped me to reach for the stars. Being that I am an algebra student it has been a blessing to wake up in this atmosphere. Through this opportunity I plan to continue my education, be an active voice for myself and my peers, all prayers and thanks to the creator who is the cause of my success and failure. Though failure was never an issue, but it helped—it strengthened me and taught me to never give up. I am happy to take any questions, and I will answer with the best of my ability.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you so much.

Next panelist.

BILL BACCAGLINI: That's a tough act to follow. I submitted testimony. So, I'll just take some time and--and--and focus on some of the things that were raised during and during the hearing. Thanks very much for this opportunity. The first thing I'd like to say is that we're very fortunate to live in a city with a city university college system as committed to providing on the kinds of services and supports to the kids like Malik and Jasmine and many others like him. We are--we are very, very fortunate. I think Councilman Levin, you--you first raised this whole--this whole issue of--of and with Councilman Rodriguez around the pipeline, and you focused on some attendance rates and in high school and he focused on a pipeline in community college versus getting kids ready to go to school. I--I think we'll--we'll--we'll fool ourselves if we focus just on college. It is the pipeline. The pipeline is critical and we know that Malik's journey to college and the journey of the foster kids in this city's journey to college is much different than my daughter's journey to college was your journey to college was. The destination is the same. As you suggested three hours ago, these kids have every

capacity to learn as any other kid in this city.

They've just never been given the opportunity. And

so, I would suggest to you folks as you deliberate

over the next few months, you know, they talk about a

peace dividend. We now have a peace dividend in this

city with only 9,000 kids in foster care. With 9,000

kids in foster care, let's do something different.

We know their journey, the educational destination of

a college degree of a law degree or a doctoral

degree. We know their journeys are different. The

destination is the same. We operate a charter school

in the Bronx for kids in the child welfare system. We

opened it up in Mott Have, and two-thirds of every

incoming class the family is either receiving

preventive services or the kids are in foster care.

We realize what the consequences of trauma is for the

educational journey. It's not a linear journey, but

it's a journey nonetheless that gets us to the same

place. I would submit to you that for as little as

\$15 million a year, you can provide one-on-one very

focused tutoring to every high school youngster in-

every youngster in foster care in high school in this

city for \$15 million. Why do you rely on it? The

Foundling with the help of the Hilton Foundation some

four years ago has quadrupled the number of youngsters going to college in four years. I'm not saying the ideal arrangement is starting tutoring in freshman year but, you know, what? We can't—we can't say to another generation of foster care kids: Oh, just wait, wait, wait while we reform the system. We can't. Councilwoman Barron again three hours ago talked about the life trajectory and what a college education did to the life trajectory. So, how can I—how can I tell the Malikis of the world: Oh, we're going to get there. We're going to get there. We're going to fix it. I'm suggesting there's an opportunity now with so few kids in foster care that we can—we can build some support systems and get next year's juniors and next year's sophomores ready for college so that Donna and her staff when kids arrive on a CUNY campus they're much better prepared to actually start academic studies. So, I—I—there are a number of other things. I mean we're currently thinking about another—another program where we—we take high school seniors who quite aren't ready yet to—and put them through GAP year. A gap year. Not the gap year you wanted, the gap year before you even start school, and what we do is we'd spend half the

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week on academics to get them ready for college and
the other half-half of the week on community service
where we stipend them and we pay them—we pay them to
do community service and the other 20 hours are
academic—spent in academic and then that following
year after a . So gap year, they're really prepared
for college. So, just a little food for thought.
You know, you guys could read the testimony and I
make some other references to some other things that
we can do. I just want to leave you with this
thought: Capacity. These kids have it. These kids
have it so don't ever doubt for a minute that they
don't. I think the problem in foster care is
historically we've lowered the bar instead of raising
the bar. The evidence clearly suggests from the two
students you heard from today from hearing from Donna
and from Julie before Donna about—about their
capacity. They can do it, and they're, you know that
was Foundling it was mention a thousand times today.
It's not the Foundling. There's a number of others.
JCCA is the leader in education. There's a number of
us in this city that have the capacity to do it. So,
I—I—I think—I think we've turned a corner and I—I
think if we double down on education because here is—

here is the other issue and I'll—and I'll leave with this: And it was raised earlier, it's critical that we get these kids educated because let me tell you this: If you're in one of our programs at age 18 or 19 or 20, I can assure you few of these kids if they turn around, there aren't many family members with their back. Right, if they've gotten to that point in foster cares. So, the value of a college degree for me, my daughter if she messes up she comes home, she knows the door will be open. Your father opened the door and then just turned you back out it. Right? We're there. Malik there's a lot of pressure on these kids. Right, this is the first generation, right and so we have to wrap our arms—wrap our arms around them because the value of getting them an education or the consequences of not getting them one is much, much greater. So, I'll end it at that, but thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: We want to thank the panel for coming especially for staying the three hours [laughter] but it's important that we hear all of the testimony. For—for Malik, I just have a question. How did you know about programs for college as our child in care?

MALIK MEERA: Well, being in foster care for about six years, I've been introduced to a lot of opportunities in foster care, a lot of vocational resources such as educational resources. So, I heard a lot from our educational specialists?

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

MALIK MEERA: So my-my agency did a pretty good job helping the youth.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay good and in terms of the programs that you talked about JCCA, comparing the Repair the World Child by Child. So, in terms of housing, what are some of the other conditions or some of the other initiatives that we can look at to be able to expand the opportunity, the opportunity for increased numbers of students who have that major issue where they're going to stay.

HARRIET LASSEL: Well, I think-I think it would be very simple. I-I think a lot of it is about looking at the different policies and procedures. So, NYCHA is a, you know, it's a city program. I know it's sort of a quasi, but it's a city program, and given that the numbers are so low, we're not-this is not a heavy lift. You know, for those young people that NYCHA one of their top choices in terms

of where they can live, we should be able to make changes in the policies and procedures regarding youth in foster care. The numbers are not that large.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Do you know, do know what the numbers are? Do you have any idea?

HARRIET LASSEL: For those that have applied for NYCHA?

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

HARRIET LASSEL: I can find out.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

HARRIET LASSEL: I can find out. I mean there's another program called New York New York 3, which is supportive housing

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Which is supportive.

HARRIET LASSEL: Which is very—which is a very wonderful program for a lot of youth in care, and obviously having more of those units because it's the kind of thing where it's sort of like it's like support while you're independent. So, it's preparing people for—to be supportive and be able to afford perhaps more market rate, although when you say that in New York you don't even know what you're talking about, but, you know, the kinds of apartments that they might get without that kind of assistance.

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CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Council
Member Levin.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
Chair Barron. I want to thank this panel. Everyone
of you brought something great to the table, and so I
want to thank you and acknowledge that. First, John,
thank you so much for your testimony. We love it
when there are—is a list of actionable items, and you
had six actionable items. So, that's very helpful
and we're going to be taking that, and making sure
that we build up those recommendations. So, thank
you very much, and you mentioned—I've also—I believe
in giving credit where credit is due. You mentioned
the Merit Scholarships. Chair Barron was
instrumental in getting those merit scholarships
restored after they were cut. So, Chair—Chair Barron
and her predecessor, Council Member Charles Barron
made sure that—that this was a priority of the
Council. So, I wanted to acknowledge that.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Harriet, thank you.
If you could email your testimony to us as well
because I want to make sure that we forward that over
both to NYCHA and to HRA because we've been in

discussions with HRA over making sure that there, you know, upon aging out that every young person in the foster care system has access to affordable housing, and, you know, to be clear, that there are major gaps in what NYCHA is doing because, you know, you know, it's-it's alarming that-to see, you know, of all the successful-the success that-that Jasmine was embodying, the idea that she may be facing, you know, a housing crisis in--in a few short months is alarming and unacceptable for anybody. So, we want to make sure that that issue is getting highlighted and there's a spotlight on that moving forward. And to Malik, thank you so much for your excellent testimony, and for bringing your story here to the City Council and making sure that-that we are going to be building upon the issues that you've raised in your story and-and so, you know, we wish you all the success, and we are-we-we could see what a-how much promise you have, and so really we look forward to-to watching your successes in the future. So, I want to thank you, and-and Bill, thank you so much for your passion, and for-and I-one thing about what you raised, \$15 million making sure that, you know, the-the Department of Education's budget I haven't

looked in a while, but I think it's probably about \$25 billion a year. So, \$15 million is a little bit less than .1% of the DOE budget annually. So, we looked in, you know, \$15 million sounds like a lot of money, but when we have, you know, these massive budgets it a drop in the bucket.

BILL BACCAGLINI: It's \$5-\$5,000 a student, and what you'll see happen to college admissions and readiness rates will--will--will curl your hair.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, thank you very much for bringing that to us, and I look forward to acting upon that. So, thank you so much, and I'll turn it back over to my Co-Chair.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [off mic] Thank you. [on mic] Thank you. Seeing no other persons wishing to offer testimony, we're going to close this hearing. Thank you so much for coming. [gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date January 3, 2017