

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

-----X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

JOINT COMMITTEES ON GENERAL WELFARE AND EDUCATION

-----X

March 5, 2009
Start: 1:20pm
Recess: 4:55pm

HELD AT: Hearing Room
 250 Broadway, 16th Floor

B E F O R E:

BILL de BLASIO
Chairperson

LEWIS A. FIDLER
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Maria del Carmen Arroyo
Annabel Palma
James Vacca
Simcha Felder
Helen Diane Foster
Jessica S. Lappin
John C. Liu
Domenic M. Recchia, Jr.
Daniel R. Garodnick
Peter F. Vallone, Jr.
G. Oliver Koppell
Melinda R. Katz
Gale A. Brewer

A P P E A R A N C E S

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Sara Gonzalez

Letitia James

Diana Reyna

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

Molly Murphy
Counsel of General Welfare Committee
New York City Council

Migna Taveras
Policy Analyst for General Welfare Committee
New York City Council

Pakhi Sengupta
New York City Council

Aysa Schomberg
Counsel for Education Committee
New York City Council

Jan Atwell
Policy Analyst for Education Committee
New York City Council

Regina Poreda-Ryan
New York City Council

Margaret Nelson
New York City Council

Yolanda McBride
New York City Council

Maria Benejan
Associate Commissioner for Program Development
New York City Administration for Children's Services

Sara Vecchiotti
Assistant Commissioner for Policy, Planning and
Analysis
New York City Administration for Children's Services

Elizabeth Sciabarra
Chief Executive of Student Enrollment
New York City Department of Education

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

Recy Dunn
Executive Director for Early Childhood Education
New York City Department of Education

Marty Barr
Executive Director for Elementary School Enrollment
New York City Department of Education

Christopher Caruso
Assistant Commissioner, Out of School Time
Department of Youth and Community Development

Randi Herman
First Vice President
Council of School Supervisors and Administrators

Neal Tepel
Assistant to Executive Director
District Council 1707

Mabel Everett
Teacher
Afro-American Parents Day Care Number 1

Wendy
Parent

Michele Rios Jenkins
Educational Director
Jamaica NAACP Day Care Center

Karen Daughtry
Executive Director
Alonzo A. Daughtry Memorial Day Care

Andrea Anthony
Executive Director
Day Care Council

Betty Holcomb
Policy Director
Child Care, Inc.

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

Stephanie Gendel
Associate Executive Director
Citizens Committee for Children

Randi Levine
Equal Justice Works Fellow
Advocates for Children of New York

Gregory Brender
Policy Analyst
United Neighborhood Houses

Rosalyn Inman
Director
Neighborhood Day Nursery of Harlem

Audrey Eadie
North Bronx National Council of Negro Women Child
Development Center

Doreen Davis Lewis
Educational Director
North Bronx National Council of Negro Women

Pamela Coleman
President of Parent Association Committee
Williamsbridge NAACP Early Childhood Educational
Center

Marie Fadoul
Director
Joe Morteman Day Care Center

CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: Good afternoon. I guess we should be happy this is a popular topic. But, unfortunately, we're facing a very difficult situation. Thank you, everyone, for being here today for this joint hearing of the General Welfare Committee and the Education Committee to talk about the situation our childcare centers are facing with this change to the policy with 5-year-olds.

I'm Council Member Bill de Blasio, Chair, General Welfare. And, in a moment, we're going to hear from the Acting Chair, I guess, of the Education Committee, Lew Fidler of Brooklyn. Want to welcome, as well, Council Member Maria del Carmen Arroyo, Council Member Sara Gonzalez, Council Member Annabel Palma. Thank you so much for being here. Want to thank all the staff from both committees, who put together this hearing, very timely hearing, Molly Murphy, Migna Taveras, Pakhi Sengupta, Aysha Schomberg, Jan Atwell, Regina Poreda-Ryan, Margaret Nelson and Yolanda McBride. Thank you to all.

Now, I want to say just a few words up front. In my six years as Chair of this

Committee, I have never heard anyone complain about the quality of childcare that children receive through our childcare centers. People in this City complain about a lot of things, but childcare quality has not been one of them in my experience. This gives us all the more reason to make sure we're protecting the precious resource of childcare as much as humanly possible.

It's clear that childcare is desperately needed resource in this City.

According to ACS, current capacity of subsidized programs only accommodates about 30% of children from low-income families who are eligible for childcare. Not all of these families, of course, would chose to utilize a subsidized program. But, it still represents a huge gap between the number of children that can be served and the number who are served.

With these numbers, it's clear ACS has to preserve every childcare seat possible. Yet, again, we're here today because the system will be further dismantled in September, when kindergarten-aged children are transitioned from ACS centers to public schools. And, as usual, the

Administration has announced a plan that has caused more confusion than clarity. The Administration has not said exactly how many children they are relocating; where these children will be sent and how they will deal with issues like overcrowding in public schools.

Thousands of parents, children and day care employees are in the dark about what awaits them this coming school year. How many kids will need to be bused to a school or an OST program because the ones in their neighborhood don't have space? Centers are being told that they cannot fill the open slots left by the kindergarteners with younger children. How will they be able to stay open? And, what happened to parental choice? The General Welfare Committee has heard from many parents who prefer having their 5-year-old in centers rather than public school. But, they're not being given that option.

We know our City's in dire financial straights. But, that means we must ensure that cuts do not paralyze parents and children and day care employees for years to come, especially when there's federal stimulus money

1
2 coming that is specifically designated for
3 childcare. And, I would note that when parents
4 can't find a good childcare option, they cannot
5 work. That is bad for them and bad for the
6 economy. When childcare employees no longer have
7 a job, that's the reverse of stimulus. That's
8 exactly the wrong direction.

9 So, we all accept that sacrifices
10 have to be made. But, I do not believe
11 sacrificing the children-- the future of our
12 children is ever acceptable. I continually urge
13 ACS to more effectively match existing demand with
14 vacant slots before closing classrooms and
15 centers. And, I continue to do so today. With
16 the City's population projected to rise to nine
17 million, according to the Mayor's own estimates,
18 by the year 2030, the need for childcare becomes
19 greater every year. We don't want to eliminate
20 slots and centers and look back in later years and
21 wish we had not done this. We need to move
22 towards policies that promote childcare
23 sustainability rather than eroding it.

24 And now, I'm pleased to introduce
25 Council Member Lew Fidler, acting today as Chair

of the Education Committee.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Thank you, Bill. And, I also would like to acknowledge that we've been joined by Councilman Jimmy Vacca and I know that Councilman Simcha Felder has been popping in and out.

I'd like to add my thanks to those who are present attending today's joint oversight hearing of the General Welfare and Education Committees on examining the Administration's plans to transition kindergarten-aged children from ACS centers to public schools. For those of you who are concerned about the wellbeing of Education Chairperson Robert Jackson, have no concern. He is unavoidably out of town today and he'll be resuming the mantle of the Education Committee forthwith.

The proposed shifting of 5-year-olds from childcare centers to public schools affects children and families throughout the City. Most of us have been hearing from the very unhappy families and childcare centers that we've affected by this plan. Frankly, I cannot fathom how shifting costs for educating more than 3,000

1 students from one agency to another will produce
2 any actual savings or can justify the major
3 disruption to the lives of these children and
4 their families. At the very least, parents will
5 now have to scramble to find schools for their
6 children, as well as after-school care and
7 transportation services. Some families will
8 undoubtedly face the nightmare of having to pick
9 up children from multiple sites; those transferred
10 to new schools, as well as other children who
11 remain in the childcare setting.
12

13 In addition to the disruption to
14 the families, themselves, there is the upheaval
15 and potential threat to the existence of some of
16 the childcare centers involved. Our understanding
17 is that ACS will not allow centers to fill slots
18 vacated by these transferring 5-year-olds with
19 younger children. This policy will result in
20 vacant classrooms at ACS-contracted childcare
21 centers across the City. And, few centers can
22 continue to operate with empty classrooms,
23 particularly in these hard economic times. These
24 centers provide essential early childhood
25 education and care, particularly for low-income

families, so their survival is critical to maintaining stable communities.

Finally, there is the impact on the receiving public schools and the other students who attend them. According to DOE's own calculations, elementary schools Citywide are already at 95% of capacity; with schools in many neighborhoods far exceeding 100% utilization. The Education Committee held two hearings on school overcrowding earlier this year and heard from many parents and advocates who contend that the DOE's Blue Book, which contains capacity and utilization data for every public school in the City, doesn't accurately reflect the reality of overcrowding in our schools. And, I must say that I agree with them.

Clearly, the influx of these 3,000 5-year-olds from ACS childcare centers will exacerbate overcrowding in many public elementary schools. Additional overcrowding in these schools will negatively impact all students in all classrooms involved, not only the transferring students.

Putting the education and wellbeing

1
2 of so many children at risk simply to allow the
3 budgetary burden to be shifted from one agency to
4 another is unacceptable and unconscionable. Given
5 the problem of overcrowding in our elementary
6 schools, some have suggested that classes for
7 these 5-year-olds remain physically located in the
8 childcare centers, but taught by DOE teachers so
9 that DOE would bear the cost of instruction,
10 relieving ACS of this expense. After 3 p.m.,
11 responsibility for the children would shift back
12 to ACS. This compromise appears to offer
13 stability for the children, their families and the
14 childcare centers, as well as providing budgetary
15 relief for ACS.

16 My colleagues and I have lots of
17 questions to ask about this plan. So, without
18 further ado, we'll now hear testimony from the ACS
19 and from DOE.

20 One last reminder, everyone who
21 wishes to testify today must fill out a witness
22 slip, which is located in the desk of the Sergeant
23 at Arms in the back of the room. Testimony from
24 the public will be limited to three minutes per
25 person to allow as many people as possible to

1
2 speak and to allow many of us to join a four
3 o'clock rally of some importance to a lot of
4 people in this room, as well. So, if we could
5 have ACS and DOE come up, we'll begin.

6 CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: Who would
7 like to begin? Please, as everyone speaks, please
8 introduce yourself.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: We've been
10 joined by Councilwoman Helen Diane Foster.

11 MARIA BENEJAN: Good afternoon,
12 Chair de Blasio, Chair Fidler and members of the
13 General Welfare and Education Committees. I am
14 Maria Benejan, the Associate Commissioner for
15 Program Development at New York City's
16 Administration for Children's Services, ACS, in
17 the Division of Child Care and Head Start. With
18 me today is Sara Vecchiotti, Assistant
19 Commissioner for Policy, Planning and Analysis in
20 the Division of Child Care and Head Start. Also
21 joining me, to my left here, is Elizabeth
22 Sciabarra, Executive Commissioner-- Chief
23 Executive of Student Enrollment at the Department
24 of Education, DOE. We are here today to explain
25 the work that ACS and DOE have underway to

1 transition 5-year-olds currently served by City-
2 contracted childcare centers into public school
3 kindergarten.
4

5 I will provide Children's Services'
6 testimony about our work to prepare programs and
7 parents for this transition, as well as the
8 collaborative planning efforts with the Department
9 of Education and the Department of Youth and
10 Community Development, DYCD. The DOE will provide
11 an overview of the DOE kindergarten and the
12 enrollment process for the school year beginning
13 in September 2009.

14 In November, so I want to give you
15 some history here, in November 2008, Children's
16 Services announced the kindergarten transition as
17 part of a series of strategies to address the \$62
18 million deficit in the City's subsidized childcare
19 system. As Commissioner Mattingly has explained
20 at a number of hearings in the past year, this
21 deficit is a result of the increased rise in costs
22 for providing childcare, including health
23 insurance, liability insurance and facility
24 development and management. While the City has
25 increased its investment in the childcare system

1
2 in recent years, State and Federal funds have
3 leveled off; leaving the City with an escalating
4 gap in funding.

5 The deficit reduction strategies
6 outlined by Commissioner Mattingly in November are
7 necessary in order for us to sustain our center-
8 based childcare system. We are committed to
9 ensuring that all children currently receiving
10 services in Children's Services' subsidized
11 childcare system continue to be served by the
12 City's Early Care and Education system. And, I
13 want to emphasize it, again. We are committed to
14 ensuring that all children currently receiving
15 services in our subsidized childcare system will
16 continue to be served by the City's Early Care and
17 Education system.

18 Through these initiatives, we are
19 working to make our system more efficient and to
20 make the most of the services provided in other
21 departments in the City's Early Care and Education
22 system. As a result, Children's Services will
23 oversee a more sustainable system in which ACS is
24 providing childcare to as many of the City's most
25 vulnerable children as possible with limited

financial resources that we have available to us.

So, a little bit about an overview on the transition-- the kindergarten transition. The kindergarten transition is one of the initiatives-- one of the three initiatives is the transition of 5-year-old children currently being served by a contracted system to public school kindergarten, which is the subject of today's hearing. This applies to children who will turn 5 by the end of the year.

Beginning in September of 2009, Children's Services will no longer provide funding for kindergarten in ACS-contracted childcare system. This will allow us, this allows us to avoid eliminating services to families who are currently receiving childcare and who do not have alternatives available to them in other parts of our Early Care and Education system. So, again, I want to emphasize this. This allows us to avoid eliminating additional subsidies to our childcare system. It is also in line with the goals that we had set out for the City's Early Care and Education system in our strategic plan back in 2005.

Currently, there are approximately 7,200 children who occupy seats in our contracted center who will be 5 by the end of this calendar year. A relatively small percentage of families, who are served by our contracted childcare system, have chosen in the past for their 5-year-old children to remain in childcare. In fact, last year 62% of our children who turned 5 went to kindergarten in school settings, not at ACS centers, at their parents' choice. Based on this information, we expect that there will be approximately 3,200 children who might have remained in the childcare system in the fall, who will now begin kindergarten in a school setting this coming September.

It is important to note that when this initiative was announced, we had planned for child care centers to end the provision of kindergarten services in July of 2009. We have since worked with our partner agencies in the City to delay this implementation so that the transition will now occur inline with the new school year, in September.

This means that all parents who

1
2 have children born in 2004 who are currently
3 enrolled in a contracted childcare center will
4 need to enroll their child in kindergarten for the
5 upcoming 2009-2010 school year. After-school
6 services will be provided through the Department
7 of Youth and Community Development, also known as
8 DYCD, Out of School Time. We refer to that as
9 OST. Programs and parents will need to enroll for
10 these services during the summer.

11 The kindergarten transition applies
12 only to ACS-contracted childcare centers. A total
13 of 125 classrooms with the majority of the seats
14 serving 5-year-olds will no longer be funded by
15 ACS. Mixed age classrooms, which in this
16 initiative are classrooms that serve 4 and 5-year-
17 olds, with the majority of the seats serving
18 younger children will continue to be funded. Some
19 of the capacity in the mixed age classroom that
20 will remain will be available to age down to serve
21 younger children. We estimate that this will lead
22 to a reduction of approximately 2,500 seats in our
23 center-based system.

24 I want to speak a bit about our
25 collaborative efforts to prepare both parents and

1
2 programs. We understand that this is a major
3 change for families as well as for programs. We
4 know that childcare is a critical support to
5 parents, and we are very proud of the quality care
6 and assistance that our centers provide to
7 children and their families. For these reasons,
8 Children's Services has been working with our
9 partners at DOE and DYCD since we announced this
10 initiative to prepare for this adjustment and to
11 communicate with parents and programs.

12 ACS, DOE, DYCD are members of the
13 Early Care and Education Steering Committee, an
14 internal inter-agency group that works to tackle
15 the broader issues surrounding the delivery of
16 services in the City's Early Care and Education
17 system. These meetings are held bi-weekly with
18 representatives from the relevant City agencies,
19 the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and
20 Human Services, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for
21 Education and Community Development, and the
22 Mayor's Office of Management and Budget. Since
23 the announcement of these strategies to address
24 the City's childcare budget deficit, discussions
25 at these meetings have centered around preparing

for the kindergarten transition as well as coordinating efforts to expand Universal Pre-K.

Children's Services has undertaken an extensive review of its enrollment to identify the makeup of 5-year-old classrooms in contracted childcare centers. ACS has shared this information with the DOE and DYCD to ensure that public school kindergarteners and OST programs have the capacity to absorb the children who are entering their system in September.

In December, ACS, DOE and DYCD held informational forums with contracted childcare programs, at which the City agencies answered questions about the kindergarten transition as well as other initiatives to address the deficit. Children's Services has worked closely with the Department of Education to develop information for programs and parents on the process for kindergarten enrollment.

In February, Children's Services held meetings with childcare directors to inform them of the process for kindergarten enrollment with the DOE. At these forums, programs were encouraged to hold staff meetings to explain the

1
2 timeframe and process, and parent meetings to
3 explain the application process, and provide
4 information on the documentation needed to enroll
5 a child in kindergarten and a timeline of DOE's
6 enrollment process. Programs have been asked to
7 reach out to ACS when they find that parents have
8 encountered difficulties, so that DOE's central
9 enrollment office can address them.

10 Children's Services also sent a
11 letter to parents in February informing them that
12 kindergarten services would no longer be offered
13 to 5-year-olds in childcare centers beginning in
14 September and advising them of the steps they need
15 to take to enroll their children in DOE
16 kindergarten. Parents of children in Universal
17 Pre-K programs also received a letter from the DOE
18 advising them of the kindergarten enrollment
19 period.

20 Moving forward, ACS is working with
21 DYCD to send information to parents on the
22 enrollment period for OST programs, which will be
23 held in the summer. ACS also plans to send a
24 letter to parents advising them of the second wave
25 of the DOE application period.

1
2 In March, Children's Services will
3 hold forums for contracted childcare programs to
4 provide additional information on the changes in
5 capacity that will result from the transition of
6 kindergarten classrooms. In the coming weeks,
7 programs will receive a revised contract for
8 fiscal year 2010 that includes the estimated value
9 of the kindergarten reduction. At the end of this
10 fiscal year, programs will receive a revised
11 budget for fiscal year '10 reflecting the actual
12 capacity reduction.

13 This information will help agencies
14 to understand the impact of these changes will
15 have on their programs and begin planning for
16 these adjustments. There are a number of options
17 that programs have to help them adjust to this
18 change in capacity, including recruiting families
19 to pay for care privately, expand UPK services,
20 and consolidating. Children's Services will
21 provide individualized support and technical
22 assistance to programs that require help in making
23 these changes.

24 In conclusion, I hope my testimony
25 today has demonstrated ACS full commitment in

1
2 making the changes necessary to avoid disruption
3 of services to children and to sustain the
4 childcare system. As I mentioned above, we are
5 committed to ensuring that every child currently
6 receiving services in the Children's Services
7 childcare system has a seat available in the
8 City's Early Care and Education system.

9 The fiscal climate presents
10 challenges for all of us in the childcare system,
11 and in the City. We have been forced to make
12 difficult decisions in an effort to maximize our
13 limited resources and avoid, avoid, eliminating
14 services to our City's most vulnerable children.
15 We will continue to work with our partner agencies
16 in the City to support the programs and parents as
17 we make these changes.

18 I would like to thank the Council
19 for the opportunity to share this information
20 today. And, I now would like to introduce
21 Elizabeth Sciabarra, who will provide testimony
22 from the DOE.

23 ELIZABETH SCIABARRA: Thank you.
24 Good afternoon, Chair Fidler, Chair de Blasio, and
25 members of the Education and General Welfare

1
2 Committees. As Maria said, my name is Elizabeth
3 Sciabarra. I'm the Chief Executive for Student
4 Enrollment at the New York City Department of
5 Education. I am joined by my colleagues from the
6 DOE, Recy Dunn, the Executive Director for Early
7 Childhood Education, and Marty Barr, Executive
8 Director for Elementary School Enrollment. We are
9 here today to explain and discuss the Department's
10 kindergarten enrollment process as we prepare for
11 school opening in September.

12 So, in November of 2008, the
13 Department of Education sent a memorandum to all
14 public elementary schools providing guidance on
15 how children should be admitted to kindergarten
16 for September 2009. There are several key
17 elements of kindergarten enrollment which I will
18 describe for you.

19 All children seeking general
20 education kindergarten placement must apply
21 directly to the schools that interest the families
22 the most. This goes for children attending a
23 Universal Pre-Kindergarten program in a public
24 school, children currently enrolled in UPK
25 programs managed by community-based organizations

1
2 under contract with the Department of Education,
3 children currently enrolled in private pre-
4 kindergarten and nursery school programs, and
5 children not currently enrolled in any educational
6 programs. Children need to apply to kindergarten
7 even if they are currently enrolled in a pre-
8 kindergarten in an elementary school they most
9 want to attend next year.

10 There is a standard calendar and
11 timeline for applying and being assigned to
12 kindergarten. The application period began on
13 January 12th and was scheduled to end on March 2nd.
14 The deadline was extended to March 6th due to the
15 City's snow day on Monday, March 2nd. The Office
16 of Student Enrollment sent two mailings to inform
17 parents about the need to apply for kindergarten.
18 One mailing was sent to all pre-kindergarten
19 students enrolled in DOE UPK programs, including
20 22,000 in public school and 33,000 in CBOs. The
21 second mailing was sent to 13,000 4-year-olds in
22 what we call the Turning 5 process for students
23 who have special education Individualized
24 Education Plans, or IEPs.

25 In addition to the mailings, we

1
2 sent out a press release on January 12th. We
3 posted information about the kindergarten
4 enrollment process on the main page of the DOE
5 website. And, internally, we shared with
6 Community Affairs, Parent Engagement, who
7 subsequently engaged people in various
8 communities.

9 Once the application period has
10 closed, schools will make assignments for next
11 year's kindergarten classes based on the projected
12 number of seats and in accordance with the
13 priorities that were established. The precise
14 order of the priorities for a zoned school is;
15 zoned students with siblings in the school; zoned
16 students without siblings in the school; other
17 district students with siblings in the school;
18 other non-district students with siblings in the
19 school; other district students without siblings
20 in the school and other non-district students
21 without siblings in the school.

22 But, let's remember, kindergarten
23 admissions is a school-based process. There are a
24 few exceptions to that Citywide. For districts
25 one and three, the Office of Student Enrollment

administers the kindergarten processes.

Placements for kindergarten Gifted and Talented programs are also administered centrally. In addition, there are a few individual schools for which there is a centrally managed process. An example of that would be the Petrides School on Staten Island.

Once schools have made the assignments according to the established priorities, and that's important, again, because kindergarten admissions is a school-based process, schools will maintain wait lists of those students who do not receive a placement. The waitlists will remain in effect through the opening of the school year. Children, who apply after March 6th, will be added to those waitlists. Because families may apply to multiple schools in this process, we have informed schools to expect that some offers will be declined, and that additional openings will occur through the opening of the school year as families move or children are offered placements at other schools, for example, in Gifted and Talented programs. Schools will then work off their waitlists to fill vacancies.

In schools where waitlists are not necessary because the number of applicants did not exceed the number of seats, students will automatically be admitted.

So, basically what does this mean? Since kindergarten admissions are school-based, there is no central database of kindergarten applicants, and no count of unduplicated students. Families may apply to all schools in which they are interested, and to all programs for which their children are eligible. Because we do not maintain central databases for kindergarten admissions processes, we cannot determine the number of children who have applied for kindergarten.

In recent history, there have been approximately 3,000, 3,200 ACS 4-year-old students remaining in ACS 5-year-old programs. It is those children that we'll focus on.

So, until the current kindergarten assignments have been completed, we will not know the full impact or specifically where the impact will be. We are operating and planning with the expectation that these families are engaged in our

regular kindergarten admissions process.

So, how will this be addressed going forward? Schools have until mid-April to notify families of children with placement offers, determine which families are accepting placement, and pre-register students with assignments. It will not be until early May that schools will be able to offer assignments and pre-register additional students from their waitlists to fill vacant seats created by initial declinations.

In late May, the Department of Education will canvass elementary schools to establish the following; the number of kindergarten seats filled in relation to the school's projected enrollment for the 2009-10 school year; the number of assigned seats filled by zoned students, where appropriate; and, the number of zoned students remaining on each school's waiting list, where appropriate. These figures will permit an assessment of whether there appears to be an overall increase in kindergarten enrollment and, if so, how such an increase may affect individual schools and communities.

By comparing school pre-

1 registration rosters with a listing of ACS 4-year-
2 olds that will no longer have a center-based
3 kindergarten as of the 2009-10 school year, the
4 DOE will be able to determine the extent to which
5 these children have been placed. The DOE will
6 then adjust the plan, as necessary, to address
7 enrollment increases above the initial
8 projections.
9

10 It's worth noting that over the
11 last few years, kindergarten enrollment has
12 remained relatively flat, with a slightly downward
13 trend, in some cases. Every child is guaranteed a
14 kindergarten seat. We are confident in our
15 ability to accommodate all incoming kindergarten
16 students and they will all be placed. As Maria
17 mentioned, we have been working closely with our
18 colleagues at ACS, DYCD and the Mayor's office.
19 We also look forward to working with you to ensure
20 that all children are served.

21 Thank you for the opportunity to
22 testify today. And, we are happy to answer any
23 questions.

24 CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: Thank you
25 very much. Well, I know we have a lot of

1
2 questions. So, I'm going to ask a few. And, I'm
3 sure my fellow Chairman has many and our
4 colleagues. I want to just start by noting we've
5 been joined by a number of our colleagues, Jessica
6 Lappin, John Liu, Domenic Recchia, Dan Garodnick,
7 Tish James and Peter Vallone, Jr. Welcome them
8 all.

9 Let me just say I have worked
10 closely with both agencies. I know how tough the
11 work is you do. And, I want to particularly say
12 to you, Liz, that I've always appreciated that,
13 whether things were working or not, you always
14 tried your best to work with us and find a
15 solution. That was particularly true during the
16 unfortunately mistaken pre-K admissions process
17 last year. And, I thank you for having done so
18 much to work with all of us to fix that problem.
19 But, unfortunately, I feel like we're going down a
20 variation of that road again.

21 So, let me start by asking both
22 agencies, this letter, and if my colleagues have
23 not seen this letter, you want to see it. I find
24 it very troubling. This was dated February 10th
25 and signed by Commissioner Mattingly of ACS. And,

1
2 it's written to parents, who are in this
3 particular situation, who have kids who will be 5
4 for the upcoming school year and are in childcare
5 centers. And, it says Dear Parents. It proceeds
6 to tell them that they have to apply for a
7 kindergarten spot by March 2nd or else their child
8 would not be accommodated in a kindergarten
9 program. And then, proceeds to tell them they
10 could apply in their own zone and different
11 places. It's a very broad set of instructions.
12 What's amazing to me is this was sent February 10,
13 so parents probably got it a week or more later
14 and then, found that they only had a couple of
15 weeks to try and make sense of the kindergarten
16 process and what their child could be-- how their
17 child could be accommodated. I'm sure some
18 parents, knowing our postal service and everything
19 else, didn't even get the letter.

20 So, the first question I have is if
21 the Administration felt it was necessary, and I
22 contest that it is, but if the Administration felt
23 it was necessary to try and make this move, why
24 did you make it in such an abrupt fashion? And,
25 why did you create a dynamic where parents would

1
2 have to apply for kindergarten and may not even
3 have time to appropriately know where to apply and
4 how to apply?

5 MARIA BENEJAN: Must have turned it
6 off there. ACS has always tried to communicate
7 with our programs and our parents. As I
8 testified, since November-- I actually even want
9 to back up, because the Commissioner has come and
10 we've had previous hearings where the Commissioner
11 has outlined the deficit that we had, the \$62
12 million deficit that we have. That's been over a
13 year. In November, it was the first time that we
14 announced this particular initiative. At that
15 time, we have always encouraged, we have spoken to
16 programs and we told them we need to get this
17 information to everyone. And, we started in
18 November. We have written. Also, one of the
19 things, and with the DOE, every child who is in
20 our UPK program, 92% of our children have UPK
21 services, received a letter. And, that letter was
22 back in--

23 FEMALE VOICE: Supposed to go out
24 in January.

25 MARIA BENEJAN: -- in January.

1
2 They received that letter in January. So, they
3 were notified of that. Ninety-two percent of our
4 children already in the system had received that
5 information.

6 In December, we came to the
7 programs. We worked with our DOE; got the
8 information that we needed to get to the parents.
9 And, in December, we gave this information to the
10 programs to outline, to give, to provide to their
11 parents. We then did our letter in February to
12 communicate to the parents.

13 We have always been open and any
14 parent that had any kind of question, had any
15 concern, had any-- wanted a clarification, ACS has
16 always been available to them to provide any
17 clarification.

18 CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: Well, I
19 respectfully, first of all, it's not at all right
20 to suggest that because you talked about changing
21 the policy here at the Council that that filtered
22 down to parents. Parents are dealing with so many
23 other challenges in their lives that getting
24 information to them clearly and letting them know
25 what their options are and how to go about it is a

1
2 huge task. We know, 'cause we represent
3 communities. We talk to our constituents all the
4 time. And, dealing with government is hard. It
5 is complicated. There's a lot of bureaucracy.
6 And, that's what people actually confront.

7 So, unfortunately, if DOE and ACS
8 were so capable with the communication process, we
9 wouldn't have had so many situations previously
10 where parents were left in the dark. So, to me,
11 to say you send some letters, I guarantee you a
12 lot of parents didn't get this to begin with.
13 But, beyond that, I'm reading it. I'm reading it.
14 And, I'm a public school parent. So, I'm used to
15 communications from DOE and the process. And, I'm
16 reading this and I'm confused as to, if I were in
17 their shoes, what to do and how far a field to
18 look and how many schools I should be applying to
19 and what my chances are. Again, we had an
20 unfortunate situation just last year with the Pre-
21 K, where the policy was clear as a bell. But,
22 what happened in terms of actual implementation
23 was not.

24 So, we have rushed-- there's a lot
25 to talk about today, including the fact that this

1 policy could undermine the future of our childcare
2 centers. But, what we're trying-- I want to focus
3 on first is what this means for individual
4 parents. And, I think from the beginning, you're
5 telling them they don't get to choose what's been
6 working for them. They do get to choose something
7 else. But, the something else is incredibly
8 unclear. And, even in your two testimonies, you
9 keep saying this'll be decided at one point;
10 that'll be decided at another point. If
11 something's not working, we'll adjust. That
12 leaves parents with no sense of what's actually
13 going to happen to their child when push comes to
14 shove. How do you respond to that?

16 MARIA BENEJAN: Commissioner de
17 Blasio, 60%-- excuse me? Chairman, sorry.
18 Chairman de Blasio, 60% of our children, 60% of
19 our children leave our centers on a normal basis.
20 It is 40% of the children that we are talking
21 about. Sixty percent already-- many of our
22 programs provide this information to their parents
23 as a normal basis. This is not something that's
24 new. They receive this information. Many of our
25 programs, and we validated that with some of our

1
2 program directors that they always provide this
3 information to their families.

4 CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: But, you
5 know, again, the history has been-- this is true
6 of, it is not personal to your two agencies, even
7 though I do think there's been a number of
8 examples, it's true of all government agencies.
9 They don't communicate well with individuals
10 facing actual problems and challenges. And so, my
11 problem here is this decision was made. And then,
12 there was, I think, vague information sent out.
13 And now, we're going to hear later from a parent
14 who was with us at the press conference earlier,
15 Janet Laura [phonetic], who is a conscientious
16 working single mother trying to situate her child,
17 who's exactly in this situation. And, everyone
18 here will hear from her. She's doing everything
19 she can and the best option she's been able to
20 find so far is a-- the only school that's telling
21 her she has a reasonable chance of getting in is
22 one where her child would be bused ten miles from
23 his home. So, and you can imagine, when you're
24 talking about a 5-year-old, how incredibly
25 uncomfortable and insecure that makes a parent

1
2 feel.

3 So, I think what happens a lot with
4 DOE and ACS is you have an idea that sounds like
5 it might be a good idea, but it doesn't work on
6 the ground with real people. And, instead of
7 saying maybe we need to do this more carefully,
8 more slowly, you just throw it out there and hope
9 it'll work out. But, I'm telling you 5-year-old
10 kids, that's a very sensitive age. And, we just
11 don't, I think a lot of us don't understand how do
12 you expect us to really work and how can you be so
13 sure this won't create additional overcrowding
14 exactly in the schools that have the most
15 challenges to begin with. So, you're doing a
16 double negative. You're taking a kid away from
17 something that works for them and putting them
18 into a situation that burdens a school that's got
19 its own challenges.

20 MARIA BENEJAN: I just want to
21 emphasize that ACS has tried our best in working
22 with DOE, DYCD to get the information out to the
23 programs. I want to see if my colleagues here,
24 from DOE, can then address some of your concerns
25 directly.

ELIZABETH SCIABARRA: Okay. There are a couple of things. First of all, the way in which we actually conduct kindergarten registration is not particularly different from any other school year. It has always been a school-based process. And so, parents have always applied to kindergarten at the schools. The one thing that is slightly modified this year is the timeline. But, other than that, the process is the same.

The second point is that with the mailings, the mailings that we conducted in January, did, in fact, go out. I hear from the audience, I hear in this room, that some people said that they didn't get the card. Duly noted. And, I think, to your point, Council Member de Blasio, that, you know, we have scale. We do the best we can when we send out information. And, you know, I acknowledge what you're saying. But, at the same point, we did, in fact, do the outreach. We sent the postcards. And, we reached as many parents as we could possibly reach through the databases that we have at our disposal.

CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: I won't

1
2 belabor the point. Again, so many colleagues have
3 questions. I just want to hammer this point home.
4 I respect Liz a lot. I don't think that's the
5 answer to what we're saying here. You know, it'd
6 be one thing if you said we're going to make sure
7 every parent is satisfied that they got a good
8 placement for their child. And, if they aren't,
9 we're going to allow them to stay at their current
10 center as a transitional move. That would be at
11 least a discussion you could have. It would be
12 another thing if you said we're going to have
13 things continue status quo one more year and
14 people will have ample time to get ready for a
15 transition.

16 But, this is, respectfully,
17 something that is kind of classic modus operandi
18 of this Administration to come up with a quick
19 plan and then, figure out how it's going to work
20 after the fact. And, I think that leaves the
21 folks affected feeling like they don't know what's
22 going to happen to them and their children. That
23 it's just, it's the unknown. And so, I don't hear
24 any appeal process here. I don't hear any
25 situation where if Janet Laura has-- the best

1
2 situation she can find is her child's going to be
3 bused ten miles, that you say well, we might have
4 to make some exceptions and give parents an
5 alternative. They can stay in their center or
6 some other kind of placement that will work.

7 It feels like a decision's been
8 made and there's no flexibility. It's just good
9 luck. And, this letter emphasizes that by saying
10 you have to go figure out the schools you want to
11 apply to and we can't tell you whether you'll get
12 into them or not.

13 So, how about a discussion about
14 what happens, as we saw with Pre-K, if something
15 isn't working? How are you going to deal with
16 that for the individual parent didn't get the
17 letter or can't get a good placement, has a
18 legitimate problem, who's going to answer that
19 concern and do something for them?

20 ELIZABETH SCIABARRA: The thing
21 that we can do with individual parents, as we
22 always do, I have my Borough Enrollment Centers
23 that are available for parents to, you know, to
24 counsel, to work through where, in fact, there may
25 be availability. I would be interested to meet

Miss Laura at the end of this to talk to her one-on-one and see, you know, what the issues are.

The issue around kindergarten, though, and I just want to say this one more time, that across the board, parents can go to schools and complete applications. I'm not sure how the message has been sent out that already she has a school that's ten miles away. I think that we haven't made those decisions yet. And, if that's the message that she's getting, that, right now, is not the correct message. The correct message is that the kindergarten process is open. And, even though, by the way, that we state that March 6th is the deadline, what it really comes down to, it's the deadline for initial applications. We know, from our experience, that children apply to kindergarten throughout the summer, the start of the school year. And, we work with individual schools if they have issues around their enrollments. We work with communities. So, on that basis, any parent who feels, at this point, that they may, in fact, have been closed out, that is not the case.

And so, we need to work together on

1
2 that to make sure that your access points are
3 driven home. And, we can talk about that.

4 CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: Liz, I know
5 you're committed to communicating. I've seen you
6 talk to parents in distress and really try and
7 help them. I appreciate that. But, your own
8 testimony reflects where some of the problem is.
9 You give the examples in the first page of how the
10 order of priorities works. And, I think what
11 parents are hearing, like Janet Laura, is they go
12 to a school. They're not zoned with siblings.
13 They're not zoned without siblings. They're not,
14 you know, they're not an other-district student.
15 They don't have another district student with
16 siblings. They go down the list and the school
17 simply says to them, because this is the blessing
18 or the curse of having it all done on the school
19 level, the school says I got to tell you,
20 Ms. Laura, you have a tough situation getting in
21 here. You can apply. But, honestly, you're not
22 going to be in the highest priority. So, I think
23 what she's saying is she went and had those
24 conversations school-by-school and is left with
25 the distinct impression the one place she has a

chance is quite a far away.

Now, that's the downside of announcing this policy late and leaving parents to fend for themselves. And, then, they're hearing from, you know, five or ten different voices and different schools. Why shouldn't they be confused? So, it's not enough to just have a borough center. You're talking to a group of people who, just weeks ago, thought their situation was secure and consistent. Now, it's not. I think you, as an agency, and ACS have to do a lot more to reach out to them and try and solve their individual problems, which is not to say I agree with this policy. But, in the meantime, we should be trying to help these individual parents.

Let me turn to Chair Fidler.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Thank you. And, before I ask my questions, I just want to remind everyone who's here that, you know, we need your cooperation. We've been kind of forced into inappropriate accommodations for such an important hearing. So, we need you to try and keep it down. And, if you want to testify, you fill out a slip.

1
2 That's the only way you'll be heard today. So, I
3 ask for your cooperation in that regard. We've
4 been joined by Council Member Oliver Koppell, as
5 well.

6 I guess, you know, one aspect of
7 this issue kind of reminds me of an old movie line
8 that what we have here is a failure to
9 communicate. I raised a number of issues in my
10 opening statement that were not addressed by
11 either of your testimony. And, that goes to the
12 very merits of what it is you're trying to do.
13 Not how you're trying to do it and whether or not
14 you're communicating the inconvenience that it's
15 going to cause, well, to parents. But, what
16 you're doing and why. So, let me start off by
17 asking what is the savings to ACS for this program
18 in total? And, what is the savings per child?

19 MARIA BENEJAN: Chairman--

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Yeah.

21 MARIA BENEJAN: -- ACS is having a
22 budget hearing on the 23rd. And, I want to say
23 that we understand your concerns. And, we hear
24 your concerns. ACS will be having a budget
25 hearing, March 23rd. And, I think that's a point

in time that you can be able to answer-- we can be able to answer--

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Oh, my.

You know--

MARIA BENEJAN: -- some of those questions.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: -- hold on a second. That is a ridiculous answer. In all due respect, that is an absolutely absurd answer if you're telling me you're not prepared to ask a question that I thought was the predicate of the tougher questions I was going to ask, you don't know what the savings to ACS is. Yet, you're going to inconvenience all these people, jeopardize day care centers throughout the City of New York. But, you can't tell me what the savings are? You really don't know the answer to that question sitting here?

MARIA BENEJAN: That will be covered on March 23rd at the budget hearing--

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: No, I think it should be-- you're at the hearing today is on what ACS is doing. I have got to tell you I wasn't expecting to get infuriated today. But,

that answer absolutely infuriates me. How could you come to this hearing and not know the answer to that basic question? Why are we doing this?

MARIA BENEJAN: The Commissioner would like to answer your questions on the 23rd of March at the budget hearing.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Would you be doing this if there weren't budget savings? If the City was flush, if money was flowing through the streets, would you be doing this?

MARIA BENEJAN: In our strategic plan, in 2005, we had already outlined what we were going to be doing in terms of transitioning children. If we had a better world, if we had additional money, we would, of course, have not reduced the capacity of those classrooms. We would have used that money so that we can then, therefore, serve more children. But, we're facing some really challenging times; some tough decisions here that we had to make. And, what were our options?

If we did not do this, we would, again, I want to emphasize, we would be eliminating additional subsidies. We have no

1
2 recourse here. We would be eliminating and
3 downsizing even more. There's just no other
4 option that we had. These are hard, challenging
5 times. So, we looked for those services where we
6 can-- we're leveraging other services so that
7 those families who have, they now have services
8 within our Early Care and Education system. If we
9 take another option and continue and reduce
10 additional subsidies, those families will not have
11 services available within our Early Care and
12 Education system. Our kindergarten transition
13 provides that opportunity. They could continue to
14 receive services. We are committed to that; that
15 every child in our system continues to receive
16 services within our Early Care and Education
17 system.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Associate
19 Commissioner, no one on this side of the table
20 needs to be lectured to about the tough choices
21 that we have to make in this City coming forward.
22 And, I understand that completely. But, the sum
23 and substance of your answer is you wouldn't be
24 doing this but for the budget crunch. And then,
25 you come in here, you know, not prepared to tell

1
2 me what the savings associated with this program
3 are, with this initiative are. I don't get that.
4 I don't understand why the 23rd is the magic day
5 and that when you know you're coming here to
6 discuss an initiative that is entirely predicated
7 upon a budget saving, as apparently you've just
8 testified, not to be able to tell me how much
9 you're saving is ridiculous. It's insulting. All
10 right.

11 And, it cuts off the entire line of
12 questions that I have now to the Department of
13 Education, because I want to know where the
14 savings are. I want to know what justifies this
15 initiative. I want to know why we're doing this.
16 And, if you can't tell me how much we're saving,
17 then, I don't know why you're here. I heard a lot
18 of story here from both witnesses entirely about
19 how we're transitioning this program. But, not
20 one as to why we're doing it and what it's saving
21 the taxpayers of the City of New York. And, I
22 think that is an incredible omission in your
23 testimony.

24 I will tell you that the Mayor's
25 preliminary budget shows absolutely zero

1 reflection of the absorption of 3,000 new students
2 at the Department of Education. And, I want to
3 know by what budget magic we are saving this
4 money, because if you're not putting the money in
5 DOE for these 3,000 students and we're taking it
6 out of ACS for these 3,000 students, where is the
7 money? Who is going to pay for the education of
8 these 3,000 students? If principals have gotten
9 their budgets already based upon some estimate of
10 the kindergarten students, all right, but they
11 have not yet been-- that budget does not reflect
12 the absorption of 3,000 students, who's going to
13 pay for the education of 3,000 students? Those
14 are the questions I wanted to ask you both today.
15 But, without knowing what the numbers are, that
16 kind of becomes impossible now, doesn't it?

18 ELIZABETH SCIABARRA: Chair Fidler,
19 if I could just clarify one thing. The schools
20 have not gotten their budgets yet. What will
21 happen is we're dealing with an initial projection
22 process right now. And, ultimately, once the
23 children, once we find out where we are with
24 kindergarten applications, what we will do, at
25 that point, is make adjustments to those budgets

1
2 so that, in fact, if there are, you know, if we
3 have to make increases or whatever it is we have
4 to do, we will be able to do that on a school-by-
5 school basis at the time before the budgets are
6 finalized. So, it's not quite at that point yet.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Well, but
8 they've gotten their projected registers, though,
9 right?

10 ELIZABETH SCIABARRA: They got a
11 projected register, that's correct.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: And, their
13 budget's based upon their--

14 ELIZABETH SCIABARRA: That's
15 correct.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: --
17 projected registers. And so, when a principal
18 needs to plan for September, they start to plan
19 now, right? I mean, they're planning a budget. I
20 mean, they've already taken a cut, right?

21 ELIZABETH SCIABARRA: Um, hm.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: All right.
23 Do you know where these 3,000 students are going
24 to wind up? Have you projected that as part of
25 these projected registers?

1
2 ELIZABETH SCIABARRA: The problem
3 is we can't project that yet because we actually
4 don't know who the students are. We can make, you
5 know, by virtue of the 7,200 names that we, you
6 know, that we have, that's the pool of applicants,
7 if we look at the percentages that hold up from
8 last year to this, we don't actually know where
9 the students are going to apply. And then, from
10 what I'm hearing today, since there also seems to
11 be a number of parents who are not sure, who feel
12 like this was thrust upon them in the eleventh
13 hour, so we have that additional piece that we
14 have to address, as well.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Well, I
16 have to tell you, almost everything I wanted to
17 ask has been frustrated by the total non-answer
18 from ACS. I mean, to me, I'll just repeat this.
19 It is insulting to come to this Council,
20 considered to be a co-equal partner in this
21 government, to tell me that you are trying to do
22 something that's going to affect so many lives
23 throughout the City of New York, all right, for
24 the purpose of saving taxpayers' money, something
25 that I absolutely-- I approve of saving taxpayers'

1
2 money, without telling me what the savings are so
3 that I can be a partner in the decision as to
4 whether or not it makes sense. That is an insult
5 to this Council. I am outraged by it.

6 And, I'm just going to ask one
7 other question of ACS and then, I'm going to try
8 and calm down while other Council Members ask
9 questions. And, that is have you considered
10 whether or not ACS centers losing this stream of
11 revenue will close; will be able to survive?
12 What's the effect on them? How many of them might
13 close? And, what effect will that have on ACS
14 services to the other children and families in ACS
15 centers?

16 MARIA BENEJAN: And, I know we hear
17 you loud and clear. That has been concern and
18 many people have brought that up. It is ACS
19 intention not to close any program. That is not
20 what we are in the business of. We do not intend
21 to close any of our--

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: What's that
23 expression about best intentions?

24 MARIA BENEJAN: Well, it is not our
25 intention to close any of the programs. We are

going to be working with each of the programs. And, programs have many, many options in using any of that vacant space. Programs can decide that they can recruit families who can pay for services privately. They can expand UPK services. They can consolidate. So, there are a number of options that programs have that they may be able to utilize. We will work with each of the programs so that we can tailor and individualize our technical assistance and support and look at those options that those programs have.

If it was, again, we're facing challenging times. And so, these are some of-- this is something that we have to do. It's not something, again, that we may have wanted if we had better times. But, we cannot. We will provide any assistance to the programs to look at those options that are available to them.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: I'm going to allow Chairman de Blasio to follow up on that while I calm down.

CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: Thank you.

I couldn't agree more with Chair Fidler and this has happened way too often. Anyone coming to a

hearing here should be ready to answer any question we have. It's a democracy here. And, it's directly on topic, exactly right. So, I'm astounded.

But, let me get to the core of what you just said, 'cause this, to me, is equally troubling. You're acting like these centers can now go out and find all these other wonderful options. But, you know that for two years straight now, this Council's been fighting to try and save centers that ACS was ready to see close in one form or another. And, certainly, OMB was ready to see close. And so, I think, unfortunately, it's disingenuous to say oh, now, we'll turn to other good options in the middle of an economic crisis to find a way for these centers to survive. My problem with this whole discussion, we've been having it in one form or another for two years, if you value the childcare centers, then they must survive. They must survive in a City that's growing. They must survive bad times to get on to the better times ahead, which means you don't pull the rug out from under them continually. By doing this, that's one

1
2 piece of it. By taking away the subsidies from
3 some of the others, that's another piece of it.

4 If you wanted to have an orderly
5 transition, where you brought in the UPK money
6 into some and you aged down with others and you
7 brought in more private pay and one thing and
8 another. You would do that in a manner that each
9 center were secure before you started to change
10 the rules of engagement. You would make sure the
11 center was economically viable. You'd preserve
12 that precious resource. Then, you'd make whatever
13 changes.

14 But, this Administration has
15 continually done the reverse. You pull back. You
16 pull back. You pull back. You keep telling us
17 the centers'll somehow make it. But, we know some
18 of them aren't going to make it through all this.
19 And, on top of that, we now have the prospect of
20 the stimulus money, which just the fact that that
21 is now a formal part of the landscape and there's
22 a childcare piece of that, you would think that
23 would instantly say it's time to pause and
24 reevaluate and not take the risk that some centers
25 could close.

1
2 So, please explain to me why,
3 strategically, you're taking actions that could
4 lead to childcare center closures when, in fact,
5 you have alternatives?

6 MARIA BENEJAN: It is not our
7 intention to close programs. And, I want to
8 address the stimulus money. We, too, are
9 encouraged by President Obama's Administration and
10 the validation of the continued expansion of Early
11 Care and Education.

12 Of course, we want to look at
13 leveraging any additional funding that is provided
14 through this stimulus packet. There's ongoing
15 discussions between our State and Federal
16 governments on how much that money will be; how we
17 can spend it and if, in fact, we can spend it on
18 any shortfall. So, that is something that we're
19 advocating for. We, of course, are advocating
20 for, and want to take, any opportunity that we
21 have to use that money to expand. We're still in
22 discussions with that. We don't know exactly how
23 much money we will get; how we can use that money
24 and any support that Council Members can give us
25 so that we can advocate for the use of the

stimulus money so that we can expand our capacity,
we much appreciate.

CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: I'm going
to turn it back, 'cause so many of you have
questions. I'm simply saying you know it exists.
You know some is earmarked for childcare. So,
it's not like you're entirely in the dark. You
have an opportunity to say lets find out what it
is before we take these radical actions that could
undermine childcare center. I'm telling you,
having talked to the people who run the childcare
centers, they cannot make ends meet at a certain
point. Period. We've been, you know that 14
centers were faced with closure two years ago. We
had 21 centers that were being discussed that
could have potentially been closed through the
November plan. We're not making this up. So, you
can't keep taking the underpinnings of their
finances out from under them and expect them to
survive.

But, if I told you hey, here's a
whole another source of money over the horizon,
wouldn't it make sense, as a strategic matter, to
freeze what we're doing until we understand that

1
2 that money can fill the gap before taking a chance
3 of closing centers. I've never heard an answer
4 from ACS that made me feel like there was a
5 strategic plan to save centers. It's always felt
6 like a plan, with a sort of grudging
7 acknowledgement that some of them are going to go
8 down and that's just the way it is. That, to me,
9 is unacceptable.

10 MARIA BENEJAN: We'll take any
11 opportunity to use money. Conversations are
12 ongoing. And, we appreciate your support and
13 advocacy in getting any relief to our programs.

14 CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: Who do you
15 want to go to next?

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: We've been
17 joined by Councilwoman Katz, as well. I just want
18 to make one other point before I go to Council
19 Members James and then, Foster. When I'm not
20 covering as Chair for Robert Jackson at Education,
21 I Chair Youth Services. And, of course, DOE isn't
22 the only component to this shift. DYCD's OST
23 program's going to have to absorb part of this, as
24 well. And, not only doesn't the Mayor's
25 preliminary budget not reflect funding for 3,000

1 students at DOE, but it doesn't reflect funding
2 for 3,000 additional people, children at OST. In
3 fact, as part of the PEG program last year, DYCD
4 eliminated funding for underutilized OST slots.
5 So, there isn't even any capacity within OST to
6 absorb these 3,000 young people without increasing
7 funding to the CBOs that administer OST. You
8 can't expect them to pick up the burden.
9

10 So, I am just a little bit confused
11 by the budgetary alleged domain here, that we're
12 saving money-- obviously, we don't know how much,
13 not until the 23rd-- at ACS, but DOE isn't picking
14 it up in its budget. OST at DYCD is not picking
15 it up in its budget. The CBOs, that are going to
16 be asked to provide the after-school programs for
17 these children, are not being given additional
18 money in their budget. And, in fact, the Mayor's
19 preliminary budget report expects that there will
20 be fewer young people participating in OST in the
21 next fiscal year than there were in the last.

22 So, you know, somewhere these 3,000
23 children are going to be lost children. And,
24 these families are not going to be able to get
25 these services without the money being restored

1 and paid for somewhere. And so, that begs the
2 question that I was trying to get to with the non-
3 answer, which is what are we doing here? And,
4 what are we saving? If we are just saying that,
5 you know, every agency has to take a PEG, and so,
6 ACS is taking it here, but somehow DOE and DYCD
7 are going to pick it up and it's going to cost the
8 taxpayers, the same taxpayers, the same dime, why?
9 Why are we doing this? Why are we inconveniencing
10 these people? And, why are we jeopardizing the
11 future of ACS centers throughout the City of New
12 York? And, that's the question that I was hoping
13 to get to. And, I was hoping to hear an answer
14 to. And, obviously, we're not going to. And,
15 that is really tragic that all these people here
16 today, for a hearing this important, and we don't
17 have an answer to the basic question, the most
18 important question, why? Council Member James.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Thank you.

21 Most of the children in ACS are low-income
22 children. Most of them look like me. Let me put
23 a human face on this policy, which is a
24 wrongheaded policy. The children who are
25 currently in ACS centers who will be transferred

1
2 to DOE, whose parents can afford to do so, will
3 probably put them in private school. But, there
4 are some low-income families, some single, female-
5 headed households who represent the vast majority
6 of the families who attend ACS, who will not be in
7 a position to attend private school.

8 Some of my constituents, and I went
9 to a day care center this morning in Park Slope,
10 and one woman told me that she was told, when she
11 attempted to enroll her child at a local school,
12 that kindergarten was not mandatory. Have there
13 been reports to any of the agencies from parents
14 when they attempt to enroll their child at a local
15 school that they've been basically turned away and
16 told that kindergarten is not mandatory?

17 MARIA BENEJAN: Councilwoman Tish,
18 we have not heard anything of that. We, at our
19 December forum, met with our programs and we asked
20 if they were encountering, if parents were
21 relaying to them any difficulties as they went
22 through this process that they would, and should,
23 inform us. We have not heard that as an issue.
24 So, I don't know if within the DOE. But, I would
25 like to get the name of that particular program so

1
2 that we can, again, together, look into that
3 situation as to who was saying that to-- the
4 program says DOE has laid out this process that
5 sort of those decisions haven't been made in terms
6 of the placement. But, please, give us that name
7 at the end of this. And, we will follow up.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: This day
9 care center that I attended this morning, which is
10 not unique, and I believe reflects the vast
11 majority of day care centers, provided a wide
12 range of services focused on early childhood.
13 And, they provided a significant amount of social
14 services, particularly to low-income children.
15 Those services will not be provided in
16 kindergarten in most public schools.

17 In addition to that, there was a
18 young woman there who told me that by closing the
19 kindergartens in some of these centers, they will
20 be losing federal dollars and some state dollars
21 because there's matching dollars for all of these
22 services, which will affect their bottom line and,
23 ultimately, result perhaps raise the possibility
24 that they may have to close their doors, which
25 goes to the question that Council Member Fidler,

1
2 Council Member de Blasio asked as to the-- whether
3 or not these day care centers will be able to
4 survive.

5 You know, in my district, I lost
6 two day care centers. They've already closed.
7 And, there's the possibility that a third day care
8 centers will be slated to be closed because of all
9 of the changes that ACS has imposed upon these day
10 care centers and because ACS refuses to increase
11 income eligibilities that more working-class
12 people can enroll their children in centers.

13 My question to you is, as you know,
14 early childhood is critical to a child's
15 development. If education really is the true
16 equalizer, I would think that since it's my
17 understanding that you are getting-- I just left a
18 hearing with regards to the stimulus package, and
19 early childhood education and social services and
20 human services, the City of New York is scheduled
21 to get over \$200 million in this area. How could
22 we not-- why don't we just stop and wait until we
23 can answer the questions with regards to this
24 stimulus funding to see whether or not we could
25 fill the void and maintain that which we have,

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

that which is not broken?

Again, Council Member Fidler, his anger is, you know, is well placed. Why are we going forward with this policy? And, let me just say that this is just a small-- there's like 200 parents downstairs that cannot get up here. The anger that I felt or the frustration and the emotion that I felt this morning at this two-hour breakfast, this is nothing compared to what I hear each and every day as I go to my day care centers. It's not broken. Why are we attempting to fix that which is not broken?

MARIA BENEJAN: We understand those concerns. We are there with you in terms of the challenges. This is not an easy thing for ACS. This is not an easy thing for programs. This is not an easy thing for parents.

On the stimulus package, we are geared up. We want to take the opportunity to use any money that we have on the stimulus package that is given to us. But, those conversations are ongoing. We still do not know exactly how much money we will get and how we can be able to use it. And, as I look at that stimulus package, lots

1
2 of the words are around expansion to services.
3 But, the stimulus is a one-to-two year relief.
4 And, that we need to really consider, 'cause if
5 it's only one-to-two years, how are we going to
6 sustain that capacity once the stimulus money is
7 gone?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Well, yeah.
9 But, that's jumping the gun. My understanding,
10 according to President Obama, is that the stimulus
11 funds are to maintain existing programs. And, if
12 we are to maintain existing programs, I think you
13 would want to stop until you can answer some of
14 those questions that you have posed and that you
15 do not know, that you cannot answer. I am of the
16 opinion that the stimulus fund will address a lot
17 of your deficits. And, we should not be in a
18 position to go forward.

19 That notwithstanding, my other
20 concern is three o'clock, a lot of parents go to
21 these centers because they are open until six
22 o'clock and they provide after-school programs.
23 There are insufficient OST slots. What are you
24 going to do with children at three o'clock? How
25 are you going to-- are you going to walk with

1
2 these children to OST locations or sites that are
3 not housed in the schools? I mean, what are you
4 going to do at three o'clock? A significant
5 number of parents want to know and single, female-
6 headed households would like to know what happens
7 at three o'clock when I'm at work? Are you going
8 to escort my child to a OST? Are you going to
9 guarantee that that child arrives safely? What
10 happens?

11 MARIA BENEJAN: We have been
12 sharing information with DYCD. And, they have
13 confirmed with us that they are able to absorb all
14 of the children moving through this transition.
15 So, I want to give the opportunity to DYCD to
16 speak to this initiative.

17 CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Good
18 afternoon. My name is Christopher Caruso. I'm
19 the Assistant Commissioner for Out of School Time
20 programs at DYCD. And, as both my colleagues,
21 from ACS and DOE, have explained, we've been a
22 critical partner in this transition. We do,
23 indeed, have enough slots. We're confident that
24 we have enough kindergarten slots to accommodate
25 the 3,000-some students who will no longer be

1 receiving kindergarten through ACS.

2
3 And, similarly, as ACS mentioned,
4 this isn't a new transition for us. Every year,
5 we take kindergarteners into all of our OST
6 programs. Most of our OST programs are school-
7 based. We also have a number that are center-
8 based; some in former ACS centers that have OST
9 classrooms now. We follow the same safe passage
10 guidelines that the former ACS centers do. So, if
11 there is a program that's nearby a school, we do,
12 in deed, offer safe passage and escort. We do
13 know that that's not always the case. And, that
14 there will be some instances, we hope that they're
15 rare, when children might not have access. And
16 then, we'll work with ACS on those direct specific
17 examples. But, across the City, we're confident
18 that there are plenty of OST slots, kindergarten
19 and school-aged to accommodate these children.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Can you
21 identify those sites?

22 CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: We'd be happy
23 to give you a list--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:
25 [Interposing] Do you have a list of them today?

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Not with me,
but we have 276 OST programs that serve--

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:
[Interposing] How did you identify the available
slots? What was the methodology?

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Well, thank
you, Council Member James, for the opportunity to
address that. As you know, you were involved at
the early stage of OST and we did a detailed
analysis of where the need was the greatest. We
have programs in all communities across the City.
Just a year and a half ago, Mayor Bloomberg
expanded the OST initiative to add another 111
school-age programs. And, in our analysis of
adding--

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:
[Interposing] Can I just stop you?

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Mayor
Bloomberg responded to the cry from the City
Council, which was led by Council Member Lew
Fidler. And, I was right behind him. So, though
you want to give the credit to the Mayor of the
City of New York, he didn't-- let me just say that

1
2 it wasn't his idea. Go ahead.

3 CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Well, we
4 appreciate the support that Chair Fidler has
5 always shown us, and his colleagues. But, in our
6 additional programs that we added last year, we
7 did, indeed, take a look at where those children,
8 who are eligible for state-subsidized childcare or
9 these children that are currently in ACS centers,
10 do reside. And, we made a conscious effort to put
11 more programs in those specific neighborhoods.
12 So, our network of 276 providers or programs that
13 are operated by a number of different providers,
14 are spread across the City and, you know, we'd be
15 happy to share that list with you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: I know
17 there's other questions. I just have two more
18 questions, Chair Fidler, and I'll be through.
19 I've been critical of OST. OST I is a-- most of
20 the employees are not unionized. Most of the
21 employees, it's not a structured system. And,
22 they do not provide all of the services that these
23 ACS centers provide to these children. So, it's
24 like comparing apples and oranges. Again, the
25 center that I was at this morning was-- there were

a number of trained and professional workers.

And, I do not find the same degree of standards or the same level of standards at most OST sites.

And, I have been to every OST site in my district and have been highly critical. They are nothing more than glorified babysitters and oftentimes, they're teenagers.

So, I, you know, particularly since these children look like me, because most of these-- because I recognize the importance of early childhood in the development of a child, because I recognize the feminization of poverty in the City of New York, and because the Mayor has publicly stated that he's focused on reducing poverty, I'm just really concerned about this process and very critical of it. And, I do not believe that this is in the best interest of children, particularly low-income children, who are oftentimes the least and the lost and the last in terms of this Administration.

So, let me just go on to talk about the Blue Book a little bit. Principals throughout the system have indicated that the Blue Book is inaccurate. It does not reflect reality. And,

1
2 that looking at the Blue Book in order to
3 determine school capacity is not a good
4 methodology. Again, there was a survey. And, I
5 believe 47% of the principals who responded said
6 the Blue Book, upon which you rely upon to
7 identify seats, available seats, is incorrect.
8 What is your response?

9 MARIA BENEJAN: I would like to
10 have the DOE respond to that question.

11 MARTY BARR: Thank you. My name is
12 Marty Barr. I'm the Executive Director for
13 Elementary School Enrollment in the Department of
14 Education. The Blue Book is a product of the
15 School Construction Authority. And, it is used
16 both as a measure on their behalf of utilization
17 of school buildings. And, it is also a planning
18 document for the development of the five-year
19 capital plan. In the process of developing
20 enrollments plans for schools, in addition to Blue
21 Book numbers, what we also take into account, as a
22 more primary measure, is the actual number of
23 classrooms in the school.

24 So, to the extent that we will need
25 to look for places where we can accommodate

1
2 additional students as they become enrolled and
3 where we might have to accommodate individual
4 school enrollment plans for next year, we will
5 focus primarily on classrooms, not on the Blue
6 Book.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: That
8 notwithstanding, again, I will close. And, let me
9 just say this Administration was wrong on UPK
10 admissions; wrong on school routing. They changed
11 it. It's not too late to change this policy.
12 And, given the fact that there are countless-- my
13 office has been flooded with calls from angry
14 women. I think angry women will stand up and
15 rise. And, I believe, given this year, this
16 political year, that the Mayor of the City of New
17 York should change his position and change this
18 policy and stop this policy because this human cry
19 out here is overwhelming and I believe they will,
20 if we bring them all here to City Hall, I think we
21 will stop government. So, I thank you, Mr. Chair
22 and thank you for your leadership on OST.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Thank you.
24 And, before I go to Council Members Katz and
25 Koppell, I'm going to take advantage of the fact

1
2 that Mr. Caruso has chosen to step into the well
3 here. I'm not as critical of OST as my colleague,
4 Councilwoman James is. I think it serves a
5 purpose. And, while I do agree that comparing it
6 to the childcare centers is a little bit like
7 comparing apples and bananas, I think OST serves a
8 purpose for many, many people. But, I am very
9 surprised to hear your assessment that you have
10 the capacity to add 3,000 OST slots at the
11 kindergarten level. We just adopted a PEG last
12 year to reduce, from your OST contracts, the
13 unutilized capacity. Did we fall 3,000 slots
14 short?

15 CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: And, to echo
16 as, you know, Chairman Fidler, we have a budget
17 hearing next week.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Yeah, you
19 don't want to go there.

20 CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: No, I'll go
21 there a little bit. The PEG that you're referring
22 to is actually for fiscal '10. And, it was
23 related to the programs that--

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER:
25 [Interposing] No. No, no, no, no. We did not

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

reduce OST last June?

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: No, sir.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Okay. So, this was the November PEG.

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: That's correct.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Okay. So, when we did this November PEG, we had so much extra capacity in OST, underutilized capacity in OST, that you knew this was coming. You left 3,000 slots in there?

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: That PEG was related to contractors that did not renew their OST contracts. There has not been a PEG taken against any of our school-age OST programs. And, I think that's a very important distinction to make. As you're well aware, the OST system encompasses kindergarteners through 12th grade. We have a variety of service options. All of the PEGs that we have taken have been around some of our less comprehensive programs and also, against the programs that serve some of the older kids. But, we still have 286 elementary school-aged, comprehensive programs. We anticipate having 286

1
2 programs next year. And, those serve close to
3 40,000 school-aged children each year.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: What's the
5 cost per slot of a kindergarten OST program?

6 CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: The maximum
7 cost is approximately \$2,800 per child.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Well, thank
9 you for coming to class prepared. Council Member
10 Katz.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: I know I
12 walked into this a little late. And,
13 Mr. Chairman, I apologize for that. But, I've
14 been getting up to date by my colleagues. And, I
15 am floored. And, I've been e-mailing my staff
16 just to make sure that I'm not wrong. I got a big
17 problem in my district with pre-kindergarten and
18 with kindergarten. I don't have enough slots. I
19 don't have room for my kids. I got kids in
20 kindergarten being told that they can't go to
21 their zoned school for kindergarten. So, I have
22 parents who work all day, who have to figure out
23 how to get their kids miles, sometimes, away to
24 kindergarten.

25 And so, I guess my question is a

1
2 few-fold. I think the testimony, and I might be
3 wrong, 'cause I did walk in late, I think you were
4 talking when I did. I think someone testified
5 that kindergarten kids are not turned away from
6 schools. And, I thought someone said that. So,
7 this is my question. If that is true, then I
8 would like the direct phone number for someone
9 here so that when we are told that the kids can't
10 go to their kindergarten that they're zoned for,
11 that I have someone who says that they are wrong
12 and that they can get into their classes.

13 The other problem I have is the
14 space for Pre-K. So, I guess what I'd like is
15 some testimony to tell me how is it we're going to
16 fit these kindergarten kids in their zoned area,
17 when we can't do it now. And then, what's going
18 to happen to all my Pre-K classes, who are already
19 being told that there's no room for their kids,
20 when my understanding is that Chancellor Klein's
21 policy is that education should start as young as
22 possible and get the kids in school. And so,
23 again, if the answer is I'm totally wrong, I'm
24 great with that. I'd like a phone number so I can
25 give all the parents that call me to tell me that

I'm right.

MARTY BARR: Let me address the kindergarten question this way. Six-year-olds in New York State are required to be in school. And, therefore, New York City guarantees a first grade placement for every 6-year-old child. In New York State, 5-year-olds are not required to be in school. What the Department of Education says is we will guarantee a placement for every 5-year-old who applies to a New York City public school. What we do not guarantee, necessarily, is that you will be accommodated in your zoned school. The shifting of population over time, development in particular communities, may mean that at various points in time, there's an imbalance between a school zone and the capacity of that school to accommodate all of the local neighborhood children.

That is why we constantly review school zoning. We are constantly looking to adjust school zoning in order, over time, to get as close as possible so that schools can accommodate all their zoned children. What we do say, however, is that if a particular school

1
2 cannot accommodate all of their zoned children, we
3 will find an alternative placement if you want
4 your child to be in public school.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: With all due
6 respect, [off-mic]. Hello? With all due respect,
7 you're repeating exactly what I said. So now, the
8 question becomes what happens? And, just so my
9 colleagues know, and everyone in this room knows,
10 I have a resolution to the State Legislature and a
11 bill into the City now making 5-year-olds
12 mandatory in the Department of Education. And, I
13 think that that is something that everyone should
14 support. And, that way you won't have this
15 argument that we can transfer kids around.

16 So now, I understand 6-year-olds
17 get that opportunity. I'm talking now about 5-
18 year-olds. I understand they can be sent
19 somewhere else. That's the problem. But, my
20 biggest problem is now you want to send more kids
21 into the system. And so, what's going to happen?

22 MARTY BARR: From our point of
23 view, there is no difference between our guarantee
24 for a 5-year-old and our guarantee for a 6-year-
25 old. If you apply, we will guarantee you a seat.

1
2 There are first graders who wind up going to a
3 non-zoned school, as well, because when they enter
4 public school, they happen to live in a community
5 that has a very crowded elementary school. We
6 guarantee a placement for all 5-year-olds and 6-
7 year-olds. The statement that was previously made
8 about somebody stating to a parent--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: Mr. Chairman
10 [crosstalk]-- Mr. Chairman, you need some water,
11 so that the gentlemen can be heard?

12 MARTY BARR: That statement that
13 was previously made to a parent about kindergarten
14 is not mandatory, there are occasions when
15 somebody may say to a parent these are your
16 options right now. As a parent of a 5-year-old,
17 you also have the additional option of not sending
18 your child to public school. The Department's
19 official policy is if you apply for kindergarten,
20 you will be guaranteed a placement.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: I believe
22 that you and I are saying the exact same thing.
23 And, although I appreciate your reiterating my
24 statements, I'm perfectly capable of saying them
25 myself. The answer, though, is-- the question

1
2 needs an answer. We're getting turned away from
3 Pre-K because there's not enough spots. We're not
4 allowed to go automatically to our zoned
5 kindergarten area, no matter what. Saying that
6 they don't have to send their kids, well, you
7 know, my understanding of the policy of the
8 Department of Education is that we want to start
9 educating our children as young as possible and
10 saying well, you don't have to send your kids to
11 school is not really, with all due respect, an
12 answer to me.

13 So, I guess have there been-- let
14 me try it this way. Have there been studies,
15 district-by-district, showing what will not only
16 happen as far as school crowding with
17 kindergarten, but also what will happen then to
18 the Pre-K that some schools have and also, how
19 that's going to affect the other grades, 'cause
20 clearly if the other grades are already
21 overcrowded, you're taking up space. So, have
22 there been studies district-by-district on that?
23 Let me start this way.

24 RECY DUNN: I'll start. My name is
25 Recy Dunn. I'm the Executive Director for Early

Childhood Education.

COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: Thank you.

RECY DUNN: So, just to the point on Pre-K not having enough slots, for Pre-K it is, as we know, it's Universal Pre-Kindergarten, which funds most of our pre-kindergarten slots, that we serve as many children as we have funding for. And, for several years, essentially since the program's been around, we've had more funding than-- we've had more seats than filled. So, we've never filled all the existing capacity. The issue has been that there's always been not enough seats in public schools. So, we've turned to our contracted community-based organizations to fill the rest of that capacity. So, there's only 40% of the seats for Pre-K are in public schools. The other 60% are in community-based organizations.

And so, the issue, again, is they can apply to a number of community-based organizations or for public school through a centralized process. But, they're not necessarily guaranteed a seat in their zoned school. The same priority that goes.

For the ongoing placement of pre-

1
2 kindergarten classrooms, through both public
3 schools and CBOs, we do ongoing analysis of where
4 the public schools are; where new construction is;
5 where new children are moving; what the enrollment
6 patterns are; utilization. We also look at the
7 contracts. That information we look at in concert
8 with the Enrollment Office and, also, with our
9 Portfolio Office. And, we've been-- but I think
10 the earlier statement is that knowing exactly
11 where this is going to-- where the children are
12 going to show up has yet to be determined. And, I
13 think that's what we were saying.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: I may not be
15 the most computer literate person, but I would say
16 that if you look at the addresses of those folks
17 that are going to the centers that you're talking
18 about and you look at where they're zoned, my
19 guess would be that the priority for them would be
20 to go in their own neighborhood where they're
21 zoned. Having said that, Mr. Chair, I'm not going
22 to keep going around in a circle. This is what I
23 would like. Since the gentleman talked so much
24 about the fact that studies were done, I would
25 like it, Mr. Chairman, if you could ask that this

1
2 week we be delivered the studies that showed that
3 these folks will have space in the schools, in the
4 area; that there--

5 RECY DUNN: I did not say there
6 were any studies done.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: There's not
8 studies done on this?

9 RECY DUNN: No, I did not say that.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: All right.
11 Sir, this is what I'd like to do. After this--
12 huh?

13 MALE VOICE: [Off mic]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: All right.
15 So, after this testimony, I'd like the Department
16 of Education and ACS to know that I will make it
17 my number one priority. I have nine months left
18 in this body. I will make it my number one
19 priority to get 5-year-olds mandatory education in
20 the City of New York. And, I would hope that as
21 Council Member James was talking about, and many
22 other colleagues here, if we don't know the right
23 answers and we don't have the answers, it seems to
24 me that we could probably wait on doing this until
25 we do have the answers.

1
2 There should be studies shown as to
3 how this is going to affect the Department of
4 Education. We should have studies [pause]. I
5 don't know. We should know exactly how it's going
6 to affect it district by district. We should know
7 how it's going to affect the Pre-K enrollment and
8 the number of slots that will be available. I
9 would like to know how this is going to affect the
10 elementary schools and whether or not sixth grades
11 stay in the elementary schools. Or, are you
12 planning on getting rid of all six grades in all
13 elementary schools in order to make room?

14 There's a large effect that this is
15 going to have. And, I do wish that you guys had
16 better answers as far as studies go. It's a big
17 step. And, it's the first step, I hate to say it,
18 in trying to consolidate this budget. That could
19 be very dangerous for the constituents. Thank you
20 for your time.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Thank you,
22 Councilwoman Katz. And, we've been joined by
23 Councilwoman Reyna and we have questions from
24 Councilman Koppell, followed by Councilwoman
25 Reyna.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Thank you.

I have done some inquiries in my district. And, particularly, PS 16, which is served by-- it's in the Wakefield section. There are two day care centers nearby. And, we asked the principal do you have room in your kindergarten for the 5-year-olds who are going to be coming over. And, she said no, we don't have any room. And, I would suspect the same is true at PS 8, which sends kids away right now. Kids come and they get sent away. And, PS 56, which is busing kids away. Both of those are in-- one is in Norwood; one is in Bedford Park.

So, those three schools and I'm sure there may well be others, I'm very concerned about. And, as for adjusting this with zoning, the zoning process takes years. It's not going to be adjusted with zoning. We're doing zoning, rezoning, in Norwood this year. And, they said they can't do rezoning in Kingsbridge until next year because it takes a whole year. So, zoning's not going to solve the problem. So, these kids who can't go to PS 16 or 8 or 56, they're going to be sent somewhere else. Is that right, if they

can't get into kindergarten in those schools?

That's correct.

So, and, we don't know where and we don't know what burden that's going to place on the parents, who now have a place where they can send their 5-year-old. Now, the child gets into kindergarten somewhere. Are you saying, and I guess maybe somebody else has to answer this, that every school has a program so that these kids will be taken care of until six o'clock? Is that what you're saying?

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: No, we're not saying that every school has a program. But, we're saying that we have enough kindergarten slots in the OST system to accommodate all children.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Citywide.

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Yeah, but that doesn't help. Let's assume the parent at PS- - the parent who takes their 5-year-old to PS 16 is told I'm sorry, you can't go to PS 16. But, we do have a kindergarten slot for their child at PS 19. I'm using a number. Maybe I should use not

official number, but there is a PS 19. But so, you're not saying-- but, they say-- then, they go over to PS 19 and they find out that there's no after-school program. And, right now, they're relying on having a program that'll keep the child appropriately housed until six o'clock.

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Yeah--

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: What's going to happen with that now?

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: And, again, this isn't new. This is what happens to first graders now and then. This is what happens to kindergartens who normally enroll in kindergarten when they're 5 years old. We have a network of schools. And, we have a network of after-school programs. Many of our after-school programs are located in communities where the need is and, you know, the City is doing its best to make sure that the kids-- that if the program is not in the school, that the program is close enough that there is safe transportation provided.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: But, you can't guarantee it. You're not guaranteeing it. You said not every school has an OST program for

the 5-year-olds.

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Does ACS--

SARA VECCHIOTTI: My name is Sara Vecchiotti. And, I'm the Assistant Commissioner for Policy and Planning. And, we have worked with DYCD in the past yearS to actually transition children from kindergarten into OST for first grade. And so, many of the practices that we have established through that process will be in play with the process of transitioning now the children who are entering kindergarten for OST. And, just like the process for the school-aged children aging out of our centers into OST, we will work to ensure that every family has a school-aged slot. And, in the instance where there is not a school-aged slot available, we will work with DYCD to issue a limited voucher to provide care for that child. But, in past experience, in the past couple of years, that actually has not been a situation because OST expanded in areas where they are serving areas that have high concentrations of ACS kids.

So, yes, we will make sure that every family continues to have services 'cause

1
2 that's what we've committed to in this transition
3 that they will have seats in the Department of
4 Education. And, in the instance that there is a
5 place where there's not an OST slot available, ACS
6 will make accommodation.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: And,
8 that's for all kids? Or, is it special category
9 of kids? Is it income-based? Or, how is it
10 based?

11 SARA VECCHIOTTI: It's based on the
12 availability of OST and where OST is. If there is
13 an OST slot available, that child will be
14 attending OST. If there is an instance where
15 there is not an OST slot available, then ACS will
16 make accommodations to serve that child.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: So, you're
18 saying that every child, every-- let's assume that
19 a child is now 4-years-old and is in one of the
20 day care centers. And, that child's going to
21 become 5-years-old in-- is going to be 5-years-
22 old, maybe it's 5 years old already, but, it's
23 going to be-- the child's going to be 5 years old
24 in September. So now, you're saying that that
25 child, who is going to be 5 years old in

1
2 September, no longer can go to the day care
3 center. That child is guaranteed a public school
4 kindergarten slot, first of all, right? And, you
5 will-- ACS will guarantee that there'll be care
6 for that child from three until six.

7 SARA VECCHIOTTI: For the children
8 that have been affected by this transition.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Yes.

10 SARA VECCHIOTTI: Yes. If there
11 is--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: All the
13 3,000 kids. There's, I guess, about 3,000 kids is
14 anticipated. Every one of those kids will be
15 taken care of from three to six.

16 SARA VECCHIOTTI: Yes, either by
17 OST or in the instance that OST is not available,
18 we will make accommodations.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Well,
20 people are saying how? But, I don't know. So,
21 maybe you can say how, 'cause people said how?

22 SARA VECCHIOTTI: So, when I said
23 limited voucher, that's what we mean. So, if
24 there's an instance where there is not an OST slot
25 available for a family, we would issue a voucher

1
2 to that family. And, that family would then use
3 that voucher to access care.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: What kind
5 of a-- a voucher for what?

6 SARA VECCHIOTTI: It's for the
7 school-age-- oh, it would be for the school--age--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: No, I
9 know. But, where does a voucher get used?

10 SARA VECCHIOTTI: That is up to the
11 parent to decide.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: No, but
13 what is it for? Is it for a babysitter? Or, is
14 it for-- what is it for, the voucher? I don't...

15 SARA VECCHIOTTI: Typically, a
16 voucher is a form of subsidy whereby the parent--
17 we pay the childcare setting that the parent
18 chooses for the hours of care that that parent
19 needs to support work.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: So, that
21 if there's a-- let's assume the parent has a
22 child, who's 5 years old, is now going to a public
23 school, but there's no OST program in that public
24 school. They can come to you and get a voucher.
25 The voucher's for money?

1
2 SARA VECCHIOTTI: I'm talking about
3 the children in this-- affected by this
4 transition. I am not talking about all 5-year-old
5 children.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: No, the 5-
7 year-old children who were in the day care center
8 and now can no longer stay there because we've
9 ceased having kindergarten there.

10 SARA VECCHIOTTI: Yes.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Okay.

12 SARA VECCHIOTTI: For those
13 children who are currently in centers--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL:
15 [Interposing] The 3,000 kids that we're talking
16 about.

17 SARA VECCHIOTTI: Yes. For those
18 children who are currently in centers that will
19 not have kindergarten capacity next year.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Right.

21 SARA VECCHIOTTI: Yes, for those
22 children, if there is not an OST slot available,
23 the first piece is that there is a mismatch
24 between where OST is and where our centers are--

25 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: I

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

understand that.

SARA VECCHIOTTI: -- which we are assuming, from past experience, is a rare occurrence. So, in the instance of a rare occurrence where there is not an OST slot available, we will make an accommodation for that family to provide after-school hours care.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: And--

SARA VECCHIOTTI: Where--

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: -- you're going to give them money? Or, you're going to give them a--

SARA VECCHIOTTI: A subsidy--

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: -- place?

SARA VECCHIOTTI: -- does not go to-- money is not given. In any subsidy that we have, money is not given directly to parents to access--

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Okay. So-

-

SARA VECCHIOTTI: -- care.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: -- let me pretend I'm a parent. I have a little boy. His name is Johnny. I take Johnny to PS 16. PS 16

1
2 says they have no room. So, they send me,
3 instead, to PS 19. PS 19 has room in
4 kindergarten. There's no OST program. Now, what
5 do I do?

6 SARA VECCHIOTTI: So, this--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Tell me
8 what I do.

9 SARA VECCHIOTTI: This would be--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: I have
11 Johnny. He's in PS 19. What do I do? I come to
12 you. I say I don't know what to do. I have a
13 job. I can't pick him up until six o'clock. What
14 should I do?

15 SARA VECCHIOTTI: The first step in
16 that process, if the parent is in PS 16 and
17 there's no OST in that school--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Right.

19 SARA VECCHIOTTI: -- they should
20 actually be talking to the DYCD first to find out
21 where there are available OST slots in public
22 schools and in community-based organizations.
23 DYCD will work with that family to find an OST
24 slot for that family. Then, in the event that
25 there is no OST slot available, DYCD would then

1
2 refer that parent to us. And then, from then on,
3 we work with the parent to accommodate that
4 parent.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Now, my
6 concern is here is I'm a parent. You're dealing
7 with me, now. And, I say to you what are you
8 going to give me a voucher for? PS 19 is on
9 Katonah Avenue in Woodlawn. Are you going to give
10 me a voucher? And, what kind of program should I
11 look for for Johnny? What should I be looking
12 for?

13 SARA VECCHIOTTI: So, for an after-
14 school program, they should be talking with DYCD
15 about the OST options available to you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Okay.
17 Yes. And, the OST option, will that include
18 transportation from PS 19 to the after-school
19 program?

20 SARA VECCHIOTTI: So, I believe
21 that Chris Caruso has mentioned already the safe
22 passage policy for DYCD. That, yes, safe passage
23 is an available service in those OST programs that
24 are nearby.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: And, if

1
2 there's no OST program, it sounds pretty
3 complicated. I feel sorry for Johnny's real
4 father. But, okay. But, it's mostly the mommy.
5 I said father 'cause it's me. But, I was using me
6 as an example. But, if there's no OST program,
7 you said you'd provide a voucher. And, that
8 voucher is to allow Johnny to go to an after-
9 school program?

10 SARA VECCHIOTTI: A voucher is a
11 coupon that parents can use that they choose the
12 individual program or care setting that they would
13 like to attend using that coupon. And so, the
14 parent would be-- we would, of course, work with
15 the parent to talk about the choice of childcare
16 setting. But, yes, the parent would then choose
17 an after-school setting that in the instance that
18 there's not OST available. And then, we would
19 provide a voucher, which is then given to the
20 provider that they choose. So, the parent enrolls
21 the child in the provider and then we pay the
22 provider for the after-school hours care.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Well, I,
24 you know, I don't know how many, you know, I don't
25 know-- and the voucher would also cover

1
2 transportation to get from the school to the
3 provider?

4 SARA VECCHIOTTI: It would depend
5 on what the setting was that the parent chose. If
6 they wanted a family friend or a neighbor setting,
7 then it would be most likely that the family
8 friend or neighbor would be picking that child up
9 from school and then taking care of that child.
10 If it's another type of after-school program, like
11 OST, that has safe passage, then it would be an
12 escort service similar to what is happening in
13 other school settings. So, that question depends
14 on the nature of the setting chosen by the parent.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Well, let
16 me just say that it's an extraordinarily complex
17 problem. I don't know how many kids will be
18 affected by it. As my colleagues have been
19 saying, Mr. Chairman, and you've been saying, you
20 know, if you have a system that works, if it isn't
21 broke, don't fix it. It sounds to me like the fix
22 here is extraordinarily complicated for many
23 parents. And, navigating this system is just
24 going to be incredible. And, I think the point
25 you raised is a good one, that is it really going

1
2 to save the City any money? It sounds like it
3 might cost the City more to do these things.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: And, not
5 only that, but it's going to be an incredible
6 burden for Johnny Koppell.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: No
8 question about that.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Thank you,
10 Council Member. Councilwoman Reyna. And, I just
11 want to announce to everybody that because of the
12 inordinate number of people who have signed up, we
13 are cutting off sign-ups. If anyone is here and
14 hasn't signed up to speak-- if you signed up,
15 you'll be called. But, if you haven't, sorry.
16 Councilwoman Reyna.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: Mr. Chair, I
18 just want to comment by saying that it is a
19 travesty that an important issue such as this one
20 was scheduled to be in this room, as opposed to
21 the Chambers. This is a very serious issue that
22 deserves a more ample room to be able to allow for
23 the public, who is standing outside in the hallway
24 to participate here.

25 Second of all, as far as the

1
2 stimulus package that I spent all morning trying
3 to understand how it's going to be helpful in the
4 area of this particular industry, early childhood
5 education. There's \$84 million anticipated for
6 childcare centers. And, we're in the midst of
7 trying to transition and implement policy that's
8 going to hurt our children, the very children who
9 are going to be [pause], the very children who are
10 going to be inheriting millions of dollars in
11 taxpayer dollars that they will have to pay back
12 to government. And, we're walking away from them.
13 This policy has no child in mind other than trying
14 to fix a \$62 million deficit.

15 And, I understand that we have to
16 find money. And, right now, we have a band aid.
17 Why not utilize that band aid to leave things the
18 way they are? Let's not complicate them more than
19 what they already are. I am enraged, not just as
20 an elected official with families just in a
21 turnstile, walking in and out of my office
22 complaining about what are they going to do with
23 their child come this September. But, I'm
24 outraged as a parent. I fear the life of my
25 child, the quality education that my child has

1
2 been promised. The law that passed federally that
3 we would not leave any child behind, this is total
4 contrary to that law. And, we're expecting
5 parents to navigate a system that is already
6 complicated for us, as elected officials. Imagine
7 them.

8 The value of a voucher has not been
9 answered. So, do you mean to tell me that I can
10 take a voucher and because my local providers have
11 no room, I can take my voucher and go to Park
12 Slope and find the same quality for the same
13 prices as in Williamsburg or in East New York?
14 It's never going to be the same. It's going to be
15 more costly in other neighborhoods. In addition
16 to that, there's an eligibility requirement for
17 these vouchers. What is it? Not everybody's
18 going to be captured. So, your child will be left
19 alone at three o'clock, a 5-year-old.

20 I cannot understand why we can't
21 take \$84 million, apply it right now and leave
22 things so that we can start understanding how to
23 fix this. Shame on the state for leaving us with
24 a \$62 million hole that has just grown over time.
25 And, how are we going to hold the state

accountable so that our dollars are being spent on our children, rather than special interest projects?

I just need to understand exactly how do we plan on making sure that 5-year-olds are going to have a safe and sound educational environment. That is what we're talking about here. And, the shifting from one to another does not merit this transition based on a \$62 million deficit, because right now, we are anticipating \$84 million. So, why not say stop? Let's pause. Let's not implement this policy. And, let's figure it out once again. Let's make certain that we've exhausted every possibility. I'm committed to that. I've also proposed legislation to making sure that we can take early childhood education, what we have been married to for over 35 years, and implement it so that it's taken under the wings of the Department of Education. So, we can use early childhood centers as satellites, because we do have an overcrowding issue. Why not explore that possibility? I believe that the Department of Education can absorb that cost. And, we can hold all of our centers intact, including their

1
2 administrations, teachers, cooks, aides and, yes,
3 the children to remain where they are, because
4 that's what's important here today. And, we're
5 not talking about that.

6 So, I need to understand what
7 security are we giving these parents, me, as a
8 parent, before becoming an elected official or
9 sitting before you frustrated because I have no
10 answers for my parents. My parents are being told
11 kindergarten is not mandatory. Leave your child
12 behind is the message. This is regressive. This
13 is regressive education. Is there anything that
14 anyone can tell me as to why are we rushing into
15 absorbing 3,500 kids and we don't know where
16 they're going to be placed?

17 MARIA BENEJAN: Councilwoman Reyna,
18 with much respect, 'cause you have been one that
19 we have been in meetings when we're working
20 through some of these challenges with our programs
21 and looking at their options. We have ongoing
22 discussions around the stimulus package. Just
23 today, here at this hearing, we heard various
24 amounts and no one particular amount. That amount
25 keeps changing. As you speak to one person, it's

1 this, this. It keeps changing. And so, we are in
2 discussions with the State and Federal government
3 to find out what exactly-- what's the amount that
4 we're looking at and how we can use it. There's
5 word in that Recovery Act around supplanting.
6 And, there's a number of things that we still
7 don't know if we're going to be able to use this
8 money for our shortfall, to expand. We are going
9 to take every opportunity to use that. We're in
10 challenging times right now. And, we have an
11 immediate deficit that we need to deal with. And,
12 we are. We are very hopeful that we can. And,
13 whatever comes our way, believe me, ACS will be
14 using it to expand the services that we have to
15 children.

17 And, I heard \$84 million you said
18 in terms of state funds. I think that is
19 something that we need to go and continue to
20 advocate and say, you know, what is going to
21 happen to this money? New York City's in a
22 critical situation. And, we need to use that
23 money so that we can be able to continue to expand
24 the services that needed, services in New York
25 City. So, we're with you on that. We want

everyone to advocate for this.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: If I ask in a scenario where tomorrow the state does what's just for New York City, what they have been neglecting to do for over some time already, and \$84 million is absorbed in the New York City childcare system, will this plan go through?

MARIA BENEJAN: If we can get a guarantee that they give us \$84 million, obviously, we will use all of that money. But, again, we've got to be clear on the stimulus money. Is it this one-time funding? If it's one-time funding, how are we going to be able to sustain it into the future? So, those are the kinds of questions. Those are the kind of guarantees that we're going to need because we just don't want to put another band aid on something here. They have to guarantee us that this money is going to be baseline; that we'll be able to get this money. I have not heard that yet.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: So, you're looking for baseline money that over the last decade we haven't seen?

MARIA BENEJAN: Yes. We are looking for any money. But, we cannot use money to expand capacity--

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA:
[Interposing] But, we're not talking about--

MARIA BENEJAN: -- in a one-time--

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: --
expanding.

MARIA BENEJAN: -- relief.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: We're not talking about expanding. We're talking about slots that have existed; that ACS, with the grace of God, have been able to leave intact.

MARIA BENEJAN: Um, hm.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: And now, they're rattling the cage because they can't do it anymore.

MARIA BENEJAN: Um, hm.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: The deficit has grown to \$62 million and they've been able to shift money to keep it-- to absorb the cost. And, every year, we have this gap. Now, you're making a decision. But, the decision is being made with no real planning. And, how I know this is because

there are questions out here and the answers being given are more optional education than it's important for your child to stay in school.

MARIA BENEJAN: We will, again, want to emphasize in terms of any of the stimulus money, we plan to use that money. And, I think we're talking the same thing in terms of expansion or the existing, the shortfall, our current capacity so that we can be able to use that money so that we can continue to serve the children and keep the capacity that we have; expand the capacity that we have; age down, our capacity. So, there's a number of options within that money. But, they have not been able to tell us (a) the amount of that money; (b) how we're going to be able to use that money; and, (c) whether that is sustainable. And so, once we have those answers to those questions, then we can be able to move with that stimulus package.

But, believe me, we are there. We are at the table. We are in discussions, both even on the Head Start side with the Federal government around the use of that stimulus money. They have not been able to tell us and guarantee

any definition. Just today, I'm hearing different amounts around what that money will be. And, I think when we get some clarity, when we get something that says this is what New York City is going to get; this is what can be used because there's a lot of things in that; there's a lot of language in there that we have to look and pull out. But, we are with you. And, we need the support of everyone here, Council Member and the public, to advocate for that money and for the flexibility in the use of that money. We're not seeing that.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: In the meantime, you have mentioned a voucher. What is the value of this voucher?

MARIA BENEJAN: Sara?

SARA VECCHIOTTI: The average cost [pause]. A voucher, the value of a voucher depends on the age of the particular child we're talking about. So, for this, we are talking about a pre-school child. And so, the average cost of a voucher for a pre-school child, and I'm looking at my colleague here, who can--

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: I thought

1 we were talking about a kindergartener here.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: It's
3 considered pre-school anyway.

4 SARA VECCHIOTTI: Yes. It's
5 considered--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: Because it's
7 under the age--

8 SARA VECCHIOTTI: -- pre-school
9 anyway.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: -- of 9.

11 SARA VECCHIOTTI: We can get back
12 to you on the exact amount of a voucher for a pre-
13 school child.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: And, if you
15 can just make sure that you're calculating the
16 cost of a pre-school voucher to include
17 transportation cost because I'm not too sure how a
18 voucher is going to be valued if not including
19 transportation when that child will have to seek,
20 with this voucher, placement somewhere else
21 farther away from home or farther away from their
22 immediate school where they've been all day.

23 So, if there's a voucher given to
24 the parent; parent goes to work. After school,
25

1
2 they're not staying in the school program because
3 there is not space in the Out of School Time. So
4 now, that parent has given this voucher for
5 childcare two miles away. Who's going to pick up
6 that child will have to be part of the cost, I'm
7 assuming.

8 SARA VECCHIOTTI: So, with a
9 voucher, in the limited instance that OST slot is
10 not available for after-school care, a parent
11 chooses the setting of their choice with a
12 voucher. So, it would be up to the parent to
13 decide who they want to provide the after-school
14 care for. If they want to try to find a private
15 center that has an after-school program not
16 affiliated with OST, or if they want a family
17 friend or neighbor or any of their-- they have
18 options in the sense of to explore if there's not
19 an OST slot available for after-school-age care.
20 So, the method of transportation would be
21 depending on the setting that the parent chose to
22 access school-age care.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: But, you're
24 confirming that transportation will be included in
25 the cost of the value of that voucher?

SARA VECCHIOTTI: That's not what I'm saying.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: Okay. So, transportation costs will not be included as part of the voucher for after-school care.

SARA VECCHIOTTI: I'm not quite saying that, either, because it really depends on the nature of the setting that the parent has chosen. And so, depending on that, the parent is choosing the option of the after-school care. So--

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: But, the option is limited to slots availability.

SARA VECCHIOTTI: Previously, we answered this question. And, I know that you weren't here. So, I'll repeat. In the instance that there is not an OST slot available--

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: Um, hm.

SARA VECCHIOTTI: -- and in the past work that we have done with DYCD in transitioning children, we have been very successful in placing children in OST slots. OST expanded, actually, to accommodate areas that had high concentrations of ACS children. So, in the

past year is when we've transferred children that have been aging out of our centers into OST.

There hasn't really been a need for issuing "a voucher for after-school care," 'cause OST has been able to accommodate those children. DYCD and ACS have shared data. And, DYCD has done an analysis and they are confident that they will be able to absorb these children.

However, in the instance, the rare instance, where there is not an OST slot available, ACS will work with that parent and provide accommodations for after-school care, like we've done in the past with the initiatives that we've worked with for OST. And, we will do the same-- have the same policies and practices in place here to ensure that every child who received care will still receive care. So, in the instance that an OST slot is not available, we will work with that parent to make accommodation, which would be a voucher. And then, the parent has the choice of where they would like to place their child for after-school care. And then, depending on the nature of that setting, the transportation issues depend on where the parent has chosen to

access school-age care.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: But, transportation cost is not included in the voucher.

SARA VECCHIOTTI: If a parent has chosen a family friend or neighbor to provide the after-school care, then that family friend or neighbor typically goes to pick up the child after school and they take care of that child. Or, if a parent has chosen a private center, that center might have the same safe passage policy that other OST programs have. And, they have staff escort the children from school. So, when a provider accepts a voucher, they're accepting the services that they provide with that voucher.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: So, they're limiting their voucher accessibility because transportation cost is not valued into the voucher.

SARA VECCHIOTTI: The provider is accepting the voucher saying yes, this is the cost of care for this child. And, I will provide the cost of care, whatever the provider is saying is the cost of care. They're accepting that the

voucher covers the cost of care.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: And, the cost of care does not cover transportation cost?

SARA VECCHIOTTI: If the service provided includes the escort, then when the program says yes, I accept her voucher, they are accepting that as the payment for the escort. It's not a separate-- there's not a separation of transportation.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: So, there's different value to different vouchers.

SARA VECCHIOTTI: No. The only difference for a value of a voucher is based on the age of the child and--

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: And so, for a 5-year-old--

SARA VECCHIOTTI: -- the setting.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: The 5-year-old, what is the value cost?

SARA VECCHIOTTI: So, looking for a pre-school, school-age voucher--

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA:
[Interposing] School-age, under the age of 5?

SARA VECCHIOTTI: Excuse me, for a-

- yes. For a 5-year-old, the cost for the voucher would be 2,000 to 2,500 per year.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: And, for--

SARA VECCHIOTTI: This is an estimate that we've just calculated here.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: So, this was just calculated to answer this question?

SARA VECCHIOTTI: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: And, the 9-year-old, Out of School Time voucher is how much?

SARA VECCHIOTTI: Actually, the school-age-- it's the same price for school-age care, 'cause it's about the modality, which is school-age. So, in this instance, this 5-year-old would actually be accessing a school-age voucher because it would be for after-school care.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: So, the value is 2,000 to 2,500, whether it's a 5-year-old or a 9-year old.

SARA VECCHIOTTI: Exactly. School-age has one value.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: And, transportation cost is not included in that value.

MARIA BENEJAN: It may be included

in the service that that provider provides.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: And so, if a parent is looking for that type of service because the 5-year-old is tiny, then they will look for a service provider that provides transportation pick-up and drop-off.

MARIA BENEJAN: Correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: They're hoping that they can get it in the range of 2,000 and 2,500.

MARIA BENEJAN: Correct.

SARA VECCHIOTTI: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: And, the eligibility for a 2,000 to a 2,500 voucher, is there an income eligibility?

SARA VECCHIOTTI: When we talk about this, this is only for the children that have been affected by this transition. So, these children are already eligible. We're only talking about the children who are affected by centers losing kindergarten capacity. So, when we talk about this instance of limited issuance of a voucher, it's only for those children who are in centers that are losing kindergarten in order to

ensure that they will still have service.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: That's not true because you have private slots in childcare centers for 5-year-olds, who, if not for the childcare center who remains open until six, so that that parent can go pick up that child after work, a school will not be able to provide that. That private parent or private slot was not eligible under ACS rules or eligibility requirements.

SARA VECCHIOTTI: However, we are talking about, in this testimony--

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: Um, hm.

SARA VECCHIOTTI: -- the children who are affected by this transition. So--

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: [Interposing] So, just-- stay right there. I understand that. So now, we have no idea where we're placing the private slot kindergarten 5-year-old child with after-school care.

SARA VECCHIOTTI: You're talking about families that currently have a voucher. Are you talking about 5-year-olds that currently have a voucher?

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: No. Five-year-olds in a private slot, in a childcare center, who have care--

SARA VECCHIOTTI: You're saying a private-pay capacity within an ACS center?

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: Correct. Not eligible for a voucher.

MARIA BENEJAN: Right. So, that is a classroom that the program has recruited private-pay parents. So, if that program has recruited private-pay parents, that capacity, that program continues-- they continue to serve those children because those parents are paying for that privately. So, they continue to provide that service to that family.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: But, that center will not pick up that child at the school where the 5-year-old is going to go.

MARIA BENEJAN: Again, that was whatever that parent, when she negotiated for that private rate in that center--

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: But, the service is being changed mid-stream. So, that parent has enrolled that child in a system that

1
2 did not have this new policy.

3 MARIA BENEJAN: Right. But, it's
4 private pay. We're not touching the private pay.
5 So, that child was a private-pay child, continues
6 to be a private-pay child in that program.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: No. I'm
8 sorry, Chair. But, I need to make sure people
9 understand here. There is a private slot, limited
10 slots, in childcare centers.

11 MARIA BENEJAN: Um, hm.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: Not every
13 center has them. There's only a few. Those
14 particular 5-year-olds, a parent can choose to put
15 their child in a public school. If they can pick
16 them up at three o'clock, they will. And, if not,
17 there's an Out of School Time program. But, those
18 parents that do not choose public school system
19 until they turn 6, remain in the childcare center.

20 MARIA BENEJAN: Um, hm.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: So,
22 therefore, from the age of 2 to 6, that child has
23 always been in a childcare center. That parent
24 has chosen that center because they believe in the
25 philosophy of that center and the teachers of that

center. They went to that center when they were a child.

Now, this center is telling them you can't enroll your child for kindergarten services here because we are not being made available applications for our center to provide kindergarten services. So now, my child will be interrupted. I have to find a public school. And then, on top of that, we try to figure out what I'm going to do with my child at three o'clock because I work until six o'clock.

MARIA BENEJAN: Yeah, this is a private-pay parent. It is not an ACS-subsidized child. So--

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA:
[Interposing] So, they're not eligible.

MARIA BENEJAN: They are not our children. They are not our ACS children. That's a private-pay parent. So, if that program chooses, as we said, that might be an option for some programs, to recruit families who have private pay. Many of our programs have private pay families right now. And, it is, again, they decide the kind of service, the model, the service

1
2 delivery that they want to get with those parents
3 in terms of private pay. They can continue to do
4 that. What we are focusing on--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA:

6 [Interposing] No. I'm sorry, but they can't
7 because they cannot pick up the child from the
8 public school. And so, that was never part of the
9 cost. And so, my point is--

10 MARIA BENEJAN: Um, hm.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: -- that this
12 would never happen. This interruption would never
13 happen if this policy is not implemented. We're
14 talking about serious interruptions, both in a
15 private setting, as well as in an ACS setting.
16 This affects everyone and everything.

17 MARIA BENEJAN: Um, hm.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: We're
19 talking about unprepared policy-driven changes
20 that are shifting children and we have no idea
21 where they're going to end up. And so, if you can
22 just understand where I'm coming from. There are
23 very few answers and many questions. And, on top
24 of the questions we're asking, more answers we
25 receive with more questions that are raised.

1
2 And so, this private slot issue,
3 with all due respect, is not being answered at all
4 because you're saying we are not responsible, as
5 an agency, for those kids. But, we are. We,
6 government, is responsible because DOE and ACS
7 have to work together. And, the option for a
8 parent is to be able to depend on a DOE facility,
9 meaning a school, public school, or a childcare
10 center that provides kindergarten services. And,
11 we are taking away that option. And, this
12 Administration has prided itself in giving parents
13 choices. And now, it's taking it away.

14 ELIZABETH SCIABARRA: The
15 kindergarten transition in the sense of a center
16 has ACS-subsidized capacity and private-pay
17 capacity. The transition of saying that ACS will
18 no longer serve children who are kindergarten age
19 eligible only applies to those subsidized
20 children. So, that center that has a private-pay
21 classroom, that has kindergarten, can still have
22 5-year-olds. So, I'm just wondering-- I was
23 hoping that would clarify something.

24 MARIA BENEJAN: So, Councilwoman
25 Reyna, if you can, and we can have this

discussion, this sort of individual case so that we can understand exactly what you're saying, tell us the program that you're referring to so that we can look at that and we can work through and see what we can be able to do. So, let us know who we're talking about so that we can look at the individual situations rather than sort of going sort of back and forth and clearly understand your question, because we want to-- this is big. This is challenges to everyone. And so, if there's a challenge there, we want to look at it. We want to step up to the plate to deal with that particular challenge. So, give us that information and we'll [crosstalk]--

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA:

[Interposing] I appreciate that. And, there are centers that will be providing testimony to further explain what I'm referring to that they're living right now. And, I hope that, as far as the representatives here, that someone's going to stay behind from both agencies to be able to absorb this information, because this is very complicated. It's not one size fits all.

MARIA BENEJAN: Correct. We

1 understand that. And, yes, - - , we will have
2 people who will be here through the extent of the
3 hearing and are capturing all of this from
4 beginning to end.
5

6 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: And, again,
7 I am seeking to stop this policy, to stop this
8 proposal. I do not endorse this. This is
9 horrible to all of our children, 40,000 children.
10 You're not just jeopardizing 3,500 children.
11 You're jeopardizing all the children in the early
12 childhood education system.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Thank you,
14 Councilwoman. Before we discharge this panel,
15 Associate Commissioner, I just want to give you
16 some information that we've been able to glean.
17 And, I suspect that you know it already. But, for
18 some reason, you've been instructed not to discuss
19 it here today. And, I'm a lot calmer now. But,
20 I'm just as angry.

21 MARIA BENEJAN: Thank you.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Our staff
23 has discovered from the Office of Managing Budget
24 that the savings associated with these 3,000
25 slots, according to OMB, is \$15.4 million, which

comes to about \$5,100 per child. I already know, from our staff, that the cost of a kindergarten slot to DOE is about \$8,000. We've heard DYCD indicate that the cost of an OST slot is just under 3,000. So, I'm just at an absolute loss as to where the savings are.

I understand that the PEG gets moved, you know, ACS absorbs its PEG. You've met your burden. You know, you get to walk out of the bullpen and saying hey, we did our piece. But, whether the taxpayers of the City of New York have actually saving a dime or whether they're actually being taxed-- they're going to have to pay more, as a result of this transfer, is not yet clear to me. And, to me, was the first priority for discussion here today. And, you know, we, obviously, aren't going to be able to go through that with you because you, either, don't know or won't say. But, it is very, very clear to me that the savings here are artificial, unless someone would be able to show me otherwise.

And so, I will repeat that I find, you know, the first answer you gave me to be outrageous; that you would come before this body

1 in such a disrespectful way and to all these
2 people here who have, obviously, taken a day of
3 their lives out because this is important to them,
4 and not be able to tell us in a measure that is
5 disrupting all these lives, threatening the future
6 of childcare centers throughout the City of New
7 York, that's based entirely upon budgetary
8 savings, what the savings are, because I don't see
9 them. And, I don't think there are any.

10 Councilman de Blasio.

11
12 CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: Thank you
13 very much, Chair Fidler. I really appreciate your
14 outrage and the way you're framing this. I want
15 to follow up on two items. One is very important
16 off the previous questioning by Council Member
17 Reyna. We have a situation, I mentioned her
18 earlier, Janet Laura, who is a private-pay parent,
19 but got this letter. And, the reason she got this
20 letter, as far as I can understand, is because the
21 center cannot, under its current dynamics, and we
22 had one of the teachers from the center also with
23 us earlier, they can't provide instruction for 5-
24 year-olds because they won't have the critical
25 mass any longer. You could say well, if it's a

1 private-pay parent, they're not costing the City
2 anything. That's true. But, you can't have two
3 or three private-pay kids who are 5-year-old and
4 no other 5-year-olds in the center and have it
5 work.
6

7 So, this is another example why I
8 think we're doing this the wrong way around. I
9 would think we'd want to encourage the maximum
10 number of private-pay parents, in fact new
11 private-pay parents, to come into centers to help
12 shore them up economically and so that those
13 parents can get a good experience for their kids.

14 So, it's almost like we're going
15 the other way. We're saying now, you know, here
16 was a center that actually was economically viable
17 and offered a good alternative to some parents on
18 the private market, but they won't be able to
19 anymore because a lot of other 5-year-olds have to
20 leave who are subsidized. So now, it doesn't make
21 sense for those who are private pay either. So,
22 this is one of the few times I've heard of the
23 City actually discouraging private money coming
24 into childcare centers. That's effectively what
25 we're doing here by this policy. And, again,

Janet Laura got the letter to prove it. So, how do you respond to that?

MARIA BENEJAN: I believe in the testimony that we actually see this as an opportunity to expand the private-pay capacity in these centers. So, for some of the vacant classrooms, we would like to help centers establish, if they don't already have private-pay capacity, or expand their current private-pay capacity, to actually remain economically sustainable.

CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: But, you're throwing the baby out with the bathwater in the meantime. If you've got parents in the center now, again, I'm not making this case up. You can talk to her. Liz, you offered to talk to her before. I appreciate that. If she's someone being told that you're no longer welcome at the inn at this point, so, you're losing that revenue, right now. You didn't send a letter to folks saying if you're private pay, hold on, we're trying to find a way to get other private-pay parents into the center so we can keep the service continuous. And, we're happy to accommodate you.

And, we're glad you're putting your own personal money into this. That's not the letter. The letter was you have to move on like everyone else.

So, I'm saying it's a nice concept to say you want to bring in more private-pay parents. But, right now, you're turning away some of the ones you already have. Yeah, I would think you'd want to hold onto the ones you have, try and add additional ones. So, I'm surprised that private-pay parents got put in this same group. And, I'm assuming the reason they did is that there was not going to be enough students at that age level to accommodate a classroom any longer.

MARIA BENEJAN: We also want to clarify that. There was no letter that was sent to the private-pay parents indicating--

CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO:

[Interposing] Well, then--

MARIA BENEJAN: -- our initiative.

CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: -- I'm immediately-- I'm sorry to interrupt. But, I'm immediately going to assume that this may be part of the communication. I'm hoping what she understood might have been an error and her

situation would be secure. That would make me very happy.

MARIA BENEJAN: Um, hm.

CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: But, remember you said at the very beginning of your testimony, you reached out to parents through centers and then, through letters and one thing and another. I am not going to be shocked if a lot of parents got the wrong message because it was coming from different voices. And, in fact, if you're saying the private-pay parents could stay where they were under any circumstance, I'm telling you I've got a real live parent and a real live teacher from a viable childcare center who understood exactly the opposite.

MARIA BENEJAN: We will clarify.

But, yes, we are encouraging parent pay. But, that depends on the community needs, whether they can be able to sustain that within their budget; all of their costs, all of their expenses, the type of lease that they have. But, we will work with any of the programs and, please, we will work with Laura and any others so that we can look at their options and they can choose what's best for

1
2 them and how they can continue to provide the
3 services that they are currently provided under
4 private pay.

5 CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: But, you do
6 agree that if there's not enough 5-year-olds, it's
7 going to be a moot point in some centers. If they
8 only have a handful of private pay left and you're
9 not giving them time to find more, that
10 effectively the kids are going to be out of luck.

11 MARIA BENEJAN: Again, it depends
12 upon the community, because if that community does
13 not have the 5-year-olds, they would have to look
14 at the cost and what they charge their parents for
15 that particular service.

16 CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: We're going
17 to send you a follow-up letter--

18 MARIA BENEJAN: Yeah.

19 CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: -- our
20 Counsel, on this particular case, 'cause this
21 might get to the bottom of some of this confusion.
22 I'd like you to help us by tracking back what
23 happened here with this center and this individual
24 parent.

25 MARIA BENEJAN: Um, hm.

CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: One more larger question. So, I'm confused, as a matter-- I think Chair Fidler got at all of the frustration we have at not knowing how this plays out exactly economically for ACS and DOE. And, I'm unhappy we're going to have to wait 'til the budget hearing. But, we will pursue this in great detail there. But, here's my question that hopefully you could answer right now. If you have kids in childcare centers and there's a cost to the City for those who require subsidy, but if you move them over to DOE, there will be a per pupil cost, obviously.

Was there any consideration of simply taking the money that would have been utilized on the DOE side and using it to additionally subsidize the childcare centers? So, in effect, it could even be DOE having some direct involvement. But, keeping, since you have physical space in a non-overcrowded dynamic in a lot of these centers, why not migrate the notion of, okay, we're going to serve these kids, but we're going to serve them over here in a pre-existing space where we have room. This obviously

mirrors the whole point of trying to use our UPK dollars more effectively in this same vein.

But, why say we're going to take a kid, dislocate his or her life, put him into a potentially more crowded situation now on DOE's budget instead of saying let's take DOE's budget and help it support the location that is working and is not overcrowded. Why wouldn't have that been less dislocation and better value?

MARIA BENEJAN: That was a question that we, and we've been in discussion with that. I'm going to turn to my colleagues in the DOE to answer that.

RECY DUNN: There's no intention of the DOE at this point to run kindergarten programs at CBOs in that manner that you're referring to. It's been raised. But, there's a number of reasons why not to. A lot of--

CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO:
[Interposing] Could you go over those?

RECY DUNN: Sure. A lot of it is, operationally, we'd start turning into annexes, as you mentioned earlier, which I think just for our site-based administrators at the school buildings

would be increased cost and how many would we have to put in. So, there's additional staffing that would be required. There's also, educationally, just starting to separate the grades, I don't think is necessarily the right way to go and just the other pieces that-- we have a procurement vehicle through Universal Pre-Kindergarten for all of our CBOs to run, to essentially expand our Pre-K capacity. And, if it came to that, that's something that I think we could look at and we'd prefer to look at as opposed to going down the route you're referring to and running public school kindergartens at CBO sites.

CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: Well, I'm not following. You have annexes in my district. There's any number of schools with annexes. The school that my children went to, elementary school, had two annexes running at one point. And, the world went on and, you know, kids got educated. So, I don't see why that should be such a barrier. And, again, you've got the right space and the right instruction being given.

So, it would seem to me, you know, we keep saying to you it ain't broke, don't fix

1
2 it. But now, I'm taking it to sort of an
3 additional point. If it's logistically better as
4 a matter of education and for the parents, who are
5 the stakeholders, then, you know, if it's less
6 convenient for the administrators or there's some
7 logistics to overcome, that seems like the least
8 of our problems.

9 And then, wouldn't it be good to
10 combine that idea of keeping that capacity in
11 place for the 5-year-olds with additional efforts
12 to utilize the UPK dollars. Then, you could have
13 a situation where we're using all our UPK dollars,
14 which we're all, whole other topic, but we're all
15 beside ourselves that we ever have to send back
16 UPK dollars. But, we'd be using more. We would
17 be reaching more kids. We would be not putting
18 such a burden on your existing physical plant and
19 your existing schools. And, we'd be shoring up
20 childcare centers for the long run.

21 I want to believe, if we bring you
22 a good notion here, you guys run the place day-to-
23 day, but if we, as stakeholders in our own sense
24 and as many of us as public school parents, I know
25 Lew and I were, I am still, you know, if we bring

1
2 you an idea and say did you think of this angle,
3 could you go back and look at this because maybe
4 there are some unintended consequences you didn't
5 think of or maybe the amount of dislocation is
6 greater than you realized or maybe the negative
7 impact on the future of the childcare centers is
8 greater than you realize, could we run this
9 through again and see if maybe we could come up
10 with another model before we actually finish
11 implementing this. Is that something you'd be
12 willing to look at?

13 RECY DUNN: I think we're happy to
14 take any thoughts of how to approach it. And, I
15 think that's what we're here and saying. So,
16 gladly.

17 CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: Well then,
18 we're going to set up a follow-up meeting with you
19 to discuss this 'cause this is an idea I think
20 would mean a lot to a lot of parents to have that
21 looked at seriously. Do you have anything else?
22 Okay. With that, we thank this panel. We
23 appreciate you being here. And, we look forward
24 to following up on all these issues.

25 Now, the next panel, I'd like to

1
2 call up Dr. Randi Herman of CSA and Neal Tepel and
3 Mabel Everett of DC 1707.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: And, again,
5 I apologize. I know I said that we were doing
6 three minutes a participant. But, given the hour
7 and the number of people that have signed up, we
8 got to knock that down to two minutes. I ask you
9 to please try and, you know, cooperate because
10 someone's going to be last, whatever that is.
11 And, you know, we want to give everybody an
12 opportunity to be heard. Clearly, those of you
13 who are here will now be in the role of preaching
14 to the choir. And, we've been joined by Council
15 Member Gale Brewer of Manhattan.

16 Somebody jump in there. Let's go.

17 RANDI HERMAN: Good afternoon. I'm
18 Randi Herman from the Council of School
19 Supervisors and Administrators. I'm here today
20 not only to speak about this proposed action plan,
21 but as a representative of some of my
22 constituents, who are the day care directors of
23 the City-funded centers here in the City. Ladies
24 and gentlemen, would you just raise your hands.
25 Okay. They're all here not to advocate for

1
2 themselves, which is what you'd expect, because
3 they've been working without a contract for nearly
4 three years; June'll be three years. They're here
5 today simply because they object to the value of
6 this plan.

7 They are willing, more than
8 willing, to continue working with our children,
9 the children of the lowest income families, even
10 though they're paid, I would say, on the average
11 of about \$51,000 with a Master's Degree. And, our
12 directors, our directors, are paid \$47,000.
13 They're not here to protest that. They're here
14 because the value of this plan in terms of the
15 education of children and the stability of
16 neighborhoods is offensive to them.

17 And, as you said, I'm preaching to
18 the choir here. So, I'll move on to my next
19 point. Why we're here, which was my next point.
20 But, Councilman Fidler already asked that
21 question. We're here because we object to this
22 plan. We don't think it's been well thought out.
23 We're here because we did propose an alternative
24 compromise that we're told was thought about and
25 dismissed because it might prove to be

1
2 inconsiderate for administrators. Let me tell
3 you, it's not inconsiderate for the
4 administrators.

5 I just got an e-mail from a
6 principal here in Brooklyn, PS 100. I had asked
7 her if it was okay to mention this here and she
8 said yes. I asked whether she had the capacity to
9 take on an additional kindergarten class, which
10 she just got notice she was getting. And, she
11 said yes, I think I can do it. But, I've got to
12 tell you, it's getting very tight. And then, I
13 asked whether or not she had an after-school
14 program at her elementary school in Coney Island.
15 And, she said no, I don't.

16 So, they have a principal who's
17 going to be taking on an extra kindergarten class,
18 but she doesn't have anything for kids after three
19 o'clock. And, she's the first one to admit it.
20 And, she'll tell that to any parent who does ask
21 her. Do you have facilities for my child after
22 three o'clock? I have to work 'til six. She will
23 say no, I don't. That me? Oh, okay.

24 I'll move on to my next point. We
25 clearly know, from the testimony that's just been

given, that this is all about the budget and money management. What they didn't say was that ACS has opted to keep Universal Pre-K because of monetary reasons. Universal Pre-K, as all my day care directors know, brings in money from the state. All of that money does not, however, go to the day care center. They tell me they are members of something called the 800 Club, which means-- they laugh-- which means that they only get \$800 per child when the state sends \$3,342 per child. When there were Universal Pre-K contracts with the Department of Education, the reimbursement was \$2,500 per child, if you had that contract. So, the DOE kept about 800 and gave the CBO the rest. A little more equitable.

But now, to the compromise that CSA offered, which we put out in a white paper months ago. It's public knowledge at this point. We suggest allowing the DOE to operate classes for 5-year-olds at City-funded day care centers, where the children are already enrolled; have the DOE bear the cost of the instructional program, the teachers and instructional supports, so that ACS wouldn't have an expense for that portion of the

day. The only portion of the day they would bear the cost of is from three o'clock to six o'clock; considerably less than the cost they have now.

After 3 p.m., the children simply remain at their centers, where they are now. Parents can pick them up the same way they pick them up now.

Nobody's been uprooted. Nobody's been having an anxiety attack. And, the compromise offers stability through continuity of placement for the children of working families. It benefits both DOE and ACS. The compromise supports an already vulnerable population and helps families maintain their dignity, as well as maintain the advantages that come from genuine early childhood education.

And, that's what this is truly about. You've heard that our President and our Secretary of Education have both put early childhood at top of the agenda. New York City can't afford to do any less. We need to invest in our children. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: Thank you. I just want to do a programming note. As Chair Fidler said, we're in dire time dynamics. We have a bunch of panels ahead and a bunch of public

1
2 testimony. So, just anyone, and I say this to the
3 whole room, if you're going to speak, please
4 summarize. And, I think Randi added a number of
5 new ideas to the discussion, which is helpful.
6 So, please add new ideas. If you agree with
7 everything else that's been said, you can say
8 that. But, summarize as much as possible. We
9 don't want to have written comments. We'll take
10 written testimony and put that in the record.
11 Thank you.

12 NEAL TEPEL: Good afternoon. My
13 name is Neal Tepel. I'm Assistant to the
14 Executive Director of District Council 1707.
15 District Council represents 25,000 members and
16 Local 205 has about 6,000 members in the day care
17 programs.

18 At a time when vulnerable New
19 Yorkers are struggling to remain gainfully
20 employed, or secure employment, New York City is
21 reducing the capacity of its subsidized childcare
22 system. Not only are they refusing-- not only are
23 they moving slots and not only will they no longer
24 permit day care centers to continue educating 5-
25 year-olds, they are reducing those slots. Day

care centers will not be able to, not be able to, use those centers. What's bizarre is that many of those classes are now mixed and therefore, they're going to force 4-year-olds out of the center. So, not only 5-year-olds, but 4-year-olds because those classes will be reduced, closed.

A point about capacity. I worked for the Department of Education for quite a while. I was involved with expansion. And, I don't think things change, but I was told, as we look for new space for special ed students, space is under the Department of Ed. We don't share space. I don't think much has changed. We have a situation. We have a unique situation. We have day care centers that have capacity. Nearby are public schools with 110, 120% overcrowding.

Department of Ed continues to look for space, annex space, which is much costlier, must costlier than the utilization of an ACS center. We have trained, educated professionals that could be utilized and should be. Yet, Department of Ed is not working. They were here together. But, they are not working at total capacity. Department of Ed looks for space, as I

remember, and Randi can contradict me, they start in January looking for space. The Department of Ed has not looked at ACS space, as of today. They started in January. What that means is they're looking at how do we reduce capacity. Is it new classrooms? And, as I remember, a new classroom in a new school, it's about \$100,000, and, I'm veering from this, \$100,000 a classroom. So, what that means essentially is when we start to build new schools in two years or three years, we closed already existing classrooms at much less. And, we're going to open up new classrooms, new public schools for very, very much more than right now.

Now is the time. We look at total capacity. What's in the neighborhood? We combine the two. And, the City could save hundreds of millions of dollars. It's not going to be costly.

During a time of economic crisis, we should be doing all that we can to keep people working, especially lower wage workers, who are usually more affected by downturns in the economy. Instead, New York City is eliminating early childhood care and education for thousands of young children, placing additional stress on

1
2 parents in neighborhoods of need. And, this
3 morning, seven parents called me with the same
4 issue that I went to my local school, I'm not
5 going to say the schools, and I was told we do not
6 have room. And, I have the names. And, I'm going
7 to give it to Bill. We do not have room. We were
8 told to go to our local school and the principals
9 are saying-- what are they saying, Randi? It's
10 not--

11 RANDI HERMAN: It's not mandatory.

12 NEAL TEPEL: It's not mandatory.

13 It's not mandatory. And, if I'm a parent, and we
14 have a full room of parents, and you can imagine a
15 parent, a single parent, walking into a school
16 afraid for her job, walking into a school and
17 where they want that child to continue in that
18 school when maybe a younger child is also in that
19 school, and they pick two or three children from
20 the day care center, and now the parent has to go
21 to the local public school and be told we have no
22 room. We don't know where your child-- your child
23 might be bused across the Bronx, three miles, four
24 miles, in another neighborhood.

25 So, we ask you to work with the

Mayor's office and please, have this plan reconsidered. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Thank you, Neal. I just want to say the reason that, in my view, that DOE hasn't looked at available space at ACS centers and childcare centers is that I think the Bloomberg Administration is looking to systematically put you all out of business.

MABEL EVERETT: Yes, good afternoon. My name is Mabel Everett. And, I'm a teacher at Afro-American Parent Day Care Center Number One in Queens. Everything that I heard, one thing we can say about ACS, they tell the truth. The letters came out in February. The parents got them. Not only our regular ACS parents, but our private parents also. They went to the schools and, not only that, they were going to the schools like seven, eight o'clock in the morning; one, two o'clock in the afternoon, they were turning those parents away. You're right. They were told to go to other schools. But, as you know, you have to live in the district where you enroll at. In Queens, it's a shame that a child would have to get on the bus, in the

1 morning, the parent drop them off. They would
2 then drop them off and there is no after-school
3 programs in those areas, those kids are going to
4 be devastated.
5

6 What I ought to do is really give
7 up because everything everybody else have said, I
8 have. But, I have a parent here, who's really
9 truly having a very hard time. We're trying to
10 find a placement for her kindergarten child.

11 WENDY: Good afternoon, everybody.
12 My name is Wendy. I have two child from Chung Pak
13 Day Care, in one of the best day care near
14 Chinatown. Right now I have one child, which is
15 going to turning 5 very soon. But, I heard that,
16 you know, they could no longer, you know, they
17 going to be a kindergarten. I was very lucky
18 before, but right now, I worry about that because
19 I'm working woman, you know. And, I really make
20 the day care supports, you know, to, you know, to
21 - - until like from 8:30 to 6 p.m. And, from what
22 I knows, we hear, isn't all in the day care center
23 at Chung Pak is the new immigration. And,
24 majority of them are Chinese.

25 See, right now, in the neighborhood

1
2 they have two school, which is PS 130 and PS 124
3 is alway crowded. There's no room for them. Even
4 my first child, when she's first register for
5 kindergartens, most of the parents have to line up
6 overnight from 12 to 1 to waiting to get the slot,
7 you know, to get register for the kindergarten.
8 This is happened, you know, even every year.

9 So, I really make that, you know,
10 right now, my daughters is very safe at the day
11 care center and that center is-- provide a very
12 good. The teacher is very good. And then, the
13 environment is very safe. So, I hope, you know,
14 my daughter will be continue, like, you know, to
15 complete the kindergarten. This is what I - - and
16 I'm here.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Well, I
18 want to thank you all for your testimony,
19 especially Randi and Neal. I know that this
20 Committee has relied very heavily on your
21 expertise and helping to prepare for this hearing.
22 So, give a special thank you. I know that both of
23 you are so knowledgeable on this issue that you
24 could have been up here for as long as the
25 Administration was and probably told a lot more

truth.

Our next panel, Michele Rios Jenkins, from the NAACP Childcare Center, Jamaica, Queens; Karen Daughtry, the Executive Director of the Alonzo Daughtry Memorial Day Care; Rich Openheimer [phonetic], the Legislative Director, Professional Associate of Day Care Directors.

And, I'm not sure if our last panel member's here, Haley Feliciano [phonetic], Childcare Center Director in Bay Ridge. So, you'd all please come up. Richard left. Okay. Anybody here? Okay. Any? Okay. It'll be Michele or Karen. You are?

MICHELE RIOS JENKINS: Michele Rios Jenkins. Michele Rios Jenkins.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Is Karen still here?

KAREN DAUGHTRY: Yes, I'm here.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Well, come on up. Come on up. Okay. So, Michele will start. Karen will join her. Go ahead, Michele.

MICHELE RIOS JENKINS: My name is Michele Rios Jenkins. And, I'm the Educational Director of the Jamaica NAACP Day Care Center. The last time I was here was a year ago. And, my

colleagues and I brought to light the devastating impact of the implementation of the Project Fullanorma [phonetic] Initiative upon our center. I'm back again advocating on behalf of children against the Administration removing of kindergarten-aged children from ACS centers to public schools.

The Jamaica NAACP Day Care Center kindergarten class has been a vital part of our early childhood program for some 40 years. The reduction in enrollment and removal of the kindergarten class will affect our center in several ways. Though tangibly seeing the effects of our reading readiness and emergency literacy programs through our cultural enrichment programs in music, dance and the arts, the 5-year-olds enhance the school's reputation.

Our license is for 2-1/2 to 6 years of age. Most parents bring their children to our center from the age of 2-1/2 and keep them at the center until they reach 5. By the time the child ages out at 5 or 6, we are able to track and identify how effective our cognitive language teaching strategies are. Many of our children are

able to read not just read words on a page, but read with understanding by the time they leave us and many are accepted into the public school Gifted and Talented program.

Some of our children have been able to read the I Have a Dream speech by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a reading milestone by any standard at their graduation or recite the preamble to the Constitution. Many have become leaders in our community, become teachers, art teachers, dance professionals and social workers. One is an Assistant Director in the Science Department at the University of Philadelphia.

The removal of the kindergarten class for our center will be the loss of many unique opportunities. Our kindergarten children have performed over the years at numerous community, civic and cultural events throughout the City. The creative arts, song, dance and art, are a vital part of our curriculum and philosophy. And, because of this, over the years, the Jamaica NAACP Day Care Center began the Jamaica NAACP Children's Chorale. The Children's Chorale enhances the lives of our children by exposing

1
2 them to learn about diverse cultures and learn
3 songs in different languages, including Spanish,
4 Tag-a-long, which is Philippine, Haitian, Creole
5 and Swahili.

6 Just to highlight a few events, our
7 5-year-olds performed this year alone at the
8 annual Senior Citizens Christmas Luncheon, given
9 by Councilman Leroy Comrie, the NAACP annual
10 dinner meeting at the Hilton and participated in
11 the Special Stamp unveiling honoring the 12 Civil
12 Rights Pioneers given by the Jamaica Post Office.
13 The Chorale will be a loss to our community
14 because it will be a resource they will not have.

15 Our 4-year-olds, because of their
16 maturity level, will not have acquired the
17 discipline to perform in the same manner.
18 Removing our kindergarten class will add to many
19 lost opportunities for our children to enhance
20 their self-esteem, develop self-awareness,
21 listening skills, ability to follow instructions,
22 confidence, poise and removing the fear of public
23 speaking, which transfers to a child speaking in
24 the class as that of a child moves on to
25 elementary school.

These attributes are not measurable by tests taking alone, but have a lasting effect on the child's overall development and is an integral part of our center's philosophy. We develop the--

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: I have to ask you to sum up. I apologize.

MICHELE RIOS JENKINS: Okay. Because parents see the positive educational achievements in their child, as a whole, they return each year with their siblings. Parents are impressed by their own children and parents see little ones impress other parents. We enjoy this reputation evidenced by the fact that our children are repeatedly move on to the Gifted and Talented program. This, too, will cease and have a terrible setback on the quality of the early childhood education program at the Jamaica NAACP Day Care. So, we do need childcare to continue at our center. Yes, the answer is a resounding yes.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Thank you. Miss Daughtry.

KAREN DAUGHTRY: I come today as the Executive Director of the Alonzo A. Daughtry

Memorial Day Care Centers, located in the downtown Brooklyn area, in the Park Slope area and the Bedford Stuyvesant sections of Brooklyn, New York. Founded by our church, the House of the Lord, in 1969, our center was one of the interim centers funded back in the days of Georgia MacMurray [phonetic]. Over the years, we've survived the budget cuts, the closings, the cutbacks, the weed-outs and have been responsible for providing a supportive and safe environment which provides early childhood education, which has prepared thousands of young children of all ethnic backgrounds for their next levels of learning.

There's no need for me today to belabor the points already made here. The facts are clear. They have been written on fact sheets shared through our unions and other networks. First, and foremost, parents are not being given their God-given right to choose where they want to send their children to kindergarten. This whole movement, secondly, is an attempt to eradicate the public day care system as we know it. Thirdly, the public schools are neither adequate to accommodate the numbers of children who will be

1
2 kindergarten age this September. Fourthly, there
3 is not a plan afoot which will accommodate these
4 children when schools are out at 3 p.m. After
5 that, the after-school programs run by OST are
6 sorely inadequate to accommodate the needs of our
7 children because they are run by unqualified
8 persons and not educators.

9 Families will be further
10 destabilized if this plan is allowed to move
11 forward. We know the facts. And now, we must not
12 be victims of the paralysis of analysis. Grammy
13 award winning gospel singer, Yolanda Adams, sings
14 a song entitled What About the Children. And, I
15 think that she's basically raising the question
16 about the mindset of those who have grown up and
17 forgotten what it means to be a child.

18 If the plan under discussion is
19 adopted, we will witness the destabilization of
20 families and children. And, children will be
21 forced into unhealthy situations, which are
22 neither in the interests of families who are
23 trying to survive the tragic economic crisis,
24 which we are living through right now. This plan
25 is also not in the best interests of children who

1
2 will become pawns in the hands of those who don't
3 seem to realize that while the budget may be more
4 balanced, the family is being destabilized. And,
5 I'm closing.

6 I ask today that those who will
7 make the decision to implement this poorly thought
8 out plan stop to consider what the consequences of
9 a wrong decision could be. Consider the decision
10 of George Bush to go to war because there were
11 "weapons of mass destruction." How many of
12 somebody's children lost their lives fighting an
13 unnecessary war? By extension, the economy we are
14 struggling with, in many ways, is related to the
15 war machine taking priority over everything else.
16 Bad decisions have longstanding consequences.

17 I come today with samples, bags
18 full of letters from parents whose lives will be
19 drastically altered. What about the children? No
20 amount of money saved will compensate for the
21 devastation this plan will bring to families and
22 children. The blood of the children who will be
23 left, placed in public schools, some of which are
24 already failing during the day, and who will be
25 left to their own devices after school will be

gobbled up by the streets and will be-- that blood will be on the hands of those who take lightly the decision they plan to make.

The blood of our children, men, young women, who make up the Armed Forces of this country, is on the hands of George W. Bush, wherever he is right now, because he and his cronies and cohorts made--

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: I thought you were summing up.

KAREN DAUGHTRY: -- a decision to go to the war in Iraq. I plead with you to not join him in a half-thought out plan on an ill-advised strategy to destabilize families and gamble with those that we are striving to nurture and educate for leaders in our world tomorrow.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Thank you, both of you. Again, I have to ask everyone to try and be respectful of the people who are coming after you on the two-minute limit. Our next panel is Stephanie Gendel from the Citizens Committee for Children, Andrea Anthony from Day Care Council of New York, Betty Holcomb from Childcare, Inc. and Randy Levine from Advocates for Children.

1
2 What do we got after that?

3 ANDREA ANTHONY: I'll start. My
4 name's Andrea Anthony. I'm the Executive Director
5 of the Day Care Council. The Day Care Council is
6 the membership organization for the public-funded
7 childcare centers; those that are funded by ACS.

8 I am going to keep my testimony
9 very brief. I just want to say, you know, how
10 much we appreciate Council Member Bill de Blasio
11 and also the Chair of the Education Committee.
12 And, I'm so glad Lewis Fidler is here to support
13 us and you have always kept up that battle to
14 support us. And, I hope you continue to do that.
15 And, we do recognize that and we absolutely love
16 you for doing that.

17 My testimony looks at the history
18 of childcare. It's a 58-year-old system. And,
19 over the last year, since the-- not the last year,
20 but over the last seven years, since Blueberg came
21 into office, we have had to deal with the
22 elimination of after-school programs, the refusal
23 of equitable and fair labor contract and now, we
24 have kindergarten, losing kindergarten classrooms.
25 We are totally opposed to it. We're totally

1
2 opposed to the fact that we're losing capacity in
3 our childcare centers. And, I would agree with
4 Council Member Fidler that it does seem like a
5 slow annihilation of the public-funded childcare
6 system.

7 The programs are not prepared to
8 take on running with all private-pay parents.
9 They do not live-- they do not work and parents do
10 not live in a community where they have the
11 funding or the monies to pay completely private
12 pay. I was so glad that you had someone who you
13 can show there is another side. I'm glad
14 Councilwoman Reyna also brought it up that we do
15 have some private-pay parents. I mean, we have to
16 look at that. And, that's very important.

17 And, lastly, I want to say that the
18 federal stimulus money could be used to defer some
19 of this. But, it also could be used to expand
20 capacity and bring in younger children. And, I
21 hope-- and your idea for the Department of Ed, I
22 just heard it. I think it's excellent and we
23 definitely support it. So, thank you for having
24 this hearing.

25 BETTY HOLCOMB: Is that on? I am--

time's up.

ANDREA ANTHONY: Yeah. See, I did it before [off mic].

BETTY HOLCOMB: I am Betty Holcomb, Policy Director at Child Care, Inc. And, in my written testimony, you'll find that we echo most of the concerns that have already been expressed here today. So, I just want to add some, underscore one idea and add some other ideas.

First of all, the whole problem of the proposal it stands would eliminate capacity, even though ACS is talking about no child now served would lose services. We know that they're going to shrink capacity with this plan. And, we would lose about 19% of the ACS-contracted capacity by next September. That's a very large number.

The other thing is that these cutbacks come in addition to a plan to pull out childcare funding at sites that offer Pre-K services. And, when you add all of these policies directions together, they really undermine the economic status of the ACS centers. That proposal

1
2 to pull out the childcare funding could result in
3 a loss of about \$45,000 per classroom at many
4 centers in addition to losing their
5 kindergarteners.

6 The last thing I want to do is just
7 to underscore and encourage the creative thinking
8 across systems that people have talked about. We
9 have capacity that could be left vacant. Some of
10 it is City-leased capacity that we'll still be
11 paying for at the childcare centers. And, we
12 wonder why we aren't looking at the capacity to
13 serve young children, as a whole.

14 I'd also like to point out that the
15 stimulus package not only has Head Start,
16 childcare and early Head Start, it also has Title
17 I education funds, which can be used broadly to
18 serve children from birth; that can serve early
19 education needs, as well as social services. And,
20 we ought to be thinking more creatively as a City
21 about how to put all these funding sources
22 together to guarantee an early learning
23 opportunity for every child.

24 I do want to make one other point
25 about using education money to support young

1 children. Just the education money doesn't have
2 the eligibility requirements and barriers for
3 children that childcare money does. So, we
4 actually support the idea of thinking of early
5 childhood services as early learning opportunities
6 that ought to be available to every child. That's
7 one advantage of using education money to pay for
8 these services. You'd have lots of kids who can't
9 get into childcare, who could get in if you're
10 using education dollars.

12 STEPHANIE GENDEL: Hi. I'm
13 Stephanie Gendel. I'm the Associate Executive
14 Director at Citizens Committee for Children. We
15 have three overarching concerns. The first of
16 which is each individual 5-year-old having a
17 kindergarten and OST slot. And, I'm not going to
18 get into that because we have discussed the
19 logistics of that already.

20 The second is making sure that all
21 of the childcare centers remain viable after the
22 loss of the classrooms with the 5-year-olds,
23 assuming the plan goes forward.

24 And so, we, in testimony, make some
25 suggestions to address that. One is making sure

1 that no center loses more than one classroom. The
2 second is related to the federal stimulus money,
3 which as we understand it is about 96 million over
4 two years that cannot be used to supplant any
5 existing childcare. And so, our idea there is to
6 try to create new vouchers for younger children in
7 the existing classrooms. Third is just to think
8 in a different way sort of the reverse of what was
9 brought up today about using the classrooms for
10 UPK and having the 5-year-olds go to DOE, when
11 there's an overcrowding problem. Sort of the
12 reverse of what someone else testified about. And
13 then, we put in some other ideas that I won't get
14 into.
15

16 And, finally, as much of the
17 City's childcare capacity must be maintained.
18 We're in the middle of an economic crisis and we
19 want parents to be able to work. And so, to
20 permanently reduce close to 3,500 subsidized
21 childcare slots out of the system would really be
22 a travesty. It runs counter to everything we're
23 trying to do in keeping parents employed and also
24 the people who work in these childcare centers.
25 We hope that the Federal government, the State

government and the City government will all come together and figure out a way to solve this problem so that ACS does not continue to carry this childcare budget deficit. Thank you.

RANDI LEVINE: Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to join this important discussion. My name is Randi Levine. And, I'm an Equal Justice Works Fellow at Advocates for Children of New York, where I focus on early childhood education. And so, my address here is to bring an education voice to the discussion.

Before any transition occurs of kindergarten children moving from ACS centers into the public schools, we urge the City Council to ensure that the Administration plans for the transition adequately and executes the transition carefully and deliberately. To add a few statistics to the many that have been already mentioned today, according to the Department of Education's own data, the average class size for kindergarten increased from last year to this year. Currently 75 schools have at least one kindergarten class with 26 or more students. And,

these kindergarten classes have as many as 36 students, according to the Department of Education. Meanwhile, the Department of Education's data also shows the widespread overcrowding in these same schools. It shows that more than 250 elementary schools have already exceeded 100% capacity and, as has been mentioned, many more are at or very quickly approaching full capacity.

Before there can be a successful transition, we recommend that ACS and the DOE engage in thorough analysis and create a detailed plan demonstrating how they will incorporate additional kindergarten students from specific neighborhoods into specific schools without increasing class size, exacerbating the problem of overcrowded schools or forcing 5-year-olds to travel a long distance. Furthermore, if the transition does take place, we strongly urge the City Council to work with the Administration to convert ACS kindergarten programs into programs for pre-school-aged children. As you know, rigorous long term research demonstrates that programs for pre-school children are not just

childcare, but are an essential part and really have a profound impact on children's education.

We applaud your commitment to expanding early childhood education and look forward to continuing to do this with you. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: Thank you very much. I want to thank this whole panel. I want to give a special shout out here to Betty. I thought your explanation of just what we're missing in this situation and the sort of moment in history was very, very helpful. So, thank you, Betty, for that-- for outlining it in that way. And, I know Council Member Brewer has a question. Actually, I shouldn't have let you get away, 'cause Council Member Brewer has a question.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Very quickly, 'cause I was at a hearing in Staten Island. So, I wasn't here earlier. But, my question is, obviously, somebody laughed last time I mentioned this, we have been talking about this same topic since 1978. And so, my question is when you-- this recent round took place, 'cause the four of you sitting there are probably some of

1
2 the premier thinkers, whether it's you or somebody
3 else who was in your job previously, but your
4 organizations. So, was there any, you know,
5 obviously, mixing and matching all this funding is
6 something could creatively take place. Has
7 anybody ever asked you for those suggestions?

8 BETTY HOLCOMB: Yes. I mean, we
9 didn't wait to be asked. We've been volunteering
10 and communicating. And--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But, before
12 the decision was - - .

13 BETTY HOLCOMB: I mean, I think
14 that this latest policy came as a surprise to
15 everyone. We were called in the night before.
16 You were told the next day that suddenly this
17 deficit was going to be closed. This seems very
18 budget-driven. And, since then, we've been trying
19 to seize the opportunity to think more creatively.
20 We do think the stimulus package ideas presented
21 here really do present some concrete opportunities
22 to make some progress toward these goals.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

24 STEPHANIE GENDEL: I think we did
25 know that the strategic plan of ACS, since they

released it in 2005, was to start to transition 5-year-olds to kindergarten so that they could age down their system. The problem is with, as a result-- well, first of all, because of its now being dealt with as a budget issue, it's happening very quickly. And so, there's no exception for some 5-year-olds. And also, we're not able to age down the system in the way we would want to.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

BETTY HOLCOMB: And, we weren't able to get-- one of our big frustrations is not being able to get data across systems, so that you could look at what's going on at the ACS center with capacity and what's going on in the local public school for capacity. And, we think it's time that we have a more coherent approach to collecting data, pooling it and really making plans that make sense for families in specific neighborhoods, 'cause that's the only way it makes sense.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Thank you, again. We have three more panels. So, I'm going to call up the next one. We have Gregory Brender

from the United Neighborhood Houses, Rosalyn Inman [phonetic] from Neighborhood Day Nursery of Harlem and Gloria French from Seabury Day Care Center.

CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: While the folks are coming up, I'm just going to note for the record we have testimony, written testimony, that will be included in the official record of the hearing from Alicia Knight, from Karen Alfred of UFT, from Children's Defense Fund and Raglan George of 1707 and from the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies. Please go ahead.

GREGORY BRENDER: Thanks. My name is Gregory. I'm here on behalf of the United Neighborhood Houses. Our 36 member agencies provide both early childhood education services and also OST programs that are, obviously, going to play a major role in this.

I'm just going to underscore a few of the points on this because I'll submit written testimony and a lot of these things have been said before. But, I just want to underscore how tragic it is that, at a time when there is a waiting list of children in need, we are losing capacity for the system permanently. ACS has always, has for

many years, carried its deficit. This year it's at \$62 million. We shouldn't expect childcare services to be bearing the full brunt of this deficit.

And then, I also just want to underscore many of the points made about the difficulty of transitioning, particularly with providing transportation for 5-year-olds coming out of OST systems because we can't expect 5-year-olds to go between a site at a community-based organization and the site of the school unsupervised. Thanks.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Thank you.

GREGORY BRENDER: Yeah, I know you guys have been here awhile.

ROSALYN INMAN: I'm sorry. Good afternoon, Council Board. Let me first apologize. I didn't know that we had to have written testimony.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: You don't have to.

ROSALYN INMAN: Oh, okay. Well, this is my first time here. I am the Director of Neighborhood--

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: We'll be gentle.

ROSALYN INMAN: Okay. Thank you. I am the Director of Neighborhood Day Nursery of Harlem, Inc. and also a member of CSA Union. And, I've been here from the beginning. And, I am just appalled how DOE and ACS have formed this alliance to, in the long run, destroy and to get rid of childcare services altogether, as far as I'm concerned.

They spoke about opportunities. The opportunities are extremely limited that they're giving us. Not only are they removing our 5-year-old children, they're taking our funding out completely. The neighborhoods that we-- where I come from, East Harlem, it is impossible for me to ask the families, the community, to pay me 250 to \$300 weekly to give a service to their children that they would expect to be as it was before. And, that is me hiring three teachers.

Parents have their children in our childcare system because of one, the small capacity and the fact that we can have three teachers in the room for a majority of the day

from eight to six.

The other part is that there is a letter that has gone out. I just received it yesterday. I faxed it over to my union. Sent certified from the Department of Education, stating to us that those of us who had independent contracts with UPK are now being forced to go inner-City, which we will now be forced to be the 800 Club. So, instead of us getting \$2,500 per child a year, we will now be given \$800 per child for the year. And, with this, we have to supply our classrooms. We have to pay our staff, pay myself and pay any other staff member that is working with UPK.

I have been calling UPK consistently. My center is in the process of now moving into a new center, where we will have larger capacity. We will have more classrooms. But, ACS has decided that they are going to be the deciding factor of what our capacities is going to be, when they shut down our 5-year-old classrooms.

Please take into consideration that you talked about the private children. Even if we have private children, we still have to have three

1 teachers, because we are still governed by DOH.
2 And, what is the requirement to me to be licensed
3 by them. So, we have a number of entities that we
4 have to deal with. It is not just ACS. It is not
5 just DOE.

6 Again, I'm going into a new center,
7 which we are now-- it has been built to be an
8 actual early childhood center. I can house two
9 UPK classrooms. On the business side, what would
10 benefit me is to bring in two full-day UPK
11 classrooms. DOE has not given us that option at
12 all for us to service a full-day UPK classroom.
13 They keep talking about they don't want to wrap
14 around. But, yet and still--

15 CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: I'm sorry
16 to interrupt. I'm going to ask you to summarize,
17 though, in the interest of everyone.

18 ROSALYN INMAN: Oh, okay. I'm
19 sorry. I was waiting for the bell. But,
20 nevertheless, I just wanted to just kind of--

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: You got a -

22 -
23

24 ROSALYN INMAN: Okay. I just want
25 to just kind of hit on some things. They were not

1
2 totally honest with you. They are going around
3 the bend in the forum in December they spoke
4 about. I did question the 800 Club and no one was
5 able to answer me if we were going to be a part of
6 that. So, and, these letters that they're sending
7 out, they are not sending it to either union, DC
8 1707 nor CSA.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Thank you
10 very much. Call up our next panel, Audrey Eadie
11 from the North Bronx something Child Development
12 Center; Anne Marie Cross, same-- no? Yes, also
13 North Bronx. This is a North Bronx panel, all of
14 you. Doreen Davis Lewis.

15 AUDREY EADIE: Good afternoon.
16 Thank you for this opportunity. My name is Audrey
17 Eadie. I'm from the North Bronx National Council
18 of Negro Women Child Development Center.
19 Currently, if this proposal goes through, we will
20 lose two kindergarten classes and four UPK
21 classes. I will have two classes left. And, as
22 has been said, ACS has not been very honest with
23 you. They are not giving us an option. They have
24 not said well, you can fill it up with 3-year-
25 olds, which we possibly could. We have a lot of

1
2 babies in the community. They're not giving us
3 any other option to keep the center open.

4 So, I have 72 UPK children that I
5 cannot replace and, almost 50, 'cause we have
6 about 24 or 25 in the two kindergarten classes.
7 So, that would be my center.

8 In terms of cost, they're not
9 honest with you either. When we lost our school-
10 age program, we did not get the OST award. And, I
11 can't name a center in my community, 10466, that
12 did get one. But, ACS came after, just before
13 they were going to shut us down in August, and
14 said if you take the voucher program, you can stay
15 open. They, indeed, gave practically every one of
16 our parents a voucher so that we can continue our
17 school-age program. The next year, they gave
18 none. Right now, they're not giving out vouchers.
19 So, my parents are floundering even as we speak as
20 to what to do with their children in the
21 afternoons. They charge \$177 fulltime per child
22 and \$165 part time. I don't have a parent that
23 can pay that per week. I do not have a parent
24 that can pay that.

25 And, ACS did not tell us that in

1
2 doing this voucher program, they charge us \$5,000
3 plus for a classroom. So, when I get a check from
4 ACS for my school-age program, they have already
5 taken out \$15,000 plus. So, I'm assuming that
6 they're going to do the same thing with the upper
7 classroom-- the kindergarten classrooms. We're
8 going to have to pay for those classrooms. And,
9 we won't be able to. As it is, that leaves me no
10 money to pay my six teachers for the three
11 classrooms and get supplies and be viable. So,
12 we're always scrambling, having bake sales trying
13 to do things.

14 And, I don't think it's fair to the
15 community. My parents are crying. My parent had
16 to leave that came with us. So, you know, it's a
17 scream. What am I going to do now that my child
18 is going to leave kindergarten? So, it's a real
19 bad dilemma, not only for the 5-year-olds, but for
20 the 4-year-olds and for the school-age. Thank
21 you.

22 DOREEN DAVIS LEWIS: Is this on?
23 Okay. Hi, my name is Doreen Davis Lewis. I'm the
24 Educational Director at North Bronx National
25 Council of Negro Women. And, this letter is on

1
2 behalf of the parents. Our parent had to leave to
3 pick her child up from a three o'clock public
4 school program. And, if she was not there on
5 time, that child would be called-- the local
6 precinct is called for that child who is not
7 picked up at three o'clock, by 3:15. So, she had
8 to leave. That's why she's not here.

9 So, on behalf of the parent, this
10 is what we read.

11 Dear Mayor Bloomberg; The North
12 Bronx National Council of Negro Women Child
13 Development Center has joined in partnership with
14 our North Bronx community to vehemently oppose the
15 budget cuts which will remove all kindergarten
16 programs from the Administration for Children's
17 Services, Division of Child Care and Head Start
18 programs. This is unacceptable. It is a known
19 fact that our public schools in the North Bronx
20 sections do not have space for children, namely PS
21 21. ACS said that they did not know the programs
22 that did not have the space. Well, we're going to
23 tell you; PS 21, PS 103, PS 116, PS 111, PS 112,
24 PS 78, PS 68, PS 189, PS 186, PS 153, PS 178 and
25 PS 160. These are all the North Bronx sections.

Okay.

Our parents have been informed that there's a waiting list and that there's no guarantee that their children will be admitted to their zoned school for 2009-2010 school year.

Thousands of children will be abandoned from an early childhood and kindergarten experience. And, what ever happened to leave no child left behind?

What does the Mayor and the Department of Education expect the working parent to do?

Statistics have certainly proven that early childhood education provided by trained, qualified teachers increase the child's chances of completing high school, of furthering their education and obtaining degrees and enhancing their chances of obtaining well paying professional careers. Early childhood programs throughout the North Bronx have consistently provided quality education by certified, honest and responsible teachers, as well as a safe and warm and secure environment. These teachers often live in the community themselves and therefore, have personal interest in the children that we educate.

These programs provide full day care including school holidays and summers. Do not take our demands lightly, Mayor Bloomberg. We, the undersigned, will not vote for you another term should this go forth. We, the undersigned, demand that this proposal change, cease and desist now. The parents of the North Bronx section of the Bronx. Thank you very much.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Thank you, both. Our final panel, Celeste Brackken, a day care teacher, Pamela Coleman from Williamsbridge NAACP and I have Marie Earl. There's another one. I'm sorry. I pulled the wrong-- Marie left. Marie Fadour-- Fadoula, okay. Okay.

PAMELA COLEMAN: Hi. Good afternoon. I represent Williamsbridge NAAC Early Childhood Educational Center in the Bronx. I am currently the President of our Parent Association Committee. And, I'm here on behalf of all the parents, especially in the community.

We have proudly served 100 pre-school and kindergarten families over 30 years. We want to continue our tradition uninterrupted. Our assessments and auditing has met high approval

1
2 and our children continue to excel in the
3 endeavors. I can say, from experience, that all
4 children that come out of Williamsbridge NAACP
5 excel in whatever they do. They're very, very
6 smart. The teachers, the staff, very educated and
7 they do a very good job with these children. So,
8 if these children don't have a chance to continue
9 their early childhood in this school or any other
10 day care, what do we have? I mean, we'll have a
11 society of children not achieving in their
12 endeavors.

13 As a returning parent, we must
14 continue to have a choice. We need more than
15 public school hours of operation for our
16 kindergarteners. My right to choose should not be
17 violated. Full enrollment is achievable in all
18 day care and educational centers. To be
19 successful, we need parent fees to be assessed by
20 an expanding sliding scale considerate of costs of
21 living and income. Also, income guidelines need
22 to be upgraded to provide services to a larger
23 population of eligible parents.

24 In reference to the UPK Department
25 of Education program, the funding for 4-year-olds

1
2 should remain as a separate contract through the
3 Department of Education with the Day Care
4 Sponsoring Board as community-based organizations.

5 Finally, given the availability of
6 space that day care offers and a limited space in
7 the Department of Education, it makes no sense to
8 transfer our kindergarten children. These
9 children are our future. They're our leaders and
10 they deserve the best that we can offer them. Let
11 the saying, let no child be left behind, mean
12 exactly what it says, no child left behind. Thank
13 you.

14 MARIE FADOUL: Hi. My name is
15 Marie Fadoul. I'm the Director of Joe Morteman
16 [phonetic] Day Care Center. I'm actually putting
17 a forum together in the summers. And, I hope you
18 all join us. It's going to be on March 18th at M-
19 Corp [phonetic].

20 Chairman Fidler, I can't believe
21 that Maria Benejan didn't answer your question,
22 because I asked her the same question in February
23 at a Director's meeting. I asked her what is the
24 saving going to be after all this. And, she told
25 me she's going to get back to us. She has to find

1
2 out. I was shocked that day that she did not
3 answer.

4 Also, you were talking about
5 transportation. Currently, our ACS children, the
6 parents are paying between 40 and \$50 a week to
7 bring their kids to day care. So, they are not
8 going to be paying for transportation. They're
9 not doing it now. They never will.

10 They're talking about putting
11 private kids in classrooms. Those teachers are
12 going to be non-union workers. We cannot have
13 non-union workers working in a union building.
14 Who's going to be paying them? Who's going to pay
15 for their medical, their pension? Are we going to
16 have half of the staff with medical and half with
17 no medical? How is that going to work, 'cause ACS
18 will not pay them? I asked Maria Benejan and
19 Deputy Commissioner Hertzog that same question.
20 They told me they'll get back to me. Okay.

21 I'm part of the Queens Advisory
22 Director's Advisory Committee. There's only one
23 in the City. So, we've been meeting with ACS.
24 Those are questions we've been asking them.

25 Another thing is Commissioner

Mattingly keeps saying that they're short \$62 million because they're paying for empty seats. They're paying for empty seats because they want to. I've been asking ACS how come my center, we have an empty classroom. They've been cutting after-school. A lot of empty classrooms are in ACS day cares. So, what I've been telling ACS why don't you use a waiting list. I can only take 60 kids. My waiting list is 25 kids. Let me take those 25, increase my budget; lower the budgets of the centers that are low enrollment. They refuse to. They're paying for empty seats because they want to.

Also, public schools are closed every time you turn around. So, where those kids going to go in the summer, not just after school? We're talking about after school. They have spring break. They have winter break. They have summer break. Okay.

Also, let me tell you, I don't know if you are the legislative breakfast, a foster parent testified that if she loses her job, which she will, she will lose her child. Single parents don't lose their kids if they lose day care.

Foster parents will lose their jobs 'cause if they don't have a job, they can't keep the kids. So, I hope you come to our forum and the directors will give you more information, because I don't think ACS really thought this through.

Also, vouchers, they told us there's no money for vouchers. Oh, why can't we get the vouchers? Okay. If they're giving the vouchers--

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Because they're trying to put you out of business. Don't you get it?

MARIE FADOUL: Well--

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Do you get it now?

MARIE FADOUL: Marie Fadoul is not going to let them--

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Do you get it now?

MARIE FADOUL: I don't get it.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: No, I want to--

MARIE FADOUL: Oh, wait. Can I say something?

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: All right.
Only 'cause you were last.

MARIE FADOUL: Yes.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Okay.

MARIE FADOUL: No, I think--

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: The person
who had to wait last gets--

MARIE FADOUL: Let me give you--

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: -- an extra
word.

MARIE FADOUL: I might be wrong.
My opinion is all this happen because Project - -
backfired on ACS. They thought we were going to
fail. They thought all the centers were going to
be under-enrolled, where, to their big surprise,
we all have waiting lists now over. So, they're
paying for more kids than they thought they would
be paying. So now, there's no money left.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: All right.
That's well said. I thank this panel. I also,
before I turn it over to Council Member de Blasio
for his concluding remarks, I want to thank the
staff of both Committees, the Advocates and all of
you for this hearing.

And, I just want to say, in conclusion, that if this was a Court of law, ACS would have had their case dismissed before it got to the jury. You know, if they would have come in here and say, you know, this proposal, as painful as it is, and it's clearly painful, is going to save hundreds of millions of dollars that were going to enable us to do so many other things that are important in lives of the City of New York, we could at least have that discussion. But, coming in here and failing to meet the burden of proof that it's going to save even a dime is disgusting. I can't think of a word stronger than that.

And, you know, a few weeks ago at a social occasion, the Mayor told my wife, and I'll clean this up, that I was a pain in his behind. So, I'm not unaccustomed to being critical of the Bloomberg Administration for things. But, what I saw here and heard here today, just absolutely was the top of the list; to come here with the disrespect for all of you and for this institution without having an answer to the fundamental question is disgraceful.

And, I certainly will intend to

1
2 take this up with the Speaker of the Council and
3 have her communicate that to the Mayor that when
4 his representatives come here on something that is
5 inconveniencing the lives of thousands, that is
6 threatening an entire existence of childcare
7 centers throughout the City of New York, to come
8 here ill-prepared, without out any substantive
9 answer and that's giving her the benefit that she
10 didn't know the answer, but to come here and to
11 stonewall the answer is unacceptable and should
12 never ever happen again and not be tolerated in
13 this body.

14 CHAIRPERSON de BLASIO: I have two
15 things to say. Amen. And, we have to organize
16 because we-- this is not the first time we've been
17 down this road. This may be the worst and most,
18 you know, really insidious evil version of this,
19 but we've beat back these efforts to close centers
20 before; two years running now. And, we have to do
21 it again. So, let's get all together and let's go
22 fight this. Thank you.

23 This hearing of the joint hearing
24 of General Welfare Committee and the Education
25 Committee is now adjourned.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, DeeDee E. Tataseo certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "DeeDee E. Tataseo". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Date

March 25, 2009