



## **FOR THE RECORD**

**FEDERATION OF PROTESTANT WELFARE AGENCIES**

Statement Prepared for the  
New York City Council  
Education Committee & Youth Services Committee  
Public Hearing:

**GED Preparation and Testing Procedures**  
January 14, 2009

Prepared By:

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The Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA) is a membership organization with close to 300 member agencies and church-based human service programs that serve an estimated 1.5 million low-income New Yorkers in communities throughout the City. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on GED Preparation and Testing Procedures in New York City.

The recent report prepared for the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), "Our Chance for Change: A Four-Year Reform Initiative for GED Testing in New York City," is excellent in conveying the extent of the problem we are facing in terms of the sheer numbers of individuals who are out of school and also lacking a high school diploma or GED in our City, along with the barriers to GED preparation classes and the struggles faced by many to passing the GED exam. However, it is essential to examine these problems in the broader context of our workforce development system. Therefore, we urge the City Council to review this report in conjunction with the recent NYC Comptroller's report, "Demands of the Time: Turning the Workforce Development Model of the Last Century into a Skills Education Model for Today."<sup>1</sup> Taken together, these two reports reveal the full scope of the problems we face in connecting low-skill, low-income populations to the adult education, vocational training, higher education, and other workforce development services they need. As an organization that conducts intensive advocacy at both the City and State level on behalf of low-income individuals, our testimony will fill in some additional details in regard to these problems and offer several solutions that address these problems comprehensively.

#### Problems in GED Preparation, GED Testing and Workforce Development:

1. *GED Student Stories: Students enrolled in a new college-focused GED preparation class were interviewed on the campus of CUNY Lehman College on November 25, 2008. These stories reflect their responses to questions about their background, interest in participating in GED classes, and recommendations for GED system improvement that will help them achieve their career goals.*

➤ "G" is 38-year-old male student from Ghana, West Africa who came to the United States at age 31. For three years, he worked as a home health aide providing services to individuals in Hospice care in the Bronx. At this job, he made \$7 an hour and was not offered any opportunities to advance or participate in education and training. He learned about the free GED classes offered

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<sup>1</sup> NYC Comptroller (October 15, 2008). "Demands of the Time: Turning the Workforce Development Model of the Last Century into a Skills Education Model for Today." Available at: [http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov/bureaus/opm/reports/10-15-08\\_demands-of-times.pdf](http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov/bureaus/opm/reports/10-15-08_demands-of-times.pdf).

at CUNY Lehman from friends who had participated, but if he had known about the program earlier, he would have enrolled in it much sooner. He feels that many people who could benefit are not aware of the CUNY Lehman GED program, and therefore, miss out on the opportunity to obtain a GED. “G” enrolled in the class for six months and passed the GED exam. As an immigrant, he had to wait to pursue his college dreams until he achieved near-citizen status. At this point, he would like to take the college placement exam as soon as possible to enroll in CUNY Lehman as a full-time college student this year, majoring in medical administration. He suggests that the ideal college transition program would provide full information about tuition assistance programs and a transition advisor in all stages of the process – before, during, and after college enrollment – to provide career guidance and all essential information about college and employment opportunities in different degree programs.

➤ “L” is a 25-year-old Hispanic mother of two from Washington Heights. She was raised in a single parent home, as her father was incarcerated when she was three years old. “L” completed 11<sup>th</sup> grade in high school, but dropped out after becoming pregnant at age seventeen and getting married. “L” was later divorced after having another child and became eager to obtain her GED to advance her career and to increase her earning potential. She asked friends and neighbors about available free GED classes, but could not obtain information from them or any other source. Therefore, she simply began calling colleges in the phone book and asking about GED courses. Eventually, she learned about the free GED classes offered at CUNY Lehman. She struggles with balancing her studies with her parenting responsibilities, particularly since child care is only available to her during the day when she is in class. “L” strongly suggested that it should be easier for people like her to obtain information about GED classes and college transition programs, since it was very difficult for her to learn about the CUNY Lehman classes. She would also like a full college orientation to learn about all aspects of applying for and enrolling in college. At the time of the interview, she had not received any information about college preparation, how to submit an application, how to apply for financial aid, or how to decide on a major. She would like all of this information to be provided as part of the college-focused GED preparation class.

Note: The “college-focused” GED preparation classes at CUNY offer students a more intensive curriculum that includes college-level reading, writing, and researching skills. However, as these student stories reveal, these courses do not yet provide students with a college transition advisor or a full college orientation that GED students often need to actually transition to higher education.

2. **FPWA Survey of Adult Literacy Providers:** *This informal survey was conducted in 2008 to assess barriers to adult education classes, including GED preparation, faced by welfare recipients [Human Resources Administration (HRA) clients] in New York City.*

In an effort to learn more about restrictions to basic education for welfare recipients in New York City, an informal online survey of adult literacy providers in New York City was conducted by the Welfare Reform Network (WRN)'s Policy and Advocacy Committee (PAC) in early 2008. The results of the survey showed that the top three barriers to participation adult education programs by public assistance recipients were: 1) access to child care (80%), 2) receiving approval from HRA (50%), and 3) fulfilling other mandatory work requirements (50%).<sup>2</sup> Of the 18 program representatives responding to the survey, 33% indicated that students receiving public assistance were less likely to complete the program than students not receiving public assistance. Several commented that students demonstrating success in one program are sometimes forced to attend a different program selected by HRA. In addition, other students are forced to choose between working and continuing their education, instead of being given the opportunity combine them as the federal, state, and local welfare policies allow.

3. **HRA-Imposed Barriers to Education and Training**

While HRA is identified as the most extensive workforce development agency in the City in the NYC Comptroller's report, HRA clients do not receive the same type of intensive assessment, training, career guidance, job placement, and career advancement services offered to job seekers through the Workforce 1 Career Centers, which are overseen by the City Department of Small Business Services (SBS). Furthermore, the report exposes the fact that CUNY's certificate and degree programs in high-demand fields such as health care, education, and technology are not coordinated with the rest of the City's workforce development programs or directly with the HRA programs. Therefore, low-income individuals must navigate these disparate workforce development systems to try to create a career pathway that offers opportunities to gain new skills and increase their wages incrementally over time. It is almost impossible for those in poverty to achieve success when HRA, which can have enormous control over their daily lives, is so uncoordinated with other workforce systems in the City.

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<sup>2</sup> Data was collected in Spring 2008 through an information online survey, not through a formal scientific random sample data collection process. Responders were drawn from the NYC Adult Literacy Coalition (NYCAL) and the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA) member agencies. A total of 18 responses were received; 67% indicated that their program was included on the HRA-approved list of education and training providers, available at: <https://a069-webapps1nyc.gov/atp/search.cfm>.

## Comprehensive Solutions to GED Preparation and Workforce Development Problems:

### 4. Holistic Approach to Solving GED Testing Problems: *Create a direct link between adult education, vocational training, higher education, and other workforce development programs.*

To expand access to GED preparation classes and improve GED passing rates, there are certain key features of effective programs that should be supported and enhanced as part of a comprehensive approach to improving workforce development structures targeted to low-income populations in New York City. These programs must receive direct support and financial incentives to recruit those facing the greatest barriers to employment, including welfare recipients, disconnected youth, previously incarcerated, and immigrants. This is essential to stimulate economic growth and prepare the workforce needed to perform middle skill jobs that require more than a GED or high school diploma, but less than a four-year degree. It is also a critical means of creating new pathways out of poverty, which ultimately will reduce expenditures on public assistance and other public benefits. The “Bridge to College” program offered at Phipps Community Development Corporation (FPWA member agency) provides college advising services to students participating in GED classes administered by the NYC Department of Education (DOE) at their West Farms Technology and Career Center located in the Bronx. Key components that have led to student success rates include:<sup>3</sup>

- **Step-by-step explanations** of the college application process and requirements to enroll, with ongoing clear communication with students.
- **Intensive support services**, including:
  - GED preparation
  - Package on how to apply to many colleges and how to receive the maximum financial aid (with assistance in appealing initial decision)
  - Essay writing
  - SAT preparation
  - Full exploration of college options, with advice on how to get into the best college at the lowest cost with minimal students loans
  - Personal transition advisor who offers helpful academic and career guidance
- **Financial aid assistance**

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<sup>3</sup> Phipps Community Education Center (CEC), Bridge to College program at Phipps West Farms Technology and Career Center. More information available at: <http://www.phippswestfarms.org/index.php?name=collegebridge>.

- **College-focused GED instruction** – Transitional programs for students to be immediately placed into college preparation after they pass the GED. Students should have access to summer internships with stipends for living expenses if they get the GED months before they can apply/enroll in college. Students should be directed immediately into a program that is employment and/or education focused, so they do not lose momentum in getting into college.
- **GED teachers focus on promoting the goal of entering college.** Programs should be designed to eliminate the stigma of being a GED student and create a positive, supportive learning environment tailored to their needs. This learning environment should stimulate interest in school and open the possibility of going to college.

**5. Community-Based Organization (CBO) and Union Partnerships:** *Provide incentives for these partnerships that would include direct collaboration with adult education programs, community colleges, vocational training providers, and other social services agencies.*

In establishing these types of formal partnerships, more low-skill, low-income individuals would receive information and resources about how to access GED preparation classes that could prepare them to enter an apprenticeship or training program for a specific unionized industry. According to a report by the Center for Economic and Policy Research, “The Union Advantage for Low-Wage Workers,” union membership means getting a wage that is 16% higher than for non-unionized workers with similar education and other characteristics.<sup>4</sup> Given this significant union advantage, FPWA is currently working in collaboration with several organizations, including the Consortium for Worker Education (CWE), the largest education and training provider in New York City for both union and non-union workers, to expand these partnerships. However, the progress that can be made in this area is limited by the lack of funding. Therefore, we urge the City Council to make new investments to allow union representatives to act as liaisons to workforce development agencies serving disadvantaged populations. Since the GED certificate is often the minimum qualification to enter many apprenticeship and training programs that prepare workers for jobs in unionized industries, it is essential to offer low-income individuals the opportunity to learn about both GED preparation classes and pathways to unionized employment simultaneously. Furthermore, HRA clients should also receive information and resources that help them access information and

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<sup>4</sup> Schmitt, John (May 2008). “The Union Wage Advantage for Low-Wage Workers,” Center for Economic and Policy Research. Available at: [http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/quantile\\_2008\\_05.pdf](http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/quantile_2008_05.pdf).

resources about GED preparation classes offered throughout the City. Then, social services caseworkers could explain how clients can participate in these programs as part of their overall Employability Plan. In making this a regular part of the process that is conducted for all welfare recipients, we could break down barriers to education and develop the skilled workforce that will make New York competitive and revive the economy.

**6. GED-to-College Transitions:** *The City must support more of these programs to create smooth transitions between GED preparation classes, GED testing, and subsequent enrollment in post-secondary education or vocational training.*

The City must support more of these programs that expand access to college and vocational training programs for both youth and adults with limited skills and education. The current adult education system is largely disconnected from the higher education system, with a few exceptions. Both youth and adults who could benefit from GED-to-College transition programs often learn about the relatively small number of programs that currently exist by word of mouth, since there is no formal outreach mechanism to provide information about locally available programs and how to enroll. This is evidenced by the student stories presented earlier in this testimony. Key features of model GED-to-College Transition programs include:

- **Recruitment and Screening** – Students are recruited from a variety of community-based organizations and include youth and adults with skills deficits and/or a gap in their education that has left them ill-prepared for college. Direct outreach is conducted to community-based organizations, Workforce 1 Career Centers, Educational Opportunity Centers (EOCs), faith-based agencies, and public schools to extend information about college transition opportunities.
- **College-focused GED instruction** – Transitional programs for students to be immediately placed into college preparation after they pass the GED. Students should have access to summer internships with stipends for living expenses if they get the GED months before they can apply/enroll in college. Students should be directed immediately into a program that is employment and/or education focused.
- **Comprehensive curricula** for career planning, academic preparation, and college experience, including unique features to facilitate transition to college, such as:
  - Dual enrollment
  - Team teaching

- Student cohorts/Learning teams
- Peer mentoring to serve as a guide and role model of success
- Tutoring
- **Direct collaboration between adult education system and post-secondary institutions** in placement testing, planning recruitment activities, assistance with application procedures and financial aid planning through Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs).
- **Mandatory collaborative partnerships** with the local business community, community-based organizations, community colleges, adult education, high schools, and social services agencies.
- **Comprehensive services for students** to help them overcome barriers to success must be provided and institutionalized as supporting transition, including:
  - Address GED testing problems and barriers to access and successfully pass the GED.
  - Assistance with obtaining financial aid and covering cost of living expenses.
  - Full exploration of college options, with advice on balancing college reputation with expense.
  - Child care, transportation, housing, psychological counseling, and other wrap-around services needed to help students overcome barriers to success.
  - One-on-one academic and career guidance with full exploration of college options.
  - Ongoing case management to provide individualized services and support pre- and post-enrollment, transition, and matriculation in college.
- **Professional staff development** for administrators, teachers, and counselors to offer intensive training and teams to discuss teaching methods, outcomes, improving instruction, and co-teaching methods.

We strongly support the recommendation of the NYC Comptroller to establish the Mayor's Office for Skills Education to centralize and oversee all of the City's workforce development systems. It is essential to integrate GED preparation as part of this overall comprehensive cross-systems coordination between agencies. The major work of this new Office for Skills Education should include:

- **Fully aligning adult education with CUNY and SBS-administered workforce development programs.** The NYC Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN) and Mayor's Office of Adult Education should be directly involved in expanding collaborations between the adult education, higher education, and workforce development systems.

- **Supporting parallel GED and vocational training in specific high-demand industry sectors.** For those with literacy levels below 8<sup>th</sup> grade, it is likely that they will need six to nine months to attain their GED. To support their efforts, programs should offer GED preparation with parallel skills training in specific skill sectors. Such sectors should include: health care, technology and office operations, “green jobs” in construction, energy efficiency, and environmental remediation, and education. This ensures that individuals obtain an educational credential and career-focused skills simultaneously. The GED/Office Operations/Internship program at STRIVE (FPWA member agency) is piloting the parallel GED model, which offers clients the opportunity to acquire all three components essential to increase job qualifications: experience, skills, and education.
- **Expanding full immersion GED preparation programs that provide intensive GED training to shorten the amount of time for students to attain the GED.** These classes involve both traditional classroom instruction plus one-on-one tutoring in areas of weakness. Ideally, these classes should also infuse a college-focused approach that teaches students writing, reading, and researching skills needed to perform college-level work.
- **Conducting more direct outreach to individuals in low-income communities without a GED or high school diploma from GED preparation programs.** This should be conducted through community-based organizations, along with government agencies, including HRA, SBS, DOE, DYCD, and ACS.
- **Directly investing more resources into existing GED preparation programs offered by DOE, CUNY, libraries, EOCs, the Consortium for Worker Education (CWE), and other community-based organizations.**
- **Organizing and overseeing partnerships between Workforce 1 Career Centers, CUNY, EOCs, and other workforce development programs operated throughout the City.** The Mayor’s Office on Adult Education and RAEN should also play a leadership role in bridging these agencies to support a comprehensive approach to workforce development. In working in direct collaboration, these agencies could design a clear career roadmap in specific sectors that demonstrates a pathway from low literacy (below 8<sup>th</sup> grade) through the process of increasing literacy and math skills, preparing for and passing the GED exam, and enrolling in postsecondary education, training, or apprenticeship program. This roadmap should also include various employment opportunities along the way in specific industries for individuals depending upon their unique career interests and pace in acquiring new skills that have value in the labor market.

In conclusion, we strongly support the recommendations presented in "Our Chance for Change." We urge the City Council to recognize the urgency of improving the GED testing system and support a comprehensive solution to these problems by restructuring the City's workforce development systems.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

# FOR THE RECORD

Testimony prepared by Jacqueline Cook

For the New York City Council

Youth Services Committee; Lewis Fidler, Chair

Education Committee; Robert Jackson, Chair

Oversight – GED Preparation and Testing Procedures

January 14, 2008

Thank you Chairpersons Fidler and Jackson and Committee Council Members for conducting this hearing on **Oversight – GED Preparation and Testing Procedures**. Your attention to this important issue will hopefully hasten necessary reforms in the systems for GED preparation and testing. At a time when post-secondary education and high-level skills are key to obtaining a living wage, these reforms are critical to the economic vitality of our city and the lives of over a million New York City residents.

My name is Jacqueline Cook. Currently I am an independent consultant and the author of *Our Chance for Change: A Four-year Reform Initiative for GED Testing in NYC* – a recently released report on the research I conducted under contract with the Department for Youth and Community Development (DYCD) and the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, with grant support from the New York Community Trust. The full report is available at the DYCD website: [nyc.gov/dycd](http://nyc.gov/dycd)

I come to this issue with extensive background and experience in the field of adult education. I served as the Director of the Mayor's Office of Adult Literacy, Executive Director of the Literacy Assistance Center, Dean of Continuing Education at New York City College of Technology, CUNY; an advisory council member to the American Council on Education GED Testing Service, and a leader of legislative initiatives at the local, state and national levels. The multiple roles I have played and continue to play in the field provide me with a unique perspective on the issues before us today.

Keeping in mind the critical importance of the GED diploma, I would like to start by providing some general information on GED and GED testing.

1. In New York City there are 1.6 million people sixteen years-of-age or older who are out-of-school and lack a high school diploma. The enormous size of this population has a major impact on the economic health and quality of life in our city and presents a daunting challenge to educators and policymakers looking to prepare our current and future workforce.
2. Last year, 61,057 students enrolled in NYC adult education programs operated by colleges of the City University of New York; the public libraries; the Department of Education, Office of Adult and Continuing Education; and community-based organizations in all five boroughs. Students arrive at a program saying they want to get their GED. However, based on an initial skills assessment, the great majority of students did not meet the criteria for GED level classes and were placed in literacy, pre-GED or ESL classes. Only 3,333 students were assessed at the 9.0 grade level or above and attended GED classes.
3. "GED Tests are designed to measure the major and lasting academic outcomes students normally acquired by completing a typical high school program of study."<sup>1</sup> The same exam is given throughout the country, US territories and Canada. Each state is responsible for determining application criteria, administering and funding the exam system, and granting diplomas.

4. 27,301 people took the GED test in New York City in one of 50 test centers in 2007. Only one out of three of those test-takers attended a preparation program prior to the exam. While the pass rate for candidates who participated in preparation programs is 20% higher than for other test candidates, overall, of the 27,301 test candidates, only 13,128 people passed.

As these figures reveal, we are reaching less than one percent of the New York City residents in need of a GED diploma; and the 49% GED pass rate is one of the very lowest in the country. Given the critical importance of this issue for our city's economy, and its implications for social equity and quality of life, it's imperative that we focus on how to strengthen our GED testing system.

The report, *Our Chance for Change*, gives an overview of current testing practice and outlines a comprehensive four-year plan for system reform. I'd like to emphasize a few salient points.

1. Simply stated, the NYC GED testing system functions poorly and is greatly under-funded. Most test-takers arrive unprepared and uninformed about the exam requirements and procedures. The inefficient application system is characterized by a six-month wait for an appointment at some testing centers while, at the same time, over 54% of the seats at test centers citywide are left empty. The system infrastructure is woefully inadequate in staffing, training, communication, coordination and oversight. The 3.9 million dollar state legislative allocation barely covers half of NY State testing costs. Furthermore, lack of public awareness of the value of the GED limits the support individual candidates receive in obtaining a diploma and limits the investment of resources needed to reform and maintain our testing system.
2. In the GED Testing Report, I propose a two-pronged approach.

First, substantial reforms are needed to strengthen the NYC GED testing infrastructure. Such reforms would require a three million dollar investment and include the development of a centralized web-based application system, improvements in staff training, development of resources to support GED candidates' test-readiness, and implementation of broad communication and oversight structures.

Second, to maintain this greatly improved system over time, the State's annual resources to support GED testing must be increased to over ten million dollars from its current level of four million dollars. To achieve this goal, a comprehensive, broad-based public awareness and advocacy campaign is essential.

The utilization of field expertise, responsiveness to the needs of GED candidates, and comprehensive coordination, communication and oversight are the key elements to the success of this GED testing reform initiative.

This hearing provides an important opportunity to bring public attention to the need for reform in GED preparation and GED testing. I believe that together we can create a comprehensive NYC GED testing system that insures that more individuals obtain their GED diploma and are on the path to college, training, family-supporting wages and life-dreams fulfilled. Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> The American Council on Education GED Testing Service, the non-profit agency that develops the GED exam.

## REFERRAL CENTERS for HIGH SCHOOL ALTERNATIVES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Referral Centers for High School Alternatives (Referral Centers) are located in each borough and are available to students who have fallen behind in school (i.e. insufficient credit accumulation) and to any student in need of non-academic support. Students can receive information on alternatives to high school and guidance to create an education and career plan. Referral Centers assist students with understanding school options and enrollment procedures. Guidance Counselors, Social Workers, and Academic Intervention Specialists are available to assist students and families with academic and non-academic needs.

### ***Why did we open Referral Centers for High School Alternatives?***

The Department of Education recognizes that students who are not experiencing success in their present schools, or who have dropped out or stopped attending school regularly, need guidance and support to continue their education. Sometimes students need access to alternative academic options in order to continue on the path towards graduation. Sometimes students need nonacademic support (e.g. childcare, substance abuse, housing referrals) to stay on track to graduation. High-school aged students can and should continue to receive this guidance and support in their current schools but can also learn about their options by calling or walking in to a Referral Center for High School Alternatives (Referral Center).

### ***How do these Referral Centers differ from Borough Enrollment Offices?***

Referral Centers provide prospective students with information about which District 79 schools and programs they are eligible to attend, and can offer referrals, guidance, and information to aid their enrollment. This is different from Borough Enrollment Offices that handle registration, school assignment, transfers, and support for admissions processes as well other enrollment functions. For more information on borough enrollment offices and enrollment processes, visit <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/NewStudents/BEO+Contact+Information.htm>.

Bronx Referral Center

1010 Rev. James A. Polite Ave.

### ***Who should go to the Referral Centers for High School Alternatives?***

Referral Centers will help any resident of New York City under 21 with referrals to any DOE alternative program for which a student might be qualified. Options include but are not limited to GED Plus programs, Young Adult Borough Centers (YABCs), Learning to Work programs (LTW), and Transfer Schools. (Important Note: Students 22 and older can receive free educational services through OACE – The Office of Adult and Continuing Education at <http://adultednyc.org/>). The Referral Centers also provide non-academic support services (and/or can refer students to support services) to students who have experienced attendance problems, had an interruption in their high school studies, need drug treatment services, have become pregnant or a parent, were incarcerated, and/or are new to the U.S. and wishes to attend an alternative program.

### ***What will I find at the Referral Center for High School Alternatives?***

The mission of the centers is to help students make a personal education and career plan and to access the best options matched to their needs. Referral Centers are staffed with Guidance Counselors, Social Workers and AIS (Academic Intervention Services) staff. They can assist you with:

- Figuring out how to get back into school
- Evaluating and explaining your high school transcript
- Applying to a transfer school in order to earn a diploma and graduate
- Learning about vocational and career options
- Understanding what you need to get into college
- Figuring out where to get help if you are having problems outside of school
- Understanding how you can stay in school even if you are a parent or are going to be a parent
- Getting childcare and other support if you are a parent or going to be a parent
- Planning to overcome any barrier that prevents you from staying in school

### ***How do I contact the Referral Centers for High School Alternatives?***

Referral Center contact information is listed below in the footer of this document. If you experience difficulty in contacting a Referral Center, please contact:

The District 79 Office of Student Support Services

Phone 917- 521-3639/Fax 917-521-3649

4360 Broadway, 4th Floor

New York, NY 10033

#### **Bronx Referral Center**

1010 Rev. James A. Polite Ave.

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

Bronx, NY 10459

P 718-842-9200

F 718- 328-1918

#### **Brooklyn Referral Center**

832 Marcy Ave.

Room 501 A

Brooklyn, 11216

P 718 636-5770

F 718 398-4476

#### **Manhattan Referral Center**

500 Eighth Ave.

7<sup>th</sup> Floor

New York, NY 10018

P 212 244-1274

F 212 244-1793

#### **Queens Referral Center**

162-02 Hillside Ave.

Room 109

Jamaica, NY 11432

P 718 739-2100

F 718 523-1251

#### **Staten Island Referral Center**

450 St. Marks Place

Staten Island 10301

P 718 273-3225

F 718 448-3936



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Testimony of Cami Anderson  
Superintendent, District 79: Alternative Schools and Programs

City Council Committees on Education and Youth Services  
GED Testing and Preparation  
January 14, 2009

Testimony of Cami Anderson

Superintendent, District 79, Alternative Schools and Programs

January 14, 2009

Opening

Good morning, Chair Jackson, Chair Fidler, and members of the Education and Youth Services Committees. My name is Cami Anderson, and I am the Senior Superintendent of District 79 Alternative Schools and Programs. By way of introduction, I have spent more than twenty years working with and on behalf of young people – as a youth theatre coach, a classroom teacher of students with extreme behavior challenges, an educational equity advocate and policy analyst, and a leader in the non-profit education community. While I spent many years working outside the system pushing for change and innovation, I joined the Department in the fall of 2006 with a focus on the students who are the most off-track, and with a passionate commitment to ensure that those students receive every opportunity to get back on-track to succeed. This is District 79's mandate.

I know that the focus of today's hearing is on GED testing. Before diving into the specifics of how the Department of Education can ensure that students have access to the GED exam, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the progress that the DOE has made in GED reform overall since 2006.

Progress we have made in GED preparation

In the fall of 2006, the New York City Department of Education and District 79: Alternative High Schools and Programs ran several city-wide GED preparation programs – programs that serve as a vital safety net for older youth who need to take and pass the GED in order to go on to further career or college training. The DOE's GED "system" was difficult for families to navigate because the programs were disjointed: each of the 100 sites had its own unique approach to entry, transition, planning, and data management. Therefore, as a whole, our GED programs lacked measurable results, and so it was very difficult to evaluate their effectiveness. When we looked closely at the system, we learned that of the 10,000 students who each year were enrolled in DOE GED programs

across the city, only 4,000 stayed for any length of time, and a very low number – between 12 and 15% of students – ultimately passed the GED exam. With such a dismal pass rate and with all of the challenges our families were encountering when enrolling their students in DOE GED programs, we prioritized restructuring and reforming the GED system.

The goals of reforming GED programs are:

- to improve access to GED programs for eligible students, including those with significant literacy needs;
- to target GED programs toward students for whom a high school diploma is no longer a viable option and to connect younger students who have time to graduate from high school to the appropriate secondary options within the DOE system;
- to provide GED students with high-quality programs that adequately prepare them to take and pass the GED exam with the highest possible score to allow them maximum options after passing; and
- to ensure that students who are ready for the exam can get a testing date as quickly as possible.

We are pleased to report that we have made significant progress in all of these goals.

We began by creating Referral Centers for High School Alternatives to serve as a single point of entry for over-age, under-credited students who are in need of connecting to any of the many secondary options within the Department of Education. Each center is staffed with a team whose mission is to reconnect young people to the school system. At each site, counselors assess the academic levels and learning needs of incoming students, inventory their interests and help them to enroll in programs that best meet their needs. Because the DOE strongly believes that high school diplomas present students with more options than GED diplomas, our intake process also works with students who are under the age of 18 to re-enroll in their home schools or find a school or program that better suits their needs. Our Referral Centers have served approximately 3,664 students this school year.

The restructuring and reforms of our GED system also included integration of our GED programs into one system – GED Plus – which now operates with a “hub and spoke” model. Each borough has a hub where students can access literacy, English language, and special education services and spokes, which extend into many different neighborhoods, where GED preparation classes are offered. Some of our satellite sites also have learning to work internship components. This reorganization gives students and their families better access to all of our GED programs and guarantees that students who are in need of more academic support are in our largest sites with the most services.

While we know there is more work to be done to ensure that each and every student in GED Plus is well-served, our initial results since this major restructuring have been impressive. Last year, our GED enrollment numbers remained steady at approximately 10,000, but we served older students with higher literacy needs. Nearly 50% of the students had previously dropped out of school, and most students entered at between a sixth and eighth grade level at intake. Through Referral Center intake, we are making a concerted effort to reconnect younger students to either their home schools or credit-bearing programs in turn growing our capacity to serve older students for whom a GED diploma is the only option.

Even with this dramatic increase in the needs of our student population, our educational outcomes were far higher in the 2007-2008 school year than they were under the previous structure:

- Approximately 2400 students graduated from GED Plus, Access GED, and Restart in SY 07-08.
- Of the students enrolled in D79 GED preparation programs, 30% passed the GED exam, up from the previous 12-15%.
- 80% of candidates in D79 programs who sat for the exam passed.
- GED Plus and Access GED saw a 10% increase in attendance – a critical and leading indicator for disconnected youth.
- 80% of our students were over 18, meaning, it is important to keep front and center that these gains were achieved while serving "higher needs" students (e.g., enforcing a policy of

not turning away any student and connecting younger/more academically prepared students to credit-bearing schools/programs as opposed to GED).

We are very pleased with this initial progress, and we are looking for even more significant gains in the coming years. We are also working on a system to track gains in student literacy so that we can measure growth for our GED students who may need more than an academic year to prepare for and pass the GED.

#### GED Testing: History and Current State of Affairs

With more students enrolling in high-quality GED programs, our goal is to have more students prepared to take and pass the exam. Therefore, as part of the overall reform effort, District 79 has also focused on improving the GED testing infrastructure. Historically, GED tests were administered at nine DOE sites – five in District 79 and four other DOE sites, as well as at 19 community-based organizations and colleges. Each test center was an autonomous organization run by a Chief Examiner who was certified, managed, and paid for by the New York State Education Department (SED). Until recently, the DOE and other agencies who hosted GED testing centers had a very small role when it came to GED testing quality or accountability because the State managed the system. This posed many problems: (1) GED preparation and testing were not aligned – therefore, students who were not prepared would sit for the exam; and (2) the system was fragmented and difficult for test takers to navigate, and (3) quality oversight was lacking.

In July 2007, the State Education Department (SED) issued an RFP to change their approach entirely. Under the RFP, the State would award contracts to a finite number of testing vendors that would recruit, hire, manage, and pay testing personnel directly, and be reimbursed by the State. Although there are and were challenges associated with the RFP – namely it was not publicized widely, the window to apply was short, and the funding was not sufficient to cover true cost – the DOE saw it as an opportunity to align our GED reform efforts with the State. In the spring of 2008, District 79 was awarded one of five contracts and, as a result, now operates nine testing sites that serve students in

District 79, the DOE, and the broader community. This resulted in an increase in our overall capacity to serve New York City's older youth.

The RFP has not been without its problems, but we continue to believe that it has helped us to better place our students on successful life paths. We began testing on July 1, 2008, and though the RFP was scheduled to go into effect in April 2007, we have not yet seen any reimbursement. We have been funding the operation out of our own budget thus far, and we expect that when the RFP does in fact reimburse with funds to operate our GED testing centers, that we will have been operating at a deficit.

#### Accomplishments in GED Testing

District 79 believes that our new approach will and has been and will be beneficial in five major areas.

- 1) **Capacity:** We are able to serve 16,710 students in nine District 79 centers that test both our students and the general public.
- 2) **Accessibility:** District 79 centers now operate as a collective. For example, if one center is full, we are able to accommodate students elsewhere in our testing system. Over time, we hope to move to an even more streamlined, digitized system that is even easier for test takers to use.
- 3) **Efficiency:** District 79 operates both preparation programs and a large testing infrastructure. The arrangement allows us to better ensure that only students who have done well on the Official Practice Test actually sit for the exam. This not only avoids wasting valuable testing resources on testing candidates who are unprepared but also prevents students from the demoralizing feeling that can result from the GED exam.
- 4) **Quality control:** District 79 now employs a full-time GED Testing Coordinator who has already improved test administration throughout our District 79 sites. We have also posted and hired 11 GED Test Examiners. All of our examiners receive the same training to promote consistency across our sites.

- 5) **Serving the public:** As a result of the RFP, SED ultimately closed almost 25 DOE GED testing sites. Yet, at the same time, our capacity increased. This means we now have fewer centers but are serving more people who want to take the GED exam. This year alone, we have tested 6,757 students in District 79 programs, which include GED Plus and the Office of Adult and Continuing Education.

I can speak for District 79's approach to testing, and we are pleased with the results we have seen.

#### Vision for the future of GED in District 79

While we are confident that we are now better serving our GED population, we know that we still have work to do to meet the standards we set forth for our GED program. Moving forward, we will continue to strengthen and expand the choices offered at the Referral Centers for High School Alternatives, replace failing GED programs with new and innovative ones, and enhance our GED preparation programs. We are creating ways to measure progress for all of our GED students, not just the ones who sit for the exam, and we have also hired peer coaches and additional guidance counselors to help students plan for life after earning a GED.

#### Closing

We are pleased with the progress we have made in our GED preparation and testing over the past two years – our newly revamped model is getting results and gaining momentum. Thank you for the opportunity to share with you the changes we have made and continue to make to improve upon DOE GED programs.

I am happy to answer your questions at this time.

Testimony  
of  
Marc Korashan

Of the  
United Federation of Teachers  
to the  
City Council  
Youth Services Committee  
And  
Education Committee

Wednesday, January 14, 2009

Thank you, Chairman Fidler, Chairman Jackson and members of the Youth Services Committee and Education Committee.

My name is Marc Korashan. I am a special representative for the United Federation of Teachers. On behalf of UFT President Randi Weingarten, I want to thank you for allowing me to offer the union's perspectives on how to best address the New York City GED testing system.

There are roughly one and a half million New Yorkers without a high school diploma in need of adult-education services. For these adults, the GED is seen as an opportunity to earn a living wage and actively take the next step towards college.

The report by Jacqueline Cook, *Our Chance for Change: A Four Year Reform Initiative for GED Testing in New York City*, is a thoughtful examination of the problems with the current system and the potential for significant improvements.

However, we are testifying today to voice our concerns regarding her recommendation to require all students to take and pass the Official Practice Test (OPT) before taking the examination.

The experience of our teachers suggests that many students, even some with OPT scores predicting success, need more than one try to pass the test. By limiting the number of students taking the test, and inflating pass rates by excluding people from the test, will produce negative outcomes. Ultimately, the passing rate on the test is less important than the number of diplomas that are actually awarded.

The Cook Report itself notes that 7,606 people in NYC passed the 2007 GED without a Prep-code, meaning they did not come through a GED preparation program (Page 38). Those 7,606 people, 58 percent of all graduates who passed that year, would not have their GED today if they were required to take and pass an OPT.

Steve Meyerson, a veteran Adult Education Teacher, reports that 135 of his students passed the GED between July 1, 2007 and June 30, 2008. Only 93 of them had a high enough OPT score to be referred to the test with the program code. The 42 of those who graduated in this cohort would not have passed the GED if an OPT requirement were in place because they would have been prevented from taking the test.

It is just as important to note that 49 of the 135 who passed had to take the test two or more times creating a pass rate of 50 percent or less. We should celebrate the success of these persistent students, not attempt find fault because they lowered the overall pass rate.

The requirement to pass an OPT before sitting for the test will prevent many students from benefiting from cumulative scoring which allows students to pass the GED by

combining the best scores from two or more actual tests. The 49 students mentioned earlier all used cumulative scoring and now have their GEDs.

One student, Esther Yebara, got her GED at age 86. She took the GED five times which created a pass rate of 20 percent. Her OPT scores were never close to 2250, the score that predicts passing the GED. She passed because she was determined. She started as an English as a Second Language student and moved to the GED class after becoming fluent in English. She is now attending Manhattan Community College.

There are many examples of dedicated students like Esther throughout the state who lower the pass rate while raising themselves. Ms. Cook herself quotes one of them who, "after passing the exam on the third try said, 'I couldn't have made it without my teachers help. He made me study.'" She goes on to add that "Most students spoke positively about the support and encouragement offered by their teachers." (Pg 20)

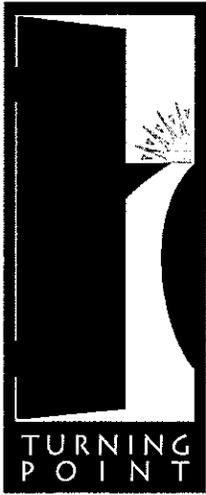
We need to recognize that OPT is not reliable enough to predict the actual result. There are currently seven forms of the OPT. Each OPT is different in content. This means that a student more familiar with the content of one OPT will obtain a higher predictive score than if he took a form with different content.

Instead of using the OPT to create a barrier between students and the test we should work to create a system that directs students who fail the test into GED preparation programs. These students would have an actual GED result which is the best diagnostic tool a student and a teacher can have. The actual result determines what area, or areas, the student needs to prepare before retesting on the actual GED.

A half-length OPT falls short of offering students the genuine testing experience. Some students outperform or under perform the OPT on the actual test. Some students pass and fail different parts on the OPT compared to the actual test. An actual GED test score provides a detailed diagnosis of where the student falls.

Students holding down jobs, those waiting to start college or a vocational training programs should not be kept waiting because of an OPT score. The same can be said for the many people who can pass the GED test without going to school and without taking an OPT.

We favor proper use of the OPT for learning, diagnosis, remediation, and guidance. However, we are opposed to turning the OPT into a high-stakes barrier which denies opportunities to thousands of students. We want to increase the number of GEDs for hard-working students, not artificially inflate the passing rate.



January 14, 2009

Thanks to the New York City Council, and Chairs Fidler and Jackson for acknowledging the problems our city is facing regarding GED preparation and testing procedures. This situation connects many important issues affecting our city's economic health and the quality of life of its residents. As an advocate who is also a service provider working the trenches, I am grateful for the opportunity to share my experiences and my concerns with you.

1. There is a great unmet need for adults and youth. 1.6 million people in New York City do not have a high school diploma. Less than 1% of those people get their GEDs each year. So this problem is probably getting bigger, not smaller. They need preparation and testing.
2. There are at least 150,000 16-24 disconnected youth in New York City. There are very few services for these young people. Many are served in adult literacy programs that do not have the resources to provide the comprehensive services youth need. These young people need preparation, testing, and support services.
3. There aren't enough seats for GED testing.
4. GED Test Centers are underfunded. At Turning Point, we lose money by providing GED Testing, but we do it anyway to serve our students, students in other agencies, and community members.
5. The GED Testing System is not well organized. If new funds are not possible, changes such as eliminating the cumbersome voucher system and instituting web-based application would still help a lot.
6. Clarity is needed on discharge policies at the Department of Education. (If I don't understand them, there's a problem.)

Submitted by Bruce Carmel,  
Deputy Executive Director of Educational Services

## NYC COUNCIL YOUTH SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEES

### Oversight - GED Preparation and Testing Procedures

January 14, 2009

Chairmen Jackson and Fidler, Council members, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony to you today. I am Elana Broitman, Director of City Policy and Public Affairs for UJA-Federation of New York.

#### **UJA-Federation**

UJA-Federation is a funding and coordinating body for more than 100 nonprofit health and human service and educational agencies in New York City's five boroughs, many of which are dedicated to providing a wide variety of services focused on youth, in large part through contracts with DYCD, as well as DOE.

While UJA-Federation does not take government funding, our agencies rely on public funding, in addition to our philanthropic support, to provide a myriad of youth related and other services, including GED preparation, GED examination sites, and programs to help GED and other graduates succeed in secondary education and in preparing for and finding work.

#### **GED Preparation and Test Taking**

Our recommendations are informed by all three perspectives; but my testimony today focuses on the experience of the GED preparation program. One of our largest agencies, F·E·G·S, operates two part-time GED programs and one full-time ACCESS GED program in partnership with the New York City Department of Education's Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation (MPG) and DOE's District 79. F·E·G·S is also a testing site and provides post-GED vocational and college programs.

F·E·G·S, under contract with MPG, provides a holistic support system that includes case management and vocational training for District 79 part-time GED students. F·E·G·S serves approximately 600 of these young people. These programs serve older high-school-age students who are behind in credit accumulation and who will be unable to earn the credits required to graduate before they age-out of the DOE system at age 22. We fully support the DOE's investment in supportive services, which are provided by community partners and managed by the DOE's Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation, to assist these students in overcoming barriers to earning a GED diploma. We appreciate the DOE's efforts through District 79 to improve the reading levels of students with low-literacy to a 6.0 grade level equivalent, so that they are able to enroll in GED programs.

F·E·G·S, likewise, includes GED preparation in its Out-of-School Youth (OSY) program under contract with DYCD. OSY serves young people under the age of 22, and some, though not all, are focused on obtaining a GED.

F·E·G·S delivers employment-related services to over 30,000 New Yorkers each year. Without question, low-literacy and the lack of an educational credential is one of the greatest barriers facing these adults. Programs such as the BEGIN initiative, which F·E·G·S operates in partnership with HRA, demonstrate the impact of Adult Basic Literacy, ESL, and GED programs on the employment outcomes and future earnings of unemployed adults. F·E·G·S serves 400-500 HRA referred adults in preparation for a GED. We fully support an expansion of literacy and GED programs for unemployed and under-employed adults in New York City, and encourage continued efforts to ensure that these services are funded to provide quality instruction, convenient locations, and flexible hours of operation. Particularly in the current economic climate, we support any opportunity to advance the skills of New York City's workforce through literacy and GED programs.

F·E·G·S also operates a GED test site in the Bronx. The main reason for F·E·G·S to have undertaken the arduous two-year task of applying to become a testing site and to operate the site at a loss that it subsidizes from other funding sources is so that its GED students have access to exam seats. It is very difficult for students to find empty seats precisely because of the lack of coordination and strategic focus that my colleagues have described this morning.

### **Lessons Learned**

As you can see, many different types of people seek and are served by GED preparatory programs – youth and adults, those with basic language skills and others who are ready to be prepared to take the exam. Community-based programs work closely with the Department of Education, and they have taken a true leadership role in promoting and funding GED preparation. But, funding for such programs comes from a number of different sources – DOE, the Human Resources Administration, the Department of Youth & Community Development (largely federal funding), and philanthropy. All of these programs are valuable and often serve different types of populations and needs. Our recommendation is the need for better coordination so that best practices are shared among the different types of programs.

These programs help prepare students to be in the best possible position to succeed on the GED. Yet, the current GED exam system does not allow these programs to help their students register for the tests. It is ironic that the very programs that are required to demonstrate GED preparedness and success are prevented from helping their students obtain exam seats. As Jacqueline Cook's report has described, a portion of the seats are reserved by students who will not take advantage of the opportunity because they duplicate their reservations, thus preventing our students from taking a seat. Moreover, there is no prioritization for students who have prepared and would thus raise New York's passage rates. The seats are taken too often instead by people who have almost no opportunity to succeed because they have not adequately prepared.

Our recommendations closely align with that of our colleagues – increase chances for success by making it easier for new test sites to be accredited and improve the exam registration system to allow preparatory programs to register their students, to provide a preference for those who have prepared in some way, and set up a system to prevent duplicative registrations.

Again, thank you for your attention to the GED system. It is an important underpinning to our education system. We look forward to working together with the Council to ensure that the opportunities provided by the GED system are maximized to serve more New Yorkers.



# Literacy Assistance Center

## **NYC COUNCIL YOUTH SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEES Oversight - GED Preparation and Testing Procedures**

January 14, 2009

My name is Elyse Barbell and I am Executive Director of the Literacy Assistance Center. The Literacy Assistance Center was established in 1983 to support and promote the most effective literacy programs for adults and youth. We work with all of the programs and initiatives you heard about today and hundreds of others, providing professional development and technical support to the adult education community throughout New York City. The LAC also manages the Adult Student Information and Support system. ASISTS is the data management system used by all adult literacy programs in New York State.

Last Friday, the Bureau of Labor Statistics released employment statistics for December 2008. One of most alarming tables in this report deserves more attention than it received: the labor force participation rate.

The BLS breaks the participation rate figures down by education level. In December 2008, 77.9 percent of adults ages 25 and over who have a BA or graduate degree were in the labor force. The rate for those with some college was 71.7 percent. The rate for those with a high school diploma, a category that includes a GED, was 62.7 percent. The rate for those with less than a high school diploma was only 46.5 percent. In other words, for every adult with a college degree who is out of the workforce, two adults without a high school diploma don't have a job.

Workforce development and adult literacy programs that offer GED programs give youth a gateway to post-secondary education or gainful employment.

According to LAC data, 61,057 students enrolled in NYC adult education programs operated by colleges of the City University of New York; the public libraries; the Department of Education, Office of Adult and Continuing Education; and community-based organizations in all five boroughs. Most of these students came in the door saying they wanted to get their GED. However, based on an initial skills assessment, the great majority of students did not meet the criteria for GED level classes and were placed in literacy, pre-GED or ESL classes. Although the GED test is open to anyone, candidates who have taken a GED class consistently attain higher scores.

Approximately 1.6 million adults and out-of-school youths over the age of 16 do not have high school diploma. The adult literacy system currently has space to serve only about five percent of them. Less than one percent—slightly more than 10,000—passed the GED test in 2006.

The lack of credentials among so many New Yorkers has a major impact on the city's economic health and quality of life. It presents a daunting challenge to educators and policymakers who are concerned with the academic preparation of our current and future workforce. We are confident that improving the GED system would give many more New Yorkers an opportunity to pass the GED test and make a successful transition to college or a job.

The LAC has been an active participant in several new initiatives to promote opportunities for adults and youths who wish to obtain academic credentials. In partnership with the New York State Education Department, the LAC serves as director of the New York City Regional Adult Education Network, or RAEN. One of our top RAEN priorities is to support programs and learners seeking GEDs. The New York City RAEN has also established the first local chapter of the National College Transition Network. Our chapter will support the establishment and strengthening of college transition services for adult literacy students through technical assistance, professional development, collegial sharing, and advocacy, and work to increase public awareness of

this critical sector of the adult basic education system. Our College Transition Network chapter will also provide a venue and hub where New York City-based adult education providers can explore post-secondary transition issues affecting adult students, discuss policy, and share best practices; take part in local, national and online professional development events; and connect with and contribute to the national movement to develop post-secondary transition services.

The LAC is also a founder of the new GED testing network, established to deliver quality professional development training and information resources that improve the quality of GED testing services to NYC test takers, provide a forum for sharing best practices, and offer a venue and mechanism for policy discussion and dissemination of information between the New York State Education Department and New York City GED testing centers.

One million six hundred thousand New Yorkers over the age of 16 could benefit from a GED diploma. With a few reforms in the GED system and a relatively small increase in funding, many more of them could obtain one and increase their contribution to our city's prosperity.

An investment of three million dollars would fund

- development of a centralized web-based application system;
- improvements in staff training;
- resources to assess and support the test-readiness of GED candidates;
- and
- creation of broad communication and oversight structures.

Maintaining this greatly improved system would require raising annual GED expenditures from the current level of four million dollars to more than ten million dollars.

These investments in developing and maintaining a new GED infrastructure would be repaid many times over.

## Testimony Presented to the New York City Council

Education Committee, Robert Jackson, Chair  
Youth Services Committee, Lewis A. Fidler, Chair

### Oversight – GED Preparation and Testing Procedures

By Leslee Oppenheim  
University Director of Language and Literacy Programs  
The City University of New York

January 14, 2009

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about transitioning GED graduates to successful studies at CUNY. At CUNY, through City, State and Federal funding, adults can prepare for the GED exam on fourteen campuses of the University and at five Workforce1 Centers through the City's Department of Small Business Services. At seven CUNY sites throughout the City, non-GED holders can take the actual GED exam. And, then, as you know, through CUNY, GED graduates can enter a full range of academic coursework and degree programs at the Associate and Bachelor levels and continue up the academic ladder.

No one would argue that adults need high quality educational programs that lead to good jobs offering opportunities for social mobility. Certainly today in New York City, moving up in the workforce requires a GED or high school diploma at a minimum, and increasingly, it requires a college degree. Indeed, 2006 Bureau of Labor Statistics data inform us that an adult earning a high school credential increases his or her average earnings by 28%. By getting an Associates degree, the baseline earnings jump by 57%, and by getting a Bachelors degree, baseline earnings jump by 125%. To help adult learners lacking a high school credential to maximize their financial well being, they must be well prepared to pass the GED exam and for the demands of college level study.

Our work as adult educators is not finished when we prepare students to pass the GED, nor is it complete when we help students to fill out an application and enter CUNY. While these are very real achievements, we cannot assume that a majority of GED graduates entering the University will do so with skill levels high enough to move easily beyond remedial studies and eventually graduate from college. Having left high school before graduation, GED graduates often have gaps in the academic skills and background knowledge essential to college success. Further, GED graduates who are highly motivated adult learners, often find themselves limited in the time they can devote to their studies, given work schedules and family responsibilities.

A recent research study by CUNY's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, *College Readiness of GED Graduates*, indicates that on most measures of academic achievement, including skill levels upon entrance to college, credit accumulation, and graduation, GED graduates face special challenges. In general, GED graduates are not as strongly prepared for college as their NYC public high school counterparts. This is

especially true in math and writing skills. As a result, GED graduates often begin their college careers needing several semesters of non-credit basic skills remediation. It has been reported that the longer a student spends in college remedial courses, the less likely it is that the student will graduate. Also, the need for many semesters in non-credit remedial courses means that students often deplete their financial aid allocations before completing credit course requirements leading to graduation.

We New Yorkers need each and every adult in our City to attain the highest level of education they can. We depend upon having well-educated workers in our hospitals, in our banks, in our businesses, and well-educated teachers in our public schools. And, we baby boomers, who will be retiring soon in large numbers, depend upon today's students in the college pipelines to learn their lessons well, graduate and replace us. We need to redouble our efforts to help under-prepared adult students achieve their GED diploma, come to CUNY, graduate and enter the workforce with confidence and competence.

While the needs may be apparent, the solutions will require our best thinking backed up by the necessary resources. Here are a few recommendations:

With respect to GED preparation, we need to:

1. Communicate more adequately to adults that getting a GED diploma will make a difference in their lives, and that a GED is the essential first step on the academic ladder. But, we need to remind them that the ladder needs to be climbed higher.
2. Encourage adults seeking a GED to attend GED preparation classes. The pass rate for those who attend such classes is significantly higher than for those who do not take preparation classes.
3. Help GED teachers devise instructional programs that go beyond test preparation and that help students gain the skills and background knowledge they need both to pass the GED and to under gird future college study.

With respect to strengthening the transition of GED graduates to CUNY, we need to:

1. Communicate more adequately to GED graduates that going to college will help them achieve greater personal fulfillment and greater financial stability; we have a place for them at CUNY and we welcome them. We know that GED graduates may need additional assistance in order to achieve their academic goals, and we have a range of programs and support in place to help.
2. Support initiatives such as the CUNY College Transition Program. The CUNY College Transition Program provides intensive instruction to GED graduates in the academic reading, writing and math skills needed for college. Beyond academics, students also need to know what is called "college knowledge"—important information such as: what is an Associates degree, how does financial aid work, what programs can prepare me to become a nurse, how many years does it take? In the College Transition Program, students fill out their applications for CUNY, well-advised about which college, which major and which program corresponds to their career aspirations. And very

importantly, the CUNY College Transition program is designed to reduce students' need for extensive remediation in college---and once again, the more remediation, the lower the chances of graduation. The CUNY College Transition program is free, so students can reserve their financial aid for credit coursework toward graduation.

3. Provide the resources to support GED graduates once they enter CUNY. Students who enter college with nontraditional academic preparation may have gaps in their background knowledge and skills, and limited "college knowledge". These students require and benefit greatly from additional support in their first year in college. This means resources for counselors and tutors, and expert academic advisement. It also means resources for peer mentors, such as the members of the GED Alumni Alliance, former GED students who are now successful CUNY students and graduates whose advice and first hand experience---having walked in the same shoes--- can help GED graduates make a strong transition to college.

Helping GED graduates and indeed all under-prepared students do well in college will require the best ideas of professionals working at the GED and college levels. It will also take the commitment of the full range of stakeholders---educators, policymakers, elected officials, members of the business community--- to ensure that high quality programs and the necessary resources to support them are available to this population of New York City adults. We very much need their energy, their experience and their potential.

**Lazar Treschan**  
**Director, Youth Policy, Community Service Society**

**Testimony to the Education and Youth Committees of the Council of the City of New York**  
**January 14, 2009**

**Issue:** GED preparation and testing procedures in New York City

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. The Community Service Society strongly believes in the importance of the GED for New York City's workforce and economic development. We are currently working on a report about the New York City GED system, which we plan to release this Spring. We look forward to discussing the report with all of you upon its release.

My comments today will focus on three points:

1. The value of the GED as a workforce and economic tool;
2. Challenges and opportunities within our current GED system; and
3. Recommendations for how we can improve our use of the GED in making our workforce more competitive and our economy stronger.

**1. The Value of the GED**

There are over 1.5 million individuals in New York City ages 18 to 64, who are out of school and without a high school diploma; this represents nearly a third of our working age population. As such, the GED has an important role to play, especially as changes in our economy require a workforce with higher skill levels. Professions for workers with low skills continue to disappear—the GED, and the level of basic skills that it represents, is a requirement for most jobs and a prerequisite to entering apprenticeship or vocational training programs.

- *Despite perceptions to the contrary, GED attainment provides tangible economic benefits.* Recent research shows that individuals who leave high school with weak cognitive skills (two years below their grade upon dropping out) benefit from GED attainment.<sup>1</sup> Statistics for New York City from various sources show that the vast majority of local dropouts are at least two years behind in their skill levels.<sup>2</sup> Labor market data from recent years in New York also shows individuals with a high school diploma or GED (but without college degrees) earned up to 35 percent more than those without

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<sup>1</sup> Mohn, T. "In These Classrooms, the GED is Only a Start". The New York Times, December 14, 2008.

Murnane, R. J., Willett, J. B., & Boudett, K. P. (1999). Do Male Dropouts Benefit From Obtaining a GED?, *Postsecondary Education, and Training, Evaluation Review*, 23(5). Boudett, K. P., Murnane, R. J., & Willett, J. B. (2000). "Second-Chance" Strategies for Women Who Drop Out of School. *Monthly Labor Review*, 123(12).

<sup>2</sup> Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation, New York City Department of Education, "Summary Findings of Research and Development Work on Over-age Under-Credited Youth in New York City," October 25, 2006. New York City Mayor's Office of Adult Education, "It Starts With a Goal: The Transformative Power of Adult Education." Briefing Paper for the Adult Education Visioning Retreat, September 2007.

secondary level certification.<sup>3</sup> That means more dollars into working class families and communities, more economic activity, and increased tax revenue. Furthermore, individuals without a diploma or GED are cut off from making the next step to college and many vocational training programs, which can provide even greater economic benefits.

- *GED attainment does NOT represent a lowering of expectations for individuals who should receive a high school diploma.* We believe that everyone who can achieve a high school diploma should do so – however, the vast majority of GED-eligible individuals have “aged out” of their eligibility to receive a high school diploma in New York. If they are to succeed in the workplace, they will need a GED at the least—without this credential they will be shut out of most good jobs and any opportunities at further training or college. The GED is a necessary first step for them on the path to sustainable, family-supporting careers.

## **2. Challenges and opportunities within our current GED system**

Some basic statistics tell us a lot about the GED system in New York City:

- *We are not getting eligible individuals into GED programs* -- despite the 1.6 million eligible individuals, only 26,000 New Yorkers took a GED test in 2006. This represents only 1.6 percent of the eligible population.
- *We are not adequately preparing those who do take the test* -- of those that did take the exam in 2006, only 43 percent passed in New York City. This is an abysmal figure, compared to the national pass rate of 69 percent.<sup>4</sup>
- *Our current GED system is not sufficiently connected to our workforce development investments* -- New York City’s GED preparation programs, with some notable exceptions, are not formally connected to career preparation. Other states, such as Washington, have mandated that GED must integrate either job training for specific industries or college transition. Washington has successfully piloted a model known as I-BEST (Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training), in which students receive basic skills/GED training at the same time that they get trained for high demand jobs. Given that most GED testers take the exam to increase their earnings potential, we need to ensure that they are prepared to transition to the careers upon receiving their diploma – the test must be a milestone, not a destination.

CSS has identified more than eight separate funding streams that support GED preparation, each with its own eligibility requirements and program standards. Too few GED programs are integrated with or connected to the most important thing: what happens next for their students.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> From the New York State Department of Labor “Value of Education Calculator”, using 2007 data.

<sup>4</sup> American Council on Education, GED Testing Service, “2007 Statistical Report.”

<sup>5</sup> Treschan, L. and Molnar, C. “Out of Focus: A Snapshot of Public Funding to Reconnect Youth to Education and Employment.” Community Service Society, June 2008.

### **3. Recommendations for how we can improve our use of the GED in making our workforce more competitive and our economy stronger.**

Although we are still in the process of developing our report and its recommendations, there are several areas where we see the chance for New York City to improve its GED system:

- *Making sure the right people are in the GED system.* This is only an issue for individuals under age 21, who still have eligibility left to receive a high school diploma. Even if high school reform overwhelmingly succeeds and reduces dropouts by fifty percent, we will still have 15,000 people per year who could not succeed in high school. For these young people, this will require a strong system of assessment and case management as well as a porousness between HS diploma schools and GED schools. Young people with low levels of confidence should be allowed to start in GED and be encouraged to move into diploma-granting programs as they begin to succeed.
- *Recognize that GED seekers demonstrate a wide range of skills.* Since most New Yorkers without high school diplomas have limited basic skills and are considered “pre-GED” while others lack English language fluency and are classified as ESOL, we should recognize that we will need a wide range of programs for students at different levels. For most, preparation for the GED will take considerable time.
- *Focus on transitions.* Attainment of the GED is only as good as the next step a person takes. All GED preparation resources should have this in mind. Programs should incorporate and connect to jobs and college. We can use example from other states, such as Washington, where all adult education funding supports programs that build basic skills while they prepare people for jobs or postsecondary education. This will require increased investments and coordination of existing workforce and adult education funds.
- *Improve the testing system.* Our testing system is inadequate, and we support the recommendations to reform the system that are within the report issued by Jacque Cook , including professionalization of testing procedures and increased funding for testing.<sup>6</sup>
- *Raise public awareness.* Finally, we need to get the word out about the GED – to potential students, who can benefit themselves and our economy by getting the credential, and to policymakers who need to understand the great value of a GED diploma.. This is the goal of our upcoming report.

There is no day more important in the life of someone who is unemployed or underemployed than the day that they wake up and say, “Today is the day that I am going to get back on track.” That day is important for our City in many ways: its economy, social fabric, and moral fiber. It means the possibility of a City less divided into the haves and have-nots; it means a more competitive workforce and greater tax revenues; and it means that we can offer all individuals a chance to succeed and contribute.

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<sup>6</sup> Cook, J. “Our Chance for Change: A Four Year Reform Initiative for GED Testing in New York City,” Dept of Youth and Community Development, June 2008.

Most people know very little about workforce development and the intricate systems of public funding of these services. They do, however, know about the GED, and recognize it as a first step. We need to take advantage of this place that the GED holds, and invest it with the resources to give everyone a real chance for success.

# NYC COUNCIL YOUTH SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEES

## OVERSIGHT: GED PREPARATION AND TESTING

January 14, 2009

Testimony by: Linda Avitabile, Director of Education and Training  
**Highbridge Community Life Center**  
979 Ogden Avenue, Bronx, NY 10452  
718 681 2222

Highbridge Community Life Center became a GED Test Site last year. We held our first testing in August, 2008. I can explain why we became a test site in two words: self-defense. We have GED and GED in Spanish classes as part of our adult education program and this was the only way to insure that our students could get tested in a timely manner in a location near where they lived. Before we became a test site, our GED instructors did everything to try and get our students access to the GED exam from memorizing the coffee preferences of every GED Coordinator in the Bronx and Upper Manhattan to taking students on dry runs from the Bronx to test sites in Brooklyn to insure they wouldn't get lost when they made the three-borough trek for real.

And yet, while applicants and GED instructors run all over the city to try and get test slots, over half of GED test slots are unused. This is due to the non-centralized nature of the GED application process. People will apply to multiple locations in the hope of getting in somewhere, and GED sites send out acceptances to people who have already been scheduled for testing at other locations. To add to the system chaos, most test-takers are unprepared and uninformed about the exam requirements and procedures. It is for this reason we urge the implementation of the findings in Jacqueline Cook's report, Our Chance for Change: A Four Year Reform Initiative for GED Testing in New York City. These recommendations included the development of a centralized web-based application system, improvements in staff training to insure that applicants understand the test process and the demands of the test itself, and the development of resources to assess and support GED candidates' test-readiness.

At Highbridge Community Life Center, we pretest all GED applicants with the Official Practice Test and only schedule those participants with a passing score for the actual exam. This has increased the rate of test takers passing the exam to approximately 90% at our last two tests. Among participants who had not been in a GED program previous to taking the Official Practice Test, most expected that that the test would be easy. They often did not know basic information such as the number of subjects they would be tested in, the scores needed for passing, or the length of time it would take them to complete the actual exam. Over 75% of the practice test takers who had not been in an educational program failed the practice test, indicating an inability to pass the actual GED exam.

Assessing applicants, providing information on the test and counseling those who need adult education before they are ready to take the exam should be part of the functions of the exam process itself. But they are currently unfunded. At Highbridge we spend approximately \$1 out of scarce general operating monies for every dollar we draw down for the test itself. It is

this infusion of funds from our own operating budget that enables us to assess applicants, provide educational counseling and to implement such basic recommendations from student surveys such as scheduling the test over a three, rather than a one or two day period.

That is the single change that has had the biggest impact in our program because it means that students don't have to face 15 hours of testing and processing over a back-to-back two day period. However, we can only do this because we run one of the smallest test centers in the city, testing approximately 280 participants per year. If we tested on a larger scale, the cost of these additional services and activities would be prohibitive. Funding needs to be increased to allow for these vital activities.

The GED Testing process needs to be treated with an importance that corresponds to the effect attaining a GED has on the lives of successful test takers. The connection between a High School Equivalency Diploma and employment opportunities is so clear that it doesn't need to be belabored here, by me. According to the American Council on Education's 2008 report on Economic and Non Economic Outcomes for GED Recipients "adults with GED credentials on average earn about \$80 more than the adults with less than a high school-level education on a weekly basis." Given this, it's not surprising that adults with low literacy earn 42% less than high school graduates, or that, according to According to the NYS Education Department's 2002 report, more than 65% of people on welfare who have a high school diploma or GED leave welfare and become self-sufficient within two years, while the majority of persons without a diploma remain on the rolls for five or more years.

At Highbridge Community Life Center, our workforce development unit, which assists public assistance recipients in gaining employment can attest to this. There are fewer opportunities for full time employment at a living wage with benefits for those without a GED than for those with that credential. Even when someone who does not have a High School Diploma or a GED has worked in a job, for example in an office, if they are laid off from that job – a common occurrence unfortunately in this economy – their experience does not compensate for the lack of a High School credential when trying to secure *new* employment.

Jobs available to those lacking a GED Diploma are often part time, per diem or temporary in nature, and at minimum wage. Even in the rare niche fields, such as certified nurse aide, where participants who have that credential can secure employment with benefits, the lack of a GED limits opportunity to employment and acts as a bar to advancement.

Highbridge Community Life Center has a successful health careers training department, which includes nurse aide training. Certified nurse aides who do not have a High School Diploma or GED can secure employment in many area nursing homes for an average starting salary of \$10 - \$13/hour. However, most, if not all, hospitals require a GED or High School Diploma. These hospitals are also more likely to offer opportunities for advancement both within the certified nurse aide job category and beyond it. Additionally, if these nurse aides wish to advance in the health field to Phlebotomy/EKG, positions that have an average salary of \$18/hour or become a Licensed Practical Nurse, then a High School Diploma or GED is a requirement.

The GED is a gateway to employment and future career advancement. The test process needs to help people one this path, not serve as an additional barrier. This is a problem that it too important not to solve.

## The CUNY College Transition Program Spring 2009

To: Literacy/GED Colleagues in New York City  
From: Leslee Oppenheim, CUNY Language & Literacy Programs  
Date: January 14, 2009  
Re: Admission of GED Graduates into the CUNY College Transition Program Spring '09

As you know, GED graduates do not do as well as they might in college—their retention and graduation rates are low. While GED graduates often have complex lives that can interfere with their college studies, it is also likely that underdeveloped academic skills contribute to their lack of success in college-level work.

The CUNY College Transition Program bridges the gap between students' GED-level skills and college expectations. College Transitions classes have been developed by CUNY GED curriculum and teaching specialists, collaborating with college faculty, to improve students' college readiness and academic reading/writing and math skills.

You are invited to recommend GED graduates who have indicated a serious interest in attending CUNY and have demonstrated good study habits and excellent attendance. Programs referring GED graduates receive SED outcome credit for their students' college entry, through authorization of the NYSED.

The free Spring '09 CUNY College Transition Program is offered at:

Borough Manhattan Community College (lower Manhattan)  
2/02/09-5/21/09 Monday through Thursday afternoons  
1:15pm–4:45pm  
LaGuardia Community College (western Queens)  
2/23/09-6/10/09 Monday through Thursday mornings  
9am–1pm  
Lehman College (the Bronx)  
2/25/09-6/26/09 Wednesday and Friday mornings  
9am–1:30pm

To recommend a student, the GED teacher or program director is asked to do the following:

1. Discuss the program with potential students, using the Overview of the CUNY College Transition Program (attached).
2. Ask interested students to complete the Student Application Form (attached and available for download from [ramon.tercero@mail.cuny.edu](mailto:ramon.tercero@mail.cuny.edu) ).
3. Complete the Recommendation Form (attached and available for download from [ramon.tercero@mail.cuny.edu](mailto:ramon.tercero@mail.cuny.edu) ).
4. E-mail the Application and your Recommendation to [ramon.tercero@mail.cuny.edu](mailto:ramon.tercero@mail.cuny.edu)  
OR use postal mail to Ramon Tercero, CUNY Central, 535 East 80<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10075. **Forms must be received for BMCC ASAP, and for LaGuardia and Lehman by Tuesday 1/20/08.**

For additional information, call Ramon Tercero 212-794-5302 or Leslee Oppenheim 212-794-5437.

# CUNY College Transition Program for GED Graduates

## Overview Spring 2009

- Free Intensive College Transition Classes
- Preparation in the Most Needed Skills: Academic Reading/Writing and College Transition Math
- Assistance with CUNY Applications and Financial Aid Forms
- Planning for College at CUNY—Selecting a Career Path, Understanding Campus Expectations, Paying for College

### How Do GED Graduates Benefit from the CUNY College Transition Program?

GED graduates want to enter college better prepared to succeed and graduate. Study in CUNY CTP helps GED graduates make a strong college start and spend less time in remedial classes. Less time in remedial classes means less expense and a better chance of graduating.

GED graduates admitted to the Spring CUNY College Transition Program attend classes 8 to 16 hrs/wk (depending on the program selected) and prepare to enter college in the Fall. A student must be recommended by his/her GED teacher or program director. Students from all NYC GED preparation programs are eligible.

### What Is It Like To Study in the CUNY College Transition Program?

CUNY CTP parallels actual college study in its intensity and in its expectations for student participation. Students must complete homework assignments and attend all scheduled classes. The content of each class connects to the next session, just as in a college credit course. Because missing a class makes it difficult to keep up, excellent attendance is required. CUNY CTP offers the academic preparation and advisement that can help students succeed in college.

### Where and When Are Spring '09 CUNY College Transition Classes Offered?

Borough Manhattan CC                      2/02/09-5/21/09 Monday through Thursday afternoons 1:15pm-4:45pm

LaGuardia Community College            2/23/09-6/10/09 Monday through Thursday mornings 9am-1pm

Lehman College                                2/25/09-6/26/09 Wednesday and Friday mornings 9am-1:30pm

### How Can a GED Teacher/Director Help Students Enroll in CUNY CTP?

GED teachers and program directors recommend selected students from their classes who have passed the GED, intend to enter CUNY, and have demonstrated strong attendance and good study habits. The GED teacher/director asks these students to complete the CUNY CTP Student Application (downloadable by teachers) for return to the teacher. The teacher adds a recommendation and sends both forms to CUNY CTP. For Spring '09 entry, the application packet must be received for BMCC as soon as possible, and for LaGuardia and Lehman by Tuesday 1/20/08. For more information, please e-mail Ramon Tercero: [ramon.tercero@mail.cuny.edu](mailto:ramon.tercero@mail.cuny.edu)





January 14, 2009

Thank you Chairpersons Fidler and Jackson and Committee Council members for conducting this hearing on GED testing and preparation.

My name is Smith Yanez. I am from Mexico City. I have been living in New York for fifteen years. I am a father of two children, one in middle school and the other one in elementary school.

I never finished studying in my country. The money was always a strong issue, and opportunities are not the same as they are here. I was very fortunate to find out about programs like The Adult Learning Center at LaGuardia Community College. I got my GED diploma last year from LaGuardia. But it has not been easy for people like me who work two jobs just to earn enough to house and feed my family. I'm a waiter at night and a real estate sales person during the day. How easy is that in a recession? There is never enough time left after work to study. Language was another kind of barrier for me. I had to learn English before I could get a good job. However, when you want something, and you have that burning desire to learn, everything is possible.

This program has given me the opportunity to go to college and pursue a professional career, which has a double benefit for me. First, and I can almost see it; a diploma with my name on it. A diploma would make me feel accomplished, an educated person aspiring for a better life. Second, it would also make me feel like a strong role model for my children. I want to encourage them to stay in school. With all these statistics of kids quitting school at an early age, I don't want my children to be just another couple of dropouts. I want them to finish, and to set higher educational goals for themselves.

I'm very thankful for all the help I received from my teachers. I'm very thankful for all the people who made it possible, for me and my classmates to have these programs, and to let us believe in ourselves. We need more support for programs like this, for young people and for entire families like mine.

Thank you.

## GED Preparation

Good morning, distinguished members of the New York City Council. My name is Shamsul Haque, and I come before you to support the GED preparation program.

I would like to share a little bit about myself. Currently, I study part-time at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University for the Master of Public Administration degree. Five years ago while attending the Baruch College for my undergraduate degree, I had the privilege of serving in a number of different capacities in the area of higher education. Some of them are: Trustee Ex-officio at the CUNY Board of Trustees and Higher Education Service Corporations, and Chairperson of the University Student Senate of the City University of New York.

Due to the recent economic crises, thousands of people are loosing jobs. Fortunately, I have a full-time employment at New York City Police Department as a Police Officer. By the end of this year, I will get promoted to Sergeant. So far, I am very pleased with my achievements. However, life has not always been as good as today.

I dropped out of junior high school from the seventh grade in Bangladesh and moved to New York in 1991. I worked as a bus-boy, delivery-boy and deli-man for a number of years. Although I worked more than 65 hours a week, I was making between twelve to fifteen thousand dollars a year.

Seeing a bleak future, I decided to go to the Adult and Continuing education program at LaGuardia Community College. After taking the entrance exam, they placed me at a pre-GED course in fall, 1996. A few months later, I was accepted to the GED program. I received my GED certificate in the spring of 1997, one of the happiest moments in my life. It was possible to pass the GED exam in a short period of time because of a strong and committed group of faculty at LaGuardia College.

Prior to receiving my college education, I have never earned more than \$15,000 a year. I am pleased to inform you that this past year alone, I have paid more than \$30,000 in taxes. If I continue to work for the next twenty year, which I expect to do, I will pay between 600,000 to 700,000 thousand dollars in taxes.

Ladies and Gentlemen: People like myself need a second chance in life and the GED provides that opportunity. In days ahead when you are faced with budget deficit, please have the courage to do the right thing and support the GED preparation programs for both moral and economic reasons.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

Shamsul Haque (Cell) 347-668-2586

# FOR THE RECORD

## CATHOLIC COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL

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EDUCATION COMMITTEE, CALENDAR NO. 2, RESOLUTION 930  
TESTIMONY BY ROSEMARY GINTY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
JANUARY 14, 2009

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Rosemary Ginty and I am the Executive Director of the Catholic Community Relations Council, a not-for-profit corporation established by the Archdiocese of New York and the Diocese of Brooklyn to handle public policy issues on the municipal level of government including, among others, housing, education and human services.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Resolution 930 which calls upon the New York City Department of Education to amend its holiday display policy for public elementary and secondary schools to include a crèche.

New York City is a rich and wonderful mosaic of peoples, cultures, nationalities and religions. We all live, work and worship together in tolerance and inclusion. It is within that spirit of tolerance and inclusion that we support the intent of Resolution 930 and hope that it wins your approval.

Thank you.

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1011 First Avenue, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, New York 10022

Testimony of  
Jacqueline Espinosa  
On behalf of:  
**The Adult Education Alumni Alliance**



New York City Council  
Hearing on  
GED Preparation and Testing Procedures  
January 14, 2009

For more information about the Adult Education Alumni Alliance please contact us at:  
[aalumnialliance@gmail.com](mailto:aalumnialliance@gmail.com)

Good Morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Jacqueline Espinosa. I got my GED in 2008 and it was a struggle for me. I am wife and a mother of two young children. I had my son when I was 16 years old and was unable to complete my high school education. With the support of my husband and with the help of a great literacy program at LaGuardia Community College I was able to get my GED. But I never would have had the chance to change my life and life for my family if my GED program had not been free and supported by public funds. Now, with the help of many people, I am currently enrolled as a college student at LaGuardia Community College. I feel like nothing can stop me now! Thank you for holding this important hearing and for allowing me to testify today.

I am here on behalf of the Adult Education Alumni Alliance, which is a newly formed group of GED graduates. We have come together to empower and connect the City's community of adult learners. Our aim is to help adult learners achieve their education, career, and life goals. The Alumni Alliance partners with literacy programs and other allies to advocate for a state-of-the-art adult education system, including – especially – a world-class system of GED preparation and testing.

We know that GED testing system and the granting of the credential is not under the City Council's jurisdiction, but it is an extremely important issue for so many New Yorkers. We, the students and alumni of the GED system, look to the City Council and particularly to you, Chairman Jackson, for leadership to strengthen the system and improve outcomes for many thousands of New Yorkers.

On behalf of the Adult Education Alumni Alliance, I would like to highlight four things the City Council can do:

For more information about the Adult Education Alumni Alliance please contact us at:  
[aalumnialliance@gmail.com](mailto:aalumnialliance@gmail.com)

**1. Amend eligibility for the Vallone Scholarship program to include GED graduates who score above a designated threshold, equivalent to a B average in high school level course-work.**

- Currently, only high school graduates with a B average who complete 12 Regents level academic credits in high school are eligible for an award. We believe that GED graduates should also be included as eligible candidates for this important scholarship. To not do so is a discriminatory practice.
- Making the Vallone Scholarship available to GED graduates would make college more affordable for adult learners and help us achieve the American dream.
- While there may be a need for more money overall to fund the Vallone Scholarships at a higher dollar amount, correcting this exclusionary policy to pave the way for outstanding GED graduates to qualify would not cost any money this year. It only requires that the City Council clarify the policy and your intent to make college more affordable for all academic high achievers.

**2. Fund an urgently needed expansion of GED preparation classes and college transition programs.** The GED diploma is a gateway to college and career options for hundreds of thousands of adults. The Council can improve the quality of life for people like me in every district of the City by expanding the number of seats available.

**3. Work with the State Legislature to explore the issues raised in this hearing in more depth.** The GED preparation and testing system is one of the most important elements in New York City's ability to bring the American dream within reach of all its residents. However, many aspects of the system are under State – not City – jurisdiction. Therefore, we call on the City Council to work with the State Legislature to increase oversight of the adult education system and

to explore the important issues raised by the many adult literacy voices you have heard today.

4. **Finally, we urge all City Council members to consider hiring one of the many talented GED graduates in New York City as interns or staff in your offices.**

Like college students who attended four years of high school, GED alumni seek opportunities to develop our skills and gain work experience. Give us a chance and we can prove ourselves. The Mayor's Office of Adult Education has taken the lead in this area by creating an internship for nine GED graduates. We call on City Council members to match this effort.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Adult Education Alumni Alliance.

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### **Adult Education Alumni Alliance**

#### **Objectives:**

To help improve outcomes for adult education students and alumni in transitioning to college and in career-related technical training.

To build a sustainable network/movement of adult learners and alumni to help strengthen the adult education system in New York City.

To help create a student-centered adult education system

#### **Leadership Strategies: The Learner Leadership Pyramid**

- **Support and motivation** for current students and alumni to achieve their goals.
- **Outreach and Community Organizing** to build strong relationships and active peer networks and reach out to new partners and allies.
- **Information and communication** including "college knowledge," and other resources to those who need it.
- **Advocacy** to help raise awareness of the importance of the adult education system and ways to strengthen it.



For more information about the Adult Education Alumni Alliance please contact us at:  
[aalumalliance@gmail.com](mailto:aalumalliance@gmail.com)

**COMMENTS BY BRIAN J. ROONEY, ESQ.**

**Re: Department of Education's Holiday Display Policy**

**COMMENTS BY BRIAN J. ROONEY, ESQ.**  
**THOMAS MORE LAW CENTER**

I represent the Thomas More Law Center, a national public interest law firm.

We represented Andrea Skoros and her children in a lawsuit against the City of New York and Joel Klein, Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education, before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals. We challenged the Constitutionality of the Department of Education's (DOE) Holiday Display Policy—the policy that is the subject of the resolution proposed today. Although it is true that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Circuit Court did not find the DOE's policy unconstitutional, the court went on to make the important *explicit* point that an *inclusion* of a crèche in the DOE policy would also not necessarily make the DOE policy unconstitutional—contrary to the DOE's reasoning on keeping the crèche out!

Further, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Circuit Court explicitly ruled—again, contrary to the DOE policy—that a Menorah and a Star and Crescent *are* religious symbols. The Court specifically stated that even though the DOE Policy was wrong in regard to the nature of the Menorah and Star and Crescent, the fact that they *are* religious symbols does not make the DOE policy unconstitutional. This line of reasoning by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Circuit Court constitutionally allows for a display of a crèche as well.

The display of a crèche or Nativity scene in public places, including public schools, has long been a part of our American Christmas traditions, reflecting both

our nation and the State of New York in their celebrations of this holiday season. The Department of Education's policy reads to be inclusive and to promote understanding and respect for the rights of all individuals regarding their beliefs, values, and customs. However, a Christmas or "Holiday" tree does not meet the stated goal of the DOE policy—in fact, the Christmas tree actually obscures the true purpose of the state and federal holiday. Whereas a Menorah and a Star and Crescent are very appropriate to further the stated goals of the DOE policy, a Christmas tree is simply inadequate to the task. However, a crèche is a learning tool that represents an historical event surrounding a religious figure; much the same way a Menorah represents an historic event that has religious significance.

The current DOE policy explicitly proscribing crèches creates unnecessary religious hostility in the community by removing a constitutionally permissible tradition. This exclusion utterly fails from an educational perspective. Without question, displaying a crèche in a manner similar to the way in which the Department of Education permits the displays of a Menorah, or a Star and Crescent enhances a student's knowledge of our society's cultural and religious heritage - including our Christmas holiday traditions. It also advances and promotes a fuller understanding of the holidays in general.

Those that are hostile to the Christmas traditions tend to hide behind the mantle of "tolerance," only to promote intolerance. Indeed, we learn to understand and respect traditions, customs, and beliefs not by being offended or threatened by

the traditions of others, but by understanding the meaning of such traditions and why they have the capacity to inspire.

Through the enforcement of the current Holiday Displays Policy, school officials permit and encourage the public display of the Menorah, a Jewish *religious* symbol, and the Star and Crescent, a *religious* symbol of the Islamic faith, during various holiday and seasonal observances. However, the Department of Education's policy prohibits the public display of the Christian Nativity scene or crèche *at any time*, including those times when it would be accompanied by the Menorah, Star and Crescent, and secular symbols of the various holiday and seasonal observances.

The Department of Education's justification for this discriminatory policy against the crèche is fundamentally flawed—much like their characterization and justification for the Menorah and the Star and Crescent were flawed, as ruled by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Circuit Court. The Star and Crescent and Menorah are religious symbols that serve the DOE's secular learning purpose. A crèche is no different. Discrimination is discrimination, and the DOE's policy has the effect of being discriminatory. As politically correct as it may seem in this so-called "multicultural" society, the Department of Education's policy of excluding the crèche is internally inconsistent, objectively hostile and bigoted, and it must be changed.

Select quotations from 2<sup>nd</sup> Circuit in *Skoros* case. Note: the court made plain that the menorah is a religious symbol and that it considered the star and crescent as a religious symbol for purposes of the appeal. Thus, permitting religious symbols (including the nativity) is permissible.

Preliminarily, however, **we note that we cannot agree with the DOE Memo's characterization of the menorah as a secular symbol.** In *Kaplan v. City of Burlington*, this court specifically identified the menorah as “a religious symbol of the Jewish faith ... recognized as such by the general public.” 891 F.2d at 1026. **The Supreme Court and our sister circuits agree that the menorah is a religious symbol.** See *County of Allegheny v. ACLU*, 492 U.S. at 613, 109 S.Ct. 3086 (opinion of Blackmun, J.); *id.* at 633, 109 S.Ct. 3086 (O'Connor, J., concurring in part and concurring in the judgment); *id.* at 643, 109 S.Ct. 3086 (Brennan, J., concurring in part and dissenting in part); *ACLU v. Schundler*, 168 F.3d at 108; *Grossbaum v. Indianapolis-Marion County Bldg. Auth.*, 63 F.3d 581, 586 (7th Cir.1995).<sup>FN16</sup>

**FN16.** For purposes of this appeal, we assume that the star and crescent is also a **religious rather than a secular symbol**, although arguments apparently can be raised to the contrary. See *Mehdi v. United States Postal Serv.*, 988 F.Supp. 721, 723 (S.D.N.Y.1997) (suing unsuccessfully to display the star and crescent, a “secular symbol of the Muslim people,” in United States post offices when Christmas trees and menorahs are used in holiday displays); see also 8 *Encyclopedia Americana*, “Crescent,” 175 (int'l ed.2002) (noting original secular significance of crescent symbol); 7 *Encyclopedia of Religion*, “Islamic Iconography,” 66 (Mircea Eliade ed., 1987) (explaining that crescent's early appearance on Islamic coins and metalwork had no religious connotations).

TESTIMONY OF DR. WILLIAM A. DONOHUE  
PRESIDENT  
CATHOLIC LEAGUE FOR RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL RIGHTS  
CITY HALL, NEW YORK, NEW YORK  
JANUARY 14, 2009

I appreciate the opportunity to speak today before the New York City Committee on Education and the Committee on Youth Services.

In 2001, I learned that New York City schools allowed the display of the menorah and the star and crescent in the classroom, but not the nativity scene. I quickly wrote to Dr. Harold Levy, Schools Chancellor at the time, asking that the crèche be afforded the same treatment given the two other religious symbols. I was astonished when he wrote back saying, “The Supreme Court has previously refused to permit erection of a nativity scene on public property.”

I immediately corrected the record—the high court never said any such thing. Indeed, I told Dr. Levy’s general counsel, Chad Vignola, that if what Dr. Levy said was true, then he should sue both me and the New York City Parks Department. My reasoning? Every year since the mid-1990s, the Catholic League has received a permit from the Parks Department (as we did in 2008) to display a crèche in Central Park. Jews display the menorah and occasionally Muslims display the star and crescent (all are erected on the corner of 59<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>). Neither the ACLU nor any other organization has ever challenged this annual tradition, and

that's because it is not unconstitutional to display religious symbols in public parks.

The position of Dr. Levy's office was that the menorah and star and crescent are secular symbols, and the nativity scene was religious. This, of course, would come as a surprise to observant Jews and Muslims. In any event, with the help of the Thomas More Law Center, a suit was filed against New York City; we secured standing by providing a plaintiff, Catholic League member Andrea Skoros, and the law firm did the litigating. On February 18, 2004, U.S. District Court Judge Charles Sifton ruled that the Schools policy was acceptable because the menorah and star and crescent had a secular dimension but the crèche did not.

On appeal, the Second Circuit disagreed with Judge Sifton on this aspect: it said the menorah and the star and crescent were indeed religious, but it balked at ordering the crèche to be displayed. It reasoned that as long as some Christmas holiday symbol was allowed, namely the Christmas tree, there was no discrimination. But it also said something else—something which explains why I am here today: “We do not here

decide whether the City could, consistent with the Constitution, include a crèche in its school holiday displays.”

In other words, there is no legal impediment to displaying the nativity scene in the schools alongside the Jewish and Islamic religious symbols, just as all three are displayed in Central Park. That is why I implore the City Council to ask the Department of Education to amend its holiday policy by allowing equal treatment of Christian religious symbols in the schools in December. To do anything less is to sanction inequitable treatment. I hasten to add that if the nativity scene were allowed and the menorah and the star and crescent were banned in the schools, I would testify in favor of permitting the Jewish and Islamic religious symbols.

In short, the only thing standing in the way of equal treatment is the will of the legislature. In the spirit of the much-vaunted goal of inclusion, I call upon you to end the disparate treatment afforded Christians and affirm the resolution sponsored by Councilman Tony Avella and others.

Thank you for the chance to explain the position of the Catholic League.



**AMERICANS UNITED  
OF NEW YORK CITY**

P.O. Box 1660  
New York, NY 10163  
(646) 961-3792

Chapter 102

[info@au-nyc.org](mailto:info@au-nyc.org)  
<http://www.au-nyc.org>

January 14th, 2009

My name is Cynthia Rudder and I am Vice President of the New York City Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. With me today is Jason Stewart, our Chapter President.

Americans United (AU) is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to preserving the constitutional principle of church-state separation, which is the only way to ensure religious freedom for all Americans.

We thank you for the opportunity to discuss Resolution No. 930, which seeks to allow a display of the crèche, or nativity scene, during the holiday season, in public elementary and secondary schools.

According to the Department of Education, the stated purpose of its holiday display policy is "to promote the goal of fostering understanding and respect of all individuals regarding their beliefs, values and customs." Although this policy has been found to be constitutional, we are concerned that by displaying any religious symbols, the Department of Education may be seen as encouraging the practice of particular religions. Our pluralism of religious belief is one of our greatest strengths. With more than 2,000 religious traditions in this country would this policy advance or hinder its stated goal by focusing on only a few? But more importantly, it may confuse or emotionally harm our schoolchildren.

Children spend a great deal of their day in the classroom and on school property. We must strive to ensure that they feel comfortable and accepted in this environment. Displaying religious symbols, even during the holidays, may cause some students to feel uncomfortable and unwelcome because their particular religious, or non-religious, beliefs are not represented.

If the sponsors of this resolution are looking for parity with the menorah and the star and crescent, the answer is not, as this resolution seeks, to add more and more religious symbols of all the diverse religions in our population. Americans United believes that

religious symbols are private and belong in the home or in houses of worship, not on public property, and especially not in our public schools.

In addition, we agree with what Justice Stevens said in his dissent in *County of Allegheny v. ACLU* (1989):

*"In my opinion the Establishment Clause should be construed to create a strong presumption against the display of religious symbols on public property. There is always a risk that such symbols will offend nonmembers of the faith being advertised as well as adherents who consider the particular advertisement disrespectful."*

We understand that the goal of this resolution is to seek fairness with the Department of Education's holiday display policy. But let's be careful what message we are sending to our schoolchildren. Clearly, we want them to see the diversity of cultures in our city. But that can be done with truly secular symbols, without pushing up against the wall of separation between church and state and confusing our students.

Thank you.

Cynthia Rudder  
Chapter Vice President  
Americans United of New York City  
P.O. Box 1660  
New York, NY 10163  
(646) 961-3792  
[info@au-nyc.org](mailto:info@au-nyc.org)  
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Americans United for Separation  
of Church and State  
518 C Street, N.E.  
Washington, DC 20002

Council President and members of the Council of the City of New York

I wish to speak on Resolution Res. No. 930/2007

The Department of Education currently implements a holiday display policy in public elementary and secondary schools that allows for the display of the Jewish menorah, Islamic star and crescent, Christmas tree and other secular symbols so long as they are displayed together temporarily during the winter holiday season.

The Department of Education's holiday display policy currently prohibits displaying a Christian nativity scene or crèche in a manner similar to the way the Jewish menorah and the Islamic star and crescent are permitted to be displayed.

The three court cases quoted in Res. No. 930/2007 state that quote;

"the display of the nativity scene or creche was **not** a violation of the Establishment Clause of the United States Constitution"

"found the display of the creche **to be** constitutional"

"did **not** constitute an endorsement of religion and **was** permissible"

One of these court cases states that it would be perceived by a reasonable observer as a "**celebration of the diversity** of the holiday season, including traditional **religious** and secular symbols of that season"

The first amendment of the Constitution states "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; ....."

In this case the Department of Education got its holiday policy terribly wrong. Therefore I urge the Council of the City of New York to call upon the department of Education to amend its holiday display policy for New York City's elementary and secondary schools to allow a crèche or nativity scene to be displayed during the winter holiday season in the same manner as other religious symbols.

It is ironic that we are having this discussion since the word holiday comes from the word holyday. There was a time when the only days people got off were holydays

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Peter Rooney". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.

Council President and members of the Council of the City of New York

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It is ironic that we are having this discussion since the word holiday comes from the word holyday. There was a time when the only days people got off were holydays

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Roney". The signature is stylized with large, sweeping loops and a long horizontal line extending to the right at the end.

Among our members are many individuals who once lived under Communism.

Their determination to resist the repression of that system and to fight for their basic human rights contributed greatly to the downfall of Communism by 1989.

They immigrated to the United States and became American citizens. Why? Because they always looked at America as a shining light and an inspiration for those who wanted freedom.

They admired our ideals of liberty, democracy and justice. These new Americans from Poland are predominantly Christian.

Many of them are now sending their children to the public schools of New York. If they were financially able to do it, some of them would have preferred to send them to parochial schools.

What surprises them when Christmas comes around is the reluctance to display a Nativity scene in the schools their children attend. Especially when symbols of non-Christian religions are used instead.

When these Polish immigrants lived under Communism, they experienced a continual hostility to their Christian beliefs.

They can't help wonder why a great American city like New York seems so hesitant to display a universally traditional Christmas symbol like a Nativity scene.

The Nativity scene has been a traditional American Christmas symbol from the very first days America became a nation.

Why would the City of New York now step away from an American Christmas tradition that has always been an integral part of the way the American people observed the season all these years?

Jan. 14<sup>th</sup> 2009

TO: All Honorable Members of the New York City Council

Regarding Resolution 930

We are requesting the passage of resolution 930/2007 which would allow the display of The Nativity Scene during the Christmas Holiday season as it allows other religious Symbols. As a concerned citizen, and member of the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians We feel this is an important issue that affects many students and their families in the New York City primary and secondary schools. This is an insult to a fundamental cultural Belief as a Christian and as a proud American. This country was founded on religious Freedom and tolerance. It is wrong for the Dept of Education to decide what our Christmas holiday symbol should be. The nativity scene is the fundamental of our belief But it is also simply a historical family scene accepted by other religions such as Muslims And is promoting family values. It is important for all the children to know the correct Symbol for this holiday to foster correct understanding of the day. We feel that is Equally important that our children not feel that their Christmas holiday is anything to be Ashamed of or to be hidden. Children should be encouraged to feel pride in their culture And heritage. Christmas is not only a Federal holiday it is international, multiracial and Multicultural. It is important that the board pass this resolution that affects so many The acceptance of this resolution 930 moves the Board of Education forward in its Goal to accept and foster cultural understanding and acceptance. We think cultural Acceptance and understanding is important for our children and we applaud and Encourage the display of all holiday symbols we are just asking that the nativity scene Be included. Christmas Should NOT be just a tree or snow flakes. NYC is know to be a

Leader for change and equality. Please pass this resolution 930/2007 and lead NYC  
Forward to acceptance of all your children. Many groups that we have contacted on this  
Important issue support us in our endeavor and many were shocked to hear of this  
policy.

We will continue to try to right this wrong. WE thank you for your time and attention to  
this matter. We hope you vote to accept this resolution 930/2007.

Thank You.

Maureen Leahy-Pres. LAOH Queen's County

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: Jan 14, 2009

Name: Curt Mills (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 204 E. 235<sup>th</sup> St, NY 10470

I represent: Highbridge Community Life Center

Address: 950 Anderson Ave, BX, NY 10452

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 1/14/09

Name: Robert Mejias (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 2845 University

I represent: Fortune Society and my self

Address: L.I.C.

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Eric Appleton (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 728 41<sup>st</sup> St., #3B

I represent: The Fortune Society

Address: 2976 Northern Blvd.

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Enrique Touber Sifo (Student)

Address: 905 Summit Avenue

I represent: Highbridge G.E.D. program

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

G.E.D

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Anthony Davis

Address: 630 Riverside Dr

I represent: The Fortune Society

Address: 29-79 - Long Island City

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 1/14/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ernest Suarez

Address: 300 31st St Bx NY 10451

I represent: Highbridge G.E.D. Class

Address: 956 Anderson Ave Bx NY 10457

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 930/2007 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MARTIN KELLY  
Address: 2059 COYLE ST. BROOKLYN, NY  
I represent: NATIONAL BOARD A.O.H.  
Address: 2059 COYLE ST. BROOKLYN NY  
11229

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Marc Korshan  
Address: SPECIAL REP. UFT  
I represent: Adult Ed  
Address: 52 Bway

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Shanel Hague  
Address: Smith Jerez  
I represent: Francisco

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 930  
 in favor  in opposition 2007

Date: 1-14-2007

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Bridget Heenan  
Address: 15754 12 Ave  
I represent: Ladies Aid Order of Hibernian  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 930

in favor     in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Maurson Leahy

Address: 167-10 Crochmon Ave 4E Flushing NY 11358

I represent: Ladies Ancient Order Hibernians

Address: c/o M. Leahy 167-10 Crochmon Ave 4E Flushing NY 11358

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Smith Yanoz

Address: 120-09 12th ave College Point NY 11356

I represent: LaGuardia Community College

Address: 31-10 Thomson Ave. L.I.C. NY 11401

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: RICHARD FISH

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: DYCA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CAMC ANDERSON

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: DEPT OF EDUCATION

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

Oversight  
ON  
GED

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dorell Thomas

Address: 197-15 116 Ave St Albans NY 11412

I represent: Greenhouse Services for Women

Address: 448 E 119 Street NY 10035

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lazar Teslan, Elise Packell, Linda J. Jantello

Address: CSS, LAC, CUNY Highbridge

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

Date: 1-14-09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Francisco Gonzalez

Address: 2277 Andrew Ave BX N.Y 10468 4th fl

I represent: MYSELF

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 930

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Cynthia Rudder

Address: 128 Central Park South NYC

I represent: Americans United

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 930  
 in favor  in opposition 2007  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: FRANK MILEWSKI  
Address: 16 CONTINENTAL AVE FOREST HILLS NY 11375  
I represent: POLISH-AMERICAN CONGRESS  
Address: 177 KENT ST B'KLN NY 11222

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition  
Date: 1-14-07

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dr William Donohue  
Address: Catholic League  
I represent: " (President)  
Address: 450 7th Ave NY

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 930/2007  
 in favor  in opposition  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PATRICK ROONEY  
Address: 51 SOUNDVIEW RD  
I represent: Queens County AOH  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Bruce Carmel Elana Brodman Sam Colon  
Address: Turning Point UJA East Side  
I represent: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lazar Trescha

Address: 452 DeGow St Brooklyn NY 11217

I represent: Community Service Society

Address: 109 E. 22nd St, NYC NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. GED Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 1/14/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Linda Arvitabile

Address: 209 Lincoln Pl #5E Brooklyn

I represent: Highbridge Community Life Center

Address: 979 Ogden Ave. Bx NY 10452

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. SEO Prop Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Leslee Oppenheimer

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: City University of New York

Address: 535 E 80 St NY 10021

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

GED

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Oswaldo Alvarez

Address: 5013 Seventh Avenue, Brooklyn

I represent: Turning Point

Address: 5220 4th Avenue, Brooklyn

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Brian Rooney

Address: 24 Frank Lloyd Wright Dr. Arden MT

I represent: Thomas More Law Center

Address: Same

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Elise Bumbell

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Levacy Assistance Center

Address: 32 Bway

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. GED Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 11/14/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SHAMSUL HARUE

Address: 32-56 69th Street, Woodside NY 11377

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

GED

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: BRUCE CARMEL

Address: 240 W 98 ST, NY NY

I represent: Turning Point

Address: 5220 44th Ave, Brooklyn

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: John [unclear]

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: USA Federation

Address: 100 [unclear]

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

GED

Date: 01-14-09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jacqueline Espinosa

Address: 47-75 48th St #10 Qus NY

I represent: Adult Ed Alumni Alliance

Address: 100 Gold St 2nd Fl

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆