

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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September 22, 2015

Start: 10:22 a.m.

Recess: 1:07 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Room
16th Floor

B E F O R E: INEZ D. BARRON
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

James Vacca
Fernando Cabrera
Jumaane D. Williams
Laurie A. Cumbo
Ydanis A. Rodriguez
Vanessa L. Gibson

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

Suri Duitch
University Dean
Continued Education and Workforce Development
City University of New York, CUNY

Ann Jacobs, Director
Prisoner Reentry Institute
John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Bianca Van Heydoorn
Director of Educational Initiatives
Prisoner Reentry Institute at John Jay College

Devon Simmons, Student
John Jay Prison to College Pipeline

Gabrielle Starr, Dean
NYU College of Arts and Science

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Fortune Society and David Rothenberg Center
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Special Litigation Unit
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Kevin Stump
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Kevin Munez
University Student Senate
City University of New York (CUNY)

Claudia Ward
University Student Senate
City University of New York (CUNY)

Louis El Monte
University Student Senate
City University of New York (CUNY)

Oscar Martinez
Student and Vice Chair of Senior College Affairs
University Student Senate
City University of New York (CUNY)

Kevin Mendez
Student and Chair and Senator-at-Large
La Guardia Community College

2 [sound check, pause]

3 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Good morning

4 everyone. I'm Council Member Inez Barron. I'm the
5 Chair of the Committee on Higher Education. Today's
6 hearing is on the topic of Higher Education Access
7 for Incarcerated and Recently Incarcerated
8 Individuals. There is a strong link between prison
9 recidivism and education. A 2013 Rand Report found
10 that on average inmates taking part in an education
11 program were 43% less likely to return to prison
12 within three years. A similar--a similar EIOC Report
13 found that the likelihood of returning to prison
14 drops 13.7% for inmates with associate's degrees;
15 5.6% for inmates with bachelor's degrees; and less
16 than 1% for inmates with master's degrees. At one
17 time, this country recognized this link. Beginning
18 in 1965 with the passage of the Higher Education Act,
19 prisoners could qualify for federal financial aid to
20 pay for higher educational programs offered in
21 conjunction with correction education programs. When
22 the federal government established the Pell Grant
23 Program in 1972, prison inmates could apply just as
24 high school seniors could. The success of this
25 program peaked in 1982 with 350 post-secondary

2 correctional education programs providing higher
3 education access to 27,000 inmates in 45 states.
4 However, rising crime rates throughout the '80s gave
5 way to the so-called tougher on crime politics of the
6 late '80s and '90s, and the 1994 enactment under
7 President Clinton of the Violent Crime Control and
8 Law Enforcement Act, which among other things
9 rendered inmates ineligible for financial assistance
10 under the Title--under Title IV or the Higher
11 Education Act. Not coincidentally, the rate of
12 incarceration of Black men in federal and state jail
13 and prison populations increased at 10 times the rate
14 of White men between 1985 and 1995.

15 Fortunately, there have been some
16 colleges such as Broad and Grinnell that have taken
17 it upon themselves to educate prisoners free of
18 charge. And more recently, the President announced
19 that he is going to exercise the provision of the
20 Higher Education Act that authorizes him to exempt
21 himself from provisions of the Act for limited
22 periods of time to experiment with higher education
23 policy. In particular, in what is being called the
24 Second Chance Pell Pilot Program, President Obama
25 will waive the provisions prohibit--prohibiting

2 grants of financial assistance to inmates to make
3 Pell Grants available to them once again. In
4 conjunction with this oversight topic, we will be
5 hearing a resolution I am sponsoring, Resolution 837
6 in support of President Barack Obama's Second Chance
7 Pell Pilot Program. This will initiate new models to
8 allow incarcerated individuals to receive Pell Grants
9 to finance their education.

10 At today's hearing, we will hear
11 testimony about higher education at Rikers Island,
12 the programs CUNY has offered and hopes to offer
13 under the Second Chance Program, the programs offered
14 by other institutions of higher education as well as
15 from various advocates. I want to acknowledge other
16 members of the Council. We have City Council Member
17 Elizabeth Crowley who is the chair of the Committee
18 on Fire and Criminal Justice. I also want to thank
19 my CUNY Liaison and Legislative Director Indigo
20 Washington; the Committee Policy Analyst, Chloe
21 Rivera, and our Committee Counsel Jeff Campagna.

22 At this time, I'll call the first panel.
23 The first panel are representatives from CUNY, and we
24 will have Suri Duitch, the University Dean; Devon
25 Simmons, Student at John Jay; Ann Jacobs from John

2 Jay College; and Bianca Van Heydoorn from John Jay
3 College. If you would all come forward. [pause]
4 And as our custom, we do ask that you make an
5 affirmation of the validity of your testimony. So I
6 would ask that you raise your right hand, please. Do
7 you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
8 nothing but the truth in your testimony before this
9 committee, and to respond to all Council Member
10 questions?

11 PANEL MEMBERS: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. You may
13 begin. [pause]

14 SURI DUITCH: Thank you. My name is Suri
15 Duitch. I'm the University Dean for Continued
16 Education and Workforce Development. Thanks. Thanks
17 so much for holding this hearing this morning on this
18 important topic. I am going to make a short
19 statement and then introduce my three colleagues on
20 the panel who will also testify. CUNY is
21 tremendously supportive of the Council's intentions
22 to increase access to higher education for
23 individuals who are currently or formerly involved
24 with the Criminal Justice System. Our Chancellor
25 James B. Milliken has a particular interest in this

2 population, and has publicly expressed strong support
3 for the U.S. Department of Education's plans to offer
4 Pell Grants to individuals in prison on a pilot
5 basis. The University demonstrates its commitment to
6 the formerly incarcerated through our support of
7 prisoner re-entry programs particularly those at John
8 Jay College of Criminal Justice including the Prison
9 to College Pipeline and the College Initiative.

10 We surely show our support for a range of
11 programs serving individuals who are Criminal Justice
12 involved including the recently launched CUNY Next
13 Steps Program offered in a detention facility on
14 Rikers Island. Which incorporates computer skills,
15 vocational training, a cognitive behavioral
16 intervention and post-detention counseling in a
17 partnership between La Guardia Community College,
18 Hostos Community College, STRIVE and the New York
19 Public Library. And we demonstrate our commitment by
20 avoiding and working to diminish structural
21 impediments to college for the formerly incarcerated.
22 CUNY, for example, has never asked questions about
23 criminal records on admission forms. We do this
24 because it is part of our mission as a great urban
25 public university because we understand the huge

2 impact, as you have pointed out that higher education
3 has on reducing recidivism and know that it is in the
4 interest of the city to ensure that the formerly
5 incarcerated have access to high quality and
6 affordable post-secondary education. And because
7 supporting those who are working hard to improve
8 themselves and their life process is simply the right
9 thing to do. As I stated earlier, we are greatly
10 encouraged by the move to re-open access to Pell
11 Grants for the incarcerated, and are hopeful that
12 this and other similar efforts will follow as part of
13 the nation's reconsideration of mass incarceration
14 policies. John Jay's work in prisons has been
15 privately funded, as my colleagues will describe,
16 and, therefore, limited in scale and scope. We know
17 that offering programs inside of facilities is a key
18 component of a strong prison to college pipeline, and
19 we look forward to working with you to help bring
20 this about.

21 I will now introduce my fellow panel
22 members: Ann Jacobs and Bianca Van Heydoorn from the
23 Prisoner Reentry Institute at John Jay College of
24 Criminal Justice and Devon Simmons at student at

2 Hostos Community College and a participant in the
3 Prison to College Pipeline. Thank you.

4 ANN JACOBS: Good morning. Thank you for
5 the opportunity to testify before you today. I'm Ann
6 Jacobs. I'm the Director of the Prisoner Reentry
7 Institute, which is one of the research centers at
8 John Jay College of Criminal Justice. The mission of
9 PRI, Prisoner Reentry Institute is to undertake
10 innovative reentry projects that contribute to a
11 deeper understanding of what it takes for Justice
12 involved individuals to live successfully in the
13 community, and to further develop the effectiveness
14 of the people and the systems that work with them to
15 try to produce that result.

16 PRI's work is clustered in several areas
17 and education is central to all of them. PRI
18 administers the New York City Justice Corps, a city
19 funded program to reduce the recidivism of 18 to 24-
20 year-old justice involved youth by changing the
21 relationship that they have with their communities.
22 In a few minutes Bianca Van Heydoorn, who directs our
23 educational initiatives will describe to you the
24 extensive work that we're doing to make higher
25 education accessible both to incarcerated and

2 formerly incarcerated people. But PRI is also
3 committed to developing the next generation of
4 criminal justice professionals and scholars through a
5 range of fellowship initiatives that provide college
6 students with coursework, financial assistance and
7 supportive relationships at the same time they
8 participate in extended internships, sometimes as
9 long as 15 months in youth justice and public policy
10 advocacy agencies.

11 PRI's research initiatives have focused
12 on understanding reentry from the point of view of
13 the person who's in the process of reentering. We
14 call our series reentry in the first person. We
15 published with assistance of Michelle--of course, I'm
16 going to forget her last name. This is where age
17 shows up. Thank you. Everybody in the room knows
18 Michelle Fine and I blocked on her name. Don't tell
19 her. We published a report called the *Gifts That*
20 *They Bring*, which was participatory action research
21 done with the participation of people who had been
22 formerly incarcerated and who are now in college,
23 reflecting on that experience and that transition for
24 themselves. Our work has also included *View From the*
25 *Inside*, that described living in three-quarter

2 houses, and forthcoming research that we're doing
3 delves into the life histories of the students that
4 we have been working with in our college program and
5 through the transition that they make to living in
6 the community, and dealing with the many challenges
7 both of reentry and continuing their higher education
8 in the community.

9 Among these challenges, housing, a job,
10 health and mental health treatment get the most
11 attention, and the discussion of education gets the
12 least attention. Yet, education is the one
13 intervention that we know consistently changes the
14 trajectory of someone's life. As the City Council
15 resolution acknowledges we know now that higher
16 education definitely and dramatically reduces
17 recidivism. It increases employability. It raises
18 earnings. It has the potential to reduce economic
19 disparity and to address the devastating consequences
20 that our school, the prison pipeline, and mass
21 incarceration have had particularly on people of
22 color. It also has beneficial ripple effects on the
23 families and communities in which the students
24 reside. Former New York State Corrections DOCCS
25 Commissioner Brian Fischer, who is a very strong

2 supporter of higher ed in the prisons, has said that
3 having a college program in the prison changes the
4 prison for the better. Every college professor we've
5 ever had teaching the prison programs say that the
6 students they deal with there are the best students
7 they've ever had, and so on. The value is well
8 established.

9 The anti-Pell, Kids Not Cons rhetoric
10 presents a false dichotomy. Even at the height of
11 prison college programs in the early '90s prisoners
12 were less than 1% of the Pell recipients. Funding
13 incarcerated students did not and will not take away
14 from available resources for so-called good students.
15 We don't have to choose. In fact, we have a
16 collective interest in providing access to education
17 to anyone who can and will do the work. This
18 inclusiveness is one of the fundamental principles of
19 the City University of New York. It simply should
20 not be acceptable to us to allow the time and
21 intellectual capital of incarcerated people be
22 limited by the access to education while they're
23 incarcerated. That's why CUNY supports the work that
24 PRI leads to restore college to our prisons, and is
25 importantly to create networks of academic and social

2 support that attract, enroll, retain and graduate
3 students when they're back in the community.

4 We believe that the restoration of Pell
5 and TAP eligibility for incarcerated. That's why
6 CUNY supports the work that PRI leads to restore
7 college to our prisons, and is importantly to create
8 networks of academic and social support that attract,
9 enroll, retain and graduate students when they're
10 back in the community. We believe that the
11 restoration of Pell and TAP eligibility for
12 incarcerated people is a smart investment, and we
13 hope to convince you that they're also has to be an
14 investment in the community supports that are
15 required for someone to get to college, and succeed
16 there when they're back in the community. I'm going
17 to turn now to Bianca Van Heydoorn, who will describe
18 the continuing--continuous--continuum of services
19 that we've created at CUNY.

20 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: Good afternoon. My
21 name Bianca Van Heydoorn. I'm the Director of
22 Educational Initiatives at the Prisoner Reentry
23 Institute at John Jay College. Thank you for the
24 invitation to testify today. In my role as PRI's
25 Director of Educational Initiatives I am responsible

2 for overseeing a continuum of services that are
3 exclusively dedicated to increasing access to higher
4 education for men and women who have been involved in
5 the Criminal Justice System. As an example, I'd like
6 to highlight two components of our work in
7 particular, the Prison to College Pipeline and
8 College Initiative. Together, they create PRI's
9 continuum of services that start in prison and
10 continue into the community, and whose purpose is to
11 increase the number of people who have access to
12 higher education and who succeed there. The Prison
13 to College Pipeline founded in 2011, marked CUNY's
14 return to offering college in prison--in prison in
15 the decades since Pell Grant funding was eliminated
16 for incarcerated students. As the name suggests, the
17 program is designed as a reentry initiative.
18 Students begin their studies while they're
19 incarcerated, and are fully matriculated CUNY
20 students who earn credits for a period of one to five
21 years before they are released from prison. Students
22 who maintain at least a C average in the program are
23 guaranteed a spot in a CUNY institution when they
24 come home. The curriculum inside mirrors a fresh
25 menu of academic study. Students take introductory

2 level courses including Sociology, English,
3 Anthropology and History. The students this semester
4 are taking courses in gender studies, criminology and
5 public health. The students also routinely receive
6 recognition from CUNY for their overall grade point
7 averages and exceptional writing. Our students
8 regularly receive invitations to join the Honor
9 Society, and every year since 2011, at least one
10 Prison to College Pipeline student has had his work
11 published in the college's literary journal *John*
12 *Jay's Finest*. I point to these two markers of their
13 achievement because neither the journal editors nor
14 the selection committee for the Honor Society are
15 aware that the students are incarcerated.

16 Once a month we host a Learning Exchange
17 where the students from the community at John Jay and
18 Hostos travel to the prison to take a blended course
19 with these students inside. Through our Learning
20 Exchange, we work to dispel myths about who's in
21 prison, build a community of peers between our
22 students in prison and those from the campus, many of
23 whom are studying to become criminal justice
24 professionals. Our experience shows us that
25 incarcerated students are among the most motivated,

2 studious and dedicated learners we've come across.
3 And beginning their journey towards higher education
4 while in prison allows us to harness that motivation
5 and plant seeds that will bear fruit across
6 generations. The--the experience has proven to be
7 life altering for the community students as well
8 frequently changing their understanding of
9 incarceration and their career aspirations.

10 We take an approach that recognizes that
11 the transformative value of higher education as well
12 as the challenges and opportunities presented by the
13 reentry experience really do have the--the
14 opportunity to change who our students become. Our
15 students leave prison with a minimum of 12 credits
16 that are immediately transferrable to any CUNY
17 institution. Access to a team of caring reentry
18 professionals, supportive faculty contacts and
19 dedicated academic counselors to help them make this
20 successful transition to CUNY and the community.

21 On July 1st a program--of this year--a
22 program called the College Initiative was integrated
23 into the educational initiatives of the Prisoner
24 Reentry Institute, making it an official CUNY
25 program. CI responds to close to a thousand letters

2 of inquiry from men and women in prison annually, and
3 provides academic counseling to people who have been
4 released. Our staff maintain those pivotal important
5 relationships with the key CUNY institutions and
6 campuses to aid our students in obtaining financial
7 aid and enrollment when they are--when they come
8 home. Perhaps the most important, but perhaps more
9 importantly, we provide peer mentoring and engage
10 students in a growing community of positive college
11 students and graduates who are invested in their
12 success. We are clear that the value of this
13 continuum of education and supportive services that
14 starts in prisons and continues into the community.
15 It shows that clearly in the GPAs retention and
16 graduation of our students.

17 The CUNY proposal to the Department of
18 Education for the Second Chance Pell Waiver would
19 expand our program from--from an enrollment currently
20 of 20 students at Otisville Correctional Facility to
21 enrollment of over 200 students Otisville and
22 Queensboro Correctional Facilities. We are also
23 collaborating with--with Hostos and La Guardia
24 Community Colleges on this effort. The Experimental
25 Sites Initiative is an important step in the right

2 direction. We also continue to advocate for the full
3 restoration of financial aid for incarcerated
4 students, which includes restoring New York State's
5 Tuition Assistance Program. But restoration of
6 student financial aid alone will not be sufficient
7 unless there is also funding for the critical
8 community based services that I've described.

9 I'm happy to share more about our model
10 and programming, but the true testament of the value
11 of higher education, and the impact of funding
12 college and prison programs comes from those that
13 with direct experience. The Council will now hear
14 testimony from one such remarkable student about his
15 journey to and through higher education. I introduce
16 you to Mr. Devon Simmons.

17 DEVON SIMMONS: Thank you. Good
18 morning. Good morning.

19 COUNCIL MEMBERS: Good morning.

20 DEVON SIMMONS: My name is Devon Simmons
21 and I am a student of John Jay Prison to College
22 Pipeline. Currently, I'm enrolled at Hostos
23 Community College where I will graduate this spring
24 with an Associate's Degree in Criminal Justice. My
25 pursuit to higher education began 15 years ago after

2 obtaining my GED in prison. I was eager to continue
3 thriving academically. Unfortunately, because of the
4 lack of financial aid for people in prison, my
5 options to attend college were limited and my dreams
6 were put on hold. Twelve years later the opportunity
7 finally presented itself and I was transferred to
8 Otisville Correctional Facility and my life changed
9 dramatically.

10 After passing the CUNY Assessment Test, I
11 was accepted into the Prison to College Pipeline. As
12 a student in the program, I took introduction college
13 courses, attended workshops, and participated in
14 monthly student learning exchanges with students from
15 John Jay who traveled to Otisville. These learning
16 exchanges were essential because they allowed those
17 of us students on campus--I mean, excuse me--in
18 Otisville to connect with our peers from the campus
19 and ultimately build community. Cumulatively, these
20 three factors contributed immensely to my success
21 academically, but more importantly towards my reentry
22 into society. Upon my release I immediately enrolled
23 in the school, and maintained a 3.78 GPA. I would
24 not have been able to accomplish any of these goals
25 without the assistance of the Prison to College

2 Pipeline and College Initiative. The networks and
3 resources created as a result of being part of this
4 community has been monumental for me, and allowed me
5 to reintegrate into society positively. Although the
6 transition is not easy, knowing that I have
7 supporters who are simply a phone call away has made
8 all the difference. Whether it has been issues with
9 school, housing or employment opportunities all the
10 assistance has been progressive.

11 I am now appear mental (sic) for the
12 college initiative, and the student success needed to
13 strive for success at Hostos where I assist first
14 year students integrated on campus. This is
15 important to me because it allows me to give back to
16 the community by helping individuals who are in need
17 just as I am, and to highlight how education is
18 paramount. Likewise, I emphasize the importance of
19 them finishing school, which will deter them from
20 resorting to a life of crime or relying on public
21 assistance. Moreover, my job allows me to
22 intermingle with young men and women who I can learn
23 from and share ideas with in regards to changing
24 public policy, thus advocating the importance of
25

2 rehabilitation, which can be accomplished by
3 education.

4 All of this is due to the preparation I
5 received as a result of having access to higher
6 education through the Prison to College Pipeline. As
7 you can imagine, I fully support bringing financial
8 aid--eligibility back for people in prison, and I
9 would like to thank the Council for the opportunity
10 to present to you to day. Thank you.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I want to thank
12 the panel for their testimony. It certainly was very
13 enlightening as to what it is that CUNY is doing, and
14 it makes me very proud because I am an alum of Hunter
15 College, part of the CUNY system. So I'm always
16 pleased to know that CUNY is on the cutting edge, and
17 understands that even when the program was first cut,
18 that there was still that need and they stepped in to
19 provide that. I want to commend you, Mr. Simmons,
20 for your fortitude and for your genius, 3.75 or 8
21 [laughter] GPA. So I want to commend you, and I want
22 to encourage you to go forward. What is it that you
23 plan to do?

24 DEVON SIMMONS: Well, currently, I'm a
25 criminal justice major.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Uh-huh.

3 DEVON SIMMONS: However, I might change
4 into public policy, you know, to help advocate for,
5 you know, individuals like myself.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Uh-huh. How many
7 credits did you take while--how many credits did you
8 take. I don't know. How is it structured. Perhaps
9 I should go to Ms. Van Doren first. Well, not Van
10 Doren. Would you pronounce your name for me?

11 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: Van Heydoorn.

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Van Heydoorn.

13 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: There you go.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. How--how is
15 the program structured in terms of students taking
16 credits? How many credits? What's the frequency of
17 the classes? How do they--is there an instructor who
18 goes there. Could you describe that?

19 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: Yeah, absolutely.
20 So we have CUNY faculty members who teach courses at
21 the prison as I--as I mentioned. They do travel to
22 the--to the prison to teach classes on a weekly
23 basis, and each semester we provide at least two
24 courses, um, per semester for the students. So
25 depending on how long the student is incarcerated

2 they can leave the facility with a minimum of 12
3 credits. If they're there longer than a year, they
4 are able to leave with more than 12 credits. So the
5 students earn approximately 12 credits every academic
6 year.

7 ANN JACOBS: And if the, um, Pell Waiver
8 is available to us, we are looking and talking to
9 DOCCS about expanding the program to full time so
10 that they'd be earning credits quicker.

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So full-time then
12 you--you would be able to take just more than just
13 the two. You have more course offerings--

14 ANN JACOBS: Right.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --than the two that
16 you presently offer.

17 SURI DUITCH: Exactly.

18 ANN JACOBS: We've been limited mostly
19 by money.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Where does your
21 money come from. That's the question that I wanted
22 to ask, private partnership.

23 ANN JACOBS: As a--part of what
24 distinguishes us from Broad and from the private
25 colleges that do wonderful work in the prison is that

2 as a public institution we were very concerned about
3 making sure that there was no appearance of taxpayers
4 subsidizing education for prisoners as long as public
5 policy was against that. So we privately fundraised
6 all of our money and paid full tuition for our
7 students, and have been lucky to be a beneficiary of
8 funding from the Ford Foundation, the David
9 Rockefeller Fund. More recently the J. M. Kaplan and
10 we have a couple of other things in the pipeline.

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And do you have the
12 dollar amount that it costs to run this program on an
13 annual basis?

14 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: Our annual tuition
15 costs each year are anywhere between \$60 and \$85,000
16 for--for the students.

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And that does that--

18 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: That includes the--
19 the tuition, books, supplies all of the--the things
20 that we have to pay for, for students to take
21 courses. It's the cost of the coursework. There's
22 also additional costs as you can imagine associated
23 with ensuring that faculty members can get to the
24 prison and other administrative costs. The costs of

2 tuition books and fees between \$60,000 and \$85,000 a
3 year.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: That's the cost per
5 student?

6 ANN JACOBS: No.

7 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: No, the cost per
8 student averages about between \$5,500 and \$7,500 a
9 semester.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. So the total
11 cost of operating this program on an annual basis is
12 from \$60,000 to \$85,000?

13 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: The cost of
14 operating for the students, yes, that's the cost.
15 The other administrative costs we'd have to get you
16 that--

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

18 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: --more exact
19 number. I don't--yeah.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. That's fine.
21 Thank you. I'm going to acknowledge that we've been
22 joined by Council Member Cabrera, and I do have some
23 other questions, and I'm going to pause now and offer
24 Council Member Crowley an opportunity to pose her
25 questions.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Thank you, Chair
3 Barron, and thank you for having this important
4 hearing. Good morning to the representatives from
5 CUNY and John Jay. Thank you for what you do
6 especially Mr. Simmons. You are quite the students.
7 A very impressive GPA. I wish you all the success in
8 your continued studies. I wanted to know have you
9 considered a program with Rikers Island or any of the
10 New York City Department of Correction facilities?

11 [background comment]

12 DEVON SIMMONS: Um, it's a great
13 question. I'll say a little bit and then maybe Ann
14 will chime in. So I had mentioned that we recently
15 launched a program we're calling CUNY Next Steps.
16 Um, my colleague Natal De Los Angeles Hodge is in the
17 audience who actually runs the program. It's a--it's
18 a very different kind of program because the
19 circumstances of the participants are very different.
20 It's for detainees. It's pre-sentencing. You don't
21 know sort of when participants are going to come and
22 go, and so you can't--you can't do something like a
23 credit course, right, where you have to be in the
24 classroom for a certain number of hours in order to
25 actually earn the credits. So that model is more

2 focused on transitioning back to the community, and
3 on helping participants build their skills. So it
4 offers computer skills, and reading skills, and the
5 New York Public Library is--is part of it. There is
6 some vocational training to help the detainees get
7 some useful credentials that they can use to get jobs
8 when they're back in the community. It is not
9 explicitly college prep, and it's not college
10 obviously. And think maybe our colleagues from the
11 Department of Corrections will be testifying in this
12 hearing as well. I'm sure they'll speak about it. We
13 think it's an important part of CUNY's mission to
14 offer this program. We would ideally like to be able
15 to do more on Rikers. We would like to be able to
16 offer credit courses. We would like to be able to
17 offer programs such as the CUNY Start Program that do
18 remediation work. So that people who have a high
19 school credential that aren't quite ready to do
20 college level academic work can get ready for it
21 whether on the island or when they come back into the
22 community. So there are a range of different
23 options, and what we're doing right now is just one
24 piece of it. And there have been a couple other
25 programs like that over the--over recent years where

2 CUNY colleges have been doing more sort of vocational
3 training, and some--some like cognitive behavioral
4 work with detainees.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: How did you
6 choose Otisville Correctional Facility, and is this--
7 is this the only time that the City University
8 actually leads the--the five boroughs to host those
9 types of higher education classes?

10 ANN JACOBS: As far as I know. We were
11 originally going to go to Arthur Kill in Staten
12 Island. Then that summer we were ready to kick off
13 the program, Governor Cuomo announced the closing of
14 Arthur Kill, which is glorious news in one way, and
15 very problematic for us. We could have had a much
16 bigger program, and it would have been logistically
17 much more--it would have been a lot easier to do at
18 Arthur Kill, but the city has been disproportionately
19 hit by the closing of institutions. So, um, we've
20 been very happy to be able to go into Queensboro.
21 Queensboro is a facility that much like the jail is
22 dealing with a constant turnover of population.
23 People go there typically for the 90 days before
24 their state sentence. You know, before they're
25 released from their state sentence, but Bianca has

2 very creatively figured out ways of doing educational
3 programs there that make sense, and testing people.

4 A lot of what we find is the barrier is

5 misinformation, and it isn't just that college--

6 potential college students think that they can't go

7 because they've got a criminal record, that they

8 couldn't get financial aid because they have a

9 criminal record. Too often the staff working with

10 them also think that that's true. So they're

11 perpetuating that misinformation. So a part of the

12 strategy that--that Bianca and I have been very

13 committed to is providing good information in the

14 state system and the city system to the staff and to

15 inmates. And with the joining of college initiative

16 with us, we have a much larger cadre including

17 students who will be able to do those kinds of

18 orientations and, you know, providing good

19 information in an--in an ongoing way. And then the

20 kinds of programs that Suri was describing also

21 introduced college as a more tangible possibility

22 than a lot of people sitting at Rikers would have

23 thought before they got to participate even in

24 something that's very short-term like that.

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: And just the
3 last question. How much of an obstacle is the high
4 education or a GED in order--in order for you to
5 recruit enough students? How many--I know it's
6 difficult in Rikers. When I visited the high school
7 that they have there for--and the GED program for the
8 inmates because there just aren't enough teachers for
9 the various different levels the students are at, and
10 sometimes classes can be very distractive, and it's
11 just not fair. But it seems as if the Department of
12 Education here in the city and probably in any state
13 correctional facility I mean you have to be able to
14 prepare the inmate for the time the they're ready to
15 take the higher education class. And you want to be
16 able to do that if somebody is sentenced to a
17 significant amount of time, and they don't have the
18 basics of the high school education. Have you found
19 that at Otisville, and do you see obstacles here in
20 the City?

21 ANN JACOBS: We recruit--I'm going to let
22 you answer this in just a second. We recruit from
23 more than Otisville. We're--so we're in a number of
24 correctional facilities and then they get transferred
25 to Otisville, if they're accepted in the program. And

2 you're absolutely right, you know, people end up in
3 prison with low educational levels, and as I said
4 before education isn't getting the attention and the
5 resources that would make sense. I mean what a great
6 use of people's time, and what's more, they want to
7 do it, right? But as our prison system grew, it
8 became a very big challenge to correctional
9 administrators just to keep up with housing the
10 population and doing the mandated healthcare and
11 education funding including federal funding for--for
12 prison education has fallen precipitously. So,
13 there's probably a much--um, there's probably no
14 better investment that could be made except, you
15 know, we also advocates for alternatives to
16 incarceration. You know there are--there are a whole
17 lot of people who are in prison who don't need to be
18 there. And if they were better served in our
19 schools, and kept in our schools, and if there were
20 more robust options available, and New York has some
21 of those. Yeah, we could--we could reduce the
22 population in the state prison much further and
23 provide more education.

24 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: So while--while all
25 of that is true, and I think that there should be an

2 investment in education at every level both outside
3 and inside prisons, you know, when we do our
4 recruitment, as Ann said, we recruit from four
5 different correctional--three other correctional
6 facilities in addition to Otisville. And just to
7 give you a sense of the interest and the--the number
8 of students that are eligible that this past year in
9 our recruitment for the--the current academic year,
10 we provided outreach over the--the four facilities
11 where we do recruitment, and we provided outreach to
12 525 men who had a high school diploma and who were
13 otherwise eligible for our program. So there's
14 interesting, desire. We provided the CUNY Assessment
15 Test to over 150 of those--of those men. So there's
16 definitely interest and--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Just--I don't
18 want to interrupt but the four other facilities were
19 they based on the proximity to Otisville, and did it
20 matter what the inmate or the prisoner was sentenced
21 to?

22 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: So it does not
23 matter what they were--well, it matters what they
24 were sentenced. It doesn't matter what they were
25 sentenced for. We--our eligibility criteria was that

2 we look for students who are returning to the New
3 York City Metropolitan area so that they can be CUNY
4 students when they come home, and that they are
5 living one to five years of release. So that number
6 encompasses them, and the facilities where we do our
7 outreach, we really focus on facilities that don't
8 currently have a college program. So that we're
9 serving students who wouldn't be served by another--
10 by another college program and can provide access to
11 as wide of a number of individuals as possible.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Great. It's a
13 great program. I want to thank again the Chair for
14 having this hearing, and add my name to the
15 resolution that we're hearing today, and I'll do
16 whatever I can to work together to make sure that we
17 can expand your program to more people because it
18 certainly does bring down the recidivism rates.
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, Council
21 Member Crowley. We've been joined also by Council
22 Member Jumaane Williams, and I do have some more
23 questions and then perhaps my colleague if he's read
24 the testimony might have some questions. So you said
25 there were 525 men who were--who had GEDs or high

2 school, and was it that 150 of them applied out of
3 that number?

4 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: Yes, so we provide
5 outreach and do information sessions--

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

7 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: --to anyone who
8 meet our criteria, and then they're allowed to self-
9 selected. I am interested in doing this.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

11 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: I want to do this.
12 So the testing were for folks who actually signed up
13 to take the CUNY Assessment Test.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, and of 100
15 and--of those who--what percentage passed the CUNY
16 Assessment Test?

17 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: That's a great
18 question, and I know Ann was just signaling me to get
19 to that point, right.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

21 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: So one of the--over
22 the course of the last five years, we've seen that
23 there's about a 50% pass rate among the incarcerated
24 students that we provide the CUNY Assessment to and
25 we test to. And in response to that, we've developed

2 a number of developmental ed programs where we
3 provide students with the CUNY Assessment Test, and
4 then do short-term six to eight-week developmental ed
5 programs, and test them again to help pass--to help
6 them get over the hump and pass the--the CUNY
7 Assessment Test afterwards. Another thing that I'd
8 like to point about the CUNY Assessment Test we're
9 providing CUNY's official admissions exam or
10 assessment exam, and that the scores on that exam are
11 good for a period of ten years. So even if students
12 are not interested in or do not for a number of
13 reasons make it into the Prison to College Pipeline,
14 they are still being prepared to become CUNY students
15 in the community because those scores are logged
16 centrally at CUNY and--and we'll follow them and are
17 good for a period of 10 years.

18 [background comments]

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: For those students--
20 for those students who are detained in the system who
21 are at different facilities, are they transferred to
22 Otisville so that they can participate?

23 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: Yes, so we have a
24 wonderful relationship with the Department of
25 Corrections and Community Supervision, and as long as

2 the students want to come to the program, have passed
3 all of the--you know, they work with us to transfer
4 the students to Otisville in time for them to begin
5 the academic year.

6 ANN JACOBS: But the practicalities of--
7 of prison life are such that some people who want the
8 education will not elect to transfer because
9 Otisville--

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh, interesting.

11 ANN JACOBS: -- doesn't have trailer
12 visit. It's a little harder for their families to
13 visit. They might be involved in another program
14 like Puppies Behind Bars and they've reached a
15 certain kind of status. And those generate special
16 consideration for release. So there's a whole, you
17 know, kind of interrelated set of considerations.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: But we need to have
19 more sites, more locations where we have this
20 program.

21 ANN JACOBS: I think that's true.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So that is not just
23 concentrated there.

24 ANN JACOBS: I agree with you.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Um, I have
3 another question if I can find it here. So how many
4 students are in your program at a given point in
5 Otisville?

6 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: So the program at
7 Otisville we enroll approximately 20 students a year.

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Uh-huh.

9 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: And as you can tell
10 from the number of students we do outreach to and the
11 number of students take and pass the exam, we're
12 serving, you know, because of funding--

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yeah.

14 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: --a limited number
15 of students that we could--could be serving, and then
16 we have--we also have a developmental ed program at
17 Queensboro, um, Correctional Facility where we serve
18 approximately 60 students a year in that--in that
19 Developmental Ed Program.

20 ANN JACOBS: We also considered the
21 learning exchange--the John Jay students that
22 participate in the Learning Exchange get enormous
23 value out of this also. Um, so, you know, we keep
24 track of how many those are, and 10 new students each
25 year. And then there's this kind of cumulative effect

2 where there are people out in the community. I don't
3 know the number of that.

4 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: Twenty-two.

5 ANN JACOBS: Twenty-two people out in the
6 community now plus the Learning Exchange, you know,
7 so students so that we are very consciously investing
8 in the development of the supportive community for
9 people after they're released, too, and that's very
10 consistent with the College Initiative values.

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I'm also very
12 pleased to see that there is a guarantee for those
13 students who maintain a certain GPA to be enrolled at
14 a--to be guaranteed a spot at CUNY. How--how many
15 students have taken advantage of that, and what kinds
16 of--I did hear you mention there's a team, but what
17 kinds of support does that team, is that team able to
18 offer those students?

19 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: Sure. So we--we
20 currently have eight students enrolled in CUNY
21 institutions including Devon.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Uh-huh.

23 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: Um, and the--the--
24 and then there's a number of students. I believe
25 there's about--there's an additional four students

2 who are in the pipeline to--to enroll in the spring.
3 And, you know, we--part of what that takes is that
4 team, right? And so we're partnered with the Osborne
5 Association, who works with the students actually
6 before they are released to provide a reentry plan to
7 talk through what supports they're going to need.
8 Contact family members and say is this a safe place
9 for your family member to return to? So that a
10 number of those things are kind of set in place
11 before the student returns home, and then partnering
12 and working a college initiative to go through what
13 the enrollment and transfer process would be. So
14 that's--that's part of the community. And I also
15 have to say and I think Devon would agree with me
16 that the faculty and the students I've met in the
17 Learning Exchanges have also been amazing resource.
18 Within two weeks of a student coming home, we have
19 them come to John Jay to do a tour of the campus, and
20 to see the community that they've been contributing
21 to. I know without fail there's always a faculty
22 member or learning exchange students that's there
23 that goes oh, my gosh. So there's really, you know,
24 the faculty and the--and the--and the students are
25 also a huge part of--of that community.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes. Well, we just
3 recently celebrated the 50th Anniversary of John Jay,
4 a great occasion and they are doing great work. They
5 are in leadership of that, and we're so pleased to
6 know about that. Okay, Council Member Williams, do
7 you have any questions? We've also been joined by
8 Council Member Laurie Cumbo.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you,
10 Madam Chair, for having this, and thank you everybody
11 who's here and thank you for the testimony. I'm
12 sorry I missed--missed it, but I did browse through
13 it. Congratulations. Is it Mr. Simmons? Is that
14 it?

15 DEVON SIMMONS: Uh-huh.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Congratulations
17 for all the work you've been doing. Thank you all
18 for all the work you're continuing to do. This
19 question may have been answered, but just for my
20 opinion, I just want to know how students learn about
21 the--the program?

22 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: So we do
23 recruitment in a number of New York State facilities,
24 but we do recruitment for correctional facilities
25 throughout the state, and we--it's--it's word of

2 mouth after that. You know, we go in and let them
3 know what--what to expect from the program and what
4 they can get.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: So when you
6 recruit, it's about then when they finish or is it
7 about class that's in--while they're still
8 incarcerated?

9 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: It's we--so we
10 provide credit bearing college courses inside of one
11 correctional facility, Otisville Correctional
12 Facility. So we literally travel to four different
13 correctional facilities and tell prospective students
14 that this is an option for them, that they can enroll
15 in credit bearing college courses while they are
16 incarcerated and that we will help them transition to
17 CUNY in the community when they're released.

18 ANN JACOBS: And that is, in fact, what
19 she's doing now. She's traveling to correctional
20 facilities making these presentations, allowing
21 people to sign up to take the test. We will go back
22 and do the test, and then people have the opportunity
23 to reply and be interviewed for the class that will
24 started next fall. It's a long process.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: And how does
3 Otis--how does Otisville able to pay for it?

4 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: Otisville does not
5 pay for any of it. We privately fundraise to--to
6 support the program.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: So this is not
8 any government funded. This is just private funding?

9 ANN JACOBS: We were very lucky that, um,
10 Jeff Aubrey put some money into the state budget for
11 us. We get \$100,000 a year in the state budget
12 through DCJS. So however the majority of the program
13 is privately fundraised through foundations, the Ford
14 Foundation, the David Rockefeller Fund, in--like--
15 like our colleagues who run other college programs in
16 other state facilities, it's privately funded.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: How much does
18 it cost?

19 ANN JACOBS: (laughs) Well, we're going
20 to get back to you with better details.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Oh, I see.

22 ANN JACOBS: But it basically costs--

23 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: So the--

24 ANN JACOBS: The--the group, the total
25 number doesn't matter 'cause then you have to look

2 up--Well, what would you say the yearly cost for one
3 student is?

4 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: The yearly cost for
5 one students is between \$5,500 and \$7,500.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: \$7,500?

7 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: Yes.

8 ANN JACOBS: That's--that's because we're
9 paying the direct tuition costs. I mean the truth
10 is--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I see.

12 ANN JACOBS: --that it is a larger number
13 when you factor--when you factor in the staff and--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I was going to
15 say that's good. [laughter]

16 ANN JACOBS: But it's a bargain
17 nonetheless.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: It is, it is.

19 ANN JACOBS: CUNY is a bargain.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Absolutely.

21 ANN JACOBS: There's no question about
22 that.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I'm a CUNY baby
24 twice so I definitely believe in it. Um, you know,
25 it's obvious to me, and I think once everyone sees

2 the statistics how beneficial educating a person
3 first of all--educating them properly before they go
4 to prison, um, many people come from communities
5 where their option wasn't there the way that it
6 should be. But then to cut down on the recidivism
7 educating them while they're in prison. But it's
8 always a bunch of pushback. And so, my question is
9 how--how do we make this be a tough on crime
10 approach? Because people keep saying we have to get
11 tough on crime. They're usually not meaning this.
12 They're usually meaning lock up as many Black and
13 brown men as humanly possible, um, which we know does
14 not--does not provide the result that we want to see.
15 So I just have a--just from an organizing point of
16 view, how can we transition this through a tough on
17 crime kind of stance and to help elected officials
18 speak on it because a lot of times they're responding
19 to what they think constituents want them to say.

20 ANN JACOBS: I think that, um, we're
21 enjoying a little bit of a respite from the tough on
22 crime kind of conversation. It think that it's--it's
23 always troubling to me that there's this expectation
24 of us being able to defend things as evidence based,
25 but in fact there is an extensive evidence base that

2 shows the value of higher education for people when
3 they[re incarcerated. There is data from the Rand
4 Corporation that says it reduces recidivism and it
5 increases employability. And for people who have
6 that kind of knee jerk reaction of kids not cons,
7 they evidence doesn't seem to make any difference.
8 So, my boss, Jeremy Travis, the President of John Jay
9 College, who also chaired the National Academy of
10 Sciences' Report on the Causes and Cons--Causes and
11 Consequences of Mass Incarceration--thinks that we
12 need to shift the conversation to one of values,
13 values of parsimony and proportionality and social
14 justice and citizenship. And make the--the values
15 based appeal. The data is there for people who want
16 to do the cost benefit analysis, but I think that,
17 you know, some of it is just that we've allowed this
18 kind of false dichotomy to--to be perpetuated. By--
19 by giving Pell to an incarcerated student it isn't
20 taking away from the CO's kid getting Pell. You
21 know, that's not the way that Pell works, and even at
22 its, you know, maximum use, the--the amount of Pell
23 that went for incarcerated students was less than one
24 percent. So it's a false kind of argument. And I
25 think that it just takes a principled stand of enough

2 people saying it's not true, and the good--the good
3 news is that some people in the general public stand
4 with us now. This is not just a conversation that's
5 occurring among criminal justice advocates who are
6 informed elected officials. There are members of the
7 public who get it and who are willing to--to weigh
8 in, and that's part of why the foundation world is
9 funding this again.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you. I
11 agree. I think there's maybe a little bit of
12 respite. I hear some of our--our Republican
13 Americans talking about issues that occurred
14 particularly in the Reagan-Bush--Bush and, um, even
15 our beloved President Clinton that put us in a spot
16 that we--we shouldn't necessarily be in. But I'm
17 not--I'm not sure that that's going to convert to the
18 dollars and the changes that we need. So I mean I'm
19 glad that people are speaking about it, but to
20 actually--for the changes is another thing. But I'm--
21 -I really will take some of what you said and see if
22 I can use it in some of my language. (coughs) If I'm
23 honest, a lot of it I believe people get upset when
24 it's brought up, but I think a lot of it obviously
25 has to do with race and how we look at the Black

2 communities and how we look at Black men in
3 particular, and the fear that that instills. I think
4 if people thought of the people in prison as a
5 different population, there would be a different
6 response. The changes have often occurred because of
7 who people believed were the recipients of this. And
8 so I think it's similar here, but hopefully we can
9 continue this on the right path that we're on. But
10 thank you very much, and congratulations again.

11 DEVON SIMMONS: Thank you.

12 ANN JACOBS: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, Council
14 Member Williams. My take on those who talk about
15 tough on crime is that we have this crisis of mass
16 incarceration based on the fact that there is
17 systemic racism in the United States. We know that
18 the Criminal Justice System disproportionately
19 incarcerates Black and brown men and women for the
20 same crimes that are committed by White men and
21 women. So tough on crime for me is--is a cloud.
22 It's a smoke screen because it gives cover to the
23 fact that there's mass incarceration at a
24 disproportionate level of Black and brown.

2 We know also that New York City's policy
3 of Broken Windows--you know that quite well, Council
4 Member. Disproportionately attacked and targeted
5 Black and brown people, and it was found
6 unconstitutional so it was modified. We know that
7 judges have judicial discretion, and too often it
8 does not weigh equally for Black and brown. So when
9 people talk to me about being tough on crime, I talk
10 to them about, as you know, some of the solutions are
11 in those very things that were highlighted as the
12 conditions that exist in those communities.
13 Educational opportunity that is abysmal. Housing
14 that is decrepit. We don't have the appropriate job
15 opportunities, and an education system honestly that
16 has deteriorated exponentially under the Bloomberg
17 years. So that we are now in the situation that
18 we're in. So the other part is that this program
19 talks about improving the success of reentry, and I
20 don't think that anyone should be opposed to putting
21 efforts into improving that and reducing recidivism.
22 It just does not always happen in a way that's
23 effective. So we want to make sure that we advance
24 that program. I did have I think another question.
25 Yes. Of the students that complete your program, do

2 they particularly address themselves to one or two
3 colleges more than others, or is it dispersed
4 throughout CUNY?

5 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: That's a great
6 question. So our students have access to any of the-
7 -

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

9 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: --the CUNY
10 institutions. Our students all have--have tended to
11 enroll in either Hostos Community College or John
12 Jay, and I think, you know, why that is, is because
13 we've built so such a strong--

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

15 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: --community, um,
16 between the faculty members and the students from
17 Hostos and--and John Jay. Um, but Devon and I were
18 talking on the train over here and, you know, we were
19 what would it look like to go to Columbia and what
20 would it look like to go to some other--you know to
21 another CUNY institution. So I think that part of it
22 is about the--the--the network in the community in
23 those first few months and years when--after you come
24 home.

25 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Uh-huh.

2 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: But I think that
3 our--our students understand that--that the world is
4 open to them, and that that's what higher education
5 makes possible.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Do any of my
7 colleagues have any other questions? No, okay.
8 Well, I want to thank you so much. You've been very
9 informative, and once again, showing CUNY to be in
10 leadership in those issues that are important in
11 making justice prevail more in our communities. So
12 we want to thank you for that.

13 BIANCA VAN HEYDOORN: Thank you.

14 DEVON SIMMONS: Thank you for having me.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Is it just two?

16 LEGAL COUNSEL: These are legal
17 advocates.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. I'll call the
19 next panel. We'll have Gabby Star from NYU College
20 of Arts and Science, and we'll have Ronald F. Day
21 from the Fortune Society. If you'd come and take
22 seats, we'd appreciate it.

23 [background comments, pause]

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: If you would raise
25 your right hand, please. I'd like to swear you in.

2 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
3 nothing but the truth in your testimony before this
4 committee, and to answer all questions truthfully.

5 Thank you. Please introduce yourself, and we are
6 going to be on the clock, and so we're going to ask
7 each person who's presenting to present your remarks
8 in three minutes.

9 GABRIELLE STARR: Good afternoon or good
10 morning. My name Thank you, Madam Chair, for this
11 opportunity to testify. Thank you to the Counselors
12 who are here. I've submitted my testimony. So I
13 won't read it. I would just call your attention to a
14 few things that I think are particularly important.
15 NYU started a--

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Can you get a little
17 closer to the mic?

18 GABRIELLE STARR: Oh, certainly.

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you.

20 GABRIELLE STARR: NYU started a program
21 enrollment (sic) to a correctional facility this past
22 year that offers an associate of arts degree to men.
23 It's a medium security prison. It was a site that
24 was granted to us by the Department of Corrections
25 because it has students who are--would be leaving in

2 five years or fewer, the majority of them. Most of
3 those men are residents when they are not in the
4 facility of New York City, about 55% of them, and we
5 have a strong partnership with two institutions. One
6 is the Center for New Leadership, which helps us to
7 provide counseling for students who have completed
8 our program or who are headed out home to help them
9 with reentry. We also have a tight relationship with
10 the Borough of Manhattan Community College for
11 students who have not completed their associate's
12 degree, but are released. They may finish their
13 associate's degree at the MCC, and if they complete
14 our program, and are granted an AA, then they are
15 eligible to continue at NYU to study. We are
16 currently fundraising for scholarships for those
17 students. The program is funded almost entirely by
18 the Ford Foundation who gave us a grant last year,
19 and now by the Mellon Foundation who has granted us
20 additional instructional funds this year. Our total
21 costs for operating it when we add in all of the
22 administrative costs is almost a quarter of a million
23 dollars a year, and that includes transportation to
24 and from the facility. We pay our instructors who
25 are regular NYU faculty. It's the Administrative

2 Support Provision of Computers and materials to
3 students.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: All right.

5 GABRIELLE STARR: I figured I'd let you
6 ask me other things you wanted to know.

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Thank you.
8 I'll ask questions after the next panelist. Thank
9 you.

10 RONALD DAY: Thank you Chair Inez for
11 calling this hearing together. I appreciate being
12 here. My name is Ronald Day and I'm Associate Vice
13 President at the Fortune Society over our David
14 Rothenberg Center for Public Policy. And I'm going
15 to start by saying funding college prison programs
16 through Pell Grants are indisputably a cost-effective
17 means or reducing recidivism and achieving public
18 safety. They send a message that America is ready
19 to--to acknowledge that it's historically punitive
20 restrictive and non-rehabilitative approach is
21 incarceration is antiquated and ineffective.
22 Reinstating Pell and TAP for that matter sends the
23 message that we as a society are wanting to own the
24 failures of our public school system, and demonstrate
25 that we truly believe in second chances. Moreover,

2 college prison programs is one small, but significant
3 step in stopping the revolving door that so many
4 criminal justice individuals go through when they re-
5 enter society with little to no education or
6 marketable skills. People make bad choices.

7 Politicians are people. Therefore, politicians make
8 bad choices, too. I remember the day in 1994 when

9 that bad decision resonated through the prison

10 system. I remember vividly because my education

11 odyssey began in prison. I entered the prison system

12 with only a GED, but enrolled in college almost

13 immediately after arriving at Sing-Sing Correction

14 Facility. I was able to earn 51 college credits

15 before the funding was cut, but it was disheartening

16 to know that the rug had been snatched out from under

17 myself and others. However, my desire and commitment

18 to earn a college degree never waned. Since my

19 release eight years ago, I completed my bachelor's of

20 science degree, graduated with a master's degree with

21 honors, and am fourth year criminal justice doctoral

22 student. And I taught for six semesters at John Jay

23 in the Masters in Public Administration Program, and

24 I'll be teaching in the program that was just

25 mentioned at Otisville in December. So at the

2 Fortune Society I interact regularly with people who
3 do not have access to higher education while
4 incarcerated and see them struggle now to catch up.
5 They desire to achieve and thoroughly reintegrate
6 into society. Their desire is tremendous. However,
7 their ability to focus on higher education when there
8 are so many competing priorities often makes the
9 process particularly challenging.

10 Pell Grant programs in prison are
11 established, again cost-effective and tested means of
12 preparing people to return to society for the demands
13 of maintaining a crime free productive life. Even
14 though it was taken away from me 21 years go, I know
15 that my own experience as a Pell Grant beneficiary
16 set me on a career path where I stand today. I fret
17 to think how my life would be different without
18 education. [bell] Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you very much.
20 We know the great work that the Fortune Society does-
21 -

22 RONALD DAY: Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --and that they are
24 a leader in this area. I want to commend you for
25 your persistence, and I can only imagine what it was

2 like with the desire to want to get that degree, and
3 then, you know, have it so abruptly terminated, not
4 even phased out, and saying those that are in it, you
5 know, you can continue until you finish. But, we
6 commend you for your persistence and for the model
7 that you offer to those who are perhaps presently in
8 situations that you looked at in the past. In terms
9 of the testimony, I have a couple of questions if I
10 can find the right one. I know it's here. So, you
11 said the cost, Ms. Starr, was \$250,000 to operate the
12 program. How many students benefitted from that, and
13 are all of those students at one location or are they
14 dispersed because you mentioned the opportunity for
15 them to attend other schools when they come out.

16 GABRIELLE STARR: All of our students are
17 currently at Wallkill. It's in Ulster County, which
18 is about two hours away. We asked the Department of
19 Corrections for a facility that was close enough to
20 the city that our faculty could travel. And the
21 total cost--

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Could you pull a
23 little closer to the mic?

24 GABRIELLE STARR: Yes. We have currently
25 50--about 52 students who are in the program and, um,

2 but there are 18 non-enrolled students who
3 participate in some of the other activities like the
4 book club that we have. We have other learning
5 opportunities for students who have not yet enrolled.
6 The total cost, most of them are structural. I think
7 this is what my colleague from CUNY was--was pointing
8 that the individual cost per student don't get to
9 those. It's--it's going to cost us a certain amount
10 no matter how--

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right, right.

12 GABRIELLE STARR: --what the foundation
13 shows on leadership. (sic)

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: You can only accept
15 so many students, right.

16 GABRIELLE STARR: And then there's a lot
17 we provide in kinds that's not included in that. So,
18 for example, our law school has a reentry clinic, and
19 the leader of that clinic Tony Thompson has his
20 students who work with--as part of their own
21 coursework. So that there are other costs that
22 aren't included in that.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And so these are the
24 faculty that's involved with these students or NYU
25 faculty what are some of the courses that they offer?

2 How are you able to have students actually come out
3 with and associate's degree did you say?

4 GABRIELLE STARR: Yes, ma'am. So the--

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So how is it
6 structured?

7 GABRIELLE STARR: The quick one that we
8 have is a liberal arts curriculum that is exactly the
9 same as what we offer in one of our programs, a
10 liberal studies program, and it is adjusted to--to
11 some--to some degree as any good teacher would do to
12 the interests of the students.

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Uh-huh.

14 GABRIELLE STARR: There's a global, our
15 great books curriculum, which students are given
16 their foundations and culture in world history.
17 There's intensive writing. There's quantitative
18 reasoning that students are--are given, um, as well
19 as the opportunity for electives that go outside of
20 that liberal arts core. We think that teaching
21 liberal arts and to incarcerated individuals is
22 actually crucial because many students who come to
23 these facilities they have been-- What--what I like
24 to think about is they've been representatives of
25 diversity, but they have not experienced very diverse

2 environments many of them because of the segregation
3 which is fundamental to many of our neighborhoods.
4 What that means is that in order for them to be able
5 to transition to lives that match their potential, we
6 need to understand how to cross cultures. So the
7 liberal arts is the best foundation for that. In
8 addition--in addition, our Social Work School, our
9 School of Culture, Education and Human Development,
10 and our Gallatin School of Individual Studies are
11 also offering elective courses to students that can
12 help them explore some of their professional
13 aspirations.

14 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: How many course
15 offerings do you have each semester at Wallkill?

16 GABRIELLE STARR: Right now we're pretty
17 limited. I believe this semester we have five
18 courses that are running studies. We would like to
19 expand the program. I think there's a huge amount of
20 interest. There's a great first among these men at
21 Wallkill for higher education, and our first class we
22 had. We started relatively small with about 30
23 students. There were over 100 applications for those
24 students, and we could have taken many, many more
25 that applied.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So what are the--
3 what are the criteria to be selected?

4 GABRIELLE STARR: So we use a version of
5 the common application, which all NYU students fill
6 out that requires an essay as well as we do an
7 assessment individually of the work that they've
8 completed up to that point. They're required to have
9 a high school diploma or the GED, and then they're
10 admitted based on whether or not we believe that we
11 can do--they can do the level of college work, which
12 we demand of them.

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And how many credits
14 can they take each semester?

15 GABRIELLE STARR: Each semester. They're
16 part-time students. They limited to eight credits.
17 Part of that has to do with--one of the things we
18 have to do is be in compliance with all state laws
19 about the length of contact hours. And so, for a
20 four-credit course that's a certain amount--

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right

22 GABRIELLE STARR: --of time per week, and
23 we teach the same time that we do at our campus here
24 in the city. So that does limit just there the

2 amount of time that the individuals participants have
3 during the day from their other obligations.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And it is one
5 faculty member per course so that--

6 GABRIELLE STARR: We have one course that
7 actually is being team taught by two faculty members
8 this semester, but generally it's one faculty member
9 per course.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Do you have any
11 questions? Yes. Council Member Laurie Cumbo.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [off mic] Thank
13 you. [pause] [on mic] Hi, good afternoon. Thank
14 you, Madam Chair, for calling this important hearing.
15 I'm really excited about the NYU program, and wanted
16 to ask are the professors that teaching in the
17 Wallkill Correctional Facility are they also active
18 professors at NYU proper in terms of on your camps?
19 Are they professors that are teaching on the campus
20 at that particular time.

21 GABRIELLE STARR: Yes, they're part of
22 our regular faculty. They do so teach out of load,
23 meaning that we, um, as our colleagues at CUNY tried
24 to keep a separation between--we're a tuition driven
25 institution. So we have tuition from students that

2 have generally fund our enterprise, and we didn't
3 want to move that tuition, um, over to the prison
4 program. So we pay faculty who teach an extra class
5 on top of their regular duties, and they travel up to
6 Wallkill in the evenings. They usually go together.
7 There are two who are teaching that evening usually
8 go together. That helps us to keep costs down, but
9 it is our regular faculty. One, our director is an
10 extraordinary faculty member for history and social
11 and cultural analysis, Neman Kill Sing (sic). We
12 have participants Andrew Ross is planning on teaching
13 a course who got his faculty Cho Enchuwalla (sp?)
14 who's teaching a semester and George Schulman. These
15 are really, really extraordinary people.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: What are the
17 majors that the students can come away with?

18 GABRIELLE STARR: Well, they only come
19 with one single degree in liberal studies, an
20 associate's degree, but there's enough room. Liberal
21 studies is at NYU, a pipeline program that leads to
22 all of the schools. So students begin in the liberal
23 studies program and then they can transition to the
24 Stern School of Business to the College of Arts and
25 Science and many of our other schools. So it's the

2 exact same curriculum, and it really is a broad
3 liberal arts basis that then could move to one of the
4 other programs.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Now, this is a
6 relatively new program. I'm also a graduate of NYU,
7 still paying for it, 40 years old. How will they
8 upon graduation--upon leaving the correctional
9 facility, what resources are available for them to be
10 able to afford the tuition? Because NYU's tuition is
11 quite expensive.

12 GABRIELLE STARR: So this is the purpose
13 of fundraising. Um, so my view on it is my view on
14 any transfer student who applies to the College of
15 Arts and Science. Um, we do have some financial aid
16 that's available. I've pledged out of my financial
17 aid budget in the college that I will fund at least
18 five students to the extent of their full financial
19 need to attend. And when I go out to donors, when I
20 raise money I'll only ever raise money for
21 scholarships. And when I go out to donors, I'm
22 asking them to fund this program.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I see. What is
24 the ideal amount of students that you all would like

2 to service through this program, or what do you think
3 your capacity is?

4 GABRIELLE STARR: Um, so the capacity at
5 Wallkill is limited by a couple of things. It's
6 partially limited by space in the facility because
7 you need adequate classrooms in order to teach
8 people. So it's there's a hard cap there. So there
9 is probably an upper bound at Wallkill of about 100
10 students base on space limitations. I'm not exactly
11 sure of that figure. I can provide it to the Council
12 more accurately. We would be perfectly willing to
13 expand the program. Since we are fully privately
14 funded, we are not going to participate in the Pell
15 program, though, we do believe it would be an
16 extraordinary thing if other colleges began to move
17 into more facilities.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Fantastic. Thank
19 you very much and wanted to ask a question of Mr.
20 Day. Really was inspired by your testimony and the
21 way that you've been able to transform your
22 experiences into a powerful one to implement and to
23 help others. In your testimony something that was
24 interesting to me was that you stated, I was able to
25 earn 51 college credits before the funding was cut.

2 RONALD DAY: Uh-huh.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: But it was
4 disheartening to know that the rug had been snatched
5 out from under me and others. I wanted to know when
6 that program was pulled, what was it then replaced
7 with? What did your days then look like in terms of
8 you're not given this education opportunity. So now
9 was it replaced with something else? Was there
10 something else going on to occupy your time, or did
11 that just go into dead space time where nothing
12 productive was happening?

13 RONALD DAY: It was--that's a great
14 question. For myself I tried to take advantage of my
15 incarceration. So even after the funding for the
16 program was cut, I looked for other opportunities in
17 the facility, but there were no educational programs
18 of that magnitude that allowed you to earn college
19 credits at the time. I--this happened to me when I
20 was in Green Haven Correctional Facility.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Uh-huh.

22 RONALD DAY: So once the funding was cut,
23 that was it. So I went to work in the law library
24 after--after that. So that was an opportunity for me
25 to continue to be educated, but not to use that

2 particular education formally in a--in an academic
3 setting.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Well, others, what
5 did other individuals find themselves doing once that
6 program was cut? You had the opportunity to work in
7 the law library--

8 RONALD DAY: Yes.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: --which might not
10 be open to everyone.

11 RONALD DAY: Sure.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: What were other
13 things that people found themselves engaged in after
14 that?

15 RONALD DAY: Well, there--there were
16 [laughs] not a lot of opportunities in the prison
17 setting once the funding was cut. So people went to
18 portal jobs. They went to vocational programs that
19 did not provide for opportunities in the community
20 because anyone who knows about--about vocational
21 programs inside the correctional facilities, often
22 they provide antiquated skills. Not jobs. Not
23 skills that you actually can apply once you make the
24 transition. So there were programs that people got
25 involved in, but not the type of programs that we

2 know of that are evidence based that are part of the
3 what works, um, process that actually reduces
4 recidivism, and increases public safety.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I think your
6 journey is just so inspiring and fascinating, and
7 also you stated, Since my release eight years ago, I
8 can completed my Bachelor's in Science Degree,
9 graduated with a Master's Degree and honors, and am
10 now a fourth year criminal justice doctoral student.
11 Um, can you describe just briefly the path that upon
12 your release to finding yourself in an opportunity to
13 receive your degree, what happened in that interim
14 period, and how were you connected to that
15 educational experience?

16 RONALD DAY: Sure. So, because the
17 college opportunity was available to me, immediately
18 upon entering the prison system--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Uh-huh.

20 RONALD DAY: --my quest to earn a college
21 degree like I said it never waned. So I was fully
22 committed to continuing to do that, and when I was
23 inside, I got in contact with a program called the
24 College Initiative, and it's now one of the programs
25 at John Jay. It's sponsored by John Jay, and Benay

2 Rubenstein started the program. I sent her a letter,
3 and Cheryl Wilkins who's in the audience now was one
4 of the staff working there. They were at Lehman
5 College at the time. I went and I sat down and
6 talked to them, and they explained what the process
7 would be like for someone who's interested in earning
8 a college degree who had begun the process on the
9 inside. And to this day because I'm still pursuing a
10 degree, I'm actively involved in the College
11 Initiative Program. I was a mentor when the
12 Mentoring Program first started, and again, I want to
13 see other individuals have opportunities like I've
14 had--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Uh-huh.

16 RONALD DAY: --and there are not a lot of
17 them. So, you know, I try to again provide
18 mentorships to individuals who are also making the
19 transition.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: And just my final
21 question for you because I just want to have an
22 understanding of how this happens. Is it because of
23 your drive and your determination, as you say, your
24 desire never waned.

25 RONALD DAY: Right.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Is it because of
3 that that you feel that you were in that position or
4 do you feel that if you didn't have that drive, if
5 you didn't have that desire, the--the concept or the
6 idea of a college degree would have been impressed
7 upon you?

8 RONALD DAY: Yeah.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Like there was--
10 there would--that actively people would have been
11 trying to recruit you or put you into the zone of
12 this lifestyle? Or is more because of your own drive
13 that you then found yourself in that situation?

14 RONALD DAY: Another great question. I
15 mean motivation and drive is a component of anyone's
16 success, right?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Uh-huh.

18 RONALD DAY: So it--it is essential, but
19 there are--for folks who might not have the level of
20 drive that I have, there are many barriers that are
21 in place, right? Some colleges have the box on the
22 application, and they just flagrantly say if you have
23 been involved in the criminal justice system you are
24 not a student that we want.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Uh-huh.

2 RONALD DAY: And you see the--there was
3 an organization that did a study Center for Community
4 Alternatives and looked at this particular
5 phenomenon, and there are other colleges as well. I
6 mean I went to a SUNY school to complete my
7 undergraduate degree. They asked me a series of
8 questions. I had to provide all types of
9 documentation to show them that I was worthy of being
10 a SUNY student. You know, and those are the
11 impediments that other individuals might decide, you
12 know what, this college really doesn't want me. And
13 so sometimes people will say that, you know what, I'm
14 not even going to go through the process.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Uh-huh.

16 RONALD DAY: You know, there's the--
17 there's the old saying, you know, what happens to a
18 dream deferred? In this instance, a lot of people
19 have their dreams deferred, and they just decide it's
20 not worth it. They don't want to go through the
21 trouble, and the hassle, right, of going to a college
22 that doesn't probably want them in the first place.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: That's--that's a
24 key point in all of this that I'd like to know, too.
25 So for both programs, when you receive a degree or

2 you have to list it, do you often have to--do you
3 have to put that- Let's say I was formerly
4 incarcerated and I went through your program
5 initially and then graduated from NYU. Can I just
6 the way it's going to be listed and write out that I
7 went to NYU or do I--and how things have to be
8 documented does someone coming in have to say that it
9 took place at this--through this particular
10 correctional facility?

11 GABRIELLE STARR: It's a lay degree.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Oh, that's
13 fantastic. Okay. All right, those are all my
14 questions. Thank you very much.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. I want
16 to acknowledge we've been joined by Council Member
17 Vanessa Gibson who is also a member of this
18 committee. And I--you said that when you came back
19 to the community, you contacted John Jay and Lehman.
20 Who sponsored the program that afforded you the
21 opportunity to gain the 55 credits?

22 RONALD DAY: So, when I was incarcerated,
23 I was in Mercy College, right. That was my--my first
24 experience, and then when I--that was in Sing Sing
25 when I went to Green Haven it was Dutchess Community

2 College. So the program was funded fully by--by TAP
3 ad Pell.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay, and also I
5 just want to reiterate what you say. It's cost-
6 effective in terms of the money that is allocated for
7 this program. At its height it was one-tenth of one
8 percent that was dedicated, that was used for this.
9 That's nominal. That's the nominal. Um, I did have
10 another question also. Yes, um, in terms of the
11 program at NYU, did I hear you say that you were not-
12 -you don't anticipate using the Pell money for
13 continuation of that?

14 GABRIELLE STARR: Not in the start-up
15 period. Um, we are fully funded. In order for us to
16 begin to think about--so NYU charges NYU tuition,
17 right?

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: What is the NYU's
19 tuition. I'm sure that CUNY would be able to poke
20 their chest out a little bit.

21 GABRIELLE STARR: NYU's tuition is about
22 \$37,000--

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Per?

24 GABRIELLE STARR: --per student, per
25 year.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Per year. Okay.

3 GABRIELLE STARR: So it's a lot. Um,
4 and, you know, for Pell Grant students who are at
5 NYU, we generally in addition to the Pell Grant give
6 them a grant of on average a little bit over half of
7 tuition. So there's a lot left to pay at NYU after
8 Pell. Um, so for us it makes more sense to privately
9 fundraise to support this number of students, and we
10 think that's going to be our model going forward.
11 But we are a very young program.

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Council
13 Member, do you have any questions? No. Okay, well,
14 thank you so much. Oh, I did have another question.
15 You said that when students leave your program, they--
16 --they can have an associate's degree, and then you
17 identified several schools that you were having an
18 affiliation with. Is it NYU BMCC and the--?

19 GABRIELLE STARR: Yeah, it's the Borough
20 of Manhattan Community College because at NYU we
21 chose to provide an associate of arts degree because
22 for this particular facility that has students--the
23 students being there for that time, we thought that
24 was the appropriate degree. It's generally a two-
25 year degree as a full-time student, and we wanted

2 people to make significant progress toward actually
3 completing the degree. It's part of the success of
4 our program that people can actually complete the
5 entire degree. We think that's important, but NYU no
6 longer offers the--the--while it's still active and
7 approved by the state, we don't give the AA at NYU
8 any more as a terminal AA. Um, we--the students who
9 matriculate into the liberal studies program are
10 expected to transition to one of the four-year
11 programs. And as I said, the Stern School of
12 Business, the College of Arts and Science, the
13 Gallatin School of individualized Study. So students
14 had to have a place to land, and so we have an
15 articulation agreement with the Borough of Manhattan
16 Community College. They've been extraordinarily
17 supportive. It's a great institution, and we also
18 are curriculum matched in a way, and we actually have
19 a pipeline from BMCC to NYU as well.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Great. Another
21 credit, another feather in CUNY's cap.

22 GABRIELLE STARR: Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Yes, Council
24 Member.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I promise to be
3 brief. Just I wanted to ask. I was very fascinated
4 also and wanted to see what did that look like. My
5 district often--often works with Dr. Divine Pryor at
6 the Center for New Leadership, and just wanted to
7 know what does that partnership look like. Because
8 that would be my entry point in terms of being able
9 to participate or support this work?

10 GABRIELLE STARR: Um, Dr. Pryor passed
11 away actually this past year, which was actually
12 quite devastating to those who knew him. Um, it--the
13 partnership is currently being--

14 RONALD DAY: [off mic]

15 GABRIELLE STARR: Oh, shoot. God.

16 RONALD DAY: [off mic] Eddie Evans.
17 (sic) passed away, but Dr. Pryor is still holding
18 down the fort right now. [laughter]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Oh, my goes.

20 GABRIELLE STARR: Thank you. God.
21 Please ignore that statement. Um, so, um, we are
22 currently designing it because since we are in our
23 first year we haven't had anyone who's actually
24 graduated out of the program.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay.

2 GABRIELLE STARR: We subcontract with new
3 leadership to--they provide all of their reentry
4 counseling that they do in the community.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay.

6 GABRIELLE STARR: And they just have a
7 dedicated contract with us to provide those same
8 services. And then the legal support part comes from
9 NYU Law.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Oh, I see. Uh-
11 huh. Okay. I think that's a great partnership--

12 GABRIELLE STARR: Yeah, the leadership--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: --and an important
14 of this as well.

15 GABRIELLE STARR: --is great because they
16 work with families--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Uh-huh.

18 GABRIELLE STARR: --really to make sure
19 that when someone comes out they come into a world
20 that's ready for them, as ready for them as it can
21 be. Um, and so that was one of the reasons that we
22 chose New Leadership as our partner in this.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you very much
25 for your testimony. It was very enlightening and

2 inspiring as well. Thank you. I'll call the next
3 panel. Khalil Cumberbatch from Legal Action Center.
4 Farouk Abdallah from NYPIRG. Johnny Perez from the
5 Urban Center.

6 JOHNNY PEREZ: [off mic] The Urban
7 Justice Center.

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: The Urban Justice
9 Center. Cynthia Conti-Cook from the Legal Aid
10 Society. Please come up. Take your seat, and once
11 again, we're asking that you present your testimony--
12 we have three-minute--

13 [pause]

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: If you would raise
15 your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth,
16 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your
17 testimony before this committee, and to answer all
18 questions honestly?

19 PANEL MEMBER: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: You may begin.

21 [pause]

22 CYNTHIA CONTI-COOK: Good afternoon. My
23 name is Cynthia Conte-Cook. I'm from the Legal Aid
24 Society. I'm a staff attorney in the Special
25 Litigation Unit. The Legal Aid Society is happy to

2 endorse the Resolution of the City Council in support
3 of the President's Second Chance Pilot Program.

4 Thank you to Chair Barron and to the Higher Education
5 Committee for the opportunity to testify. I testify

6 today on behalf of the criminal defense practice with
7 the Special Litigation Unit, but also on behalf of

8 our Prisoner's Rights Project. Prisoners' Rights

9 Project has in the past brought litigation to enforce
10 the rights to general and special education for young

11 prisoners in the city jails. And while this

12 litigation involves secondary education rather than

13 college, the Prisoners' Rights Project staff have

14 been impressed during their work on it that the

15 strong desire of young people in jail to attend

16 school is the only means available to them to get

17 their lives back on track. And Prisoners' Rights

18 Project work with women prisoners at the Bedford

19 Hills Correctional Facility. Our staff has similarly

20 been struck by the importance of the women there gave

21 to the limited college programs available to them in

22 terms of both enhancing their chances of getting

23 employment and avoiding recidivism and of helping

24 them survive prison intact. They talk about how it

25 keeps them from losing their minds from idleness and

2 even more importantly how it makes them feel like
3 they've done something to help repair their
4 relationships with their families and children who
5 may feel terrible about having--have left behind. It
6 gives them a means to a sense of self-worth, which is
7 a critical component of a successful transition to
8 the outside world. Personally, I'm happy to be here.
9 I've seen first hand the hunger for a sophisticate--a
10 sophisticated college education as a volunteer in the
11 Bard Prison Initiative program we'll call it a decade
12 ago. I had the privilege of sitting through many
13 college courses in the prison. 85% of the barred
14 prisoners students were from New York City, and
15 witnessing the academic rigor of the students, and
16 the seriousness with which they took their classes
17 was an absolute honor. As is being able to have
18 maintained relationships with many of the--the
19 students after they have graduated from the program
20 and come home. And witnessing the opportunities that
21 college education has given many of them has been a
22 wonderful experience to have had.

23 So we're very pleased to see the Obama
24 Administration's efforts to restore educational
25 opportunities for prisoners even if it is--in a sort

2 of exception for the purposes of the study sort of
3 way. Expanding opportunities obviously reduces
4 recidivism, increases opportunities for employment
5 after release and saves our communities the cost of
6 incarceration. This view is no matter--no longer
7 just a matter of anecdote. The Rand Study obviously
8 has laid out the many ways that improves employment
9 opportunities and that it is cost-effective. [bell]
10 With such important results already established, it's
11 clear that expanded access to education is essential
12 to making progress, and helping to reduce the extreme
13 inequalities in our society. Thank you for this
14 opportunity.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you.

16 JOHNNY PEREZ: So good morning. My name
17 is Johnny Perez. I'm the Safe Reentry Advocate at
18 the Urban Justice Center Mental Health Project. I'm
19 also a father and I'm also a full-time student at
20 Saint Francis College in my third year. And to that
21 I don't come to you as an advocate or as a student.
22 I come to you as a person who was also formerly
23 incarcerated having served 13 years, and also finding
24 the transformative power of education throughout my
25 journey. As a society, we value human dignity, human

2 worth, and we value the--the possibility of what it
3 is to be--to be great, you know. And throughout my
4 travels, I have never, not once throughout the 13
5 years in prison met a criminal in my life. I only
6 met men who had an unrealized potential, and all of
7 them they always tell me the same thing. They ask me
8 questions like, Johnny, what am I going to do when I
9 get home? How am I going to get a job? You know, I
10 have kids to feed. You know, and it--it kind of
11 saddens me that they find themselves in place where
12 their life has been ending a lot of senseless way.
13 They become itemized inventory and property of the
14 New York State Correctional System. In my own
15 experience as a teenager, I was faced with situations
16 where a 15-year-old shouldn't have been faced with,
17 you know. When I was 15, I was trying to go--I
18 wasn't trying to decide whether I should go to band
19 camp or karate school or go jet skiing or something.
20 I was trying to decide which product(sic) I'm going
21 to take. I'm trying to decide how I'm going to help
22 my mother put food--food on the table for my
23 brothers. I was trying to decide which way I'm going
24 to go to school because I keep getting arrested for
25 even just hanging out in front of my own building.

2 Because of education, I came to see my own belief
3 system in a different way. I deconstructed it. I
4 asked myself why. Johnny, why do you feel
5 comfortable handling your problems with criminal
6 solutions? Why is it that your self-esteem is
7 directly connected to the amount of money that you
8 have in your pocket? And why do you willing to break
9 the law in order to put money in your pocket? Right?
10 And because of that, I came to see possibilities
11 where before I saw nothing, but challenges and
12 barriers. So suddenly the impossible--the impossible
13 became possible and my mind opened up, and I was able
14 to see myself in a different light, more than just a
15 criminal defendant. And I came to see that my mother
16 did not give birth to me to spend my days locked
17 inside of a human cage. Today, I've lectured in
18 places like Princeton, Fordham University, Cornell
19 Law School. I've spoken at the U.N. I've lectured--
20 next week I have to lecture at NYU Law, as a matter
21 of fact. I'm in countless documentaries, you know,
22 and I ask myself, you know, I ask myself how is it
23 possible that, you know, although it's a no-brainer
24 to educate people who are in prison, why is it not
25 happening? Why has--sort of like--like the gentleman

2 said, or they say why has the rug kind of been pulled
3 from--from underneath. Because of education, I
4 changed--the impression was fully different from the
5 person I was back then. I pulled my pants up,
6 changed my grooming, polished my vocabulary, learned
7 how to communicate diplomatically and eloquent
8 without the force--the use of force or violence. And
9 even though despite that I still feel that I'm not
10 yet the man that I could be or that I would be or
11 that I need to be, but I thanks God that because of
12 education, I'm not the man that I used to be. Thanks
13 for letting me share.

14 [background comments]

15 FAROUK ABDALLAH: Good afternoon. My
16 name is Farouk Abdallah. I'm from NYPRIG, the New
17 York Public Interest Research Group, and we
18 appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective
19 on President Barack Obama's Second Chance Pilot
20 Program. The Obama Administration took a step to try
21 to deal with one of the--one of our nation's most
22 intractable (sic) problems, how do we--how to
23 reduce the recidivism rate for those released--
24 released from prison? There are--there are about 1.5
25 million people in state or federal prison. What

2 happens when the time is up and they are released
3 back into--back into the communities? The stats are
4 grim. Prisons do a dismal job of turning lives
5 around. According to the U.S. Department of Justice,
6 nationwide about two-thirds of released state
7 prisoners were re-arrested within three years, and
8 three--three-quarters within five years. All too
9 often, prison is a revolving door. The Obama
10 Administration's power--power program will allow Pell
11 Grants to be issued to a small number of colleges to
12 offer college courses to inmates. While prisoners
13 can sometimes get access to education courses now,
14 they are ineligible for--for federal state grants as
15 well as New York State Tuition Assistance Program,
16 TAP.

17 The connection between higher education
18 and reduced recidivism has--has been well
19 established. Individuals who earned a--individuals
20 who--who have earned associate's degrees were 62%
21 less likely to return to prison than those who did
22 not. A study conducted by the University of
23 California at Los Angeles found that a \$1 Million
24 investment in incarceration will prevent 350 crimes
25 while that same investment in education will prevent

2 more than 600 crimes. Correctional education is
3 almost twice as effective as incarceration.
4 Punishment alone will not reduce the nation's
5 recidivism rates. However, providing inmates with a
6 path that leads to education, independence and
7 security, thus making them more productive members of
8 our society, will not only reduce recidivism, but
9 also lead to a safer and more productive society.
10 Thank you so much for this opportunity.

11 KHALIL CUMBERBATCH: Thank you and good
12 afternoon. I want to thank Committee Member and
13 Chair Ms. Barron for pulling together this committee
14 and this hearing. It is very important for us to
15 hear not only the statistics but also the stories of
16 people who have been directly impacted by this issue
17 that we're talking about. So my name is Khalil
18 Cumberbatch. I'm the Policy Associate for Legal
19 Action Center. Legal Action Center is a litigation
20 and policy firm. It's a not-for-profit firm that's
21 been around for 40 years that fights against
22 discrimination for people with criminal histories.
23 Legal Action Center supports the President's
24 initiative. They've been working on this issue for
25 quite some time on a federal level to reinstate

2 access to Pell Grants for incarcerated students. But
3 following much in the footsteps of my friend and
4 colleague Johnny Perez, I'm not here to really talk
5 to you as an advocate. I'm here to share my personal
6 experience with incarceration and education. So I
7 served 6-1/2 years in the New York State Prison
8 System from 2004 to 2010, and a year into my
9 incarceration I was very fortunate to be able to have
10 access to an education program. And it was one year.
11 it was full-time five classes a night, and it was
12 largely wrapped around this idea of human services.
13 And it was in this program while incarcerated in a
14 maximum security prison that I really--for the first
15 time in my life, I tapped into the true potential of
16 who I am as a human being. And I say that very
17 easily, but it's something very heavy to think about.
18 For the first time in my life I realized that I had
19 not been a part of the solution. I had actually been
20 a part of the problem, and it was through those
21 lenses that I completely changed my perception of who
22 I was as a person, who I was as a father, as a
23 husband, as a community member. And as someone, more
24 importantly, who was going to be released into the
25 community and then I started to ask myself well how

2 am I going to use my education? And when I was
3 released, one of the first things that I did was went
4 to College Initiative, which was mentioned a couple
5 times already, and they helped me get into college.
6 I completed my undergrad in two years. I then
7 immediately enrolled into a master's program, and
8 completed that in two years. And a week before my
9 graduation, I was revisited by Immigration and
10 Customs Enforcement, and they detained me for five
11 months because my conviction put me at eligibility
12 for deportation. And throughout this journey, which
13 I'm trying to do in three minutes, education and the
14 fact that I had attained education was something that
15 was always brought up as evidence, and I use the word
16 evidence that I had changed. And the day that the
17 government released me and decided to not deport me
18 besides the fact that my conviction put me in the--
19 puts me in the same category as people who have been
20 known to be a threat to national security. The
21 government said that it was because of the fact that
22 you're one week away from your graduation that we
23 arrested you. And the fact that you had so many
24 letters from your community [bell] and your
25 professors that and from your--and from your

2 classmates that really changed the way that they
3 viewed me. And more importantly, now when I talk to
4 my children about accessing higher education, it's
5 something that's attainable to them as to--as what
6 would grow up to be two young women of color when
7 they look at the opportunity of accessing higher
8 education in many cases because the statistics say
9 that it's very impossible for them to attain that.
10 The fact that they can have two parents in a
11 household that can say that not only will you do as
12 we say, but you will do as we do. And because we've
13 accessed higher education, and we understand the
14 value of it, and the way that it's changed the way
15 that we raise you and more importantly the way that
16 you will raise your children, it seems more
17 attainable to them. So I--I encourage the City
18 Council to--to continue support this issue. Not only
19 do I support this issue, but I sit here representing
20 millions of incarcerated students who will at some
21 point benefit from what we're talking about today.
22 Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: All right. Thank
24 you so much. We appreciate your testimony before our
25 committee, and we are certainly pleased to know that

2 you have a very concrete and very positive story of
3 how your pursuit of education and your persistence in
4 fact allows you to remain here. And it weighed so
5 heavily in the decision that was made. So, we
6 commend you for your persistence and you did say that
7 when you were first incarcerated, you took classes.
8 Did you say five? What did you say was the frequency
9 of your taking classes?

10 KHALIL CUMBERBATCH: It was five--it was
11 five classes a night. I mean it was five classes,
12 one class per night. Sorry.

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh, so five nights
14 you were taking classes?

15 KHALIL CUMBERBATCH: Five nights a week,
16 yeah.

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, and which--who
18 sponsored that class?

19 KHALIL CUMBERBATCH: It was--it was a
20 certificate program, and it was through the, um New
21 York Theological Seminary that sponsored it.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Interesting. Does
23 that program still exist? Do you know?

24 KHALIL CUMBERBATCH: No. Well, it does.
25 It's very fragmented, but it doesn't exist in the way

2 that it--that it did when I participated, which is in
3 2004.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And how many credits
5 were you able to--were they credited bearing classes
6 that you--?

7 KHALIL CUMBERBATCH: They were 33 credit
8 bearing classes that I was able to then transfer into
9 my undergrad. So entering into my undergrad I
10 already had a year worth of college credits.

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Excellent. Very
12 good. We want to thank--Any questions? Yes, Council
13 Member Cumbo.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Of course, I'm
15 equally as inspired by both of your journeys in this
16 way, and I--I applaud Council Member Barron because
17 she always brings the humanistic side of these
18 hearings to the forefront. But wanted to ask as
19 well, and part of it could just be youth, or--or lack
20 of experiences in that way, but if you were to think
21 back to that time, which is some time ago before your
22 incarceration, can you think of anything that you
23 think could have interrupted that pathway to you
24 ultimately becoming involved in the prison
25 institutional complex system? Is there something

2 that you think could have interrupted that or some
3 type of thing that now you've experienced what you've
4 seen now that we could then put those types of
5 resources or energy or opportunities right then and
6 there. It could have been perhaps maybe if you had
7 been arrested previously to that could the
8 intervention have happened then, or something in that
9 way? Or, do you find that because of the dynamics of
10 intercity communities the only thing that could have
11 transformed that situation at that time was the
12 isolation that you experienced, and those programs
13 being right there without many other alternatives?

14 KHALIL CUMBERBATCH: Johnny, you want to
15 go or do you want me to?

16 JOHNNY PEREZ: Yeah, I--I thought about
17 that question, right? What led me to prison? What
18 could have prevented me from going to prison? You
19 know, when I think about the neighborhood I grew up
20 in and, you know, how education made me analyze--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Where did you grow
22 up?

23 JOHNNY PEREZ: I grew up in the Bronx.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay.

2 JOHNNY PEREZ: All over the Bronx.

3 [laughs] So I think about that. I think about, you
4 know, like for me it was like--like a fish that's
5 been living in water. It's all it knows, you know,
6 and when I--and in hindsight when I look back, my
7 neighborhood, you know, in a lot of sense crime was
8 normalized. You know, I didn't see the crimes that I
9 committed as even being a crime. It was just kids
10 being kids, you know. Only as an adult, um, with the
11 education that I have that I can see how the societal
12 forces that played into the decisions that I made,
13 although I've always accepted the responsibility of
14 my actions. So what does that look like? Well, it
15 looks like 24-hour porn shop (sic) saying that--
16 saying that we buy gold as if people from low-income
17 neighborhoods have gold to sell. It looks like
18 thousand dollar jackets, you know, being sold in
19 these--in these stores when, you know, in medium
20 income in the neighborhood is probably about \$30,000
21 if that, you know. So when we look at--I mean this
22 is a large question. I think way beyond--I mean way
23 beyond three minutes, but I think that the
24 neighborhood that I grew up in like the resources I
25 think that it--I think that education was highly

2 stigmatized. I saw school as a place where White
3 folks went to become doctors. You know, it wasn't
4 even a possibility in my mind, and that was reflect
5 to me by the way that my teacher treated me. You
6 know, she didn't scold me for not turning in the
7 homework. She didn't scold me for cutting class.
8 She didn't scold me when I came in high off of pot
9 neither. You know, so when I look at that, I think
10 that is a combination of many things, a lot of
11 different pieces to the same puzzle, but they all
12 lead to industrial--um, this institutional
13 discrimination in a lot of senses. Um, you know, the
14 resources not being affordable or available to the
15 people from low-income neighborhoods. Although with
16 the fact of personal choices and my belief system,
17 but like I said, I was like a fish living in water,
18 and where I believed that--I believed that what I
19 believed was right until I was told that it was
20 wrong. And that for me was--was like wow. You're
21 going to tell me I've been wrong this whole--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Uh-huh.

23 JOHNNY PEREZ: And then that started part
24 of my educational journey, but I think it is also
25 different things for different people, too.

2 KHALIL CUMBERBATCH: I would to add to
3 that, Council Member, that I was lied to. I was--I
4 grew up in a neighborhood where college wasn't
5 something that was attainable for a young man of
6 color. And that was reinforced not only by the
7 people around me, but it was reinforced by the
8 resources--by the lack of resources like under-funded
9 educational systems. And the only people that I knew
10 that went to college were women and White people.
11 And that was my lens for accessing higher education,
12 and because I wasn't even one of those, I figured
13 that it wasn't for me. And the first time that I
14 actually got an A on my first paper while in prison,
15 I actually still couldn't believe it. I--I literally
16 believed that the professor who taught at very
17 prestigious universities was being soft on the way
18 that she graded my paper. And I had to question her
19 after class. Like, you know, just tell me the truth.
20 Like you--you graded this with the curve, right? And
21 she said, No, it's probably one of the best written
22 papers because it was so emotional. And it was in
23 that moment that I realized that I actually had the
24 ability to do college and do it successfully. And I
25 would also mention while I have the microphone now

2 that while myself and Johnny and Ronald's cases are
3 being talked about today, it's very sad that our
4 cases--it's very easy to exceptionalize our stories.
5 And the reality is that we come here today to share
6 our stories in the hopes that it becomes more normal,
7 that our outcomes are the ones that should be the
8 baseline, should be what we're starting from, not
9 what we're aiming for.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [off mic] You're
11 exactly right. [on mic] You're exactly right.
12 Thank you very much for your testimony today. Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Any
15 questions?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Thank you so
17 much--

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Council Member
19 Gibson. Yes.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Thank you, Chair
21 Barron, for your leadership and for all the work
22 you've done around higher education. We truly
23 appreciate it. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen,
24 and I preface my remarks as someone who was formerly
25 a state elected official now coming to the City

2 Council representing a very challenge district in the
3 Borough of the Bronx. I am working currently, and
4 this bill--this resolution is very important because
5 I represent the old Fulton Jail on Fulton Avenue, and
6 what we are doing is something that is historic. We
7 turning the Fulton Prison into a plan with a purpose,
8 and we are transforming it into a reentry and
9 economic development center. Specifically for
10 formerly incarcerated individuals, and it's going to
11 have a multitude of services around education,
12 health, mental health, housing and all the things
13 that are very important for those that are coming
14 home from jail that certainly have a huge vacuum in
15 terms of service. So as I hear your testimony, and
16 certainly hear your story, I can only say that divine
17 intervention has allowed you to be the way you are
18 today to tell your story. And you understand it.
19 You know that your story is similar to many other
20 stories that may not get this platform before elected
21 officials. That may not get a headline in the
22 newspaper. So it is it really important for us as
23 elected officials to hear the story because for many
24 of our young people, they only see themselves as a
25 statistic. They can look and listen to your story,

2 and see themselves as not a statistic, but a success
3 story. And the fact that the trials and tribulations
4 and challenges that we go through only make us
5 stronger individuals, and I'm thankful that that
6 divine intervention has allowed you to be here to
7 tell us your great story. So I guess I just have one
8 question because my conversations with this
9 development of this reentry center working in
10 partnership with Osborne with Fortune. These
11 incredible organizations that do a lot of work,
12 working with a very challenging population, a
13 population that, you know, let's be honest, many
14 communities don't want. And we had a time just in
15 making sure that residents in my community understood
16 what we were trying to do with reforming the Fulton
17 Prison. So my question for you is as I have
18 conversations with providers on what services we're
19 putting into this building, 7-story building, the
20 education piece is very important. But as we start
21 to work with many of the clients, how can they
22 understand and see their potential. Coming home from
23 prison. Not having a lot of services. Not really
24 understanding ye their own self-motivation and self-
25 determination, their value and their worth, their

2 potential. How can you advise me on what message I
3 could send to my constituents, my brothers and my
4 sisters on what they can do to recognize their
5 potential and see themselves as a different person
6 than they currently are? What would you say would be
7 my words of encouragement? I like to minister to my
8 community?

9 KHALIL CUMBERBATCH: So prior to my
10 current place of employment, I used to work at the
11 College Initiative as an academic counselor, and, um,
12 used to do a lot of outreach and talk about the
13 importance of accessing higher education. And two
14 major things were a huge lift. One was always
15 talking about the economical piece. So the
16 Department of Labor, the Federal Department of Labor
17 has really good statistics around how much person--
18 how much a person can potentially make with higher
19 levels of education. So we used to have a handout.
20 We used to give that, and always say, you know,
21 because money talks, right. And that would always
22 kind of peak some interest, um, because obviously the
23 higher education--the higher the education you have
24 is potentially the more income that you can make.
25 Um, so that was just one piece, um, and then always

2 asking this question of why. So I just to always ask
3 the question who here feels, to the group or whoever
4 I was talking to, who here feels that college is
5 something that you can see yourself doing, and like
6 actually participating in? And obviously not
7 everyone was going to raise their hand, and I used to
8 get rooms where no one raised their hand. And the
9 one question I would then ask is why? Because the
10 real issue that I would try to get to is that there's
11 narrative that have been given to certain people.
12 That you are not deserving of certain things, and
13 accessing higher education at least for me from my
14 personal experience, and also some of my professional
15 experience, is one of those things on a very long
16 list. And particularly young people when I used to
17 talk to them about the importance of education, I
18 used to talk--I used to ask them, you know, what is
19 it that you want to do? And many of them would say,
20 well, you know, I want to work in construction or I
21 want to own my own business, I want to-- And then I
22 would ask, well, how many construction workers do you
23 think they need, but more importantly, how many
24 foremen do you think they need? How many engineers
25 do you think they need, right? And I have 20

2 construction workers, but two engineers, and what's
3 the difference between the 20 construction workers
4 and two engineers? In many cases, it's some form of
5 higher education, right. And then tie it back to
6 your initial handout, which is you want to make more
7 money, and obviously construction is a very--it's a
8 very honorable field, but it's also very dangerous.
9 And the older that a person gets in most cases their
10 body will break down, and no one wants to always be
11 in a position where they have to ask themselves how
12 much medication do I need to take to actually do my
13 job? Um, and then talked to them about well, what's-
14 -what's stopping you from thinking that you can
15 become an engineer? Because that's the real question
16 because I would--I would be able to tell them that
17 there's nothing stopping you but you. I mean even if
18 you have to get tutoring or if you have to take
19 weekend classes, if you have to take classes at
20 night, college within itself is not going to easy.
21 There is no clean cut way to do college. So the
22 reality is once you wrap your mind around that, then
23 the next question is what other supports do you need
24 once you decide to--to take that--to take that jump?
25 [off mic] Did I answer that?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Sure, and I
3 think--you know, I think the challenge is that you
4 have many individuals that are broken, right? So a
5 lot of it is healing. It's restoration. A lot of it
6 is really within yourself to recognize, you know,
7 that there are places and people out there that will
8 help you when all along the road you've been, you
9 know, given broken promises. You've been failed by
10 the system.

11 KHALIL CUMBERBATCH: Uh-huh.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: So that--that
13 challenge is very great, but I feel like it's always
14 attainable, but it's only attainable when you talk to
15 individuals that have the same story, that have, you
16 know, the same types of similarities. You know,
17 people that come from the same community that
18 understand the struggles. That to me has always been
19 the challenge because in my community as much as I
20 support the population, I get a lot of heat in my
21 community for--for supporting this population, and
22 not supporting anything else. And I'm like but
23 they're our community residents. They look like us.
24 They come from our community. We know their mothers.
25 We know their fathers. So it's like yes they've been

2 through a challenge, but they all deserve a second
3 change at life. And so, I have those conversations
4 quite a bit, but trying to understand that I can do
5 to get my young people across that barrier is where I
6 have the greatest need.

7 JOHNNY PEREZ: I think--I think
8 approaching people from a strength based perspective.
9 I think people don't realize how strong they are
10 until somebody else points--points it out to them.
11 Sometimes we believe in ourselves to the same degree
12 in which other people believe in us. It's been true
13 in my life, and a lot of the lives of the people that
14 I know. I also think that human proof goes a long
15 way. When I was--I've only been home for about two
16 years, and when I was released, I was also part of
17 the College Initiative Program, which you're going to
18 hear a lot today. But the beauty about it was that I
19 came home with a few college credits about 60, and
20 then I saw the human proof. I saw--when I see a
21 gentleman like Ronald Day say I'm a Ph.D. candidate,
22 so this is possible. Because you came from the same
23 place that I came, and if you can do it then I can do
24 it. It's the same kind of ideology that--that--that--
25 -that allowed me to--to start my project Criminal

2 Solutions. Now, I see a guy with a Benz. He's just
3 like me. I'm going to see what you had to do to get
4 it. I want a Ph.D. What do I have to do to get it,
5 and I know that it is attainable because the proof in
6 the pudding is all around me. So I would suggest
7 definitely bringing in human evidence. You know,
8 I'll come in and talk to them. Um, you know, also
9 people have these transferrable skills, you know.
10 And there's times when I speak to people who have
11 drug convictions and who understand the idea of what
12 it means for supply and demand, but except that they
13 don't know how to apply it legally and to run a
14 business. But when you make that connection for
15 them, yeah, wow, I thought that this was complicated.
16 I used to think reading stock tables was complicated
17 until I learned how to do it. You know, and a lot of
18 folks they have been told what they can't do for so
19 long that they need to hear what they can do. Don't
20 tell me what I can't do. I'm tired of hearing that.
21 Tell me what I can do, what are the possibilities.
22 What can I do with what I have, you know, and I think
23 that listening--hearing from elected officials or
24 people who look like them, talk like them, you know.
25 And a lot of the same ways. They might even dress

2 like them. If they hear enough of that--that same
3 message from them, bears more credibility. You know,
4 in certain areas we call that credible messengers.
5 And I definitely think that any program, any reentry
6 program that does not have people that are directly
7 affected as a part of that, it's--it's doing a
8 disservice to their own program.

9 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you very much.
10 Thank you. Thank you, Chair Barron.

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. I want
12 to acknowledge we've been joined by Council Member
13 Ydanis Rodriguez. Do you have any questions?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: I have a
15 comment. First of all, I apologize for not being on
16 time. I was with the other, the Commissioner of DOCS
17 and other, um, Commissioners. Something related to
18 transportation. So I apologize for not being on
19 time. First of all, congratulations, and more than
20 congratulations. You know, we don't have choices.
21 More than the--it's like a matrix. We have to
22 believe that we are the one, and the difference is
23 like the one is not just one individual, but is a
24 generation. You know, we have been left behind, and
25 the reality is that I do believe that there are

2 certain aspects that has to occur that happen in real
3 life. You know, there is a prison system industry
4 that benefits a lot. You know, and they need to--to
5 continue creating those numbers of individuals that
6 provide them the--the income that they need to
7 support the businesses. And I think that unless we
8 take control, you know, and say we can make the
9 difference, we need to go back. It's like the John
10 Lord (sic) You know, let's give back, and I was not
11 here with John Lord because, you know, I was--I just
12 came here at the age of 18 but, you know, knowing the
13 history of many great institutions that believe in
14 the progressive justice in the social justice value.
15 We have to continue that pattern. You know changes
16 take longer sometimes longer than we expect. Some of
17 started believing that we will see the changes that
18 we need in our generation. The reality is it takes
19 centuries to make--to bring the real changes. Now,
20 the one related providing every single individual the
21 opportunity to excel, to provide every opportunity--
22 every single individual the opportunity to receive
23 like a real quality education. So that we don't have
24 to have this conversation about a second chance. As
25 a former teach, you know, and as a former chairman of

2 this committee, we know that the largest student
3 coming from the--from our Black and Latino community
4 when they go to ninth grade, they were only like a
5 fourth grade average. They were only reading and
6 doing math at the--at the fourth grade level. So
7 imagine a teenager being in ninth grade and he or she
8 they are so confused because they've been told that
9 they are ninth grade. However, they cannot perform
10 at that level. And at the same time we have the
11 society bombarding out teenagers with so many things
12 that they should do outside of the classroom. Why
13 does school have been so boring? What there's not
14 something interesting happening inside our classroom?
15 So that our teenagers say I'm excited to wake up
16 early in the morning and be inside the school. The
17 New York Times said three days ago that the plan that
18 Mayor de Blasio presented on education come out with
19 a solution to a problem that affecting our society
20 nationwide, not only in New York City. Because I'm
21 pretty sure that as we would need a voice of someone
22 that already has proven as many of us have proven in
23 different area that we can make it. Like for me it's
24 like listen to the stories like I see myself not in
25 the same situation but similar. Being here at the

2 age of 18 not speaking one word of English. But
3 people--many people told me that I should not be able
4 to make it, but I found the other individual, not
5 from the same (sic) to the other groups, to Richey
6 Parris, and Howard Jordan saying, guy, education is
7 more than the classroom. It's organizing our
8 community. So I thank the Chair--Chairman for--the
9 Chair of this Committee for leading this
10 conversation. Thank you for the work that you're
11 doing and other advocates. But, you know, it would
12 take numbers more than we expects. Because when we
13 know that close to 80% of our students going to a new
14 city public school they are Black and Latino, and
15 only like 32% of those they are enrolled in the
16 school at the high school level that focus on math
17 and science. Not because they didn't dream to be an
18 engineer or to be an architect. Why because they've
19 been left behind in important subject areas such as
20 math and science. So thank you and we will be here
21 to go through this sharing and be sure that every
22 single teenager especially those close to 14,000 that
23 we have in Rikers Island they should know that when
24 they will come out, they will have the support they

2 need to be the next Council member. To be the next
3 doctor. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: We want to thank the
5 panel for your testimony. Thank you so much, and
6 we're going to move now to call our next panel, which
7 is representing the Administration. We have Alex
8 Crohn. Thank you. Alex Crohn the General Counsel
9 for the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. Winette
10 Saunders, Deputy Commissioner for Youthful Offenders
11 Program from DOCs and Frances Torres, Executive
12 Director of Educational Services at DOCs [background
13 noise] Would you raise your right hand, please. Do
14 you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
15 nothing but the truth in your testimony before this
16 committee, and to answer all questions honestly?

17 PANEL MEMBERS: I do.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. You may
19 begin.

20 ALEX CROHN: Good afternoon, Chairperson
21 Barron, and members of the Committee on Higher
22 Education. My name is Alex Crohn, and I'm the
23 General Counsel of the Mayor's Office of Criminal
24 Justice. I'm joined here today by Deputy
25 Commissioner Winette Saunders and Executive Director

2 of Educational Services Frances Torres from the
3 Department of Correction. Thank you for the
4 opportunity to testify today. The Mayor's Office of
5 Criminal Justice advises the Mayor on public safety
6 strategy and together with partners inside and
7 outside government, develops and implements policies
8 aimed at achieving three main goals: Reducing crime,
9 reducing arrests and incarceration, and growing
10 fairness. To the extent that crime reduction is
11 simply about controlling behavior and managing risk,
12 we now know that there are a number of strategies
13 beyond traditional law enforcement that can lead to
14 lower crime while building trust and creating the
15 strong neighborhood necessary for enduring crime
16 reduction. Our office strongly supports expanding
17 access to higher education among incarcerated
18 individuals. From a criminal justice standpoint,
19 expanding access to education is a proven strategy
20 for reducing recidivism and preventing crime.
21 According to a 2013 study by the Rand Corporation,
22 prisoners who participated in educational programs or
23 43% less likely to return to prison within three
24 years than those who did not participate. In New
25 York State, the New York State Department of

2 Corrections and Community Supervision or DOCCS has
3 supported using private funds for post-secondary
4 education for incarcerated individuals resulting in
5 programs such as the Prison Bard Initiative and the
6 now Prison Education Program. Here in New York City
7 we also strive to provide services and connect people
8 to services after discharge. The Rand Report and
9 other extensive studies spanning several decades have
10 established and affirmed education's effect on
11 preventing further crimes. In an effort to broaden
12 this access to education, the Obama Administration
13 recently announced a plan, the Second Chance Pilot
14 Program, which will provide state and federal
15 inmates access to Pell Grants, education grants
16 provided by the government for the first time since
17 1994. The New York City based Vera Institute of
18 Justice will provide technical assistance to the
19 correctional facilities as a partner with academic
20 institutions to provide education opportunities as
21 part of the experimental program. The City
22 wholeheartedly supports the establishment of the
23 Second Chance Pilot Program, and its efforts to
24 expand on educational opportunities to this
25 underserved Criminal Justice population.

2 Education inmates better prepares them
3 for life after prison. Individuals face a host of
4 barriers upon release and increasing educational
5 attainment can increase both employability and
6 earnings, which is a number collateral benefits.
7 Research shows that prisoner education not only
8 reduces recidivism, but increases chances of
9 employment when inmates enter the general population.
10 There exists a strong and pure link between access to
11 higher quality education programming and successful
12 reentry post-release. Successful reentry leads to
13 few repeat offenders and stronger neighborhoods
14 creating virtual cycles and ensuring drops in crime.
15 Higher education programs are traditionally
16 associated with prisons where people can participate
17 in multi-year programs. But the New York City
18 Correction Department provides a number of
19 programming opportunities. The department partners
20 with community groups to provide literacy programs,
21 career and technical education, skills development,
22 reentry services and some post-secondary education
23 programs.

24 Three programs are specifically focused
25 on higher ed. These programs provide services inside

2 to help transition incarcerated individuals to
3 college upon discharge. The first is a college and
4 community fellowship program, which provides
5 information on college application and financial
6 literacy skills. Once individuals are released and
7 accepted to college, participants are given academic
8 stipends upon completion of 12 credits and 2.5 GPA.
9 Another program is College Way. College Way
10 volunteer educators provide a college readiness class
11 on key successful college life, college admission
12 tests, and college mathematics. Professors and
13 adjunct lecturers provide lectures on mathematics,
14 business and other subjects.

15 Finally, is the Higher Education Program
16 implemented in 2012 known as the DOC Manhattan
17 College Inside Out Program. Undergraduate students
18 from the college and selected inside students take a
19 course on criminal justice ethics at Rikers Island.
20 Upon completion, inside students who meet the class
21 requirements are admitted to the college upon release
22 free of charge. This is the first Inside-Out Prison
23 Exchange Program on Rikers Island. By working to
24 support higher education program for those rejoining
25 our communities, programs such as the Second Chance

2 Pilot Program and the aforementioned DOC initiative
3 will help to improve reentry outcomes and ensure
4 public safety. Thank you for this opportunity to
5 speak with you today, and we're happy to take any
6 questions you may have.

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you for your
8 testimony. You highlight three programs and the
9 first one is the College and Community Fellowship
10 Program. You give information on college
11 applications and financial literacy skills. And it
12 says once individuals are released and accepted to
13 college, participants are given an academic stipend
14 upon completion of 12 credits and a 2.5 GPA. How
15 many students are presently in this program? What is
16 the amount of the stipend, and do you know which
17 colleges they attend?

18 ALEX CROHN: Well, I'm now going to refer
19 those questions to the Department of Corrections who
20 can speak with more specificity.

21 FRANCES TORRES: At this very moment,
22 ma'am--

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Would you say our
24 name, please?

2 FRANCES TORRES: Yes, Frances Torres,
3 Executive Director of Educational Services. The
4 service is done by college and community fellowship.
5 At the present moment, we have no participants
6 enrolled because we're waiting for the job developer
7 to come into recruitment, which usually starts in
8 October of any fiscal year. And so, we're presently
9 working on the calendar for the provider. Usually,
10 they conduct five different recruitment sessions at
11 Rikers Island, and the target population happens to
12 be the female population at Rose M. Singer, who
13 happen to have high school diploma and/or equivalency
14 who are interested in educational services or college
15 life upon release. When it comes to the workshops
16 I've done, the counselor with the female participants
17 do go on individualized conversations as to where it
18 is they want to go once they are released. Once our
19 female young women are released, they do get in touch
20 with college and community fellowship in order to do
21 a further and more conclusive individualized plan
22 that would serve and would assist them in enrolling
23 in any CUNY college.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And how long has
25 this program been in operation, and how many

2 students--how many participants have you had on an
3 annual basis on average?

4 FRANCES TORRES: We've had--we've had
5 college and community fellowship coming into Rikers
6 Island since 2011. The number is something that we
7 can send to you later on, but regularly there were 25
8 to 30 females who do go into the workshops.

9 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: On an annual basis
10 about 25 to 30.

11 FRANCES TORRES: Well, in every workshop
12 and we do run about five workshops every year.

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: How long is a
14 workshop?

15 FRANCES TORRES: A workshop is a one-shot
16 deal, ma'am. Meaning that a job developer comes in
17 and does the presentation and provides them with her
18 contact information, and so our young women could get
19 in touch with them while they're still incarcerated
20 and upon release.

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So it's a one-shot
22 presentation and there are five of them during the
23 year.

24 FRANCES TORRES: That's correct.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And there are
3 approximately 25 to 30 at each of the presentations--

4 FRANCES TORRES: Yes, ma'am.

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --that you do. Okay.
6 Thank you. And what is the amount of the academic
7 stipend that they receive, and is it--you say upon
8 completion of 12 credits and a GPA of 2.5. What is
9 the amount of the stipend?

10 FRANCES TORRES: Unfortunately, that's
11 information that I didn't bring with us. We'll be
12 more than happy to consult college and community
13 fellowship and provide it to you.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: One second. Um, and
15 if a person--what is the--what are the application
16 eligibility? What's the eligibility to participate
17 in this program?

18 FRANCES TORRES: As long as you have a
19 high school diploma and/or equivalency, you are able
20 to join the workshop.

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: If a person has 12
22 credits and they have been incarcerated, they had 12
23 credits before coming into the system, they have 12
24 credits. They come to your program, and they decide

2 they want to participate. Would they be eligible for
3 the stipend?

4 FRANCES TORRES: That is something that
5 we would have to refer to College and Community
6 Fellowship, ma'am.

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, so who
8 operates the College and Community Fellowship since
9 you said they--they're here? Are you also going to
10 be testifying?

11 [background comments]

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Have you submitted a
13 slip to testify? Is some here from that organization
14 that would like to testify and give us testimony.

15 MALE SPEAKER: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, then if you'd
17 fill out a slip, we'll be pleased to have you testify
18 as part of our hearing. Thank you. Okay, so the
19 second program that you talk about is College Way.
20 It prepares volunteer educators to provide college
21 readiness. And how--what's the frequency in which
22 that program operates?

23 FRANCES TORRES: We are currently
24 revamping that component. When, you know, we
25 generally started, it started as once a week for a

2 period of eight weeks. We have been able to increase
3 it to a cohort of six weeks twice a week, and it
4 targets once again those individuals who have a high
5 school diploma or a equivalency.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

7 [background comments]

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And the third
9 program is a higher education program, DOC-Manhattan
10 College Inside-Out Program. Undergraduate students
11 from the college as inside students, and they take a
12 course. How does that program work?

13 FRANCES TORRES: Sure thing. The DOC-
14 Manhattan College Inside-Out Program is modeled after
15 the Inside-Out Program that began at Temple
16 University. Our model defers from Temple University
17 because the model out of Temple allows for a group of
18 undergraduate students to take a course within a
19 prison and that number of undergraduate students is
20 usually matched by the same amount of individuals who
21 are imprisoned. Our model has moved away from just
22 one day of instruction. When it comes to our model,
23 we have a selected number of inside brothers and
24 sisters who apply to be selected for the semester.
25 The selection process encompasses an essay of 300

2 words on what it would mean to them to secure a
3 college education. The--

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So--go ahead. I'm
5 sorry.

6 FRANCES TORRES: I'm sorry.

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Go ahead.

8 FRANCES TORRES: The applications are
9 reviewed by a panel, and then the same amount of
10 inside students will match the same amount of
11 undergraduate students who take the course on
12 Criminal Justice Ethics on any given Tuesday. In
13 addition to the Tuesday and in order to prepare them
14 for college life upon release, they inside students
15 are given three additional days, two to review and
16 prepare reflection papers, and one on computer
17 literacy/essay writing for a total of four days a
18 week. Semesters are done one full semester, one
19 spring semester. Traditionally, we've done the full
20 semester with the sentenced population at EMTC and
21 the spring semester with the female population at
22 Rose M. Singer. So far since the summer--

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So the fall semester
24 is just submitted for males?

25 FRANCES TORRES: Yes, ma'am.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

3 [background comments]

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And what is the--
5 what is the impetus--if I'm understanding, you have
6 students from Manhattan College take the class with
7 students, with inmates at Rikers.

8 FRANCES TORRES: With insider brothers
9 and sisters. Yes, that's correct.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And they take the
11 class inside the facility?

12 FRANCES TORRES: That's correct.

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. So what is the
14 attraction for those students who want to take the
15 class to travel to Rikers, to get there and to take a
16 class in Rikers?

17 FRANCES TORRES: So they know that upon
18 release our inside brothers or sisters will join the
19 community at Manhattan College, and it is the goal
20 that the community sense starts from the inside
21 because our inside students upon release are able to
22 continue their course offerings at Manhattan College
23 until they achieve a total of 15 credits, their
24 status as non-matriculated changes to matriculated
25 status allowing them the opportunity to obtain the

2 bachelor's degree at Manhattan College, which is
3 free, of course, to them.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh, it's free.

5 FRANCES TORRES: Yes, ma'am.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And that's for which
7 levels of degree?

8 FRANCES TORRES: A bachelor's degree,
9 ma'am.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And so how many
11 students are presently in that course?

12 FRANCES TORRES: Overall when it comes to
13 the seven semesters that we have done at Rikers
14 Island and we're currently on the eight semester, 49
15 inside brothers and sisters have completed the course
16 at Rikers Island, which allows them to earn three
17 credits. Presently we have had eight students who
18 are enrolled at Manhattan College as matriculated, as
19 non-matriculated students. We have had success. We
20 have two students who did complete the 15 credits and
21 surpassed the 15 credits. So we do have two
22 matriculated students. Regrettably this past summer
23 we had one of our students who had obtained 33
24 credits. He actually passed away from natural

2 causes, and so we now presently have one student who
3 has exceeded the 15 credits.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, thank you.
5 I'm going to ask if Jacqueline Thompson would like to
6 join this panel. I believe she has information about
7 the College and Community Fellowship and can provide
8 information and insight as to how that operates. If
9 you would raise your right hand.

10 JACQUELINE THOMPSON: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Do you affirm to
12 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
13 truth in your testimony before this committee, and to
14 answer all questions honestly?

15 JACQUELINE THOMPSON: Yes, ma'am.

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. You can
17 give us your name and give us whatever testimony you
18 have.

19 JACQUELINE THOMPSON: Okay. So, my name
20 is Jacqueline Thompson. I am the Intake Coordinator
21 College and Community Fellowship. College and
22 Community Fellowship began about 15 years ago, and
23 one of the professors that used to teach at Bedford
24 realized that there was a need for further support
25 once the women were released with continuing

2 education. We offer support in the form of academic
3 counseling and advisement. From the very beginning
4 once a woman is intaked (sp?) into the program, she's
5 assigned an academic counselor who will help her pick
6 the school, if she hasn't already has. If she needs
7 to go on a tour of the school, the academic counselor
8 sets that up. Helps her fill out all applications,
9 financial aid papers. Once all of that is done and a
10 student is accepted into the school, though in any
11 school that you attend you will be assigned an
12 academic advisor--an academic counselor. College and
13 Community Fellowship's job is to get to know you a
14 little more. They know a little bit more about your
15 background as opposed to the advisor in the school.
16 And her job mainly is to make sure that you're
17 successful. So the students must bring in their
18 class schedule. She's going to look to see because
19 she knows their everyday life. She knows she--they
20 have three children that they just returned to. Some
21 of them have come home to take care of aging parents.
22 So she's going to look at the schedule and see if
23 you're taking too many upper level courses here.
24 Maybe you don't want to take this intensive writing
25 course with this math course. Things that, you know,

2 she feels may make them fail later on. So they have
3 that type of support in the system. We also offer
4 tuition and transportation assistance, book voucher
5 assistance. The scholarship that they're referring
6 to is in the amount of \$675, and that's just for like
7 offset costs that come up for students. They're
8 eligible to put in for that at the end of each
9 semester if they have maintained at least a 2.5 GPA
10 and have attended our community meetings. To date,
11 we have helped over 300 women earn degrees ranging
12 from their associate's all the way up to the Ph.D.,
13 and two years ago we go our first JD.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh.

15 JACQUELINE THOMPSON: So at College and
16 Community Fellowship we like to say that we, too, are
17 in the business of myth busting. So many people when
18 they're on inside, as has been mentioned, either
19 believe that college is not for them or for the few
20 that we can get interested, they all think that
21 because of the background they need to go into
22 something with social work. So we get excited when
23 we hear people that want to branch out and go into,
24 you know, the medical field. We even have an RN, and

2 the law field. So college--It's just a support
3 program that has been working.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Great. So it's
5 been 15 years operating. That's great and who
6 identifies the participants that are eligible to go
7 into the College and Community Fellowship programs.
8 Do you work with DOCCS? Are they identified while
9 they are still incarcerated? How does that happen?

10 JACQUELINE THOMPSON: So we include
11 through Rikers Island to accommodate Bedford Hills.
12 We go into the facilities. We also recruit at
13 probation and parole, and then other community based
14 organizations like that are within the area where
15 they're, you know, coming home to.

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And what--what
17 requirements is it? How would it basically--

18 JACQUELINE THOMPSON: The requirements
19 they must already have a GED or high school diploma,
20 and if they have criminal justice involvement which
21 within the last ten years.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Thank you.
23 You had all the answers to what I needed to know. So
24 it's \$675 each semester?

25 JACQUELINE THOMPSON: Each semester.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And--

3 JACQUELINE THOMPSON: And that's in
4 addition to the help with transportation. We give
5 out the Metro Cards. We help with supplies as well.
6 They can put in for a laptop or a tablet--

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh.

8 JACQUELINE THOMPSON: --if they need help
9 with that. Yes, and books and--

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And what is the
11 operating cost of your program on an annual basis, do
12 you know?

13 JACQUELINE THOMPSON: No, I don't.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. I would love
15 it if someone could get that information to our
16 counsel. We would appreciate knowing that.

17 JACQUELINE THOMPSON: Okay.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Is there anything
19 further that you would like share? I'm glad to know
20 about these programs. I did have a question about
21 your introduction, Mr. Crohn. You said that three
22 main goals. The Office of Criminal Justice has three
23 main goals: Reducing crime, reducing unnecessary
24 arrests and incarceration, and promoting fairness.

25

2 What steps are you taking to reduce unnecessary
3 arrests and incarceration?

4 ALEX CROHN: So that's a good question.
5 It drives quite a lot of the work that a lot of times
6 --

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Could you move the
8 mic a little closer to you.

9 ALEX CROHN: I'm sorry. So, on the
10 incarceration front, we actually have quite a big
11 initiative right now called Supervised Release. So
12 there is currently an RFP out where we're seeking
13 3,400 slots for supervision in the community instead
14 of detention at Rikers during the pendency of the
15 case. So this would be a group who we feel is low or
16 mid-risk individuals who can be effectively
17 supervised in the community. And so, providers are
18 currently bidding, and those bids are being evaluated
19 to determine who can in all five boroughs handle this
20 program. So we think it will have a pretty
21 significant effect on--on helping to drive down the
22 number of people that are detained on Rikers to avoid
23 them staying there in the first place.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. So that
3 address the incarceration piece. What about reducing
4 unnecessary arrests?

5 ALEX CROHN: So there's a lot of low-
6 level work that we're doing with--and when I say low
7 level, I mean low level crime. We work with the
8 Police Department. So late last year, the Mayor and
9 the Police Commissioner announced that for marijuana
10 would not longer be arrested for small amounts.
11 Instead, they'd be issued a summons. So we've seen a
12 significant drop in the number of arrests related to
13 marijuana. There's a--Oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: No, go ahead.

15 ALEX CROHN: So, there's a lot of those
16 sorts of things where we sort of take a look at the
17 whole universe of crime and say where are places that
18 we can lighten the touch and de-escalate. And
19 marijuana is just an example of that.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Well, you know, I'm
21 sure, that the City Council as others said that they
22 want to have decriminalized. So would you care to
23 share with us what the position is on those?

24 ALEX CROHN: So we're currently in
25 discussions with the City Council about that. Um, I

2 think that the Mayor and the Police Commissioner have
3 both said that as far as decriminalizing certain
4 offenses, they're certainly open to the idea provided
5 that the police department maintains the option of
6 issuing a criminal, usually a criminal summons. And
7 the reason for that, well there's a few different
8 reasons, but the--the way to compel someone to come
9 to court you sort of do that with the civil summons.
10 So although we're open to the civil summons and I
11 think we're excited about it, and it's currently
12 being used, but obviously could be used a lot more.
13 I think the Police Department's preference is to
14 retain the option for people who are recidivists or
15 just continually are committing crime, and
16 potentially not showing up to court. If we give up
17 that criminal option, we don't have the--the tools to
18 get them into court any more, and there is a small
19 population of people that may need a little bit more
20 intervention than purely a civil summons.

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Well, we do know
22 that many of these low level offenses do result in
23 people having warrants issued because they forget or
24 miss their court dates, and puts them in the criminal
25 system. And we are so pleased to know that the

2 District Attorney in Brooklyn is having Second Chance
3 Days. So he's allowing those persons who have not
4 responded to those warrants to come--

5 ALEX CROHN: Uh-huh.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --to be able to have
7 a hearing, and to be able to have a decision rendered
8 in that. We had one recently, and we're pleased to
9 know that he's doing that, and we would encourage
10 other DAs to do that again so that people can get
11 their lives back and not be criminalized and put in
12 the system because they were spitting on the
13 sidewalk.

14 ALEX CROHN: Uh-huh, and the District
15 Attorney's model is something we're very interested
16 in talking to them about. It's something we've been
17 focused on. It's cutting the warrants from being
18 issued in the first place. So earlier this year we
19 announced something called Justice Reboot, which
20 would have court reminders for people to come who are
21 issued a summons, and we've seen a lot of examples of
22 court reminders being very effective in getting
23 people to come to court and really driving down that
24 warrant rate.

25 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Uh-huh.

2 ALEX CROHN: So I think we're both
3 focused on the front end and then the back end like
4 the District Attorney is as well.

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Well, we want to
6 commend District Attorney Ken Thompson for the work
7 that he's doing. I think that concludes the
8 questions that I have. We want to thank you for
9 coming, for your testimony. We also want to say that
10 we know that much of the incarceration and the
11 criminalization of young people is a result of the
12 Broken Windows Policy that the Police Commissioner
13 insists on maintaining. We know that it criminalizes
14 Black and Latinos to a degree far exceeding that of
15 others. We know that it is not a result of people
16 having--we know that it is not a result of people
17 having deficiencies in their cultural backgrounds
18 that lead them to be incarcerated contrary to what
19 the Police Commissioner has indicated he believes.
20 And we want to see that there's a more equitable
21 distribution of justice, and we're going to work to
22 make sure that that happens. Thank you for coming.

23 ALEX CROHN: Thank you.

24 FRANCES TORRES: Thank you for having us.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I'll call our next
3 panel. Raul Baez from the WITO, Incorporate and the
4 EIO Coalition; Kevin Stump from the Young
5 Invincibles; Gary Sessions from the JLUSA; and Teanna
6 or Deanna King, D? Deanna King from the Education
7 from the Inside Out Coalition.

8 [background comments, pause]

9 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. If you
10 will raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell
11 the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
12 in your testimony before this committee, and to
13 answer all questions honestly?

14 PANEL MEMBERS: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. You may
16 begin.

17 DEANNA KING: Good afternoon, and thank
18 you, Madam Council for holding this hearing. It's
19 been great to hear all the stories of people who have
20 experienced criminal system, directly and all the
21 advocates who are doing work to make sure that people
22 aren't going back inside. My name is Danna King.
23 I'm the Organizer with the Education from the Inside
24 Out Coalition. We are actually housed at College and
25 Community Fellowship. The organization was founded

2 by Vivian Nixon and Glenn Martin, both people who
3 were formerly incarcerated who know the value of
4 higher education from their direct experience. We
5 have three campaigns that we focus on. The
6 restoring the Brook (sic) Campaign to three State
7 Pell Grants, and that it states the campaign aims to
8 restore tuition assistance programs in New York, and
9 it campaigns to be in the box at all public and
10 private institutions, academic institutions in New
11 York.

12 So, I'll start my testimony. As the
13 organizer for the education for the Inside-Out
14 Coalition, I hear many stories from people who are
15 incarcerated, have returned home or have family
16 members who are directly impacted by the criminal
17 justice system. Their stories resonate with me as
18 they are deeply connected to my own story. My
19 brother was first incarcerated at the age of 18. Our
20 school administration discovered a small amount of
21 marijuana in his high school locker. They stripped
22 and detained him, and I found him sitting in the
23 principal's office looking forlorn waiting for the
24 officers to take him away. A German Shepherd with a
25 keen nose and a routine sweep of the hallway

2 disrupted his life forever. Beginning a cycle of
3 incarceration that lasted for a decade. This is my
4 story, but it's hardly original. Thousands of young
5 people have cycled into the school to prison
6 pipeline. Few find their way back to education as
7 they stop being children and become criminals in the
8 eyes of the state. My story led me to the Education
9 from the Inside Out Coalition where I worked to
10 advocate for the removal of barriers to higher
11 education for individuals who are incarcerated and
12 those who have come home. The decision to ban Pell
13 Grant eligibility to incarcerated individuals mire
14 the political theater that placed incarcerated
15 students at odds with the low-income and middle-class
16 traditional students. Proponents of the ban argue
17 that giving Pell Grants to incarcerated people
18 creates suffering for law abiding middle-class
19 families who struggled to afford college at a time
20 when tuition prices were increasing. So under *Jessie*
21 *Holmes*, Fosse argued that incarcerated students
22 drained \$200 million from the Pell Grant programs.
23 Other legislators went further to argue that many
24 incarcerated students cheated in class and only
25 participated in post-secondary college education

2 programs to get time off of their sentence. They saw
3 incarcerated people as irredeemable beyond
4 rehabilitation and only deserving of deprivation and
5 harsh punishment. Despite the evidence that proves
6 that participation in post-second college education
7 significantly reduces recidivism upon release,
8 increases employment opportunities, makes conditions
9 safer and more manageable for the individuals working
10 in correctional facilities and increases public
11 safety as a whole [bell] Pell Grants eligibility was
12 denied to incarcerated students. Legislators in New
13 York swiftly followed suit and banned TAP grants for
14 incarcerated students 1995. The Tough on Crime Era--

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: If you could
16 summarize and wrap up, I'd appreciate it.

17 DEANNA KING: Okay. [laughs]

18 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

19 DEANNA KING: Essentially, as much as we
20 want to celebrate the moment that it's just now as
21 the Second Chance Pilot Program is something that
22 exists, it's not enough. It's temporary in nature,
23 and we're still dealing with the same rhetoric that
24 leads people to stop legislation like the Real Act,
25 like the TAP restoration. And we're just asking for

2 the New York City Council to use its influence to do
3 more to celebrate this moment, and to create a
4 parallel moment in New York City so that people--all
5 people who are in incarceration can go back to
6 school.

7 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you.

8 GARY SESSIONS: Hi, good afternoon. My
9 name is Gary Sessions. I wasn't going to come up
10 here and talk. In fact, this is a last minute
11 decision. I was earned--I was urged by the Director
12 of the EIC to come up here and give my testimony.
13 That's why I have nothing written, but yeah, I do
14 mentoring for at-risk kids, you know, speaking to
15 them about the dangers of crime, violence, drugs,
16 gangs, incarceration and things of that nature. And,
17 of course, urging them to go to college and continue
18 education, and not just stop at high school or GED
19 level. The Department of Correction is really doing
20 the incarcerated people disservices in not totally
21 fulfilling their obligation and rehabilitating the
22 people that's returning to the society, by not
23 affording them a chance to gain a higher education.
24 Because only through higher education you will be
25 able to make better thought processes and better

2 decisions. You know, it's not enough to just give
3 someone vocational training or a GED degree. You
4 have to be able to--you have to teach them how to
5 think. They have to be able to think. That's the
6 main thing because these are the people that's coming
7 into our community and we--we want them to make
8 better decisions. And only through higher education
9 and learning will they be afforded to do that. We
10 have experience--have experience of being in jail.
11 I've been in jail a couple of times. I've been
12 locked up. I studied in jail. I took a college
13 course in jail in the late '90s right before that was
14 taken away by President Clinton. I'm here to tell
15 you that I can tell you that my colleagues who went
16 to school with me the morale was very high. Everyone
17 was very excited to be afforded the opportunity to
18 have a chance to gain education while in prison
19 because most of us knew if we was real with ourself
20 that being on the street probably would not be doing
21 that. So we look forward to that opportunity and we
22 excel in that opportunity. I myself I received a
23 3.75 grade point average while incarcerated. One of
24 my colleagues he received Valedictorian not just of
25 the school population, but of the whole--not just in

2 the jail population--I'm sorry--but the whole school
3 population. He was the Valedictorian, which was a--a
4 big accomplishment, and it was written about in the
5 newspaper. I can give you a list of people that I
6 know with success stories who went to college
7 incarcerated, and did very, very well opposed to
8 giving you a list of people who didn't do very well.
9 I can only think of one. I'm sure there are many
10 more, but that just shows you the ratio between the
11 two. Even the people I know that didn't go to
12 college with me or might have went to college before
13 me, they did very well in the population and in the
14 street. If they wasn't in the streets, they--they
15 became [bell] role models in the prison. It's--it's--
16 -

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: You can finish up.

18 GARY SESSIONS: Okay, the became role
19 models in the prison. They started doing mentoring,
20 and work in the prison. They opened up different
21 workshops, advocacy groups and a whole bunch of
22 different other avenues for people who didn't have
23 education to receive some either on the unit or they
24 made provisions where they would be able to give
25 someone some education to teach them as well. And

2 that's why, you know, it's very important that they
3 continue this college and program and incarceration.
4 Because we need to be able to give people a chance.
5 Thank you.

6 KEVIN STUMP: Good afternoon. My name is
7 Kevin Stump. I'm the Northeast Director for Young
8 Invincibles a non-partisan, non-profit policy
9 organization dedicated to expanding economic
10 opportunities for young people 18 to 34 relating to
11 healthcare, higher education, and jobs. I thank the
12 City Council for giving me the opportunity to testify
13 in support of President Obama's Second Chance Pilot
14 Program. Second Chance is a common sense idea that
15 will offer incarcerated young people an opportunity
16 to afford an education and find a quality job by
17 providing Pell Grants to incarcerated students who
18 otherwise qualify. Young adults in the justice
19 system already face major barriers trying to get back
20 on track. Young people account for more than a
21 quarter of the ten million individuals involved with
22 the prison system each year. Already facing harsher
23 economic conditions than previous generations and
24 with much of their lives still ahead of them,
25 incarcerated young adults working hard to get back on

2 their feet deserve the chance for a quality education
3 and a better life. Skyrocketing college costs push
4 educational opportunities even further from reach,
5 and prison based education has proven to be the
6 single most effective tool for lowering recidivism.
7 Pell Grants would provide the access to crucial
8 education and training, which have been proven to
9 reduce unemployment, poverty and ultimately lead to
10 lower rates of incarceration and recidivism.

11 While Second Chance provides federal
12 resources, it does not direct the--address the lack
13 of state aid available to New York inmates. The
14 state currently spend \$60,000 each year to
15 incarcerate one person, and approximately \$3.6
16 billion in total costs for prisons. New York's
17 recidivism rates 40% with an inmate with an inmate
18 population where 49.2% are African-American; 24% are
19 Hispanic, and 24% are White and 2.7% are identified
20 as other. Despite the racial disparities, high
21 financial costs of imprisoning residents and a
22 stubbornly high rate of recidivism, New York State
23 hasn't offered state aid through the Tuition
24 Assistance Program in 20 years. Since the
25 discontinuation of PELL and TAP Grants in the

2 mid'90s, the number o college programs across the
3 state supporting inmates pursuing a higher education
4 went from 70 to 4 because without Pell and TAP
5 Grants, inmates can no longer afford the program.
6 This is despite evidence that higher education has
7 been a proven method to reducing recidivism and
8 saving the taxpayer significant resources. One study
9 found that inmates who participate in correction--in
10 correctional education programs were 43% less likely
11 to recidivate. That's why Young Invicibles
12 recommends the New York City Council pass the
13 Resolution 837 sponsored by Chairman Inez Barron--

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you.

15 KEVIN STUMP: --which supports the Second
16 Chance Pilot Program Pell Grant Program, and to pass
17 a resolution urging the New York State Legislature
18 and Governor to once again extend TAP Grants to
19 incarcerated residents. Young Invincibles looks
20 forward to working with the City Council to expand
21 economic opportunities for all of New York's young
22 people including those who sometimes need a second
23 chance. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: We want to thank you
25 for coming, taking the time to prepare your

2 testimony. We want to thank you for coming up in
3 front, too, and sharing what it is that you do [bell]
4 and we look forward to working with you to make sure
5 that this Resolution goes forward. Thank you for the
6 work that you do. And we are going to call our last
7 panel. Kevin Munez from the University Student
8 Senate; Claudia Ward, University Student Senate;
9 Louis El Monte, University Student Senate; and Oscar
10 Martinez, University Student Senate. [background
11 comments] While they're coming and getting situated,
12 I do want to read into the record that we do have
13 testimony that was sent to us from Columbia
14 University and that will be a part of the record as
15 well. [background comments, noise] Okay, you only
16 have two? The others?

17 OSCAR MARTINEZ: They all left--left the-
18 -the papers.

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh, they left their
20 testimony.

21 OSCAR MARTINEZ: Yeah.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Great.

23 OSCAR MARTINEZ: Yeah, their records.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, great. So if
25 you would raise your right hand. Do you affirm to

2 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
3 truth in your testimony before this committee, and to
4 answer all questions honestly?

5 PANEL MEMBER: Yes, we do.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. You may
7 identify yourselves and begin. [background comments]

8 OSCAR MARTINEZ: Um, good afternoon.

9 Thank you, Ms. Barron, for allowing me to speak here,
10 and thank you for the Higher Committee of Education
11 for getting this hearing. My name is Oscar Martinez.
12 I currently serve--serve as the Vice Chair of Senior
13 College Affairs for the University Senate at CUNY.
14 I've been very fortunate to be able to experience
15 college, but not many are fortunate enough to be able
16 to fulfill the dreams to earn a bachelor's degree.
17 As a Latino, I'm just one of the few who will earn a
18 bachelor's degree and will be able to have a decent
19 career in this new generation. Are we forgetting
20 about the incarcerated individuals that won't be able
21 to fulfill that dream to have a career and be the
22 next lawyers, council members, doctors, teachers or
23 engineers. In my opinion, those are people we forget
24 about and don't even worry about their futures, and
25 hoping we can help those individuals to reintegrate

2 themselves to our society. How can we stop the
3 minorities especially the youth from making those
4 huge mistakes that will deprive them from fulfilling
5 their dreams? One mistake is that not many parents
6 will involve their sons and daughters to get an
7 education. All they worry about is for them to
8 finish high school, get a GED and be able to find a
9 job to pay their rent. Many parents work two jobs to
10 fulfill the needs of their families, and their kids
11 sometimes go on their own without that caring and
12 loving feeling. But I care about you and your
13 education. This influences a child to hang out with
14 bad influences, and leads to committing crimes doing
15 drugs and dropping out of school. I don't need to
16 say this that it's how Latino parents are, but it's
17 just my opinion of what I've seen personally. We
18 need to start tackling the problem. We don't want
19 our youth to make the same mistake. I'm grateful to
20 my parents for always supporting me and encouraging
21 me to fulfill my dreams by earning a college degree.
22 College is not only getting an education, Having
23 personally earned an associate's degree, and only
24 within a few months of completing a bachelor's
25 degree, something that not many people expect a

2 Latino to accomplish it. As a dream, I was the first
3 one in my family to earn a degree in computer
4 information systems it is an achievement. I learned
5 a lot in my four years of college, met new people,
6 networked. I got involved in improving my leadership
7 skills. That college has proven to be for everyone.
8 I'm glad to see the President of the United states
9 taking the initiative to start this program that will
10 allow Pell Grants for the incarcerated. He sees
11 there is an issue in our society, and we're now
12 tackling it. I totally agree. Incarcerated
13 individuals deserve a second chance. Now, we're in a
14 generation where you need a bachelor's or a master's
15 degree to live, work, and get a good family. People
16 that come out of jail always have difficulty
17 integrating. Let's not keep making that same mistake
18 over and over again. I feel that this new initiative
19 will give them hope to a new beginning. Knowing that
20 they were--went through a lot, and feel that every
21 door closed on them. Now, they will have the
22 opportunity to earn a college degree to give back to
23 their community and contribute to this country. In
24 other words, no one is perfect. We all make
25 mistakes. Education is the key to success--to

2 success. Everyone deserves the right to learn and be
3 given a second chance, and I'll end with a quote:

4 The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can
5 take it away from you. B.B. King. Thank you.

6 [bell]

7 KEVIN MENDEZ: Good afternoon, Chair and
8 Council Member. My name is Kevin Mendez. I'm
9 currently Chair and Senator-at-Large La Guardia
10 Community College. I'm an ASAP student. I'm also an
11 advocate for University Senate as well as cum laude.
12 Bear in mind I've just completed one year a La
13 Guardia Community College. I'll be speaking behalf
14 for you--on behalf of today not just students, but my
15 role--they have experience with incarceration. I
16 honestly feel without having Second Chance, I will
17 not have a second chance with school because I'm 25
18 years old. I dropped out of high school in 2008,
19 Wilton High School in the Bronx. Dropped out of
20 college DeVry College in 2009, and being that I've
21 been out of school for five years because my brothers
22 they've been incarcerated, so I've been--I was born
23 and raised in Elmhurst (sic), Queens. Now I live in
24 the Bronx. From personal experience I see how Second
25 Chance not only gives students of today and students

2 of tomorrow opportunity, but how my family has only
3 given the passion, the ambition to motivate me to go
4 back to school. Because of this, I've just completed
5 one year representing--in interested in the Senate.
6 I've been going to Albany, and new to all this I'm
7 honestly saying, but in my testimony it is just how
8 Second Chance is. One of my brothers, Ben, he got
9 the GED from Rikers Island. He went to Sing Sing, he
10 went to Morrissey, he went to Buffalo. Now he's at
11 Hunter pursuing his masters, 32 years old. That's my
12 oldest brother. Another one is he got his GED from
13 Rikers Island, his conception. He didn't pursue his
14 school. Well, we all dropped out of high school
15 honestly saying. I say this experience to a lot of
16 my fellow colleagues in a way because I come with
17 experience. It's just like my other brother he left
18 high school, he went--he went to Fordham (sic)
19 Community College. He dropped out when he got locked
20 up, and then he pursued back and got his associate's.
21 Now, he's a manager at Macy's in Queens. Even though
22 I'm here testifying of behalf of just me and family
23 students because honestly saying second chances are
24 not just--I can't--I won't revoke what they have done
25 like in the past, I have done in my past. In fact,

2 NYPD has my fingerprint, honestly saying, and I'm not
3 ashamed to say it because I'm a student community
4 leader, and CUNY has provided me the resources and
5 being an ASAP students gave me that ambition, the
6 motivation and being now with Starbucks (sic), you
7 know, everything is hard. But my family push, push,
8 push, and because of them it makes me get that
9 ambition, the passion to pursue my education. Being
10 a student leader, I advocate for students and for my
11 family and for the leaders of today and the leaders
12 of tomorrow. Because honestly saying I just go
13 nominated for Malave last week. It's overwhelming
14 this experience. I'm new to this and this CUNY
15 system because it's been one year. I've just
16 completed my first semester[bell] as an ASAP student.
17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you so much
19 for coming, for sharing your stories, and your
20 testimony and you certainly don't need to talk about,
21 you know, whatever that was that put you into the
22 system in the past. There is a scripture in the
23 Bible that says that those things get thrown into the
24 sea of forgetfulness. So we forget about those
25 things, but we grow from those things and we learn

2 from those things. But I do want to thank you for
3 coming, and sharing your testimony. Seeing that
4 there are no others, I just have a closing comment.
5 And we know that part of the way to reduce recidivism
6 is to increase the educational opportunities so that
7 as people come back into our society, they're better
8 able to cope with the challenges of just coming back
9 into the society. And we know that unfortunately the
10 rate of incarceration for Blacks it's likely that one
11 in three Blacks will be incarcerated, which is six
12 times more than Whites. We know that for Latinos,
13 it's one in six that it will be likely that they will
14 be incarcerated, which is twice as many as Whites.
15 And for Whites the ratio is about one in 17. I
16 continue to say that the mass incarceration is a
17 result of a system that targeted Blacks and Latinos.
18 Also a result of the system that sought to generate
19 and profit from their incarceration. And we know
20 that the Constitution says that slavery is abolished
21 everywhere except as a punishment for crime. So that
22 people who are incarcerated are, in fact, in a form
23 of slavery right here in the United States, and it's
24 a disproportionate number of Black and Latinos. And
25 a growing number of Black and Latino women. So it's

2 certainly something that we as a society have to
3 address and I think that this is an attempt to be
4 able to provide the mechanism for those who are
5 incarcerated to be able to look, to be able to
6 function at a higher level when they return to our
7 communities, and be able to have an opportunity to
8 make significant contributions. So I want to thank
9 everyone for coming to participate--for participating
10 in this hearing, and I now declare that this hearing
11 is adjourned. Thank you. [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date September 27, 2015