

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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September 30, 2025

Start: 1:12 p.m.

Recess: 4:54 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY - 8TH FLOOR- HEARING
ROOM 1

B E F O R E: Rita C. Joseph, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Eric Dinowitz
Jennifer Gutiérrez
Shahana Hanif
Shekar Krishnan
Farrah N. Louis
Mercedes Narcisse
Pierina Ana Sanchez

A P P E A R A N C E S

Dr. Cristina Melendez, Deputy Chancellor for the
Division of Family, Community, and Student
Empowerment at New York City Public Schools

Kleber Palma, Executive Director of the Office of
Language Access at New York City Public Schools

Kyle McDonald, Executive Director of Data and
Policy for the Office of Multilingual Learners
and Colleagues at New York City Public Schools

Andie Corso, Chief of Support for District 75 at
New York City Public Schools

Ana Pons, Strategic Advisor for Multilingual
Learners for the Division of Inclusive and
Accessible Learning at New York City Public
Schools

Tamara Mayer, leads Project Open Arms for New
York City Public Schools

Aracelis Lucero, interpreter

Lauren Secundito, self

Concepcion Maldonado, self

Qingxia Zhu, English Language Learners
Representative for the District 15 Community
Education Council

Eve Valeras, Haitian Creole interpreter

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

Dina, Russian interpreter

Lupe Hernandez, self

Tiaye Sinlat, youth advocate at Asian American Student Advocacy Project at the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families

Ashwin Lu-Heda, youth advocate for the Asian American Student Advocacy Project at the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families

Kulsoom Tapal, Education Policy Coordinator at the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families

Airenakhue Omoragbon, New York Policy Manager at African Communities Together

Nat Moghe, Advocacy Coordinator with the Asian American Federation

Taina Wagnac, Director of State and Local Policy at the New York Immigration Coalition

Catherine DiVasto, Staff Attorney at Queen's Legal Services, Legal Services NYC

Rita Rodriguez-Engberg, Director of the Immigrant Students' Rights Project at Advocates for Children of New York

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

Stamo Karalazarides Rosenberg, First Vice
President of the Council of Supervisors and
Administrators

Dr. Anabel Ruggiero, self

Christopher Leon Johnson, self

Brooke Edwards, speech language pathologist and
Board-certified stuttering specialist at
Stuttering Association for the Young

Magaly Sanchez, self

Dr. Eduardo Antonetti, Senior Director of
Advancement for Internationals Network

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Testing one two one two. Today's hearing is the Committee on Education. Today's date is September 30, 2025. Being recorded by Keith Polite.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon, and welcome to the New York City Council hearing on the Committee on Education.

At this time, please silence all electronics and do not approach the dais. I repeat please do not approach the dais.

If you are testifying, make sure you have filled out a slip with the Sergeant-at-Arms in the hallway. Thank you very much.

Chair, you may begin.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [GAVEL] Good afternoon, and welcome to our oversight hearing on language access in New York City public schools. I am Council Member Rita Joseph, Chair of the Education Committee. Thank you to everyone who has signed up to testify. We will look we look forward to hearing from you.

The Committee will also consider three pieces of legislation. Intro. Number 1336 sponsored by Council Member Shekar Krishnan requiring the

Department of Education to distribute information about importance of dental care; Intro. 1337 also sponsored by Council Member Shekar Krishnan requiring the New York City Public Schools to distribute information about vaccines to parents; and Resolution Number 54 sponsored by Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala calling on the New York State Education Department to collaborate on prioritizing increasing the number of educators trained to work with English language learners to improve the quality and comprehensiveness of English language learners' education.

New York City public schools are among the most diverse in the country. More than 180 languages are spoken by students, families. This year roughly 44 percent of students live in homes where English is not the main language. And since the summer of 2022, the city has welcomed about 48,000 new arrival students, many of them learning English. Language access means providing timely meaningful communication in a family's preferred language so parents, guardians can fully participate in their child's education. It allows families to understand report cards, curriculum updates, disciplinary notices, and special education services. Research

shows that when families can communicate in their home language, students attend school more regularly, perform better academically, and thrive socially.

This is especially true for students of color. But for too long the burden has fallen on school staff to arrange translation services or even on parents

themselves to interpret for others. A recent audit by

the City Comptroller found that New York City Public

Schools failed to maintain records for nearly one-

third of sampled students providing no evidence that

parents were informed of their rights in their

preferred language. This erodes trust and leave

families in the dark. The Council took action last

year with Local Law 115 which requires New York City

Public Schools to inform families each about

available interpretation and translation services.

That requirement took effect this September, and

we're eager to learn how schools carried it out. In

June New York City Public Schools also issued

Chancellor's Regulation A663 affirming the

responsibility to provide families meaningful access

to information in the language they understand.

Earlier this year, President Trump issued Executive

Order 14-222 designating English as the official

language of the U.S. He then ordered the Department of Justice to unwind nearly 25 years of language access work in the federal government. With the weakening federal support for language access services and going so far as to target these services in school, now is the time for the City to strengthen its commitment to all of our students and their families regardless of what language is spoken at home. So today we'll hear from New York City Public School students, families, educators, and advocates, and we ask do our schools truly welcome every parent, guardian into converse into the conversation.

Language access is not merely a matter of procedural fairness. In our schools it is essential to fulfilling legal obligations ensuring equity and safeguarding students' welfare. It directly influences educational outcomes and equity.

Thank you to all the Members of the Education Committee who have joined us today including Council Member Louis, Council Member Krishnan, Council Member Narcisse, and Council Member Hanif. I also would like to thank the Committee Staff, Alejandro Carvajal, Chloë Rivera, Katie Salina, Andrew Lane-Lawless, and Grace Amato and also

as well as my Staff, my Chief-of-Staff Juvanie Piquant, Joel Desouve for their work on this hearing today.

But before we swear in the Administration, we will also hear remarks from Council Member Krishnan.

COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you so much, Chair Joseph, and I appreciate you holding today's hearing on two pieces of my legislation.

Here's the moment we're in right now. Republicans in Washington and Donald Trump are creating an urgent public health crisis. They've kicked millions of Americans off their health insurance including a million New Yorkers, and with an impending budget shutdown, it also endangers even more people and their health insurance across the country. And now HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has spread serious misinformation, false misinformation about the effectiveness of vaccines and fluoride in the water. He's made the CDC and HHS political pawns in a harmful disinformation movement I would say, actively undermining universal recommendations around public health, actively

endangering people's health on a number of issues when it comes to usage of Tylenol during pregnancy, when it comes to fluoride, when it comes to vaccine. Make no mistake the damage that this Trump Administration is doing when it comes to public health is serious, it will take years to undo, and it is putting people's lives at risk every single day.

In New York City we recognize that we must trust public health experts and follow proven science to build healthy and strong communities. That stands in stark contrast to what is happening in Washington with a slew of resignations from the CDC, FDA as this Administration steamrolls and overrides the opinions of trusted medical experts.

And that is why I am proud to be the prime sponsor of two bills that we are hearing today. Both require New York City schools to provide children and their parents with important information around vaccines and the importance of taking them, oral hygiene and fluoride, as well as instructions on how to obtain vaccine and fluoride if needed. The Department of Education under my legislation will be required to work with the Health Department to ensure the information is backed by experts. This

information will also be language accessible to ensure all families across our city have the information they need to keep their children and our communities safe and to access critical medical resources. If the federal government will not provide the public health information we need to keep our communities healthy, if they will actively undermine medical experts and endanger lives, we in the New York City Council will take a stand, a stand for public health and a stand for the health and well-being of every single New Yorker.

Ultimately, I look forward to hearing from everyone today about our pieces of legislation, and I urge all of my Colleagues to sponsor it and one day soon vote in support of it. We will protect our children, schools, and communities when Donald Trump and Republicans in Washington, D.C. spread actively harmful disinformation about medicine. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council Member Krishnan.

Finally, I would like to remind everyone who wishes to testify in person today that you fill out a witness slip which you can find on the desk of

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2 Sergeant-at-Arms near the entrance of this room.

3 Please fill out the slip even if you have already
4 registered in advance that you will be testifying in
5 person today. If you wish to testify on Intro.

6 Numbers 1336 and 1337 or Reso. Number 54, please
7 indicate on the witness slip whether you're here to
8 testify in favor or in opposition to the legislation.

9 I also want to point out that we will not be voting
10 on any legislation today.

11 To allow as many people as possible to
12 testify, we will be limited to three minutes per
13 person, whether you're testifying in person or in
14 Zoom. I'm also going to ask my Colleagues to limit
15 their questions and comments to five minutes.

16 Please note that witnesses who are here
17 in person will testify before those who are signed
18 into the Zoom webinar.

19 I will now turn it over to Education
20 Committee Counsel to administer the oath, and this is
21 welcome Alejandro, our new Committee Counsel.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CARVAJAL: Thank you so
23 much, Chair.

24 Good afternoon. Now in accordance with
25 the rules of the Council, I will administer the

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2 affirmation to the witnesses from the Mayoral
3 Administration. I will call on each of you
4 individually for a response. Please raise your right
5 hands.

6 Cristina Melendez.

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ:

8 (INAUDIBLE)

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CARVAJAL: Kleber Palma.

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: (INAUDIBLE)

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CARVAJAL: Kyle

12 McDonald.

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: Yes.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CARVAJAL: Andie Corso.

15 CHIEF CORSO: (INAUDIBLE)

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CARVAJAL: Tamara Meyer.

17 TAMARA MEYER: (INAUDIBLE)

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CARVAJAL: Cheryl

19 Lawrence.

20 CHERYL LAWRENCE: (INAUDIBLE)

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CARVAJAL: Sasha

22 Bernard.

23 SASHA BERNARD: (INAUDIBLE)

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CARVAJAL: Anna Pons.

25 ANNA PONS: (INAUDIBLE)

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CARVAJAL: David Tepel.

3 DAVID TEPEL: (INAUDIBLE)

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CARVAJAL: Amy
5 Lichtenfeld.

6 AMY LICHTENFELD: (INAUDIBLE)

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CARVAJAL: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. As a
9 reminder to all of our witnesses, please state your
10 name prior to your testimony for the record.

11 If anyone here today requires an
12 accessible version of a presentation given at today's
13 hearing, please email testimony@council.nyc.gov.

14 You may begin your testimony.

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ: Good
16 afternoon, Chair Joseph and Members of the City
17 Council Committee on Education. My name is Dr.
18 Cristina Melendez, and I serve as the Deputy
19 Chancellor for the Division of Family, Community, and
20 Student Empowerment. I am joined by Kleber Palma,
21 Executive Director of the Office of Language Access,
22 or OLA, and Kyle McDonald, Executive Director of Data
23 and Policy for the Office of Multilingual Learners
24 and Colleagues from New York City Public Schools.
25 Thank you for the opportunity to join this important

conversation and to highlight the progress and impact of New York City Public Schools language access efforts. We are proud to celebrate this work and its role in strengthening connections with families across our city.

As you know, family engagement and empowerment is at the heart of what we do at New York City Public Schools, and true partnerships with families are not possible without language access. In a school system encompassing more than 180 different languages with approximately 38 percent of households speaking a language other than English, OLA has been spearheading this work for over two decades by creating the infrastructure needed to communicate and engage families who communicate in a language other than English. As part of this work, OLA processes requests from schools and offices for written translation services, on-site and virtual interpreters, and over the phone interpretation services. OLA also distributes language access kits to all schools each year which include multilingual posters and guides to help school staff assist parents with limited English proficiency. OLA monitors the implementation and effectiveness of

language access services to ensure that we are communicating effectively with our families. Under this Administration, OLA continues to address critical priorities including supporting new and emerging languages, ensuring the safe and appropriate use of translation technologies to engage families, and establishing partnerships with elected officials and community stakeholders to advance language access. The City Council has been a true partner in this work, and I would like to thank you for the longstanding commitment and leadership on this issue.

Our most recent major accomplishment occurred just a few months ago in June of 2025 when our Chancellor's Regulation A663 was amended. This regulation establishes our policy and procedures for ensuring that parents who communicate in a language other than English are provided with a meaningful opportunity to participate in and have access to programs and services critical to their child's education. Among its key provisions, the amended regulation expands the New York City Public Schools covered languages from 9 to 12, formally establish a language access coordinator at each school, strengthens guidance for school-based language

translation and interpretation plans, and requires language access training for school staff. With the addition of the three new covered languages, Albanian, Ukrainian, and Uzbek, New York City Public Schools now proactively translates general communications for nearly 99 percent of our families.

Chancellor's Regulation A663 also now aligns with Local Law 115-2024, requiring distribution of information regarding interpretation and translation services offered to families. Our most recent instructions to principals to distribute our multilingual Get Help in Your Language notice to families took place early this month during the week of September 8th. Our approach to language access has always been multifaceted. It is based on the premise that language access requires both the creation of support systems and the provision of services that are ultimately the responsibility of all, not just a few. A critical component of this work is raising awareness and ensuring that language access remains a priority for both school staff and families. In the recently concluded school year, 98 percent of our schools had a designated language access coordinator, with 90 percent of those coordinators completing the

required training. Language access coordinators play a vital role in supporting the school's language assistance services, ensuring families receive communications in their preferred language.

Additionally, in the spring of 2025, New York City Public Schools rolled out mandatory language access training for principals and parent coordinators for the first time, resulting in 2,423 staff completing the online asynchronous training. This fall, the mandatory training will be expanded to include all parent-facing school staff. The training is designed to equip staff with essential tools to effectively engage parents who prefer to communicate in a language other than English. This means having multilingual signage in school in place at every entry in our school, as well as access to translations of critical communications and interpretation services. One main component of our work focuses on disseminating information about New York City Public Schools' language assistance services to families through a variety of channels, including family events and trainings, backpack notices, emails, text messages, robocalls, mailers, our website, and our social media. Thanks to the City

Council's generous language access investment, we also launched an annual citywide public awareness campaign to further amplify our message to families, including print and digital ads, digital displays, and radio spots.

The second component of our approach is creating an enduring yet flexible language access support system for our schools. At the core of this support is OLA, with an approximate budget of 12 million dollars and 90 positions. Over the past years, OLA has developed workstreams that extend beyond its traditional translation and interpretation functions, including community partnerships, compliance, language data metrics, and usage evaluation, to name a few. One particularly notable initiative rooted in this evolution of OLA is new partnerships with community-based organizations to reach hard-to-engage communities. Another key initiative is the development of data dashboards that allow us to monitor language access performance at school, district, and citywide levels. Our language access support mechanisms include online archives of translated materials and templates, monthly newsletters for schools with updates and best

practices, and an annual school allocation of 7 million to help schools address local language needs. The City Council has been instrumental to all those investments.

Lastly, our third component is the provision of direct language assistance services to families. Last school year, New York City Public Schools provided interpretation for over 422,000 phone calls with families and provided professional interpreters to more than 6,500 family meetings. OLA also facilitated translation of over 1,400 general communications, 15,000 IEPs, and 1,500 foreign transcripts into English for student placement. These numbers do not include the countless daily family interactions facilitated by our school-based bilingual staff.

The Office of Sign Language Interpreting Services is a key partner in language access for the New York City Public Schools community. The Office provides interpreting services between American Sign Language and English for families and caregivers, staff, students, and other stakeholders throughout New York City Public Schools. Their purpose is to promote cross-cultural communication among deaf and

hard-of-hearing members of the New York City Public Schools community while fostering inclusivity and communication access for the ASL signing community in their schools and workplace. In addition to interpreting services, the Office also provides screening and monitoring for agency interpreters working in the classroom, ASL observations of deaf and hard-of-hearing children in the system, and assistance with outreach for parent coordinators, principals, schools, and other departments within New York City Public Schools. We are proud that PS347, the American Sign Language and English Lower School, is a dual-language pre-K-8 public school in New York City serving deaf, hard-of-hearing, children of deaf adults, and hearing students.

In addition to fulfilling family rights to language access, we are equally committed to advancing students' rights to multilingual education. Our Office of Multilingual Learners partners with district and school-based teams to ensure the timely identification of English-language learners, improve record-keeping, and fulfill bilingual staffing needs. These ongoing priorities of our system's work are part of a broader effort to provide every child with

access to high-quality instruction in a welcoming and inclusive environment. For multilingual learners, this includes our initiatives to strengthen bilingual program quality and sustainability, increase the availability of curricula and materials in students' home languages, and equip all teachers to serve ELLs effectively.

Just as importantly, we are focused on making sure that students' abilities to speak multiple languages translates into tangible academic and career benefits, such as paid work-based learning experiences and college credits. To deepen this work, New York City Public Schools launched the Advisory Council to Boldly Reimagine Multilingual Education to integrate community perspectives in shaping priorities. In alignment to New York City Reads and our commitment to family empowerment, this school year we are piloting two English language development curricula, HMH English 3D and National Geographic Reach Higher, to ensure the needs of our English-language learners are met. For year one implementation, the pilot will impact approximately 9,000 English-language learners. While they are long-lasting challenges, historic investments by this

Administration and the Council have driven real progress, an 8.7 decrease in dropout rates for current ELLs over the five years and a 29 percent increase in students graduating with a seal of biliteracy between August 2024 and August 2025.

So while we have made significant progress, our work is far from complete. We need to leverage translation technologies to supplement current services. We are currently exploring translations tools that will allow families and staff to communicate on smart devices in a reasonable manner without compromising privacy concerns. We need to promote and celebrate our three new New York City Public School languages through multicultural events, and we need to look beyond our borders to our other multilingual societies with long-lasting expertise in this area to learn more. To this end, New York City Public Schools is prepared to enter the next era of language access and looks forward to continuing its collaboration with the City Council to support our multilingual families.

Lastly, I would like to turn to the legislation. Intro. 1336 would require New York City Public Schools in collaboration with the Department

of Health and Hygiene through the Joint Office of School Health to distribute information about the importance of dental care. We support the collaboration allowing students and families to receive oral health education, ensuring consistent and efficient use of public health expertise.

Intro. 1337 would require the distribution of information on vaccines to parents of all students in collaboration with the Health Department, also through the Office of School Health. We are also in support of that legislation. The Office of School Health currently develops and shares immunization information on requirements, guidance, and resources with families and supports efforts to continue to do so. We look forward to working with the Council on how we can identify the best methods for distributing information to families to best support their health.

Thank you to the Council for the opportunity to speak today. I look forward to your questions.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.

First question, how does New York City Public Schools assess translation accuracy and

interpret equality and what were last year's error rates and corrective actions?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Good afternoon, Chair Joseph, Council Members.

My name is Kleber Palma, Executive Director of the Office of Language Access. Thank you for the question.

We have implemented several steps to proactively minimize quality concerns. Nevertheless, we still make available feedback and complaint mechanisms for families to share their thoughts and concerns. Within OLA, we have teams of translators led by a senior translator who reviews translations and provides ongoing feedback. Our teams collaborate closely to stay up to date on emerging terminology and remain attuned to the terminology commonly used within our communities. Our translation vendor is provided with the same bilingual glossaries, style guides, and translation memories, all of which are developed within our teams to ensure consistency, continuity in our message for families. Additionally, OLA conducts monthly quality audits and provides targeted feedback when needed to support ongoing refinement of translations provided by our vendors.

On the interpretation side of things, we also provide interpreters with bilingual glossaries to allow them to better prepare for family meetings and events. We also use an interpreting tiering system that takes into account the interpreter's experience and the complexity of the assignment that needs coverage. In some instances in the past, there have been moments we had to make an adjustment between the interpreter and the assignment, and we make those adjustments for future sessions as well. So that's for the most part what we found last year is lining up correctly the interpreter to the content area or the complexity of the meeting.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So what was some of the corrective actions you took if there were errors, right? What was the error rates? Do you have a number?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: No. We don't have an error rate. The thing about language is very, very subjective.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes, it is. And there's also nuances to languages as well. Are you also capturing those nuances?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Absolutely. So we work with interpreters through our vendors that go through training and are highly vetted. We provide them terminology and glossary to make sure that they're consistent, they're tuned into the community needs and lingo and terminology, they're prepared as could be. However, there's always going to be the subjectiveness and pieces where there's room for improvement. And that's the feedback that we receive, make adjustments specific to those concerns that are brought to our attention and adjust moving forward.

And now my Colleague from District 75 will address the American Sign Language piece of this.

CHIEF CORSO: My name is Andie Corso. I support District 75, and I'll be speaking about American Sign Language.

We work closely in collaboration with OLA, but when it's a little different, I'll also add a piece for American Sign Language. All interpreters for the Office of Sign Language Interpretation Services are screened prior to being hired. They're tasked with interpreting videos, both in English and ASL, and are evaluated on their quality and accuracy

of the interpretation. We also have a deaf staff member on the team who does assess the interpreter's language quality on an ongoing basis. All New York City Public School classroom interpreters, those are through contracted agencies, complete, of course, the full clearance process, and are screened by the deaf staff member through the Office of Sign Language Interpretation Services to qualify them.

The Office of Sign Language Interpretation has a close relationship with the deaf community, and any concerns that are raised around the quality of American Sign Language interpretation comes directly to the office to be reviewed and remediated.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How often do you get errors, and how often do you... it's usually perfect? Is that why you're shaking your head?

CHIEF CORSO: Perfect is not... translation is never perfect, and we did not have examples last year where we had the community say, actually, this was not faithfully translated to what we were needing.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. That's good to know. So I guess, so what performance metric are

translation interpretation contracts, and how did vendors score last year? If you were to rate a vendor, how did they score last year?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So we have some information that I can share with you on that piece. We consider performance being task-based, which is dependent on the language requested, the amount of notice provided, the nature of the event or the document to be translated, its complexity, and other issues as well with regards to those two pieces, translation and interpretation. However, we do have some information on the interpretation side of things, and we monitor fulfillment rates for our vendors to ensure that they have enough capacity to provide support, and in School Year '25, we found that we had a fulfillment rate of about 91 percent of the requests received. Those unfulfilled were because of a couple of reasons, mostly, one, very short notice of request, that happens often, and that's our, we have to do better in making sure that we raise awareness in terms of our requesting procedures and timelines and expectations, and sometimes the matching of the expertise of the interpreter with the type of meeting that was being requested was another

concern as well, which goes back to my previous point of making sure those things are aligned.

On the translation end, it works a little bit differently. All of the requests are completed. There's usually... no, in every instance, all the translations are completed within a timeframe, or in some cases, we will need a day or two, depending, again, on the complexity and length of the document or the language being requested, but there's 100 percent fulfillment on translations.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And also the content. The content is also important.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yes, absolutely. And sometimes you don't know about the content until you're in the document itself.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Oh, I know a thing or two.

How many language access coordinators, principals, parent coordinators, and school nurses have completed training as required by the legal settlement?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So in School Year '25, we had 1,599 language access coordinators complete training both in-person and virtually, and

we had 1,101 school nurses complete the same training that was a little more tailored to that target audience. In the spring, we rolled out for the first time ever the mandated asynchronous training for principals and parent coordinators, and our numbers came back at 1,220 principals being trained and 1,151 parent coordinators having completed the training. Those who did not complete, we will be following up with them this fall, in addition to expanding the training to everybody, all of the public-facing staff at schools who will be required to take this training.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That is important. I've always wondered why principals and administrators have always been left out of training, information, even our multi-language learners. I think principals should start attending these trainings so they can deliver top to bottom, bottom up, in order to get the work done. And parent coordinators who has a lot of face time with parents that can really directly deliver all of the resources to parents, they need to have those tools in their toolbox in order for them to do their work properly.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So how often are language access training offered, and what is the timeline for expanding the training from 2025 to 2026 and 2026 to 2027?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Well, let me start by saying beginning this fall, all parent-facing public staff are required to take training throughout the school year and every year moving forward so that's being launched now.

In terms of language access coordinators, they're part of that group, but in addition to that, every other year they are required to complete a more comprehensive training that goes into the more nuts and bolts in terms of resources and supports and other access to OLA directly, further learning how to work with vendors and expectations and best practices and so forth. So that's going to continue to happen every other year, but in terms of all public-facing staff, it's starting now.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: It starts now. And you said how many did you train already for the year?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Well, last school year?

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Last school year, in the spring we started with principals and parent coordinators. We had 1,220 principals and 1,151 parent coordinators.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is those training also will be available for assistant principals?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yes. They're considered public-facing staff to us.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes. Normally we leave them out as well.

What specific guidance have been given to principals, parent coordinators about their responsibility under Local Law 115 of 2024?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So just earlier this month, actually we started back in February. We made our first communication to schools back in February. We did another one, I believe it was the week of September 8th. We created a Get Help in Your Language notice in all of our new covered languages, and those instructions went to school leaders to make sure that they sent those communications home to families. That flyer is also, we brought a copy of that for you to see as well. It's in your folder. We have it available online and it's being used at all

parent events that we have throughout the city throughout the school year.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And New York City Public Schools are ensuring staff understand and apply new requirements from the lawsuit settlement and Local Law 115? Is that being communicated on the ground and everyone knows what is required of them? If I were to walk into New York City Public School right now and I asked about Local Law 115 and the legal settlement, would schools be able to, teachers, providers, parent coordinators, and principals, would they be able to tell me about that?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: If you completed the training, yes.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And if they did not?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: No.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So how are we getting that information down on the ground?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So, we're communicating through our typical communication methods, our principal digest and other communications from several divisions, including ours. But one of the major communications is this is mandated training that has to get done. So we're

launching it for the first time. We're targeting over 135,000 employees for the first time, and we are going to follow up very aggressively to make sure all complete the training.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'll be following too.

How many schools currently have unfulfilled language access coordinator role, and what is the timeline for filling in these vacancies?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So, today we have about five percent of the schools do not have a language access coordinator. We never get to 100. There's people movement in terms of our schools. Last year, we got up to about 99 percent. So right now we're at 95 because it's the beginning of the school year. But we also do follow up to principals and we work through our DSL and other folks to make sure that we have a designated point person in our Galaxy system so we can make sure that we're communicating with that individual, we're relaying information, and that they're able to escalate concerns to us as well. Of those individuals as of today, 79 percent of those individuals have been trained so far, and we will

continue to work throughout the school year to get close to 100 percent as possible.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ: Chair, also in the State of our Schools, yesterday revealed an accountability metric that lives in our website and one of the things that we are monitoring is our language access coordinators and making sure that every one of our schools has one so that's something that's there permanently right now.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And you're going to update that website too that's so hard to navigate as parents?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ: That part, yes.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That part.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ: But this one has a specific link to it with all of the data right in there so we're hoping to push that link out so that folks can access it and also support us in supporting our schools.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So I'm going to ask the hard question that I always ask. For parents who don't have access to digital divide, how is that information traveling, getting to parents who don't

have access to technology? How are we getting that information?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ: Yeah. We are continuously supporting schools and making sure that if anyone needs a device that they have access to the device, that they have the wi-fi that they need, or supporting them with connections to those opportunities and resources that they lack. However, we really rely on our parent leadership structures to be those spaces where families can have access to the information so we're very serious about supporting our parent leaders in knowing exactly what's going on, particularly our CECs, of course, and our president's councils, so that then they can share with families more broadly.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And for parents who don't read that language at all, what support is happening? There are parents who don't read, they speak the language, but don't read and write it. What are we doing for that parent? That's a huge chunk of families that we're leaving out. How are we reaching out to those families?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ: I think that's where our Family Connectors program is really

thinking about this work intensely. How do we build trusted messengers with our parent leaders, with our Family Connectors, to make sure that they're able to have those conversations with families? And of course, with the support of the language access opportunities at the local level, so that families can get this information in spoken word, because that's really what they need, many of our families need.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, spoken words.

And unfortunately, some of our families are bi-illiterate, they can speak more than one language, but can't read and write it so how do we support and not leave those families out?

So, what are the most commonly requested language for interpretation and translation?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Our top five languages based on data for School Year '25 are Spanish, Chinese, of course, and the interpretation is inclusive of Mandarin and Cantonese, Russian, Arabic, and Bangla.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And the other languages that you have, they're not up there because families don't know that they're there, or?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Well, everything that's communicated from the New York State Public Schools proactively and automatically goes into the 12 languages, right? In terms of the school level demand, that's the piece that we need to look into further, is whether or not schools are translating based on the language data that's reflective in their communities. Again, that's part of the training, it's something we've been working hard, we're doing a lot of work in data collection and sharing those metrics to find those gaps and to ensure that we address those gaps moving forward.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That's why I asked that question earlier, how are folks getting that information on the ground.

How does New York City Public Schools keep track of translation and interpretation requests from schools and from parents? Where does that information live?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So, we make use of technology, Microsoft-based technology for the most part, for online forms, we have internal tracking systems and databases to ensure that all that information is received, is tracked, and we're

able to report out on that information afterwards.

These are tools that we use with our project managers within OLA to track any request that comes through our office.

CHIEF CORSO: I'll add for American Sign Language, we have an official request form that goes right into a FileMaker database, and so all of the requests can be quantified that come through that. We do know that we have requests that come in many other ways, and those right now, those daily requests that come in that do not come through the request form, we do not right now have a good way of tracking, which is why we're asking everybody to use the request form so we actually do more than we have a record of.

In terms of fulfillment, we do have vendor agencies that we can source from if we're unable to fulfill requests internally with the Office of Sign Language Interpretation staff. So, we have 22 staff members who are able to provide the service. We're looking to hire two additional staff members, but at peak times, like graduation or parent-teacher conference, we may then go to a contracted provider in order to meet demand.

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2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you have any
3 vacancies on your team?

4 CHIEF CORSO: No.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: All positions are
6 filled?

7 CHIEF CORSO: We are looking to hire two
8 more, but the current positions are filled.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. All right.

10 So, how many requests for translated
11 special education documents were made in SY 2023,
12 2024, and 2025, and how many were fulfilled?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Okay. So, I'll
14 start with IEP specifically. For School Year '24, we
15 received 13,203 requests, of which 12,778 were
16 fulfilled. In School Year '25, we received 15,814
17 requests, of which 15,138 were fulfilled. And the
18 reason for the unfulfillment, just to clarify, is...

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Oh, I was going to
20 follow up with that.

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: I know. I know.
22 A couple reasons. One of which, again, as I mentioned
23 earlier, we use online request forms for people to
24 submit, for folks in schools to submit requests.
25 There are multiple instances of duplicate requests.

There are instances where requests are made prior to the IEP being finalized, and we won't translate until it's actually finalized because there could be amendments or adjustments so we wait for that so there's some back and forth going on with schools. Some cases, there's just administrative processing errors, last names, and wrong OSIS numbers, and so forth so a lot of that falls into those pieces.

As I mentioned earlier, we aim for 100 percent completion of translation requests, but we need to iron out some of those pieces when it comes to the IEPs, and that's why there's some unfulfillment rates there.

We also have received translations for Section 504s and other special education documents, for example, impartial hearings, of which all have been complete, fulfilled, and translated.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What share came from staff versus directly from parents?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So, let me give you the big number for this, but I gave you the IEP numbers. If I give you the total account for all the special education documents, inclusive of Section 504s and other special education related documents,

in School Year '24, we're looking at 15,528, and in School Year '25, 17,579. Of those, in School Year '24, 137 came directly through our online parent-facing form, and the previous school year, School Year '25, 218 came from parent-facing forms.

Now, a couple of things. Those online forms for the parent-facing community, is relatively new, a couple years old, so it's just taking off, and the campaign efforts, thanks to the investment of the Council and other efforts of promotion and so forth, are helping build momentum and awareness of the ability for parents to submit requests directly themselves on our site so we do see an incremental increase, but we hope to see more moving forward.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And for the parents who don't have access to technology again, how do they get to access, or do they even know that this service exists?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So, a lot of the promotion efforts that awareness, which we talked about in the testimony, is making sure families are aware of the service. We want to give as many avenues and mechanisms available to families to request services, so I keep on going to the online form, but

I'm happy you brought up what other mechanisms are in place. Folks can call 3-1-1 to make the request, and we have the ability there to transcribe those requests, and it ends up in our systems. We also have, on our promotion and all of our awareness efforts for families, is talk directly to the school. Come to the school, and everybody should be trained at that point, or at least the parent coordinator should be aware, or the language access coordinator, to address those concerns or address those requests.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is there a guide for families to follow? Is there a guide that the parent coordinator have if parents come to them to give to them?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yes. That appears in several assets that we've created. We've created a Parent's Guides to Language Access that describes for families where they can go to provide the support, the same message in our campaign efforts, and the same message in a lot of our back-to-school assets that are sent to families. We touch on language access as well.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I have a follow-up. School Data Dashboard that you referenced earlier

notes that 78 percent of schools have designated language access coordinator for district-wide Brooklyn high schools. They have only 38 percent of the positions designated. Can you clarify how that compares to the numbers of unfulfilled position, and what is the distinction between unfulfilled position and undesignated?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: If you're referring to a language access coordinator, those are designations. The instruction there is for school leaders to designate a staff member as a language access coordinator. There's no filling of positions.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: There's no what? Say that again?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: There's no filling of language access coordinator's positions. That's a designation that's made for a current staff member.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, unfulfilled positions mean what? We want to clarify it on the record versus undesignated positions.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Unfulfilled means a fully salaried position, full-time position

that is filled or not. That's not what the language access coordinator is about.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Thanks.

What are New York City's Public Schools target actual turnaround time for translation and for schedule interpretations by language and by borough?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So, we don't differentiate between languages and borough for how we work in providing services for interpretation support for central offices. OLA requires a seven-day business notice to make sure that we can make the arrangements, find the correct interpreter for the event. And for schools, the timeline extends to 10 business days to ensure the vendor can find the appropriate resources for the particular event or meeting for families. The over-the-phone service which is available to schools in over 200 languages is an on-demand service, so that's seconds or minutes depending on the language being requested.

And on the translation side of things, it really depends on several factors, as I may have touched on earlier which you're well aware of, amount of text, content, formatting, specs, online digital processing. These translations, if these requests

come to OLA, we do have some general guidelines and timeframes for schools to be aware of and those fall into three major pots. Projects or documents up to 1,000 words, we kind of give a timeframe three to seven business days. In some cases we beat that, but we want to make sure to surprise folks as opposed to disappoint folks in timeframes. Jobs that are up to 3,000 words, we extend that to 7 to 15 business days. And all jobs over 3,000 words, it can hover anywhere from 10 to 15 business days.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You might as well sit there.

CHIEF CORSO: I get a few steps in. But for American Sign Language, we request our staff interpreter availability by the 20th of each month for the following months. Then we schedule month-to-month based on fixed, variable, and one-off interpreting requests. We do provide interpreting services via ASL, English, and when needed, trilingual with Spanish and American Sign Language. We currently have two trilingual interpreters on staff. We do request a two-week notice for the request. That allows us to staff and request additional staff to match the right person to the

job. Having said that, we do our absolute best to meet every request that comes in.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is there ever a time where you could not meet the needs?

CHIEF CORSO: That's when we go to contract. And so we have our staff, and then we go to contract during peak times if we cannot meet the need during staff.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: When you can't get the service in-house, you decide to go out. Okay.

How come you don't keep data per borough as to your turnaround time for translation and for interpretation by language in borough? How come you don't keep that data?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So, I'm going to clarify my response. We do collect information as to who's making the request, what district, what borough, what school, what language. We have the information. We haven't flipped it on the other side and seen if Bangla gets more covered in Queens than it does in Staten Island, which I thought you were asking for. We don't do that. But we could. We just haven't done that.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah. That would kind of give you an idea how we can do more, right? Okay.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Also, a lot of these things are virtual nowadays too, so it doesn't matter where the meeting is taking place. We can find interpreters who can jump online regardless of the location.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. All right.

How do you conduct audits or evaluation of language access effectiveness? What are some of the findings? How do you assess yourselves? Have you assessed yourself and say, hey, I'm doing great, or there's areas where I can improve?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yes. We've started to do that just last year. So, what we've started to do in School Year '25 is start to collect and review language access effectiveness at schools by doing a few things. First of all, tracking service usage, which is what we're talking about now, tracking like designations, which I'm able to share with you now, monitoring completion of training, which we will be doing moving forward, and monitoring the usage of school-based translation funds through our SAM. Those are some of the metrics that we use,

and we're beginning to take a look at the gaps and also best practices for places you're doing this really, really well. And that's our next step, is to begin to digest that data, take in more compared to our recent past of data being collected this last school year, and moving forward trying to just make progress in areas that need to be improved.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what are some of your best practices that you're seeing that you can probably share here with us? And what do you see that you will continue to work and improve?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So, a few of the things that we have found over the two decades of doing this work, just to give you a simple example, is every Yom Kippur or every Thanksgiving or every Christmas break, we get from hundreds of schools the same simple request. We are closing next week, opening up, come back on January 2nd or whatever, and we in the past strive to accommodate all these requests, and we still will if we're sent a request because people have different writing styles and want this flowery language everywhere. But we've also come up with a concept of just creating a template that simply states in two or three sentences the idea or

the concept of the message, make it available in the 12 languages, and try to drive folks to our online archive of translated documents to download and use immediately and not have to wait the three to five to seven business days to get their flowery message done the way they would like. So that's one thing that we've learned, these best practices that we want to make sure, and that's what we flip to our training sessions as well, to our staff.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: It makes sense because then you don't have to wait on someone to say happy new year in your 12 languages.

What percentage of newly enrolled students received the HLIS and NYSITELL screening within the required five window days in the last school year?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: Chair, my name is Kyle McDonald, the Executive Director of Data and Policy for the Office of Multilingual Learners, and really thank you to ask this question as it pertains to recent...

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: This is our new room. You have to enjoy the new stuff. You realize that, right?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: I'm loving it.

Okay. Thank you so much for the question. For the record, I guess, Kyle McDonald, Executive Director of Data and Policy for the Office of Multilingual Learners.

So this question pertains to two parts of the ELL identification process, the Home Language Identification Survey, and the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners. So last year, in '24-'25, we saw over 38,600 students complete the NYSITELL within the 10- or 20-day administration window. This was 88 percent of all eligible students. The recent New York City Comptroller's Report did include about 2,500 students that were actually not eligible for the New York State Identification Test within that report. Those were students that either were previously enrolled in New York City schools and were not eligible for re-identification or were students that were enrolled for fewer than 10 school days. Oftentimes, this is the family changed their minds after they initially enrolled and didn't end up attending for 10 school days. However, we accept that 88 percent is

absolutely not acceptable. And therefore, with regards for how we're going to improve from 88 percent to 100 percent, we're working with our district teams to ensure all schools are appropriately supported. Schools are provided regular completion reports of the students that require the administration. These reports are monitored centrally and at the district level by superintendent staff so that they can proactively reach out about any additional support they might need or if schools need any additional support with training new proctors to increase capacity. And they also follow up on any areas of non-compliance.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I was going there.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: Yeah.

District staff are all over following up when they see in order to see if there's needs for additional training. There might be a staffing shortage, whatever might the case that is contributing to that lack of compliance.

And then going forward, we're also looking forward to our new student information system. This information system will allow us to more accurately collect the dates of eligibility. They

will make it more transparent to schools about when the deadline will be. This has been and will continue to be an ongoing area of focus for our district school staff to improve.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many schools you currently have out of compliance right now?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: Out of compliance? So, those metrics were by student. And so, that's about like how many students in the last school year were attended, not necessarily how many schools where the students attended.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: If we were to look across the school district, so you don't know per district, how many folks were out of compliance?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: I don't have a metric right now about how many schools had students that were out of compliance.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You should have one. You should have one in the NYSITELL, especially with the NYSITELL, because that also drives where students are placed, right? Whether it's a bilingual, standalone, transitional, pull-in, pull-out, that also determined their services, right?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, I think we should know where they are, where the gaps are, and how we can make sure the students are meeting their needs, right?

So, how many students were screened late?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: I can get you the exact number. So, it was about 12 percent of the eligible students last school year.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That's double digits.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: It's definitely an area we're working to improve on.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And do you know what the reasons were that they were delayed?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: So, there can be a variety of reasons. The most common reason is that students are absent for periods of time during the beginning of the school year, and so that might do with the holidays, it might do with students get a cold in the beginning of the school year as they're coming, and then they're not there for part of the time. Another contributing factor often has to do with staffing changes, especially at the beginning of the school year. That's where our district staff play a key role in reaching back out to schools, to

helping train additional staff members on how to administer the exam and their staffing changes at the beginning of the year.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Doesn't that process also occur in enrollment as well as they take the HLIS, as you fill out the HLIS form?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: So, the Home Language Identification Survey is completed. It needs to be completed in person by a pedagogue, so it's done by a teacher at school site. Families are invited to the school to complete that with the teacher, and oftentimes, the Home Language Identification Survey and the NYSITELL can be completed within the same visit for the family. It's not necessarily like they have to attend...

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct. So, that child is in the school at the time. Why are you not taking advantage while they're there? You're saying absent. Do you also have enough staff to cover? You have enough ENL coordinators in school buildings across the city to make sure they are also being screened?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: So, both of these parts of the identification process can be

completed by any pedagogue, so it does not require an ENL specific teacher. An important area of training for our support staff is that they work with schools to ensure there's a team of teachers that all are trained and available in order to do this.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how many teachers you've trained already?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: We can look at how many teachers.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I need those numbers to know, because we know across the city, right, we have a shortage in ESL teachers. We have a shortage in ENL coordinators. So, bodies in the building, they should be in your office. Everyone, including principals, should be trained in administering this in case you don't have, right? Because you know that's my world, right? So, I'm asking you those questions.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: And I guess I want to emphasize, I think it's not just in case you don't have, because ENL, English as New Language teachers, have a full schedule and need to be providing services.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: But there's also a
3 shortage across the city as well.

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: It's
5 unacceptable to pull an English as New Language
6 teacher out of the class in order to complete the
7 identification process. Those are the teachers.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How are you going to
9 get it done?

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: So, our
11 district staff, they're monitoring this data at a
12 distance, looking at both daily refreshes of reports
13 and monthly compliance reports with superintendents.
14 And then those district staff also, as a part of
15 annual monitoring visits, do review all plans around
16 the identification process.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How often do they go
18 to those school buildings?

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: So, over 300
20 schools are monitored each school year based on the
21 schools with some of the lowest compliance metrics or
22 student performance outcomes.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And once a school is
24 out of compliance, how soon do you send someone there
25 to support that school?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: So, as I named, there might be a data dashboard that's refreshed daily. And so, there might be a district support staff who can reach out with information within the day. So, that 10-day timeline, all students who enroll within the first day of school did need to be identified by September 17th. We saw many district staff reaching out last week then to support with schools and making sure we were meeting those deadlines.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how many did not meet the deadline?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: I do not have that information with us.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. So, you're going to get all of that to me, right?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: Mm-hmm.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: Yes. Yes, I will.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

How do New York City Public Schools ensure that families receive clear, translated information about the programs, standalone, ESL,

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60

2 bilingual, integrated, pull out after testing? Yes,
3 sir.

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: Could you
5 repeat that question?

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah.

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: Could you
8 repeat the question? I'm so sorry.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: No. I said, how do
10 New York City Public Schools ensure that families
11 receive clear, translated information about the
12 school's program, standalone, ESL, bilingual,
13 integrated, pull out after the testing?

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: So, all
15 families, after completing the identification process
16 and that New York State identification test should be
17 offered that ELL-parent orientation meeting. That's
18 something that can occur at the school building and
19 it needs to occur in the family's preferred language.
20 Afterwards, the families then complete the ELL-parent
21 agreement survey, which families then can indicate
22 what would be their preference, regardless of what's
23 available at their school, and then also acknowledges
24 what services they could be provided at that school
25 or if there's a need for a transfer. That form is

then collected and the key information from that is entered centrally into the Automate the School System, ATS, where both at a district level and a central level, we're reviewing that information. That form does include whether or not the family was able to attend a parent orientation prior to being able to submit that information. And so, we're able to centrally and at a district level monitor whether or not those meetings are occurring and are occurring in the family's preferred home language.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And for families who don't want the program that's offered at the school, what's their option and where do they go for support?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: Within that same process, trying to streamline that, one of the areas of noncompliance found within the Comptroller report was forms that were completed maybe in a way that was confusing, contradictory information entered. The Comptroller's audit began three years ago so we saw that issue three years ago and quickly moved to address it so we've already updated the parent agreement and parent survey form, that form to be more streamlined. It's now easier for families to indicate what they need and I think a lot more

actionable for school staff to complete. We are monitoring, since that change occurred, how that has helped drive more compliance so that families can be quickly placed within the program of their preference. If there's not a bilingual education program available for a family, they'll be offered to a program that's nearest to them if there is one available at their grade level and within their home language. All schools would provide English as a new language. So, if there was a family that preferred English as a new language as their preferred program option, they stay within their school. If there's not currently an ENL provider, we would then work to create a budget adjustment to ensure that that school does have an English as a new language provider to fulfill that family's preference.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What's the process to bring families back after NYSITELL results to confirm their program choice and what language is this information provided in?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: So, although the Home Language Identification Survey must be completed in person with like the parent and the pedagogue in the same place, ELL parent orientation

around the programs does not have to occur in person. So, there are schools that might offer virtual options for that. We do encourage schools and try to support them in doing that all at one time so that families can complete all that at the same, but there is an option for schools also to complete that virtually or to provide that information at a later time to families in order to give them the overview of what the programs that are available. There are online videos that are translated in 16 different languages that provide the overview of what those program options are so that's also something that families are able to view outside of the school in order to get an overview of what the program options are.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how do families know about these programs outside of schools?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: The programs that's not available at the school that they're currently attending. Is that correct?

Sorry, just as a clarifying question, how families are able to know about the programs outside of their school?

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Mm-hmm.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: Okay. So, the programs that are not available at their school, when the families complete the ELL parent survey, schools indicate what are the other schools in that family's preferred language in their area so they're able to be able to be given the list as they're making that decision about what programs are available.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We're going to go on a trip.

Okay.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: And I can provide some information to some of the questions you asked.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: So, schools that were out of compliance with timely identification of students via the New York State Identification Test. There were 357 out of the 1,460 schools. That is 65 percent of our schools were less than 99 percent compliant.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What do you plan to bring that as close as possible to a 99 percent?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: So, we have ongoing reports that we're working with our district staff in order to follow up and support schools with whatever barrier they might be currently encountering so we can have the timely identification and placing of students.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Have you done a survey with families after to find out what some of the barriers are and to remove? If you're going to remove barriers, you got to know what they are. How do you know what they are? Do you survey the families?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: So, the ELL-parent survey does include some questions around what was the family's experience with the ELL-parent orientation in order for when district staff are monitoring and supporting with schools, they can review that information that was submitted.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what are some of the feedbacks?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: I don't have any of that feedback with us today, but we can provide it.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Have you looked through them?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: I've not personally, no.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. I think you should. If you want to remove barriers, you got to know what you're looking at, right?

How do you measure success or satisfaction for parents with language access services? After you provide that, is there a way that you measure if parents were satisfied with the service that you provided because I take a survey every time I go, wherever I go, I take a survey. Is that being provided by New York City Public Schools?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yes. So, we provide a mechanism for families to provide feedback in several ways. One of which it's attached to the yearly New York City School Survey that goes out to all families to get a sense of how we're doing on language access. In addition to that, we also have an online form in translation and also the 3-1-1 mechanism to collect feedback from families with regards to language access specifically. Some data that we took a look at for the spring, just the

recent spring semester, shows out of 827 responses, 56 percent of families indicated that language assistance services were received always or often, 16 percent indicated sometimes, 6 percent indicated they can make use of language assistance services, and 22 percent said they didn't need it so they shouldn't have filled out the form to begin with. But all this to say that there's the beginning of us taking a look at how things are working and where things are not working. And in places where we're able to locate where these concerns or lack of services are being originated from, we can follow up with the school or the region or district to follow up with training or further support in those services.

CHIEF CORSO: Just speaking to American Sign Language for a second, one of the most important ways that we measure quality is relationships with the deaf community, so both with agency support and directly with the families that are impacted as well. We do take seriously complaints of dissatisfaction brought to our attention by parents, guardians, other requesters, and address them internally case by case. Quality is paramount in terms of the translation. One note is that sometimes people will have preferences,

I'd really like to work with this interpreter. That's not always possible to accommodate, but we do the best that we can.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And that survey and the feedback also drive on how to improve your work, right?

CHIEF CORSO: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That's what's needed. Sir, that's what's needed. Survey in order to know how to drive your work to make it better and make sure the outcomes for our students is much better.

I'd like to recognize Council Member Gutiérrez and Dinowitz, and I'll start with Council Member Hanif to ask questions.

Go ahead.

STRATEGIC ADVISOR PONS: Hi. My name is Ana Pons. I'm Strategic Advisor for Multilingual Learners for the Division of Inclusive and Accessible Learning. I just want to add to my colleague's response about how we have tried to capture and understand families' experiences with understanding their rights for their child's education and how they can access the best education program for them. So in addition to the parent survey process and the work

that our team is doing to improve that, last year we also launched the Fully Reimagining Multilingual Education Advisory Council, which includes over 50 advisors who are current students, families, advocates, other community members to share with us their feedback on all aspects of multilingual education, including the enrollment process, their program experiences, staffing, everything we're talking about today. So, that is one of many efforts that we're taking to make sure that we are capturing that feedback, and we hope to publish the recommendations soon so we can start to implement them in a strategic plan and really begin to address these things in a targeted way.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What was the number one thing that came up?

STRATEGIC ADVISOR PONS: For the Fully Reimagining Multilingual Education report? We have five key priorities and over 30 recommendations. There are priorities around how we are expanding pathways to multilingualism for every student. With equitable access for English language learners, that includes how we are strengthening bilingual education programs and sustaining high-quality programs. That

is also around how we strengthen ENL, standalone ENL, for the 80 percent of ELLs who are still served in ENL. High-quality instructional materials are a key priority for educators and schools in terms of how we ensure that all teachers are equipped to fully meet the needs of ELLs through the materials and resources they have available to them, and those should come alongside high-quality training and ongoing support with implementation. Things like NYC Reads and NYC Solves have really allowed us to scale this work in an important and impactful way. Welcoming Inclusive Schools, I think that extends to the work we're doing with language access. Language access definitely was a part of the work we discussed, as well as some of our programs like Dream Squads, immigrant ambassador programs, things I believe some of our Members of this Council are familiar with. And then ensuring that a multilingual skill set is translating to real academic and career benefits. So that things like the seal of biliteracy, which Council Member Dinowitz has been a huge proponent of, are ensuring that students have access to more experiences like paid work-based learning opportunities and college credits so now we have the 11 CUNY colleges who are awarding up to

eight college credits for seal recipients so we're really looking at that continuum from kindergarten to graduation and thinking about how to ensure a high-quality experience for families entering the system that is welcoming and inclusive, that students are having access and can attain a high-quality education throughout their experience, and that they're not only developing English, but have opportunities to leverage their home language and all of their learning and instruction, and then that they're graduating with that skill set recognized and positioning them to really thrive and succeed in college and career.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely. Are we also encourage them to making sure they're taking AP classes. We're working developing the workforce for the next generation. As I've always said this, another language is always our superpower, not a deficit so we want to make sure we're also putting our students on pathways for career, AP placements, and also our transfer students. We cannot forget the support that they need. Sometimes we take transfer schools as a dumping ground, which I'm very against,

but we also got to make sure we're providing support for our transfer students.

Council Member Hanif, followed by Gutiérrez, and then Dinowitz. Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you, Chair Joseph, and welcome.

I just want to start off by saying that as a daughter of immigrants and the experience of seeing the language access issues, the dire language access issues as a young person and being the primary interpreter at home, and seeing the extraordinary progress that the Department of Education has made is very exciting to me. I'm very optimistic about the future of education access in our city, not just for our young people, but also for parent engagement. To see more engagement within the parent-teacher associations as a result of there being language access available is making a huge, huge positive difference. We've seen that as we've welcomed new asylum seekers and their children.

I want to kick off by asking, New York City is a sanctuary city, and however, that designation hasn't meant that our policies on sanctuary city has been followed. I'd like to know if

all school personnel, including contractors, bus drivers, school safety officers, have received training on the laws and regulations protecting immigrant students and their families.

TAMARA MEYER: Good afternoon, everyone.

My name is Tamara Mayer, and I lead Project Open Arms for New York City Public Schools, so thank you so much for the question. I am proud to say that we've trained thousands of folks within New York City understanding our protocol for non-local law enforcement that is inclusive of our principals, our superintendents, our assistant principals, our social workers, our guidance counselors, our students in temporary housing staff, it's New York City Public Schools staff who live inside of our shelters. We have also trained our bus dispatchers to make sure that they understand the protocol and what to do, and the protocol is not only what do who are inside of New York City Public Schools, but we've also trained our staff to understand what to do if they're outside of New York City Public Schools. If we're on a school trip, we're at the Bronx Zoo, what do I do if I see non-local law enforcement? So, we're making sure that all folks understand how to protect our students.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So, if a family seeks a safety transfer for their child, is information about that process available in the language they prefer?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yes. Any information that's made available to families, and we translate everything into the covered languages, so yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And then, if ICE or federal law enforcement agents enter a school with a valid warrant, what processes exist to notify parents in their preferred language?

TAMARA MEYER: I want to say, I'm proud to say, to date, as of right now, no non-local law enforcement has entered New York City Public Schools premises, and if somebody did, we would use the Office of Language Access to make sure that the family gets the information as soon as possible.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you. And the DOE has been very excellent on protecting our kids, and a big shout out to Chancellor.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I called the order.
Council Member Gutiérrez.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: I was
3 listening, Mrs. Joseph.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: No, no.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: I just wanted
6 to make sure.

7 Thank you so much, Chair, and thank you
8 all for being here, and of course for covering this
9 important topic and seconding the comments of my
10 Colleague, Council Member Hanif.

11 Oftentimes, when I go to schools, the
12 question that gets all the hands raised is like, how
13 many of you interpret for your parents? And it is
14 really a common thread for so many people in my
15 District, but just across the board, and I try, and I
16 think I drive the message home, be proud, similar to
17 what Chair Joseph said, that it is your superpower,
18 and so it's a wonderful experience to be a product of
19 the schools, and so I thank you.

20 I have just a couple of questions, and I
21 was late, so I apologize if you already covered this,
22 but regarding the vendors that you all use for, or
23 did we ask the questions about vendors, and you did
24 already? No? I'm so sorry. No, no, no. I just want
25 to, I just, because I have not experienced this

directly with DOE. I've experienced this with other agencies that will use Language Line, for example. I know the DOE does it a little bit differently, but for any vendors that you do use for translation services, how are you all examining performance? And I know that in the case for our Spanish speakers, it's a little different. So many of us are able to speak Spanish at my daughter's school. The teachers do it oftentimes, but would just love to know how you all evaluate when a vendor is being called in to translate whatever language.

And then I just have a couple of questions on the technology systems, and that's it.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Excellent.
Thank you. Thank you for the question.

So, we try to preempt a lot of the quality concerns with making sure that we're in constant contact with our vendors, collaborate with them, give them guidance. I think one of the biggest issues with vendors generally is that the client doesn't provide enough content and guidance or adjustments or corrections or updates or revisions so they can improve their service. We do that. We're in constant contact with our vendors to ensure that

they're in line. We provide them glossaries. We provide translation memory software. That gets into your technology question a little bit, which I'll follow up in a little bit. But we also spot check their work as well, both document translation and also for interpreters at either virtual or live events.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: That's great. Thank you.

What technology system does the agency use to manage requests for translation? And are those systems integrated with platforms like MySchools or InfoHub, for example?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So, to manage our workflows, we use Microsoft-based products, whether they're online forms or data systems or spreadsheets, and we're very creative with the tools that we have. But we're able to track all requests, both translation and interpretation, make sure that we collect who the requesting party is, what language is, how many words in the document, how many hours in the session for interpretation. All those pieces we collect so that we're able to report out in terms of

where demands are coming from, what languages are present.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: And aside from, does the Department directly use or the vendors directly use any machine translation tools?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So, within the Office of Language Access, we use something called Translation Memory Software, which is recycling of human translation, so it allows us to expedite, ensure consistency and continuity with the work that we do. We have teams of translators. So everyone can have their particular style, but the term itself will be consistent because it's coming from one source or one database. That allows us to do things a little bit quicker. It allows us to actually save costs as well with vendors.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you.

And then what safeguards are in place to just to verify the accuracy, any errors? What does that look like?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So using these tools, we still have at least two, one or two people on our teams review each other's work.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: How many?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Well, we have several teams. But if I translate something, for example, and Deputy Chancellor is one of my team members, she would be reviewing my work or vice versa so we make sure that all those translated documents are reviewed from our office.

CHIEF CORSO: Council Member, my name is Andie Corso. I support District 75. And we have the Office of Sign Language Interpretation Services. We work very closely together. But I add in when something's a little bit different for American Sign Language than it is for the other languages. We do have a deaf staff member who does quality control with our sign language interpreters as well as 22 sign language interpreters on staff, and their progress is regularly evaluated. We also maintain close relationship with the deaf community to receive ongoing feedback around the quality of the American Sign Language interpretation that we do.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Excellent. I just want to let you all know that there are times where I'm in a bind and I don't know how to translate something so I do go back to the DOE documents to cross reference so it's important that it is tight,

and it's important for all of us that you're running the safeguards that you're already running.

Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Let me see if y'all following instructions.

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I guess I was a good student and I wait for specific instructions.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, you're next.

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: All right. Well, good afternoon, everyone. Thank you. Thank you, Chair Joseph. Thank you all from the DOE.

I was really happy to hear you bring up the Seal of Biliteracy. You know, this was something that we passed two resolutions in the last session, urging the DOE to expand this program and for CUNY to accept the Seal of Biliteracy as credits. And as you said, now 11 schools are taking between three and eight credits for this. And for those who are uninitiated, this Seal recognizes the work students do inside or outside of the, I think, only 10 languages provided by AP courses. It can recognize work students have done in other countries, in many cases, their home countries. It can release us from this, you know, the trap of high stakes testing where

you can get this seal for doing culminating projects or work and could be work in the community so I'm very pleased to see that this has been expanded.

Two things. One, can you talk a little bit about the expansion and what work is currently being done to expand it to even more high schools and what incentives are being provided to high school students, teachers, and principals beyond the Seal itself so that more schools and students will engage in this really vital program?

STRATEGIC ADVISOR PONS: Thank you for your questions. And of course, thank you for your advocacy. One number I didn't share that we celebrated this year is that over, we had a 29 percent increase in students who received the Seal between August 2025 and August 2024, so there are significant gains year to year in both the number of schools offering the Seal, the number of languages in which it's offered, and the number of students who are aware of the Seal and have pathways to attain it.

I think your questions are around, just to make sure I understood, around what are we doing to ensure that we are continuing to increase access to the seal across schools and across languages. You

may know this is the work of one very small but mighty team, and Jill Schimmel, our Director of World Languages, does a lot of work to expand the cohorts of educators who run as the point person for the seal in their schools each year to ensure that we are building on the existing number of schools year to year who continue to offer the Seal and in the languages. We also continue to identify opportunities for language teachers who can either provide the courses or review the assessments or criteria that are needed for students to attain the Seal and expand access to them in that way. One really lovely story of kind of an individualized approach that we were able to take last year, one of the student advisors on our advisory council attended a high school that did not offer the Seal, but he is a fluent Spanish speaker, was learning other languages. And when we learned that he could not access the Seal at his school, we were able to get him on a path to receive the global seal of biliteracy through the State, and so we are looking at as many options as possible to give students access. Of course...

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Is it sort of on a school-by-school relationship building basis? And

then the second part of that question about the incentives, a superintendent comes into a school and says this is your credit accrual, this is your regent's pass rate, this is your attendance. Is the Seal of Biliteracy one of those markers that the superintendents across the city will look at to determine whether a school is engaging in rigorous academics?

STRATEGIC ADVISOR PONS: My hope is that the answer to this is yes, and I think what will drive that is the fact that now the Seal is credit bearing at colleges. And I think that has been a driver to ensure that more students understand the value of getting the Seal and making sure that if they are already multilingual because they either enter the system multilingual, they were able to learn a new language in our system, that that being recognized saves them time and money once they enroll in college.

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Right. Which is one of the benefits that we were advocating for when we passed the resolutions into this advocacy was that CUNY take it as credit. I mean, that's a really critical component. And so I guess the ask is I would

urge the DOE to have as a way to incentivize schools to work with your office to offer the Seal of Biliteracy, that they should be looking for that, just like they would look for AP courses, just like they would look for how many college credits or regent's credits a student gets, our superintendents should be looking for that as well. Because when a superintendent asks a principal to do something, I think they're a little more likely to do it. And that also relieves some of the pressure off you by going school to school, developing those individual relationships, which should still be done, but doesn't have to be done in a vacuum.

STRATEGIC ADVISOR PONS: That's right.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: Council Member Dinowitz, if I could expand on that answer just briefly, we also provide that information publicly in multiple venues to empower families in order to drive those choices. So on MySchools, when you're reviewing any diploma-granting high school, it will list whether or not that school did offer the Seal of Biliteracy and in which languages so that families can use that as one of the factors. And then

the number of graduates is included within the school quality report cards for families.

To your question around the idea of like leaving it up just a principal so they really have to figure out on their own to multiply the strength of Senior Director of World Languages, Jill Schimmel, starting last year, every superintendent that oversees high schools identified one world languages district point. And that person who has now been trained on the Seal of Biliteracy process and is providing more localized support. That multiplies our capacity, and we're also ensuring then every district that has high schools now has someone who can support those schools with that process.

And I think one final change we've really done to increase the capacity to your point, the amazing ability for low instance languages to be prevalent. One of the challenges is that it does require evaluators in that language. And so we've taken on centrally partnering with community-based organizations and with CUNY in order to identify, I think 20 additional language advisors who can then support with any of those languages. That way it doesn't necessarily depend on there being someone at

the school who knows that language can evaluate that. And we've now built a larger resource bank of community members who can help support students if they're choosing a low incidence language.

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Yeah. I'm very pleased to hear that some of that work is that work is being done centrally, not leaving it to individual schools to find it. You're the biggest agency where the most language is spoken in this city so that you're taking that on is and finding those community organizations and doing that work is really critical so thank you, and I look forward to continuing our work together to implement the seal of biliteracy in more schools so that more CUNY campuses can provide credit.

Thank you, Chair Joseph. Thank you, DOE.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council Member.

Does any of any Title III funding go towards funding OLA and the work you do, or does it all flow directly to schools? If so, how much of your budget is composed of Title III funding?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So, no Title III funding is part of the OLA amount. In terms of

schools, we do have a SAM that goes out to schools for funding, and the total funding that went this year is about 7.4 million. 1.1 is Title III funding of that 7.4. So, I don't have the percentage. I just have the dollar amount, so.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. You can always get all that back to me.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. In the 2025 Comptroller's audit found, I know it's three years old, New York City Public Schools did not place or may not have nearly 10 percent sampled of ENL in the correct program. We talked about that. Staff misrecorded parent choices or did not record parent choices at all. How do you honor that placement decision? What do you do when something like that happens?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So, family's right to choose their bilingual education program is something they had throughout their student's academic career. It's not only at the initial enrollment. And if anytime families would like to transfer to a bilingual education program, even if they did not previously express that request, they

could request that again. We would then work to dutifully provide them the options of what are the closest bilingual education programs that are available to them.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, okay, okay.

So, the audit further found that New York City Public School did not maintain signed copies of HLIS forms. 16.2 percent of sample students did not accurately record. 18.5 percent of the sample students home language. What corrective actions have you taken or does plan to take since the Comptroller's audit to ensure (INAUDIBLE) language students' placement is accurately recorded?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Absolutely. It's very serious and important to us that we're following through on any of those errors and working to correct them when we encounter them. Nine out of the 10 recommendations that the Comptroller had recommended were ones that we agreed with and were work that was by and large already going on in order to improve those areas of non-compliance. At a high level, we're working to improve those data systems. As I named, the new student information system will hopefully have a few areas that will help us correct,

including potentially be able to collect online documentation as well as send more information to families so that it can be more transparent about what information has been collected for them. We're also working to expand the opportunities for placement. So the shortage of bilingual education programs that are near a family, we're looking at that parent data in order to open new bilingual education programs close to where families are requesting them so that there's more program options available to them. And also working then to strengthen our oversight so that our district staff and superintendent staff as well as centrally are closely looking at that information, giving that to the key stakeholders that need it, if it's principals or it might be superintendents in order to hold principals accountable so that we can improve any areas of non-compliance.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is there someone inside the superintendent's office that's dedicated just for multi-language learners?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So, superintendents do have at least one staff member who's dedicated, depending on the district, as well

as the Division of School Leadership does have a team of staff who are also, they support multiple superintendents each.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how often is that staff trained and or gets refreshers?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Absolutely monthly. I get to have phone calls with them and they're fantastic people. If I don't talk to them at least monthly, it's something fantastic is going on in their districts.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, you do plan on implementing some of the recommendations to centrally record and analyze parents survey on communication access, correct?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Correct. And this is something that we do collect that information centrally and, as you pointed out, we are working on analyzing at a central level. It is analyzed at the district level. We have conferences with superintendents to review that information.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: All right. And you plan on monitoring progress on implementing all of the Comptroller's you said oversight recommendation. Can you provide a status update on each or if how

many of them you started working on already and what are you working on to implement to make sure all of them are in place?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So out of the 10 recommendations, we agree with nine of the 10. We're already working on all those nine and have updates. Many of those were, as we had named, the Comptroller report audit had begun three years ago so much of that work has already been done. I would point out that within the Comptroller's report, there are 11 pages that are our response where we do enumerate what were some of the steps already taken or steps planned for each of those nine.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And you said more oversight.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Can you provide status updates on some of the ones, like give me the first top three that you've already implemented and where are you? Can you give me some updates?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Absolutely. I mean, one related to tracking and monitoring. There were recommendations around the revision of tracking and monitoring system for bilingual education and new

English language programs. So, when we had actually begun looking at the provision of English as a new language in the 2019-2020 school year, we developed business rules in order to capture were English language learners getting that English as a new language support they needed? And five years ago, only 68 percent of English language learners were. As of last year, we've increased that number from 68 percent to 93 percent of English language learners are fully receiving all their mandated minutes of instruction. And so a lot of that growth was due to some of the structures and procedures we put in place, and so we're using that as the next steps to leverage around bilingual education, which would program differently, but we're applying the learnings that we had from English as a new language growth towards our bilingual education growth in alignment with recommendation number one.

I can point out for recommendation number three, continue to recruit more qualified teachers for English as language programs and encourage more DOE personnel to obtain the required certifications to become English language learner certified teachers. Expanding the pipeline of bilingual

education in English as new language teachers, something that we have continued been doing and continue to innovate new applications for that. We're working really closely with many of our partners. So for example, partnership with the United Federation of Teachers and our teachers' union has helped us offer a new stipend for tenured teachers to be able to change their license. We've partnered with local institutes of higher education to expand the pipelines for our continuing teachers. We offer subsidized programs for our current staff to be able to earn new credentials and so that they could become our bilingual and email teachers in the future.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: There was an article that came out in today's documented entitled Immigrant Students Pack New York City Schools, But Support for English Language Learners Fall Short. You're aware of that article? Did you read it?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yes, I did.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what are some takeaways for you and what are some recommendations, some things that you can work on? They said one, they're all clustered all in one location and some of them are not receiving the one-to-one services that

they're entitled to. What are some, how you plan on, if I were to do another hearing on here on this, what type of support are you planning? Are you meeting, going to meet with those in that particular area? What are some work that can be done?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: I'd say that there are multiple approaches that we're taking to address the needs of some of our most newly arriving students within our system. Key that was brought up in that article, the idea of students at the lowest proficiency levels are entitled to a standalone English as a new language period, which is in part of what you were just describing. We're very excited to announce as of yesterday the launch of a new English language development pilot. This is a compliment to the New York City READS curriculum that was being used within our English language arts classes. It will be a new curriculum that will be able to support students at the lowest English language proficiency levels. And we're piloting a few curricula this year in order to find strengths and weaknesses and looking to expand that. That's one key area that I think will help alleviate some of those.

As we look to review how student enrollment have changed, we looked also at the needs for additional English as new language teachers or bilingual education teachers, look to open programs as quickly as we can in those areas. As I named earlier, if there are students that need English as a new language, schools can quickly apply for a budget adjustment and we ensure that that happens as soon as possible to give schools the funds they need to hire those English as new language teachers. And we also work to expand the pipeline and pool of candidates for English language teachers to fill those vacancies.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How soon is this going to roll out? I don't think these kids can wait based on what I'm reading in the article.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: The pilot is beginning this fall. It's going to begin within eight districts and for about 10 schools in each of those districts so 80 schools total for this school year.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I will be visiting.

Do New York City Public Schools plan to add and request additional resources in FY2026 budget

to support compliance with Local Law 115 and other mandates?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So at the moment, the requirements for Local Law 115 do not require any additional resources from our part at this particular time. However, we have submitted a new needs request to help support the expansion of the new covered languages to cover that on a long-term basis.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And those new languages are?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Albanian, Ukrainian, Uzbek, the three new languages from the regulation.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is there funding allocated for immigrant family communication and outreach? Where does that live and how can we see it?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ: As you know, New York City Public Schools doesn't specifically ask families what their immigration status is, and so all of our communication and the amounts or the funds that we use to share information is for all of our families so we make sure that all of our families have what they need in the language

that they need, which is our 12 covered languages at this moment. And so our funds come from the OLAB budget most of the time, depending on what the questions or where the resource is being asked for translation, as well as the SAM that our individual schools have access to.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The question wasn't around immigrant status. It was around what are we doing to outreach, which is one of the things I've always complained about, that we don't do enough to reach the families. Even when we talk about early childhood, a lot of seats stay open in communities where they need them, but then they don't know they exist because no one is doing the outreach, and some of it has to go boots on the ground as well. For example, I represent a large Uzbek community. When I walk through and those links, I don't see nothing up in their language. They call my office all the time. I don't hear any language support for them, even in the schools that I visit, and so I think it's an issue when the services are here, we spend a lot of money on them. This Council spends a lot of money in making sure that you have all the resources, but when the resources are there and then we're not reaching

out to the families, that's an issue for me so I would love to see this division really be boots on the ground. That means every...

UNIDENTIFIED: Council Member Joseph, I'm sorry. Can I...

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Excuse me?

UNIDENTIFIED: I'm sorry, can I add in?

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Excuse me?

UNIDENTIFIED: Can I add in?

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: When I'm finished.

UNIDENTIFIED: Oh, sorry.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, I would really love to see more done in terms of grassroots and reaching out to families, whether it's in their churches, whether it's in their PTA, their SLT meetings so the information is really getting boots on the ground and grassroots.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ: Yeah. I appreciate the Council's support and your advocacy over all this time. And I think our next powerful step is to first acknowledge Uzbek as one of our covered languages and then what does it look like in action, right? How do we make sure that we have these multicultural events as we're seeing them right now,

but it's really about being in communities and sharing with them in their language, what does it mean to be part of New York City Public Schools and that you are in fact part of us and we welcome you and we need to really show up in that way through celebrations, but also through inclusiveness, and so we're working towards that. Our family connectors work is really about how do we really support families and make it known that families are here and they matter and everyone is part of our conversation. And then I think the powerful part of our regulation update is that that LAC designation is going to be mandatory, and that is going to be a powerful way for us to transmit this training because there are 7.4 million dollars that our schools have at the ready to provide those individualized supports and access if they cannot read or write in their language, but can speak, they can have access to that phone call. But we need to make sure that we have a point of contact that we can always train, remind them, and then support them in supporting everyone else as you alluded to before that this is not the LAC's responsibility. This is the school's responsibility, and everyone in there is responsible for it, and so

we want to make sure now that we have access to the LAC and we're going to provide those trainings to them directly, we can support them in reminders of like, and you have money for that and this is how you access it. And if you can't wait for us, you can do it yourself, right? And we can support them in that tangible, actionable stuff that they need so that the families get what they need immediately, not just 10 days from now.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Waiting on the wayside, correct.

Ma'am, you can go now.

UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you, Chair Joseph. I'm so sorry.

I did want to say that while New York City Public Schools does not collect immigration or asylum status, we are making sure we are communicating with all of our families, regardless of immigration status. We also know we have families with mixed immigration status. We have a Project Open Arms district leadership monthly meeting where we're meeting with not only our student services managers who support our guidance counselors and our social workers, but our FSCs, our family support

coordinators and our family leadership coordinators are also in that monthly meeting, and we talk to them, making sure that they understand all of the trainings that Project Open Arms is offering in collaboration with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. We do work very closely with the Office of Language Access to make sure that those Know Your Rights trainings are offered in multiple languages for our families, and that is one of the ways that we're communicating with our families.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And you have to build that trust, right?

UNIDENTIFIED: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: In immigrant communities, it has to be about trust. You could be offering whatever you want, the moon, the sky, they're not coming if they don't trust you so you have to build that trust with families as well so that's what I mean when I say you're in communities, you have to go and build trust with immigrant communities. They're already going through enough. So for you to come in with your little, they're not going to fall for it. So you got to build trust with them as well in order to be in community.

Yeah, and we do invest a lot of money on this side so we want to make sure.

How much of your funding is allocated from city, state and federal sources? The city we know. State and federal sources.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So as I mentioned earlier, the OLA funding is primarily City funded. The federal piece shows up in the SAM allocation, the 1.1 of the 7.4 million, the percentage I don't have for you. That's the piece that comes from the federal level.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how much is allocated directly to school versus central admin?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So of the 19 million dollars that the New York City Public Schools invest in language access, OLA's budget is about 12 million dollars. The other 7.4 goes to schools.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And which office oversees these funds?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Office of Language Access.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Say that again?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: The Office of Language Access.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. In the adopted budget, we included 4 million for immigrant family communication outreach in FY26. What outcomes have resulted from this investment so far?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So we have exciting plans this year's continued support from the Council. But just to recap a little bit about what we did in School Year '25. Among several initiatives, we launched a citywide public awareness campaign, which I mentioned previously. We partnered with a total of nine community-based organizations, amplifying our work to over 1,000 parents, provided interpretation at over 480 school-based family events in pilot districts, supplied interpretation equipment for family meetings for over 100 schools, and hosted our first ever in-person LAC empowerment event where nearly 100 LACs attended and learned more about the language assistance services available to the LACs and schools.

For this school year, we plan to continue some of these exciting initiatives. But in addition to that, we're also looking into creating more video media in translation for families, and this goes to the video, audio component, making sure that we're

connecting with those communities. We plan to hold, as Deputy Chancellor mentioned, some sort of celebratory multicultural events for our new languages, Uzbek, Albanian, and Ukrainian. And we plan to provide additional school language access, printed assets to promote services for families and explore in schools and explore the possibility of safely leveraging technology to help address impromptu engagements with families.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'd like to recognize Council Member Sanchez. I'm sorry.

Thank you. In the earlier, you mentioned the new needs request. How much was the new needs request amount for getting three languages integrated?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: 5.8 million for Fiscal Year '26.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And that's because of the new language, Uzbek, Albanian and...

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Partly, yes.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Partly, yes.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

How are you preparing for federal action like Executive Order 14-224, designating English as the official language?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ: New information is ever evolving from our federal government, and so we are making sure that we are on task and understanding what's coming from the federal government. But in the meanwhile, we continue to provide supports and services to all of our families in all of the targeted languages from the OLA office but then at the school, we continue to encourage our schools to continue to make education accessible.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, what risks do proposed federal budget cuts pose for DOE's language access programs?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: The only risk that we've identified at this point is, again, the 1.1 piece of the pie going to schools because that's the only funding piece that's directly connected to the provision of language assistance services.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Would staffing be vulnerable if federal funds were reduced?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: No. Those funds are not meant to support staff.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How much of New York City Public School adapt if agencies scale back resources like LEP or OCR guidance?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: As DC Melendez has pointed out, the federal guidance has continued to change. The repeal of the Dear Colleague letter does not change the State and City mandates to provide our students the highest quality access to grade level instruction, regardless of their home language or their prior background.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I heard that loud and clear.

So, how will New York City Public Schools' families informed of their rights if federal technical assistance is cut?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ: New York City Public Schools is committed to making sure that we use all of our processes to continue to provide information and making adjustments wherever needed if there was a cut in funding because informing our families is not only our priority, but it is important to continue to do the work successfully.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What supports do you need from the City Council to protect language access if federal funding or oversight declines?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ: Your current advocacy and continued advocacy has proven to be the number one supporter of all of the work that the Office of Language Access has been doing and just having hearings like this and having us come and be able to share the work that we're doing and where we're going next so that the public knows and continues to amplify the fact that we do support them and that we speak their language is the most powerful thing that you've been doing, and so continued support in that way is incredibly helpful.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Are there any plans to provide additional funding or support to schools where a large share of families speaks language not covered languages? For example, 20 percent of a school community speaks Wolof. We have a large community of Quechua speakers in Council Member Gutiérrez's District. What support does the school receive when you have those low-incidence languages?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ: I'll start and then Kleber, you can go.

That SAM money, that 7.4 million dollars is distributed across our schools that need it, so it's based on per capita of our students that speak a language other than English. And so if there is a need for another language, this is where that money is already there and ready for them to use.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Not the 12 languages that are your official.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ: This is over the 12 languages.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: It's off the official list?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ: Yes, exactly.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: But I will say that I don't want to get hung up on only the 12 languages that we support centrally. I mean, there's the over-the-phone component that we provide centrally, which is available in 200 different languages. OLA also offers translation support for IEPs in whatever language is requested. So the 12 languages is really just the proactive translation of general communications to large school communities, but we're still providing. We don't say no.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Right. But do schools know that and communities and family members know that?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How is New York City Public Schools reaching parents with limited digital literacy and low literacy in their home language? And we talked about that earlier. I really would like to see a comprehensive plan around that for families who are limited in digital literacy or low literacy in their home language.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ: We welcome the opportunity to think about that more intentionally, especially now that the LACs are part of our regulation. We're going to have a point person at every one of our schools that we can constantly build their knowledge base and best practices.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Our new favorite topic now. Is New York City Public Schools using AI machine translation or other technology tools for language access? If yes, how is the accuracy evaluated?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So I touched on this earlier. We use something called translation

memory software. We've been using it for some time. It's the recycling of human translation. It's not necessarily AI. It's a tool that helps us keep pace with the increasing levels of demand in translation.

But in terms of the future and the leveraging of technology as something we've been exploring and we want to do it safely, so we're looking into AI technologies that allow us to produce some sort of level of quality. It's never going to be perfect and quality varies from one language to the next and also with the content and its complexity, the list is lengthy. However, we do want to do something and explore the possibility of making a tool available or an app available for our staff. But one of the other concerns we also have to address is privacy issues and how that technology works. We want to make sure that no information is being shared that's not supposed to be shared because these tools recycle that stuff and it's shared throughout other areas, right, other sectors so we're exploring options at this point. We want to do so. And once we feel comfortable, both on the procurement side and the privacy side, on the quality side and cost side, we do want to do something.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I was going to mention about the safeguards and of privacy for our students and families that their information is not living somewhere in a cloud, and those are also very sensitive information we don't want floating out there in the wrong hands.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: That and also supplementing that with proper guidance and training to staff just to make sure the expectations are what they're supposed to be.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, absolutely.

And the software you have, how often is it updated to meet the moment?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So, it's used by our translators on every translation job they're assigned daily. Everybody's using it now.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How often does New York City Public Schools select direct feedback from parents and how is that feedback incorporated into service improvement? And that's what I kept on emphasizing. How much are we using family voice to make sure the delivery of services is quality? And at any point, are we using student voice as well? So

important to me. Is student voice being used in this process?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ: I think we have different offices here represented. The Office of Family and Community Empowerment has an ample opportunity to continue to leverage and get feedback from our families, particularly our parent leaders that we have access to, and we are constantly asking them for feedback through surveys and supports. Even when we use the Office of Language Access, they are also surfacing some feedback from those that are using the translation services so we are constantly in that question and seeking for feedback.

And even when we don't ask for feedback, our families are very, very good at feeling comfortable in letting us know that, and so that's a powerful trust relationship that we've created so it's a place. I think we're moving into working with other offices that do have more contact with families, with students in particular. And how do we extend past the Chancellor's CSAC group, right? There's so many more opportunities with the CSAC and the BSAC to continue to garner more information

outside of just the form-related groups. And so this is sort of the work in progress now for us thinking about how do we support them in getting more feedback from their colleagues and peers on the ground.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Go ahead.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: I was going to add, as my colleague was discussing the Chancellor's Advisory Council for Multilingual Learners, just that did include student panel members. They were provided additional support on how to be advocates and then joined alongside the other adult advocates, and it was really amazing to have them contribute also their opinions in places.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Did they give recommendations as well as how we can better serve them as they navigate through our New York City public school system?

STRATEGIC ADVISOR PONS: I can take that. They did give recommendations. So, we had four student advisors who are all current high school students, one recently graduated, and we did special sessions just with the students and we also did training with advisors around youth-adult partnership, authentic partnership, to ensure that we

were creating a fully welcoming and inclusive space for young people to participate as real collaborators and leaders in this space. So, areas where they were particularly interested were not only in sharing what their experiences as either former English language learners or immigrant students or children of immigrants in the school system and how we could improve those experiences. They also wanted to share the types of opportunities they wanted to have access to. So, I think some of the things you named around either paid internships or work-based learning opportunities or things like the Seal of Biliteracy that are college credit bearing. And so we took all of those into consideration. And they also got to review the full set of recommendations and weigh in on those as well. In addition to the advisory council, even prior to the advisory council, other touchpoints we have with community members include monthly meetings with the citywide council for English language learners, which is a fantastic parent forum where we can learn from district level family leaders what are the day-to-day or year-to-year issues that they are dealing with, what are the questions they have, what is the information that we

can bring to them to help them understand the system, the programs, actions they can take and information they can share with other ELL families. And then we also have regular partnerships and touchpoints with advocates across the education landscape to continually hear from them what are the key issues coming up across education more broadly and how we can partner to address those.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I know our students also want to make sure they're included in AP classes as well.

STRATEGIC ADVISOR PONS: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Multi-language learning students.

All right. This question is for Project Open Arms. Will Project Open Arms continue hosting Know Your Rights sessions throughout the year? Will future sessions be offered in languages beyond English, Spanish and French?

TAMARA MEYER: Absolutely. We will continue to work with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and...

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Can't hear you.

TAMARA MEYER: I'm sorry. We'll continue to work with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and Project Rousseau to give those trainings alongside with the Office of Language Access to ensure that those trainings are offered in multiple languages.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: One of the things in the school visit I saw personally was home language differs from instructional language assigned in schools. For example, a Chilean student who speaks Haitian Creole at home but was placed in a Spanish bilingual program.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MCDONALD: Just personally, it's been a struggle that I've been frustrated with. I'm very excited for the new student information system. One of the considerations has been to recognize the multilingual identities of our students. I would say not necessarily specific to that situation, but students of any home language are allowed to participate in bilingual education programs. There are many students who are tri-lingual or have different backgrounds of their students. So home language does not preclude any student participating in a bilingual education program so

that's not necessarily an area that we'd want to correct from, but we do want to recognize the multilingual identities of our students and ensure they're being placed in the right programs.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Of course, of course. We do want them to also maintain their language or birthplace.

Does New York City Public School plan to build a language bank or partner with community interpreters to ensure family have meaningful access?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ: I think it's so powerful when we are in communities and there are many times that the community already has identified a trusted translator or messenger, and so that is why we do the work with the money that you have provided to really start partnering with our community-based organizations and then to build on that work and think about where are the places and spaces that we can identify people in the community that are trusted messengers and already being used for this work and how do we support them in supporting communities as well. So, we're looking into that is the long and short of it.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yeah. I'd echo that response as well. I think that the relationships that we've established with our community-based organizations the last couple of years will lead us to these types of conversations and ventures so we're excited to explore that possibility.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: If someone files a complaint against language interpretation, they weren't happy, how do we resolve that?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So similar to the feedback mechanism that I touched on earlier, we've kind of modeled that approach with the complaint procedure and complaint process as well. We have online forms, we have the 3-1-1 capacity, and we have simply just direct parent feedback or escalation. Someone gets my email one way or the other to share a concern. In response to those concerns, we do assess them and address them accordingly. We go to the origin of the source of the issue and provide the adequate amount, combination of either direct support, further training, or just general awareness of what needs to be done in those instances. Now that the training is going out to all public-facing school staff, that's going to help us a

2 little bit, but it's not going to stop us from going
3 knocking on doors to make sure that it's fulfilled,
4 particularly if a concern has been raised.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Can I file a
6 complaint at the school, at the desk, or do I have to
7 file online?

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: No. You can
9 complain to anybody. Yeah, to anybody.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Good to know. 3-1-1.

11 One last, how does New York City Public
12 School determine which documents qualifies as vital
13 communication that must be translated?

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So, our policy
15 defines critical communications by the type of
16 content that the communication has. I don't have the
17 list of any, but it's about disciplinary, academic
18 programs, safety, health, all these issues. It pretty
19 much is the gamut of any type of communication going
20 out to families. That's the benchmark, but by no
21 means do we stop there. Any communication that is
22 needed in translation that is submitted by school or
23 DOE staff, we will process. We just want to make sure
24 it's authored by DOE staff and that's intended for
25 parent communities.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: If a reoccurring meeting, for example, IEP, disability evaluation, must families submit a new request form each time they have them? IEP meeting, must they submit new forms?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So, the staff should be offering services in every instance and the family says that interpretation is needed and staff members will submit the request.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What safeguards ensure interpretation is available for urgent or time-sensitive meetings?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So, we work very closely with the vendors to make sure they have the capacity to fulfill those last-minute requests. I can't say we fulfill in every instance because the need, the timing, the language required varies from time to time, but all requests are considered urgent. We advise and we try to push schools to give us notice, but we know in the reality things are going 100,000 miles per hour every single day so requests come up on an impromptu basis and our vendors try to do the best they can to support those needs. In instances where that's not possible, we look to

reschedule meetings if possible if language support is actually needed or sometimes the over-the-phone capacity comes in and helps out with that.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: During exam times, how long must a school apply in case they need somebody to come and interpret or read the exams that are not translated in those languages?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: So, the practice is 10 business days as I mentioned earlier, and that gets a little trickier because the demand goes up during those times, and our vendors, again, we're well-connected with our vendors advising them of high peak seasons throughout the season, throughout the years so So they are accustomed to kind of increasing that band of interpreters during those time periods and do the best they can with what they have. Our interpreters that we use have gone through security clearances and fingerprinting processes so we can't get anybody off the streets. We're very clear on who can provide those services, whether they're experienced and have the capacity to do so as well.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: During testing season, is that highly in demand to have interpreters?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yes, yes.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So how do schools decide between in-person and telephone interpretation?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: That's a great question. We are trying to get the answer to that as well. At OLA, our practice is if it is scheduled and there's the ability to schedule, we prefer the in-person or virtual interpreter, and if it's an impromptu or just someone walks in and is needed at the moment and service is needed at the moment, the over the phone comes in and helps out with that. Many schools have gotten very creative to use the over the phone for scheduled events but they haven't scheduled an interpreter for that scheduled event and that's where this training that we're rolling out emphasizes and makes folks aware about the capacity expectations of making these requests and when to do so and how to do so as well.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is it something you practice and having teachers provide interpretation for parents when they come to the school?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Bilingual teachers?

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: No. Just any regular teacher in the building.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yeah. So, any school-based staff has the ability to make these requests both over the phone or for in-person virtual services.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How New York City Public Schools ensure timely effective language access for families who speak slow incidents which we talked about, indigenous language or current or planned efforts to improve this and we talked about that. I look forward to seeing that comprehensive plan on how do we have language access for low incidents or indigenous languages for families.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

How do New York City Public Schools OLA work with New York City Public Schools special

education enrollment to improve communications
between LEP families? Do you work together?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yes. We work
with every office very closely. A lot of programs and
services and work streams connect with our support
including special education so we ensure that any
communications and assets that are created for
families have a language access component with them.
Any guidance to staff also have any language access
expectations as well.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: For specialized
meetings, does the interpreter get the paperwork in
advance to ensure accuracy?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: If OLA is
behind the request, yes, and it is best practice that
we share with schools to do the same. Does it happen
in every instance? Probably not, and we need to do
better on that.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How often?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: That's
something we need to find out.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah. Do you plan on
tracking it in the future to see how it works?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PALMA: Yeah. We have to find the right question and find out when to ask it.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. I'll be sending the right questions over so you can have the answers for me. Thank you so much.

We'll be in touch and you'll be hearing from me with all my questions that were not answered here today.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DR. MELENDEZ: We look forward to that.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I now open the hearing for public testimony. I remind members of the public that this is a government proceeding and that decorum shall be observed at all times. As such, members of the public shall remain silent at all times.

Witness table is reserved for people who wish to testify. No video recording or photography is allowed from the witness table. Further, members of the public may not present audio or video recording

as testimony but may submit transcripts for each recording to Sergeant-at-Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please fill out an appearance slip with the Sergeant-at-Arms and wait to be recognized. When recognized, you will have three minutes to speak on today's oversight topic or legislation.

If you have written statement or additional testimony you wish to submit for the record, please provide a copy of that testimony to Sergeant-at-Arms. You may also email testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72 hours of this hearing. Audio and video recordings will not be accepted.

I'd like to call the first panel. Concepcion Maldona (phonetic). If I mispronounce your names, please give me grace. Lauren Secundio (phonetic). Am I saying this right? Secundito (phonetic), yes. And Aracelis Luceros (phonetic).

Okay. Thank you.

ARACELIS LUCERO: They're going to speak in Spanish. I'm going to let them do their whole testimony and then I'll do it in English.

LAUREN SECUNDITO: (SPEAKING SPANISH AND
ME' PHAA)

ARACELIS LUCERO: First of all, I
appreciate the invitation, and I want to thank MASA
and the Education Committee, the Honorable Committee
Chair Rita Joseph, and all the municipal
representatives present here to hear about what is
happening in New York City schools. And then she
spoke in her indigenous language, Me'phaa.

Good afternoon. My name is Lauren. I
trained at MASA as an interpreter of a native
language of Latin America as I am a speaker of the
Me'phaa language, which comes from the town of El
Chirimoyo in the state of Guerrero, Mexico. When I
had my first child in public school in the Bronx, my
son was in kindergarten. He already had a diagnosis
and had an IEP. I asked for a translation of
documents. They told me that there was no one who
spoke Spanish and that they did not have access to
the IEP information in the language I needed. Later,
I approached institutions like MASA and learned that
it was my right to have an interpreter and a Spanish
translation of my son's IEP. When you don't know your
rights, they treat you badly and push you aside. I

met a mother who has faced the same situation. She is a Quechua speaker from Ecuador and I have known her for many years. Not knowing how to read or write in Spanish or English prevented her from understanding the essential information about her son at school, especially on sensitive issues such as special education and the IEP process. She told me that in just 10 minutes, they made a diagnosis and asked her to sign documents she did not understand. In several previous meetings, they assured her that they would be quick and that she did not need an interpreter, ignoring her right to receive understandable information. Since I met her five years ago, I have accompanied her on these school visits. Although we speak different indigenous languages, I am a Me'phaa speaker, we share the same frustration and pain of not understanding the process that affects our children's future. Until last year, she did not have any bilingual relatives to support her, and I witnessed the lack of trained interpreters and decent options for understanding the information provided by schools. For example, at school, knowing that we come from Mexico or Ecuador, they assume that we speak Spanish, and many people from these countries do not

1 speak or understand Spanish well and they do not ask
2 us if we speak another language. My recent training
3 as an interpreter with MASA has given me the tools to
4 explain complex concepts such as the IEP, and now I
5 know that I will be able to help bilingual Me'phaa
6 speakers better understand the information provided
7 in schools and other institutions. The experience of
8 indigenous women like myself and other mothers
9 illustrates the urgent need to establish linguistic
10 justice in New York City. Women who arrive without
11 access or support feel vulnerable and excluded
12 because they do not speak the dominant languages such
13 as English or Spanish. We need to continue working
14 together to build spaces where all voices and
15 languages are recognized with equal dignity.
16 Therefore, I suggest and request that non-dominant
17 languages be recognized in schools and that
18 interpreters be provided.

19
20 CONCEPCION MALDONADO: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

21 ARACELIS LUCERO: First of all, I would
22 like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to
23 give my testimony before the Education Committee and
24 Honorable Chair of the Committee, Rita Joseph, and
25 all the Council Members present.

Good afternoon. My name is Concepcion Maldonado. I also trained at MASA as an interpreter of a native language. I speak Tu'un Sávi, also known as Mixtec from the town of Tlahuapa in the state of Guerrero, Mexico. I have also witnessed the injustice of not understanding educational processes at my children's school. A year ago, I attended a parent's meeting at my son's school. It was a meeting at the beginning of the school year attended by parents of new students. An indigenous woman who spoke Tu'un Sávi, the same language I speak, also attended the meeting. This mother, who did not understand Spanish or English very well, told me that she was afraid to ask questions about the documents her son needed and how to access his grades. After the meeting, I heard her talking in Mixtec about her frustration and decided to approach her to explain in our Tu'un Sávi language how she could access the information and support her son. With the help of an interpreter, she gained confidence and was able to understand the necessary procedures that required documents and how to access the website to check her son's grades. This type of support is very important as it ensures the participation and access of indigenous families to

education. Although schools sometimes offer interpretation services, these are provided by bilingual staff who have no professional training as interpreters, are unfamiliar with the ethical protocols, and do not verify that the message is fully understood. This practice perpetuates inequalities and leaves out essential information. For this reason, I decided to train as an interpreter with MASA, seeking to build bridges of access to information between parents and educational institutions. Building true linguistic justice in New York City requires a commitment to training culturally competent and committed interpreters who guarantee full, dignified, and equitable access for all families, regardless of the language they speak. Therefore, I suggest that interpretation services for indigenous languages be provided in public schools.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. And in my recommendations, I suggested comprehensive, I want to hear a comprehensive plan for those other languages than those 12 that they currently serve, and the assumption is I'm from Guatemala or Ecuador, I automatically speak Spanish and that is so wrong so as this Committee, we will continue to keep tabs. New

York City Public Schools, we will continue to work to ensure you deliver for these families. So, if there's two here, that means there's more. Thank you. Thank you so much.

Oh, wait. I have a question for you. When you're doing your interpretation, is it indigenous to Spanish? Tell me the process?

ARACELIS LUCERO: It's relay interpretation. So it's indigenous to Spanish, Spanish to English. And that is a necessary evil at this time. As an organization, we also provide English classes and are focusing like they're in intermediate, higher level English classes, and so what we're trying to really make them is trilingual.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Okay. Thank you. Makes sense. Thank you.

Qingxia Zhu. If I mispronounce your name, please give me grace. Dina, CWA. Eve Carmel, CWA. Lupe Hernandez, parent.

Lupe, we're going to start with you and work our way down.

QINGXIA ZHU: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

INTERPRETER: Good afternoon, Members of the City Council. My name is Qingxia Zhu. I'm a

mother of two children and the English Language Learners Representative for the District 15 Community Education Council. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today.

My daughter was born prematurely at just 24 weeks, weighing a little more than one pound. As a new immigrant who spoke no English, I felt completely helpless. When she started school at age three, she needed speech therapy, but the school had only one speech therapist with a full caseload, and my daughter received no service her first year. External agencies were overwhelmed, and we had to wait another year before therapy could begin, further delaying her language development. This is not just a problem for my family. Many parents of English language learners, children with IEPs and the immigrant families face the same challenges. Data collected from my daughter's preschool shows that several children did not receive timely language interventions. Securing services for a child is already difficult, but without language access, advocacy becomes nearly impossible. Important forms are often provided only in English, and even when interpreters are available, their quality is inconsistent. Parents struggle to

understand their children's needs and cannot effectively communicate with schools because of language barriers. Language access cannot remain words on paper. It must respond to families' real needs. Schools and districts could provide clear multilingual information, improve the quality of translation services, increase resources for English learners, and ensure timely interventions. Children should not be disadvantaged due to lack of resources and communication barriers, and all families should be able to participate equally in education. Thank you for your listening.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Go ahead.

EVE VALERAS: My name is Eve Valeras.

Thank you to Chair Joseph and the Education Committee for the opportunity to testify today. I am a Haitian Creole interpreter. I've worked as an interpreter for Language Line Solution for almost three years. LLS is considered the largest on-demand spoken language interpretation service in the country. LLS has contracts with many different companies in New York City, such as New York City Health and Hospital, 3-1-1, Department of Education, and many more. The issues we are facing with this company is the lack of human

contact. We do not have human supervisors. We put in a help desk ticket. Everything is done through email so a lot of back and forth and problems are never resolved, but yet we receive email that says resolve, and we are still left with the problem. Our hours have been cut. They call it AEX, absent excuse, meaning instead of five days of work, we now work four days and sometimes three and a half days. The schedule changes come last minute and you need to check your schedule before every shift to make sure you're still working. You don't know which day AEX is going to be. The pay is low. The health insurance is mediocre. They cut our hours. They keep adding more work, but no raise. The job level is from level one to level five, meaning at each higher level, you take on more complex call. You get a promotion with no raise, just more work. You cannot take a second to breathe after a call. We have a maximum of 15 seconds between each call, sometimes less, and they just keep on coming. You don't know the types of cases you'll get. They varies from medical, school, immigration, courtroom, counseling, education. It could be anything. We do not get enough training. The system often refuses the calls because of faulty technology,

and we get penalized for that because it affects our endurance and that can lead to termination. We are restricted from getting a second interpreting job. Due to all these factors I've stated, we see high interpreter turnover and worse service for both contract holders and the people who need the service. This is why you should pay attention to what's happening to us interpreters. These problems are not only affecting us, but they also affect the clients, which include the students, the families who rely on these services. You want the best service, not the worst. These problems mean longer wait times for an interpreter because they have been furloughed or their hours have been cut, and you'll get less experienced interpreters because they only receive bare minimum of training and support from the company. These issues matter to education because our children need our help to understand people with better context instead of having to translate into broken English. We, as interpreters, facilitate clear communication between teachers and students, ensure students understanding academic content and enable active participation in the classroom beyond academics. Interpreters support both the child's

learning and their family's ability to understand and engage with the school, which strengthens the home-school connection and helps the child thrive academically and socially. My coworkers and I have come to form a union to address these issues. We want to exercise our right to a collective voice on the job to improve LLS for everyone. This is the reason why a union is necessary. We ask you to join our effort to call upon Language Line's parent company, Teleperformance, to follow their own neutrality agreement and allow us to form our union. Thank you for your time today.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

DINA: Thank you to Chair Joseph and the Education Committee for the opportunity to testify today. I have been working as a Russian interpreter at Language Line Solutions for more than two years, and I'm also a student in the MATI program in CUNY Hunter College. MATI program is a Master of Arts in Translation and Interpretation. Language Line Solutions is the largest phone and video interpretation services in the country. It provides government and private sector clients with remote interpreting services across the United States. Here

in New York City, Language Line Solutions provides interpretation services for hospitals and contact centers like 3-1-1. I personally receive phone calls from New York City Health and Hospitals, contact center 3-1-1, Progressive, State Farm auto insurance companies, Bank of America, Aetna, United Healthcare, and Fideliscare, Con Edison and many more. New York City Department of Education also gets services with a Language Line Solution and, while I do not personally handle those calls, I'm testifying to share the work conditions at Language Line Solutions and how that impacts the quality of service we are able to provide. Our work comes with several challenges. We face low pay, limited training, no human interaction to resolve issues and regular hour cuts. These conditions make many interpreters leave which makes it harder for clients to get a good service. A major challenge is interpreting long disclosures and disclaimers that contain complex legal terminology. Clients often just read these disclosures themselves and we have to interpret them in Russian without being able to review them fully in advance. Language Line Solution advises to find these disclosures in the library but many are outdated. We

are not allowed to use our personal email addresses to receive updated disclosures, and our work email cannot be used to send or receive anything outside of the company. It only works internally. These restrictions make it very difficult to provide accurate high-quality interpretation. In schools and educational programs, accurate interpretation is essential for students and families who do not speak English. Without the proper support for interpreters, students may not get the help they need to learn and to succeed. Because of the challenges we face on the job, we're organizing a union with the Communications Workers of America. We want a collective voice to improve pay, training, and working conditions. Many of us have back-to-back phone calls which is exhausting and makes it hard for our brains to work properly. By improving working conditions, we can provide better, more reliable service for the people who depend on us. We hope the City Council will support us in our campaign to organize for better conditions on the job, especially given the City's contracts with the LLS. Language Line's parent company, Teleperformance, has a global neutrality agreement but they're blocking implementation in the

United States. We are asking that for the sake of interpreters, clients, and the people who use these services, including the children of New York, that the City calls upon Teleperformance to follow their own neutrality agreement and follow us to form our union. Thank you so much for your patience and for your time.

LUPE HERNANDEZ: Good afternoon. Thank you, Chair Joseph and the Education Committee. My name is Lupe Hernandez. I am here speaking in my own personal capacity as a New York City Public School parent. I just want to share with you some of the challenges that we experience as parent leaders since they are leaning in on us to be these trusted messengers. Unfortunately, as a parent of a student with disability, we know that we do not get the IEPs before the IEP meeting so that makes it very difficult for any parent that is not speaking English or reading in English to actually receive that document before that meeting actually takes place in the language that they are speaking or reading. I also want to uplift that our CECs, the Community Education Councils, are not all hybrid. There are some that still only function in-person to

participate. And those that do have hybrid capabilities are not able to provide interpretation both online and in-person. It is only one or the other. We also have CECs that are not adhering to federal ADA compliance. I can speak to you as a parent of a former Education Council Member and the liaison for the American Sign Language School, where I gave ample time, more than the two weeks required, for an ASL interpreter. And unfortunately, the Chair of our council decided that it would need a motion to spotlight that ASL interpreter for our participants to participate in that meeting that day. We had over 50 participants from that school that had to watch the council for 30 minutes debate whether or not to spotlight our ASL interpreter for this community. And I sought support from the DOE to prevent this from happening, and they allowed it, and that is unacceptable. I also want to raise the fact that we have council members, parents, that do not speak English and need interpretations for their participation in their respected councils, and this is not always provided. We also have council members that have asked for the bylaws or other documents to be translated, and none of these documents have been

provided. One time for the bylaws, we were told we needed more time because it was a legal document. But what I heard earlier this afternoon on the panel where they said they had 100 percent rate of delivering these documents to those that needed them, it is simply not true.

One last thing. The designated language coordinators. These are positions that are given to staff members that have full-time jobs. If you heard, I'm not sure if you caught that, but the reason why there's no vacancy for these positions is because they're not actual full-time positions. Similar to our transportation coordinators, they are given to someone that has a full-time job, the school aide, the secretary, the principal. This puts a burden on the person that is able to successfully really help the families in need in these situations. And our bus emergency contact cards are not provided double-sided anymore. In fact, these cards are not given to parents that ride the bus in the paper form, and if they are, it's only the front side. The back side actually has the translation and the directions on why you are filling out this emergency card. And this card is able to tell the bus driver and the matron

who can receive your child or drop off your child.

And the OPT hotline that we just put more money in

also does not provide language access for any other

parent if you do not speak English. And it's just not

acceptable. Thank you very much for your time for me

to be able to share these contextualized experiences

of families in New York City public schools.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you to all the

panelists, and thank you for highlighting these

things. They're on the record, and I make sure that I

will definitely reach out to New York City public

schools to elevate these issues, and you know I'm

relentless on solving issues for New York City

students. Thank you so much.

Hope you get your union. I hope you do,

and thank you.

Tiaye Sinlat (phonetic), are you here,

from ASAP. Kulsoom Tapal, and Ashwin Lu, hey there.

And I always call my kids first. Y'all, I always call

my students first. Are there any other students in

the room?

TIAYE SINLAT: Hi. Good afternoon. Thank

you, Council and the Committee, for having this

conversation. My name is Tiaye Sinlat, and I'm a

senior at John Dewey High School. I'm also a youth advocate at Asian American Student Advocacy Project, ASAP, at CACF. As an English language learner, we need individual supports from our school, but we are not getting any. For me, writing essays take me longer than usual because my English isn't perfect. And sometimes it makes me question whether I truly belong in my classes, or if my ideas are even worth sharing, if my ideas are not delivered perfectly. During group discussion or presentation, me and my friends, who is also an ELL student, we experience fears of being judged and not being understood by our classmates because we are not confident and we're not fluent in speaking English. There are also times when me or my friends feel uncomfortable in communicating with teachers and classmates and feel isolated from others. Sometimes a teacher will give instructions and my friends don't understand because they're too nervous to raise their hand and ask for support. Because of this, they often got low scores on assignments that they could have done if they have understood the direction. Now that devices are banned in school, ELL students are having a hard time assimilating to the new school year when the teacher

don't understand and they couldn't communicate. They cannot communicate because their phones were their quick translating tools. Most of our struggles are unnoticed and unheard of. I wonder if it is because we are invisible or our struggles were designed to be unseen. We participate less, not because we don't care, but because we don't understand and we are not being understood. It always feels like we're being forced to assimilate and it really should be integration. School doesn't give us space to better learn the new language, and what schools are doing and not doing make us feel like we don't belong here. Because of stereotypes and misconception about AAPI community, AAPI ELL students are often lumped together as one group, even though we're different and diverse. In my school bilingual program, there's often shortage of qualified bilingual teachers, especially for less common languages. As AAPI ELL students, we want to be included and our language should be appreciated, providing us with a space where we can grow and succeed in school and outside of school. This bill is an important step for all ELLs to feel like we're actually being seen and cared for. If this bill is passed, then I can better have

access to resources that will help me deliver my ideas and my writing. My friends can feel supported since their teachers will make sure that they fully understand us. We will have an inclusive school environment for ELL students. However, we also need our schools to intentionally build in structural and space where we can easily communicate with native English speakers, build confidence, and eventually leading us to be more willing to participate in class. There will be a better outcome for our health. There will be a better outcome for our mental health, our sense of belonging, and our overall education. Thank you.

ASHWIN LU-HEDA: Good afternoon, and thank you, Council and Committee, for having this conversation. My name is Ashwin Lu-Heda, and I'm a senior at Eleanor Roosevelt High School. I'm also a youth advocate for the Asian American Student Advocacy Project, or ASAP, at the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families.

There have been countless times when I've tried to reach out to teachers for support. The most prominent example was when I was a freshman taking history, which didn't make sense with me as the dates

often blended into one. However, when I went to go seek help in office hours, my teacher would just tell me the answer to my problems without explaining them. And when I asked for explanations, he said to look it up as I needed to learn how to be more self-sufficient. Not only did this impact my grades, but it also impacted my mental health. Watching all my friends succeed in this class really isolated me as being the failure and made me feel like it was 100 percent my fault for not doing well. Now, I speak English fluently, but imagine the situation for an English language learner. How can they learn and thrive in this type of school setting? AAPI ELLs in New York City Public School system rarely receive the support they need. As a member of ASAP's Language Access Campaign Team, I've heard my fair share of similar stories and their experiences are so heartbreaking. However, they are not surprising. One of the examples is that ELLs in the DOE public school system receive inaccurate translations. What this means is imagine you're a kid from Myanmar who only speaks Burmese, and so when you take a regent test, you need the one translated in Burmese. But instead of that, they give you the Chinese one. Imagine how

awful you would feel, like the school doesn't even value you at all and how they have no intention of helping you. Last year, we held a convening of AAPI ELLs where we heard stories and challenges from AAPI ELLs directly. One of the academic related challenges was fast-paced lessons with limited or mismatched support. Moreover, what was heartbreaking and disappointing to hear was that many ELLs experience social isolation and emotional strain where they experienced bullying and racism and struggled to transition into a regular classroom. I wish I could say these experiences are uncommon, but they really aren't. Based on these experiences, there's a lack of sense of belonging, lack of support from teachers and staff, lack of care from the school system, and lack of space and opportunities to learn and engage meaningfully. It is beyond time for action. Actions that are centered around the needs of English language learners that would allow all students, including ELLs, to thrive in this educational system. As a youth leader at ASAP, our campaign will continue to learn about students' needs, uplift their voices and stories, and come up with policy recommendations. We thank the Council for having Resolution 0054,

which calls for prioritizing an increase in the number of educators trained to work with English language learners and to improve the quality and comprehensiveness of English language learners' education. This is the first step to fully and holistically supporting English language learners. However, we hope it will not stop here. We hope that one day we will have our next convening where we will hear positive stories from ELLs. Thank you for your time.

KULSOOM TAPAL: Good afternoon. My name is Kulsoom Tapal. I'm the Education Policy Coordinator at the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families. We are the nation's only pan-Asian children and families advocacy organization. We advocate for marginalized AAPI students and all New York students, which includes English language learners. We know that properly equipping educators with tools they need to feel successful in the classroom is a key step to supporting our most marginalized students. CACF stands today in strong support for Resolution 54, which calls on the DOE and SED to collaborate and prioritize increasing the number of educators trained to work with ELLs. 17 percent of ELLs enrolled in New

York City public schools are AAPI. That is more than 25,000 students. This resolution responds to urgent documented failures as reported in supporting New York City's ELL population. A recent audit by the Comptroller's Office found pervasive non-compliance with requirements that has meaningfully harmed students' access to language instruction they are legally entitled to receive. Specifically, the audit found that schools did not provide required courses or the minimum instructional minutes to 48 percent of the sampled ELL students, and 40 percent of sampled ELL students were taught by educators that did not have the required certifications. The audit also finds that DOE frequently files waivers to avoid mandated bilingual programs, denying students their entitled instruction and leaving educators unsupported and unqualified to meet ELL needs, compounding harm through lost instructional time and inadequate support. Additionally, without disaggregated data on students and educators, schools cannot properly identify needs or recruit bilingual culturally competent staff. Detailed breakdown by ethnicity, language, disability, among other categories are essential to addressing representation

and language gaps and build more supportive learning environments, which includes expanding the bilingual educator workforce. CACF urges the council to both pass the Resolution 54 and to press DOE and SED to act on concrete implementable changes outlined in the recent audit to support the diverse needs of AAPI ELL students. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. You sounded perfect. Are your parents involved in this process? How are parents involved in this educational journey?

TIA YE SINLAT: For my parents, well, they have a hard time with the new school system. So, when we got here, we just talked with other friends, like whoever needs, and they tried to tell like, oh, what you have to do in school, what is needed. But from my school, we don't really have that much like reach from the school to my parents, like, oh, what is happening at school? And they didn't really deliver like the... most of the time, they don't really reach out to them daily, and it's not accurate. I mean, it's not effective enough for them to understand what is happening at school. So, most of the time, they don't know what I'm doing, and I'm sure that they

don't even know that schools are banning the phones. I mean, we don't use phones in our school. So, my parents may have a hard time being a supportive member of the school.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And if you heard earlier, those are certain barriers we have to remove in order to make sure that parents are part of this engagement in this educational journey.

What are the top one or two things you would like to see New York City Public Schools do better to support you as an English language learner?

TIA YE SINLAT: For me, I think we should have... so when I took the English language... (INAUDIBLE) it's more focused on the academic, like passing the NYSESLAT test, and I feel like it doesn't really improve... my English doesn't really improve as much as when I talk with people and communicate. I feel like I still need time on learning more of how I can... practicing on how to like, oh, you have a long conversation. I just say, hi, how are you? And creating a space where I can practice... try conversational English with other native English speakers that can actually maybe boost how I feel about myself when I am outside of the school and

helping my parents, like talking out on solving problems.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I got you. You, young man?

ASHWIN LU-HEDA: I'm personally not ELL. However...

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You said you sit on the advisory so what are some of the things that we can do better?

ASHWIN LU-HEDA: Well, the ASAP Language Access team has brainstormed is we want to integrate data disaggregation so that we can properly identify what translators are needed. That's because, especially for communities as large as the AAPI, there are over 100 languages and you'll never be able to find one person that can speak all 100 so we were really focused on that. And also we want to focus on project-based learning. As Tay mentioned, we want to shift the classes focused from passing the NYSESLAT lab to really teaching the students English so that they can learn English well and take that beyond high school into college or wherever their future may lead.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Well, New York City Public Schools is still here so I hope they're taking notes, and I hope they meet with you guys to better support you. You hear it here firsthand and you hear, it's from the student's mouth that some of these recommendations must apply and we can't put everyone in a bucket, and this model cannot be a cookie cutter model and that's exactly what they're saying so thank you so much. I got you.

And I am calling on New York City Public Schools to increase the workforce to make sure we're delivering for our New York City students. They know how important that is to me. And yesterday I heard there's a first step, but I'm always going to always look for more and make sure that I'm holding their feet to the fire to deliver. Thank you.

TIAYE SINLAT: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Nat Moghe. If I mispronounce, please give me grace. Airenakhue Omoragbun, African Communities Together. If I mispronounce, give me grace. Taina Wagnac, and Kate DiVasto.

Hello. Go ahead.

AIRENAKHUE OMORAGBON: Okay. Is this on?

Yeah. Okay. So good afternoon, Chair Joseph.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Speak a little louder and bring the mic to you.

AIRENAKHUE OMORAGBON: All right. So good afternoon, Chair Joseph and Members of the Committee on Education. Thank you for holding today's important hearing. My name is Airenakhue Omoragbon, and I'm the New York Policy Manager at African Communities Together. I drive the organization's Hair Braiding, Right to Shelter, and Language Access campaigns, and I also have the opportunity to work full time on the Language Justice Collaborative to eliminate language and cultural barriers to immigrants' access to public services. I'm here today to highlight the need to protect and increase the quality of ELL programs offered to African young people living in New York City. I won't go through all of the statistics, but everyone knows that over the past three years, there's been an increase in over 225,000 new arrivals. Between 10 and 20 percent of those migrants are Black and they speak dialects that are not included in the City's top 10 languages. Many also came to the city with school-age children and, as a

result, we've seen over 13,000 new ELL students entering the public school system between the 2022 and 2023 academic year. So as a national membership organization that is by and for African immigrants, ACT is dedicated to fighting for civil rights, and we're very concerned right now about the quality of ELL programs and the longevity of these services in light of federal efforts to deprioritize non-English speaking citizens living in the United States. There was also a report that was put out about last week telling us that about 48 percent of sampled ELL students did not receive the required courses necessary for them to learn alongside their English-speaking peers. Due to existing policies like the 30-60 day rule and other things that require constant moving, many asylum seekers already run the risk of having to, you know, having to, excuse me, constantly file paperwork pertaining to school and missing notices to take, you know, New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test. By failing to adequately provide them with, you know, these bilingual programs, they're actively choosing to set African language, African young people up to fail in their efforts to learn the English language and

ultimately get the jobs they need to be successful here in the U.S. We also heard about the executive order, right, and while it doesn't explicitly ban agencies from producing documents in languages other than English, it gives the social service providers the opportunity to just stop considering the languages needed for immigrant communities. So ACT has been a part of this language justice work for a very, very long time. And we also made sure to take the time in 2022 to work with the Department of Education staff and complete the GenConnect project involving African families in the DOE. We educated people on the hundreds of languages that are spoken in the continent of Africa, the cultural and language barriers these young people face at school, and the challenges they face in trying to get an education and learn English here in the United States. So you can only imagine the disappointment we face in seeing that the needs that African children have are being neglected in the classroom. So, I just wanted to come here and speak to you about, you know, the disappointment that we have here, and we just hope that you continue to see ACT and also AfriLingual as

a resource, you know, in continuing to solve this problem. So thank you.

NAT MOGHE: Thank you, Chair Rita Joseph and Members of the Committee on Education, for holding this hearing and providing us with the opportunity to testify. My name is Nat Moghe, the new Advocacy Coordinator with the Asian American Federation, where we proudly represent a collective voice of over 70 member non-profits serving 1.5 million Asian New Yorkers. AAF is a proud member of the Language Justice Collaborative with African Communities Together, MASA, the New York Immigration Coalition, and Haitian Americans United for Progress. Ensuring access to linguistically and culturally competent services plays a vital role in AAF's mission in raising the influence and well-being of the pan-Asian American community through research, policy advocacy, and non-profit support. Language access for our communities is a matter of equity, dignity, and civil rights. As mentioned before, our nation's official language has been narrowed to English only, creating additional barriers for our limited English proficient community members. Asian Americans have the highest rate of limited English

language proficiency in the city, with nearly 45 percent of all Asians in New York City and 72 percent of our seniors having limited English proficiency. Specifically in education, linguistically isolated households and schools serve as a major barrier for Asian American children. In linguistically isolated households, adults may be unable to access the educational programs and assistance they need for their children or for the family, including oral interpretation, written translation of vital documents, and more. With our communities facing extreme linguistic barriers due to federal policy change, our City must continue to step up to ensure New Yorkers have access to the language support that they need. Over the long term, educational opportunities for both LEP children and adults are the route out of poverty. We thank the City Council for prioritizing these needs and recommend to continue prioritizing funding for worker language co-ops so that LEP community members can access the interpretation and translation services they need in their preferred languages, support and advance the New York State Language Access Expansion Act, which would expand uniform language access standards to

local branches of critical state agencies that immigrant families depend on, implement a comprehensive in-language outreach campaign, particularly for low-income families, to ensure that parents and children are aware of and have access to all of the educational opportunities available for them. And I'll submit this in my written testimony, we could see the 2023 New York City Language Access campaign as an example. Also ensuring that New York City Public Schools have linguistically and culturally competent resources through the educational workforce development programs that prioritize adult language learners and are tailored to address their specific cultural needs, strengthen partnerships between government agencies and CBOs that provide language translation interpretation services to bridge critical service gaps in education. We'd also like to say that we support Intro. 1336 and Intro. 1337 introduced by Council Member Krishnan to ensure that the DOE develops in-language materials for students and parents. We also support Resolution 0054 introduced by Deputy Speaker Ayala, prioritizing the increase of culturally and linguistically competent educators trained to work

with English language learners. We at the Asian American Federation, thank you for allowing us to testify, and we look forward to working with you all to ensure that our LEP Asian communities continue to get the support that they deserve.

TAINA WAGNAC: (SPEAKING HAITIAN CREOLE),
Chair Joseph and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Taina Wagnac. I am the Director of State and Local Policy at the New York Immigration Coalition. In addition, I also want to take the opportunity to submit testimony in support of the proposed legislation currently on today's agenda.

We've heard today the DOE speak about new trainings, coordinators, and notices that they claim have been rolled out, but what we hear from families and see on the grounds tells a very different story. Parents are not receiving these notices. Students who are bilingual or ELLs continue to sit in classroom, ignored and invisible. It's almost as if it's an inconvenience for certain schools when a student speaks another language. The environment is not one of inclusion for many of our students. DOE says principals and coordinators are trained, but families

continue to report that they cannot get interpretation when they need it. DOE says they are investing in bilingual education, but classrooms still go without a single certified bilingual educator. Even DOE's own data confirms this. While nearly 1,300 translation, as they stated earlier, transition requests were made last school year, fulfillment was only at 91 percent, and 5 percent of the schools still lack a designated language access coordinator. This is unacceptable. Families, as you mentioned, who lack access to technology or literacy in their own languages continue to remain cut off from critical school information. And DOE also admitted that training is not yet universal for all of their frontline staff. Here at the NYIC, we are looking forward to work with New York City Public Schools for the provision of interpretation services. Throughout the summer, our team have provided a series of 48-hour community interpreter training with the first cohort for Spanish and English speakers completed in June, and we are launching our second cohort for French and Haitian Creole speakers, which will run through the month of September till the end of October. Once we have officially launched in

October, we look forward to receiving interpretation requests so that we ensure that our families and our students are able to access the services that they need and also participate in school. This Council body and Committee has already shown leadership by pressing DOE to expand supported languages and strengthen oversight, as well as maintaining critical investment for initiatives like the Family Communication and Outreach Initiative, thank you, and the Project Open Arms. But with federal protection under attack, your role is even more critical and needed now. So, we urge you to immediately pass all three legislation currently on the agenda, but also to codify oversight into law by requiring DOE to disaggregate and publicly report data on language access requests and fulfillment rates so that families and advocates can see where schools are failing, as well as to take a step further to introduce a resolution calling on Albany to pass the New York State Language Access Expansion Act. No child should sit silent in a classroom, nor feel ignored when they walk in. No parents should be left without answers. Immigrant families deserve not just

rights on paper, but also equity in practice. Thank you for your time.

KATHERINE DIVASTO: Good afternoon. I'm Katherine DiVasto. I'm a Staff Attorney at Queen's Legal Services, part of Legal Services NYC, a non-profit that has served low-income New York City residents for over 50 years, and we are very proud to be able to serve the Borough of Queen's. What you have already heard today from agencies, from families, from students themselves, is what we hear to our office on the daily, that we are continually having to remind schools of their obligations to not rely on us, but instead themselves to provide language access services. And I appreciate the City Council for this opportunity to discuss language access in New York City public schools. As you may be aware of, in 2019, Legal Services NYC filed a lawsuit on behalf of the Alliance for Families with Developmental Needs and parents who did not receive critical school communications in their preferred languages about the children's safety, health, and special education in violation of their own policies, city, state, and federal law. The resulting settlement just this year requires multiple reforms

in the schools about staff training, complaint systems, and outreach to families about their right to language access services. Yet again, we continue to see holes and gaps in these services, despite this settlement. We routinely continue to see documents that are not translated, delays in bilingual evaluations, delays in starting up services, delays in students being able to get the education that they need in order to thrive and become the adults that they can be contributing to their communities. And so these delays in language access till services are provided continues to harm families, not only the child themselves, but also the parents, as been heard of, and their ability to effectively advocate for their children, which is their right. There are many barriers to improving language access. As we've heard of, there's limited staffing for the Office of Language Access and insufficient oversight systems for tracking provision of language access services. A simple one is that there's insufficient tracking, even of when school staff are providing interpretation at IEP meetings. What was reported today was specifically interpretation requests made to the Office of Language Access, not specifically

about what school staff are themselves providing. And so we also, again, recommend that the recommendations made by the New York City Comptroller be taken into account and also thought about as far as making changes to DOE more broadly and their tracking of language access services for families as far as it relates also to disciplinary procedures and preschool IEP processes and more. We believe the Comptroller suggested reforms to the administration, accountability, and training regarding language access services and the New York City DOE can ensure that no student is denied vital educational opportunity due to unaddressed language barriers and no parent is left wondering about the safety, health, and education of their child. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much, and we heard your legislation. We should work on crafting it. Thank you so much for all that you do. And I do agree on the lack of languages for specific niches of our students in the system and they get lost, unfortunately. But thank you for the lawsuit and I'm sure they're applying all of the work. I've mentioned that in several of my questioning. Thank you so much.

Rita Rodriguez-Engberg, Stamo Rosenberg.

I butchered your name. Give me grace. Anabel
Ruggiero. Anabel.

You may begin, Mrs. Engberg.

RITA RODRIGUEZ-ENGBERG: Good afternoon.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to discuss
language access today. And thank you, Chair Joseph,
for all the work that you do for our English language
learners and our immigrant families. My name is Rita
Rodriguez-Engberg. I'm the Director of the Immigrant
Students' Rights Project at Advocates for Children of
New York, a proud immigrant and a former English
language learner and always English language learner.

Based on our extensive work on the ground
and our constant advocacy with immigrant families,
we're highlighting several concerns and
recommendations regarding language access and
communication. Number one, the diversity of New York
City families requires multifaceted communication
methods. Many parents have limited literacy in their
home language and others have limited digital
literacy or a lack of reliable internet access,
preventing them from fully engaging with their
children's schools. In our work, we see parents who

rely on translated paper communications because they don't use email or the web. We meet other parents who do not read or write in their home language and who rely entirely on in-person meetings and phone calls with an interpreter to stay up to date on their children's education. So when we address language access, we have to first address communication more generally because providing translation and interpretation is not enough. Families must first have access to the language. This is why we urge the New York City Public Schools to utilize a multifaceted approach to communicating with families, which uses phone calls, paper notices, in-person meetings, ethnic media, campaigns in our neighborhoods, partnerships with community-based organizations, and other forms of culturally appropriate communication, which take into account the fact that many families do not speak one of the top 12 languages.

Number two, schools must provide language access to all families who need it. Despite everything that's been going on, all the promises that have been made, we continue to hear from families who do not receive basic language access

services from their schools or even sometimes from NYCPS offices. For example, we hear about family-facing school staff who do not offer the use of phone interpretation, even though they have it, to families, and they turn them away when they visit their school with the concern or question. We literally just had one person tell us this, a client tell us this last week, that she's been going to her school repeatedly and they don't have somebody on site so she gets turned away. Special education teams who are not aware that parents have the right to translate special education documents, even though this is an agreement that we came up with years ago, and schools have to know that the Office of Language Access provides this. Educators who still ask children to interpret for adults at parent-teacher conferences, this still happens. School staff who are not trained interpreters and they don't follow basic practices, let alone ethical ones, when serving as interpreters at formal school meetings like IEP meetings. And schools that don't address the language needs of families who speak low incidence and indigenous languages despite having a budget for translation and interpretation needs. We urge NYCPS

to ensure that all schools have a trained LAC, as we've talked about, and to make sure that parents know who the staff member is and how to get assistance from them. I think what's obvious here is that there's a big disconnect between what happens at OLA and Central and what's happening at schools and what the actual parent experience is, because although we know OLA is doing a lot, it's not really translating to what's happening in schools, no pun intended.

Number three, renew and baseline funding for immigrant family communications. I want to express my gratitude to the Council for working to secure investments in language access services and immigrant family communications with the 4 million dollars allocated each year for the last four school years. We know NYCPS has been able to help families with a lot of different initiatives. We've been part of some of them, so I can attest to the fact that some of them have actually really been effective, and we're proud of our partnership with NYCPS in this respect. They've partnered with community-based organizations. They've utilized local and ethnic media to share school-related updates, etc., and we

know it's been very helpful for our families. However, we're concerned that the funding is not baselined and advocates have to fight for it each year. By advocates, I mean me a lot. We therefore urge the City to provide long-term funding for immigrant family communications and outreach and call it that, which would allow NYCPS to plan ahead and ensure continuity of these essential services without having to wait, you know, throughout the summer, waiting to see if the money is going to go through. By investing in these vital services, we're empowering our parents to be active partners in their children's education, and we're creating a more equitable and inclusive school system. Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify today.

STAMO KARALAZARIDES ROSENBERG: Good afternoon, Chair Joseph and Members of the City Council's Committee on Education. Thank you for holding this critical hearing on language access in our public schools. As many of you know, I am Stamo Karalazarides Rosenberg, First Vice President of the Council of Supervisors and Administrators, representing nearly 20,000 school leaders,

administrators, supervisors, and early childhood directors across New York City.

Language access isn't a policy on paper. It's part of our daily work. Every day, New York City school leaders greet families who speak more than 180 languages. They deserve high-quality education for their children. Even simpler, they deserve to understand the frequent communications they receive from their school. These students deserve curriculum and materials that meet them where they are, regardless of their native language. In addition to language access, this is about overall transparency to families. Our schools promise that we shall provide the same high-quality education to all students, but the reality is uneven. A recent City Comptroller audit found nearly half of English language learners didn't get required instructional time or proper placement. About 40 percent were taught by teachers without the right certification. Yesterday, at the State of Schools address, Chancellor Aviles-Ramos called multilingualism a superpower. Knowing more than one language should be an expectation and not a deficiency. We could not agree more. We are encouraged by the new pilot

program in 80 schools using standardized English development curricula, and we look forward to partnering with New York City Public Schools to ensure the necessary resources for successful implementation. Yet the gaps deepen for students with disabilities who also require ELL services. Federal law requires special education services like speech therapy and literacy support in a child's home language, yet far too often we cannot find certified bilingual providers. This also impacts students during IEP testing as they're unable to find the bilingual staff necessary to test our students. Therefore, our ELLs who are students with special needs take a lot longer to acquire their IEP mandates. And far too often, families leave IEP meetings expecting bilingual therapy only to discover that one is not available to them. This stream has grown as thousands of new immigrant families have arrived. ELL enrollment in New York City has jumped nearly 10 percent in one year. Despite the City's promises, parents face mixed messages. DOE materials to families describe three program models for English language learners, but most schools can only offer English as a new language. Principals who want dual

language programs can't simply create certified bilingual teachers or curriculum overnight. Families expect a choice that often doesn't exist for them. That breeds frustration and erodes trust.

We see three urgent needs that we've shared in our written testimony. Number one, clear, honest communication. Parents must know which bilingual programs truly exist for their children and how long placement will take.

Certified staffing and curriculum support. We need pipelines and incentives to recruit and retain bilingual and bilingual special education teachers plus translated curriculum materials. For example, in bilingual programs across New York City, HMH reading curriculum does not always come in the language of the program as, for example, Mandarin.

Transparent data and accountability. Public reporting on services, teacher certification and interpreter requests will show where we've where we're succeeding and where we need to act.

Our school leaders are committed to all families that they serve, including those that speak a different language. With your partnership and the DOE support, we can turn the promise of language

access into a reality for every child and every family. Thank you.

DR. ANABEL RUGGIERO: Thank you. Hello, I'm Dr. Anabel Ruggiero and, between signing my slip today and getting up here, I realized instead of giving general testimony on today's meeting, I really need to speak in favor of Intro. 1337 about information on vaccines for families. In all the myriad ways that the federal administration is making all of our lives worse, one of the most insidious and abstract ways that's making our life worse is, well, what RFK Jr. is doing to our society, especially with the anti-vax rhetoric and, well, let's not forget his comments on Tylenol. But one of the things I'm particularly concerned about is the loss of herd immunity amongst the public. The way is that vaccines protect people because some people for medical reasons cannot receive vaccines or they're ineffective for them. The fact that most of us can, which cuts down the ability on disease to actually transmit, is how vaccines protect people who can't take them. Yet the concept of herd immunity is a relatively abstract one. It's imprecise language to communicate a much more nuanced topic. It is the type

of idea that I would expect because it's relatively nonlinear, would also be very hard to translate. It's very important to make sure that we get this information to as many people as broadly as possible while also minimizing the errors in that communication. As somebody who at least likes to think they're skilled at scientific communication, even when I'm communicating to somebody in English, the only language I know how to use, I fail. I fail all the time at it. And I can only imagine how much more difficult that task is to also translate that into myriad different languages. This is the type of work that to translate, you not only need to have understanding the target language you're translating to, but an understanding of the, like a deeper understanding of the concepts being translated, because there might be a better way, a different abstract or nonlinear way to communicate those ideas in the target language. I also want to take a few seconds to go off topic. I wanted to thank Rita Joseph for speaking at the press conference earlier today on the Trump Administration's threats over magnet school funding, and Trump Administration starting to withhold magnet school funding over the

City's trans-positive guidelines for students. As a graduate of a magnet student in Jersey, I think it's important to not give in to this type of depraved extortion. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank you to the panel. I've taken your recommendations. Thank you so much.

Christopher Leon Johnson.

Is there anyone else in the room that needs to testify?

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Good afternoon, Chairwoman Joseph. My name is Christopher Leon Johnson. I'm here to show support for Intro. 1337. I hope that you jump on the bill today. I know you're not on the bill, but I hope you jump on, but I want the City Council, like you as a Chair, to make a statement condemning a organization that for the past about, let's say five years, had been creating a lot of terror within the City Council and that organization is called Teachers for Choice, and I believe that you should be condemning Vicki Paladino and Robert Holden in the Common Sense Caucus for enabling this organization because vaccines are needed inside these schools. I have a niece. She goes

to charter school. I know that you love public schools, so I hope become an enemy because of that. But my niece, she needs the same vaccines to go inside the schools. And I know that kids in charter schools go to schools that are affiliated in public schools like South Shore and older zone schools like Boys and Girls and they need them. Now, I believe that vaccines are needed for kids because if these kids don't get it, you don't know what they're going to have. TB, smallpox, deadly diseases. But you have groups like Teachers for Choice that is backed by Mark Gordon on their children health defense is pushing this anti-vaccine rhetoric and saying that vaccines kill and nothing's being done about it. And I know that in the City Council, they're trying to push a certain provision to City Council where you can't say certain things to the Council. Hey, I know it's going to go through, but I hope that the City Council really start cracking down on anti-vaccine rhetoric in the City Council and the enabling of anti-vaccine organizations like Teachers for Choice and Cops for Freedom and (INAUDIBLE) for Choice and anybody that pushes anti-vaccine rhetoric. And I think that the City Council need to come out and make

a statement to where that anti-vaccine rhetoric will not be championed in the City Council, will not be allowed in the City Council because this type of rhetoric is dangerous and it put these kids in danger to the point of where that a fellow Council Member, Eric Bottcher, had somebody out of his house and threatened him. I think I know about that story. So I think that this bill should go through, but the City Council need to start stepping up and condemning anti-vaccine rhetoric. I know they talk about my rhetoric and Raul Rivera's rhetoric, but same you get us, you need to start getting at those people too. And I understand that Mark Gordon runs Transportation Alternatives so he's going to get a lot of backlash, but y'all need to start calling stuff out as the City Council, and I know that you guys care about the kids. I care about the kids. I care about my niece, but this stuff had to stop. So, I support Intro. 1337, and thank you so much and have a good day. Thank you. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

Now on Zoom, I'm going to call Brooke Edwards, Abdelrahman Mohamed (phonetic), Magaly Sanchez, and Eduardo Antonetti.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

BROOKE EDWARDS: Thank you to the Chair and city Council Members for your time today. My name is Brooke Edwards, and I'm a speech language pathologist and Board-certified stuttering specialist testifying on behalf of the non-profit organization, SAY, the Stuttering Association for the Young. While I'm not testifying about any of the legislation on the agenda today directly, I hope to demonstrate the need to include our students who stutter in the conversation of improving language access in New York City Public Schools.

Stuttering is a complex and often misunderstood communication difference that occurs due to variations in the neurological pathways involved in speaking. Stuttering is characterized by interruptions in the flow of a person's speech that may vary across time and situations. Stuttering is not an emotional disorder but might cause a child to experience feelings of shame, anxiety, or discomfort about their speech. Some children may exert a lot of

energy, switching words, shortening their message, or even not speaking at all to conceal the fact that they stutter. These variable and sometimes covert characteristics often lead to schools overlooking the needs of students who stutter. At SAY, we run a sleep-away camp, speech therapy, and family sessions, creative arts programming, and professional trainings, all with the mission to build a community of acceptance and encouragement for children who stutter. Our schools must be a part of this community. Unfortunately, there's a growing body of research that shows that both teachers and, maybe even more concerningly, also school-based speech therapists consistently report a lack of confidence about their training on stuttering. At SAY, we hope that New York City Schools start to prioritize finding knowledgeable professionals to conduct staff trainings so that students who stutter receive the time, respect, and accommodations that they deserve. A SAY participant wrote, because I can never string a sentence of words together without stumbling, I was without a voice. My opinion was never heard and my beliefs and feelings were forced to stay in the recesses of my mind. Then I found theater. It was

SAY's theater program that provided him space to share his authentic voice. With proper training, teachers and other school staff members can be empowered to do that for countless other children as well. Thank you, Council, for your openness to seeing stuttering through the lens of neurodiversity and supporting us to ensure that stuttered voices are accepted and accommodated for in New York City Public Schools. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

Abdelrahman Mohamed. Abdelrahman.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Magaly Sanchez.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

MAGALY SANCHEZ: Hello. Can you hear me?

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes.

MAGALY SANCHEZ: Hi. My name is Maggie Sanchez. I'm the Co-President of the Citywide Council on Special Education. I'm speaking here in my personal capacity as a parent of a student with disability. Given all of the issues that students like my child experience on a daily basis, I would like to sincerely entreat the New York City Council to please apply pressure or have discussions with

your fellow New York State (INAUDIBLE) to please pass Bill S-1018, which right now is stuck in committee. Families and school bus workers need this bill to pass and be signed by the Governor in order to help mitigate the pervasive and never-ending busing problem. I would also like to encourage this Committee and the City Council as a whole to oversee DOE's planned policy proposals on generators AI within the education system. It is very important for the City Council to listen to those in our community who have been very vocal over the years about establishing more robust safeguards, especially around student data, especially when it comes to generative AI or AGI and its utilization within the classroom and school system. I also want to comment that P-3-1-1 is no longer in use. That line seems to have been disconnected even though it was a way for families to make direct complaints regarding any school violations or any IEP violations. Parents are being redirected to 3-1-1, but that just brings parents to an endless loophole and just passing the ball so P-3-1-1 needs to be reinstated, and a more equitable source for parents to make formal

complaints needs to be established and needs to be an inclusive one.

I also want to state that the comments from the DOE today about language access are insufficient. More needs to be done. More oversight needs to be done on the quality of interpretation and translation services. Having somebody's email or emailing somebody directly about those complaints on interpretation that's not being sufficient or adequately done is not a way to go. There needs to be a specific complaint system where parents can go and complain and let the DOE know when a repetitive offender is not providing those adequate services because...

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time is expired.

MAGALY SANCHEZ: The vendors are getting their money anyway.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Eduardo Antonetti.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

EDUARDO ANTONETTI: Esteemed Chair Joseph and Members of the Committee on Education, my name is Dr. Eduardo Antonetti, and I am the Senior Director of Advancement for Internationals Network.

Internationals Network is an education non-profit organization with more than 20 years of success in supporting immigrant and refugee students in New York City Public Schools. There are 17 international schools in New York City, and we have supported an additional 20 schools with their newcomer population since 2023. I'm pleased to report that Queens International Secondary School, our first grade 6 through 12 school just opened in Ridgewood and its doors are open to welcome new students. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the oversight topic of language access in New York City Public Schools.

I am here today to emphasize the critical importance of increasing the number of educators trained to work with multilingual learners. The influx of new arrivals into New York City schools in recent years has amplified the need for more highly trained teachers to serve newcomer multilingual learners. In the early 2000s, Internationals partnered with other organizations and advocated for the creation of the New York City Department of Education's Translation Interpretation Unit, and we worked to ensure that it was structured to meet the needs of schools, providing these language services

for families. Today, our schools continue to use T and I services and we appreciate the funding that the City Council provides each year to ensure that these services continue and even expand promising programs such as the Future Ready Interpreter Program. One way New York can increase the number of qualified educators is to create a pipeline from within our schools by investing in our multilingual students. Currently, nearly 100 alumni from our international schools are working in our public schools as principals, assistant principals, school counselors, teachers, and staff. These amazing educators are former multilingual students whose lives were deeply impacted by our schools and they chose to pursue careers as educators so they could give back to the next generation. Thank you for your continued support of our public schools and our newest New Yorkers. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.

One more call for Abdelrahman Mohamed.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Abdelrahman Mohamed.

1 COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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2 Is there anyone else on Zoom that would
3 like to testify?

4 All right. Thank you. We're closing out
5 our hearing. [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 October 24, 2025