

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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March 23, 2026

Start: 9:30 a.m.

Recess: 8:41 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Erin Dinowitz,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Speaker Menin
Chris Banks
Gale A. Brewer
Carmen N. De La Rosa
Harvey Epstein
Amanda C. Farias
Simcha Felder
Jennifer Gutiérrez
Kamillah Hanks
Rita C. Joseph
Shekar Krishnan
Linda Lee
Farah N. Louis
Mercedes Narcisse
Lincoln Restler
Lynn C. Schulman
Julie Won
Phil Wong
Susan Zhuang

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

Administration

Kamar Samuels

New York City Public Schools Chancellor

Danielle Giunta

New York City Public Schools First Deputy
Chancellor

Flavia Puello-Perdomo

Deputy Chancellor of Family Partnership and
Community Support

Simone Hawkins

Deputy Chancellor for Early Childhood

Christina Foti

Deputy Chancellor of Inclusive and Accessible
Learning

Kevin Moran

Deputy Chancellor of School Operations

Seritta Scott

Chief Financial Officer

Nina Kubota

Cora Lui

Public (in-person) - 92 people

Michael Mulgrew

Henry Rubio

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

Donald Nesbit

Anyinelda Santana Candelier

Angela Hernandez

Connie Chen

Adrina Rokib

Daniel Ruiz

Ny'Jhea Pulley

Ishaq Bekoe

Jiaxiang Zhang

Daniella Rodriguez

Serenity DeJesus

Ashley Frato

Kulsoom Tapal

Abigail Chen

Theodore Tien

Olivia Li

Ebonie Simpson

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

Anderlis Feliz-Pena

Peyton Cruz

Elmer Reyes

Abigail Segura

Kaeole Naroti

Ben Kofman

Jairo Santamaria

Hailey Ortiz

Sebastian Martinez

Andrea Alonso Roridiguez

Germanyoni Lopez

Sophia Vazquez

Shari-Wejsa-Stewart

Katie Caster

Ruth Aguirre

Madison Mounty

Sophie Stelboun

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

Gray Bruce

Brianna Lucero

Alina Flores-Veliz

Allison Revelo Castillo

Diaraye Bah

Sadea Rahman

Miley Gomes

Mariama Jalloh

Reinaly Bran

Hadia Ali

Yaretzi Vidals Hernandez

Esperanza Vazquez

Ammy Heredia

Paulina Milewska

August Hoyt

Juniper Wang

Charles Hahn

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

Albania Jimenez

Erika Myers Hyde

Asher Rodriguez

Karen Rogel

Randi Levine

Gregory Brender

Molly Senack

Kimberly Olsen

Chauncey Young

Andrea Ortiz

Naveed Hasan

Yasmin Naji

Jon Harriman

Aracelis Lucero

Kyle DeAngelis

Eva Gray

Eman Gad

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

Yainel Beltre

Sandra Mitchell

Madison Pinckney

AJ

Paul Anthony

Alison Garbariru- Teacher's College

Pamela Koch- Teacher's College

Varina Naik

Michelle Kraus

Megan Nordgrez

Miles Toussant

Cassie Schwerner

Louisa Foy

Lizabeth Lucero

Violet Lahive

Michael Exstract

Lauren Brazier

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

Brenda Triplett - Children's Aid

Chijindu Obiofuma- ARISE Coalition

Nyah Berg

Adelo Ramirez

Adriana Aviles

Public (Zoom) - 11 people

Phoebe Assenza

Ro Ford

Janice Weinman

Benjamin Tocker

Tanesha Grant

Diana Diaz

Janelle Barth

Tamika Mapp

Jenny Veloz

Glendaliz Valdez

Lupe Hernandez

1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: This is a microphone check for
3 the Committee on Education, recorded on March 23,
4 2026, located in Chambers by Nazly Paytuvi.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and welcome to
6 today's New York City Council hearing for the
7 Committee on Education. If you would like to
8 testify, you must fill out a witness slip with one of
9 the Sergeant at Arms in the back of the room.

10 At this time, please silence all electronic
11 devices. Please silence all electronic devices.
12 Just a reminder, no one may approach the dais.
13 Chair, we are ready to begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: [GAVEL] Good morning.
15 Very good class. Welcome, welcome to the Fiscal 2027
16 Preliminary Budget hearing for the Committee on
17 Education. My name is Eric Dinowitz, I am the Chair
18 of the Committee on Education joined today by Chair
19 Gutiérrez of the Subcommittee on Early Childhood
20 Education. This is my first budget hearing as the
21 Education Chair and I'm honored to be here as a proud
New York City Public Schools Alum and a Former Public
School Education Teacher. And just a quick, you know
we're starting at 9:30 this morning and just a quick
shoutout to all the teachers, the principals, the

1
2 para's, and everyone else who works in and with
3 schools who have already been at work for two, two
4 and a half hours. We're getting started now but to
5 all the people out there who work with our children,
6 thank you.

7 This morning we'll be discussing the Department
8 of Education's \$38.04 billion Fiscal 2027 Budget as
9 presented in the Preliminary fiscal, Preliminary
10 Financial Plan.

11 This afternoon, we will also be discussing the
12 DOE's capital plan with the School Construction
13 Authority and thank you to everyone present here and
14 of course those of you who are testifying remotely.

15 And I think it's important to remember why we're
16 here and what the dollars go to. The dollars go to
17 our kids and everyone here who works in schools knows
18 that whoever walks through our classroom into those
19 doors, is our charge. Those are the kids we take
20 care of. We'll be pausing for a moment.

21 Has anyone here read any good books recently? We
got James. We got - what did you read recently?

UNIDENTIFIED: INAUDIBLE 5:48-5:51].

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Read it or watch the
movie?

1 UNIDENTIFIED: Both.

2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But why would you read it?
3 Right, you could watch a movie.

4 UNIDENTIFIED: Red card, red card.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: This is what we call a
6 teachable moment. This is when you all say no
7 Dinowitz, read the book, and then maybe.

8 UNIDENTIFIED: That understanding from the book
9 that you might not get from the movie sir.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'd love to - it was the
11 best - was when we did - I read Harry Potter with my
12 kids and then we watched the movie and they were
13 like, but that's not what was in the book. That was
14 different in the book. How come they didn't do that
15 scene in the book and - right? Any other besi- okay,
16 we got James.

17 UNIDENTIFIED: Sorry to spoil the fun.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay. Now to the fun.
19 Tell me when you are - are you live? Are we live
20 right now?

21 UNIDENTIFIED: We are.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay - okay. Uh, okay, I
think for the record I'm going to start over. Uhm,
good morning. It was better the first time. Good

1
2 morning and welcome to the Fiscal 2027 Preliminary
3 Budget Hearing for the Committee on Education. My
4 name is Eric Dinowitz. I am the Chair of the
5 Committee on Education joined today by Chair Jennifer
6 Guti rrez of the Subcommittee on Early Childhood
7 Education.

8 This is my first budget hearing as the Education
9 Chair and I'm honored to be here, not just as a
10 Council Member, as a Chair but as a proud New York
11 City Public Schools Alum and proud former Public
12 School Special Education Teacher. We'll be
13 discussing this morning, the Department of
14 Education's \$38.04 billion Fiscal 2027 budget as
15 presented in the Preliminary Financial Plan.

16 This afternoon, we'll also be discussing the
17 DOE's Capital Plan with the School Construction
18 Authority. Thank you to everyone present here and to
19 those of you who are testifying remotely. I would
20 also take a moment to thank our teachers, our
21 Administrators, our Para's who are definitely not
watching this because they're in the classroom and
they've been in their schools for maybe two, two and
a half hours. So, thank you to all of our educators
out there. And I also want to kind of take a moment

1
2 to think about why we're here. We are here for the
3 kids to make sure that the \$38.04 billion, what those
4 dollars mean. It's supposed to mean better education
5 for our students. For any student, no matter who
6 walks the doors of our classroom. And I just want to
7 acknowledge two things this morning. The first is to
8 acknowledge that our friend, Dylan Contreras, who was
9 in ICE detention for over ten months has recently
10 been released and is returning to school.

11 [APPLAUSE]

12 And as a reminder, this was a kid who was doing
13 everything that we ask of everyone. Going to school,
14 working hard, doing right by his family, had a job,
15 taking care of the rest of his family and going to
16 his regularly scheduled ICE appointment. Uhm, and
17 despite that, was treated wrongly by our government
18 and this is happening all over, all over our country
19 and so, we are thrilled that he is back. He is going
20 to be back in school, back playing UNO with all of
21 his friends doing lunch and he is going to finish
reading Frankenstein, which is a book he is now
currently reading.

I also want to recognize that it was National
Down Syndrome Day on Saturday and as Chair of

1
2 Education, I will continue to fight for students with
3 Down Syndrome. Every student, no matter their age,
4 immigration status, disability status, because
5 everyone who walks through the doors of our
6 classrooms deserves a world class education and
7 deserves the care and love that all of our children
8 deserve.

9 The DOE has the largest budget among city
10 agencies, around one-third of the overall fiscal 2027
11 budget. It also has the largest headcount among city
12 agencies, with 140,530 budgeted positions, 46 percent
13 of the entire city's budgeted headcount.

14 As Chair of this Committee, I will push hard for
15 accountability and efficiency to ensure that the
16 budget for the largest school system in the country,
17 actually reflects the needs and interests of our
18 students and our families.

19 The Preliminary Plan includes an additional \$2.6
20 billion for the Fiscal 2027 Budget since the November
21 plan through additional funding for early childhood
education programming, District 75 classes and Summer
Rising. However, this increase also contains large
amounts of mandated spending.

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2 Areas where the city is covering what the state
3 has not. This plan recognizes the true cost of due
4 process cases, allowing for more oversight and
5 transparency, which we have been fighting for as a
6 Council for years. The plan also includes the full
7 cost for class size implementation mandated by state
8 law.

9 But along with this large funding increase, comes
10 difficult choices. While the Council applauds the
11 Administration's focus on budget transparency and
12 providing funding for crucial programming for
13 schools, the Mayor's Fiscal 2027 budget is balanced
14 by relying on tapping into the Rainy Day Fund this
15 year and raising property taxes on hard working New
16 Yorkers next year.

17 While we are not all rallying to address this
18 affordability crisis - well, sorry. While we are
19 rallying to address this affordability crisis, we
20 believe that there is more that the city can do to
21 address this issue with the DOEs growing budget and
to avoid a budget crisis, to be sure it's not
balanced on the backs of hardworking New Yorkers.

Notably, the city is the only school district in
the state that pays rental assistance to Charter

1
2 schools located in private facilities and is the only
3 district dealing with such high rates of due process
4 cases. Both of these concerns point to issues with
5 our public school system, not meeting the needs of
6 all students in the city.

7 The high number and cost of due process cases
8 points to a broken special education system where
9 students can afford it, have to sue to receive their
10 mandated services and high quality special education
11 at a private school.

12 While this plan begins to make investments to
13 help our public school students with disabilities,
14 this is only one small step to reconcile for years of
15 disinvestment.

16 In Fiscal 2027, the DOE has budgeted \$3.7 billion
17 to charter schools, including both tuition costs and
18 leases. Of this funding, 54 percent comes from city
19 tax dollars, while only 45 percent is covered by the
20 state. It is unclear how the city has worked with
21 the state for additional support for Charter Schools.

Beyond Charter Schools, we believe that the city
should leverage its relationship with the state to
ensure a state budget that increases foundation aid
funding to New York City Public Schools.

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2 The State Budget Proposals from the Assembly and
3 Senate include additional funding for English
4 Language Learners, students experiencing
5 homelessness, and students living in foster care.
6 Additionally, the Assembly proposes funding for class
7 size and further funding for 3K. These proposals
8 could bring in hundreds of millions of dollars for
9 our most vulnerable students.

10 The city and the DOE should also do more to show
11 support for crucial state legislation for school bus
12 contracts. The DOE recently extended the school bus
13 contracts for another three years. This has been a
14 recurring issue. Old contracts from the 70's do not
15 work for the 21st Century, especially for students
16 with disabilities and students in temporary housing
17 who rely on this transportation.

18 In order to fix it, the state must pass
19 legislation that includes labor protections for
20 school bus drivers in any new contracts. If this
21 legislation is not passed this year, it will make it
very difficult to negotiate new contracts before the
current extension runs out.

The city spends \$15 billion more on education
than ten years ago but we continue to face high

1
2 chronic absenteeism and inequities in test scores and
3 graduation rates.

4 The city funds a good deal of programming that it
5 does not have concrete assessments for. Without
6 these assessments and evaluations, how do we know -
7 will these billions of dollars really make an impact
8 on our students. The DOE's budget relies on
9 contracting, which can lead to ballooning costs
10 instead of efficiencies. The contracting process for
11 the DOE is unique and not aligned to other city
12 agency procurement methods. This process is attached
13 to mayoral control, which is currently being
14 negotiated in the state budget. With additional
15 oversight on contracts, the city may be able to
16 decrease contracting costs and ensure that we are
17 only funding what is effective for our students.

18 Another critical aspect of the DOE's budget is the
19 Early Childhood Education system. Over the last
20 decade, DOE has focused more and more resources on
21 early childhood education. DOE relies on community
based organizations and other contracted care to
provide these services to our youngest New Yorkers.
However, the DOE and the Administration have not
publicly stated meaningful targets or how success

1 will be measured. With \$700 million added for Early
2 Childhood Education programming in Fiscal 2027, it is
3 critical that the Council understand how the DOE is
4 ensuring that this funding is spent appropriately.
5 In an effort to stabilize the system, while expanding
6 the number of seats for two year olds.

7 It is the Council's responsibility to ensure that
8 the city's budget is fair, transparent, and
9 accountable to all New Yorkers. It is essential that
10 the budget we adopt this year is also reflective of
11 the priorities and interests of the Council and of
12 the people that we represent.

13 This hearing is a vital part of this process and
14 I expect that DOE will be responsive to the questions
15 and concerns of Council Members. I look forward to
16 active engagement with the Administration over the
17 next few months to ensure the Fiscal 2027 Adopted
18 Budget meets the goals the Council has set out. I
19 want to acknowledge my colleagues on the Committee
20 who are present, Council Member Schulman De La Rosa,
21 Wong, Zhuang, Joseph, Lee, and Hanks.

I would also like to thank Jenna Klaus, my Chief
of Staff, Theo Solter, my Legislative and Budget
Director, Andrew Lane-Lawless and Grace Amato, the

1
2 Committee's Financial Analysts, Alejandro Carvajal,
3 the Committee's Counsel, Chloe Rivera and Katie
4 Salina, the Committee's Policy Analysts.

5 I would like to remind everyone from the public
6 who wishes to testify in person that you must fill
7 out an appearance card, which is located on the desk
8 of the Sergeant at Arms in the back of the room.
9 Please fill out this slip, even if you have already
10 registered to testify in advance.

11 Public testimony will begin after both the
12 Department of Education and the School Construction
13 Authority have testified. When you are called,
14 please limit your testimony to two minutes, whether
15 you are testifying in person or on Zoom. I am also
16 going to ask my colleagues to limit their questions
17 and comments to five minutes.

18 I will now administer the oath to anyone
19 testifying from the DOE. Please raise your right
20 hand and if you plan to testify later, please raise
21 your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth,
the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your
testimony before this Committee to respond honestly
to Council Member questions? Thank you.

1
2 As a reminder to all of our witnesses, please
3 state your name prior to your testimony for the
4 record.

5 Okay, thank you. You may begin your testimony.

6 KAMAR SAMUELS: Kamar Samuels. Good morning and
7 thank you for inviting me to testify on the Fiscal
8 Year 2027 Preliminary Budget. Thank you speaker
9 Menin; Education Chair Dinowitz and Members of the
10 Committee on Education; and Early Childhood Education
11 Chair Gutiérrez and Members of the Subcommittee on
12 Early Childhood Education.

13 I am the New York City Public Schools Chancellor
14 Kamar Samuels, and I'm joined by First Deputy
15 Chancellor Danielle Giunta; Deputy Chancellor of
16 Family Partnership and Community Support Flavia
17 Puello-Perdomo; Deputy Chancellor of Early Childhood
18 Simone Hawkins; Deputy Chancellor of Inclusive and
19 Accessible Learning Christina Foti; Deputy Chancellor
20 of School Operations Kevin Moran; and Chief Financial
21 Officer Seritta Scott. I am honored to serve in the
Mandani Administration and to lead the nation's
largest school district. I look forward to
discussing the Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget as

1
2 it relates to our city's students, staff and
3 families.

4 For me, serving in this role is the culmination
5 of more than 20 years of devoted- 20 years devoted to
6 our schools. I started as a New York City Teaching
7 Fellow in the Bronx, where I realized that education
8 would become my life's work, and later served as a
9 principal, deputy superintendent, and superintendent.
10 I am also a proud NYCPS parent.

11 These experiences have shaped my perspective
12 profoundly. But as I refined my - as I refined my
13 vision for our schools, the greatest influences have
14 been the conversations I've had with our NYCPS
15 community since taking this role. I've been to every
16 borough, and soon, every superintendency visiting our
17 schools and by this point, I have seen 36 and
18 counting. I have seen New York City Reads and Solves
19 in action and students' artistic and creative talents
20 on full display. I've watched our youngest learners
21 develop their literacy skills and our oldest learners
prepare for college and careers.

Whether that's by building robots or checking
someone's vital signs using aircraft simulators or
broadcasting a news program. Each of these school

1
2 visits have - on each of these school visits, I have
3 met with families, elected officials, staff, and
4 community members listening to their concerns, their
5 ideas, and their hopes.

6 I'm also more than half way through a ten stop
7 community conversation tour, where I've gathered
8 insightful feedback and a wide range of perspectives
9 from students, families, staff, and community members
10 across every borough.

11 Tonight, that tour continues in Manhattan,
12 tomorrow evening we'll be in Brooklyn and finally
13 earlier this month, I announced a comprehensive
14 reorganization for NYCPS, one that puts students,
15 families and students and schools at the center of
16 our work. My new cabinet, an experienced diverse
17 group of public servants, is here with me today.

18 Together, these conversations and perspectives
19 have informed my vision for our school system, that
20 every school should be safe, academically rigorous,
21 and truly integrated. And as I have demonstrated in
my initial months as Chancellor, this work can only
be done by listening to and partnering with families
and communities.

1
2 My first priority is safety. We know that
3 students cannot learn if they do not feel physically
4 safe and emotionally safe. So, we are taking a
5 comprehensive approach to student well-being. With
6 our cell phone policy, we are prioritizing students'
7 mental health and creating distraction-free
8 classrooms and our work to leverage technology
9 responsibly continues with our foundational AI
10 guidance, which will be released tomorrow and will
11 include opportunities for community input.

12 With our Summer Rising program, we are keeping
13 our students safe, engaged, and learning year-round.
14 We recently launched applications and are gearing up
15 for a fantastic summer. And with Project Open Arms,
16 we are embracing and supporting our immigrant
17 students and their families, reaffirming our
18 commitment to every child's right to an education.
19 Moving forward, I am committed to these strategies
20 and others, such as community schools, support for
21 students in temporary housing and foster care and
more to ensure holistic student safety.

My second priority is academic rigor. Across
every classroom, students should be challenged,
engaged and pushed to reach their fullest potential,

1
2 all with appropriate support and guidance. That's
3 where our core academic initiatives, New York City
4 Reads, New York City Solves, and Student Pathways
5 come into play. This work is already transforming
6 our system and producing real outcomes for students.
7 I am determined to deepen and strengthen this work as
8 Chancellor.

9 With New York City Reads, we are implementing a
10 Multi-Tiered System of Supports, or MTSS to determine
11 the highest leverage interventions for each child.
12 With New York City Solves, we are maintaining our
13 focus on conceptual understanding while promoting
14 automaticity in foundational math skills. And with
15 Student Pathways, we are aligning our work to New
16 York State's Portrait of a Graduate, to ensure
17 students gain the competencies that will not only
18 earn them a diploma but will also serve them while in
19 college, career, and life. This includes an emphasis
20 on financial literacy, starting in kindergarten with
21 our partners at NYC Kids Rise and continuing through
high school. Academic rigor, I should note, is not
only the purview of K-12. This Administration has
taken significant steps towards universal early
child- er, er, early care and education, including 2K

1
2 and 3K expansion, while simultaneously stabilizing
3 the system, because we are committed to engaging,
4 enriching, educational experiences from the earliest
5 ages.

6 My third priority, true integration, is
7 especially relevant to our New York City context,
8 because our schools should reflect our rich diversity
9 and multiculturalism of the city we call home. This
10 is about expanding robust, rigorous programs, many of
11 which intentionally foster diversity in every sense
12 of the word from bilingual education to specialized
13 programs for students with disabilities, from
14 International Baccalaureate programs to Early child -
15 Early College high schools. It's about thoughtful
16 enrollment policies and school utilization,
17 especially as we meet the class size mandate. And
18 it's about interdisciplinary, culturally responsive
19 learning experiences, leveraging materials like
20 Civics for All and Respect for All programs.

21 Let me be clear, Respect for All is more than a
slogan. It's something we live every day in NYCPS.
Our students deserve to see their stories, recognize,
and uplift it, and to celebrate the identities of
others.

1
2 To that end, I am proud to announce that,
3 building on the Council's investment in culturally
4 responsive resources, such as the Black Studies
5 Curriculum, the Latine Studies Curriculum and Hidden
6 Voices resources, we will be launching a
7 comprehensive professional learning plan to expand
8 the use of these materials in classrooms across the
9 city. While all schools have access to these
10 resources, access is not synonymous with
11 implementation. I am committed to supporting our
12 educators to make that implementation seamless and
13 impactful.

14 I want to thank the many members who support has
15 been instrumental in bringing culturally responsive
16 education to our schools and I ask for your continued
17 partnership. This is only the first step in my
18 broader integration vision, and I'm excited to share
19 more about how we are fostering equity and true
20 integration, district by district, in the upcoming
21 months.

22 So, as you can see, we have hit the ground
23 running and the FY 2027 Preliminary Budget will
24 enable us to accelerate this progress. I am deeply
25 grateful to the Mamdani Administration for their

1 support of our schools, students and families. This
2 budget indicates - dedicates over \$1 billion in new
3 funding to our school system this fiscal year. A sum
4 that will grow in the outer years, demonstrating this
5 Administration gets it. The Mayor and his team are
6 listening and recognizing our needs, stabilizing the
7 system and creating efficient, effective, and
8 sustainable pathways to long-term transformation.

9 To start, this budget addresses operational
10 necessities around technology, transportation, and
11 more, laying a critical foundation for the rest of
12 this work. The budget then builds on this foundation
13 to advance the broader vision, making significant
14 strides toward safe, academically rigorous and truly
15 integration - integrated schools.

16 With \$106 million in baselined funding for Summer
17 Rising, we will keep our children engaged and safe
18 year around. With investments that support early
19 childhood, \$300 million this fiscal year and even
20 more baselined and students with disabilities
21 baselined at \$226 million, academic rigor will start
early and the bar will remain high for all students.

Also meaningful in this baselined investment in
reducing class sizes, allowing us to hire more

1
2 teachers, in addition to this, we are closely
3 collaborating with the School Construction Authority,
4 unions and elected officials to analyze our fiscal -
5 our physical footprint, brainstorming capital and
6 operational strategies to meet the mandate.

7 To our City Council Members, I want to thank you
8 for your ongoing support, partnership and dedication
9 to our school communities in all these areas and many
10 others.

11 I also ask for your advocacy with state lawmakers
12 as they pursue their own budget negotiations. We
13 strongly support both houses' additions of
14 Foundational Aid weights for students in temporary
15 housing and foster care and increased weights for
16 English Language Learners, which I spoke to at the
17 Senate - at the State Budget hearing in January.
18 These updates are long overdue and will allow us to
19 better support the needs of some of our most
20 vulnerable learners.

21 Moreover, both houses are proposing increased
early childhood investment, and the Assembly is
proposing class size funding, all critical needs. At
the same time, we hope the state will consider a
regional cost index increase in the Foundation -

1
2 Foundation Aid formula and weights for students with
3 disabilities.

4 Additionally, as the State considers an extension
5 of mayoral control, I ask for your help in making
6 clear to the state lawmakers the importance of this
7 governance structure. As I testified to the City
8 Council last month, mayoral control allows us to
9 pursue big, bold systemwide goals to ensure equity
10 across our system and to respond effectively in
11 moments of crisis. Both the Mayor and I believe that
12 mayoral control and family empowerment can, and must
13 coexist. Our children deserve both, the centralized
14 oversight and execution that allow - that allow for
15 real impactful change and local input and decision
16 making that give our families a meaningful say. A
17 thoughtful balance of the two will uplift our system
18 to new - will lift our system to new heights.

19 To close, I want to thank this Council for your
20 continued partnership and dedication. It's been a
21 pleasure meeting you and seeing you in your schools
these last few months, and I know we will continue to
partner in service of our school communities. I look
forward to answering your questions. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Chancellor for
3 your testimony. It has been exciting to see you get
4 around the - some of our schools throughout the city
5 and I'm excited for the new team. You really have a
6 lot of good people supporting you in your work, so
I'm very excited for what this DOE has to offer.

7 I want to start with class size. The class size
8 implementation in 2026-2027 school year, DOE needs to
9 meet 80 percent compliance for class size and
10 currently sits at 64 percent compliance in the school
11 year. The Administration added \$542.9 million in
12 city dollars and \$57.1 million in newly recognized
state funding for a total of \$600 million invested in
class size in Fiscal 2027.

13 Does the estimated funding for full
14 implementation take into account any possible
15 enrollment or demographic shifts. Why or why not?

16 KAMAR SAMUELS: So, thank you for your question.
17 We are committed to ensuring that we are moving
18 towards this law as aggressively as possible. Uhm,
19 this is something that's very, very important to us
20 and first, given our enrollment challenges, we do
21 need to think about how we're using the buildings
that we currently have to their maximum capacity.

1
2 And so the first thing that you know certainly was
3 top of mind for me was - was developing a plan for,
4 for, for our current building utilization, which does
5 take into account where our current enrollment is.

6 Uh, when it comes to projections, I know that you
7 know we are thinking about some of those projections
8 but first, we are partnering with the School
9 Construction Authority as well as our union partners
10 to make sure that uhm, we're thinking about the
11 compliance as - because I think it's going to be very
12 difficult to get to 80 percent by September but I
13 want to turn it over to Erin to talk a little bit
14 more about some of the considerations that we've had
15 for our class size.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah. Two, two, uh three,
17 things. One, I want to acknowledge we've also been
18 joined by a number of Council Members, including
19 Council Member Banks, Felder, Restler, and Won.

20 Second, I just want to make sure if yes or no,
21 does it take into account the possible enrollment or
demographic shifts. And then when you answer, please
state your name for the record.

ERIN JAHANT: Erin Jahant and we are considering
flat enrollment in our projections right now. Just

1
2 because we're utilizing responses from the principal
3 survey, so again in FY for in advance of FY '27, we
4 put together the most comprehensive class size survey
5 to date.

6 We received- we developed this survey in response
7 to or in partnership sorry, with both UFT and CSA.
8 We received responses from all of our district 1-32
9 schools and are utilizing that information because
10 again, we believe principals understand, as they
11 worked in partnership with their community, how best
12 to plan for class size implementation.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, you're planning for
14 flat enrollment?

15 ERIN JAHANT: We - yes and using responses from
16 the principals.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Using the response from
18 the principals. Thank you. Now of course, there's
19 space constraints as was acknowledged. We'll be
20 asking the School Construction Authority later about
21 that but how, from your perspective, can you talk,
22 talk more about how you are planning around your
23 space constraints that currently exist.

24 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, so as Erin started, we
25 asked all of our principals to respond to a survey

1
2 that outlines, that asks them several questions. Do
3 you have - if you have the space, what resources will
4 you need to get to class size and then also uhm, if
5 you don't have the space, we are looking at what are
6 some of the options for schools and those range from
7 small room conversions to thinking about does the
8 school need an annex or is there a capital investment
9 strategy. But I think first, we have to look at the
10 noncapital investments, the noncapital strategies
11 that we can do and we're working with the School
12 Construction Authority as well as our union partners
13 to really explore those in a very rigorous way in
14 each district. And Erin, I don't know if you have
15 anything to add.

13 ERIN JAHANT: And adding on again, we've spent
14 uh, we've shifted our approach and kind of built on
15 what we've our partnership before to kind of invest
16 in a more intensive planning approach. Again, taking
17 our internal New York City Public School teams
18 alongside SCA going school by school.

18 Also, integrating results from the principle
19 survey to determine what the best path forward to
20 compliance would be around identifying more, more
21 space.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I would like
3 to acknowledge we've been joined by Council Member
4 Brewer. Uhm, when you say identifying space, does
5 that include repurposing art rooms, art studios,
6 dance studios, theaters as classrooms?

7 KAMAR SAMUELS: So, that's a great and
8 interesting question. While we are taking a
9 localized approach for - and working with school
10 communities in thinking about the best ways. I for
11 one, certainly as a superintendent, saw some of those
12 tradeoffs very close and upfront and have worked to
13 avoid those in some proposals. But school
14 communities will be engaged in thinking about what
15 those adjustments could look like.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, it would be a
17 travesty to lose any of our art spaces, our dance
18 spaces, our theater spaces. And I would like to know
19 how many art rooms are being taken away to comply
20 with the Class Size Law.

21 Uhm, in the current year, DOE, UFT, and CSA agree
to a range of exemptions, including for the nine
specialized high schools. How do the DOE decide on
exemptions for this year and what discussions had the

1
2 DOE had with the UFT and CSA about exemptions for
3 next year?

4 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, so the conversation is
5 ongoing in terms of thinking about what the possible
6 exemptions are and you know, I think we will be
7 looking at and we're you know having conversations
8 about some commonsense flexibilities and exemptions
9 but Erin, you want to add?

10 ERIN JAHANT: Uhm, and again, just thank you for
11 that and thank you for raising that. We do meet very
12 regularly with both UFT and CSA on class size
13 reduction. Uhm, we are uh working towards the
14 deadlines outlined for our FY27 Class Size Reduction
15 Plan and just as a reminder, the law asks that - or
16 the law requires that exemptions are jointly
17 developed by New York City Public Schools, UFT and
18 CSA. So, it's a partnership.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That was my question.
20 Okay, uhm, in Fiscal '28 and the out years, the
21 funding for class size jumps to \$942.9 million in
city funding and \$57.1 million in state funding. How
did the DOE estimate that 100 percent class size
compliance will cost an additional one billion on top
of the over \$400 million in investments already made?

1
2 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah well, so part of the
3 thinking about class size is this idea that, of this,
4 you're going to need space. So, there's a capital
5 investment, a potential capital investment and then,
6 there's also the hiring of teachers right? As we
7 continue to make sure that we uhm are fully staffed
8 in our positions, we do know that there are
9 significant shortages here, so that will require
10 significant investment both in creating a pipeline,
11 as well as making sure that we're covering the
12 attrition that happens typically and like thinking
13 about the you know certainly in the high schools and
14 the middle schools, all of the, the, the licenses
15 areas that are really hard to find. So, when we
16 think about the space and we think about the uhm the,
17 the, the, the human capital that is going to be
18 required to meet the mandates, I think, you know
19 those - that obviously are significant costs.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I'd like to
21 acknowledge we've been joined by Council Members
Farias and Narcisse.

Uhm, and lastly, the outyear funding, does the
outyear funding take into account possible
demographic shifts?

1
2 KAMAR SAMUELS: I'm going to turn it over to
3 Seritta to talk about the outyears funding a little
4 bit.

5 SERITTA SCOTT: Yeah, sorry, Seritta Scott and
6 so, yes, the estimates are reflected, projected
7 staffing needs that are required to fully, to ensure
8 that we're in compliance with the law and it takes
9 into direct account the school level data, which
10 again, takes into account hiring needs and other
11 costs associated with ensuring that we are meeting
12 the mandate.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So you are looking at
14 demographic shifts.

15 SERITTA SCOTT: Our uhm, we are constantly
16 looking at demographic shifts.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah and I'll bring it up
18 at any hearing I can, since you're in the
19 Administration, if this Administration like previous
20 ones is not building two and three bedroom
21 apartments, if they're not building housing for
family, we're just going to keep losing families. It
might make your Class Size Law easier but it's not
good for our city to lose - to continue to lose
families.

1
2 Uhm, the Preliminary Plan worked to correct
3 underbudgeting in key areas such as due process cases
4 and class size. The DOEs budget continues to have
5 areas that appear to be over budgeted. For example,
6 the budget for books has been consistently over
7 budgeted when comparing actual spending to the
8 adopted budget. On average, the DOE has underspent
9 \$43 million on books each year. Has the DOE looked
10 at over budgeting in the budget and object codes
11 within the budget? And which areas seem to be over
12 budgeted when compared to actual spending trends?

11 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, so this was for you. As a
12 former principal, superintendent, and thinking about
13 school budgets, I would say this is something that we
14 have been contending with for a year, thinking about
15 making sure that we actually make use of all of our
16 spending and there are rules and processes that help
17 us to do that. But specifically, when it comes to
18 what you're talking about, I'm going to turn it over
19 to Seritta.

18 SERITTA SCOTT: Sure. So, yes, we are definitely
19 looking uhm I would say actually turning over all the
20 couch cushions to see where there is under spend,
21 especially now that we are under the Executive Order

1
2 uhm to achieve savings. So, yes, we are definitely
3 looking at all of those things.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: How do you plan to correct
5 over budgeting in certain areas of the budget? And
6 which - have you identified which budgets like the
7 budget for books are continually underspent when
8 comparing to adopted budget actuals?

9 SERITTA SCOTT: Yup, so I just want to make sure
10 that we're - in the way in which we've been looking
11 at savings, I want to make sure we're being careful
12 because we want to ensure that there's no disruption
13 to any school level services. So, we have to be very
14 strategic in all the places that we're actually
15 looking for under spend. And so, while we are still
16 in the beginning of those uh conversations, we will -
17 we're focusing on like what's workable again, with
18 the focus on not disrupting any school level
19 services.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, I think none of us
21 want disruptions but I'm just asking, what are some
of the areas you've identified that have historically
been over budgeted where you can find the savings?

SERITTA SCOTT: So, we've been looking in
different programmatic areas just looking whether or

1
2 not those different programs have uh yielded the
3 desired outcome. Again, if the funding was actually
4 -

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can, can - I'm sorry. Can
6 you just provide-

7 SERITTA SCOTT: Sure, no.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can you just provide some
9 examples of some of the areas in the budget that are
10 consistently over budgeted, that you are looking at
11 to - thank you.

12 SERITTA SCOTT: Understood. I don't have the
13 list in front of me but I can provide it to you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

15 SERITTA SCOTT: You're welcome.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That's an answer. Not the
17 answer I love but that is an answer, thank you. Uhm,
18 you know this is uh you know a working relationship
19 where you have to find the dollars to make sure that
20 they're going to our students. And that we're not
21 over budgeting because we need to know where our
dollars are.

Uhm, the DOEs contract procurement process
includes the Panel for Educational Policy, which is a
voting body of mayoral appointees, parents, and other

1
2 community members. We want to talk this process as
3 it's tied to the mayoral control extension currently
4 being negotiated, as you know, you were here at the
5 hearing last month. One of the sources of contention
6 was the Panel for Educational Policy. Uhm, and its
7 role in contracting. The oversight that exists or
8 doesn't exist there. How does the DOE's procurement
9 and contracting process differ or not from other city
10 agencies?

11 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, thank you for that question
12 and uhm we'll continue to work with the panel but I
13 wanted to turn it over to Elisheba Lewi to talk
14 specifically about you know the relationship bet- the
15 difference between our procurement processes and
16 other agencies.

17 ELISHEBA LEWI: Good morning, Elisheba Lewi. Uhm,
18 in terms of the procurement policy and processes, I
19 think at the last hearing I had mentioned that our
20 procurement policy differs from that of the city,
21 primarily because we are bound to at, at state law
but in saying that, our processes don't differ very
much. It's really more about the steps in the
process. For instance, other city agencies aren't
required to present contracts on a monthly basis to

1
2 the Panel for Educational Policy. So, that adds
3 steps into our process. I would say about probably
4 eight weeks through the process. But in most
5 instances, our procurement, our procurement processes
6 and solicitation methods are very similar to that of
the city.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can you outline some of
8 the specific ways in which they're the same in terms
9 of timeline and in the terms of oversight that the
10 public or city agencies have over the contracting
process?

11 ELISHEBA LEWI: Well, I can't speak specifically
12 because I'm not an expert on the BPB but I do - uh we
13 have done some comparisons in terms of just
14 solicitation. So, we have RFP very similar to the
15 city, RFBs. The areas where we differ is we have
16 listing applications right and these are what I would
17 classify as sole source procurements and that is
18 primarily for textbooks and educational software and
19 the reason why they qualify for sole source is
20 primarily because these are proprietary materials
21 that you cannot purchase elsewhere. So, that's one
example.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, the uhm one of the
3 sources of contention is that there's not enough
4 oversight over the PEP and even the PEP members
5 themselves don't see the contracts or necessarily
6 know what their voting on. One of the contentions is
7 that there is not sufficient time for public feedback
8 before there is an actual vote, whether on contracts
9 or anything else from the PEP. Would the DOE be in
10 favor of adjusting the PEP contracting process to
11 increase transparency for example by providing
12 additional information to PEP members or by hearing
13 contracts before voting on them at the PEP meeting.

14 And does the DOE have any other recommendations
15 to revamp this process, to provide the transparency
16 that we deserve in our city's budget?

17 KAMAR SAMUELS: Well, I think we're - I'm going
18 to be in ongoing conversations with the PEP. We'll -
19 I'll consider some of those proposals that that
20 reasoning but uhm, for now uhm, I'm not going to
21 commit to changing any part of the process but I am
open to listening to the concerns that they have.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I'm going to
20 turn it over - I'm going to turn it over momentarily
21 to Chair Lee of the Finance Committee.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hi, good morning. It's good
3 to see you all. Uhm, sorry - I was just looking at
4 more of the specific numbers from the OMB report and
5 just was curious as to for example, Code 436 where
6 it's Code 436 where it's school facility OTPS right?
7 For FY26 AND FY27, there seems to have been a
8 decrease there. Uhm and then for fringe benefits in
9 PS, there seems to be an increase. And then just
10 overall when you look at the full time position,
11 pedagogical and non-pedagogical, uhm, headcount.
12 Between FY26 and FY27, it seems like they're
13 relatively flat, right? So, I guess my question is,
14 where is that main increase coming from between the
15 FY26 and FY27 numbers? Is it new needs? Is it
16 programs? Like, where is that coming from?

14 SERITTA SCOTT: So, in terms of the headcount,
15 it's associated with new needs and I can give you the
16 specifics on those. In terms - and in terms of the
17 headcount not being adjusted yet for the outyears,
18 that's something that we'll continue to work with OMB
19 on. And then I want to get more information on the U
20 OF A 436 that you flagged and I can come back to you
21 with on that.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: So, the FY27 headcount as it
3 stands where it's 127,927 for - or 120 million; I
4 think these are in millions. Uhm, and 12,603, those
5 are not updated with the new needs for FY27 or are
6 they?

7 SERITTA SCOTT: Uhm, I will get back to you on
8 that.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, because I just want to
10 have an understanding of where the increase in the
11 \$1.- almost \$2 billion is coming from. If the
12 headcounts are the same? Is it supplies? Where is
13 it coming from, fringe, health insurance costs, those
14 kind of things. So, if you could get back to me,
15 that would be great. And then also, when I look at
16 the contracts right, same sort of issue. It seems
17 like actually there's a slight decrease in the number
18 of contracts between FY26 and FY27. But yet, there's
19 an increase from \$11.4 to \$12.8.

20 So, that's another question I have is where are
21 the main sort of increases? I know that for example,
22 payment to contract in corporate schools for
23 handicapped kids that one, is increasing quite a bit.
24 Just looking at these numbers, same thing with the
25 Charter schools but if the number of contracts are

1
2 decreasing, just curious as to why the per contract
3 average is increasing? So, if you have information
4 on that as well, that would be great.

5 SERITTA SCOTT: So, just want to make sure I
6 acknowledge that yes, we're seeing some increases due
7 to the funding that was put into the budget for
8 related contractor services.

9 Also, for our Early Childhood and you just - you
10 named another one but just want to acknowledge the
11 increases that we're seeing in the contracts there
12 but I can give you more information on where we're
13 seeing the fluctuations between what is budgeted, you
14 know - what's coming down versus what's going up but
15 we are seeing a number of investments that do
16 actually have an impact on our contract spending
17 budget.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay and if you could just
19 give us a more detailed breakdown in terms of like
20 you said, the fluctuation.

21 SERITTA SCOTT: Absolutely, yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, perfect. Uhm, and
then just going straight into Chief Savings Officers
because the DOE Budget comprises of 29 percent of our
city's overall budget. Uhm, and then when you add

1
2 fringe and other costs, it's actually 40 percent of
3 the entire city's budget. So, I just want that to
4 sink in for a second.

5 Preliminary Budget greatly increased the
6 Department's Fiscal '27 Budget from \$35.4 billion to
7 \$38 billion. A 7.4 percent increase compared to the
8 November Plan. There are areas that are continually
9 underspent as the Chair mentioned but continue to be
10 budgeted at current levels and additionally, the
11 Administration asked, of course we know, all Chief
12 Savings Officers to identify savings and the report
13 that was due last Friday.

14 So, uhm, if you - I know the Chair already sort
15 of asked this but what were the details of this
16 report and what specifically was proposed?

17 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, so uhm, with the regards to
18 the Chief Savings Officer, we've obviously designated
19 ours and we had significant deliberations on where we
20 want to be conscientious and fund savings for this
21 year. The Mayor is clear that uhm, you know vital
services need to be protected, and so we - as much as
possible, we are cognizant of not impacting schools
but we have been working and submitted our
preliminary savings cost.

1
2 SERITTA SCOTT: Yeah, the only thing I'll add
3 there is that this submission included a wide range
4 of options across Administrative efficiencies,
5 programmatic adjustments, areas of under spend and
6 operational cost controls and again, as the
7 Chancellor just stated, with a focus on preserving
8 classroom instruction.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, yes, and I want to
10 emphasize that we are on the same page. We want to
11 make sure that the services themselves are, you know,
12 remaining at the same levels. And so, I just want to
13 emphasize that point. Uhm, my favorite topic, the
14 Mental Health Continuum, which I bring up every year.

15 So, I noticed that it did not include funding for
16 the continuum, uh for the \$5 million across DOHH and
17 DOHMH. So, just out of curiosity, how many schools
18 currently have access to mental health centers and
19 what is the total number of mental health centers in
20 clinics open with this funding?

21 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, so thank you for that and
uhm, we are committed to the Mental Health Continuum.
In every school, we have - every school has at least
a guidance counselor, a social worker, or a mental
health organization that is connected to and I'm

1
2 going to turn it over to Deputy Chancellor Flavia to
3 talk a little bit more specifically about the data
4 that you have.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Thank you.

6 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: Good morning everyone.
7 Flavia Puello-Perdomo. Uhm, thank you Council Member
8 Lee for your question. So, currently we have 50
9 schools that are supported through the Mental Health
10 Continuum, primarily Central Brooklyn and the Bronx,
11 South Bronx and parts of the Bronx where we had high
12 needs. Specifically, for those 50 schools, we
13 developed 16 school based mental health clinics that
14 are dedicated to support 16 out of the 50 but in
15 addition to that 34 of the school gets their support
16 through H&H through their local clinics.

17 So, there's like a combination of support
18 services as you highlighted where some of the
19 services happening in the school in the ground,
20 including professional - robust professional learning
21 for the staff but the more clinical acute services
for those who are not happening in the school happen
to community based clinic. And I want to emphasize
that this is in addition to the nearly 250 mental

1
2 health clinics that we have supporting approximately
3 400 schools.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: How many students are - and
5 those are the Article 31's?

6 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: Yes.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, so those are the
8 Article 31.

9 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: The additional 250, yes.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: And how many providers are
11 those 250? Because it's not 250 providers, so in
12 other words, it's probably multiple satellite sites
13 that they have?

14 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: So, for the continuum
15 specifically, there's the 16 clinics -

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right.

17 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: That are specific for the
18 continuum. The additional clinics that I mentioned,
19 the over approximately 250 clinics, are mostly the
20 school-based clinics that are in DOE building, open
21 to the campus. So, for instance, when I was a
principal in the building that I was in in the three
schools, we had a clinic that provided both mental
health support services and other clinical services.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right, through let's just
3 say Campa Charities or

4 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: Montefiore- yeah.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Montefiore, okay, so, okay
6 uhm and how many students are currently utilizing the
7 continuum program?

8 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: Uhm, for the mental
9 health continuum for the 50 schools is approximately
10 20,000 students.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: 20,000 okay and would you be
12 able to still provide it if the funding were not
13 available?

14 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: We will not -

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

16 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: Because we wouldn't be
17 able to maintain the same level of fidelity of
18 support but also, the Mental Health Continuum
19 specifically, was anchored in schools that didn't
20 have that kind of support.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: And do you think the funding
is enough to meet the levels or if - what would you
say is the appropriate amount of funding that would
be able to meet the current needs?

1
2 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: What I can say factually
3 is that those clinics have been able to support
4 merely like uhm, you know, 6,600 appointments that
5 otherwise will have probably been delayed and will
6 not have been received.

7 I think is really looking at all of the systems
8 that we have to support students and also making sure
9 that our families and our students are aware and
10 consistently looking at the gaps and the needs, just
11 like we're looking for everything else because they
12 do change and they do chief and we have to keep on
13 eye on our communities and what their needs are. And
14 we know that since the pandemic, uhm, mental health
15 challenges has really escalated and we need to
16 continue to stabilize our students.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah, uhm, and just moving
18 really quickly over to state budget and funding, so
19 obviously as mentioned, Chancellor, the State One
20 House Bill does include a number of proposals that
21 would increase the amount of state funding coming to
the city. Uhm, and both the Senate and Assembly
include proposals to increase the weights in the
foundation aid formula for ELL, English Language

1
2 Learners from .53 to .6 and add a weight for students
3 experiencing homelessness and living in foster care.

4 Uhm, and the Assembly includes further proposals
5 for additional funding for 3K and class size. So,
6 the IBO, Independent Budget Office estimates that the
7 State and Assembly ELL proposal would add \$69 million
8 in foundation aid funding in Fiscal '27.

9 Has DOE conducted their own estimate and if so,
10 where does that land compared to IBOs estimate?

11 SERITTA SCOTT: Uh, so yes, we've conducted our
12 analysis and we agree with that estimate.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, perfect. Uhm, and
14 then IBO also estimates that the Senate Proposal for
15 added weight for students experiencing homelessness
16 and living in foster care would add \$93 million in
17 funding and that the assembly proposal would add 486.
18 So, what was the number that you came to?

19 SERITTA SCOTT: Uhm, so we are slightly off from
20 the Senate's proposal. Uh, we have - we estimate
21 about \$75 million and we're in alignment with the
Assembly's proposal.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay perfect. And uhm, what
are DOE's thoughts on these and other educational
funding proposals in the One House Bill? Are you

1
2 advocating for this at the State level and of course
3 that's something we talked about when we went up also
4 for Tin Cup Day as well.

5 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, we are - we are advocating
6 for those things. And uh, just to - before we move
7 on Council Member Lee, I think Seritta wanted to
8 address something?

9 SERITTA SCOTT: Yeah, I wanted to address your
10 headcount question.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yes.

12 SERITTA SCOTT: So, the headcount that was
13 included as part of the new needs and preliminary
14 budget, was in part for early childhood education
15 uhm, to align with the expansion. And then also, in
16 support of our IESP efforts. That one is only in
17 Fiscal Year '26 and that's the reason why we see uhm-

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: A shift?

19 SERITTA SCOTT: We don't see the amount - right,
20 in the out years and so, that's what we'll continue
21 to work with OMB to address the budget.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay and then just a final
question about your - uh, just curious, do you do
group purchasing across all your schools and systems
and everything? I see a smile on your face. Only

1
2 because I, I know that some agencies have done that,
3 which actually helps towards mitigating a lot of the
4 costs involved. And just, and for example, for
5 Department for the Aging, for our senior center back
6 in the day, they actually extended their group
7 purchasing and health insurance fringe benefit rates
8 to the nonprofit providers, which greatly helped, you
9 know because obviously it increases their numbers and
10 it lowers the cost. And so, I was just wondering how
11 that works or -

12 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, so I, I smile because
13 that's something that we're - it's certainly top of
14 mind for us, something that we're thinking about.
15 Uhm, particularly in future years in terms of some
16 reforms that we have coming up but I want to turn it
17 over to Alicia.

18 ELISHEBA LEWI: Sure. Good morning Elisheba
19 Lewi. Thank you for that question. So, uhm, when I
20 think about group purchasing, it's uhm it's a
21 contract that you would have with other school
districts to achieve scale and best placing. It's
not a common practice at the DOE but it's something
that we're exploring as one of our procurement reform

1 strategies to uhm to uh, ensure that we're spending
2 our dollars efficiently.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Alright, thank you. Thank
4 you Chair.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Chair. We've
6 been joined by Council Members Krishnan and Epstein
7 and by Speaker Menin and I'll turn it over to Speaker
8 Menin.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Thank you so much Chair,
10 really appreciate that and thank you Chancellor and
11 your whole team for being here today. So, a number
12 of different questions. I want to start with
13 universal childcare. So, obviously universal
14 childcare is an enormous area of alignment between
15 the Council and between the Mayor. And so, in that
16 vein, now that funding has been allocated for Early
17 Childhood Educational programming, the Council wants
18 to ensure that the implementation is both high
19 quality and cost effective and truly universal.

20 So, what is the DOE doing to address chronic
21 issues including provider payment delays, multiagency
coordination, staffing shortages, and seat
misalignment?

1
2 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, thank you so much for that
3 and thank you so much for your alignment and our
4 universal belief in that childcare is something
5 that's super important and it's way too expensive and
6 we're adjusting that on behalf of our families
7 together. I'm going to turn it over to Deputy
8 Chancellor Hawkins to talk specifically about some of
9 the concerns you've raised because we are working
10 through some of those as a system.

11 SIMONE HAWKINS: Good morning. Simone Hawkins.
12 And so, thank you Speaker for those questions. Uhm,
13 and so, we've been doing a lot of work to improve
14 payments. That begins with the contracting process
15 and as you know, with your support, with the support
16 of many others, including the Comptroller's Office,
17 we've been improving and streamlining that process.

18 Once a contract is registered, then they have the
19 ability to begin invoicing us. And so, my team has
20 been improving the way that we just engage with
21 providers, specifically our CBOs and family childcare
partners to make sure that they have the supports
they need. We've been talking with the Mayor's
Office of Childcare about how - ways we can partner
to help folks build their back office, right, muscle?

1
2 I said this before, a lot of folks get into this
3 work. They just want to love and care on the
4 children and not necessarily want to be an
5 accountant. And so, we need to recognize that and
6 make sure that they're properly supported.

7 And so, where we are seeing kind of the biggest
8 backlog in payments is where there is still a
9 contract pending. Not necessarily where there is an
10 invoice being - you know can take action on.

11 Where there is an active contract, we are still
12 working with providers to honestly submit budgets.
13 They do need to submit a budget in order to begin
14 invoices. So, again, those are things we're doing to
15 support providers around payments.

16 You asked other questions Speaker- I'm so sorry -

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Well, before you go
18 further on the payment system, I mean, we're still
19 getting a tremendous number of complaints and
20 concerns about this. So what exactly is the timeline
21 to try to rectify late payments?

SIMONE HAWKINS: So, I'm not aware of late
payments.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay.

1
2 SIMONE HAWKINS: So, I want to be very, very
3 clear about that and so, if there are any, please do
4 reach out to our office. We will look into them.
5 That is something we take seriously. We can't ask
6 folks to do this work if they're not properly
7 resourced.

8 Another issue is the technology. We started the
9 pre-kit system, which is one of the primary systems
10 we use for our contracted providers. It had its
11 particular use at some time. We've been growing ECE
12 and so now we need to also grow our system
13 capabilities.

14 And so, thanks to the Council, we're able to
15 hopefully at the end of this calendar year, launch a
16 new system, called the Early Childhood Management
17 System, which will give increased transparency and
18 visibility into the process of payments for our
19 providers.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay the other areas were
21 multiagency coordination, staffing shortages, and
22 seat misalignment.

23 SIMONE HAWKINS: Yeah, I'll start with the last
24 one because that's something that's really exciting.
25 So, for a while now, we've been working with each of

1
2 the providers. Mostly to age down. A lot of
3 communities as you probably know, they really are in
4 need of infant and toddler care. And so, where we
5 have been seeing persistent underutilization in Pre-K
6 and 3-K and where providers are willing and capable.
7 We have been working to modify their slot
8 configuration based on the needs of their community.
9 So, I'm really excited. We've made a lot of progress
10 and we are looking forward to doing that more. Uhm,
11 and we honestly use the CTL Transitional contract,
12 previously Early Head Start and Head Start to really
13 make a dent in those efforts.

14 Uhm, and so, wanting to make sure that we are
15 continuing to do that as we look for 2K and launching
16 2K and so, what I will quickly introduce is the fact
17 that what we did with existing providers was release
18 a survey. And so, we are allowing them to look at
19 their current portfolio of the seats to say, "hey we
20 want to participate in 2K. We want to leverage this
21 opportunity by modifying our slot."

22 So, we're doing that with that as well in
23 addition to RFI. I'm taking up a lot of space.

24 KAMAR SAMUELS: No, that's fine. The kids take
25 up a lot of space.

1
2 SIMONE HAWKINS: Sorry.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: I want to really spend a
4 lot of time talking about contract spending. Because
5 DOE has the largest contract budget of course of any
6 city agency at \$12.9 billion, which is as we all
7 know, one-third of DOE's Operating Budget. Unlike
8 other city agencies, the DOE contracts flow through
9 the panel for educational policy for approval. We
10 have heard concerns about the process and its
11 transparency and we've also heard concerns about the
12 size of DOE's contracting budget and we want to
13 better understand the full landscape of DOE's
14 contract.

15 So, the first question is how many contracts are
16 related to mandated programming? Such as contract
17 related services due process cases in Charter
18 schools.

19 KAMAR SAMUELS: Alicia.

20 ELISHEBA LEWI: Good morning, Elisheba Lewi,
21 thank you for the question. I'll start by saying
that the Division of Contract and Purchasing, which I
oversee, processes around 1,700 procurement actions
annually and has done this for the nearly 3,000
active contracts with annual spend of about

1
2 approximately \$7 billion. We're always working to
3 ensure that we're getting the best value for goods
4 and services procured by New York City Public
5 Schools, inclusive of working with nonprofits and
6 small businesses including many of our MWBEs. I
7 welcome the opportunity to have a board of discussion
8 on the topic and I hope you understand the full
9 landscape and the policies that dictate how
10 procurement works at DOE.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can you speak a little
12 closer to the microphone please.

13 ELISHEBA LEWI: Absolutely, sorry about that.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, thank you.

15 ELISHEBA LEWI: But in terms of your specific
16 question about the contracts related to mandated
17 programming. There are 227 contracts for mandated
18 services across multiple categories, including
19 related services, special education assessments,
20 assistive technology, translation and interpretation
21 and transcription and the combined value for these
contracts is approximately \$17 billion over the life
of their respective contract terms.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: What is the contract value
associated with these 267 mandated contracts?

1 ELISHEBA LEWI: Uh, the 227 is \$17 billion.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: I'm sorry, could you -

3 ELISHEBA LEWI: \$17 Billion.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Could we get a breakdown
5 provided to the Committee of the contracts and of the
6 associated value?

7 ELISHEBA LEWI: Yes, I can.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: But are you able to
9 provide the contracts? That would be very helpful
10 too.

11 ELISHEBA LEWI: The actual contracts?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Yeah.

13 ELISHEBA LEWI: Uhm, I'll, I'll, I'll circle back
14 with my team to see how much of a lift that would be
15 because I think that the contract - the individual
16 contracts are probably like 200, 300 pages. So,
17 we'll work and figure out how we can get that to you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, what is the contract
19 value associated specifically with technology
20 contracts?

21 ELISHEBA LEWI: So, there are 73 active contracts
for technology and -

COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Did you say- I'm sorry,
did you say 73?

1 ELISHEBA LEWI: 73.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay.

3 ELISHEBA LEWI: And their contract value is
4 approximately \$2.3 billion over the life of the
5 contract.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN; And why are there multiple
7 contracts for laptops, tablets, and other hardware?

8 ELISHEBA LEWI: So, given the scale, the size and
9 scale of the DOE, we often award contracts to
10 multiple vendors for same or similar services. AND
11 that's to create redundancies to reduce operational
12 risk in the case that there are any capacity issues,
13 which often happens. One more - one recent incident,
14 uh, or uhm, that I can recall is when the cell phone
15 ban mandate was rolled out, we had to ensure that our
16 vendors had the appropriate technology, the pouches
17 available for uh, for the schools in a very short
18 period of time.

19 And even with that proactive planning, we still
20 ran into some delays, primarily because tariffs were
21 imposed, and so some of the inventory got stuck on
the water. So, having those options allows us to
pivot in real time without having to go through a
lengthy procurement process.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: How many of all the
3 contracts we're discussing? So, not just related to
4 technology to be clear. How many of the contracts
5 are no bid contracts or other words, contracts that
6 were procured outside of an RFP process.

7 ELISHEBA LEWI: So, out of the, the contracts
8 awarded, 96 percent are primarily competitive and
9 only 4 percent of those contracts are uhm, are non-
10 which what we would consider noncompetitive or what
11 you stated, no bid.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: And so, the 4 percent,
13 what were those contracts? Who were they awarded to
14 and for what purposes?

15 ELISHEBA LEWI: A majority of those contracts are
16 for negotiated services for Early Childhood
17 Education. That includes the 4410's and some of the
18 UPK contracts. In addition, I mentioned earlier that
19 we have listing applications, which I had classified
20 as soul source. That's for uh, textbooks and
21 educational software.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: So, two things. So that 4
percent, what does that constitute in terms of in
numerical value? What does that constitute in terms
of how much does no Bid contracts were?

1
2 ELISHEBA LEWI: Uhm, you know, hold on one
3 second, let me - Can I - I can get back to you on
4 that.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Yeah, if you could get
6 back to us and we'd like an answer this week before
7 the OMB hearing, so which is on Wednesday, so we'd
8 like an answer before then.

9 ELISHEBA LEWI: Uhm, and let me just restate.
10 Uhm, you don't know, I think it's 94 percent that is
11 competitive and 6 percent -

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, so 6 percent. So,
13 if we could get before Wednesday's hearing a list of
14 the 6 percent of contracts that were no bid, who were
15 they for? What were the value and the purposes of
16 those contracts?

17 ELISHEBA LEWI: Absolutely.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: And if you could provide
19 it both to the Chair and to myself, thank you. Uhm,
20 so how many contracts of this whole bucket that we're
21 talking about are with outside consulting firms?
Like constitute consulting firms?

ELISHEBA LEWI: So, I want to ensure that I'm
providing adequate responses to this particular
question, so I'm going to say that we have numerous

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2 contracts for a wide array of what I would define as
3 consulting services, including but not limited to
4 professional development teachers and administrators.
5 IT consultants who support infrastructure projects
6 and educational consultants who provide direct
7 support to schools.

8 Now the DOE also has two contracts with one major
9 consulting firm, Earnest and Young for auditing and
10 forensic accounting services with a combined value of
11 \$17 million. Now, uhm, I'll pause here to see if
12 there are any clarifying questions because I do have
13 some data on what I would consider contracts for
14 consulting services.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: I do have a question about
16 the Earnest and Young contract. So, because
17 one-third of DOE's budget is going to these contracts,
18 does the Earnest and Young audit show that there are
19 areas where maybe there are duplicative contracts or
20 there are areas of potential savings around these
21 outside consulting contracts. That's really what
we're trying to get to.

ELISHEBA LEWI: I'm unable to answer that
question.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Well but you mentioned the
3 Earnest and Young did a \$17 million audit. So, I
4 mean what were the findings of the audit in terms of
5 the consulting contracts?

6 SERITTA SCOTT: If I can just chime in there. So
7 the work Earnest and Young is doing first is not in
8 terms of looking at redundancies across the agency.
9 They actually do a C for E audit for us which is
10 mandated by the state.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: I see, okay.

12 SERITTA SCOTT: So that's one way that they
13 service us.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Was there any audit
15 overall of consulting contracts?

16 ELISHEBA LEWI: No that I'm aware of.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Because it seems like that
18 would be a big area of opportunity for the agency to
19 really look at are there areas where perhaps numerous
20 consultants are duplicating work or - and I recognize
21 that many of these contracts are from last year. So,
again, I'm trying to get to that issue.

KAMAR SAMUELS: YEah, uhm, so I think first of
all, I thank you for the line of questioning. I
think you're uhm coming up on some of the things we

1
2 are discussing in our - in our - with our Chief
3 Savings Officer and the plans there to really take a
4 look at what are areas that are duplicative and so on
5 as we move into the future. So, those are
6 conversations that we are having now. I'm not sure
7 how much we had those conversations before.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, thank you. I want
9 to move on to due process cases. So, with the
10 addition of \$500 million in Fiscal 2026 and the
11 Prelim Plan, The budget for due process cases also
12 known of course as Carter cases, is now \$1.49
13 billion. So, this is an area that had been under
14 budgeted in the past, which I know the Administration
15 has highlighted which is very important.

16 So, we want to really better understand that. In
17 Fiscal Year 2016, the budget for due process cases
18 was \$312 million. Can you speak to the increase in
19 spending on due process cases over the past decade,
20 both for tuition and for services?

21 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, thank you so much for that
question, Speaker Menin. We are actively and deeply
working on our due process cases and how they project
into the future. Uhm, and I'm going to turn it over

1
2 now to our Chief Legal Officer Liz to talk a little
3 bit more.

4 LIZ VLADECK: Good morning. Uh, Liz Vladick,
5 thank you for the question. I can't overstate its
6 importance and I think it's really critical to set
7 forth the context. I think there's a lot of
8 misinformation and misunderstanding about this
9 phenomenon. So, the context is that from year to
10 year, we used to see an average of between 5,000 and
11 6,000 total cases being filed. Due process cases,
12 that's the overall rubric uhm which you know the
13 premise of which is that a family is seeking
14 something to support their student with a disability
15 that they are not receiving directly from us.

16 I was a parent who filed those claims. When
17 Mayor de Blasio took office, he instituted a policy
18 whereby DOE was directed to settle all cases where it
19 wouldn't practically be malpractice to settle. He
20 took the view you know totally fairly from my
21 perspective that families who felt the need to bring
a legal claim shouldn't then be battling through the
legal process. And I think that was well intentioned
but it had some pretty damning consequences and so we
saw that average of 6,000 cases a year start to jump

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2 and we saw exponential growth year over year over
3 year.

4 So, we hit a high of 26,000 cases in FY24. And
5 so again, those cases, they went up what, five times
6 in eight years. Uhm, the common narrative that
7 attached to these cases turned out to be badly off
8 base factually and I think has done a real disservice
9 to the tremendous progress that my colleague DC Foti
10 and her teams have made in serving students with
11 disabilities.

12 The narrative that took hold was that uhm, this
13 is a further illustration of DOE failing to provide
14 for the needs of students with disabilities. But in
15 fact, as we started to understand our data better
16 what we discovered is that up to two-thirds of all
17 cases being filed were not Carter cases. So, the
18 terminology is Carter cases, this refers to a Supreme
19 Court decision that established the premise that a
20 family where they want a public education for their
21 student with disabilities, they are entitled to it.
And if the school district fails to provide it, uhm,
then the school district is obligated to pay the
tuition for the school that the family on its own
identifies the specialized school.

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2 Uhm, IESP cases, which is a nomenclature, we
3 didn't - language we didn't even have really five
4 years ago, uhm are cases where the family is not
5 seeking a public education. They are not looking for
6 a placement in a public school, no matter what
7 services and programs we may be able to offer in our
8 public school. Instead, they are because of their
9 family, their personal desires, whatever it may be,
10 they are choosing a private school that is not
11 generally a specialized private school. That may be
12 a religious school. It may be uhm, you know one of
13 the private schools on the upper west or upper east
14 side that we all know the names of but they're
15 seeking to have the DOE. What the law requires is to
16 provide services for their students.

17 New York State did a funny thing about 15 years
18 ago. Uhm, and I'll say what I mean by funny; not ha
19 ha. In seeking to support the rights and needs of
20 students with disabilities who did not want public
21 education, they removed the funding cap, the
financial cap on a school district's legal
obligations to students who do not want a public
school education.

1
2 Our obligations to Carter students is to pay
3 whatever it takes. We get a federal IDEA Grant but
4 if that grant is not enough for us to meet each
5 individual student's needs, we've got to find city
6 tax levy monies. We've got to get help from the
7 state. We've got to pay whatever it takes. That's
8 not how IESP cases work in the rest of the country
9 uhm and if you look at the law and the history,
10 clearly no one ever conceived of IESP cases becoming
11 a huge cost center but that is what happened. AND
12 so, in Fiscal Year '24, we spent almost \$400 million
13 on IESP cases. Cases that again, students who did
14 not seek a public education.

15 And unfortunately, we've identified a tremendous
16 amount of fraud and abuse and simple misunderstanding
17 that this is not just you know free money. And so,
18 we've taken extensive steps to tighten up the
19 process. We've made numerous criminal referrals.
20 And so, where we're really seeing a drop in due
21 process cases is on the IESP side. We were down 40
last year over the year before.

A lot of that is the tremendous work again, by
Deputy Chancellor Foti to make unheard of
investments, tens of millions of dollars. It's in

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2 the Preliminary Budget into directly serving IESP
3 students, cutting out the middle men, lawyers,
4 agencies, who have benefitted enormously from this
5 phenomenon. But the other thing that's happening is
6 that the Carter cases, the tuition cases, while they
7 haven't exploded in volume in the same way, they're
8 creeping up in terms of annual tuition cost. And so,
9 the average cost of a Carter case right now of
10 tuition is \$100,000 a year.

11 On the other hand, the average cost of a case
12 where there's an autism diagnosis is \$144,000 a year
13 and autism cases are now a third of Carter cases.
14 So, the money is a huge issue. Now, we think that
15 the progress we've made in bringing case filings down
16 is going to start to be reflected in spending. We're
17 optimistic but I think the more important point and
18 the one that we are focused on is that, the \$100,000
19 over here in a Carter case or the \$30,000 a year over
20 here in an IESP case, there are no results to be
21 gleaned from that spending. There's no
22 accountability. There's no reporting as to the
23 quality of those programs, the graduation rates of
24 those students. So, when we keep that in mind, then
25 we look at dial special education programs and

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2 services. Programs like the NEST program and the
3 Horizon program, programs where we've got waiting
4 lists and we've never even advertised. We have
5 remarkable graduation rates for those students and
6 we're spending half, a third, of the cost of a Carter
7 case.

8 So, what we really need you know we're doing all
9 that we can internally. We're working incredibly
10 hard. I'm even going to tell you that Cheryl
11 Williams and Emily Manarsic(SP?) on my team and their
12 teams have eat, slept, and breathed this issue for
13 four years.

14 But what we really, really need is help with the
15 big picture. Help with getting the public to
16 understand what effective special education programs
17 and services look like. Getting them more exposure
18 to how high quality our programs and services are and
19 ensuring that we're able to scale up those programs
20 and services because we serve over a quarter of a
21 million students in our schools with IEPs and we do
it despite the public narrative that's attached for
many years. We actually do it really well and Early
Childhood programming has - because we've been able

1
2 to start interventions earlier at a younger age with
3 students, we are seeing those investments start to -

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, I just - thank you
5 for that overview. A couple questions on that. So,
6 you know specifically on Carter cases, like what
7 specific steps is DOE taking to manage the growing
8 cost in that area? And have you partnered for
9 example, with OATH on any legal strategies in that
10 regard?

11 LIZ VLADECK: Yeah, so we're very, very proud to
12 have helped to lead the creation of the OATH
13 tribunal. We worked very closely with the state and
14 part of how the boom got so bad was that case
15 processing times slowed to a crawl and frankly, that
16 operated to the advantage of the bad actors. So, we
17 are really proud to have gone from in some cases more
18 than a year to move a case through the system. To
19 under 90 days on average, which is the legal
20 obligation. We're really doing great there.

21 Where I do have concerns is on some of the kinds
of fraud control measures that we think are really
critically important where we and OATH don't see eye
to eye. Now, I don't think people always understand
of course, DOE defends cases but we have a separate

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2 function on case administration, so what OATH does is
3 actually a delegation of our legal obligation for
4 that case administration and we think that things
5 like, requiring a parent to appear at a hearing and
6 confirm that they asked to have the case brought is
7 important.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, I just want to
9 interrupt because I want to push back though on this
10 timeline of the cases closing because the MMR
11 reflects something different. It says it really
12 reflects that many of the cases that were settled or
13 closed in Fiscal 2025 were filed several years prior.
14 A few date back as far as 2007, meaning the students
15 are literally now well past school age.

16 What is the reason that a case would take this
17 long to complete?

18 ELISHEBA LEWI: Yup, it's a great question. I pay
19 close attention to this. When I started, we had
20 11,000 cases that hadn't even been assigned a hearing
21 officer. At this point, when cases are taking a long
time to close, it could be any number of things that
are specific to the case. For example, it may be
that uhm there are some complicated things about the

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2 case and the parties have agreed to extensions, which
3 is totally lawful, timeline extensions.

4 It may be that uhm we really strongly disagree or
5 the family does with the outcome of the hearing and
6 so, there are many rounds of appeals going up and
7 down first to the state review office, then to state
8 or federal court. There are plenty of cases that fit
9 that bill but those are specific to the cases, not to
10 the process.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, I mean, I think
12 you're going to hear a lot more from colleagues about
13 this issue. I mean there's a real concern about the
14 ballooning costs around this, so I know many of my
15 colleagues will also continue to ask questions about
16 this.

17 Uhm, I want to move on to a different topic about
18 paraprofessional pay parity. We've talked obviously
19 just now about the cost of the due process cases.
20 Uhm, the backbone of that whole system really are
21 paraprofessionals and they have long worked for too
little pay. The Council has proposed a bill, Intro.
692, which would provide paraprofessionals with much
additional pay as the current starting salary for
paraprofessionals is \$32,000. It is far too low.

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2 In terms of the data on current DOE headcount
3 that was sent to the Council last week, it indicates
4 that they are currently a little under 26,000
5 paraprofessional positions that were filled. About
6 1,200 of which are for hourly positions.

7 So, my question is what is the current vacancy
8 rate for para's?

9 KAMAR SAMUELS: Okay, yeah. So, we value our
10 paraprofessionals throughout the department and we
11 see their value and you know we thank the Council for
12 bringing, raising this issue up, uhm pay parity.
13 Uhm, in terms of our filling for our
14 paraprofessionals, I don't know uhm, Christina, do
15 you have uh any data on that in front of you?

16 CHRISTINA FOTI: Yeah, uh, yes Chancellor. I
17 have data from the office that oversees para hiring.
18 Currently, we have 2,100 para's. We have 5,520
19 Subparaprofessionals.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: I'm sorry, can you repeat
21 that 5- can you say that one more time?

22 CHRISTINA FOTI: So, currently, we have 2,100
23 that we have hired. We have 5,520 paraprofessionals
24 operating as subpara's and in terms of the vacancy

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2 rate, that was provided, it's 1,324 and subpara's are
3 available to cover these vacancies on a daily basis.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Could you please just
5 state your name for the record?

6 CHRISTINA FOTI: Christina Foti.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: So, 1,300 you said in
8 terms of the vacancy? So, what can be done you know,
9 this is really a dire situation for the
10 paraprofessionals. Again, we are totally 100 percent
11 committed to raising the pay for the
12 paraprofessionals. What is DOEs plan, you know in
13 terms of this and what can be done given the vacancy
14 rate and the low pay rate for paras?

15 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, I think you know we do so
16 much around recruiting. We make sure that the
17 paraprofessional uhm portfolio is open as much as we
18 can. We're connecting with, uh, we have principals
19 connecting with local community members to really try
20 to do outreach there. And again, you know we're open
21 to thinking about paraprofessional pay raises with
the support of the Council.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Is someone else - uh, uh,
okay.

KAMAR SAMUELS: No, I think that's good.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: I mean, I just want to be
3 clear about this. I mean, our strong feeling is that
4 until we raise the paraprofessionals pay, which
5 absolutely has to happen. We're going to continue to
6 face this crisis in terms of the vacancy rates. It
7 affects obviously the students who are most in need,
8 who need the paraprofessionals. So, I can't
9 overemphasize the importance and our strong
10 commitment to raise paraprofessional pay.

11 I have a lot more questions but I'm going to turn
12 it back over to the Chair, so that other Council
13 Members can ask.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Speaker Menin.
15 One follow up question about the Carter cases and
16 then - I'm sorry, the due process cases and then
17 we'll go to Council Member questions.

18 I'm trying to understand a little bit Ms.
19 Vladeck. Uhm, I, I mean, I'm maybe a little biased.
20 I think we have great special education programming.
21 I think you agree. I don't think that narrative
exists. Uhm, but you say there's a narrative that
dissuading people from engaging in the special
education program that we have here in the city. And
also at the same time that even without advertising

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2 your NEST programs are doing extremely well. You
3 have lines out the door. I'm trying to reconcile
4 those two things and also, if we know that these
5 programs work, which I know and we've testified here
6 before. This has been my line of questioning before
7 and it's in the long term going to save money by
8 having fewer students with those private school
9 tuitions. Why aren't we pumping more money into
10 schools or programs specifically for students with
11 autism?

12 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, can I, can I just uh - So,
13 look, I think overall, when we think about what we
14 need to do in special education and uhm, you know
15 making sure that folks know about our programs, we
16 also need to create more programs and invest in more
17 programs closer to home for our families. We see
18 that when we've done that, those programs are high
19 quality. I visited one in District 12 quite
20 recently. Uhm, and that also cuts down on something;
21 I'm sure you'll ask later, which is the
22 transportation of kids from home - from school to
23 home and so, we need more high quality programs -

24 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, so, we agree.

1
2 KAMAR SAMUELS: Closer to home and I'll add - uh,
3 I'll ask Christina and Liz to follow up on that but
4 just overall, overarching, I think the investment
5 going forward is, is what's really critical here.

6 CHRISTINA FOTI: Yeah, so I - let's - I just
7 really need us to get clear on this. Number one, Liz
8 just mapped out and it is worth spending time on
9 this. She mapped out what the last 15 years has
10 looked like in terms of funding. We have been
11 operating under a system of policy and process where
12 the New York City Public Schools has been asked to do
13 anything by all costs to settle cases. These are
14 students that never entered New York City Public
15 Schools.

16 We didn't fail them. So, my question you know
17 and I just want to put it back, have we been
18 operating under all, you know doing anything
19 necessary to fulfill the funding requirements of
20 mandated services? The answer is no. And Chair, I
21 have the deepest, deepest respect for you. When we
call our special education system broken, that means
are children are broken. That means that educators
in the system are broken. That means our schools are
broken and I argue to the absolute opposite, that we

1
2 are at 93 percent compliance because of the deep
3 competency of our schools and our educators and of
4 our brilliant children.

5 Now, when we have funding coming our way, we are
6 able to do things like create world class programs
7 where kids with autism who come in not speaking,
8 graduate in four years at 97 percent. When we have
9 funding, we open up 11,600 specialized program seats.
10 When we have funding, we hire 500 related service
11 providers this year, 800 special education preschool
12 seats, 20 preschool assessment teams that speak
13 children's languages in their communities.

14 Now, if we want to get to a place where we say by
15 all means necessary special education will be funded,
16 then we will not be out of compliance anymore and we
17 will have competitive options for our Carter schools,
18 for students pursuing Carter schools.

19 So, that is the real story here and we can
20 continue to talk about how quickly we pay our Carter
21 schools or we can continue to talk about how we are a
broken system out of compliance or we can make the
decision finally to holistically take care of our
kids and you know Council Member Lee talked about
fair student funding and raising rates. Well, guess

1
2 what? Fair student funding never paid - never gave
3 us money to support psychologists, related service
4 providers. We do that locally, right? So, like when
5 we talk about special education, I really just am
6 asking folks join in our narrative about how
7 brilliant our schools and educators are and how a
8 broken larger fiscal ecosystem that we've been doing
9 everything possible to make up for. That you've been
10 doing everything possible to make up for. We get
11 piece by piece investments and when we get that,
12 those pieces, we make gold out of it for children.

13 But we have to start from the whole and so,
14 that's the biggest, that's the answer and I know it's
15 long winded Chair of when you give - when we have
16 that, we have hundreds and hundreds of children
17 waiting on who wants specialized programs. We have
18 families in China saying that I want to relocate
19 because I heard about this program. We have Denmark
20 recommend- replicating our programs.

21 So, when you give it to us and when the city
makes this choice, it is brilliant and so, I would
say that we have a deeply functional special
education system, a fiscal ecosystem that needs the
larger help.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, it sounds like we're
3 saying the same thing though, which is, which is
4 that, which is that when we make the investments, we
5 do amazing things and you've testified to that. So,
6 we agree. My question is, where in the DOE budget
7 are the investments? It is the right thing to do by
8 our students and it is the right thing to do by our
9 city budget to save money on what is otherwise going
10 to private schools. So, that is the question. Where
11 is the money in the DOE budget? Where is the
12 Administration investing this money?

13 LIZ VLADECK: I think we can't gloss over that
14 point about the money that's going to private schools
15 that quickly.

16 KAMAR SAMUELS: Hmm, hmm.

17 LIZ VLADECK: In addition to the fact that people
18 may not know about our programs, there is a very well
19 funded set of folks in our city who do plenty of
20 advertising and outreach to recruit people to outside
21 programs. That's why there are kids who never show
up in our schools. I switched my kid back out of a
very well known Carter school because they gave up on
him and a New York City Public High School got him
over the finish line. The schools that all this

1
2 money is going to and by the way, the provider
3 shortage, IESP cases equals related services. So, we
4 have a provider shortage. Why? Because we went from
5 a few hundred IESP cases a year to almost 30,000 IESP
6 cases a year.

7 So, please when DC Foti talks about the
8 ecosystem, the ecosystem is not just OMBs material
9 online about what money coming to us, it is also the
10 outflow of public dollars for private education that
11 is not accountable. Not accountable for general
12 education standards and not accountable for giving a
13 student with disabilities what they need. And I am
14 saying that with respect to Carter and IESP schools.

15 That's - that's the part that we really don't
16 control but really, \$1.5 billion a year, the number
17 of seats that we could create in DC Foti's programs,
18 nevermind the advertising campaign that we could do,
19 that we do for early childhood, that we could do for
20 NEST and Horizon programs. The money is going out
21 the door and it's not accountable and we need help
figuring out why.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, is it the DOEs
position then that you would like to reinstate the
cap for service providers?

1
2 LIZ VLADECK: No, I don't think that's what I'm
3 saying. It's our position that any dollars being
4 spent on special education should be accountable
5 right, so that any tuition money we're paying, any
6 services money we're paying, there should be some
7 obligation on the part of the schools, the programs,
8 to demonstrate that those kids are getting what they
9 need. It's why the tens of millions, the tens of
10 millions of dollars we're now spending to support
11 IESP students who never wanted to come to public
12 school. All of those dollars, all of those providers
13 are - could be going into our schools and New York
14 State by the way, which decided to take the funding
15 cap off of IESP cases, has never put in a dollar to
16 supplement those costs. We're paying ten times what
17 the federal law requires us to pay.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right, so uh, I'm going to
16 - I think we should talk more. I want to get to
17 Council Member questions but there is this question
18 about the cap, which I think the D- it sounds like
19 the DOE can take an official position on and can do
20 advocacy with the Council towards - to the state. If
21 that is a real - one of the elements of the

1
2 challenges, of the financial challenges for these due
3 process cases.

4 I'm going to turn it over to Council Member
5 Schulman.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you very much
7 Chair and I just want to - uh, I have some questions
8 about Early Childhood intervention but before I get
9 to that, I want to say since I've been a Council
10 Member, I've been asking the same questions about the
11 Carter cases and what I do want to say is that I have
12 programs in my district that are wonderful for D75
13 and for kids in need and we have to replicate those.
14 That's my position on this.

15 Uhm, so Early Intervention is a critical program
16 administered by the Department of Health and Mental
17 Hygiene that serves children from birth to age three
18 with developmental delays. As children age out of
19 the program, the DOE plays a key role in ensuring a
20 smooth transition into preschool special education
21 services. During the Health Committee Fiscal 2027
Preliminary Budget hearing last week, DOHMH
highlighted the importance of this transition and I
would like to get additional clarity around
timelines, coordination and service capacity.

1
2 DOHMH stated that 81 percent of individualized
3 family service plans are developed within 45 days.
4 What is the typical timeline for DOE to evaluate and
5 place a child referred from early intervention and
6 where do delays most commonly occur?

7 KAMAR SAMUELS: Uh, thank you for your question.
8 Certainly, uhm, when we think about Early
9 Intervention, that is something we are certainly
10 invested in. We - when we think about how programs
11 have been done in the past and things that we want to
12 rectify, these are areas that we're really thinking
13 about. So, I want to turn it over to Christina. You
14 want to address some of that?

15 SIMONE HAWKINS: And I'll start and then I'll tag
16 you in. And so, as you mentioned Council Member,
17 Early Intervention, that is a process handled by the
18 Health Department but there is a small but mighty
19 team on my team, the Division of Early Childhood
20 Education, that supports with the transition from EI
21 through the CPSE process.

Timelines is something that is managed by my
colleagues in DIAL uhm on getting them evaluated.
So, I'll pass - yes, thank you Foti.

1
2 CHRISTINA FOTI: Of course. So, as DC Hawkins
3 said, we work very closely with Early Intervention
4 and Early Childhood to make sure that handoff is as
5 smooth as possible for families. Not to be a broken
6 record on this point but again, we've been making up
7 for lack of fiscal infrastructure on the preschool
8 point. That means, what that turns out to mean for
9 families, that families is that the handoff from
10 Early Intervention to CPSE needs a personal touch,
11 via the CPSE workers and outreach coordinators that
12 work directly with families.

13 Now, when those CPSE workers have hundreds and
14 hundreds and hundreds of cases, that personal touch
15 is a little different than when a family uh a worker
16 is able to - an administrator is able to work hand
17 and hand with a family. And so, with the recent
18 investments that you all helped to advocate for,
19 Advocates for Children helped and certainly the city,
20 uhm made a wonderful investment in, uh we've been
21 able to hire you know 80 addi- we're hiring 80
additional evaluation teams, almost 47 additional
administrators and other essential staff. And so, we
thank you for that investment and that is what is

1
2 going to make the handover as smooth and supportive
3 as possible for families.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you. So, I have
5 a follow up, which does DOE currently have sufficient
6 staffing and capacity to meet the needs of children
7 transitioning from Early Intervention and how are
8 caseloads managed across providers?

9 CHRISTINA FOTI: Thank you Council Member
10 Schulman. Uh, the- yes, that is through those
11 investments, that is how we are getting there. Uhm,
12 and we're seeing our compliance rates increase over
13 time but that hiring is happening this year via the
14 current investments. We're going to expect to see
15 our numbers look much better and have a very clear -
16 much clearer baseline in the upcoming school year.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay. During the
18 Health Committee hearing, DOHMH stated it would
19 follow up on how many staff are dedicated
20 specifically to background clearances for 2K
21 programs. From DOE's side, how many staff are
required to support or coordinate with this clearance
process. That's part one of the question. Part two,
is there a shared system or database between DOE and
DOHMH to track clearance status in real time?

1
2 SIMONE HAWKINS: That's, that's me. Uhm, so very
3 intimately aware of this process. So, we do for our
4 programs require PETS clearance, which is different
5 from independent programs, which go through DOI. And
6 so, can get back to you around how many staff
7 currently support the PETS process that is outside of
8 my division. But we have on my team - is a policy
9 staff, also small but mighty, that actually support
10 with managing as the liaison between the provider
11 organization and the PETS team, if there are any
12 delays.

13 I will say it moves very quickly and in certain
14 situations in the past, we have allowed for some
15 concessions for folks to go to DOI. That is not
16 something we can allow it continually but we do allow
17 - uh we do have supports within my team to support
18 with the process.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: And we- I just want to
20 uhm, so, I remember when we had the previous hearing,
21 we talked about getting together with DOHMH at some
point, so I want to follow up with you.

SIMONE HAWKINS: I would love that.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: And I also want to -
sorry Chancellor, I got so bogged down with the

1
2 previous conversation, robust talk, welcome to our
3 hearing. I just wanted to say that.

4 KAMAR SAMUELS: That's okay, that's okay.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: And uh, that's it but
6 thank you Chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member
8 and next, we have Council Member Joseph.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Hello, good morning
10 everyone. Happy to see you all. Uhm, I have a
11 couple of questions, so I'm going to go fast because
12 I only have five minutes.

13 Uhm, in the last hearing from uhm Children and
14 Youth Committee, Commissioner, Interim Commissioner
15 said they would be having a conversation with you
16 around foster care youth transportation. Can you
17 give us an update on where that conversation is or
18 are you still having that conversation?

19 KAMAR SAMUELS: Sure, I'm going to turn it over to
20 Kevin Moran as well.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Good morning Mr. Moran.

KEVIN MORAN: Good morning. Uh, Kevin Moran and
thank you Chair for your advocacy in this space, it's
so greatly appreciated. We've been spending a lot of
time talking with ACS about more responsive uh

1
2 transportation options for all our students, espec-
3 specifically students in housing and those in foster
4 care.

5 One of the things we found of great success was
6 our rideshare program in terms of meeting the
7 immediacy of transportation. And so, that, you'll
8 see somewhere in the budget, increase from \$12
9 million upwards of \$22 million. So, that service is
10 very much appreciated by families and foster as well.

11 We've been sharing that data with ACS, so to
12 inform potentially future procurement on their side
13 to help with the immediacy of transportation. We do
14 think we'll be reducing routing times in the future
15 drastically but as an interim step, we'll continue to
16 meet with ACS. We've given all the data to do some
17 modeling, so we'll come back on a more wholesome
18 response.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Okay, we can definitely
20 talk about that, absolutely.

21 Uhm, DC Foti, nice to see you. Uhm, thank you so
much. I just want to emphasize about the AIMS
program in my district that we opened. I mean, it's
a game changer and you came to the grand opening and
you saw parents were crying. A four year old had to

1
2 get on the bus at 6:00 a.m. in order to get the
3 services where we're keeping the services in the
4 community. Thank you to you and your team and we're
5 opening that building on the weekends for SEED
6 program. I mean, come on, so of course, you know how
7 I am. I am a teacher. I do the grows and I do the
8 glows. Is it a perfect system? No, but is there room
9 for improvement? Absolutely with the right
10 investments and we've been making the right
11 investments. And we've been making the right
12 investments from the last budget and in this budget
13 baselining a lot of the services that our students
14 need.

15 So, my question is around Pre-K Special Education
16 waitlists. In previous school years, we've seen long
17 waitlists for Pre-K Special Education students, for
18 classes and services. There have been tremendous
19 efforts to address the issue with the \$55 million
20 restored and baselined in Fiscal 2026. For
21 additional classes, another \$70 million restored and
baselined in this plan for additional services. How
many students are currently receiving all of their
mandated services? How many students and ECE
students are currently waiting for one or more of

1
2 this mandated services to begin? How many of the ECE
3 students are enrolled in special education classes
4 and how many students are on a waitlist for a
5 classroom?

6 CHRISTINA FOTI: Okay. Uh, thank you Chair. So,
7 I just in my previous answer, I should have pointed
8 out to you that based on the origin- these
9 investments, we have already increased the number of
10 evaluations provided by 600 cases this school year.
11 So, pretty remarkable. Uhm, in terms of uh, students
12 waiting placement, uhm - I'm sorry, let me first give
13 you - uh, we have 62.9 percent of preschool students
14 receiving all of their related services. Again, we
15 do expect to see increases as we continue to hire in
16 the upcoming year. Nonetheless, it is currently at
17 62.9 percent. 12.7 receiving some of their services,
18 24.4 receiving none, 50.7 percent receiving see at
19 services. We recognize that this is - uh we agree
20 that this is far from 100 percent and as we receive
21 those additional supports, we will - can ensure you
that children will be assigned and will receive their
mandated services.

Uhm, in terms of uh seats, uhm, we have - sorry
Chair. Did you mean through the investment? I

1
2 apologize. Okay, thank you. We opened 108 to - uh
3 802 seats via the most recent investment, making sure
4 that every student with a disability in preschool was
able to start school on time.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you.

6 SIMONE HAWKINS: Can I - I'm so sorry, can I just
7 add uh -

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Yes, please.

9 SIMONE HAWKINS: And just to piggyback and just
10 to add, I believe we have about 100 to 150 students
11 currently waiting for either a special class or
12 integrated setting. DC Foti and my team were working
13 in real time to identify classes we can open even in
this year. And then anticipating the need for the
upcoming school year, so that work is happening.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: So, that timeline, that's
15 the timeline from now to the school year.

16 SIMONE HAWKINS: Correct.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Any child being placed in
18 between as the school year -

19 SIMONE HAWKINS: Yes.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Even if we're in the
21 middle of the school year.

1
2 SIMONE HAWKINS: So, we're doing it on a rolling
3 basis. So, when we and where we can identify
4 classrooms to be opened, we are opening those
5 classrooms and then enrolling children. Sorry, I
6 didn't mean for you to run out of time.

7 So, yes, happening in real time.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Okay, thank you so much.
9 Immigrant family outreach engagement, student success
10 centers, community schools. I can go on and why
11 we're not baselining mental health continuum and what
12 happened to Learn to Work? It wasn't in the
13 Preliminary Budget.

14 KAMAR SAMUELS: Okay, so -

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: I know, fired.

16 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, yeah, so really quickly in
17 terms of our immigration, immigrant outreach, as an
18 immigrant myself, this is - I'm very committed to
19 making sure that our students who are new to the
20 country and are immigrants in general are protected.
21 Our Principals know exactly what to do if local law
enforcement show up. Flavia, I'm going to ask you to
address some more of that.

FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: Yeah, absolutely. Uhm,
so for the funding that Council provided to support

1
2 immigrant outreach, it has been leveraged through
3 higher CBO community, race organizations that are
4 directly connected to families to make sure that they
5 are aware of both the fact that we speak their
6 language, the 12 languages that we have resources
7 available.

8 We also have uhm, enhanced our technology through
9 the Hello app, to make sure that right then and there
10 uhm, we can translate for family. This has also
11 allowed uh, to provide direct interpretation services
12 at school. Uhm and I know you also had - I don't
13 know if it was a specific question about community
14 school as well?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Yeah. Can you talk a
16 little bit about community schools, where we are, how
17 many do we have, do any providers have to be paid or?

18 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: Okay. So, uhm community
19 schools, we are at 419 community schools across the
20 city in all boroughs, pretty much you have
21 representation in community schools across most
districts. Uhm, we have done - thank you to Council
and also thank you to our leadership support, have
really doubled down on our efforts to support
contracts registration and payment for community

1
2 school. As I had testified here previously, one of
3 the biggest challenges was that community school
4 doubled in number but we had the same or like two
5 people less supporting contract and supporting
6 procurement and everything else. So, you can't
7 expect the same - you couldn't expect the same
8 quality of level of support.

9 As of today, the 269 CTLE contracts for community
10 schools that expire in FY25, have all been
11 successfully registered and renewed. We also are
12 working to close out the few remaining amendments uhm
13 and the Comptrollers Office is always on point when
14 those amendments are in for registration. Usually
15 the timeline is expedited.

16 Uhm, so far this year, we have put in the hands
17 of our providers uhm around \$52.5 million in
18 payments. We took full advantage also the fact that
19 we could do advances to make sure that we could pay
20 our providers in time and I think the piece that I'm
21 most excited about to is as we know, community school
is going into ten year anniversary of the work and
what we have seen is that across the board, community
school graduation rates when compared to citywide
were higher. We could see that even after the

1
2 pandemic, when chronic absenteeism is an increase.
3 That rated an increase at the same rate in community
4 schools.

5 We could also see that ELA and math proficiency
6 when comparing community school to non-community
7 school. Community school so higher increases. So,
8 when we talked about contracts, when we talk about
9 accountability, not only are we improving our
10 services and the alignment to those to the
11 Chancellor's priority, but we can actually say with
12 numbers that this work is creating an impact on our
13 students and our families.

14 KAMAR SAMUELS: And so, finally you asked about
15 uh Learning to Work. Learning to Work is one of the
16 critical uhm areas we look at when it comes to over
17 age under credited serving those students. We
18 continue to have ongoing conversations with OMB about
19 with respect to the funding needed for FY 2027 and in
20 outyears. I wanted to give Jane a chance to address
21 anything else there when it comes to learning to
work.

JANE MARTINEZ DOWLING: Good morning everyone.
Jane Martinez Dowling. Well, first of all, we just
want to start by recognizing that learning to work

1
2 has been a cornerstone of support for over age, under
3 credited vulnerable students for many years and we're
4 deeply grateful to our school leaders, our educators,
5 and our community based partners and many of you up
6 here who have really helped us uh, with the
7 commitment and the kid or student success.

8 At its core, uh LTW is about ensuring that
9 students have the relationships, experiences, and
10 opportunities that they need to graduate with a
11 strong plan and a path forward to long term economic
12 security. LTW is grounded in a youth development
13 framework centered on strong relationships, trust and
14 meeting students where they are. The program funds
15 contracts with community based organizations and
16 those CBOs placed additional staff in schools to work
17 alongside school leadership and staff to deliver
18 advising, work based learning opportunities, and post
19 secondary planning supports. As Learning to Work
20 falls under the Office of Student Pathways.

21 Uhm, we currently serve 9,000 students in
transfer schools and several thousand students across
YABCs including both full time, evening students and
shared instruction students who attend YABC part
time.

1
2 The central message on this RFP is that it's
3 going to be a modernization of the program, not a
4 departure from its core values. The relationship of
5 this foundation remains. What is changing is the
6 effort to ensure that these relationships are
7 supported by stronger systems, clearer expectations,
8 and more consistent student experiences across sites
9 which align very much with the Chancellor's
10 priorities.

11 This redesigned RFP also expands access to LTW
12 including additional transfer schools and new Charter
13 transfer schools, allowing more students citywide to
14 benefit from these supports.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much. Thank
16 you Council Member Joseph. Next, we have Majority
17 Whip Hanks and we've also been joined by Chair
18 Gutiérrez on Zoom.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you Chair and thank
20 you Chancellor and everyone else. Everybody okay
21 over there? Okay and thank you for everyone joining
us today. Uhm, I want to start by talking about
Holding Harmless. Typically a schools budget is tied
to the enrollment and additional weighted space on
population through the Fair Student Funding Formula.

1
2 During COVID-19, pandemic, the city began holding
3 schools harmless to any enrollment changes compared
4 to their original projected enrollment. Therefore,
5 the projected budget for the year. Originally this
6 process helps students during the pandemic uhm where
any cuts to schools would be detrimental.

7 Enrollment at public schools continue to decline
8 with 22,000 less students in our school system this
9 year. So, my questions are does the DOE plan to add
10 an additional hold schools harmless allocation for
11 the schools in the upcoming school year? What is the
12 projected costs of holding school harmless next year
13 and what discussions has the DOE and the
14 Administration had about mid-year adjustments and
holding schools harmless after the October 31
enrollment registers?

15 KAMAR SAMUELS: Thanks so much for the question
16 for something that's really important to the city.
17 When we think about declining enrollment, we see the
18 impact of that across our schools and specifically,
19 many of our schools who serve the most vulnerable
20 populations and so, we ought to be looking at ways
21 going forward for making sure those schools are
sustainable and uhm, and can withstand the impact of

1
2 the turning enrollment. When it comes specifically
3 to hold harmless, we are having conversations with
4 OMB about various issues, including holding harmless
5 and I'm uh Seritta, I want to turn it over to you.

6 SERITTA SCOTT: Sure. Uhm, so just to answer
7 your question around projections. So, there are no
8 projections at this time to share. A lot of the data
9 that goes into inform the policy but most importantly
10 to inform uhm initial school budgets are not
11 finalized until later in the spring.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: So, later this spring, we
13 will have a real number of the projected cost?

14 SERITTA SCOTT: Yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Okay, uh Chair, thanks.
16 So, then we're going to pop over to class size and
17 mandate and staffing challenges that relates to uhm
18 my borough. In FY 2027, the plan includes \$6 million
19 to support class size getting - getting us really to
20 the meeting the 80 percent compliance under the law
21 and despite this investment, District 31, Staten
Island, is only at 58 percent compliance and this
reflects, not only the gaps but also the facility
constraints and teacher shortages, particularly in

1 specialized subjects like science and world
2 languages.

3 And so, you know critically, while the funding
4 anticipates hiring 6,000 new teachers, the DOE is not
5 aligned in headcount budgeting, raising concerns with
6 implementation, disability and transparency. So, for
7 me, while meaningful progress is made and while we're
8 doing what we can on class size and compliance with
9 goals, District 31 is still 50 percent classrooms is
10 about 15- 50 percent classroom size compliance, which
11 is significantly below the 80 percent classroom
12 compliance despite citywide progress. Is there any
13 plan to shorten this gap?

14 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, thank you so much for that
15 question and the class size issue around the city is
16 something that is very, very important to us as we
17 move towards the uhm, the compliance towards that
18 law.

19 Number one, uhm, we look at - we have our
20 principals fill out a survey about their space needs
21 as well as their staffing needs and we try to match
those as much as possible. Now uhm, there is
significant, like you pointed out, significant issues
or concerns regarding our pipeline and that's our

1
2 teacher pipeline and that's where we find that uhm,
3 specifically for high schools and other licensed
4 areas very difficult to sometimes meet those needs.
5 And so, we've made significant investments. We've
6 hired more teachers. We hired more teachers last
7 year than ever before 3,700 just for just new
8 teachers and we have plans to expand that amount in
9 the upcoming year and I want to specifically around
10 teacher recruitment and getting teachers. I want to
uh invite Amy Way from DHR to speak to that a little
bit.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Please turn your mic on
12 and state your name for the record. Thank you.

13 AMY WAY: Good morning, Amy Way. Thank you so
14 much for this question. Having a talent pipeline to
15 support all the programs that we've been talking
16 about and particularly for the class sizes, really
17 essential. Uhm, we have been investing in different
18 pathway programs, specifically to address the
19 shortages in our special education in math and
20 science, which have been a challenge for us even
before the class size reduction. So, this is a place
where we're able to attract new talent into the
21 system. I can say for District 31, we have been

1
2 partnering with the Empire State Teacher Residency,
3 which is a way to support for your own talent within
4 uhm within a district and so, that's been a great
5 partnership with the College of Staten Island and
6 Wagner in your community in particular.

7 So, we've uhm, you know we have - we recognize
8 that there are challenges with these shortage areas
9 but we have plans in place to be able to build out
10 that pipeline over time.

11 KAMAR SAMUELS: Thank you and specifically to
12 address some of the space concerns on Staten Island,
13 I want to bring Aaron back because we have been
14 looking district by district across our city very
15 closely with our partners both at SCA and with our
16 union partners and so I wanted to invite Erin to
17 address some of that.

18 ERIN JAHANT: Yeah so as I had shared before,
19 well, first thank you for the question uhm, Erin
20 Jahant, if I need to reintroduce myself.

21 Uhm, uh, thank you for this question. This is
something that we recognize as the next phase of the
work as critically important. I do want to point out
there was a huge amount of investment in Staten
Island in terms of teachers last year and we saw

1
2 market growth particularly in the schools that we
3 provided funding through the Schools Up model and
4 Staten Island was at 31 percent in the prior year, so
5 there was pretty significant gains and I think you
6 know we've heard from principals and teams down there
7 that the schools have just made tremendous progress.

8 With regard to this space, again, we have uhm-
9 we're continuing our work with School Construction
10 Authority but deepening that partnership and being a
11 lot more intentional in our approach. We've met and
12 again, as the Chancellor shared, we've gone through
13 every school that has a space, many of which that are
14 in Staten Island. We're looking to blend how we're
15 looking at noncapital and capital strategies to be as
16 efficient as possible and in work with great urgency
17 around this.

18 We utilize results from the principal survey,
19 where principals specifically requested us to
20 consider them for annexes or look at room conversions
21 in their school. That information was driven, drove
a lot of the conversations that we're having with SCA
as well.

KAMAR SAMUELS: Okay.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: So, I'm going to stick
3 around and we'll talk about the School Construction
4 Authority piece and so, I'll be back for that but
5 thank you for your answer.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Majority Whip
7 Hanks.

8 KAMAR SAMUELS: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I will now
10 turn it over to Council Member Restler.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so much Chair
12 Dinowitz and Chancellor and team, good to see you
13 all. Congratulations to all of the new folks in your
14 - or reappointed new whatever official roles you're
15 all in. Congrats.

16 Uhm, and Chair, thank you for leading this
17 thoughtful hearing. I think it's really been
18 productive. Uh, I just want to follow up on the uhm,
19 on the Whips questions and the Chair asked about this
20 a little bit as well on Hold Harmless. As
21 Chancellor, you may recall, this was the issue that
uh, uh torpedoed the relationships between our
previous Mayor and our previous Speaker and I hope
that we don't have similar problems uh in this
budget.

1
2 My understanding is that the Hold Harmless funds
3 are not generally incorporated at Prelim, so we're
4 not surprised that they're not there today but we are
5 concerned.

6 Uhm, you know recognizing we are seeing shifts in
7 enrollments in our schools and there comes a time
8 where we're going to have to reflect that in our
9 budgets. The average Hold Harmless funding if I
10 understand it right and Ms. Scott, please correct me,
11 is about \$280,000 per school. And so, just want to
12 understand - are conversations happening now uh
13 around gradually shifting funding for Hold Harmless
14 amounts? Are we expecting to see full reductions in
15 Hold Harmless funding? I've got a great public
16 school PS 261 that receives \$66,0000 a year that they
17 depend on critically.

18 I want to make sure that they're supported. It
19 would be - these could be major challenges for the
20 schools to face if they see a significant reduction
21 in their funding in their budgets in June. Could you
22 give us some insight into how you're approaching this
23 issue?

24 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, first of all, uhm thank you
25 for raising the question and uhm, also Council Member

1 Restler, uh thank you for what sounds like, an
2 acknowledgement of a thoughtful wrestling with the
3 idea, nobody wants to think about uhm, the moving
4 funds if you will from a school and so, that's - so I
5 respect that. That's like a really thoughtful
6 approach. Uhm, certainly internally within DOE, Hold
7 Harmless is a conversation that happens every single
8 year. Uhm, and so, we're continuing to have the
9 conversation.

10 SERITTA SCOTT: Uhm, I think the Chancellor said
11 it best. Everything that you just outlined are all a
12 part of the conversations that we're having. No
13 final decision shared, so nothing to obviously share
14 with you but we are definitely being thoughtful in
15 our approach and the way in which we're thinking
16 about Hold Harmless, as we do every year.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yeah. I just, to be
18 clear, this issue is so important. It has impacted
19 how Council Members vote on the budget. So, there
20 are not many individual issues that we will discuss
21 at any of these hearings that impact our collective
vote on the entire \$127 billion budget. That's how
important this is, so I really want to make sure
we're not in a situation where we're seeing school

1
2 budgets a day before the vote and getting an
3 understanding of where our schools are that's
4 informing whether we need to vote no on a budget
5 because our schools are getting screwed. We can't
6 let that happen, so it's really important. We're
7 only in March, we've got three months to have direct
8 dialogue and real conversations with the Chair,
9 wherever he went. Uhm, thank you Minority - thank
10 you Whip for filling in but I'm pointing him out
11 somewhere in the ether and the Speaker and all of us
12 because it's that important. So, I just really want
13 to make sure this dialogue is in place. We're not
14 getting surprised by school budgets at the last
15 second. That we're working and talking together
16 about a thoughtful plan uhm to solve for this issue.

14 KAMAR SAMUELS: I appreciate that and we'll
15 engage on that at some point.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay, I appreciate it.
17 I will hold you to that Chancellor. Uhm, I want to
18 ask about a bunch of different issues but I got 122
19 and imagine that my friend from Staten Island is
20 going to start screaming at me.

21 So, I'll go to school bus contracts. Uhm, you
22 know the PEP didn't approve. Nice to see you Kevin,

1
2 congratulations. Uhm, Deputy Chancellor, sorry. Uhm,
3 uh, uh, uh, the PEP last year in their wisdom, did
4 not approve the five year extension. They only gave
5 a three year extension as retroactive, so we're
6 already basically two years out from the end of these
7 school bus contracts.

8 My understanding is that you're looking for
9 legislation out of Albany that Senator Jackson and
10 Assembly Member Yudelka Tapia has sponsored before
11 kind of deciding on how exactly you're going to
12 proceed but I want to make sure that we're not boxed
13 in to having to continue with the corrupt school bus
14 landscape that has uh harmed out school bus
15 transportation system for decades. And want to make
16 sure that we're planning now for a better school bus
17 uh system moving forward. Can you give us some
18 insight into how we're looking ahead? It will take
19 years of planning. Uhm, are we starting that process
20 now? Could - thank you.

21 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, uh first of all, I think
we're on the same page. Uhm, we agree that any kind
of thoughts around what we need to do with our bus
contract should begin now and the planning should
begin now and we're in that process certainly within

1
2 DOE. And, I'll say you know we bus 150,000 kids,
3 9,000 routes daily and uhm, and we have a lot of room
4 for improvement and we've already started some of
5 that and I just want - I'll turn it over to uhm
6 Deputy Chancellor Moran to talk us through a little
7 bit more.

8 KEVIN MORAN: Thank you very much. So, the
9 desire to improve school bus transportation is ever
10 present. It was my first briefing with the
11 Chancellor and this Administration. It is top of
12 mind. We will continue to stay in touch with
13 families, CECs, our CPAC, our CCSE. As informed
14 partners, those who experience the system are school
15 principals and are transportation coordinators
16 locally. It's important we get this right. To your
17 point on timing, here we are looking at like two
18 years away. We're looking at June 30, 2028. So,
19 what we've galvanized, a really good team here at New
20 York City Public Schools to focus on this issue and
21 we'll be sharing new and exciting updates soon. But
I would say our modernization efforts continue.
Schools will be uh, school bus companies rather, will
have score cards that will actually have transparency
and accountability embedded in that. And schools now

1
2 can see ridership tracking when a student gets on the
3 bus. We're introducing that pilot this spring. And
4 also, we're cutting over our modernization to a new
5 routing system this fall.

6 So, we know and acknowledge there needs to be to
7 the Chancellor's point, improvements and quickly. We
8 also know we need a longer term strategy and look
9 forward to coming back and working with you on that.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I really appreciate it.
11 I would love for us to be engaging together with
12 stakeholders, Council, and uh the DOE on how we can
13 envision a better school bus transportation system.
14 You know we're working on legislation that I'm hoping
15 to introduce in the next few weeks to improve public
16 sharing of data on on time school buses, on time
17 performance, better identified problematic vendors,
18 give us - make clear the data so that you all can
19 throw the book at bad vendors that are failing to do
20 their job and failing to deliver for our kids and
21 families.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you so much Council
Member Restler.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I'm going to go for
round two. Thank you very much.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you. Next, we have
3 Council Member Banks.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Thank you Chair. First of
5 all, congratulations again Chancellor and uh, you
6 know my question are always going to be hyperlocal.
7 When it comes to uh, Thomas Jefferson High School,
8 I'm going to I guess revisit the YABC issue.

9 When it comes to Thomas Jefferson High School,
10 which has helped about 1,800 students complete high
11 school due to the YABC program. DRIFT has been
12 taking left off the RFP as a potential site. What
13 change and uh why was the site removed and has the
14 DOE thought about the potential impact of this
15 decision, especially the potential of an increase
16 drop out risk, uh when students may now have to
17 commute two hours round trip sometimes longer just to
18 finish high school and uh, the RFP deadline is also
19 we believe it's also set for April 29th for a
20 community like the 42nd Council district that has
21 relied on this partnership with Medgar Evers College
for years. Were any impact studies done or
conversations held prior to this decision with the
school leadership or students before making this
decision?

1
2 And uhm, and finally, I want to get this out.
3 Will the DOE reconsider removing this program from
4 Thomas Jefferson High School because losing it would
5 be a real setback to our community and this program
6 provides access and opportunity and something our
students really need.

7 KAMAR SAMUELS: First of all, thank you for your
8 question and thank you for your support of Jefferson
9 and it was good to be there with you a couple of
10 weeks ago. I really appreciated the time I spent
11 there and the questions that the folks from the
12 community had. And so, I'm going to turn it over to
13 Jane uhm, to speak a little bit more specifically
14 about the program you're referring to.

15 JANE MARTINEZ DOWLING: Jane Martinez Dowling,
16 nice to see you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Pleasure.

18 JANE MARTINEZ DOWLING: Uhm, can you hear me?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: I can hear you loud and
20 clear.

21 JANE MARTINEZ DOWLING: Yes, okay, so a couple of
things. Uhm, we uh, there were actually five sites
that we thought to consolidate as we kind of thought
about the YABC programs and the attendance that we

1
2 had had and those that had to remain fully staffed
3 with DOE personnel, including Assistant Principals,
4 teachers and counselors.

5 So, just to make this clear, students are going
6 to continue to receive core advising credit
7 accumulation support, post-secondary planning and
8 college and career advising through SAM funding. So,
9 the students who are at Jefferson will continue to
10 receive that.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: No, but the question is
12 it's being removed from Thomas Jefferson uhm, the
13 students who have to travel to Bensonhurst, students
14 from East New York and Brownsville would have to
15 travel to Bensonhurst. That makes no sense.

16 JANE MARTINEZ DOWLING: Uh, so let me clarify
17 again. If students want to receive the workbased
18 learning opportunities, and the sort of modernized
19 thing that we're doing with YABCs, it won't be at
20 Thomas Jefferson High School.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Where would it be at?

JANE MARTINEZ DOWLING: But there will be - it
will still be a transfer high school available.

COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Where would the location
be now for the students that are enrolling in the

1
2 program or enrolled at the center at Thomas Jefferson
3 High School?

4 JANE MARTINEZ DOWLING: They are able to go to
5 another center in the borough, so it's a-

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Where is the location at
7 Ma'am? In the borough. I need to know the location
8 because what is being said to us is that they have to
9 travel all the way to Bensonhurst, which is two hours
10 away.

11 JANE MARTINEZ DOWLING: Uh, that is not
12 incorrect.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: And - so what is correct?

14 JANE MARTINEZ DOWLING: What is correct is that
15 it's a youth borough program, right.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: I need you to answer my
17 question. Where is this new program going to be that
18 the students from East New York and Brownsville would
19 not have to travel two hours away.

20 JANE MARTINEZ DOWLING: So, they will - if
21 students who chose not to do the Learning to Work
program -

COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Is it Bensonhurst in Coney
Island?

1
2 JANE MARTINEZ DOWLING: They would go to Coney
3 Island if they decide not to continue at Thomas
4 Jefferson's transfer school.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Has an impact study been
6 done as to uh how this may impact those students?

7 JANE MARTINEZ DOWLING: Yeah, so you had asked
8 about how we socialize the information. We had over
9 30 meetings over the past 18 months with principals,
10 school leaders, the YABC programs themselves, our
11 CBOs, and we have had additional meetings since
12 December. Uh, we very recently had to answer your
13 specific question about Thomas Jefferson. Had a
14 meeting with Assembly Member Lucas and we are going
15 to be meeting with her again because we're
16 considering putting it into the amendment.

17 So, we are considering it - what you're asking
18 about.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Well, we definitely hope
20 that you reconsider.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you Council Member.
I'm going to move on.

COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Reconsidering that the
students have the opportunity to have their program
there. Thank you.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you so much Council
3 Member. Council Member Brewer.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much and I
5 want to thank you for Civics for All because it's
6 fabulous. I live with people who uh do go to
7 Learning to Work and the social workers there are
8 phenomenal. So, I'd hate to lose that program. It's
9 excellent.

10 So, one of the questions I have is just on math,
11 as a former math teacher. Are you putting extra
12 dollars into trying to find more math teachers? Are
13 you looking at other ways to increase the math
14 instruction? Because you do talk about the need to
15 have extremely good academics. Math is part of that.

16 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yes, thank you Council Member
17 Brewer for that question. Uhm, alright, so
18 absolutely. When we think about New York City
19 SOLVES, we are very clear that we need our young
20 people to be more engaged in conceptual understanding
21 in math since making and, uhm, fluency and
automaticity and in order to do that, we've started
in the last couple of years with high schools and
middle schools, thinking about this work but the
expansion that has to happen is the expansion to

1 elementary school. Our elementary school teacher
2 really need to be able to get really strong
3 professional learning in math content and conceptual
4 understanding in math, because there is a lot of fear
5 in our neighborhoods and our communities about math
6 and as I've been saying a lot, it's no longer okay
7 for us to be telling our kids that we're not math
8 people or they're not math people. Uh, we all need
9 to be math people and we are, otherwise people
shouldn't go shopping.

10 So, I will say that uhm, I'll invite Amy Way back
11 to talk a little bit about our recruitment but a lot
12 of our thinking around this Gale uhm centers around
13 our work with our New York City Fellows program,
14 which you know is the part of the reason I became a
teacher.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: No, I agree.

16 KAMAR SAMUELS: So, we're expanding a lot of work
17 with that. We've seen an increase. I want to claim
18 responsibility because we've seen an increase,
19 significant increase in the number of applicants that
we've had into our New York City Fellows program but
uhm -

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, I'm ready.

1
2 KAMAR SAMUELS: Okay.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Because I don't have much
4 time. So go ahead.

5 KAMAR SAMUELS: Oh, sorry.

6 AMY WAY: Okay. Uhm, well, I'll share the big
7 reveal on the numbers of applications. So, we've had
8 over 5,400 applicants to the Teaching Fellows
9 program, which is a 44 percent increase over last
10 year.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: How many of them teach
12 math though?

13 AMY WAY: So, within math, we have a cohort, I
14 can get you the percentage but that is a strong
15 focus, that and special education and science are the
16 primary areas for the Teaching Fellows program and
17 uhm, in addition to the work we're doing with the
18 Teaching Fellows program, we have worked with
19 traditional higher education where we recruit other
20 staff and we're focused on aligning our student
21 teaching and field work experiences, so that our
teachers in training can have exposure to the
practices that the Chancellor spoke about in
mathematics and in literacy.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so alright, I kind
3 of understand what you're saying. A little bit
4 gobbly but I would say that you're working to get
5 more math teachers but I would say you have to do
6 some marketing, outreach. I would take people who
7 don't have the credentials and then get them the
8 credentials but are you doing that?

9 AMY WAY: Yes.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's the Tony Albarado
11 way, like how he used to do. Go ahead.

12 AMY WAY: Yeah, so the Teaching Fellows Program -

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Those have been around
14 for a long time. Go ahead.

15 AMY WAY: Teaching Fellows Program does directly
16 that, attract people who have maybe a major -

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: No, I know, I know.

18 AMY WAY: We also have a Teach Where You Belong
19 Campaign that launched on social media.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so you'll give us
21 at some point how many have been recruited next year,
right specifically Art Teachers?

AMY WAY: Yup.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, the - my
understanding is that students in the 8th grade are

1
2 not necessarily meeting their requirements in terms
3 of arts education. So, how many schools do not have
4 a full time or part time certified arts teacher?
5 What are you doing about it? Where are students not
6 meeting the state mandated level of arts instruction?
7 How will you or will you update the Blue Print, which
8 I love that was some time ago.

9 And then, how many, what's the percentage or
10 number of students enrolled in Arts Education. I'm a
11 huge supporter of Arts Education.

12 KAMAR SAMUEL: Yes, uh, Gale and I know that
13 well.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yes, you do.

15 KAMAR SAMUELS: We've hosted many programs as
16 with CBOs at Lincoln Center and so on. So, thank you
17 for your constant support in this area. I'm going to
18 turn it over to Deputy Chancellor, First Deputy
19 Chancellor to talk a little bit more about our arts
20 work.

21 DANIELLE GIUNTA: Good morning. Danielle Giunta,
so in passionate agreement with you. Every child in
New York City Public Schools deserves equitable
access to an incredible arts offering. Uhm, to some
of your questions, we have 99 percent of all of our

1 students are receiving arts instruction and support.
2 Some through certified arts teachers and some through
3 uh great organization partnerships as you know and
4 our cultural organizations grant funded initiatives
5 and then district provided arts programming.

6 For recruitment, we received about 391
7 applications from teachers in the arts uhm last year.
8 I don't know if Ms. Way has an updated number but
9 we're keeping an eye on that as well.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, because my
11 information here is 31 percent of 8th graders don't
12 meet the learning requirement and then what about the
13 Blue Print?

14 KAMAR SAMUELS: So, with regards to that, so you
15 know 8.4 percent of schools serving 7-12 right do not
16 have a certified art teacher and that's uhm part of
17 what we're talking about in terms of you know using
18 CBOs and so on to really try to uhm fill that gap and
19 the Blue Print conversation I think we can get back
20 to you on that. I'm not sure -

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, I want just quickly
one more thing, if I could ask because the Chancellor
talked a lot so I lost some time.

1
2 So, I want to know about GNT because you didn't
3 mention it. I love GNT, not everybody does and
4 secondly, how many more 1972 Broadways are there and
5 how much rent are they paying and are they vacant?

6 KAMAR SAMUELS: Alright, so I'm about to turn
7 over or that conversation to uhm, the conversation
8 about 1972 Broadway just to give some context. There
9 are some buildings which included 1972 Broadway at
10 one point that were Pre-K buildings that were empty
11 and Gale and I when I was a superintendent worked to
12 make sure that that building is now occupied. The
13 conversation on GNT is something that's very
14 important to many of our families across the city. I
15 am super committed to making sure that our families
16 have access to accelerated opportunities in schools.
17 We'll be launching soon enough in the upcoming weeks
18 and months an engagement conversation specifically
19 regarding GNT starting with schools like the Anderson
20 School and others around the city.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I would like to be part
of that conversation.

KAMAR SAMUELS: Yes, you will be Gale, I promise.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: What about my 1972's?

KAMAR SAMUELS: Yup.

1
2 SIMONE HAWKINS: Council Member looked directly
3 at me for that answer.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yes, I did.

5 SIMONE HAWKINS: Uhm, we have 20-

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And Lincoln. Lincoln has
7 a 1972 also.

8 SIMONE HAWKINS: There are 27 - 1972's and for
9 folks who may not know what that means, they are city
10 owned or leased buildings that are currently
11 unoccupied. 1060 Flatbush was once - 1070, 1070,
12 thank you. Thank you was once 1972 and it now has an
13 AIMS program.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

15 SIMONE HAWKINS: And so as you know Council
16 Member, that number was once 40. It is now down to
17 27 and so, we are getting that number down as we
18 continue to get additional resources and investment.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay but those are all
20 paying rent, I assume.

21 SIMONE HAWKINS: Not all. Some of them are owned
by the city.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, can you get us an
amount that is dollar rent is being paid?

1
2 SIMONE HAWKINS: So, we have to confirm that with
3 SCA. We do have some limitations in sharing lease
4 costs in terms because it can impede negotiations
5 with the landlords but we will confirm that.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright, thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member
8 Brewer. Council Member Narcisse.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Uhm, thank you Mr.
10 Chair for the opportunity and I want to say
11 congratulations again Mr. Chancellor and Deputy
12 Chancellor as we're talking about enrollment, slot
13 configuration, I hope that my zip code, some of the
14 zip code that I have is in need for that - dying
15 need. So, many questions that I have but I'm going
16 to keep it tight for you and try to answer it as much
17 because the time is not on my side.

18 The state's new temperature law which took effect
19 September 2025 now prohibits occupancy above 88
20 fahrenheit and requires that mitigation at 82 degrees
21 fahrenheit. Uh, DOE is therefore out of compliance
in their own building.

How many schools currently have no safe
alternative space for students when common areas are
over heated in that specific capital investments

1
2 plans are there to finally bring the gyms cafeterias
3 and the clinics into compliance?

4 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, thank you for that
5 question. We have over the last number of years, had
6 significant investment in a seize through our schools
7 and uhm, and also through the help of so many of you
8 on the Council. Uhm, significant investment in Reso
9 A grants for common areas but if uh Kevin, I don't
10 know if you want to add anything else.

11 KEVIN MORAN: Yes, very much plan to be in
12 compliance with the state law here. Our schools are
13 equipped uh, our custodians are equipped with several
14 mechanisms to measure indoor room temperatures.

15 I would say we benefitted greatly from the AC For
16 All initiative. That ensured air conditioning and
17 electricity was brought to each and every single
18 classroom, over 69,000 classrooms -

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you for the
20 classroom. I'm specifically talking about the common
21 areas, cafeterias, gym, because I have many of them
in my district right now and will not go in the
summer time. They are heated badly.

KEVIN MORAN: Yeah and in part -

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: They need to be fixed.

1
2 KEVIN MORAN: And in part why I was bringing up
3 the classrooms is because there's some 69,000
4 classrooms where -

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I appreciate it.

6 KEVIN MORAN: Where we would bring kids for
7 breakfast or lunch, if we had to in egregious heat
8 wave or we could do move to improve and do exercise
9 within said classrooms. So, part of our contingency
10 plan is like, if you cannot use the said gymnasium or
11 said, can you use the classroom. So, we do have
12 classrooms and other spaces. We're well over 50
13 percent in compliance with public assemblies. We do
14 require infrastructure development and making capital
15 investments in those classrooms and gymnasiums. And
16 I thank -

17 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I appreciate it. Let's
18 say specifics because I have a few questions. You
19 cannot play basketball in the classroom. Uhm, you
20 can not have a play in the classroom.

21 Uhm, giving the federal uncertainty around uhm
Title 1 and other education funding streams. What
happens to schools that rely on federal dollars to
purchase textbooks and classroom supplies if those
funds are cut or frozen?

1
2 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, thank you for - thank you
3 for the question. I think you know all of us are
4 concerned with uhm our schools and their funding and
5 that's why it's great that the vast majority of the
6 funds that comes to NYC Public Schools actually end
7 up directly in our schools and specifically in
8 thinking about what we - what, what happens in terms
9 of Title 1 and Seritta, do you want to add anything
10 there?

11 SERITTA SCOTT: Yeah, so just wanted to add like
12 we're very well aware of all of the uncertainty
13 that's happening at the federal level. And so, any
14 reduction in our federal funding would be disastrous,
15 especially since it actually supports some of our
16 most vulnerable students. I think it would
17 definitely initiate conversations with both our local
18 and state partners to ensure that we are maintaining
19 those critical resources to our schools.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: For the
21 paraprofessional, we talking about recruitment and
retention? You can recruit but if you're not paying,
you cannot retain. Uhm, now we have so many classes,
so many classrooms that need support and they,
according to the teachers, they're not getting the

1
2 support. Paraprofessionals - we know they are very
3 essential with uhm, IEPs, receiving their mandated
4 services. What is the current vacancy rate for the
5 paraprofessionals citywide? I think you said about
6 1,300, 13- something. So, what - compared to last -
7 I mean year before, how many was it? Because now I
8 think it's 13, 1,300 something.

9 KAMAR SAMUELS: Speaking to that issue a little
10 bit, we have to also acknowledge like our like my
11 cabinet pointed out earlier, there's a structural uh
12 impediment that creates even a greater need for
13 paraprofessionals and so, we applaud and we
14 appreciate your desire to push for increased pay at
15 the Council. We thank you for that but in terms of
16 specific uh specially what it was last year, I'm not
17 sure we have that but we can easily get that to you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay, thank you. How
19 many schools, if any, currently lack a full time
20 dedicated school nurse?

21 KAMAR SAMUELS: Uhm, yeah, Kevin, do you have
thoughts on that.

KEVIN MORAN: Every school has access and any
student has access to health services for any student
enrolled at the school.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay, I appreciate it.
3 Uhm, for the EI- I mean, IEP, thank you so much for
4 this young lady that kind of put it out for me. I
5 always wonder about EIP program and you give it to
6 me. Uhm, the cap we're talking about. I am so not
7 with it because we're spending a lot of money while
8 New York City actually our DOE can get the job done
9 without going to a private. What are we doing
10 actually to reach the level that we can be advocate
11 with you and encourage back to make sure the children
12 are in DOE and we're not being pennywise dollar
13 foolish?

14 LIZ VLADECK: Uhm, well, first of all, thank you
15 for calling me young lady.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I don't know your name.
17 You are young.

18 LIZ VLADECK: Liz Vladeck, thank you. Uhm-

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: You're young.

20 LIZ VLADECK: So, as the least informed person at
21 this table about pedagogy in particular, I think the
real partnership we need is to understand the quality
of programming is to understand what it actually
takes for a student with disabilities to succeed.
You know I think DC Foti could not be more clear how

1
2 well she and her teams understand that and the
3 distinction that I've been drawing is that we don't
4 see that same kind of information, transparency, uhm,
5 you know grades, test results, when for all of the
6 money that's going outside of our system.

7 So, I -that's where we really need some help is
8 to see more public interest in what's actually
9 happening with all those dollars that are going out
10 the door. Because remember, while I - you know while
11 we have a total of this year, I think we'll in
12 somewhere around 16,000 cases. Each case is assessed
13 individually by a hearing officer who isn't concerned
14 about what's going on at that particular school or
15 what could we be doing. They don't see the bigger
16 picture. So, we need help with that bigger picture
17 assessment and setting public expectations for what
18 our dollars should pay for.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Yeah, because I have a
20 case right now in my office they're coming back and
21 forth and it's a simple thing. The recommendation
was done by the therapist, by everyone that assessed
the child for - to have a phone, to use the phone
because that eased her up in the classroom and we did
not do that and that probably costing you over

1
2 probably you say \$144,000. I don't know. So, now
3 we're going to have to do better with that.

4 So, I see my Chair giving me a hand even though
5 I'm excited whenever I'm in front of DOE. So, thank
6 you so much for all your work. I appreciate you.

7 LIZ VLADECK: If I may Council Member, we would
8 love to follow up. We use those when people raise
9 up, oh, I have a particular case, we really like to
10 get in and see what's going on so we know, oh did
11 something just go wrong here or is there actually
12 something that we need to fix. If you wouldn't mind
13 reaching out, we would like to follow up.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I'm ready to work with
15 you. I love my children in New York City.

16 LIZ VLADECK: Great.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member
19 Narcisse. It seems very clear we on this Committee
20 care a lot about our kids with disabilities, kids
21 with IEPs, we are also interested in making sure we
have the investments, to make sure that our public
system can and does provide the services to our kids
who need them and I think we're all in agreement
there and we'd like to see the investments made.

1
2 Turning it over to Council Member Wong.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you Chair. Thank you
4 Chancellor and members of the panel for coming today.
5 Uhm, uhm, before I get to my uh district questions, I
6 just want to uh talk about my experience in attending
7 PEP meetings. Because I serve them on the school
8 board, PEP 24 and after that I serve as budget
9 director of the former Councilman Robert Holden.

10 I attend a lot of PEP meetings and quite often
11 they talk about contracts. They vote on contracts
12 but one thing I noticed that there's no mentioning of
13 how many students it impacts. We have contracts that
14 may impact a few hundred and then there are contracts
15 1,000 and there may be contracts that affect 100,000.
16 Is this something you want to consider including that
17 in voting on contracts because if I don't know and
18 I'm sure to the parents, a lot of them will be
19 clueless but they're very concerned about these
20 issues. Can you address that?

21 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, thank you so much for the
question and I think you know when we're thinking
about what the PEP wants to look at and when we're
thinking about contracts, people do want to know what

1
2 the impact is and I think that's something we can
3 look into and take back and consider.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay thank you, yes. Okay,
5 I'm going to move forward to my district questions.
6 Uh, my district, District 30 includes some of the
7 most engaged public school families in Queens,
8 families in Elmhurst, Masbeth, Middle Village,
9 Richwood, Glendale and Rico Park. Families who also
10 rely on parochial and non-public schools that are now
11 facing closures and added pressure.

12 I also represent PS IS 128. When the school
13 community has serious concerns about a proposed
14 lithium ion battery facility being built directly
15 across from the school. In a situation like this,
16 the Department cannot sit on the sidelines. We need
17 to know where DOE stands and what it is doing to
18 protect that school community.

19 At the same time, we're heading into an FY27
20 budget with real fiscal pressure. If we are asking
21 schools and families to do more with less, we need to
start by looking inward. We cannot keep expanding
central bureaucracy while classroom feels the
squeeze.

1
2 So, my first question is, uhm PS IS 128, has DOE
3 conducted any safety assessments for PS IS 128 given
4 the proposed facility that's across the street and is
right next to the annex of the school?

5 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, thank you and you know
6 whenever things arise close to our schools, they are
7 certainly of concern to us and so, I'm going to turn
8 it over to Kevin Moran to see if there is anything
that we've thought of there.

9 KEVIN MORAN: Yes, thank you for the question and
10 understand your concerns regarding battery storage.
11 This is an evolving technology and evolving
12 infrastructure in the City of New York and its
13 heavily regulated. We would defer to our partners at
14 the Department of Buildings and Department of Health
15 for a follow up here. Certainly want to learn more
16 about that actual location but I have seen, as many
New Yorkers have seen these uh so far as being close
to gas stations and then causing concern.

17 So, I want to learn a little bit more about this
18 specific issue and then come back to you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay, what is DOE's position
20 on this facility? Do you have one?
21

1
2 KEVIN MORAN: We're not the regulator of the
3 facility but we're going to follow up with our
interagency partners to come back to you.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay, thank you. Uhm,
5 next, last week in IS 93, there was a carbon monoxide
6 incident in which I got updates from Speaker Julie
7 Menin's Office and from the FDNY and from the
8 Superintendents office but there seems to be a
9 conflict of stories where one message says students
10 were evacuated, another said the students were in the
11 cafeteria. When did DOE first become aware of the
issue and was there a full evacuation?

12 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, each school has a building
13 response team and the principal is a part of that.
14 We notify first responders of any incident like this.
15 FDNY does come to the building and recommends
16 evacuation or not. They also give us the all clear.
17 In that specific case, students were relocated and
students were allowed back in the building after it
was given the all clear.

18 If you want a timeline of the notification from
19 the superintendent and the FDNY, I can provide that
to you.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yes, please do.
21

1 KEVIN MORAN: Absolutely.

2 KAMAR SAMUELS: And usually the BRT, the Building
3 Response Team is, they have a note taker that
4 actually should outline a time.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay thank you. Parents
6 call our office first when they heard about it and
7 then we gave them conflicting answers and we couldn't
8 explain the inconsistencies. Thank you.

9 Uhm, the next, uhm, I talk to principals and I
10 hear from them consistently that in my district that
11 decisions are still being driven from Tweed and not
12 from the school level. Do you agree that DOE is
13 still operating as a top down system Chancellor?

14 KAMAR SAMUELS: Well, first of all, thank you for
15 that question and there are times - one of the things
16 that I think is a challenge for any Chancellor and
17 certainly something I'm thinking about is at what
18 point- points are we a system of schools? That means
19 individual schools have the autonomy to be able to do
20 the things that they see fit and at what points are
21 we a school system. That means that there ought to
be some uh, citywide things that we believe uhm, are
baselined that we need at every single school. And
so, uh one example, is New York City Reads, where

1
2 we're saying look, we need and we believe that all of
3 our young people should have access to grade level
4 content and we should be clear about the
5 interventions that we're doing when our young people
6 are off track. And so, that - I make no apologies
7 for that. I think that should be a citywide
8 conversation and there will be other times when
9 certainly schools can at their own uhm, topic or
10 their own flavor if you will. Each district has its
11 own flavor, each school has its own unique concerns
12 but there are times and we want those times to be
13 when they are high leverage times. So, when we're
14 talking about what's our city's response to students
15 with disabilities. What's our city's response to
16 multilingual learners? Those things are find to be
17 things that we stand on because we believe that they
18 are that important. But then there are other things
19 that certainly schools can have an individual
20 response to.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay, thank you Chancellor.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member
19 Wong. We're going to - yes, I'll put you down for
20 the next round. Council Member Won.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Thank you so much. It's a
3 little confusing right, Wong and Won?

4 KAMAR SAMUELS: No, it's fine. It's fine.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: It's good to see you all.
6 Thank you so much to Chair Dinowitz. I want to go
7 into my district numbers for the 2025 to 2029 Capital
8 Plan. So, according to your report right now for
9 District 30, there is 1,146 new total funded sites in
10 progress. Can you help me understand which schools
11 this is referring to? Because for the LIC project
12 and for previous landuse development in Long Island
13 City, we have had outstanding investments and I know
14 that right now in the Executive Budget, my district
15 is missing the Department of Education funding for
16 \$152 million outstanding for 5-46 46th Avenue, the
17 middle school. That is long overdue. And then \$367
18 million outstanding for two elementary schools that
19 are badly needed because of the amount of development
20 that the district has taken in with the amount of
21 waitlists for my children. As well as understanding
how we have to adhere to the fair classes sizes rule.

So, can you help me understand one, why is the
\$152 million plus \$367 million missing in the
Executive Budget, though promised by the Admin as

1 well as supported by the current Mayor, who
2 represented this district prior to becoming Mayor?
3 And what the current budget is for District 30 that
4 you're accounting for?

5 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: So, trying to understand the
7 difference.

8 KAMAR SAMUELS: Okay, uhm, I think Kevin or Erin,
9 you have thoughts?

10 KEVIN MORAN: My preference on this question in
11 particular is to hold it to the SCA Capital hearing.
12 They have the latest figures. We actually just met
13 with them on this very topic on Wednesday. So, I
14 prefer the SCA President applying here.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay because I do speak
16 closely with the President and her Chief of Staff and
17 I want to make sure that the written promises are
18 kept for my district because for the last ten years,
19 for all the schools that were promised. They were
20 all delayed because we did not have proper funding.

21 Another question that I have is - well, I'll ask
during the SCA hearing as well but the BSGE
Highschool so Bachelorette School of Global Education
is fully funded. So, I just want to make sure that

1
2 that's confirmed on record. And I also want to
3 understand, what is the plan going forward to also
4 think about right sizing our schools or creating
5 space for existing buildings. For example, PS 111 in
6 my district services mostly Queens Bridge Houses and
7 Ravenswoods Houses residents. Yet, they have been
8 fighting back on the colocation of vocal char- uh
9 voice charter school and they've been asking for the
10 school to be no longer colocated. So, as we try to
11 adhere to the fair classes rule, how are we also
12 looking at spaces that are being forced to colocate
13 with Charter Schools to make space to adhere to this
14 mandate?

12 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, that's a great question.
13 And so, something that we've over the last uh, number
14 of weeks and something that as I came into this role,
15 was really deeply thinking about, which is how do we
16 make fully use of our existing spaces. And so, we've
17 had significant conversations with our SCA partners
18 around this and uhm, we're developing a citywide
19 utilization strategy that's actually going to address
20 exactly what you're talking about, specifically for
21 District 30. I don't know if you had anything to add
there Erin?

1
2 KEVIN MORAN: Well, your specific question around
3 colocation.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Yup, of Charter Schools
5 being removed from Public Schools.

6 KEVIN MORAN: That's right, so currently we
7 follow the law, the Charter law, which requires us to
8 offer space or pay rental assistance. So, I
9 understand your question. There's no intention right
10 now to remove colocated schools as a policy matter
11 but there may be school utilization proposals in the
12 future that do contemplate that. Also, there could
13 be vendors themselves or Charters themselves that
14 look for rental assistance; something we would
15 support.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: So, I want to make sure that
17 it's on record that PS 111 should be a standalone
18 school to make sure that our children, especially of
19 the lowest income are being counted for and if we're
20 going to adhere to fair classes rule, that means that
21 we have to remove Voice Charter School from that
school so that we don't have to build a whole new
standalone building but we should just relocate the
Charter and pay for their rent elsewhere. If you can
keep an eye on that.

1
2 KAMAR SAMUELS: Noted.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: We've - we've also for the
4 last four years, have invested over \$100 million for
5 our school upgrades for buildings that are over 100
6 years old that continue to be- remain unspent. Can
7 you help me understand why there is such a delay in
8 capital funding being spent to maintain our schools
9 for simple things like sensory gyms or wall dividers
10 for the auditorium/gym natatorium so that kids can
11 play freely? What is the hold up? Because year to
12 year, I continue to be told by SCA that we just have
13 to wait and there's no clarity on why. For four
14 years it hasn't moved.

15 KEVIN MORAN: I could do this at the Capital
16 Hearing or if it's - I could do it now, if it's
17 helpful. Uhm - wait? Do it now? Okay, so that's an
18 excellent question. Uh, at the heart of the matter
19 was a broken system in our capital reimbursement
20 program. That essentially took all the Reso A grants
21 uhm and introduced a we'll pay for it with tax levy
first, reimburse at the end of the year later with
capital dollars.

What happened in that process was largely
disallowances and problems with us losing money year

1
2 over year. That process has since changed. I
3 testified last year, we had 700 some jobs in the
4 backlog and roughly \$50 million going into our new
5 capital reimbursement system. We recently just
6 crossed the \$210 million capital threshold system.
7 In that, we have no disallowances, we have dollar for
8 dollar project going out the door. There are
9 currently - this is - I was saving this for the
10 Capital hearing. About 73 jobs left in our backlog.

11 Uhm and so what we're doing now I could provide
12 to you for the first time ever, a full list of where
13 every project is that you funded and whether it's in
14 scope, design, award, or what phase in construction
15 and it will be member specific. So, I could send
16 that to each member and it goes back. So, you'll
17 have a full allocation.

18 I'll tell you this time next year, we will not
19 have a backlog. It will be project for project.
20 We'll make sure those critical investments happen.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much. Thank
you Council Member Won. We're going to go on to
round two. Council Member Banks.

COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Thank you and I would be
remiss again Chancellor for not thanking you and your

1
2 team for coming to Thomas Jefferson High School. We
3 appreciate that. Back to the young adult borough
4 centers.

5 I just want to relay some of the concerns that
6 was expressed to me by parents and uhm, and some of
7 the students. Uh, the unsafe - they said it is
8 unsafe for students who are overage and undercredited
9 trying to finish high school hours for the YABC from
10 4:00 p.m. to 10 p.m. to now have to travel far out of
11 Brownsville, East New York to Bensonhurst and Coney
12 Island.

13 They said South Shore has a gang problem. That
14 some of these students have gang issues. Medgar
15 Evers School and Thomas Jefferson creates a safe
16 corridor, right on Pennsylvania for these students.
17 And you know I just want to - again, I just want to
18 reiterate their needs - there should have been an
19 impact study done or conversation earlier on before
20 we were removed from the RFP. To me- uh this to me
21 makes no sense, that a district that has historically
been left behind, now to add insult to injury and to
continue to hurt these students by having them have
to travel close to two hours into Bensonhurst and to
Coney Island.

1
2 Uhm, I don't want to belabor that anymore but I'm
3 hoping that you seriously reconsider that and you
4 stop this injustice from taking place to our students
5 in the 42nd Council District.

6 Now, turning to pupil transportation and uh,
7 safety, student safety. Over the past two years, my
8 office has received multiple complaints from parents
9 about the serious transportation failures. Students
10 being left on buses, routes changing without notice,
11 and overcrowded buses, where children including those
12 IEPs do not have proper seating and/or
13 accommodations. And in each of these cases, the
14 students required additional support. What is DOE
15 doing to address these failures, particularly for
16 students who rely on these services the most?

17 KAMAR SAMUELS: Uh, well two things. I will be
18 looking into the issue you raised before. I was a
19 Deputy Superintendent in Brownsville. I recognize
20 that you know, Brownsville to Coney Island is far.
21 And so that - that -

COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: And East New York.

19 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, right, exactly and so
20 that's - I can see that difficulty and so, we'll look
21 into that issue.

1
2 Uhm, when it comes to pupil transportation,
3 that's something that you know as a former principal,
4 superintendent in two districts, that was - that was
5 one of the things that was constant no matter where I
6 worked in the city. There was significant concern
7 with pupil transportation and I think over the last
8 year, year or so and certainly recently we've been
9 working on some modernization efforts that I think
10 have uhm, you know contributed positively to some of
11 this work. So, I'm going to turn it over to Kevin
12 Moran to talk a little bit more about that.

11 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, this is so vital for our
12 students that rely on yellow school bus
13 transportation. For the nine out of ten kids that do
14 not get a yellow school bus, we also want to provide
15 them opportunities like ferry discounts, OMNY cards
16 four trips a day, 365. I also want to see how far we
17 could expand that to the one in ten kids who rely on
18 yellow school bus. And the goal with yellow school
19 bus service is to improve each and every day.

18 One of the things we did foundationally and this
19 was basically at the prodding of the City Council
20 Local Law 32, 33, and 34, was introduce a
21 modernization effort. One that parents can track and

1
2 find data where they needed to be and actually hold
3 people accountable.

4 The first thing was a New York City School Bus
5 App, so I encourage everyone to go to NYXA, download
6 that app. Now we'll be able to time what time they
7 get on and what time they get off and the routes will
8 be much more efficient going forward. But we do want
9 to have other places for parents to file complaints.
10 So, we're going to try to have the app do that.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Right.

12 KEVIN MORAN: We'll actually roll up all that in
13 aggregate on the website so parents could see how
14 each vendor is doing. We could then use corrective
15 action to hold vendors accountable. Something quite
16 frankly we haven't done a good job at.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: And that's - that's what I
18 want to hone in on - on the accountability because
19 there are parents that have the app but they are
20 finding their child to be left in the bus lot where
21 the child should be home. I have had multiple
situations and we've advocated for parents, who the
child has been left on the bus. Uhm, or have been
dropped off at a location that they shouldn't be
dropped off at and then nowadays, uh that just -

1 that, that, that just to me for most parents, that's
2 something obviously that is unacceptable.

3 So, uhm if we can, you know see more reforms done
4 there, so we can put our students safety first.

5 Thank you.

6 KEVIN MORAN: Absolutely. Thank you Chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member
8 Banks. Council Member Hanks.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Hanks, Banks. Thank you so
10 much Chair. Uhm, I just have a few questions. In
11 your testimony Chancellor, I was excited to hear the
12 Administration will be building on this Council's
13 investment and creating culturally responsive
14 resources for Black, Latino and Hidden Voices
15 curriculum.

16 I find that to be fantastic. You said that you
17 would be launching a comprehensive professional
18 learning plan to expand the use of materials in
19 classrooms across the city. So, I just wanted to
20 understand a little bit more like what is that plan
21 to ensure that all schools across the city are going
to be equitable in getting that information. How are
they going to get informed and how are we going to
make sure that the resources are implemented

1
2 seamlessly and impactful implemented. So, I want to
3 know how that magic is going to happen.

4 KAMAR SAMUELS: Alright, thank you so much for
5 lifting this. Uh, it's something that's really
6 passionate, I'm really passionate about. We, uh, as
7 a superintendent, I implemented the Black studies
8 curriculum and started that curriculum in my district
9 and I you know there's one thing though to make the
10 curriculum available to everyone and resources
11 available to everyone. It's a different, it's a
12 different thing to say, let's make sure our teachers
13 with everything that they have going on understand
14 how to seamlessly weave what the work is into their
15 lesson plan or else it won't be - it won't be used as
16 efficiently.

17 And so, we've seen significant interest in this
18 from teachers. There is uhm, uhm, a huge number of
19 downloads of the Black studies curriculum in
20 particular. A lot of resources and hidden voices.
21 And so, we have a three different layers providing
professional learning. There will be professional
learning provided by uhm, the New York City Social
Studies Department. There will be work that we're
going to be doing with partners such as facing

1
2 history and others and then there's also work that's
3 already being provi- uh done - uh this is the work
4 from the City Council's work with work as well as the
5 ECO foundation and so, you know I'm going to turn it
6 over to our deputy chancellor, First Deputy
7 Chancellor to talk a little bit more about process
8 and getting - making sure that we try to get this as
9 much as possible in the classrooms.

8 DANIELLE GIUNTA: Thank you and thank you so much
9 for your excitement. Uhm, when I was a
10 superintendent, uh one of my schools had a student
11 equity team that presented me with a letter about
12 making sure our libraries had books that were Windows
13 and Mirrors. I'm sure you've heard that frame
14 before. Uhm, and so, I've been just so excited that
15 the agency has built out the Hidden Voices
16 curriculum. That your support has allowed us to
17 bring in the Black studies and Latina curriculum and
18 also that we've built Tech Sets that are available
19 digitally through our library to make sure that these
20 culturally responsive books are in the hands of our
21 students and their families to really get at that
CRSC.

1
2 So, now that we have HQIM through the High
3 Quality Instructional Materials in our schools and we
4 have these resources, we want to have a more
5 intentional approach on how we support our teachers
6 and aligning those curriculum, not replacing HQIM but
7 really lifting up any gaps or making the CRSC
8 approach more rich.

9 So, we're going to be thinking about this in
10 different phases, piloting some districts. We
11 already have the Black City's curriculum started in
12 two pilot districts. It expanded across 18. There
13 are 32,000 downloads of the curriculum. We have
14 momentum over access and use but what we need to your
15 point, to Chancellor's point is that strategic
16 coordinated uhm approach. And so some steps that
17 we're taking is also thinking about how we do
18 crosswalks where we show our teachers in this unit
19 whether it's your ELA unit and we're preparing for
20 all three curricular choices across the city or
21 within passport. Uhm, where you can use these units
and these resources integrated seamlessly. We'll
start this in some small scale. We have a long term
plan to scale up from there and then make sure that
we're touching every one of our schools.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you so much. I have
3 one more question before my time runs out. Uhm, so
4 families in Staten Island often lack uhm access to 3K
5 seats forcing long commutes. We also did not get any
6 2K seats as part of the Administrations roll out.
7 And is there a reason why you know that this roll out
8 happened the way it did and is there an opportunity
9 to add 12 to 15 K seats in Staten Island if we have a
10 provider to do so?

11 We can talk offline. Thank you Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, thank you. You can
13 answer.

14 KAMAR SAMUELS: No, no, no so uh just real
15 quickly, I think you know the 2K piece is a first
16 step. That's - this is a part of a long term
17 strategy and certainly in the next go around, Staten
18 Island will be on the list and I want to make sure
19 that uhm, Deputy Chancellor Hawkins, if you had -

20 SIMONE HAWKINS: Yes, I'll do it Brooklyn quick.
21 Uhm, and so for 2K, you know we hear you but we also
22 heard loud and clear from providers who've been
23 through 3K, been through PreK that there are a set of
24 independent providers who want to remain viable and

1
2 so, we have to consider them as part of the larger
3 ecosystem of care.

4 And so, we want to be thoughtful in how we roll
5 out programs across communities as to not, you know,
6 put other publicly subsidized programs at risk but we
7 hear you. We hear our Staten Island partners loud
8 and clear and for 3K we are including additional 3K
9 as part of the expansion.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: That sounds like a
11 communication thing. So, yes, we will. Thank you
12 very much.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you and
14 to follow up just for clarity and I appreciate you
15 bringing up the Black studies in your testimony,
16 Latina studies, the hidden voices -

17 KAMAR SAMUELS: Hidden Voices resources, yeah.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I have three questions. One
19 is AAPI included in that?

20 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yes, so the Hidden Voices
21 resources has nine identity groups inclusive of AAPI.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, there's a reason I'm
23 asking that one specifically, which I'll get to and I
24 also appreciate you understanding and everyone here
25 understanding it's not just about providing a

1
2 resource of that integration looks like. What is the
3 DOE's plan to evaluate whether from the teachers
4 side, from whether this is being implemented, and
5 from the student side, whether the education is
6 having an impact.

7 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, it's a great question. So,
8 first, one of the things that we're going to do is
9 also invest in our superintendents in terms of their
10 work and professional learning around this, as well
11 as, uh and the superintendents will also work with
12 their principal around this work.

13 Uhm, so first in any kind of evaluation, you have
14 to make sure that you're tracking right. So, the
15 first thing that we're going to do is track the use.
16 We were tracking that in the beginning through
17 downloads and so on of the curriculum and then, I
18 think through our superintendents and principals, the
19 progress monitoring of how that's actually happening
20 in schools. We're looking into and thinking about
21 uhm, you know an implementation tracking mechanisms.
Like, we use them - we use them very consistently for
our core curriculum. Uhm and we're thinking about
ways that we're going to be doing that going forward.

1
2 I think finally, uhm, you know I, I believe in
3 inspecting what do you expect and I think when it
4 comes to our principals and our superintendents, like
5 that's going to be the core measure and seeing that
6 when you think long term about proficiency rates and
7 achievement gap closing, those are the things that
8 we're thinking about.

9 DANIELLE GLUNTA: I mean, that was exactly right.
10 We really built a great muscle for our monitoring
11 over the implementation of Reads and Solves using
12 like our implementation check, so that we have clear,
13 clearly delineated what we're looking for, what we
14 hope our teachers are being supported in and our
15 superintendents are able to really give the
16 principals also that professional learning.

17 So, we're going to - we learned so much from
18 those, that implementation that we're going to apply
19 it.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, it has constantly
21 been the - sort of the responsive DOE in the past.
22 So, look at all these things we're putting in and it
23 has rarely been the response of what we're getting
24 out and I would add the experience of so many
25 students and teachers and principals is about what's

1 being measured. You mentioned the core curriculum.
2 It is the experience of so many that where they're
3 coming in, look at all the great we're doing, Hidden
4 Voices, we're doing the Black Studies curriculum.
5 We're doing arts and then the superintendent comes in
6 and measures your math and ELA scores.

7 Uhm and so unless your- unless there is - I, I,
8 this conversation does need to continue because
9 unless it really is part of the evaluative structure,
10 it's going to continue to rest on those - the same
11 few elements uhm that don't really measure all of
12 what our students need to do. So, I'm encouraged
13 hearing this. I'm encouraged hearing about the
14 expansive nature of what evaluations can and should
15 look like for the benefit of our kids.

16 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, I mean, Chair I think we as
17 superintendents and principals and -

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: In your case, former
19 superintendent, former prin-

20 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah me too - right, right,
21 right. Former - once a superintendent, always a
22 superintendent but you know, there are multiple ways
23 to measure how a school is doing. Uhm, we have uh
24 qualitative ways for doing that and quantitative ways

1
2 for doing that. We conduct probably the largest
3 survey nationally of our parents and families and we
4 use that survey - those surveys in discussion with
5 principals and discussions with superintendents and
6 so, I think you know we already do so much but I
7 agree with you overall, that sometimes we end up
8 focusing too much on inputs and not enough on
9 outcomes and I think uhm, when it comes to the Black
10 Studies curriculum and the Latin curriculum as well
11 as our Hidden Voices resources that we are going to
12 start thinking about monitoring, measuring an impact.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right. Good, I'm glad
14 we're on the same page. It is the constant,
15 constant, question I ask at every hearing is how are
16 you evaluating. So, I look forward -

17 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: To those continued
19 discussions because again, if it's not being
20 evaluated, there isn't the incentive to implement it
21 fully. So, I appreciate hearing that.

Uhm, and lastly about this and then I'll go back
to Council Member questions. The Council currently
Black City curriculum through the Education Equity
Action plan. We also fund Latinidad curriculum, AAPI

1 curriculum, about \$7.5 million. What are the
2 conversations like with OMB for the Administration to
3 fund these initiatives?

4 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, so as you know, so many of
5 the uhm, so many of these conversations are ongoing
6 with OMB. These things have come up and we have
7 constant conversations around them.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm glad the conversations
9 are happening. No, for a program, you know the
10 Council often uhm initiates these important programs
11 and show how important they are and that they work.
12 Uhm, and it should be picked up by the Administration
13 from this point going forward, especially since it's
14 being implemented and expanded widely.

15 KAMAR SAMUELS: Appreciate that, yup.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I'll turn it
17 over to Council Member Joseph.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you Chair. Uhm, my
19 next topic is something that we haven't touched on
20 and need to really look at it and see how we could
21 come up with a comprehensive plan, right? Chronic
absenteeism, we have not addressed that. I'd like to
know what is your plan. For example, students in
temporary housing, they are 56 percent of chronic

1
2 absenteeism. What is the plan? I know we have
3 shelter based coordinators. That's something the
4 Council worked with the Administration. We must get
5 our students back into school. Are we using every
6 tool in our toolbox? Are we partnering with social
7 workers, parent coordinators, to make sure that the
8 students are in school and what- whatever the barrier
9 is, are we working to remove those barriers?

10 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, look chronic absenteeism is
11 a huge one. It's a huge issue for us and you've gone
12 directly to our most vulnerable young people but I'll
13 tell you across every single demographic in our city,
14 one thing that is clear about our young people and
15 families right now is that our students are attending
16 school for fewer days than they did prior to the
17 pandemic. We've seen an increase in attendance and a
18 decrease in chronic absenteeism over the last number
19 of years but this is a citywide issue, a statewide
20 issue and a national issue. And so, we have to make
21 sure that we are very clear around how we're getting
to our most vulnerable young people.

What we've done uh, is one of the things that
we've done is to shift our attendance teachers to
superintendent to be supervised by superintendents as

1
2 opposed to like more essential supervision and I
3 think that's yielded some really good results because
4 then you're closer to the community of schools that
5 you have to visit and that you - and that supervision
6 has been strong.

7 But I want to turn it over-

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: What's the current
9 caseload for a shelter based coordinator? What's the
10 current caseload? Because that also will help
11 determine if you don't have enough, then you're not
12 reaching everyone that you should be reaching and
13 students in temporary housing, we should not only be
14 buying stuff for them. What are we doing to support
15 them academically?

16 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah and when you talk about
17 every child and families that we're thinking, we're
18 continuing. I think that's important there but
19 Flavia can address it.

20 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: Absolutely. Thank you
21 Council Member Joseph for the question. Uh, so let
me start by addressing the question about the ratio.
So, we have 180 community coordinators supporting our
shelters and this is nearly 300 shelters. So, even
though some of the shelters, the hotels, have moved

1
2 now and they're taking over uhm, managed by the
3 Department of Homeless Services, still a ratio could
4 improve but I think it's really looking at like all
5 the ecosystem of support, where I do want to begin by
6 addressing is that while there is significant work to
7 do in this area, uhm, we went from having nearly 41
8 percent of the students in the whole system being
9 chronically absent to 33.3 percent. So, 7.4 percent
10 reduction.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Well, your students in
12 temporary housing are still at 56 percent.

13 FLAVIO PUELLO-PERDOMO: Students in temporary
14 housing - absolutely, it went, it went - you are
15 correct. When you look at all STH, we started with
16 54.2 percent of them being chronically absent and now
17 we are 48 percent. So, 5.5 percent reduction and the
18 only subgroup in our system where we actually have
19 lower chronic absenteeism than what we had
20 prepandemic, it's students in foster care, which is a
21 direct correlation of the investment that was done
with your partnership of creating an office of foster
care, which is one of probably the only two offices
across the nation, small but mighty dedicating to
these supports.

1
2 So, I think what we see here is when we invest,
3 we see a return for our investment. I also don't
4 want to miss this opportunity to highlight the
5 critical work that community schools and looking at
6 wraparound supports provide to mitigating challenges
7 of chronic absenteeism. When we look at our data and
8 we look at the recent calls, we look at national
9 research. Why are students out? There's three
10 factors that come up often. One of them is when
11 students are chronically ill and have other
12 circumstances that keep them from coming.

13 Another one is uhm, aversion, which includes
14 mental health challenges. Students who just like
15 feel like they don't belong. That they - you know
16 they'd rather stay home and not be in school.

17 Then the third one is disengagement and
18 disengagement ranges from not having that adult
19 connection to also not being challenged or being
20 supported by the content.

21 So, when we talk about combating chronic
absenteeism in addition to increasing the support,
the magic is, our school communities need to know
every child well.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Are we - are we doing
3 that training? It can't happen by a wand. Is that
4 conversation happening? Are we engaging families and
5 parents and school based- are agencies talking to
6 each other? Is DHS talking to you? Is ACS talking
7 to you? So, these things need to happen.

8 FLAVIO PUELLO-PERDOMO: Absolutely, 100 percent
9 and I just uhm, had a meeting with leadership but DH-
10 uh last week. We continue to meet with them. We are
11 also discussing when we - which was a good thing,
12 close in the hotels to move students to more stable
13 homes but that also created challenges in terms of
14 now we have children in the middle of the school and
15 at different times, that are having to move from
16 where they were and while they continue to be allowed
17 to remain in the school that they were currently
18 enrolled, that also creates another set of
19 challenges.

20 So, I agree with you 100 percent and I'm
21 committed that this is work that needs to be done in
an interagency support, but also, we need to be
really pointed about what are the root causes why
children are out.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you
3 Council Member Joseph.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Council Member Wong.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you Chair. Uhm, I
7 want to, uh, start with uh, the Summer Rising Program
8 because uh, I again, as a member of the CEC, I was
9 visiting schools and I hear a lot of feedback from
10 parents.

11 Uhm, what happens is the attendance of the Summer
12 Rising program drops significantly after the first
13 week and I - it's always my belief that either DOE or
14 somebody from the school would reach out to the
15 students. Hey, you know, you should come to school.
16 And if you're not, reach down the others on the
17 waiting list that want to come to school. But I just
18 don't - I didn't see that. I didn't see that for
19 several summers, so can you talk about your remedies
20 because it's just, just really it stresses me to see
21 a school open but so few kids attending Summer
Rising. Can you- can you address that?

22 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, so first of all, Summer
Rising is a wonderful program that we are happy to
make available for parents-parents. It's universally

1
2 a very popular program for families but you do raise
3 a significant concern. The attendance in Summer
4 Rising is not based on a mandated, a mandatory
5 program for families, so it ranges in the mid-60
6 percent in terms of attendance overall and I do
7 believe that's a constant concern for us, partly
8 because you know many of our families sign up and
9 they - they know that they have gaps in the summer.
10 They might be going place- they might be doing other
11 things and so, it's very difficult then to give a new
12 spot to families but we are constantly working with
13 our schools. Our schools are really thinking about
14 ways to make sure we're serving as many families as
15 possible.

16 And so, I want to turn it over to Kevin to add
17 anything else there.

18 KEVIN MORAN: Yes and Council Member Wong, as
19 mentioned earlier as a follow up to your question, it
20 was a relocation within the building at 96. One of
21 our rooftop units had a fan issue. The CO2 readers
were detected in the classroom, so we relocated out.
FDNY cleared it and we went back in.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: 93.

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2 KEVIN MORAN: That was fixed, yes absolutely. As
3 it relates to Summer Rising, by the way for all here
4 and watching at home, the deadline for applications
5 is March 27th. So, encourage friends, families and
6 others to apply. Uhm, we're very excited about the
7 program. We, at the end of every year, work with our
8 research and policy group to survey families, to talk
9 a little bit about what's it - you know what do you
10 like in the program? Where should we improve and I
11 do note like the Chancellor, parents do have
12 commitments through the summer season that sometimes
13 draw them away from the program.

14 With that being said, we'll continue to work with
15 our CBO partners and DYCD to increase outreach to
16 families to make sure we're filling the seats, the
17 110,000 seats we're offering. And across our sites,
18 we're increasing our sites from 360 to 379, so
19 hopefully we'll reach families where they are to lead
20 any transportation issues traveling to and from.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you and onto topics,
difficult topics, hold harmless policy. Uhm, DOE has
continued a hold harmless funding model where schools
were declining enrollment maintain their budgets.

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2 Uh, at point do we acknowledge that we're funding
3 empty seats and is there a long term plan to phase
4 this out or this is now a permanent policy? Can
5 anybody answer that?

6 KAMAR SAMUELS: I will attempt to but uhm, but
7 you're raising like Council Member Restler did uh,
8 earlier, the- the difficulty of this time and this -
9 and that proposal or that policy and so, we're
10 continuing to have those difficult conversations
11 within uh DOE and no decision has been made on hold
12 harmless and we'll continue to work with our City
13 Hall partners as well as uhm OMB to think it through.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: So, is there a plan to
15 phase this out or this is now permanent?

16 KAMAR SAMUELS: No decisions have been made.
17 We're going to continue to have conversations as you
18 know, the projections that's used to calculate hold
19 harmless we'll figure out down the line. And so,
20 uhm, this is the time to have the conversation uhm
21 and we're continuing to think about that.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay, yeah moving on. Uhm,
23 it is difficult to talk about this but is - it's a
24 fact that we have schools that are underenrolled and
25 I've been keeping track of them. There are schools

1
2 that enroll fewer than 150 kids compared to four or
3 five years ago where there's several hundred kids.

4 Uh, uh, is consolidation being actively
5 considered where there are multiple underenrolled
6 schools in close proximities?

7 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, so first of all Council
8 Member Wong, thank you for the question. It is a
9 tough question but I don't think it's uh it's a
10 secret to anyone. We've lost over 200,000 kids and
11 so, if we're going to lose a high number of students,
12 it's going to impact many of our schools and it's
13 going to impact uhm, our schools that serve
14 demographically families who are leaving the city.
15 Uh, more - it's going to impact them uhm
16 disproportionately right and so, we have seen
17 significant numbers of schools declining enrollment.
18 When I look at uhm, across our city, I do think we're
19 going to be discussing having serious conversations
20 about areas that we can see opportunities for like
21 you said, consolidations and so on. And that's also
a part and part and parcel of thinking about the
noncapital strategies as it pertains for our plan for
class size.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you Chair. Thank
3 you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Council Member
5 Restler.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Terrific. Uhm, thank
7 you Chair. I really appreciate it and uh I tried to
8 go to Parks but there were too many people, so I came
9 back to have fun with you guys.

10 KAMAR SAMUELS: More people at Parks than here?
11 No, I'm kidding.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: You know, well you got
13 started early. Uhm, so I wanted to ask about a few
14 things. Firstly, I just you know it feels like
15 things are really moving in the right direction on
16 early childhood, which is great on a number of
17 different fronts and I'm so thankful that we have
18 more seats coming in. Greenpoint in 11222 in
19 Brooklyn Heights and the surrounding neighborhoods in
20 11201, in 11217, a lot of District 33 is covered. We
21 did send a request for data. Perhaps we were not
clear. We didn't get all of the data we requested so
I'm just going to follow up. I don't think it was
intentional but DC Hawkins, I will bug you about that
later today. Thank you in advance.

1
2 Uhm but thank you for all the progress in early
3 childhood. This is the first time where I didn't
4 just spend almost all my time complaining about it in
5 the last - in four years.

6 KAMAR SAMUELS: How can - now you can pay
7 attention to your own early childhood.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: There we go. That's it,
9 you know. I want to shift to class size which I'm
10 very anxious about and just there are a number of
11 schools in my district that are struggling on
12 compliance. There was including some of the District
13 13 schools that you know well Chancellor. Uhm, so
14 last year schools were able to apply for and a number
15 received additional funds to facilitate class size
16 compliance. Are those commitments, multiyear
17 commitments or school- I know schools are applying
18 again for new ways to - for resources to help with
19 compliance with the law. But will they ha- are the-
20 are the funds that they received last year in place
21 for next year as well?

22 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, because they hired a
23 teacher right, so you can't hire a teacher for one
24 year.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Right.

1
2 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I imagine you're
4 tracking like I'm tracking, losses of art, music,
5 libraries and other you know really, you know
6 essential enrichment programs that are no longer able
7 to be accommodate by some schools to comply with the
8 class size law.

9 Are - how is that - well, let me actually ask the
10 question. How is that being tracked across the
11 system and how concerned are you about this?

12 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, so when it comes to uh,
13 uhm, you know what you're talking about arts and uhm
14 you know - those, those programmings that in many of
15 our schools is a huge part of the identity of the
16 school.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: 100 percent.

18 KAMAR SAMUELS: Uhm, we do have to uhm manage a
19 local conversation with superintendents, so I'll give
20 you an example, when I was a superintendent thinking
21 about uhm a particular school. Uhm, we decided that
we were going to go in the way of truncating the
middle school of that school because it was honor
enrolled and we wanted- because, partly because we
wanted to protect their OPT room. We wanted to

1
2 protect their theater room and their arts
3 programming. And similarly, uhm when we look at uh,
4 another program in my district, in order to instead
5 of doing that, we decided we're going in my old
6 district side, we're going to do a proposal to recite
7 a, a, middle school so that the elementary school
8 there could keep those pieces of programming.

9 I really do think it's very critical that we are
10 having that conversation locally because SOTs and
11 schools and superintendents and principals can often
12 make the best decision based on what they see in
13 front of them. And I'll turn it over to Erin to add
14 anything around specialty rooms as well.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Just briefly if you can
16 because I got a minute and 30 and -

17 ERIN JAHANT: I'll be quick. Uhm, hi, uh Erin
18 Jahant. Thank you for the question. Uhm, FY27 the
19 way we design the survey, we ask the principals uhm
20 ask for resources that would result in no program
21 reduction. So, they were intentional on how they
asked. Additionally, where there were requests for
room conversions, we were clear. No reduction in
programming in that and then we're doing secondary uh
secondary looks at that with the - we're not reducing

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2 - uh, we're not converting classrooms that would
3 otherwise be art rooms or specialty programs.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I mean, I can tell you
5 I've got schools that are losing our rooms, losing
6 technology rooms. That has already happened and
7 there's more that are going to happen to comply.

8 I want us to reduce class sizes but I want to
9 also protect these programs. So, I just, I
10 appreciate the approach that this previous and the
11 current administration are taking of asking
12 principals and school leadership teams, what can -
13 what do you want to do? How can you comply? What
14 recommendations you have, they know best about their
15 schools but there's a tension here that I'm very
16 concerned about and I'm not really hearing how we're
17 solving for it.

18 Just a little bit more broadly, I really
19 struggled with the previous Administration on citing
20 new schools, on class size compliance challenges,
21 where SCA was involved. And I think part of the
challenge was that SCA had a direct reporting line
into City Hall and wasn't reporting into the DOE or
didn't have a dotted line to the Chancellor and it
was immensely frustrating. We had school options for

1
2 new schools in Williamsburg that are desperately
3 needed that were just reject- that were in new
4 developments that were rejected without ever talking
5 to me or anyone in my community that were agreed to
6 in rezonings.

7 So, I'm just trying to understand as I look
8 ahead, I've got high schools that are bursting at the
9 seams where we need new space. Where they need to
10 grow at the Harry Van Arsdale Campus. I've got needs
11 for new elementary school capacity in District 14 in
12 Northern Greenpoint and in the north side of
13 Williamsburg. I've got a meeting set up on Wednesday
14 with the folks from district planning but who should
15 I be really coordinating with at the most senior
16 level in the Chancellor's office on these issues if
17 we're not getting cooperation from SCA, which
18 hopefully that will change. It's a new
19 Administration but who should we be coordinating with
20 on these issues?

21 KAMAR SAMUELS: That would be Deputy Chancellor
uhm, Kevin Moran.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay. Kevin, we will be
in touch. Always good to see you all. Thank you
very much.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member.
3 Council Member Won.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Thank you so much Chair
5 Dinowitz. I want to go back to talking about equity
6 in due process cases. So, formerly known as Carter
7 cases. I've been having a lot of conversations with
8 our parents who have special needs, so especially
9 children who are twice exceptional, who just have not
10 been able to find a school that is adequate for their
11 needs. What is the long term plan here because it
12 takes a lot - it costs a lot of money for these
13 parents to have the lawyer to sue and it just is not
14 sustainable long term. What is the Department of
15 Education or New York City Public Schools long term
16 strategy to meet the needs of twice exceptional kids
17 and not just punting them to private schools to meet
18 their needs?

19 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yes, it's a great question and
20 we've had uhm, and certainly as a superintendent had
21 several conversations with uh - with families who
were in that position and really, it boiled down to a
really thoughtful approach from each school to meet
individual needs but uhm, I'm sure there are more -
there's more of this happening across city and I just

1
2 want to turn it over to Christina Foti to address
3 that.

4 CHRISTINA FOTI: You know Council Member Won,
5 we've done so much work on the autism front given the
6 explosion in autism numbers we're seeing nationally
7 and locally uhm and the next layer of our work really
8 has to focus on neurodiversity and which is often
9 what we're seeing with our choice exceptional
10 students.

11 Uhm, what we've been doing is taking components
12 of what we see kids struggle with, sensory issues and
13 executive function and doing widescale training on
14 both of those things. So, for example, this year, we
15 did 2,127 attendees for executive function training.
16 The reason why this is important is that we've never
17 did - done a citywide effort to help educators know
18 how to develop skills that twice exceptional students
19 often struggle with.

20 The same with our sensory spaces and you
21 mentioned those before. I was delighted to hear.
Uhm, it's another area that our twice exceptional
students often struggle with. And as you know, the
priority is making sure that kids have both the
social, emotional, the academic, and uhm the special

1
2 education expertise all in one building. As the
3 Chancellor said, this is often done locally. I just
4 wanted to share some of the things that we're doing
5 systemically.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: So, you want to bring the
7 students back to public schools and you're preparing
8 for it?

9 CHRISTINA FOTI: Absolutely.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Because I know the governor
11 has asked for due process cases for the cost of it to
12 be brought down. So, what is the plan here during a
13 budget crisis to bring that price down?

14 CHRISTINA FOTI: Yeah, it's exactly what we
15 talked about earlier is opening up more of the
16 programs that parents are asking for. And as we
17 spoke about earlier, investments in those programming
18 allows us to expand and those are the most
19 competitive options to allow for families to seek -
20 who want to seek a public school placement.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: So, for School District 30
and you- and District 24, you have plans in place to
expand those programs for the children?

CHRISTINA FOTI: Yeah, you probably know how much
expansion we've done in both of those districts.

1
2 It's pretty phenomenal work that most of them have
3 been doing and again, with additional uhm, additional
4 funding for specialized programs, we're able to do
5 that expansion.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay. Can you give me a
7 dollar amount of how much more we can expect this
8 fiscal year coming up?

9 CHRISTINA FOTI: Uhm, I certainly in terms of
10 what we're going to be doing this year to expand
11 specialized programs, a dollar amount?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Within the school district,
13 more District 30 and District 24.

14 CHRISTINA FOTI: Either uhm, our CFO can do that
15 or we can get back to you.

16 SERITTA SCOTT: So, we continue to have ongoing
17 conversations around specialized programming with
18 City Hall and OMB and so I don't have a particular
19 dollar amount for you especially specific to the
20 district. We can uh get back to you but again, these
21 are ongoing conversations that we are having about
these important investments.

COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay, I just want to make
sure that's it's on your radar that District 30 and
District 24 has seen a tripling of the number of

1
2 students who need these programs, so we want to see
3 at least double of what the funding has been in the
4 upcoming fiscal year.

5 SERITTA SCOTT: I'll be sure to let OMB know
6 that.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: And can you help me
8 understand, I know Deputy Chancellor Hawkins is here
9 and we're so grateful for your partnership for having
10 increased our school seats for 3K and PreK by over
11 175 in District 30 and District 24 but we want to
12 understand, right now I'm getting a lot of emails and
13 phone calls from early childhood providers who are
14 elated with the news from the Mayor and the Governor
15 saying that we're going to have full funding for 3K
16 and PreK across the whole entire city.

17 So, right now, from my conversations with the
18 early childhood education providers is that they have
19 submitted an RFI but they have not been given an RFP
20 but it seems that parents and providers are under the
21 impression that we're going to be opening these 3K
and Pre K seats by the fall. So, can you help me
understand because you and I have been on the phone
multiple times where we know how long the RFP process
takes from an RFI to an RFP to all of the approvals

1
2 and permits from Department of Education, Department
3 of Health and Mental Hygiene and FDNY, DOB. So, how
4 are we going to do this by fall and what is the plan
5 here and strategy for how we're going to have
6 children enroll into those schools by the fall
7 because it's not on My Schools NYC for them to have
8 applied to it. So, just trying to understand your
9 process here.

10 SIMONE HAWKINS: No, I appreciate those
11 questions. And so, the RFP process to your point, is
12 very involved and that is something we are planning
13 for the future. That would be a larger procurement
14 effort that is not available right now to your point.
15 What we did release to leverage this opportunity to
16 launch 2K and expand 3K in places where we don't
17 currently have a contract or don't currently have
18 care in a district school setting was release a
19 request for interest. And so, we are - that RFI you
20 mentioned.

21 In addition to that, we did send surveys to
family childcare networks and contracted CBOs to
determine if they would like to also participate in
the 2K and 3K effort and or right?

1
2 And so, what we are doing is two things,
3 leveraging existing contracts, where we can convert
4 underutilized seats to support either and, 2K and 3K
5 where appropriate looking at for 3K specifically,
6 application data where there's been a history of
7 unmet demand where we can place seats. We also
8 believe in continuity of care. So, where we may
9 launch 2K in the fall, we are looking at providers
10 and locations that already have a permit. To your
11 point, it is a big lift to get permitted by our
12 lovely health department partners, not to their fault
13 and so, we are planning forward for that for year 2
14 of 2K and in supporting 3K along the way.

15 So, right now, we're leveraging existing
16 contracts, existing spaces with 3K and also school
17 setting, so District Schools and PreK centers.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: So, am I understanding
19 correctly that by fall, these 3K seats will be open?

20 SIMONE HAWKINS: That's, that's our commitment
21 and so and like years prior, if there are new sites
that come online, sorry Chair. Sites that come
online after the 3K and PreK application process, we
notify families through an alert system through My

1
2 Schools and then families can always add themselves
3 to the waitlist but it is a rolling process.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay because I just want to
5 put on record, Bean Sprout and Woodside is waiting
6 for the 3K seat, especially because we're getting rid
7 of the Mosaic 3K seat and PreK seat to be out of the
8 district, as we've talked about before. So, Bean
9 Sprout has to be that replacement if you close Mosaic
10 and Bunny Hill, that is open in Long Island City that
11 we were able to get open for 3K and PreK. They have a
12 site in Greenpoint and currently Greenpoint only has
13 only one 3K and One PreK. So, they have responded to
14 the RFI and are waiting for it and also, Kuei Luck
15 that is operational in Long Island City, is also in
16 Greenpoint looking to open up a 3K and PreK seat as
17 well. So, I really hope we can get that done. Thank
18 you so much.

19 SIMONE HAWKINS: Thank you Council Member.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you
21 Council Member. Council Member Felder.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah, I apologize. We
have you know other votes uh, uh, so I'm sorry I left
in the middle.

1
2 So, first of all, congratulations and good luck
3 to the whole team because you know that you're going
4 to get the complaints. You're not going to get any
5 complements or anything like that and that's the way
6 it works.

7 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: So, I am sorry. That
9 shouldn't count towards the time. Yeah, but you know
10 my mother, may she rest in peace, till the day she
11 passed away said that the best time of her life was
12 the time she spent in the public school in the Bronx.
13 That's where she went. That was the - and uh, I
14 always thought that I was the baby and that she would
15 say something else but that's what it was.

16 So, I'm going to mention three items, not to
17 debate. I'm just asking you to look into them and
18 then one, which I think and I'm going to try to talk
19 as quickly as my colleague did.

20 So, number one, is that the issue of the school
21 yards. I'm not sure you're aware of it but there used
to be a policy where the school yards were entirely
dedicated for play for the children. Somehow after
the Bloomberg Administration, the - the parts of the
school yards have been set aside for parking. I know

1
2 that it's difficult for staff and whatever else to
3 find parking but at the same time, I know that it's
4 impossible for children to find any place to play.

5 So, I would just ask you to look back to that policy
6 and there is no perfect solution but I would just say
7 is that if you had to take you know - make a choice,
8 I think the school yard should be dedicated entirely,
9 entirely for children to be able to play, one.

10 Two, safety, as it stands now, I- I've tried by
11 the way. I can walk into almost any public school
12 that I did and uh, let me tell ya, I'm a scary guy.
13 You know, God forbid the resource officers are not
14 armed. I know it's a complicated issue but they're
15 not armed. Anybody God forbid could walk into a
16 public school and we don't want to wait. I'm just
17 saying my own opinion. You don't want to wait till
18 something terrible happens. I know it's - again, I
19 know it's a complicated issue but right now, anybody
20 could get into the door and they're not armed.
21 There's really nothing much they can do. That's
number two.

Number three, the public school system used to
have many more, a much more I should say - many more
options of vocational programs. Now there's a guy

1
2 named Simcha Felder who was always in the principal's
3 office, always. School and I did not get along. It
4 wasn't my fault, it was their fault. If I had had a
5 vocational program, I would have done very well.

6 And I think that there are many students no
7 matter how many times they give them the tests, it's
8 just never - it's not going to work. They're not
9 made for it so I would just ask that you look into
10 that you know about increasing it. I still haven't
11 graduated, so I'm interested in the program.

12 And finally, the question I really have is the
13 following. Is that this is not something obviously
14 that happened just now but it's a problem that's been
15 going on for many years. The issue of the
16 overwhelming need to address the payments and the
17 whole system for special education children in public
18 schools and in non public schools. Time and time
19 again, I've heard from parents and providers in
20 schools you know less so, that - denied services.
21 They go through the whole system. There's something
22 wrong with you know, there really is. It's broken.

23 Uh, and I can't blame, I can't even complain or
24 blame anyone at the Department of Education because
25 it's an overwhelming problem that never ever, it just

1 keeps on building you know. It's never been
2 addressed. So, I have to ask you know, I'm just
3 asking like one provider as an example, it encores
4 one provider, a private - they're owed an excess of
5 \$5 million you know. And I'm just saying to you,
6 maybe it's not an answer, a question you know that
7 you can answer. I'm just saying that there - I -
8 among the many other things that you have to fix, you
9 know maybe, maybe you can please dedicate - I have
10 some ideas for you by the way that I'm willing to
11 volunteer.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Good, there's a lot of
12 issues there. Do you want to respond or answer to -

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah, yeah, yeah, no, I
14 told him he doesn't have to respond to the first
15 four.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: And even the fifth, he
18 doesn't have to respond. You know what I mean.

19 KAMAR SAMUELS: I think you know we talked a
20 little bit earlier about due process and
21 reimbursements and there are significant, uhm, issues
there. We're making significant headway on those
though and I think the more we can, we can really

1
2 attack some of the core issues, the better it will be
3 for efficiency long term.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I'm not allowed to say
5 anything but if the Chair could just make believe I'm
6 Council Member Wong for a second is that - is that I
7 - for the first ten years, I was a tax auditor and
8 they found boxes and boxes of cases in the basement
9 that had to be addressed. It is impossible for you
10 to fix a problem that has accumulated over so much
11 time.

12 So, that's why I'm volunteering to come back.
13 You need a SWAT team.

14 KAMAR SAMUELS: Okay.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I'm just suggesting.

16 KAMAR SAMUELS: For now I have my Chief Legal
17 Counsel, she's not a SWAT team but she's close.

18 LIZ VLADECK: Yes, oh yeah, well, Council Member,
19 thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to
20 address this. We've got a SWAT team and that SWAT
21 team is acting pursuant to the court order issued by
Judge Loretta Preska in the LV case and we have
transformed this work. I would love to share updated
data with you. I think your data is out of date.

1
2 Uhm, because we are down to record turnaround time
3 for issuing payments.

4 Now, some providers do experience delays and most
5 of where we see those delays happening is when
6 they're unable to provide us with required
7 documentation such as a confirmation from a parent
8 that the services have been provided. So, I'm aware
9 that some providers are having that experience but in
10 terms of when we get the paperwork that parties, that
11 families are required to submit to us, we're getting
12 payment turned around in a matter of weeks.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I want to thank you for
14 inviting me to come see you. It's the first time in
15 history that that has happened.

16 LIZ VLADECK: My goodness.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I'm very excited by the
18 way, even if I don't show up, even the fact that you
19 invited me.

20 LIZ VLADECK: I'll be there. I'll be there.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: No, I'm going to take you
up on the offer.

LIZ VLADECK: Great, we'd love to show you our
dashboards.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I want to. Thank you.

1 LIZ VLADECK: Good, thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you
3 Council Member. Council Member Epstein.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: Thank you and I know
5 you've been here a long time. So, I want to talk
6 about uhm, so in my district, we see a lot of trouble
7 early on in learning and we use a program called
8 Literacy Academy that really helps kids get up to
9 speed and we see that really transforming people's
10 lives. I'm wondering where you are on expanding,
11 ensuring that you know earlier on in their careers,
12 we're getting kids to learn to read earlier enough in
13 their career Chancellor.

14 KAMAR SAMUELS: Alright, I'm sorry, look I think
15 Literacy Academy is a strong forum. We at uhm, at
16 our - at DOE, we're really thinking about and have
17 been over the last number of years, especially with
18 uhm, New York City Reads in terms of early screening.
19 Uhm, you know really thinking at making sure that our
20 - we're responding to our uhm -

21 COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: Chancellor, can we
expand things because I worry about Summer Rising. I
worry that, that we're not educating kids during
Summer Rising and Literacy Academy is really a place

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2 where we can do that and replaces programs like that.
3 I'm wondering if we can be expanding that. We're
4 struggling to get enough resources where I live in
5 District 1 and across my District.

6 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, we can look into that. I
7 do think last year in particular for the first time,
8 we did incorporate uh literacy interventionists into
9 Summer Rising program because we see that need there
10 as well. And so, we can - we can talk more offline
11 about Literacy Academy but I do recognize like you
12 said, the need to think about early literacy and to
13 make sure that we're addressing needs earlier.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: I appreciate that, thank
15 you. I want to talk about after school for a moment.
16 So, I've been a parent for a long time in this city
17 and back in the day when my kids were little and we
18 had more control over programs, we could see more
19 diverse schools. Well, we've seen Mayoral control in
20 the Bloomberg Administration that schools become more
21 racially segregated and it really, it connected to
after school because in our Title 1 schools in my
district, people getting free after school and
non-Title 1 schools, they're not.

1
2 So, people are making economic choices about what
3 school to apply in a district of choice because
4 access to after school. I'm wondering what we're
5 doing to expand free after school so Title 1 families
6 can make choices about what schools they can go to
7 especially in a district of choice to give them more
8 opportunities, to create more economic racial
9 diversity in our schools.

10 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, thank you. After school is
11 a huge deal. We talk to parents all the time,
12 especially in elementary schools who really care
13 about expansion of after school. We've done some
14 expansion of after school this year, 5,000 seats I
15 believe across the city and then next year, thinking
16 of ramping that up to 10,000 seats. And so, there's
17 significant work being done there. I want to turn it
18 over to Flavia to add anything.

19 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: Thank you for the
20 question. So, yes, after school support are critical
21 as a DOE mom who also has a child that attends a
program that benefits for afterschool. I know how
critical those programs are for all of New Yorkers,
particularly for working families.

1
2 As the Chancellor pointed out, there was a recent
3 expansion of after school, specifically through DYCD.
4 So, they expanded after school to 40 schools, 37 of
5 them being New York City Public Schools and three
6 Charters. Now, going into the next school year in
7 the fall, there's going to be an addition of 67 DOE
8 schools that are going to receive after school. So,
9 in total, the vast majority of afterschool in our
10 city are through DYCD and then the remaining that are
11 centrally funded programs are through New York City
12 Public Schools, community schools. So, I would love
13 to understand more of the concerns, meet up and talk
14 through the footprint that exists.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: Yeah, I would love to
16 make sure that every family, especially the lower
17 income families, can get to - have an after - a free
18 after school program so they can make choice - you
19 know in a district of choice, they can make choices
20 to advance some of these values and I'm happy to
21 continue to talk offline.

FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: Same.

COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: Yeah, I'm happy to do
that. I just want to talk about uhm, kind of the
greening of our school systems and I don't have a lot

1
2 of time left, so there's the physical building and
3 the kind of inside the physical buildings of how we
4 create a green infrastructure. I know we've talked a
5 lot around kind of what it would take to do that and
6 the cost associated with it. I'm wondering what's
7 the - kind of what's on the landscape to make sure
8 that we have the green infrastructure? Making sure
9 that we're moving away from single use, especially
10 seeing non compostable items and how we then are
11 working on the building structures to green them.

12 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, great question and we've
13 seen the investment across our schools uhm, in
14 thinking about and I always hear about sustainable
15 coordinators in schools, that are working with our
16 young people on these issues but uh, in terms of the
17 greening of our buildings, I'll turn it over to
18 Kevin.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: Chancellor, just before
20 we turn it over, I just want to make sure you're
21 committed to not having single use plastic in our
buildings as well. Like I want to move away from
that. I know we talked to School Foods about it. I
want to hear if you're committed to doing that as
well.

1
2 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, I think that's something
3 that we can continue to look at right? You know uhm,
4 conceptually and certainly ideologically, I'll
5 absolutely align to that but Kevin, you can talk.

6 KEVIN MORAN: Specifically, plastic free; I was
7 at an event pretty recently up in the Bronx where we
8 did that. Everything with a CBO partner and the
9 school community embraced it so really would like to
10 learn more about that program too.

11 As it relates to the green infrastructure, uhm,
12 something we're very excited about, we hold the title
13 of the largest solar uh footprint of any city agency.
14 We're real happy about that. Unfairly, we have 1,400
15 buildings, I get it but we do have a lot of solar. I
16 do know the School Construction Authority has looked
17 at geothermal as a way. We are stepping down all of
18 our - and staying compliant, uh, stepping out all our
19 fuel. Uh, most recently we opened up at Muro, a B100
20 boiler, which is really exciting. It's essentially
21 french fry oil. All the kids wrote about it in the
school journals in class. So, we were really excited
about that but as we step down from the dirtier oils
if you will, uhm, going to natural gas and other
solutions, electric being one, uhm, we can give you

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2 stated progress but it's something that we definitely
3 support and are excited about.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member
5 and I want to thank Deputy Chancellor now. You
6 weren't Deputy Chancellor back then but Deputy
7 Chancellor Moran who has been very helpful in some of
8 the water fountains in schools in my district. And
9 you know we have to make sure we're providing kids
10 the opportunity and the availability of water. And
11 now that that's there and in other schools as well I
12 hope soon, working clean water fountains, that will
13 make it much easier to reduce things like plastic
14 water bottle use.

15 Uhm, I want to go back to special education. Uh,
16 the Preliminary District 75 expansion. Uh, the
17 Preliminary Plan added \$49.6 million in state funding
18 for additional District 75 special education classes
19 associated with a 464 additional headcount. How many
20 additional classes will be open with this funding?

21 CHRISTINA FOTI: Thank you Council Member uh,
22 thank you Chair. That funding was actually for this
23 school year and with that funding, we were able to
24 open 100, an additional 173 classes.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And which community school
3 districts will geographically, will they be located?

4 CHRISTINA FOTI: Yeah, so in uh in Brooklyn we
5 have Districts, geographic Districts, geographic
6 Districts, pardon me. 32, 19, 15, 20, 13 in
7 Manhattan.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You're quick.

9 CHRISTINA FOTI: Sorry.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Start over, 32-

11 CHRISTINA FOTI: 19.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yup.

13 CHRISTINA FOTI: 15, 20 and 13 and I'm happy to
14 send these in writing.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, please also but -

16 CHRISTINA FOTI: Manhattan 6 and 3. Queens 30,
17 27, 24, and 28. District 31 in Staten Island and in
18 the Bronx, we have 8 and 11.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I was scared you were
20 going to leave the Bronx out for a second.

21 CHRISTINA FOTI: Nope.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: There's a dramatic pause.
It was very dramatic.

CHRISTINA FOTI: For you, I will say that's uh
best for last.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You're very good. Uh and
3 these - just to be clear, these are seats that are
4 already online. They're in the current fiscal -
5 okay.

6 CHRISTINA FOTI: That's right.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, uhm, is there any
8 particular type of disability classification that
9 these seats support?

10 CHRISTINA FOTI: Autism, emotional disability,
11 intellectual disability and students with multiple
12 disabilities.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And these to you are the -
14 just relating it back to due process cases, these are
15 the kind of the majority of cases that you are seeing
16 the due process claims made for? Is there a
17 correlation between those decisions to open those
18 seats and due process?

19 CHRISTINA FOTI: No, the decision to open those
20 seats are driven solely on individual needs and what
21 we're seeing in terms of students coming through the
IEP process. Uhm, and so, a child shows up, we
evaluate and we give them the program that they uhm,
the evaluation team thinks is needed. Uhm, in terms
of due process, we have opened up specialized

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2 programs in specific districts to serve and those are
3 community districts to serve students that otherwise
4 would have taken the Carter route.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Now, you mentioned the
6 district is going to get it, you can send it to us
7 later with the seat breakdown per district.

8 CHRISTINA FOTI: Of course.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Uhm, and the
10 positions that are associated with the additional
11 headcount, those are - can you break that down for us
12 as well?

13 CHRISTINA FOTI: Yes, teachers, classroom
14 paraprofessionals, transportation paraprofessionals,
15 and IEP paraprofessionals.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And you can also send a
17 breakdown of those too? I do want to give a shoutout
18 to our paraprofessionals. I know there's at least
19 one here and yeah, uhm you know from my time in the
20 classroom, you know I don't know where I would
21 personally be and where my kids would be without
their paraprofessionals. Uhm, during the pandemic,
New York City uh public schools launched a program
called Sensory Exploration Education and Discovery
SEED, providing afterschool and weekend programs

1
2 where students with intensive sensory needs can get
3 help from occupational and physical therapists, along
4 with the family educa- engagement component. After
5 the federal COVID-19 stimulus funds expired two years
6 ago, public schools got a grant from the State
7 Education Department. That grant runs out this year.
8 Uh, 94 percent of families agree that the SEED
9 program has been beneficial in addressing their
10 child's sensory needs. That's a good grade, that's
11 an A. What is - so that funding is running out from
12 the state, what is the current budget for this
13 program and how many SEED sites does this support?

14 CHRISTINA FOTI: Currently uhm, 77 seat sites are
15 up and running, fully operational and it costs us
16 about \$6 million annually to run that program for
17 nearly 2,000 students.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, so you said 2,000
19 students are currently utilizing the program?

20 CHRISTINA FOTI: Uhm, it's - I don't want to give
21 the exact number because it's rolling enrollment but
typically between 1,700 and 2,000.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay uhm and what
resources does the Department of Education need to

1
2 ensure you can continue the SEED program including
3 the after school and weekend SEED programs?

4 CHRISTINA FOTI: We are working on that number.
5 I have to get back to you.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And you know going back to
7 the same questions about mayoral control. Similar -
8 same questions about the caps. Uhm, what advocacy
9 has the department of education done with the state
10 to advocate for continuing this funding?

11 CHRISTINA FOTI: Well, you know earlier we talked
12 about and I need to apologize for mispeaking.
13 Earlier I quoted Fair Student Funding. What I meant
14 was our funding weights that we - the Chancellor uhm
15 - Fair Student Funding does take into account the
16 localized needs of students. So, I - I was actually
17 talking about the advocacy the Chancellor did at the
18 State Budget hearing around added weights for
19 students with disabilities.

20 Of course when we - if we look at added weights,
21 we're able to look beyond you know the mandated needs
and into spaces such as this.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, the advocacy centers
on the increased uhm, formula for students
disabilities, that's what the advocacy right?

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2 CHRISTINA FOTI: I think that's - I think that's
3 one form of it.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Are there other forms?

5 CHRISTINA FOTI: You know, we're certainly - I
6 just, I don't want to say that that's the only thing
7 that would help. You know we are open to any sort of
8 additional funding that would support this program
9 because of its monumental uh, impact that it's had on
10 students.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay uhm, so just sort of
12 uh, for these particular programs, I'm just trying to
13 make clear, is the DOE going up and saying this
14 program needs \$6 million as you just testified, this
15 other program needs whatever the dollars. Are you
16 going up programming by programming, program by
17 program and advocating for the dollar amount in
18 addition to the advocacy you've already done around
19 the uhm, the formula uh to increase the funding for
20 students disabilities?

21 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, so I think you know in
22 general uh, we have conversations about a lot of
23 different uhm topics and certainly when we're in
24 conversations with CTR and OMB a lot of many specific
25 programs come up.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Uhm, and have
3 you spoken to OMB about continuing this funding, this
4 program with city dollars?

5 SERITTA SCOTT: Uhm, so yes, we have spoken to
6 OMB about this particular program.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Great, thank you. I want
8 to go back to District 75 for - just for a minute,
9 just to better understand a little bit. You're
10 saying there are new uh 173 new classes uhm and new
11 seats for District 75. Are we talking new schools
12 that are opening up? Are we talking about putting
13 more seats in existing schools? What's the mix?

14 CHRISTINA FOTI: We opened, we put a new District
15 75 school online uhm this year and then it also
16 includes opening up additional classes in existing
17 schools.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, so you're mostly
19 talking about expanding existing D75 programs.

20 CHRISTINA FOTI: Correct.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay and is - what has the
feedback been on that? Is that what principals or
teachers are saying? Like, it makes sense to expand
existing programs or do you hear more that we need

1 new uh schools, new programs in throughout the city?

2 What are you hearing?

3 CHRISTINA FOTI: We, we hear both but ultimately
4 Chair we are looking at high quality program Close to
5 Home and the vision here is to give as many kids as
6 possible access to programs that are in their
7 geographic district and ideally where their siblings
8 go to school and that's why we've been focusing. You
9 know certainly District 75 play such a vital role.
10 Given the demand and the increases we're seeing of
11 students with disabilities and the level of need,
12 uhm, District 75 has been what we have been - our go
13 to around uh serving students.

14 Ideally though we are going to be moving and
15 that's what we have seen in our pilots into that more
16 localized placement of students with the support and
17 that's why we keep pushing for our specialized
18 programs. It's the most effective way to do that.

19 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah and I'll just add a couple
20 things. One, just a reminder that District 75 has
21 grown over 2,800 students since 2020 and this is in
contrast to the rest of the city that's losing
enrollment right and I think when it comes to citing
a District 75, what I've heard from principals, uhm

1
2 around the city is this opportunity for inclusion, is
3 something that's really important to us. So, the
4 site within a school uhm you know allows us to, to,
5 to really promote being inclusive.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you and I do - I
7 don't think I said it outloud, you know I do
8 appreciate every time you say it, that when you talk
9 about integration, you are also talking about
10 integration of students with disabilities, which is
11 huge. It's something I think we don't talk enough
12 about and I'm grateful that you are speaking, using
13 that language, so thank you.

14 KAMAR SAMUELS: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I want to move over to
16 Early Childhood. Uhm, unfortunately the Chair is
17 stuck and so, I'll be asking some questions on her
18 behalf. Uhm, but here we go. Are you ready? Pull
19 up those documents. She looks ready, okay. 2K
20 pilot, okay, Preliminary Plan includes \$73 million in
21 Fiscal 2027 in state funding to begin a 2K pilot next
year. The city recently announced that 5 school
districts, 6, 10, 18, 23, and 27 will receive new 2K
seats next fall. How many extended day and school

1
2 day seats will be offered under the 2K program in the
3 first year?

4 SIMONE HAWKINS: Thank you for that question
5 Chair. Uhm, I'm going to provide something that's
6 probably not going to be uh satisfying. We are still
7 working through those details. And so, as I
8 mentioned earlier, we released an RFI. That process
9 is still ongoing. We also released two surveys to
10 existing providers. And so, we're working through
11 those details now to determine the program model and
12 also specific locations and seat counts.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, I'll tell you, I
14 have mixed feelings about that answer.

15 SIMONE HAWKINS: I'm sorry.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I appreciate that it was
17 an answer. You answered the question honestly, so
18 thank you. Uhm, when - is there a timeline on when
19 you'll have answers to that question?

20 SIMONE HAWKINS: So, we have to confirm the
21 timeline but what I can commit to is once we do
22 finalize the information, we are happy to share it
23 with the Council so you can have the information.

24 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, I think all of us
25 have our constituents stop me in the street asking

1 this question. Uh, and you know they are very eager.
2 We are all eager in the Council to know when this
3 will be implemented. When they'll have those
4 details.

5 SIMONE HAWKINS: And Chair, I will say those who
6 apply to the RFI, those not in the priority districts
7 for the upcoming fall were notified. Those moving to
8 the second phase of the RFI were notified. And so,
9 any of your constituents are aware where they are in
the process.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I meant the
11 parents.

12 SIMONE HAWKINS: Oh.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, I meant the parents.
14 Uhm, the funding for 2K, it jumps to \$4 to \$25
15 million in Fiscal 2028 as part of the governor's
16 commitment however, there's no baseline funding for
17 2K. Uhm, what is the DOE's long term funding plan for
18 this population?

19 SIMONE HAWKINS: I think as we are having
20 conversations about the overall state of uhm our
21 portfolio of early care in education, we are having
conversations with the Administration, the Mayor's

1
2 Office and OMB about what that figure could look like
and should look like.

3 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Under the Council's Infant
4 and Toddler pilot, the competitive seat rate costs
5 uhm of \$40,000. Given the amount of state funding
6 allocated for 2,000 seats, this would not cover the
reimbursement rate. Can you confirm?

7
8 SIMONE HAWKINS: So, the birth to two pilot
includes infants and toddlers.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Uhm, hmm.

10 SIMONE HAWKINS: Not just two year olds, those 24
11 months to 36 months. We are looking at what the rate
could be for 2K and I would like to remind the
12 Council and folks that the birth to two pilot only
13 included community based organizations. 2K will also
14 include family child care providers.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: What is your target rate
16 for the 2K seats and do you believe it's a
competitive rate?

17 SIMONE HAWKINS: We're finalizing that now but I
18 would like to think it is a competitive rate.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, I -I - uh, smaller
20 providers have expressed concerns about getting
contracts when competing with larger corporate

1 providers. How is the DOE working to ensure equity
2 when awarding contracts?

3 SIMONE HAWKINS: So, it's just what I mentioned
4 earlier around you know we talk about ecosystems and
5 ecosystems include independent care. It includes
6 informal child care. It includes homebased,
7 centerbased care, district school care because if
8 it's really around parent choice, parents choose
9 different settings for their littles.

10 And so, what we did was we looked at the entire
11 uh permitted license regulated footprint in New York
12 City, which includes regulated care from OCFS, New
13 York State OCFS as well as DOHMH. That also includes
14 our independent program - I mean, uhm, excuse me, our
15 district school programs.

16 And so, looking at where placement currently is,
17 we want to do this on a very thoughtful and measured
18 way. We understand that there is need for 2K.
19 There's a need for 3K. There's a need for infant
20 care but that care also exists outside of New York
21 City Public Schools and so we want to be thoughtful
about where we place seats. And so, the Mayor's
Office of Child Care and Early Child Education
working with us, ACS, talking about interagency

1
2 partners, looking at a bunch of data and making sure
3 we overlay that when we are determining seat
4 placement is how we approach this.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I will note that there are
6 some high schools where they need day care, child
7 care for the student population.

8 SIMONE HAWKINS: That's the Life Program,
9 correct.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes, yes, so I'd love -
11 we're going to talk offline about that, one of the
12 schools in my district you're familiar with. Uhm,
13 but I - you know we talk in - here in these meetings,
14 very kind of high level and you look at it as
15 spreadsheets. You need to, you're running something
16 but there's also the reality and it was sort of
17 referred to, referenced before about DOE programs
18 versus the community based providers and there are
19 different challenges there. And I'm going to ask two
20 things in how you're addressing these. One is you
21 are doing a reimbursement rate per child for your
community based organizations correct?

SIMONE HAWKINS: That's correct.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And so, so how do you
manage, how do you work with a CBO where you've told

1
2 them you have whatever 20 seats? You have - you know
3 you gave them funding for 20 seats, only 18 kids, or
4 17 kids for whatever reason stay in the program and
5 you've just taken away, uh, funding for three
6 students but they still have to open the classrooms
7 for those 20 kids. They still have to hire the
8 teachers. They have to do all that contractual work.
9 How do you manage that and still support CBOs with
10 such a rigid structure, given the realities of what
11 the CBOs are facing.

12
13 SIMONE HAWKINS: Yeah, I want to acknowledge
14 that. You know I cut my teeth at a community based
15 organization many years ago and so - although I love
16 all of our settings, they hold a special place in my
17 heart. So, I want to leave with that truth.

18
19 Uhm, we have a base plus model in which our
20 community based organizations are funded and so, they
21 are reimbursed usually on a month lag. Uhm, and it
is above their actual enrollment and to your point
Chair, it recognizes that there are some costs that
are just fixed. And so, you need a teacher for 3
kids, you need a teacher for 15 kids.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You got it.

1
2 SIMONE HAWKINS: And so, we are looking at models
3 as we kind of shift into a larger procurement about
4 how we can better reflect those fixed costs but right
5 now in the current contract structure, which has been
6 in, in, in uh, active for about five years now. It
7 does recognize above your actual enrollment for that
8 very reason.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, yeah, I still think
10 there's some - there are some problems there. Uhm,
11 and it's clear that there are problems which is why
12 you're going back and looking at it because you're
13 aware of them. And you are I assume in conversations
14 with the CBOs, with the ones who provide -

15 SIMONE HAWKINS: Absolutely.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Second, thank you - second
17 question about that, uh, and it was mentioned again,
18 CBOs versus DOE schools is pay disparity, right? And
19 it is uhm, I know we have a bill in the Council by
20 Chair Lee to address that. Uhm, but that's uh, you
21 know it's a really tough call to make. You know so
many people at CBOs, they stay because they love
their kids and they love the program. And then they
go home and they're met with this - the wait of
affordability in New York City. They're met with the

1
2 weight of asking themselves if they are making the
3 right decision for their lives knowing that they can
4 make more at the DOE than they can at the place that
5 they love.

6 How is the DOE addressing the pay disparities
7 between the CBOs and the DOE schools?

8 SIMONE HAWKINS: First, I want to say there's no
9 versus, right. That's not how we operate and for
10 early care in education, we would not be successful
11 without our CBOs. They comprise about 60 percent of
12 our seat capacity and so, there's no versus.

13 Uhm, we want to also acknowledge that there is
14 pay disparity across the settings and that's
15 something we are committed to fixing with the
16 Administration. Clearly, the Administration is
17 leading that effort but we have to do that in
18 constant with our labor partners. And so, we are
19 having those conversations but you know, we have -
20 you have our commitment to making sure that our CBO
21 partners are homebased providers are seen in this
space because they are very much valued in this work.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I mean is the DOE looking
- are New York City Public Schools looking to match
the CBO pay scale with that -

1
2 SIMONE HAWKINS: That's not something we can
3 independently decide. That's something we have to do
4 with our labor partners.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: In the past, you provided
6 I guess they're bonuses. I don't know what the
7 proper term is.

8 SIMONE HAWKINS: Many moons ago, there were
9 retention and recruitment bonuses to incentivize
10 folks to come into the field. That's different, I
11 think that was around \$2,500 to \$3,500.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: During COVID I believe and
13 I believe it was very successful and the teachers are
14 very happy about that, right?

15 SIMONE HAWKINS: Right, there was also this
16 effort to increase non-union wages to align with DC
17 37 wages. Again, that's different from what you know
18 district school teachers under UFT has provided. So,
19 we are having all of those conversations.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right but there were I
21 guess recruitment retention bonuses for the non-UFT
members. The non-DOE schools. I'm talking
specifically about CBOs, that they received - the
teachers got additional funds, right?

1
2 SIMONE HAWKINS: I would have to verify if it was
3 a contingent upon a union affiliation. That happened
4 many years ago but that's something my team could
5 look into around the recruitment and retention
6 bonuses.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, because that seemed
8 to have been successful and we want to repeat models
9 that have been successful paying, early child
10 providers, what they deserve right, taking care of as
11 you say, our littles, our babies, which is language I
12 love.

13 SIMONE HAWKINS: Yeah, I would say you know a
14 bonus and incentive bonus is always welcomed. I
15 think what I'm hearing you say is something that is
16 kind of at the undergirding of what they do to be
17 compensated at a rate that they deserve. And so, a
18 one time payment of \$2,500 I'm sure is nice but I'm
19 sure that our educators want a livable wage, a higher
20 wage that's more aligned with what their colleagues
21 are doing.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: They, they deserve it.

SIMONE HAWKINS: Exactly.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: They deserve it and I hear
the phrase often labor of love and like that's nice

1
2 but that doesn't pay the rent, you know. Uhm, so and
3 it's so hard to keep relying on simply the fact
4 people love their job and love their kids. Uhm, you
5 know it isn't right so I want to move to Head Start,
6 Head Start transitional contracts. The DOE recently
7 transitioned from federally funded Head Start seats
8 to city funded transitional contracts for Head Start
9 delegates.

10 We would like to discuss updates on this process
11 and the future of DOE run Head Start programming.
12 What is the current breakdown of city funded
13 headstart and early headstart seats by school
14 district?

15 SIMONE HAWKINS: We have that data ready and we
16 can share that after the hearing Chair.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Uhm, same
18 question, was the current enrollment in these seats
19 by Head Start and Early Head Start and what is the
20 overall utilization rate and the utilization rate by
21 seat type?

22 SIMONE HAWKINS: We can share that. I just want
23 to clarify we no longer stratify by Early Head Start
24 and Head Start because those are titles that no
25 longer exist. They're no longer Head Start programs.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for the
3 clarification. And how will these seats eventually
4 be integrated into the DOE, Early Childhood ECE
5 system?

6 SIMONE HAWKINS: I love that question. We're
7 looking at that now as we think about the overall
8 procurement that will be happening perspective.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But same day - is there a
10 timeline? Like have you set goals for yourself for
11 integrating that into the DOE?

12 SIMONE HAWKINS: So, internally yes. So, we
13 can't give any information proactively about a future
14 procurement because that can create some unintended
15 advantage for folks who are listening to this hearing
16 in that instance.

17 So, yes, we are planning forward for that but we
18 can't share details on a specific timeline for which
19 that will be released.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You can't share a timeline
21 of what your goal is for integrating the seats
because it's related to an RFP?

SIMONE HAWKINS: Correct.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, as a now city funded
3 program, what's the goal for Head Starts, Head Start
4 seats?

5 SIMONE HAWKINS: Sorry, I don't think I
6 understand the question.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, uhm, the total
8 number of seats for Head Start. What is your goal?

9 SIMONE HAWKINS: So, we don't have a goal
10 necessarily. So, one thing that we did when we
11 transitioned from Head Start contracts including
12 Early Head Start to transitional was give the
13 providers an opportunity to convert their seat types.
14 And so, what you'll see in the data and I'm sure what
15 you saw in the PMMR is that there was a transition of
16 - or actually an increase in infant and toddler seats
17 and a decrease in PreK and 3K seats for the Head
18 Start transitional.

19 So, there's no goal but we do have a total uh,
20 uhm, portfolio of care that we've been trying to
21 maintain for - with the Head Start Program.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And do they have
23 immigration status requirements, these seats?

24 SIMONE HAWKINS: No, they do not.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, anyone is eligible for
3 these seats?

4 SIMONE HAWKINS: So, what we've been asking the
5 providers to do was prioritize those families who
6 would normally be eligible for Early Head Start or
7 Head Start, which has categorical eligibility
8 requirements. It does not consider immigration but
9 since these are now CTL funded, they can expand
10 eligibility to include those that are just age
11 eligible and live in the five boroughs.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Uh, in the -

13 SIMONE HAWKINS: I'm ready.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I can tell, you're ready.

15 SIMONE HAWKINS: I'm locked in.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I almost want to go to
17 someone else, give you a breath. Uh, uhm, the Fiscal
18 2026 Budget deal, the Council secured \$10 million in
19 funding for the first non means tested infant and
20 toddler seats, also known as birth to two initiative.
21 I first want to thank you for working with the
Council to launch this pilot program especially in
such a short timeline. How many childcare programs
are participating in the pilot program to offer these
seats and how are they selected?

1
2 SIMONE HAWKINS: Yeah, so originally it was 18
3 for 240 seats. Right now, we are down to 13 at 170
4 seats. And what we found was starting mid-year, we
5 ran into issues with staffing, identifying staff to
6 work and start in the program in January but also
7 families often locked in their care starting earlier
8 in the school year, so that September. So, some of
9 our participating providers ran into issues
10 recruiting families specifically for the 24 months to
11 36 months range.

12 Right now, we're 88 percent enrolled and what we
13 did was we looked in communities again, taking that
14 overlay of existing care and saying, who has uhm for
15 instance vouchers. We don't want to have families or
16 providers, excuse me supplant care. We wanted this
17 to be in addition to. And so, also, we looked at
18 existing contracts. Again, a very concentrated
19 timeline to set these up. So, wanting to leverage
20 existing mechanisms to do so. And then looking at
21 the economic need index in communities to determine
what- you know meeting the kind of families with the
most need.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And so what -

1
2 SIMONE HAWKINS: That is kind of the high,
3 highline sorry.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: What insights have you
5 gained from this experience that's going to shape the
6 rollout or the continuation of this and the rollout
7 of the 2K pilot?

8 SIMONE HAWKINS: Yeah, I think the timing is
9 something we are still evaluating. That January
10 start did not work at our advantage to be honest.
11 I'm mentioning again the staffing and families but
12 what we've been doing now in addition to getting the
13 word out about 2K earlier on, we are creating a
14 centralized admissions process for 2K which will help
15 families really direct them into care once they are
16 announced. Really focusing our marketing but also
17 supporting the participating providers no matter the
18 setting on staffing up properly. So, having a bit
19 more runway will allow a lot more success for 2K.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Now, you're talking about
21 enrollment. You're talking about managing the Early
22 Childhood System.

23 In the past, there were walls between these two
24 systems where my Early Childhood providers you know
25 they would complain they lost kids but they had no

1 way to access the - uh, let's say a waitlist or other
2 kids to fill up those seats and when asked in the
3 past - when I asked in the past about this, to the
4 Early Childhood, uhm, uh of the DOE, the response was
5 very nicely but the response was, well, that's a
6 different unit. That's a different division.

7 So, what has been done in the past year or two
8 years to break down those walls to ensure that
9 enrollment is directly related to the work that
10 you're doing?

11 SIMONE HAWKINS: Yeah, so what I would like to
12 say and it's something to kind of your prior point
13 about frankly funding vacant seats is recruitment is
14 everyone's responsibility. Not just that of New York
15 City Public Schools. It doesn't just live in my
16 schools. It is everyone's responsibility. And when
17 I used to work at a community based organization,
18 what makes that role so powerful is that they have an
19 intimate awareness of that community. I would go
20 into the WIC center, right? We would have folks
21 going into the barber shop of the local bodega. You
have to know your community and where to find
families. Frankly, stand outside of the hospital.
You know a baby is born every day. Uhm, but what we

1
2 have done around my schools integration and to your
3 point Chair, it is not just the responsibility of the
4 Office of School Enrollment. We are trying to
5 improve that process, make sure that providers and
6 families know how to actually access it. Use it,
7 extend the languages in which it is offered and
8 actually be in community to help families enroll in
9 real time and we've worked with the Mayor's Office on
10 that.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, I understand all hands
12 on deck but I just want to be clear in my question
13 that, that the offices at the DOE central are working
14 together, that they're not in silos and what that -
15 and what that communication looks like because in the
16 past, in the past five years since I've been on the
17 Council, it has been people in silos and where uhm,
18 the Early Childhood organizations wanted to get more
19 kids but they had to go through three different
20 offices just to figure that out.

21 So, what is communication with the Office of
Enrollment for you look like?

SIMONE HAWKINS: So, we actually have weekly
meetings with them. And not that meetings is a
solution but it's definitely a tool to make sure that

1 we are communicating. I would be remiss if I didn't
2 shout out DIIT, which is a huge part of making sure
3 that My School is operable and so, in addition to
4 meeting with them weekly, we're meeting with them
5 weekly to talk about the 2K centralized system to
6 iterate on existing systems and then we also beyond
7 the Office of Student Enrollment, which is the
8 primary manager of My Schools, we actually have
9 standing meetings agencywide with reps from different
10 divisions to make sure that we are operating strongly
interagencywide.

11 KAMAR SAMUELS: Just a general point that you're
12 making about the silos that exist within the
13 Department of Education, I think or NYC Public
14 Schools, uhm, that was desperate in which I entered
15 the reorganization moves that we recently made, which
16 is why so many of the uhm, the pieces that - or
17 structures that support schools are now with the
18 First Deputy Chancellor along with superintendents
19 and our supervising superintendents and I think you
20 know just the way our cabinet operates uh, lends
21 itself to seamless communication between uhm, the
Office of Enrollment and uhm our Early Childhood
division and I think that's - that's one of the

1 things that I'm super committed to open in the next
2 number of years to make sure that we're breaking down
3 the silos in NYC Public Schools.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, I noticed that when I
5 asked one of my questions you gave this face, like
6 shaking your head, like how could anyone think that
7 or do that but the reality is, it's - you can ask any
8 Council Member it's happened in the past. It happens
9 with our city agencies. People don't talk to one
10 another. I appreciate your commitment to this.

11 However, in a \$38 billion agency uh, you know things
12 sometimes - that is the reality of it. Uhm, and so,
13 I appreciate your awareness of this and knowing that
14 this Committee is ready to work with you to make sure
15 those silos are broken down, that all of the agencies
16 are talking to each other because it's for the
17 benefit of our kids and the people who educate our
18 littles, our babies.

19 KAMAR SAMUELS: New York's cutest.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Maybe not the middle
21 schoolers but -

KAMAR SAMUELS: The littlest are the cutest yeah.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, my kids are getting
to that age. Speaking of uhm well, and for all kids,

1
2 we all deserve safety. Uhm, you know you mentioned
3 it in your DC Hawkins, you are relieved. You are
4 okay. You did great. Uhm, Chancellor I know you
5 said this both publicly, privately, that safety, huge
6 concern. Uhm, we know that there are many facets to
7 the safety of a child. I want to focus right now on
8 school safety officers. The plan includes increased
9 costs for school safety but the additional funding
10 does not increase headcount for these positions.
11 What's the current budgeted headcount for school
12 safety officers and how many positions are currently
13 filled?

14 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, thank you for - I know, you
15 know I see my Chief of Safety Mark Rampersant is
16 already at the table and I'm excited to kind of hand
17 it over to him but just to really point out that
18 safety in a school as you know Chair is really
19 centered on relationships and you know it's never
20 with anyone individual. And so, we've been doing a
21 lot of work around ensuring that communication in
schools are really strong and uhm, I'm excited to -
to kind of continue to think about that with our
principals and our school staff but as you know, we
don't also - we also are not uhm, the headcount for

1
2 school safety agency - school safety agents doesn't
3 fall on the DOE. And so, I'll shift it to Mark so
4 that Mark can address some of these concerns but
5 remember to introduce yourself and for the record.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You're good, maybe we
7 should just switch.

8 KAMAR SAMUELS: No thanks. I'm good.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Agreed by the way.

10 MARK RAMPERSANT: It's too early to switch. My
11 name is Mark Rampersant, Chief of Safety and
12 Prevention Partnerships and as the Chancellor just
13 mentioned, the NYPD School Safety falls within the
14 scope of the NYPD. So, we don't directly control
15 their hiring, training or deployment of school safety
16 agents. However, we partner with them on a daily
17 basis to ensure that our schools are safe. They are
18 viable members of our school community and do a great
19 job in supporting, supporting our students. Uhm,
20 currently, the School Safety headcount allotment is
21 4,015 school safety agents. We are experiencing a
massive shortfall as it relates to the School Safety
Agents deployed through our school with their current
headcount at 3,578. Some of what they've done to
support the shortfall of school safety

1
2 agents, especially in our elementary schools that only
3 have one school safety agent, is the assistant school
4 safety agent program that you probably heard of where
5 114 school safety agents have been hired and deployed
6 to supplement the single school safety agent at our
7 elementary schools.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Does the 3,578 include
9 those 114 assistant uh school safety officers?

10 MARK RAMPERSANT: Unfortunately it does.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And talk about some of the
12 issues that uh that you're facing or the NYPD is
13 facing in terms of hiring school safety agents.

14 MARK RAMPERSANT: Yeah, so in our daily
15 conversation with School Safety division, some of the
16 things that they were hearing is the prevailing wage.
17 The School Safety agent incoming wage is really low.
18 And so, it is very difficult for them to get takers,
19 or at least young people who are willing to remain
20 with the job, as there are so many other uhm,
21 competing agencies. You know when you were a school
safety agent, you'd rather work in a correctional
facility than a school, right? That's really telling
right? And so, they are competing with agencies such

1
2 as the Corrections Department and their own police
3 department to boot.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And what are some of the
5 strategies? So, it sounds like you're saying they
6 should be paid more.

7 MARK RAMPERSANT: I am saying that the current
8 wage is what is challenging for the school safety
9 division to keep their current allotment of school
10 safety agents.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: It's the same thing, same
12 thing.

13 MARK RAMPERSANT: It is - you said it, not me.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: We both said it. We both
15 said it. Beyond the wages, uhm what other
16 recruitment strategies is the DOE engaged in and you
17 know just for color for people who may not be aware
18 that we have principals in my district. Principals
19 throughout the city who want to do after school
20 programs, want to do programs on the weekend for
21 their kids, especially high risk students or in
communities that are of higher rates of violence or
crime and they are unable to do the programs that we
know work for engaging kids. The programs we know
make our kids safe because the school safety agents

1
2 are not available. Like, that is how important. It
3 is important. It is about keeping our kids safe and
4 making sure we are expanding the programming
5 available to them, so they can continue to be safe
6 and engage in safe activities.

7 So, what recruitment efforts are being made to
8 hire up the number of school safety agents that we
9 need to at least 4,015.

10 MARK RAMPERSANT: Sure, sure so first of all,
11 thank you very much for that. First and foremost if
12 there's any principal in our system that's having a
13 problem with staffing, school, after hours and on
14 weekends, please let me know of that right because
15 that is not a shortfall for us in terms of SSAs, as
16 many of our schools are closed during the weekend.
17 So, the SSAs are in fact available in that respect.
18 Some of the recruitment efforts are exactly what I
19 just shared.

20 They are going to local high schools and even
21 advertising for the school safety, assistant school
22 safety agent program with the hopes of getting recent
23 high school graduates to join the force right? So,
24 18 years old to 20 years old, that's the assistant
25 SSA program. So, that's one of the recruitment

1
2 efforts. The other is, advertising the role of the
3 school safety exam at many of our PTA meetings,
4 working with our parent coordinators to get the word
5 out in various different ways by which they get to
6 have face time with families and other bodies.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Let's go back to
8 evaluation of schools because this is for me like the
9 number one thing. A superintendent goes into a
10 school, let's say high school as you're talking
11 about, go into a school. Some of the quantitative
12 markers, test scores, attendance, credit accrual,
13 important things and number of students attending
14 college. Is that last one correct - that they're
15 looking at the number of students who get into a
16 college? Are they also looking and measuring the
17 number of students for example, that take the civil
18 service exam? Are they looking at measuring the
19 number of students that uhm, that get gainful
20 employment after high school, rather than go to
21 college?

22 KAMAR SAMUELS: That's a great question. So,
23 through our pathways work as well as our uhm, what
24 we're thinking about for uhm, our New York State
25 Inspires work. That's something that we uhm are

1
2 looking at in terms of preparing our young people for
3 both a career and beyond and also, uhm, when we think
4 of our CTE programs that we offer throughout the
5 city. Uhm, those are pieces that superintendents,
6 especially superintendents of high schools are
7 constantly thinking about as they do the evaluation
8 of principals. What are the offerings? What - how
9 are our young people uhm being prepared, not just
10 through the you know Regents requirements, the
11 graduation requirements that you're talking about but
12 the 21st Century skills that we know they'll need as
13 they enter the workforce.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right but again, just you
15 know try to drill down to like the very boring -

16 KAMAR SAMUELS: We look at the civil service.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, wouldn't that be like
18 if you're saying we have the shortfall of civil
19 service and you're saying you're encouraging all
20 these things, wouldn't it just make sense to measure,
21 just superintendents another datapoint to go and say
like, how many of your kids whether they're college
bound or not, I don't know. How many of your kids
are taking the civil service exam or how many of your
kids have a job lined up after high school? Wouldn't

1
2 that quantitative measure lend itself to the
3 importance of measuring and really help with that
4 pipeline at least a little bit, at least a little bit
5 to help recruit people for our civil service jobs?

6 KAMAR SAMUELS: So, in thinking about the - how
7 many of our young people have a job lined up for
8 after college, for after high school or how many of
9 our kids are getting to college. We have obviously
10 our College now work that we're doing. All of our
11 uhm, young people when they get to 12th grade, get an
12 acceptance letter from CUNY or SUNY school and we
13 have a plethora of uhm, certifications that our kids
14 are working on while in school. And so, they're
15 leaving school getting ready for uhm, EMS or FDNY and
16 so on and so forth. So, there is quite a few - and
17 LPN courses and so on, so there are quite a few
18 opportunities for us to think about you know are our
19 students ready to begin filling and applying. I just
20 don't know if we do this - we look at the civil
21 service side.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, I think it's worth
19 again going back to evaluations. I think if you know
20 college fantastic, love it. I went there, it's
21 great. Uhm, I think that they're measuring how many

1 kids get accepted to college is really critical. I
2 think as we're talking about getting more kids to
3 take the civil service exam. Getting kids to get a
4 certification. Really incredible things that are
5 happening in our schools if the superintendents go in
6 and just have that as a datapoint. It will lend
7 itself to the importance of the principal to think
8 about, you know, to get kids to take the civil
9 service exam, right? If you're evaluating it, then
10 principals, super- they're going to think about it
11 more.

11 And at least maybe a little bit. That will help
12 with some of the recruitment problem. I want to turn
13 it over to Council Member Felder for a second round.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah, I'm sorry. I had
14 asked, I had mentioned the four questions to the
15 Chancellor that I said I don't want an answer but I
16 didn't say that to you and since you came up and
17 you're in charge of security, I'm very serious, like
18 I'm think- in my mind, I'm thinking even if you have
19 hundreds right, and it's not because I spend too much
20 time on Netflix or anything else. We're living I
21 think in a very complicated world and the fact that
the officers that are supposed to be protecting the

1 kids are not armed. I don't understand, even if you
2 had as many as you wanted, I just don't get it. Like
3 you know if God forbid somebody walks into a school
4 even if you have ten officers there, right and that
5 guy you know has a machine gun or whatever else and
6 I'm not suggesting that even if they were armed,
7 nothing good happen God forbid. All I'm suggesting
8 is that as it is now it's - they are sitting ducks as
9 we say. So, I don't - can you respond to uh, -

10 KAMAR SAMUELS: I would have responded earlier to
11 if we had the time but I just - I just want to add a
12 couple of things or put some context to what you're
13 talking about.

14 In our school system, the first thing you said,
15 you can walk into a school and the first thing we
16 have is our safer access doors, right? So, you
17 actually have to get buzzed into a school. Now that
18 was not the case in the past. And secondly, you know
19 as a former principal and somebody who spent a lot of
20 time in schools, there are ways to protect ourselves
21 that don't necessarily involve heavy weaponry, right?
For example, we have a general response protocol that
makes sure that we practice and drill lockdown drills

1
2 across our system so that schools can keep themselves
3 safe until first responders arrive, right?

4 And I think you know while they do not have uhm
5 weapons, they do have a direct contact to our
6 precinct and - and, and uhm, you know if you if -
7 don't try to test this but if something ever happened
8 where uh, uh a school safety agent goes citywide,
9 uhm, you know having experienced this, the response
10 level of, of, of our NYPD partners is quite swift and
11 actually protective - to protect our school
12 communities. And Mark, you know I'll give you the
13 opportunity to add anything else.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Uh, uh, but hold on a
15 minute, he interrupted you, the Chancellor. So, I'm
16 sorry, I mean you opened it up to me. I would just
17 say that - that the you know we- I still wish you
18 good luck and everything else, seriously. And the
19 only reason I made some jokes is because you're
20 sitting there for hours under you know and I want you
21 to remember me. That's all.

22 What you just said is counter intuitive to what's
23 going on in this country. Yeah, absolutely. If you
24 want uh, your counsel said that she's willing to
25 spend time with me. I'm willing to spend time with

1
2 you. The cases that exist were different - not in
3 New York, in other states where unfortunately there
4 were tragedies. You're describing exactly the case
5 in those schools where they had very similar systems
6 to what you're describing.

7 So, you know, all I'm you know - that's why I, I,
8 I, I'm not going to debate the issue because we
9 clearly have very strong opinions or feelings about
10 what would work - what's necessary or not.

11 I still believe wholeheartedly and unfortunately
12 that the, the schools as they are now with the - with
13 everything that you mentioned, needs - that's it.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Why don't you finish that
15 sentence. The suspense is going to -

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Huh? No, that's for the
17 next episode.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Alright.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: No, I'm just saying like
20 I mean, I don't want to drive you nuts. It's like
21 when we have - I have an argument with my siblings.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: You know no one wins and
in the purpose, I - look, in my heart of hearts, I
know that you - there's no way in the world that you

1
2 wouldn't do anything that you could to protect the
3 children. There's - I'm not suggesting anything but
4 that. I'm just saying to you is that what I - the
5 cases that have taken place throughout the country
6 had very similar uh, you know things going on and
7 unfortunately it's just not for the time, for the
8 day, you know the time we live in. I just feel
9 strongly that that's you know - that's all.

10 KAMAR SAMUELS: I did interrupt Mark.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, I'm just going to
12 note uh Council Member Wong is going to be next, so
13 Mark why don't you answer and then we'll go over to
14 Council Member Wong.

15 MARK RAMPERSANT: I'll be super brief. Thank you
16 very much for your comments uhm, and as the Chan-

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I just want you to know
18 that the Chancellor thanked everyone and said that
19 was a good question. I was the only one that when I
20 mentioned that he didn't say it was a good question
21 but I know it was a good question.

MARK RAMPERSANT: It wasn't a good question. It
was actually a statement but -

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: No, I want to thank you.

1
2 MARK RAMPERSANT: I'm going to thank you for your
3 question and your statement. I'm also going to thank
4 you for recognizing that here in New York City Public
5 Schools, we're going to do everything that we can to
6 keep young people safe. And as the Chancellor
7 shared, there are different measures by which we're
8 doing that, including the new technology door locking
9 system, right? And so, that is one of the things
10 that's going to avail us the opportunity to allow our
11 school safety agents to use the one tool that they
12 have at their fingertips to get the entire police
13 department to respond.

14 So, you say school, you say gun, they're coming,
15 right? So, those are some of the things that we have
16 different then they have outside the state but we
17 definitely recognize that there's still more to do to
18 keep our young people safe right? And it's
19 everyone's responsibility and not that of just the
20 school safety agent. So, I appreciate your comments
21 and I appreciate you recognizing and while my
colleague has invited you to spend some time to talk
more about her respective area, I won't do the same.

So, yeah. I'm just kidding. I will be more than
happy to talk with you.

1 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Council Member Wong.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you Chair. Uhm, I
3 just wanted to chime in uh with Council Member Felder
4 that uhm, despite all the technology or the AI and 20
5 years from now, we'll still need our auto mechanics,
6 our electricians, our plumbers and they uh - they
7 will all when I went to high school here, their all
8 graduates from vocational schools in New York City
9 and I notice just like everybody else and then those
10 schools have been disappearing. So, I would say that
11 uh, look into the matter and then open these schools
12 so we don't need college graduates for these kids -
13 for these students to become like plumbers. You know
14 we need them right? So, uh, uh, look into that and
15 see uh if you can reopen to these programs. That's
16 my first question. Can you talk about that?

17 KAMAR SAMUELS: Sure, uhm, look, I think uh
18 across the system, we are thinking about multiple
19 pathways for our young people and some, of course, we
20 want to do College Now courses. We want to have
21 access to college but some involve early career or
immediate career opportunities, which we do have
schools that are pursuing. Our CTE programs are very
expansive and we have our Co-Op Tech program. That is

1
2 if you want a nice uh haircut and if you want to get
3 your car checked, you can go to Co-Op Tech. They do
4 an amazing job and so, uh, I see Jane is here if you
5 a new glass- a new pair of glasses you could go to
6 Co-Op Tech like I did. And so, there are significant
7 opportunities around our, our, our, NYC Public
8 Schools for young people to get in uhm, vocational or
9 CTE programs but they're not like the vocational
10 programs that you're describing. They're really
11 setting up our young people with 21st Century skills
12 that it can go into and get certification to get into
13 a career right after college - right after high
14 school and so Jane, if you want to add anything
15 there.

16 JANE: Yes, a little back up. I think uhm, nice
17 to see you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Please state your name for
19 the record. Nice to see you.

20 JANE MARTINEZ DOWLING: Jane Martinez Dowling,
21 uhm, so one of the things that we have focused on as
we've done our pathways work is actually
apprenticeships. As you probably know there was a
law passed in the fall, which uh the civil service
law, which will now allow our seniors to go straight

1
2 into an apprenticeship and receive a lot of those
3 benefits that they weren't able to before. So, Chair
4 Dinowitz, you are correct that uhm, we are really
5 canvassing all of our agencies. Many of our
6 departments here are actually uhm very excited to
7 have apprenticeships but specifically uhm, what we
8 did want to say is that it is not as common as all
9 the other pathways that we have but we have had about
10 692 apprenticeship - apprentices straight out of high
11 school.

12 About half of those have actually also gone to
13 college part time. Because what we are seeing is
14 that the more opportunities we give around career
15 connected learning, the more that students really
16 want to know more about how to excel in their
17 careers.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay, thank you. Uhm, my
19 next question is, it's a fact that many middle school
20 students are not required to read books, novels or
21 nonfiction as part of the curriculum. Uhm, can you
address that and will you commit that they will
require students to read at least one or two books in
6th, 7, and 8th grade?

1
2 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, so this is linked to the
3 conversation that we had earlier about when some -
4 when are we a system of schools versus a school
5 system. I think when we are thinking about the
6 expansion of New York City Reads into the uhm, the
7 middle school grades, what you will is that a lot of
8 our curriculum uhm, curricula do call for like
9 reading uhm, you know hope books and so on. And so,
10 you'll see that improving significantly in the
11 upcoming years as we are definitely thinking about -
12 about that and what do you know about uhm, middle
13 school teachers is that they do care about their
14 books. They care about comparing books. They care
15 about comparing themes. Uhm, they may not be as
16 strong at teaching kids to read but they can teach
17 them to get excited about reading and make these
18 connections and the First Deputy Chancellor, I don't
19 know if you want to add anything.

20 DANIELLE GIUNTA: I mean I wouldn't really
21 necessarily add much more to what Chancellor said but
when we are thinking about that next phase and we are
looking with our curricular option partners, this is
a conversation that we're putting front and center

1
2 because we know we've gotten some feedback about that
3 as well.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you. Thank you.
5 Thank you Chair. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member
7 Wong. Uhm, one other - first of all, agreed reading,
8 reading books. It's like a very exciting thing. If
9 you were here while the cameras were broken, you
10 would have known that we had some great books being
11 recommended and Chancellor, do you want to share
12 again what your book recommendation is?

13 KAMAR SAMUELS: James.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: James, perfect, alright.
15 So, all the kids out there who are watching this, all
16 - many of you, uh make sure you go out and go to your
17 local library and borrow James.

18 I would recommend Animal Farm myself.

19 KAMAR SAMUELS: Good recommendation, I like it.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: They're both good. I just
21 want to ask again, in that same category of
evaluation, we have restorative justice programs in
our schools. Again, we talk a lot about the input.
I have used it in my classroom, incredible. Uhm,
we're going to ask for the data right. How many

1 schools, how many classrooms. What I'm really
2 interested in is how the DOE measures the
3 effectiveness of restorative justice programming and
4 what measures are you using to evaluate its
5 effectiveness, whether it's in the classroom
6 academically. Whether it's student suspension rate.
7 Uh, satisfaction rate, really anything. What
8 measures are you using to evaluate its effectiveness?

9 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Not its existence.

11 KAMAR SAMUELS: No, I, I, I, I agree and I
12 understand the question. I think, you know as a
13 former principal during in the South Bronx during the
14 Stop and Frisk era, I really relied on restorative
15 approaches. We got better at restorative approaches
16 and I think it's important to our system to continue
17 to move towards uhm, build a capacity of our school
18 uh, school staff as well as uhm, our principals to
19 really take on these approaches and for me it was
20 always looking at in the classroom, incidents,
21 looking at our suspension rates, that those were -
that you know continue to go down. Once those, those
- once we build the capacity of our staff to really

1
2 address these concerns. But I'll turn it over to
3 Mark Rampersant to kind of speak to more of this.

4 MARK RAMPERSANT: Again, thank you for that
5 question and I appreciate you preferencing by saying
6 that this is a measure that you used in your
7 classroom. And you saw the effectiveness and one of
8 the ways by which you were able to determine whether
9 or not that was working is by the response from the
10 young people, right? Whether or not you will have an
11 incident in the class. Whether or not there was
12 suspension and so forth and that's just some of the
13 ways by which we measure this very, very important
14 work. It is really about the climate and culture of
15 this school as well because you can actually feel the
16 effects of the restorative approach in our respective
17 schools.

18 So, to answer your question with 500,000 young
19 people having access to some level of restorative
20 practices. The measures of which we just recently
21 shared are the ways by which we determine that the
program is working, less suspensions or less reliance
on suspensions. Less incidents in young people uhm,
uhm, adopting a conversation, versus a physical
confrontation are some of the ways by which. The way

1
2 by which adults respond to young people. Instead of
3 using a punitive approach, they are talking more to
4 young people and trying to understand their why. So,
5 those are some of the things that we use to measure
6 the effectiveness of the program as well. It is a
7 program that has yielded very, very good returns for
8 us with 904 students taking part in our restorative
9 justice actions team. We definitely see that there
10 is a great - a positive effect in this initiative for
11 our schools.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And you do have the data
13 associated with it and the schools that have engaged
14 in certain types of restorative justice, you have the
15 data that correlates to lower suspensions that fewer
16 I guess reports or deans referrals, that data exists.

17 MARK RAMPERSANT: Yes, yes, we definitely have
18 the data that we can share with you for those schools
19 that really dive deep in direct services for
20 restorative justice. Remember it's also a mindset
21 shift, right? So, you were shifting the minds of all
adults in the building to take a restorative approach
as opposed to a disciplinary approach but we
definitely have the data to support the positive
measures and outcomes, yes.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Good and I would add the
3 thing that I think is spoken about a little less but
4 is very important is the academic component.

5 KAMAR SAMUELS: Absolutely.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Which is when a student is
7 comfortable with themselves, comfortable simply
8 saying I need help or I got this wrong. That is a
9 huge hurdle to overcome, especially in math from my
10 experience. When they so often want to say, is this
11 the right answer, the wrong answer? Just being able
12 to say like I need help uhm, is a critically
13 important component that I have found with
14 restorative justice. So, I am uhm, would like to
15 continue this conversation.

16 MARK RAMPERSANT: Absolutely.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: About both how it's being
18 implemented and also the quantitative measurable
19 results of it because we also used when I was a
20 teacher, third parties to uhm, do the restorative
21 justice training and I imagine some are more
effective than others. So, I'm looking forward to
continuing the conversation around you know which of
these organizations are most effective? How should
we invest in them and divest from the ones that just

1
2 aren't doing as good a job, all for the benefit of
3 you know the safety and academics of our kids.

4 MARK RAMPERSANT: 100 percent and just remember,
5 the goal is to create a school system that's
6 sustainable.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right.

8 MARK RAMPERSANT: Right and that we are training
9 our staff to be self reliant in that respect.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Great. For all of you up
11 here and all of you sitting over there, I want to
12 thank you so much for your time, for your testimony
13 today. We look forward with some of the follow up
14 data but most importantly for the continued
15 conversations about making sure our school system is
16 working as best as it can for the benefit of our
17 children. As little as babies to as big as you know
18 whole grownups. So, thank you so much for your time
19 today. We look forward to those - that work
20 together.

21 KAMAR SAMUELS: Thank you for having us and as a
reminder to you as a former teacher, if you had kids
in here, they would say it's mad cold in here mister.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I thought they would say
it's brick but uh -

1
2 KAMAR SAMUELS: That's true. They would say that
3 too.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: In a moment, we'll be
5 hearing from the School Construction Authority.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Folks, if we could just take
7 the conversation outside of the Chambers as we
8 transition. Please take the conversation outside of
9 the Chambers please. Thank you.

10 Please move the conversation outside of the
11 Chambers, please move the conversation outside of the
12 Chambers.

13 Everybody please find your seats. Please find
14 your seats. Take conversations outside the Chambers.
15 Please find your seats.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Will the School
17 Construction Authority, please join us. If you have
18 conversations, you may take them outside. Thank you.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Please find your seats.
20 Please find your seats. Take conversations outside
21 the Chambers.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay. Got it. Got it.
23 I'd like to invite the School Construction Authority
24 to come join us. Okay, they will be joining us in
25 about a moment.

1
2 Great, alright, you hear our first book
3 recommendation of the afternoon is The Bell Jar by
4 Silvia Plath, Council Member Felder.

5 Okay, good afternoon and welcome to the Education
6 Committees hearing on the School Construction
7 Authorities Fiscal 2025 to 2029 Capital Plan and
8 Fiscal '27 Preliminary Capital Budget and Commitment
9 Plan for the Department of Education.

10 Today's hearing will be primarily focused on the
11 \$21 billion proposed February amendment to the Fiscal
12 2025, 2029 Capital Plan. SCA's Capital Plan is an
13 important element of the city's education
14 programming, as it provides the infrastructure for
15 learning, extra curricular activities and enrichment
16 that our students crave.

17 Every new classroom, cafeteria, playground, and
18 educational space is a step toward a better learning
19 environment for our city's students. The plan is
20 mostly unchanged from the version issued in November.
21 There are 33,417 seats funded in the plan. The same
number as has been funded since the states enacted
Fiscal 2025 budget added an additional \$2 billion to
help comply with the States Class Size Law.

1
2 The \$33,417 seats funded under this plan is less
3 than the 70,000 that SCA has previously testified to
4 needing to reach class size compliance. However,
5 seats are still opening up from the prior capital
6 plan and SCA has been prioritizing smaller new
7 capacity projects that can open seats in a more
8 targeted way across a larger number of schools faster
9 than full school openings.

10 We hope to hear more on how the SCA plans to open
11 seats across districts in need in a timely manner.
12 Accessibility, sits at \$800 million, an investment
13 that will bring much needed projects to schools but
14 is not sufficient to bring all schools to full
15 accessibility, meaning we are still many years away
16 from reaching maximum, practical accessibility.

17 SCA has previously discussed how they look to add
18 accessibility elements to other projects, however,
19 and when we look forward to hearing how this can
20 bolster the accessibility program and get more space
21 at our schools to be accessible for everyone.

We also look forward to getting updates on
important capital improvement projects like internet
speed upgrades and facility enhancements. The status
of the removal of temporary classroom units and the

1
2 status of new construction projects at many new
3 schools across the city.

4 We will cover these issues and others and hope to
5 get some additional transparency and guidance on how
6 to best support SCA in their work. I would like to
7 recognize that we have Council Members Wong, uhm
8 Felder and Majority Whip Hanks and Council Member
9 Joseph.

10 I would like to thank the Administration for
11 coming to testify or the School Construction
12 Authority for coming to testify before the Committee
13 today.

14 Now, as you are not officially an Administration,
15 I don't have to administer the oath but hopefully
16 you'll be telling us the truth anyway.

17 You may, you may begin your testimony.

18 NINA KUBOTA: Good afternoon Chair Dinowitz and
19 members of the New York City Council Education
20 Committee. My name is Nina Kubota and I am President
21 and CEO of the New York City School Construction
Authority.

I am joined by the Deputy Chancellor for School
Operations Kevin Moran who you were with all morning
from New York City Public Schools and by Cora Lui,

1
2 Vice President of Capital Plan Management for the
3 SCA. We are pleased to be here today to discuss the
4 proposed SCA New York City Public Schools Fiscal
5 Years 2025 to 2029 Five Year Capital Plan, which
6 currently totals \$20.97 billion.

7 Since the SCA's inception in 1988, we have opened
8 over 319,000 school seats. More than the entire
9 student population in the 5th largest school district
10 in the nation in Las Vegas. In our history, through
11 Fiscal Year '25, we have obligated roughly \$77
12 billion, which equates to about 17,000 construction
13 projects.

14 We are immensely proud of our history and I am
15 happy to be before you today to talk about the future
16 we are working towards for the public school students
17 of New York City.

18 Our current five year capital plan spans fiscal
19 years 2025 to 2029 and is broken up into four main
20 categories: capacity; capital improvement; healthy
21 schools; and mandated. Each category is dedicated to
addressing key elements of the buildings in our
portfolio. From safety and security to making our
building sustainable, adding needed capacity and
enhancing student learning environments. We know our

1
2 work is vital to how our students learn, play and
3 grow and we strive each and every day toward our
4 mission of achieving the highest standards of
5 excellence in safety, quality and integrity.

6 We believe in our mission so much, so strongly
7 that last month, we hosted a forum bringing together
8 the top architects and engineers in the country to
9 launch our Design Excellence program.

10 Our team at the SCA is striving to push the
11 boundaries of what is possible in our fiscal school
12 spaces, understanding the direct impact of
13 educational facilities on learning outcomes.

14 We have told the architecture and engineering
15 communities that New York City students are the most
16 important clients in the world and we are demanding
17 nothing short of the very best.

18 This past September, we celebrated the opening of
19 our largest building ever, a 3,066 seat high school
20 in Woodside Queens. We are immensely proud of this
21 project as it was designed from start to finish by
our own in-house architects and engineers. This
site, which once stood as a big box store and then as
a COVID testing center is now home to four high
schools, including a D75 school.

1
2 While we are incredibly proud of this project, it
3 was just one of the 15 projects that were completed
4 by September 2025, adding 6,600 seats to the public
5 school portfolio.

6 Our new schools are funded through the capacity
7 category. In the proposed February 2026 amendment to
8 the plan, we have allocated a total of \$6.98 billion
9 to support seat creation throughout the city. This
10 category is further broken down into distinct
11 programs to address specific needs.

12 The first and most recognizable is new capacity,
13 which totals \$6.13 billion. This program funds our
14 new schools and new seats and existing schools and
15 will be used to comply with the state's Class Size
16 Law. This funding will allow us to create over 3,300
17 seats citywide through various types of projects,
18 including new buildings, additions, annexes, mixed
19 use buildings, lease spaces, and interior room
20 conversions that provide targeted support to schools
21 in existing buildings.

To date, there have been 14,318 seats sited in
this plan. Of those, 1,349 seats are newly
identified in this February amendment from 8 new
projects.

1
2 Roughly 20 months into our current Capital Plan,
3 I'm happy to report that we have sited 43 percent of
4 the seats currently funded but capacity is more than
5 just the creation of new school seats. In addition
6 to the new capacity program, there are three other
7 programs that are included in new capacity category:
8 replacement, temporary structure removal, and early
9 education. The replacement program is currently \$400
10 million and is allocated to schools whose building
11 must be replaced. Most commonly due to an expiring
12 lease.

13 A new building for PS 106 in Queens is an example
14 of a vital project that is being funded through this
15 program and is scheduled to be bid and awarded by the
16 end of June and will open in September 2029.

17 The Temporary Structure Removal program funded at
18 \$250 million allows us to continue the work of
19 removing transportable classroom units and other
20 temporary structures that were placed in school yards
21 during the enrollment boom of the late 90's and early
2000's but have become more permanent than any of us
wanted.

Out of the roughly 350 TCU's we started with, we
have only 23 remaining without a removal plan at just

1
2 five sites. In addition, there are 54 sites that
3 have temporary structures and 16 of them already have
4 an identified removal plan.

5 Through this program, we can remove what in many
6 instances have become an eyesore for the school and
7 surrounding community and either build the needed
8 capacity at the school or return an enhanced brand
9 new playground back to our students.

10 A great example of the impact of this program is
11 the project we did at PS 195, 196 in the Bronx. We
12 removed one of the temporary structures, which
13 allowed us to open an addition in 2024, which
14 included not only 25 classrooms but also a new
15 kitchen and cafeteria, library, art and music rooms,
16 science resource room, exercise and playrooms as well
17 as reading and other resource rooms.

18 Now, we plan on bidding and awarding the next
19 phase of this project, which will remove the second
20 temporary building on the school's property and
21 deliver a beautiful outdoor play space. The last
program in the capacity category is early childhood,
which funded at \$200 million allows us to continue
the transfer of the former ACS sites to the New York
City Public Schools portfolio.

1
2 As I have outlined, our capacity work encompasses
3 a wide range of projects but we understand the topic
4 on everyone's mind right now is class size. Today
5 and as we did through a joint letter, when we
6 published the February amendment, we reaffirm our
7 strong and coordinated partnership with City Hall and
8 New York City Public Schools to meet class size
9 compliance requirements. This is a shared systemwide
10 effort that aligns capital investments with
11 operational strategies to deliver tangible results
12 for students. We remain fully committed to ensuring
13 every student learns in an environment that supports
14 stronger outcomes and individualized attention.

15 Since the start of the Mamdani Administration,
16 there is a laser focus on class size compliance and
17 the SCA and New York City Public Schools partnership
18 has strengthened. Meeting Class Size Mandates at the
19 scale requires thoughtful planning and execution that
20 goes beyond just building and adding more seats.

21 We have taken a complete 360 degree view of the
school portfolio, going sub district by sub district,
looking at both individual schools, as well as
clusters of schools to identify targeted solutions

1
2 from a range of options that include capital and non
3 capital strategies.

4 We've also aligned capital strategies with New
5 York City Public Schools survey data from all
6 principals as part of this effort. We now have a
7 clearer understanding of our facilities from our
8 principals who know their buildings best. We are
9 examining where additions and annexes are possible
10 and aligning that with the survey data.

11 We've also taken a holistic, geographic look as
12 to where key real estate is needed that can alleviate
13 several schools in the surrounding areas.

14 Lastly, we have also identified key land use
15 changes and improvements that will make it easier for
16 us to identify sites and site schools and we look
17 forward to working with the teams at City Hall on
18 these potential actions. It is the partnership
19 between our two agencies led by City Hall and the
20 marrying of capital and non-capital strategies that
21 will allow us to achieve Class Size Compliance.

Our work is guided by four core principals:
Maximize existing space across the system to its
fullest potential; pursue practical quick wins such
as room conversions that rapidly increase

1
2 instructional capacity; target investments to schools
3 and districts with the greatest space needs and
4 advance equity by prioritizing underserved
5 communities with the highest deficits. Every seat we
6 site, is one seat closer to a smaller class size for
7 our students. We are working in coordination with
8 our partners in labor at the United Federation of
9 Teachers and Council of School Supervisors and
10 Administrators.

11 The data shows smaller class sizes are critical
12 to student success but achieving them requires
13 sustained investment, strategic execution and
14 continued collaboration across all levels of
15 government.

16 With the right resources and flexibility, we are
17 confident in our ability to deliver the high quality
18 learning environments New York City students deserve.
19 We are committed to this work and look forward to
20 sharing more with the Council in the coming months.
21 But let us not only focus on our new buildings.
Projects in our existing buildings actually make up
the majority of our work. With a portfolio whose
buildings average age is 70 years old and with 200
buildings over 100 years old, there's never a

1
2 shortage of work to be done to keep our buildings
3 safe, water tight and modern.

4 In this proposed amendment, we have allocated
5 \$7.95 billion for work in our existing buildings
6 through the Capital Investment category. The Capital
7 Investment of the plan is divided into two primary
8 programs. The Capital Improvement Program or CIP
9 totaling \$3.43 billion and school enhancement
10 projects totaling \$2.91 billion.

11 Together, these investments support our continued
12 commitment to maintaining safe, modern and inspiring
13 facilities for students across the city. Through
14 this work, we expand and modernize critical spaces
15 within our buildings, helping ensure that our
16 facilities support equity and excellence.

17 The CIP program focuses on essential upgrades and
18 major repairs that keep our buildings safe and
19 functioning at the highest standards. These projects
20 include both exterior and interior building work,
21 addressing life safety and security systems as well
as key structural elements such as roofs, parapets
and windows. Maintaining this infrastructure is
vital to protecting the safety and wellbeing of the

1
2 students, staff and communities who rely on our
3 school facilities every day.

4 In the current plan to date, we have awarded 156
5 projects under the CIP umbrella focusing mostly on
6 exterior modernizations totaling roughly \$1.1
7 billion. The School Enhancement program totals \$2.91
8 billion and is designed to strengthen educational
9 opportunities and improve the day to day learning
10 experience for students. These investments support
11 school technology upgrades with data and bandwidth
12 enhancements. The real alignment of existing
13 facilities to better meet instructional needs,
14 bathroom renovations, science lab improvements, and
15 programs such as innovative diverse equitable,
16 accessible spaces and career connected learning.

17 One of our biggest priorities in the past several
18 plans has been to increase the accessibility of our
19 existing schools. I know this has been a top
20 priority for the Council for many years as well and
21 we appreciate your advocacy and partnership in this
key area.

This plan allocates \$800 million towards making
our buildings accessible to school communities. An
example of our progress together, New York City

1
2 Public Schools and the SCA undertook a full program
3 accessibility project at PS 236 in Brooklyn, which
4 also houses a D75 school. This project was completed
5 in June of 2025. Thanks to this work the building
6 accessibility profile rating changed from not
7 accessible to fully accessible.

8 Some of our work in this comprehensive project
9 includes the provision of accessible entrances,
10 ramps, lifts and elevators. Student accessible
11 restrooms, a fire alarm system with strobe lighting.
12 Altogether improving safety and inclusivity for all
13 occupants.

14 For the FY 2025 to 2029 Capital Plan, we will
15 build on the successes of the previous plan.
16 Continuing our focus on citywide equity. In
17 collaboration with our advocate partners and other
18 stakeholders, we established new citywide goals. We
19 will prioritize projects that increase the
20 accessibility of all primary buildings across every
21 school district, raising the accessibility threshold
from 33 percent to 40 percent. Additionally, New
York City Public Schools will focus on improving
accessibility in District 75 across the entire city
aiming to ensure that 75 percent of those buildings

1
2 are at least partially accessible with 50 percent
3 fully accessible.

4 We anticipate that our efforts to achieve our
5 goals will improve accessibility in over 60 school
6 buildings. Further advancing our commitment to
7 progress and growth. As you know, in the FY25 to
8 FY29 plan we created a category called healthy
9 schools, which focuses efforts and funding on the
10 health and wellbeing of our students, our buildings
11 and in turn our city. Most of the \$2.32 billion
12 allocated for healthy schools category is for
13 electrification.

14 In this plan we have \$1.4 billion allocated to
15 electrify existing school buildings and convert them
16 to all electric heating. This extensive work
17 involves replacing fossil fuel burning boilers with
18 high efficiency all electric heat pumps that will
19 provide ventilation, cooling, and heating for the
20 entire school including their kitchens, cafeterias,
21 auditoriums, and gymnasiums.

Buildings account for nearly 70 percent of the
city's greenhouse gas emissions. With over 1,500
school buildings in our portfolio. Our work
represents a significant portion of the city's

1
2 efforts to reduce our carbon footprint and combat
3 climate change.

4 Since the electrification program was initiated,
5 we have 18 school electrification projects in
6 construction with more in the pipeline. Combining
7 planned funding and additional funding from DCAS, we
8 aim to fund over 30 more electrification projects in
9 this plan. We're also continuing to explore ways to
10 reduce our reliance on the electrical grid with
11 renewable sources such as geothermal and solar in
12 addition to researching innovative solutions that
13 extract heat from thermal sources.

14 \$390 million is dedicated under the healthy
15 schools category to fiscal education facilities and
16 reflects our commitment to ensuring that every
17 student has access to safe, modern spaces, including
18 gyms, playgrounds, athletic fields, and swimming
19 pools that support healthy lifestyles, teamwork, joy
20 movement while fostering stronger school communities
21 and more vibrant neighborhood spaces.

These investments not only enhance the student
experience during the school day but also create
welcoming shared assets that communities can take
pride in beyond school hours.

1
2 Also, in this category, there's \$150 million for
3 the cafeteria enhancement experience, which is
4 intended to improve the overall atmosphere,
5 functionality and student experience in school
6 cafeterias. It focuses on creating welcoming student
7 centered dining spaces through upgraded equipment,
8 improved layout and flow, visual enhancements, and
9 supports that encourage healthier choices and
10 smoother meal service.

11 The goal is to make cafeterias more engaging,
12 efficient and align with New York City Public Schools
13 commitment to nourishing students in a positive
14 environment. Since the inception of this initiative,
15 we have completed 295 sites with 50 additional sites
16 to be completed by the end of August.

17 Lastly, in this proposed amendment, we have
18 allocated \$3.72 billion in our mandated category to
19 meet code agency remediation and other requirements
20 of Local Law or city agency mandates.

21 It also includes funding for wrap up insurance
for contractors on our projects as well as prior plan
completion funding to finish the projects that
started in the previous plan. As I close, I want to
thank the Council for their longstanding partnership

1
2 to our schools, which is evident not just through
3 your advocacy but in the funding that is currently in
4 our plan through Reso A allocations. These are
5 important projects for our schools and the community
6 and we thank you for your continued support.

7 I would like to leave you with a few images of a
8 few of the buildings we will be opening in September,
9 bringing more capacity to these neighborhoods and
10 furthering our work to comply with class size.

11 So, in addition, what's that? Well, we could
12 just skip it. IS at 4012 Fort Hamilton Parkway in
13 Borough Park Brooklyn. The next slide. Uhm, PS at
14 4610 70th Street in Woodside Queens. In addition at
15 PS 116 in Jamaica Queens. Addition at IS 216 in
16 Fresh Meadows Queens. It's not, it's the middle
17 school and this slide is actually the middle school
18 that's serving an annex and feeder school for John
19 Dewey High School in Graves and Brooklyn.

20 We look forward to celebrating the opening of
21 these buildings and all of the over 4,600 seats. We
are opening in this September with you, the schools,
and all of our partners. I thank you for allowing me
the opportunity to testify before you today and we'll
be happy to answer any questions you may have.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for your
3 testimony. Uhm, did I see bicycle parking in one of
4 those buildings?

5 I'm sorry, I kind of have a law about that.
6 We're trying to - a lot of students wanted to bike to
7 school and they couldn't so, you're putting bicycle
8 parking there. Do it in all your schools. Uhm, I
9 want to start with your testimony. I have a
10 question, I just want to clarify, uhm, uh the impact
11 of a program you did at 195, 196 in the Bronx and on
12 the mainland. You removed one of the temporary
13 structures, allowed you to open an addition in '24.
14 25 classes and you tout kitchen cafeteria, library
15 art and music rooms, science research rooms, exercise
16 and playrooms, and reading in other resource rooms.
17 This is in your testimony on my pa- I think my font
18 is a lot smaller than yours, so it's fine. Sara,
19 very good.

20 And then on the next page, uhm, you spoke about
21 practical, quick wins, such as room conversions that
22 rapidly increase instructional capacity. What I want
23 to know is how many in these conversions, how many
24 art rooms? How many exercise rooms? How many
25 libraries have had to be converted to regular

1
2 classroom space? Have we lost any of our arts,
3 music, library exercise etc., places to comply with
4 the Class Size Law?

5 NINA KUBOTA: We have not converted any of the
6 art rooms or any specialty classrooms for that
7 purpose. We are looking primarily at either uh
8 unused offices or larger classrooms that could be
9 subdivided.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You came up like you
11 wanted to ask - uhm, so in the previous testimony,
12 DOE said uh that enrollment, they're projecting it's
13 going to be flat. Does the SCA have a calculation
14 for how the 46, 56, new seats slated to be added
15 September 2026 would impact the city's overall class
16 size compliance assuming that enrollment does stay
17 flat?

18 ERIN JAHANT: I'm sorry, can you repeat that one
19 more time?

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes, how will the new
21 seats, the 4,656 new seats impact the city's
22 compliance with the Class Size Law assuming as it was
23 testified earlier that enrollment is flat.

24 ERIN JAHANT: I mean again, as we've shared
25 before space is a critical next part of the glass

1
2 size implementation. As these seats open, we'll -
3 you know we're working with schools and working with
4 SCA in this comprehensive process to ensure that
5 they're utilized by schools. Uhm, and uh in order to
6 further class size implementation.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, first of all, can
8 you state your name for the record?

9 ERIN JAHANT: Erin Jahant.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I didn't quite
11 understand that answer. Right, we have more seats
12 coming in. Uhm, how do you have an estimate as to
13 how these new seats will impact the city's compliance
14 with the Class Size Law?

15 ERIN JAHANT: Sorry, it's been a very long day.
16 Those chairs are not the most comfortable chairs.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You're doing great. Pull
18 one up there, they're very comfortable yeah.

19 ERIN JAHANT: Uhm, so you're referring to the
20 4,600 new seats? Sorry.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: The 4,656 new seats.

ERIN JAHANT: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That you said will be
added in September, how that will impact the class
size compliance.

1
2 ERIN JAHANT: So, when we looked at it last - or
3 for '25, '26 exemptions at the 17 schools that were
4 impacted by these seats, uhm increased compliance by
5 about one percentage point.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Uhm, I didn't ask about
7 exemptions, I'm sorry. Can you repeat your answer?
8 I'm ask - am I asking it wrong? Let me ask it again.

9 ERIN JAHANT: I'm sorry.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: It's okay.

11 ERIN JAHANT: I apologize, it's been a very long
12 day here so let me-

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I know, yeah, everyone
14 take a breath. We've been here for many hours. For
15 everyone who is here since this morning, thank you
16 for being here. Thank you for testifying or thank
17 you for planning to testify. Long day, let me ask
18 one more time. You testified 4,656 new seats.

19 ERIN JAHANT: Yeah.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Correct? Okay. That will
21 be opening in September of this year, 2026. Does
that impact the city's compliance with the Class Size
Law from the state?

ERIN JAHANT: Yes, it will impact compliance.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Great.

1 ERIN JAHANT: Thank you for bearing with me. Uhm

2 -

3 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: In what way?

4 ERIN JAHANT: Uhm, in what way?

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: To what degree?

6 ERIN JAHANT: I think to - so sorry, we read this
7 - we read this a little bit differently when we first
8 saw it but I think what we can do is take a look. I
9 want to take that back to talk to our team. The
10 exact impact on compliance uhm varies based on how
11 the schools are utilizing their space and again, uh,
12 enrollment at that point. But let us take that back
13 and make sure I get a proper response from our data
14 folks.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, it is under the
16 assumption as was testified earlier, under oath that
17 enrollment will be flat. That was based on principal
18 survey data.

19 Usually when you see a post it note passed, that
20 means there's an addition to the answer. Uhm, and
21 also, we would like it broken down by community
school district as well. Okay. Uhm, there are seats
that have been allocated by district and subdistrict
but not sited and then seats that are currently

1
2 designated as citywide. Is SCA Prioritizing working
3 on either of these two categories of seats more than
4 the other and if so, why?

5 NINA KUBOTA: Uhm, no, we are not prioritizing
6 one over the other. We're working actually both
7 simultaneously, so.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Does the SCA
9 believe that all districts that need additional seats
10 to be in compliance with the class size law, have
11 enough seats funded and designated in this plan?

12 NINA KUBOTA: Uh, I think we're still kind of
13 working through that. Uh, I think when in your uh
14 opening statement, you talked about 70,000 seats.
15 Uhm, it's certainly come down from there but we're
16 still going through the data. I think I mentioned in
17 my testimony about us really I think being very laser
18 focused on both operational and capital strategies to
19 address class size. So, we've been working
20 tirelessly which is why Erin and I are very tired
21 today. To come up with a solid plan for every single
school.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, you previous - or
the SCA rather, has previously testified or shared

1
2 that 70,000 was the targeted number but you are now
3 amending that. What is the new target?

4 NINA KUBOTA: We don't have the new target yet
5 but we're still working through the data.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Help me understand that,
7 you had a target of 70,000. You don't have a target
8 now?

9 NINA KUBOTA: We do not because the 70,000 was
10 just based on brand new seats. Uh, rather than any
11 non-capital or operational strategies, so we suspect
12 that it will come down utilizing operational
13 strategies.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, when you expect - I
15 mean what's your timeline. When do you expect to
16 have a target number of new seats that need to be
17 added to reach this 100 percent compliance?

18 NINA KUBOTA: I say in the coming months, a
19 couple of months.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: A couple months?

21 NINA KUBOTA: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, should I set an
alarm on my phone?

NINA KUBOTA: Yeah.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, you don't have a new
3 estimate. Uhm, there are 33,417 seats currently
4 funded in this plan, which is certainly far short of
5 that 70,000. We don't even - we don't know what the
6 new target is. Uhm, but is it possible to increase
7 this number within the current level of funding in
8 the plan?

9 NINA KUBOTA: To increase the number of funded
10 seats.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, yeah.

12 NINA KUBOTA: Uhm-

13 CORA LUI: It's really difficult for us to ask
14 the number of seats now will be funded because it's
15 based on the projects, based on the site we identify
16 but we are expanding the classroom conversion
17 program, which is a more cost effective and time
18 effective approach to provide targeted relief for
19 schools. So, hopefully we'll all be able to lean on
20 that program a lot more.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But not converting music
and art rooms.

CORA LUI: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Oh, please state your name
for the record.

1
2 CORA LUI: Sorry, Cora Lui.

3 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Uhm, so there
4 are clear limitations - you've let out an increase in
5 the number of seats and the speed of adding them.
6 Uhm, one possibility that's been discussed in the
7 state is extending the timeline for the Class Size
8 Law by two years. So, full compliance would need to
9 be achieved by 2029 to 2030 school year. Given
10 current funding levels, how many seats could SCA
11 realistically have opened by September 2029?

12 NINA KUBOTA: So, since the Class Size Law was
13 enacted in 2022, uhm, and through September 2029
14 based on the sites that we already have in the
15 pipeline, we have about 9,900 seats from the current
16 plan and over 30,600 seats funded by the prior plan.
17 So, for a total of 40,500 seats. I do think it's
18 important at this point to clarify that uhm, what's
19 been agreed upon I think with the UFT and CSA and
20 Erin, I can pass it to you if you wish. All class
21 sizes over the legislative caps are exempted in
schools without space to comply that will be impacted
by capital projects that are already planned and
sited. So, capital projects do not have to be
completed to that space exemption.

1
2 So, in other words, we need to cite as many uhm
3 and tie it to schools that would be impacted by it
4 but we don't have to be done with construction
5 because as you are aware, it typically takes about
6 four years between design, bid and construction for
it to be online.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I am aware.

8 NINA KUBOTA: Yes, you are.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: It's a long time. Uhm, so
10 can you break down for us how many seats have been
11 added and how many - how many schools are now in
12 compliance and then, separate that out. Disaggregate
13 it from the sort of commitment to that, commitment to
14 compliance, which is what you just shared, right?

15 NINA KUBOTA: Right, right.

16 ERIN JAHANT: So, again we are working in close
17 partnership with SCA. We're taking a look at the
18 space that's available or the space where schools
19 where space is needed. Uhm, and looking as I shared
20 before, a blend of capital and non-capital strategies
21 and approaches that will inform both the continued
work on the capital plan as well as uhm -

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Do you need more time on
3 class size? Do you need more time to comply with the
4 law? Is that - what is SCA's position?

5 ERIN JAHANT: What is SCA'S position?

6 NINA KUBOTA: If there are dependencies on new
7 buildings siting, depending on I think how the
8 numbers shake out, I would say yes, it would be
9 beneficial.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: To have more time?

11 NINA KUBOTA: To have more time, yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, so yes. That's like
13 a yes. I'm just asking but again, if you're unable
14 to separate out, you said in compliance with the
15 Class Law, as agreed upon by the UFT. I think you
16 said CSA, uhm, how many of those are - what percent
17 of those seats are in the committed to and what
18 percent are actually completed and built?

19 NINA KUBOTA: Uhm, I mean, the numbers I stated
20 earlier about the 40,500 seats, those are sited.
21 They are in construction or almost in construction.
Uhm, so those - those will be complete by 2029. We
actually even have some sites that uhm, are almost in
construction that won't be ready till 2030. So, it
is likely that only these 40,000 and maybe a little

1
2 bit more, especially with our room conversion
3 projects could come online before 2029 - 2029 or
4 earlier.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, I just want - thank
6 you and I want to repeat what you said and make sure
7 I heard it right. To build a new school, on average,
8 four years.

9 NINA KUBOTA: Correct.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And what about an
11 extension to any existing schools? The same four
12 years?

13 NINA KUBOTA: Uh, yes, so it takes about a year
14 to design, two to three years to bid out publicly and
15 then uhm and then construction and a lot of our
16 annexes or additions actually are connected to the
17 main building. So there is work to do in the main
18 building as well.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, now you have cited
20 numbers, costs, great. Uhm, a number of seats you're
21 able to complete within the current envelope of
funding. Uhm, the Mayor, the Administration rather
has proposed rating the Rainy Day Fund and increasing
taxes on middle class New Yorkers and moodies has

1
2 shared that you know this could lead to a downgrading
3 of our credit rating. Is that correct?

4 NINA KUBOTA: I have heard that yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, how does it impact
6 the work that you are able to do and the funds that
7 you were able to procure in order to build new
8 schools and how it will impact the number of seats
9 that you are able to build?

10 CORA LUI: We cannot not talk to the - speak to
11 the Administration's decision. Uhm, but just a
12 reminder, the funding we use is capital funding.
13 That's normally obtained by issuing bonds, not
14 necessarily associated with the expense budget.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right but if borrowing
16 costs increase as a result of lower bond rating,
17 would that impact SCA and your ability to build as
18 many seats? Wouldn't it increase borrowing costs?

19 CORA LUI: Certainly, additional funding provided
20 will help us with our work to move closer to
21 compliance. As we mentioned before, the \$6 billion-

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, I'm sorry, I - okay,
I know it's a long day. I either feel like I'm
asking it wrong or you're answering a different

1
2 question. If our bond rating is lowered, would that
3 increase costs to borrow money?

4 CORA LUI: I feel like we might need someone from
5 OMB to really speak to that. We're not bond experts.
6 We just use the funding provided by OMB.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay.

8 CORA LUI: Sorry about that.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, well I would surmise
10 that if it costs more to borrow money, I would really
11 love SCAs opinion on the exact impact that would have
12 or even a projected impact. I mean these are things
13 that you think about years and years out, right?
14 Like how much - how much money you have, how much
15 cost to borrow, what's funding the School
16 Construction Authority, and where those dollars go?
17 How many - how much it costs to build seats. Uhm,
18 I'm going to turn it over to Majority Whip Hanks for
19 her questions.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you Chair. Yes,
21 it's been a long day but uhm, I think we can try to
22 figure out how to answer my questions.

23 So, thank you very much President Kubota and
24 thank you Deputy Chancellor Moran. Uhm, so big
25 thanks to the School Construction Authority for uhm

1
2 working - we've done some really great projects in
3 the last term and uh, Staten Island Northshore is
4 better for it. Uhm, two years ago, we launched the
5 Northshore Action Plan that promised - that promises
6 thousands of new housing units. Uh, one of the
7 projects that's going to be included is a K-8 school
8 in Stapleton and we have now a recent project to add
9 more school seats for Wall Street in St. George.
10 Uhm, and I believe there could be an opportunity to
11 build another school at the Hungerford site on
12 Thompkins Avenue. Can you expand on how uh, these
13 projects seek to address our boroughs class size
14 compliance?

15 CORA LUI: Sure Council Member, we are very
16 excited about the upcoming projects we have and that
17 includes 25 Wall Street site. We have another site
18 in Epinton. That's a little bit more south part of
19 this borough and like you mentioned we have the
20 former Hungerford site and that's ready for us to
21 potentially build a school there. We're very excited
for those projects. A lot of school not currently in
compliance and we're hoping that those projects will
provide the much needed support and we would love to

1
2 partner with your team, your staff to help us to move
3 those projects, those sites across the finish line.

4 Uhm, so now we can, you know, deliver more seats
5 in a more timely manner.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you and we can
7 definitely talk offline about how the number of those
8 seats are going to be adding to the class size. I
9 think it's important for all of the Council Members
10 to know like the proposed sites and how they are
11 going to be adding to that, so at least we can answer
12 our constituents but one more question Chair and then
13 I'll promise I'll get out of your hair forever.

14 So, as a graduate of La Guardia High School of
15 Music and Performing Arts, I am one of hundreds of
16 children in over the past 30 years. Yes, I say 30
17 because I graduated in 1990. Uhm, that have a three
18 hour daily commute uh to one of the New York City's
19 specialized high schools, yet Staten Island is the
20 only borough that does not have a performing arts
21 school. And I really would like to have a commitment
from SCA that we will work in earnest to construct
one, even some of the ones that are part of those
plans that we discussed. Like the former Hungerford

1
2 site or uhm, we have to get this done in my last and
3 final term.

4 KEVIN MORAN: Thank you very much, appreciate the
5 question. Kevin Moran. I would say largely the new
6 construction projects are very, very excited on
7 Staten Island with President Kubota's reference to 25
8 Wall, which we see as an immediate relief to high
9 schools within that area. I know it's not designated
10 yet for purpose. It's being built for high school
11 seats. So, we're working with Superintendent, CEC,
12 and others to make sure that a sound decision is made
13 to address the very real issue of overcrowded high
14 schools.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Can you just state for the
16 record how many seats that are slated? Because I
17 know we haven't worked out whether it would be an
18 annex to a local school but you kind of let us know
19 how many seats we're talking about?

20 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, it's about 700. So, it's a
21 significant relief uh to neighboring high schools.
Uhm, I would say also that the St. John Villa
development will also relieve some of theirs more
immediately school uh - other schools in the
district, in your district. I won't name each

1 individual school but that would benefit from both 6
2 to 12 tandems and then a PS school.

3 Uhm, in addition, we did uh previously walk Snug
4 Harbor and SCA did endeavor to do a feasibility study
5 on what a performing arts school could look like.
6 So, we're certainly active in discussions there and
7 the Hungerford site is something I will absolutely
8 follow up on and see if there's anything -

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Yeah, just so I'm on the
10 record, I'm not married to a location. I think it's
11 more important to be looking at having a school that
12 satisfies that in the arts in Staten Island but if it
13 - it could be I mean there's tons of sites that we're
14 looking at and talking about when it comes to the
15 development under the Northshore Action Plan. We're
16 slated for over 2,500 units of housing and so, one of
17 the main things that constituents ask for is
18 infrastructure and school seats. So, we just want to
19 make sure that we're in line. Thank you so much
20 Chair.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Majority Whip.
I got to get that title right, Majority Whip. That's
- that was the acting she learned at La Guardia
miming. Uhm, I just want to ask about project

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2 delays. Everyone's favorite. This has been a
3 concern particularly for members, not just when our
4 local schools are delayed but uhm, coming out of last
5 year's preliminary budget, SCA said they wanted to
6 engage members at an earlier stage in the process of
7 Reso. A project in order to delay - uhm, in order to
8 avoid delays that can pop up later in the process and
9 you know the big joke is like, we fund a project so
10 that our successors can cut the ribbon on it, right?

11 Well, it's funny to us. How is the project
12 looking in the current fiscal year and has the SCA
13 been able to flag things earlier in the process in
14 order to mitigate delays?

15 NINA KUBOTA: Yes, so thank you for that. So,
16 since our last meeting, uhm, we have piloted a
17 quarterly status report for some Council Members. I
18 think it was received pretty well and we've met with
19 most of the new members to introduce ourselves and
20 sort of give general guidance on the Reso. A program
21 because I think some of the issues we were up against
also was uh the estimate would be obtained from the
school and then it comes to us and then it's a year
later by the way, right? A year later and it's
underfunded and then that sort of starts some of the

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2 delays. And I know that uh, Deputy Chancellor Moran
3 spoke at the expense hearing and it wouldn't be bad
4 to reiterate some of the reforms we've made to sort
5 of the payment process that has actually sped things
up on the construction end.

6 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, absolutely and first and
7 foremost, I'd like to thank you and the Council
8 broadly for their support of schools. I want each
9 Council Member to feel assured that when monies are
10 assigned to a school, that we are responsive and
11 diligent in getting that project done in a reasonable
timeframe.

12 So, with that in mind, we sat at the last
13 hearing, uhm, last year with some 700 jobs in our
14 backlog and we took a look at really what were the
15 influencing factors that caused these said delays and
16 to President Kubota's point, there was a lot that
17 happened. First, was potentially a quote that didn't
line up, increased cost. It could have been a scope
change where things significantly changed.

18 So, we set out and put in a few business rules.
19 Number one, we were using a process that didn't work
20 uh well. Our vendors weren't being paid. We were
21 advancing capital work with tax levy dollars and

1
2 trying to true up at the end of the year. Vendors
3 were not happy with that process. Uh, our teams were
4 not happy and so, what we did with the support of OMB
5 and the SCA was developed a process by which we
6 gathered all our information in one system with a
7 certificate to proceed. A low level work number and
8 we tracked the job with a scope and quote that we had
9 fidelity towards.

10 We didn't allow the scope to change and say I
11 want to add this one more thing. That would only
12 slow us down, so with that in mind, we started the
13 capital reimbursement process in December and pushed
14 over \$210 million, dollar for dollar on capital.
15 It's one of the best reforms we've done in a long,
16 long time in partnership with the SCA and division of
17 school facility. So, the good news here is that I
18 could actually give every Council Member a report now
19 where the projects are. Where they are- for their
20 waiting a purchase order. Whether they're in scope,
21 design, award and we're endeavoring to put that on
our public website. One of the things we want to
make sure is that there's a level of transparency and
accountability that everyone from a parent
coordinator, a CEC president, a principal etc., can

1
2 all see the project and most notably, the project you
3 award, you can see where it is and I could also text
4 you pictures as the project moves along.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I could say on the record,
6 we get - the football field at JFK, pictures every
7 other week. Uh, now we're doing the softball field
8 at Walton. All the work looks really beautiful and I
9 know you personally provide those updates but let's
10 get into just some of the numbers. At last year's
11 hearing, you gave a figure or the SCA gave a figure
12 that 10 percent of member projects in the prior five
13 years had not yet been completed. Has that number
14 been updated to reflect some of the work that uhm,
15 that you shared with us today?

16 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, in terms of the 700, we're
17 down to 70 right now. The jobs that were in our
18 backlog, uhm, I can give you actually by year now and
19 categorize them and I can share an actual report with
20 you but we're down to 70 that are waiting to start
21 from nearly 700.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, the Committee would
like to see - to see that report.

KEVIN MORAN: Absolutely and just to give - just
to give some color on current jobs, just so you'll

1 know what we're working on. We're working on 40
2 bathroom upgrades now, 20 hydroponics labs, 20
3 gymnasium upgrades, 20 elevator jobs, over a dozen
4 playgrounds, a dozen libraries, 9 cafeterias, 7 stem
5 labs, 6 athletic fields. So, we are keeping busy.
6 Our vendors are in a much better place and the system
7 is working as designed with SCA and our team making
8 sure that work is happening.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And your vendors are being
10 paid on time?

11 KEVIN MORAN: That's right.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: 100 percent of them?

13 KEVIN MORAN: That's right.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Wow. That was - see, that
15 was an easy answer.

16 KEVIN MORAN: It was a very painful year.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Let's get more answers
18 like that. Yes, 100 percent, yes. Yes or no, yes.

19 KEVIN MORAN: If you spoke to them last year, it
20 was a different story but now we've reset and we've
21 made sure that no vendor works at risk anymore and
that we do have the certificate to proceed, so
therefore we can print the purchase order and they
could invoice right off that purchase order.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I'm turning it
3 over to Council Member Joseph.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you Chair. Thank
5 you so much. Happy to see all of you here. Thank
6 you DC for really stepping up and changing the system
7 and upgrading. Last year was not great at all. So,
8 I would definitely love to see a detailed report on
9 all the projects that I funded in my district. Where
10 they are and uhm I'm still going to ask for PS 217
11 and the playground. The kids call me all the time.
12 Everytime they call me, I'm calling you. It's the
13 kids.

14 Uhm, so my question is around uhm, class size.
15 Uhm, last year's hearing, uhm, you testified that
16 70,000 additional seats would be necessary to meet
17 the class size goals in the law and there are less
18 than half that number in the five year capital plan
19 or only 33,417 seats. Is that still your estimate or
20 has it changed, or is it true that 57 percent of
21 those seats funded have no sites and only 12,426
seats are projected to be completed by September of
2028 deadline for compliance?

NINA KUBOTA: Uhm, so it is true that we have uh
cited 43 percent of our seats. You know we continue

1
2 to cite pretty regularly the exercise that we've just
3 gone through with New York City Public Schools has
4 identified a bunch of sites that could be - could
5 receive an addition or annex and we're going through
6 those one by one before we say it publicly but we - I
7 mean we are 20 months in and you know almost 50
8 percent cited is pretty good. We have a lot more
9 sites in our pipeline that we're going through right
10 now and 217 has restarted after the delay because of
11 the weather.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Right, right, right, I
13 know mother nature was not on our side. I know that,
14 so I hope the kids that are listening heard that
15 mother nature was not on our side on that project.

16 Uhm, also uhm, 39 percent of the seats in the
17 plan are unspecific as to district, subdistrict,
18 grade level and when the State Class Law Size uhm,
19 when the State Class Size law and Local Law 167
20 required New York City Public Schools and SCA to
21 publicly report the details of the needs of the seats
by district and grade levels.

CORA LUI: We fully believe we're in compliance
with Local Law 167. All the required reports are
directly refreshed as new reports become available.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Is it - is it built as
3 you go along, as you see the needs and then you start
4 citing the sites or how does that work?

5 CORA LUI: So, every uhm, Local 167 requires
6 quite a few documents to be published. When we
7 published, when we have updated reports, not just the
8 amendment or you know projection or housing data, uh
9 and bluebook data, we would go back online to post it
10 with the most recent reports.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Do you have a timeline as
12 to when you'll be posting that?

13 CORA LUI: Uhm, when normally it's either in the
14 summer for some of the reports and then after
15 November.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Okay, thank you for that.
17 Uhm, is it true that high rises uhm, are going up
18 quickly in many communities and especially in my
19 community where schools are already overcrowded and
20 likely to become more so in the future. Are there
21 proposals to include schools in these plans and I
know I did a project like that on uhm, Coney Island
for Early Childhood and uhm, it's also a supermarket
desert. One of the things we did with the developer
was make sure that there was a supermarket in the

1
2 Early Childhood Center because we knew there's a
3 growing family. Is that one of the things you're
4 considering as developers are you know building in
5 our communities? Are schools being added to that
6 plan?

6 NINA KUBOTA: Yeah, that's a great question.
7 Thank you for that. So, yes, if they're not
8 triggering a school need uh, we work with as many
9 developers as we can for you know sort of a mixed use
10 be at the base of their building. Council Member
11 Restler has introduced us to one in his area. Thank
12 you for that. Uhm, and we you know, we do look to
13 see if we can uhm, have an FAR bump for them as well.
14 So, it makes it beneficial for them as well but yes,
15 we work very well with them.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Wonderful, thank you so
15 much. Chair, I'm done.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member.
17 Council Member Restler.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Brilliant thank you so
18 much. Uhm, I'd like to firstly, I could use an extra
19 pillow here. Uhm, I always like a little extra
20 height because I need it desperately.
21

1
2 Uhm, i'd like to firstly ask you uh, Deputy
3 Chancellor, President, about something that doesn't
4 directly, maybe it reports into Kevin. I'm not
5 actually totally sure, is ECF. Uhm, ECF does like
6 one project every five years, which seems like barely
7 a drop in the bucket. We have significant challenges
8 around compliance with the Class Size Law. This is a
9 cost effective way for us to significantly modernize
10 it, improve, expand our school capacity. Why does
11 ECF do such little work?

12 KEVIN MORAN: Well, I think when you look at it,
13 first of all, it's a great question in the way of
14 thinking that are there opportunities to build
15 classes and class size issues be addressed through
16 uhm, some building developments and private
17 developments and that's a great question. ECF does
18 do those projects. I think having contractors
19 interested, uhm, is the number one piece and there's
20 a lot to coordinate. I think if you go to 80
21 Flatbush, you could see they just recently opened
that and two schools at PS and Khalil Gibran and that
was a really uhm it's a really wonderful project.
So, looking at how we replicate that and ramp that up

1
2 at a speed. We can talk - definitely talk to Jemal
3 who leads that work for us.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yeah, as you recall
5 Deputy Chancellor, 85 percent in my district. Uhm,
6 PS 287, which is in the beginning stages of a ECF
7 project, it's in Council Member Hudson's District but
8 if you walk out on two different sides, you're in
9 District 33. So, I'm - I'm very familiar with it.

10 And we have a housing crunch where we need to be
11 building a lot more housing. There's like -
12 everybody is fixated on adding 12 units on top of
13 every library site in the city but we have 1,000- I
14 don't know - 800,000 school buildings in New York
15 City. Many of which have real potential for
16 development above where we could expand class size,
17 meet - achieve compliance with Class Size Law, build
18 new school facilities. This just feels like a
19 tremendous opportunity that we're doing almost
20 nothing. Uhm, the projects that are happening, I'm
21 pleased with. I'm supportive of but we should be
doing so much more. This just feels like a great
opportunity for the Mamdani Administration to really
make ACF a relevant agency and have them do real
work, rather than one project every five years.

1
2 So, appreciate it if you'd look into it and I
3 know that there are folks at City Hall who feel
4 similarly, so I hope we can advance something there
5 together. Uhm, President, I have harangued you in
6 the past about the fact that we put money in for
7 Reso. A projects uhm and it takes six months before
8 they show up in your budget. And so, there's nothing
9 that you or DCF for that matter can do for over six
10 months after we allocate funds and it's just dead
11 time. These schools are desperate for the resources
12 that we allocate. If it wasn't for us, we wouldn't
13 have new bathrooms, wouldn't have air conditioning in
14 our gyms and auditoriums. Wouldn't have all kinds of
15 upgrades for steam and tech and everything in
16 between. How can we fix this? New Administration,
17 fresh set of perspective. How can we make sure that
18 when we're putting money in for exciting new
19 projects, that we're not losing six months before we
20 even start?

17 NINA KUBOTA: Yeah, uhm, that is a great question
18 because going over the timeline, right so typically
19 reach out to - or schools reach out to you in the
20 sort of February timeframe. It goes through the City
21 Budget, so July 1, then we- we get the lists. Then

1
2 we go to OMB for certificates to proceed. We cannot
3 start work until we receive those CP's.

4 So, I think we do have an opportunity. Would
5 love to maybe talk to OMB to see how we could
6 streamline that process. So, from the July to
7 December, January, I think we just received some of
8 the CP's uh just a few weeks ago. So, I mean that's
9 an entire year.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Seriously.

11 NINA KUBOTA: And I think we can do better. So,
12 happy to talk to our OMB partners.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: You think we should give
14 Shareef a really hard time on Wednesday on this
15 topic. Is that what you're saying? Because I'm
16 happy to do it.

17 NINA KUBOTA: I like Shareef but -

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I think that's not what
19 I thought I heard you testify to but I'm - I'm just
20 kidding. Everybody likes Shareef. Uhm, uh, I want
21 to focus a little bit on Class Size compliance. Uhm,
I really appreciate your willingness to try and
identify sites for an annex for PSA. That's the
number one Class Size challenge for us in District 33
but I'm hearing from a number of my elementary

1
2 schools across the district, especially in Greenpoint
3 that they're really concerned about class size
4 compliance.

5 We know we have a new elementary school coming to
6 the neighborhood. I believe 2029 opening after an
7 extensive 20 plus year engagement process with the
8 community. We are moving forward. Uhm, but I'm very
9 concerned that we don't even with that new school
10 have the ability to comply with the Class Size Law
11 and meet the demands on Early Childhood Education.

12 And just wondering, with this Administration's
13 focus on Early Childhood Education, how is that being
14 incorporated into our analysis of capacity in our
15 schools and potentially the need for more school
16 space?

17 CORA LUI: Council Members, we uh explained
18 earlier, capital strategy is only one of the toolkits
19 to help us achieve class size compliance, which is
20 why we have had a really in depth conversation with
21 our partners at uh, New York City Public School to go
through district by district, subject by subject, and
school by school to really identify, solutions for
them. Not every school potentially needs a capital
strategy and there might be other non-capital

1
2 strategies that might be available. So, exploring
3 all of the pathways to identify the most uhm,
4 efficient ways to help schools achieve near
5 compliance.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Alright, well I just
7 want to say plainly, I think in Greenpoint on the
8 northside, even with the new school coming, I think
9 we have a crunch that I'm concerned about and the
10 other piece - can I do one more question Chair? Do
11 you mind? Thank you.

12 Uhm, I think that I will make this preamble as
13 brief as I can but 20 years ago, the Bloomberg
14 Administration cited a lot of small schools and I
15 don't feel like anybody in 20 years has really done
16 the analysis. These small schools are doing great
17 and we need to figure out how to ensure that they can
18 serve more kids.

19 I'll give you an example, the Harry Van Arsdale
20 Campus has three high schools in that building and
21 they're all great high schools. They're all bursting
at the seams. We don't have enough space to
accommodate any of them and there's no plan for how
we grow them and there's no plan for how we grow
them. You got the A tech campus three blocks away

1
2 that's mostly an empty building, which is not
3 thriving and yet, I haven't been able to get
4 cooperation from you know folks to say, how do we
5 expand capacity for the high schools that are working
6 where there's real demand in our community and make
7 that happen.

8 What kind of thinking analysis is going on right
9 now of - these are the small schools that are working
10 that are wanting to serve more kids that would
11 benefit families across our community if they had
12 more capacity. What's the thinking there?

13 KEVIN MORAN: Well, the commentary there is right
14 on target. Uhm, we're looking at about 495 schools
15 that have expressed interest in needing more space
16 and they're kind of like three different buckets if
17 you will. One being potentially like reprogramming
18 the school, minor renovations. The second being some
19 more modest renovations and the third, being
20 potentially an addition and annex or new construction
21 but your first point around how we utilize space is
22 what the Chancellor has charged us recently and we
23 spent a couple three days together uhm, in Long
24 Island City focused as teams with the district
25 planning school construction or facilities and

1
2 saying, where do we find places like that? Where can
3 we use proposals to better uhm, match the attributes
4 of the school and the enrollment patterns and then
5 better utilize empty space. So, it is - that is very
6 active on our minds about how we best use it across
7 small schools potentially in large campuses.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And I hope you will
9 consider us as partners because nobody knows the
10 schools in his community better than Eric Dinowitz.
11 I know what's happening in the schools in my district
12 too. I would be really happy to give you insight
13 into where there's space, where - who is doing great,
14 where there's demand. So, I want to just thank,
15 thank you all for the testimony today. Kevin, I
16 think you've been testifying for about 15 hours, so
17 good luck with the rest of the afternoon. Thank you
18 all and thank you Chair.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member
20 and he said he's committed to staying here till
21 midnight. Did I get that right Kevin?

22 I did want to clarify one thing in your
23 testimony, where you said a 3,066 seat high school in
24 Woodside Queens, that was actually four schools?
25 It's actually, you were actually building us four

1 schools. I'll just share my opinion that once you
2 start breaking up - related to small schools. Once
3 you start breaking up these schools into smaller
4 schools, you really do lose economies of scale and it
5 does make it more challenging to program properly to
6 even out those classes, so that we can have small
7 class sizes without losing a lot of space.

8 So, as you're - so I would like to see more of
9 the bigger high schools like we used to have in the
10 Bronx, all broken up and there's not a lot of space
11 uhm or flexibility for everything from AP classes to
12 the space for those R classes to the space for the
13 self contained classes and everything in between.

14 So, you know I want to share that because it is
15 really important to the education that we lose a lot
16 of programming and we lose the ability to program
17 easily, as easily as possible when uhm, when we have
18 such small schools. But I do want to turn it over to
19 Council Member Zhuang for her questions.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Thank you Chair and I am
21 very glad to see Kevin here. Just for the record, we
have a date of May 30th in front of PS 97. We want
to make sure the AC is going to be installed at that
time after two years fighting, more than two years

1 fighting. Uhm, but I appreciate your work being
2 transparent with us and I have questions for our CEO
3 of the SCA. Uhm, I appreciate Kevin take the shot
4 but in general, in our district schools, even City
5 Council allocated the funding and we don't see
6 anything built or anything - hear anything back in
7 two years in general. Like I say we give funding for
8 a school to build a new playground, right? Allocate
9 money into South and 24 and we haven't heard anything
10 back all and it's very hard to get a response from
11 SCA every time - the answer is always it's in
12 process. It's in process.

13 Phase 1, Phase 2, we have no track record. Can
14 you give us a better direction to the public and also
15 parents and the people living in the community, how
16 we check every single project if the City Council
17 Member funded the project.

18 NINA KUBOTA: Yes, thank you for that and yeah, I
19 think it's - the problem is too full right? We
20 talked about earlier, getting the CP done earlier, so
21 we can actually start the project earlier. So,
that's one side of it. The other side of it is
communication with your office, the public and I
think Kevin talked about uh trying to pilot getting

1
2 like a website for the projects that DSS manages on
3 so that the public can see it. So, we would love to
4 sort of talk to you in your office to see how best
5 you would like that communicated or publicized. Uh,
6 but yes, I agree, we do need to probably engage
7 earlier so that there's an understanding of where the
8 project is in process.

9 It shouldn't take two years for you to see any
10 action on - we should be communicating that earlier
11 in the process with you whether it's under funded,
12 whether there's a conflict with another project that
13 might be going on that doesn't allow us to access the
14 playground. Uhm, those things all should be
15 discussed with you and your office.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: And the other thing is, I
17 understand SCA wants to get fully funded before to
18 move any project. Uhm, just for the record, the
19 other city agencies, part of their nonprofits, they
20 never get their money funded ahead of time. Like
21 say, a lot of nonprofits, they have to deliver the
service first and then they get the reimbursement. I
think SCA is very fortunate to get the money before
you guys uhm, really actually invest to our
community.

1
2 The money sitting there for years. We don't see
3 any progress. If the money was sitting in the bank,
4 probably would get better interest. And we want to
5 see a City Council Member, a mother, my kids go to
6 public school, we like to see the work get done for
7 our kids. Not we invest in a project five years
8 later. We still don't have a chance to cut to the
9 rebuild or my kids even don't have a chance to go to
10 the playground that her mother fund- uh, helped to
11 fund the program.

12 So, it's not fair for all the kids in New York
13 City and also uhm, in the public or public school
14 system, not see any progress about all the projects
15 in the place.

16 NINA KUBOTA: I hear your concerns and I think we
17 - noticed you better this process. So, thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member.
19 Council Member Wong.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you Chair. Uhm, a
21 very specific question for my district. How many new
seats are planned specifically for Council District
30 or School District 24? If you have the data, it
would be great.

1
2 NINA KUBOTA: May we send you the list after
3 this?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Absolutely, absolutely,
5 yeah and do you have any update on IS 93? Because
6 it's - the construction has been going on - at the
7th year.

7 NINA KUBOTA: Give us one second.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay.

9 NINA KUBOTA: Uhm, so just - just for folks that
10 are new to this, so, it was a \$19 million masonry
11 roof and parapet window, elevator accessibility
12 project. I know that it did face COVID delays and
13 all of that but and then they - we did have to do
14 some redesign but we will be done by fall.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: This year?

16 NINA KUBOTA: This year, yes, 2026.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you. Thank you
18 Chair, thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Uhm, last two
20 questions, the SCA had previously testified it would
21 take \$4 billion to reach maximum practical
accessibility in schools. Meaning the level required
to update all schools, it could be physically
upgraded without being fully rebuilt. Does SCA have

1
2 an updated estimate for how much it would take to get
3 to maximum practical accessibility?

4 KEVIN MORAN: Full accessibility remains a goal
5 of the New York City Public Schools and School
6 CONstruction Authority but that's married to some
7 logistical obstacles where some older buildings are
8 landlocked and -

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Look, I just want to - I
10 agree. We know there are logistical challenges. I
11 just - I'm just asking the \$4 billion was testified
12 last year, is that still the same estimate or has
13 that estimate changed?

14 KEVIN MORAN: I don't think it's changed much.
15 We're looking at right now, we have 15 projects that
16 are funded at \$204 million for just those 15. So, I
17 think the number is probably going to hold true.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, thank you and
19 lastly, are there any plans for remedial action in
20 the school kitchens that are extremely hot?

21 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, uh we started uhm, to - we
started with one using window AC units where
appropriate and where practical to make sure we're
really and focus on ventilation.

1
2 The newest work we're doing now is having split
3 units and we're working on a project right now with
4 the SCA to do six kitchens with split unit air
5 conditioning and hopefully we can replicate that
6 after we test it and see how it performs but the goal
7 is to bring the temperatures down in the kitchens.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Do you have a survey of
9 how many kitchens are too hot for the workers to you
10 know safely work in the kitchens? And then what the
11 timeline is for the installation of those AC units?

12 KEVIN MORAN: Well, any kitchen that's too hot,
13 we stop hot meal service and reduce the heat
14 immediately. We don't use unairconditioned sites in
15 the summer. It's not an issue right now. Uhm, in
16 terms of uh, this time of year but as the
17 temperatures warm up, we do see it as an issue. So,
18 the survey, I don't have at my fingertips but I
19 definitely have it. I can get it to you.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, I'm sure you
21 understand. I know you're working it out but this is
a critical issue for you know for the health and
safety of our workers and our students. So, we'll be
following up with that as well.

 KEVIN MORAN: That would be great.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I want to thank you all
3 for your time today, for your testimony. There's
4 certainly a lot to follow up with regarding the SCA.
5 Uh, but this is you know this is the future of our
6 city. This is the future of our school system and
7 therefore the future of our kids, our kids future.

8 So, thank you for coming in today and we will, I
9 will call the first panel. Okay, I'd like to call up
10 once they clear their things, President of the United
11 Federation of Teachers, Michael Mulgrew. We also
12 have Henry Rubio.

13 HENRY RUBIO: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, fantastic. Dynamic
15 Duo, let's - I'll leave it up to you two to decide
16 who goes first.

17 HENRY RUBIO: He wanted me to go first. Good
18 afternoon, my name is Henry Rubio and I'm humbly
19 serving as the President of the Council for School
20 Supervisors and Administrators and on behalf of
21 nearly 1,800 in service and retired school leaders
and Administrators. Thank you Chair for the
opportunity to be here with you today.

Today, I want to focus on just three matters
right now that we think are paramount. Number one,

1
2 student safety. Two, Early Childhood Education and
3 three, what allows for schools to function
4 effectively and deliver high quality instruction.
5 And let me clear, we strongly support the city's
6 investment in early childhood, including two care and
7 the growth of 3K and PreK but expansion without
8 improved infrastructure is too great a risk.

9 Right now, early childhood directors and CBO's
10 are managing the complexity of running schools,
11 staffing, compliance, engagement, operations, all
12 without comparable investment in leadership capacity
13 or workforce stability.

14 This is just not sustainable. Our families
15 deserve and need pay parity. Educators and CBO's
16 that I represent are doing the same work under the
17 same standards of those in DOE settings but are paid
18 significantly less. The vast majority of them are
19 women of color. This is a stability issue, a quality
20 issue, and an equity issue, all at the same time.
21 Parity alone is not enough.

Providers also deal with delayed reimbursements
and funding searches that leave them exposed but we
recognize that that process is getting better.
Centers cannot operate for months without payment or

1
2 absorb the risk of enrollment fluctuations. We will
3 continue to see turnover, staffing shortages and
4 uneven program quality, especially in those
5 communities that rely most on those programs -

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm sorry to interrupt.
7 Sergeants, can you make sure that if people are
8 talking they either leave or go downstairs? It's
9 disruptive to the hearing. Thank you.

10 HENRY RUBIO: Thank you Chair. We must also be
11 clear about school safety. For school leaders, this
12 is not something abstract, it is a daily operational
13 and it's urgent. There are too many schools without
14 sufficient school safety agents or the necessary
15 safety technology and equipment that principals are
16 asking for. There are still schools without an
17 assistant principal who sanctuary coordinate safety,
18 respond to crisis and maintain the stability of both
19 students, teachers and all staff. And safety cannot
20 be separated from mental health. Investments in
21 safety must be paired with counselors, restorative
practice, school based supports that prevent crises
before they escalate any further.

And finally, we must invest in people and systems
that make schools work, expand professional

1
2 development for school leaders, including training
3 around artificial intelligence, literacy, mental
4 health, and uh, and to continue to address the real
5 cost of our class size implementation.

6 We should focus on the space constraints that
7 make compliance impossible in way too many buildings.
8 This requires strategy through new construction,
9 retrofits, and identifying additional space in a
10 timely manner.

11 School leaders are responsible for turning policy
12 into real practice every single day. If we need
13 these investments to succeed, we must ensure that we
14 have them to support our children and our families.
15 Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

16 MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you and thank you and
17 thank you for having this hearing. I do appreciate
18 all the work that we've been able to do together over
19 the years and all the programs that you have
20 supported, which we know when we run a program, as
21 you all know because we invite you to come see them,
that goes directly to the schools. It doesn't get
lost in the building across the lot over there.

Uh, so for us, let's just talk with one thing
we've been here before about, paraprofessionals.

1
2 Earlier today, you had uhm, very distinct questions
3 for the Department of Ed, specifically the Carter
4 Case rise, which is now \$1.5 billion projected. Uh,
5 and is also an additional over half a billion dollars
6 in all legal processes against non-compliance on
7 special education. So, the city has for years now,
8 it continues to make the decision to spend \$2 billion
9 of taxpayers money because they are not supplying
10 services to children with special needs but they
11 won't pay their paraprofessional. They will continue
12 to say the starting salary for a paraprofessional is
13 \$32,000. Do you - the cost of the paraprofessional
14 bill and I thank the City Council and all of you for
15 championing it and bringing it, saying enough is
16 enough. The cost has been estimated by the City
17 itself between \$254 million and \$400 million. Just
18 tell me why the city would continue to make the
19 decision to spend \$2 billion a year in noncompliance
20 with special education versus just hiring people and
21 being in compliance? When they actually will save
the city a lot of money.

19 So, it's just obscene at this point and we look
20 forward to working with you to continue to get this
21 done. On class size, as you have heard from my

1
2 colleague Henry, look it's got to be realistic. We
3 need a plan. There is one component of the law that
4 has not been complied with yet and that is the
5 capital program. We know that the past
6 Administration was somewhat let's just say, passive
7 aggressive when it came to complying or making this
8 law work. We now seem to be on a much faster track
9 the last couple of years. The school communities,
10 the principals, the Administrators have all done a
11 great job putting in plans. So, we now have a much
12 better idea of what we need to do but now we need the
13 School Construction Authority, school facilities to
14 be ready to go to get this work done. We've been
15 waiting for 50 years for someone to tell the School
16 Construction Authority to do and they actually do it
17 and follow up on it. That's what we know we need and
18 when I'm in Albany, this is all I'm getting from the
19 city electeds or representatives in Albany. Where is
20 the plan? Where is the Capital Plan? That we know
21 we need this to get to the finish line.

18 Early Childhood, I want to go a step further. As
19 we expand this to something, we are so enthusiastic
20 about, we think it's a phenomenal idea. We think it
21 is a gift, not just a gift but something that we

1
2 could be very proud of New Yorkers to say that we
3 have universal childcare. But it's not going to be
4 easy to get there and as Henry stated earlier, we
5 know it's not a question. You're going to need
6 changing tables. You're going to need safety devices
7 for small children. All of this stuff is not oh,
8 does something think they need it. We know these
9 things are going to be needed, so we don't want to
10 hear anymore; the Department of Ed is like, well,
11 it's up to whoever is in charge. No, if you have two
12 year olds, you need changing tables. You need also-
13 it's a sanitary device. We know these things are
14 necessary and have to be there and looking forward to
15 doing that.

16 And then, my other favorite, I don't even know
17 what to do at this point, how many times I've sat
18 here and talked about central spending and consulting
19 contracts. Try to get a handle on this. We will
20 partner with you on anything you want to do in terms
21 of getting this. I'm looking, I just looked today
quickly and I'm looking - this \$7 million in these
contracts; I'm trying to remember what they're
called, professional development for leadership and
teachers. I don't know what that - I know what

1 professional development for leadership with teachers
2 are but I don't know any of these consultants. I
3 don't know what the hell any of this is and that's
4 like 47 million. And we have \$10 million for support
5 services for IT. Have you ever tried to call the
6 Department of Ed for IT support? Right?

7 So, this spending \$10 million minimally, this is
8 just looking quickly today. I didn't go through all
9 of it. This is just looking quickly. They just
10 continue to do this craziness and there is a culture
11 inside of the Department of Ed that came about and it
12 is now entrenched where if there's actual work to be
13 done, it seems that the people who are hired to do
14 with work, the first thing they do is put together an
15 RFP to hire a consultant to do the work they were
16 hired for.

17 And if you go to look at any of this, they'll
18 shift the cost to a superintendents office or to a
19 school district and say, it's not our cost, it's
20 their cost. Because central wouldn't waste money
21 like that. When you dig into it all, it is all an
absolute complete waste. We have phenomenal
administrators who can do great work. We have
teachers who can do great work. They don't like

1
2 consultants running around their buildings period.
3 And across this river, right, across this Hudson
4 River in Jersey City the parents are up in arms
5 because they're like, it seems that we're hiring more
6 and more consultants but they all seem to be people
7 who used to work in our schools.

8 So, we just got to call this out. It is what it
9 is. We have to stop this oversight on DOE central
10 spending, especially on their contracting out, it has
11 to come - we have to start lowering the percentage
12 significantly on a yearly basis they're spending
13 because that's the only way to stop this automatic
14 knee jerk reaction to everybody over there just wants
15 to hire up another consultant. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Mr. Presidents.
17 It's great to see you two together. I think 30 years
18 ago, I don't know if the principals and the teachers
19 always got along so well, right?

20 HENRY RUBIO: I didn't have this job.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, I know. Uhm, it
really is uhm, it's really true and whether it's in
the classroom or from the you know looking from the
birdseye view, the contracts are really outrageous
and we're here fighting over you know what seems like

1 pennies for these Learn to Work programs or
2 Restorative Justice programs, the SEED programs and
3 yet, that's one contract. That's one of these
4 consulting contracts and we know, we often have to
5 look no further than inside our own classrooms and
6 inside our own schools to find so much of the
7 expertise that we need.

8 Uhm, I, President Mulgrew, you know you speak to
9 teachers all the time. What has been their reaction
10 to the class size mandated to the fulfillment or
11 nonfulfillment of the class size mandate and even
12 some of the capital construction that is or isn't
13 going on. Like, what are you hearing directly from
14 teachers about their experiences in the schools where
15 they are supposed to have lower classes, what is
16 their response? If they're not in compliance, what
17 is that like?

18 MICHAEL MULGREW: So, in the first two years, it
19 was oh, we're never going to get this. This is never
20 going to happen. Uh, now that we're over 60 percent
21 and people are seeing that the money is actually
flowing to the school directly because it was a real
fear, rightfully so, that principals would just be
sent budgets and they were being told that the money

1
2 being there and low and behold it wouldn't be in
3 there. So, we've broken through that. It's a - you
4 know it's a discrete funding line for the staff to do
5 that. So, teachers are - as they've said they have
6 so - they are able to get into a better relationship
7 with more of their students for the schools that
8 haven't been able to do this with the classrooms that
9 have smaller sizes. Where there's construction, I'll
10 just tell you, there's always one thing you're always
11 going to hear about. Dust, dust is big okay, because
12 we're asking School Construction Authority, school
13 facilities to do work, you can't do all of the work
14 in the summer. You can't get it all done in the
15 summer. Certain things should start. We all
16 understand that but uhm, it always comes down to
17 making sure that everyone is following the rules of
18 doing construction inside of a school building. Uh,
19 but this year, this year, I mean between the class
20 sizes and the cell phone ban, it's probably been the
21 most significant impact I've ever seen in the
classroom in one year.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Huge fan of the cell phone
ban. Huge fan and the teachers feel it too and the
students feel it, feel it too and they feel it when

1
2 they have those smaller class sizes. The attention
3 they're getting and how their academics improve.

4 Uhm, the DOE to hire 6,000 more teachers. Uhm,
5 how is the UFT currently working with the DOE to hire
6 6,000 more teachers that are needed next year?

7 MICHAEL MULGREW: Well, we run an extensive and
8 aggressive uhm, new teacher program. We try to work
9 - as- we work with different entities, we're trying
10 to attract. We will go out and speak to them. We
11 will have offices and go to education schools and we
12 really take great pride. We want the children of our
13 city to teach in this city. Uhm, we're more than
14 happy when people want to live in New York. They
15 come, they fly, sometimes they stay for a long time.
16 Sometimes they stay for a couple of years. New York
17 is not for everyone as we all know but the thing is
18 to get the support. Once they're here, the thing
19 that we focus on the most is a new teacher program
20 where we get them in August when we know they've
21 already been able to - they've been hired and we
continue to run that for the first three years of
their career and one of the first things we do for
them is, we are able to help them get their student
loans because they are public servants. Many of them

1
2 don't know that but that's a big deal when you can
3 really minimize the student loan from all the nasty
4 vultures out there.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That's true. Uhm,
6 President Rubio, you mentioned uh safety.

7 HENRY RUBIO: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: One of your number one
9 things. Can you talk a little more about what it
10 means for a school administrator when they don't have
11 enough school safety agents either during the day or
12 after school? What does that - what does that look
13 like for the school?

14 HENRY RUBIO: Yes, so again, like Mike we visit
15 schools on a weekly basis and I visit schools where
16 principals are concerned and stressed around the fact
17 that just a few years ago, they might have had eight
18 safety agents and now they're down to three or less
19 on a good day. And when you don't have those safety
20 agents there, uhm, students don't feel as safe,
21 right. You're creating an environment where there's
a slower response than anything that happens in the
school. You don't have the number of agents that are
patrolling outside the perimeter for school. Agents
that are patrolling the inside of the building as

1 well. Just, I want to say last week, we had a school
2 where an intruder came in uh and left uh, uh, uh, a
3 threat. Got into the principal's office and left a
4 threat there. It's a police matter but again, that
5 was a building that had more safety agents before,
6 right? There's a whole protocol that our people now
7 are doing an incredible job but that's because
8 teachers and administrators are carrying the lift of
9 those approximately 1,500 agents that are not there.
Someone else is doing that work Chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right.

11 HENRY RUBIO: It's just flattening on our
shoulders.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right and it's amazing
13 despite -

14 HENRY RUBIO: And our Deans and Teachers, yeah.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, in spite of the
16 support that is not always there for whatever reason,
17 our teachers, our Administrators, our Para's, you
18 know people serving lunch all do the work together to
19 support our kids. I always find it uhm, amazing and
I, I, I always relied on our School Safety Agents.
20 They're there to keep us safe and have you spoken
21 with - what are those conversations with the

1
2 Department of Education been like in terms of
3 recruitment or retention of the School Safety Agents?
4 What is your sense there?

5 HENRY RUBIO: I think that uh, what you heard
6 from Mark Rampersant today has been the consistent
7 message that uh, safety agents, it's not a job where
8 they can say it's not paying enough. The bottom line
9 is, you cannot recruit enough folks to become a Para,
10 to become the Safety Agent, uh a Crossing Guard, uh -

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Early Childhood.

12 HENRY RUBIO: Early Childhood, right. It's a
13 matter of there are other jobs out there they're
14 going to do and if they do come in, they don't stay
15 long because they'll go into corrections or NYPD or
16 something else that's more lucrative and pays better.
17 And so, it's really hard to keep them in that job
18 move. We simply have to pay them better.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, regarding the
20 Para's, how many Para positions do you represent?

21 MICHAEL MULGREW: 28,000.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That's how many positions
and what's the -

MICHAEL MULGREW: No, no, that's how many Para's
we have at this point. We can't get the Department

1
2 of Ed says it doesn't have the ability to give us the
3 number on the number of positions, which we know is
4 not true.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That's not true.

6 MICHAEL MULGREW: Yes, we know that's not - we
7 want to put out a number, let's just say we're short
8 4,000 para's. They'll - give them a week, they'll
9 come back and say that's wrong. Then we'll get the
10 real number.

11 HENRY RUBIO: And then the reality also is uh,
12 that they - I think I heard them say there's like
13 5,000 subpara's. That doesn't mean anything. Those
14 are just names in the computer. That doesn't mean
15 they have to come to work. Many of them are
16 sometimes college students, so they go to school
17 Monday, Wednesday and Friday, they can only work
18 Tuesday and Thursday. So, I got one child. I'm the
19 principal. I need to be in compliance. I need to
20 support the teacher in the classroom and I don't have
21 a consistent Paraprofessional in the room to support
that child, right? And so that number is a make
believe number. I mean it's a number that people in
the community - that's not solving the problem.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But we also know that the
3 Paraprofessionals job isn't just the employment, it's
4 the relationship they build with the student, with
5 the class, with the teacher. I mean, it's -

6 MICHEAL MULGREW: The key is the relationship
7 with the student.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah.

9 MICHAEL MULGREW: They get to know their student
10 and in ways that no one else ever will because they
11 know their responsibility is to help out students
12 whether they have anxiety or fearful. They're
13 fearful or whether they have any sort of anger
14 management issues. They know their job is to figure
15 out helping that student really deal with the
16 challenges of getting through a day without causing
17 harm to themselves or others and they do a great job.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, I know Council
19 Members Zhuang has questions and then Council Member
20 Joseph.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Thank you two presidents.
I have a question about Dial a Teacher.

HENRY RUBIO: Dial a Teacher.

COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Yes. Can you give me
more information about this program because I have

1
2 schools don't have after school programs? Can - do
3 you think DOE should actually fund this type of
4 program directly?

5 MICHAEL MULGREW: Well, Dial a Teacher is a
6 program that the City Council has funded for years
7 and it is a program where we have seven different
8 languages now. Uh, where students call in and get
9 homework. It's a homework help hotline basically.
10 But you're doing it with a teacher. Uh, and you know
11 we've expanded it. We do a lot of it - it is an
12 online service now but because the students felt more
13 comfortable with it as students develop new ways of
14 learning and doing their work, you have to modernize
15 to it. Yes, because there's a lot of - especially if
16 there's not an afterschool program, there are a lot
17 of students who don't have anyone to help them with
18 their homework and that's a difficult thing to do in
19 life, especially if you're having a hard time. I
20 don't want to go into math. I know nobody likes new
21 math. Nobody has liked new math for 40 years.
Whatever the new math is, nobody likes it, okay but
you know you don't have to worry about that. We have
people who know whatever the new math is.

1
2 Uh, so we'll take care of that but yes, it is
3 something and it's constantly utilized.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: And the funding is only
5 300, around 300K.

6 MICHAEL MULGREW: That's it.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: How many students
8 actually, you got the help in this program?

9 MICHAEL MULGREW: There's 83,000 last year.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: 83,000 so it's much
11 cheaper to invest in this type of program right?

12 MICHAEL MULGREW: Yeah, yeah.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Cheaper than like a
14 consultant right? If we can -

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Cheaper than consultants.

16 HENRY RUBIO: We could hire one consultant to
17 give me leadership development.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: And the help, you said
19 18,000 students right?

20 MICHAEL MULGREW: 80.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: 80,000 students. So, how
many students you can hire?

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Which, according to new
math, 80 is greater than 18.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Yeah, 80 and then one
3 million dollar, how much - you can imagine how many
4 kids we can help. Thank you.

5 MICHAEL MULGREW: Yeah, thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Council Member
7 Joseph.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Three rapid questions for
9 you. Oh yeah, Mayoral control, yes or no for the
10 next four years?

11 MICHAEL MULGREW: No.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Teacher Centers?

13 MICHAEL MULGREW: Yes.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And Childcare Navigators?

15 MICHAEL MULGREW: Childcare Navigator is, I'm
16 sorry, childcare navigator is - that was developed
17 between ourselves and two companies and one company
18 was dealing with the financial side in terms of what
19 a family might qualify for for assistance from a
20 city, state, or federal government in terms of
21 childcare. Uh, as well as what the costs are at the
actual centers themselves.

Uhm and the other company was where everything
is. So, one was dealing with the paperwork and then
the other was where the locations are, what type of

1
2 students they serve. That's all together now in what
3 is known as the Childcare Navigator. So, you could
4 put in your zip code and say put in the different
5 parameters you want. It will take you about five
6 minutes and you would then know exactly what your
7 options were for childcare for you and your child.
8 This is something we put together. I do believe, I'm
9 - I do believe that the city has an RFP out for a
10 \$100,000 million contract to develop and navigate it,
11 which they already have access to.

12 So, the navigator is to me, we developed it
13 because we thought it would be the pivotal tool to
14 actually help families. It only came out of
15 frustrations because our own members were constantly
16 struggling looking for childcare that was appropriate
17 for them or affordable to them as well as the
18 different parents in all the communities who work
19 inside the city were constantly frustrated by it and
20 that's why we went and pushed towards that.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Does it also cater to
zero to two or -

MICHAEL MULGREW: Hmm, hmm.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Okay.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Yup.

1 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member.

3 I want to thank -

4 MICHAEL MULGREW: Mayoral control.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: On your rapid fire
6 questions.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Rapid fire two, mayoral
8 control.

9 HENRY RUBIO: Uh, I'll take that one, the other
10 one is more UFT uh, I would say uhm, no to four
11 years. I think that uh we haven't heard enough about
12 what the vision for the education of our city is yet.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Okay.

14 HENRY RUBIO: From the Mayor and the Chancellor.
15 Uh, I don't have a personal grievance of any sort but
16 again, every, every school in the City of New York
17 and in the state, is required the principal with
18 their chapter leader to develop a plan for their
19 school.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Hmm, hmm and what about a
21 safety plan?

HENRY RUBIO: And then I'm sorry -

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Go ahead.

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HENRY RUBIO: Former Chair. Then we align the school's budget to that plan.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Okay.

HENRY RUBIO: But a 40 plus billion dollar bureaucracy can't tell us a plan for the future and how they want to align that budget and make it transparent. So, I think if it's good for the geese, good for the gander.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Okay.

HENRY RUBIO: What's the plan?

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: What's the plan?

HENRY RUBIO: What's the plan?

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: That's the hundred million dollar question.

HENRY RUBIO: Too often, we -

MICHAEL MULGREW: \$40 billion.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: \$40 billion.

HENRY RUBIO: Too often has the initiatives but not necessarily a strategic plan.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Okay.

HENRY RUBIO: And before we hand someone a license for four years, I think we should have more information on it, so let's try two and see how it goes.

1 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Okay.

2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member
3 and as you know, we had our hearing on Mayoral
4 Control and a number of the things that were
5 mentioned here was brought up there, including is
6 there a comprehensive educational plan for the city
7 instead of just initiatives? Including issues about
8 contracting, oversight of contracts, so we can really
9 get into making sure our money is going to the kids
10 and two methods that we know work, not necessarily
11 consultants. But I want to thank both of you for the
12 work you do for our city every day.

13 MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: For the work on behalf of
15 your members and for the work that you're doing
16 really in collaboration, which is really incredible
17 to see. Thank you so much.

18 HENRY RUBIO: What an outstanding hearing. Thank
19 you.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I'd like to
21 now call Donald Nesbit, Vice President of Local 372
of DC 37.

MICHAEL NESBIT: Good afternoon Chair, Chair
Dinowitz, and distinguished members of the Council.

1
2 I am Donald Nesbit, Executive President for Local 372
3 DC 37 AFSCME. We represent 24,000 members and
4 schools, 8,000 plus School Lunch Workers. Our
5 members, as School Lunch Workers, serve 946,747
6 public school children and get them ready for
learning.

7 School Lunch Workers unload, prepare, and serve
8 food each day, including during the summer months.
9 School lunch is critical in a student's health and
10 well-being, it also ensures that students have the
11 nutrition that is needed throughout the day. It is
12 important that there is sufficient kitchen staff to
13 service these menus.

14 Local 372 respectfully requests that the city
15 allocate \$10 million towards hiring of 1,000 School
16 Lunch Workers, bringing the total number in service
17 up to 9,000 plus. This will help reduce the strain
18 on the current workforce while still continuing to
19 fulfill the breakfast and lunch initiatives set by
20 previous administrations.

21 School Lunch Workers must also accommodate
dietary restrictions, including medical or religious
restrictions. School food programs accommodate such
restrictions, School food workers must follow

1
2 multiple sets of strict guidelines to ensure school
3 for children are eating safely. Breakfast in the
4 Classroom is one of those programs we prepare - we
5 prepare for and also prepare for lunch.

6 Local 372 is extremely supportive of these
7 programs, as well as universal lunch - every child
8 deserves to come to class with a full stomach. So, an
9 additional 1,000 school lunch workers, it would make
10 it uh - is essential, so it's not as difficult on the
11 current workforce. Another struggle faced by school
12 lunch employees is updating the existing inadequate
13 cooling and air exchange within our kitchens. That
14 has become a struggle for decades to school lunch
15 workers. The majority of schools built from the 1930
16 and 1990, lack the proper design and operation for
17 adequate indoor air circulation.

18 A 2017 report titled "Too Hot to Learn," detailed
19 the significant lack of air conditioning where the
20 mayor and elected officials pushed for support for
21 air conditioning in teaching spaces, which was
essential. That same energy and leadership is needed
to support the health and safety of thousands of
School Lunch Workers.

1
2 We thank former Council Members Treyger and other
3 members of the Council at the time in pushing for
4 uhm, for Resolutions to this. Local 372 requests
5 that the DOE and the SCA come out with a
6 comprehensive plan to evaluate the school outstanding
7 kitchen ventilation needs throughout the five
8 boroughs, and we request more funding be allocated
9 towards a plan pursuant to this evaluation.

10 Again, we extend our gratitude to the Council.
11 We hope that we have your support in the request for
12 \$10 million for more staff within the school kitchens
13 and also, additional resources to remediate these
14 working conditions. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Vice President
16 Nesbit. Do you have an approximate vacancy rate of
17 current budgeted headcount?

18 DONALD NESBIT: Uh, we're short - so school food
19 has uhm - I want to thank the Council for this two
20 years ago. We came here asking for \$20 million.
21 Chair Rita at the time, Rita JOseph, pushed for along
with the Council Members, for this funding. This
funding went into not only education around nutrition
within schools. But it also went towards staffing,
which was critical but what we're finding as a

1 trustee at the retirement system as well, the
2 headcount that we get in, folks are retiring and
3 leaving at the same rate.

4 And so, it's just filling the gaps but we're
5 still short and we think about a thousand more
6 workers will be adequate in order to fill these gaps
7 permanently.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And can you speak to some
9 of the struggles with hiring and recruiting uh, new -
uh new employees.

10 DONALD NESBIT: So, one is uh my colleagues
11 within labor spoke before at the Principals Union and
12 others President Mulgrew has spoken to. Retention
13 and recruitment is the same across the board for city
14 workers. In an affordability crisis where things
15 continue to go up, we have to figure out a way to
16 raise wages for workers. Starting salaries is a big
17 stopping point for a lot of folks. Uhm, and so,
18 that's the main issue in how much folks are getting
19 paid. If you are taking a job and still can't afford
20 to pay your rent right? And still have to take a
21 second or third job in order to live, that just
doesn't work at some point.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right and then I mean how
3 many employed people are also living in shelters for
4 that very same reason who are in unions right? So,
5 we hear time and again, uhm, as you mentioned whether
6 it's serving food, early childhood education, school
7 safety, wages need to go up. Uhm, do you have an
8 estimate about how many lunchrooms or what investment
9 would need to be made to ensure that the workers are
10 safe and air conditioned even in the old buildings,
11 what kind of investment that would require?

12 DONALD NESBIT: So, the estimates I think two
13 years ago were about \$70 million uhm in order to take
14 care of this project. I will say uhm I'm grateful to
15 the school leadership. Some of the money that
16 they've had in their own budget, Chris and his team
17 have actually put money into a list of outstanding
18 projects in ventilation systems that they needed to
19 upgrade within kitchens. So, uhm, according to that
20 list, he's put in some of his own money so I would
21 guess that it's not the same amount as it was two
years ago but there's still a great need. And we
work, just so you know we work closely with Chris and
team and labor management for them to make sure that
we're getting up to date information and our team and

1
2 reps are also out in the fields to ensure that we're
3 looking at these uhm conditions and that we're
4 reporting back uh where there are needs.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, thank you so much
6 Mr. Vice President.

7 DONALD NESBIT: Thank you Chair. Thank you
8 Council Member.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Uhm, we're now going to
10 continue the public testimony portion of the hearing.
11 I remind members of the public that this is a formal
12 government proceeding and that decorum shall be
13 observed at all times. As such, members of the
14 public shall remain silent at all times. The witness
15 table is reserved for people who wish to testify. No
16 video recording or photography is allowed from the
17 witness table. Further, members of the public may
18 not present audio or video recordings as testimony
19 but may submit transcripts of such recordings to the
20 Sergeant at Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

21 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please
fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms
and wait to be recognized. When recognized, you will
have two minutes to speak on today's topic, the

1
2 Preliminary Education and School Construction
3 Authority Budget.

4 We will hear all in person testimony first and
5 then turn to testimony on Zoom. If you have a
6 written statement or additional written testimony you
7 wish to submit for the record, please provide a copy
8 of that testimony to the Sergeant at Arms. I will
9 now call the next panel.

10 And if at any point I mispronounce your name, I
11 apologize, you'll correct me for the record. Uhm,
12 Angela Hernandez, Connie Chen, Adrina Rokib, Mariama
13 Jalloh, Anyinelda Santana Candelier, Paulina
14 Milewska, and Ammy Heredia. You may approach the
15 dais. We will begin this panel. We'll start from my
16 right, your left. You'll state your name for the
17 record, begin your testimony and remember you have
18 two minutes to testify. You may begin when you're
19 ready.

20 ANGELA HERNANDEZ: Hello, my name is Angela
21 Hernandez and I attend the Young Women's Leadership
School in the Bronx and I'm a youth activist with the
Ya-Ya Network. Today I stand before you all because
as a student from a low income Black and brown

1
2 school, I would love to see the city's budget
3 actively prioritizing the youths mental wellbeing.

4 Within my school, a frequent problem is conflicts
5 between students. After a fight breaks out between
6 two students, the two are suspended for about a week
7 or two. However, when they return back to the
8 school, not only are they behind on their school work
9 but the tension between the two will remain with some
10 cases being that another fight will occur.

11 Although there is a restorative justice club
12 within our school, many have not even heard of its
13 existence, including myself, however, I know that the
14 club could be doing so much more for the community
15 but the limited budget has held it from its full
16 potential.

17 That's why I'm asking the City Council to invest
18 \$80 million to expand mental health and restorative
19 justice practices within New York City and its
20 schools in order to create a safe space for its
21 students. We can fund this cause not by filling the
open positions for school safety agents, which
students have frequently stated that who cause
distress and unsafety for many of the students here.

Thank you for listening.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much.
3 They'll reset - you can begin when ready. They will
4 reset your time. You worry about you. Just go ahead
5 whenever you're ready.

6 CONNIE CHEN: Alright, good afternoon to the
7 Education Committee. My name is Connie Chen and I
8 speak to you today as an immigrant student attending
9 Stuyvesant High School. Some students around me are
10 worrying about their next math test, college
11 applications or they work in clubs. Immigrant
12 students are worried if their family will be here
13 tomorrow.

14 We have additional responsibilities that our
15 peers never have to stress about. From translating
16 important documents to being a parental figure to our
17 siblings. Even with these burdens, immigrant
18 students go through our school system every single
19 day. I remember when a student from my school
20 jokingly called ICE on one of his friends. Despite
21 it being a joke, his friend was terrified that ICE
would come and take him or his parents. The fact
that students even feel comfortable joking about this
should tell you that schools are not adequately
informing their students.

1
2 We should not fear that our schools might comply
3 with ICE. Yet, we have every reason to be afraid.
4 Dylan Lopez Contreras from ELLIS Preparatory Academy,
5 [INAUDIBLE 41:38] from Gotham Collaborative High
6 School. A six year old student from public school
7 89. All of these names are students that have been
8 detained by ICE due to the failure of their schools
9 and their city to protect them.

10 Students already face enough stress. Don't
11 burden them knowing that at any second, they could be
12 left without a family to go to. Imagine being a kid,
13 and all you want is support from your parents. You
14 open your front door and everything is exactly how it
15 was when you left for school but your house feels
16 empty.

17 The laundry is still being dried, moms book is on
18 her nightstand. Dad's coffee and book is still on
19 the table but they're not there and you don't know if
20 they'll ever come back. That has been reality -
21 sorry, that has been reality for so many students in
New York City and we're counting on you to make sure
fear has no place in education.

We want the city to fully fund protections, both
immigrant students and their families. We want

1
2 baseline funding for the immigrant family
3 communications and outreach, which expires in June.

4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much.

6 Perfect timing. Please make sure your uhm, you could
7 push the button on the base.

8 ADRINA ROKIB: Good afternoon Council Members.

9 My name is Adrina Rokib and I am here today on behalf
10 of the Ya-Ya Network to speak about a basic dignity
11 that too many students in our city are being denied.
12 Imagine a student sitting in class when she suddenly
13 gets her menstrual cycle. Maybe for the first time,
14 she is confused, scared, and has no products. Can
15 you imagine your own child facing that panic and if
16 no product is available, the humiliation of leaking
17 through her clothes in front of her classmates. Yet
18 our schools are failing them. This panic is far too
19 common. Students get their periods abruptly with no
20 warning and no resources. The anxiety at that moment
21 is a burden no child should carry.

In 2016 New York City made history as the first
city in the nation to require free menstrual products
in schools but almost a decade later implementation
remains a failure. A 2023 survey found that 85

1
2 percent of NYC High School students still lacked
3 access. Just last year, a lawsuit was filed alleging
4 the DOE is still in flagrant violation with students
5 routinely missing class because they cannot access
6 what they need.

7 Even when products exist they are often behind a
8 pay wall or are so low quality they don't work. For
9 students from low income families who make up over 70
10 percent of NYC public school students, an extra
11 quarter for a pad or a tampon is an impossible
12 choice.

13 It is inconsiderate, it is inequitable and it is
14 a healthcare issue. You have the power to change
15 this. We need dedicated funding and accountability
16 for reinforcing the past legislation that the city
17 has failed to implement. Menstrual products are not
18 luxuries. I would argue that they are essential as
19 toilet paper. I urge you to make menstrual equity a
20 reality for every student in New York City.

21 My colleagues are here today demanding funds to
support the services that make our schools safe and
supportive communities, including funding for
restorative justice and counselors, not cops.

Dedicated funding for menstrual products is one more

1
2 way to increase students' sense of being safe and
3 cared for. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much. Next.

5 ANYINELDA SANTANA CANDELIER: Good afternoon. My
6 name is Anyinelda Santana, I am 17 years old and a
7 senior at Academy for Excellence and leadership. I
8 am also a youth leader with Make the Road New York at
9 the Bushwick Campus Student Success Center. In my
10 role, I guide my peers through every step of their
11 post secondary planning exploring options and
12 applying to colleges and navigating financial aid. I
13 also support them in the social emotional aspect of
14 decision making, helping them stay focused, motivated
15 and confident about their future. When I began high
16 school, I wasn't sure what path to take. I was torn
17 between psychology and nursing but after completing
18 my youth leader summer training and doing deeper
19 research, I discovered my true passion, nursing. A
20 career where I can make a direct impact on people's
21 lives. Being a youth leader has shown me not just
about how essential a student's success center is on
campus. It provides students with personalized
one-on-one support that helps them navigate high
school and prepare for college with confidence.

1
2 Without it, many students will be left to figure out
3 the complex process of FASPA and TAP on their own.
4 Often missing out on opportunities that could change
5 their future.

6 My family's story shows the difference a
7 student's success center can make. My big sister who
8 was part of the center was first in our immediate
9 family to apply to college. She is now a first year
10 nursing major at CUNY City Tech. Watching her
11 support students and serve as a role model inspired
12 me to step into the role and become a youth leader
13 myself. Now, I can provide the same guidance and
14 encouragement and inspiration my peers that I once
15 received. This work not only taught me how to help
16 others but also to grow, lead and unite my community
17 towards their dream.

18 The SSE has given me a family of peers and
19 mentors who push me to strive for excellence every
20 day. They remind me that with their support and
21 determination, anything is possible. If funding for
SSE is cut, thousands of students will lose access to
guidance that truly changed the trajectory of their
lives. We will need the city to commit to \$3.3
million this year to sustain the Student Success

1
2 Center across the New York City. Supporting these
3 centers -

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much. Thank
5 you and remember you can submit the rest for
6 testimony.

7 ANYINELDA SANTANA CANDELIER: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much. Uhm,
9 just if this panel could raise their hands, just
10 raise your hand if it's true. Have your teachers or
11 administrators or adults in your school spoken to you
12 like about ICE and what that means in your school and
13 any guidance or support on the issue?

14 So, what I'm seeing is for in none of your
15 schools, Stuyvesant Young Women's Leadership Academy,
16 none of your teachers or administrators have spoken
17 or given you guidance on ICE? Okay, and can you just
18 talk briefly for 15 seconds on if it was impactful or
19 not, what that looked like.

20 CONNIE CHEN: I feel like it was impacting
21 because they taught us about our uhm, like the rights
22 that we have uhm, so that like if ICE comes to your
23 door, like what you can do.

24 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Uhm, hmm, thank you.

25 CONNIE CHEN: So, I feel like it has.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you for
3 sharing that. Uhm, I want to uhm, and raise your
4 hand if you've had - if you've been taught
5 restorative in your current school, restorative
6 justice practices as part of your daily class or like
7 in school activities.

8 Okay, so clearly there's in your particular
9 schools, more that needs to be communicated about
10 ICE, something that's facing so many of our schools
11 and our students and restorative justice, which we so
12 deeply care about in this Council.

13 Uhm, I want to thank the four of you for your
14 advocacy, for your testimony. You know of course the
15 work, the discussions we've had outside of this
16 hearing. Thank you so much.

17 I'm going to call the next panel but before I do,
18 just if you do at any point need a translation, you'd
19 like to testify and you need translation, please see
20 the Sergeant up here. [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
21 420:00-420:08] Thank you.

22 The next panel, Serenity DeJesus, Ashley Frato,
23 Daniel Ruiz, Ny'Jhea Pulley, Ishaq Bekoe, Jiaxiang
24 Zhang. I apologize, you'll correct me please and
25 Deniella Rodriguez. Thank you.

1
2 Okay, we can begin on my right, your left.

3 Starting with you sir, please state your name for the
4 record and you may begin your testimony. Whenever
5 you're ready sir.

6 JIAXIANG ZHANG: Hello Education Committee
7 Members. My name is Jiaxiang and I am a sophomore at
8 Stuyvesant High School and a fellow with friends of
9 the highline. I am in support of the Transit
10 Authorities Alliance Expand Student OMNY Campaign
11 because I believe we students should have universal
12 access, a fair communication regarding deactivation
13 and a better process for replacing lost or
14 deactivated OMNY cards.

15 Now, before I begin, I'd like to make it clear
16 that some of the information that I'm providing is
17 specific to Stuyvesant High School although there may
18 be some common ground with the information. Having
19 the OMNI cards are - is an important part of every
20 student's commute to and from commitments, however,
21 since the debut of OMNI cards, there have been a lot
of issues with most of which is covered in today's
testimony.

As a volunteer in my schools guidance office, I
have seen first hand the amount of OMNI replacement

1 forms my schools transport coordinator receives daily
2 due to lost cards or OMNI cards seizing the work.

3 Most students who submitted an OMNI replacement form
4 were due to the OMNI card not working.

5 On December 4, 2025, exactly three months since
6 the school year began, 528 OMNI replacement forms
7 have been submitted with 284 of them being submitted
8 due to OMNI cards seizing the work.

9 Stuyvesant ran out of OMNI cards on March 2,
10 2026. This morning we received an order of 200 OMNI
11 cards, three weeks after we had initially ran out.
12 In the month of March received 185 OMNI replacement
13 cards and counting. The agency system is supposed to
14 trigger a new OMNI card delivery when a school's
15 available OMNI card falls below 300.

16 Since we received 200 today, does that mean we'll
17 receive another delivery? Based on previous
18 experiences, most likely not. Additionally, ATS's
19 data on Stuyvesant High School is wildly inaccurate.
20 And thus, I ask the Committee to expand student OMNI
21 and work on more communication with all of our
schools and to develop a system with accurate data.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Jiaxiang.

1
2 ISHAQ BEKOE: Good afternoon Chair and members of
3 the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to
4 speak today. My name is Ishaq Bekoe and I am a
5 student at NYC Lab School for Collaborative Studies.
6 I am here today with the highlight and strong support
7 of Transportation Alliances Expand Student OMNI
8 Campaign. Transportation is not just about getting
9 to and from school. It directly affects the students
10 ability to fully participate in life. OMNI supports
11 hundreds of thousands of New York City Public School
12 Students who rely on public transport every single
13 day. Expanding access to unlimited rides would allow
14 students to move freely and safely throughout the
15 city, not just for school but for jobs, internships,
16 tutoring, extra curricular activities and even family
17 responsibilities, like picking up younger siblings.

18 Right now, limited rides create unnecessary
19 barriers where students are forced to choose between
20 opportunity simply because they cannot afford the
21 extra fare. That should not be a reality in a city
like New York. Transportation should not be a
barrier.

Last year, my friend's OMNI card randomly stopped
working. We never knew why and to this day, we still

1
2 don't know why. He tried to use it and it kept
3 saying card not accepted. We thought it was just a
4 glitch, however, the next day, the same thing
5 happened. His card wasn't working so he had to jump
6 the turnstile where an officer approached him and
7 stopped him and asked him where his OMNI card was.
8 He tried to explain to the officer that his OMNI card
9 wasn't working, to which the officer replied that
10 something like that doesn't just happen.

11 My friend ended up showing the officer his school
12 idea then missed a train causing him to wait another
13 ten minutes. When a student - when a student's card
14 stops working without warning, it is not just an
15 inconvenience, it can disrupt their entire day, their
16 attendance and their sense of stability and this is
17 one of many stories of cards mysteriously stopped,
18 not working. That is why fair and transparent
19 communication around deactivations is just as
20 important as expanding access. Students deserve to
21 know what is happening and how to resolve issues
without confusion or delay. Every student in New
York City deserves equal access of the opportunities
this school has - I mean this city has to offer.

1
2 Expanding Student OMNI is not just a
3 transportation policy, it is an investment in
4 students' future. Thank you for your time and
5 consideration.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much. You
7 may begin when ready. Make sure your microphone is
8 on. The red light means it's on.

9 NY'JEAH PULLEY: Good afternoon Committee Chair
10 and members of the Committee. My name is Ny'Jhea
11 Pulley and I am a sophomore at High School for the
12 Environmental States. I'm here with the highline as
13 part of the Friend of the Highline Fellows program.
14 I'm very grateful and appreciative to have this
15 opportunity to share my testimony with all of you.

16 As two of the country's largest systems, MTA and
17 New York City Public Schools serve millions of
18 students each year. Without public transportation,
19 the city can't function, which is why I believe
20 Student OMNI must expand. There are around 600,000
21 students who use the MTA regularly and are a part of
the student OMNI card system.

In theory, four passes should be more than enough
for students but as a student athlete, who is also
part of their extra curriculums, four passes just

1
2 isn't enough. I often find myself calculating how
3 much money I need to spend in order to get through a
4 whole day even with four passes. I play school and
5 club volleyball and that has been a big difficulty
6 for me. I would use one pass to take the train to
7 get to school, one pass to take the train to go to
8 like around the area of my way game, then another
9 pass to take the bus to the school, which I was
10 playing at and then after the game, I would use one
11 pass to go to my club practice and that was four
12 passes. So, to get home, I would have to pay with my
13 own money.

14 In my case, I had fare money or if I didn't, I
15 would ask my mom but not every student has that
16 privilege of being able to pay the price every time.

17 In summary, every student deserves to do all
18 their extra curricular activities and out of school
19 responsibilities without having to pay out of pocket
20 with students on the expansions this could be. Thank
21 you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Ny'Jhea.

DANIEL RUIZ: Good afternoon Committee Chair and
Members of the Committee. My name is Daniel Ruiz, I
am a 10th grade student in Quest to Learn and I'm

1
2 representing the friends of the highline. Before I
3 begin with my testimony, I would like to thank the
4 Committee for holding this hearing and my manager for
5 allowing me to state my stance on such a subject.

6 The MTA system is one that many New Yorkers rely on
7 and students like my fellow coworkers and I use the
8 system to get to school, go to extra curriculums or
9 college programs or to spend times with friends or
10 family.

11 More student passes are beneficial but increasing
12 that number can greatly help students across New York
13 City to get to all their commitments and other
14 responsibilities easily. Therefore, I advocate for
15 unlimited rides and OMNI cards for students.

16 As stated before, the OMNI cards for students are
17 beneficial in a lot of ways. Off a bullet pointed
18 list, some things the students use the cards are
19 getting to and from school using transfer in between,
20 using the MTA system during lunch to get food in a
21 timely manner, getting to part time jobs which can
also take multiple transfers, exploring places,
whether it be finding a new park or finding a new
store to spend their time in or hanging out with
friends which could also be another subgroup for

1
2 exploring places. These benefits, as well as many
3 others allow students to move freely throughout the
4 city, providing educational and mental health
5 benefits. From my experience, the OMNI card ride
6 restrictions are a little detrimental to me. I enjoy
7 hanging out with my friends usually after school,
8 after work, or on weekends and sometimes my friends
9 and I go around Manhattan and sometimes around Queens
10 and the four rides OMNI are, most of the time, not
11 enough for me.

12 I also use my OMNI to meet with my mother to run
13 errands before my job and having only four rides
14 makes it going from Chelsea to South Jamaica harder.
15 Thus, I ask the Committee to help fund unlimited
16 rides, increasing student mobility across the city
17 and overall providing an even more beneficial
18 experience for students. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That was great. Thank you
20 so much Daniel.

21 SERENITY DEJESUS: My name is Serenity DeJesus.
I am a 9th grader at the Community School for Social
Justice. I am here to share my experience with the
New York Edge Community Schools and tell you how New
York Edge has strengthened our school for the better.

1
2 New York Edge is not just the afterschool program
3 for our school. They are an engaging and enriching
4 all day program that gives promising students like
5 me, opportunities to improve our overall attendance,
6 behavior and academics. For example, they launched
7 an exciting initiative called New Year, New Me that
8 awards students who improve and maintain their
9 attendance with deli vouchers, uh, with vouchers to
10 our local deli.

11 The PBIS school store and book system reframes
12 positive behavior, good attendance, and high grades.
13 In a way, it also teaches us real world skills like
14 personal accountability and financial literacy. New
15 York Edge has brought in an inclusive and interactive
16 way of approaching our history and culture. As an
17 example, our Black history month event, featured a
18 cuisine focused activity where we use our literacy
19 and finan- and uh investigation skills to research
20 Black owned restaurants and recipes. New York Edge
21 has this - The New York Edge staff has the sort of
presence that will put a smile on my face, even on my
worst of days.

Every morning, when I come into school, I will
always be greeted with a good morning and a smile. I

1
2 went from coming to school once a week to every day.
3 The New York Edge team has motivated me to show up to
4 school more consistently, become more involved in
5 school activities and embrace positivity all the way.
6 Please vote to increase funding to New York Edge in
7 the upcoming city budget. Investing in New York Edge
8 means investing in students like me. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That was great and I got
10 say real profits like every school student keeping it
11 at like two minutes. I could tell you wrote this,
12 you practiced, it's very clear. Just kudos to all of
13 you. There it is, you got 12 seconds to spare. You
14 did fantastic. You've all been doing - thank you so
15 much and by the way, I know it takes a lot for
16 students just to be in school all day. Like your
17 school work is a lot and for you to come here and
18 also testify on behalf of you- not just yourself but
19 your community is really an incredible thing to see.
20 So, simply for coming here and doing your school work
21 and taking care of your siblings and all the
preparation you did for this, uh, you're really
making your New York City, your classmates proud.
You're really showing what our city really is and
it's about all of you so thank you for testifying.

1
2 Next, please.

3 ASHLEY FRATO: Good afternoon. My name is Ashley
4 Frato, I'm the New York Edge Community School
5 director at the community school for social justice.
6 I'm here today to ask that you prioritize New York
7 Edges Fiscal Year '27 citywide funding requests. New
8 York Edge is the city's oldest and largest provider
9 of after school summer programming, serving almost
10 33,000 students in 134 schools across the city,
11 including 4 beacon centers and 21 community schools.
12 We run programs in 37 of the 51 Council Districts.
13 Our mission is to help bridge the opportunity gap
14 among students in under invested communities. Core
15 components of our programming include stem education,
16 social, emotional learning and leadership, visual and
17 performing arts, sports, health and wellness,
18 academics and college and career readiness and summer
19 programs.

20 We are as identified by Mosaic by ACT, the
21 largest after school provider in the nation offering
social and emotional learning supports. This year,
we are seeking \$1.5 million under the Council's After
School Enrichment initiative and \$250,000 under the
Council's Social and Emotional Supports for Students

1 initiative. For over three decades, the New York
2 City Council has been a vital partner in helping us
3 to fulfill our mission.

4 Council citywide funding has enabled us to enrich
5 and expand our school year and summer programs and
6 has allowed us to develop and implement new, unique
7 and engaging programs, such as our award winning
8 student led podcast formative, our book publishing
9 program, Our Heart for Art program, our partnership
10 with the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam and our Read
Across New York Edge program.

11 Since 2020, we have tripled in size and have
12 significantly increased the number of students
13 served. Our Council citywide funding however has
remained flat at \$1 million.

14 We are extremely grateful for the Council's past
15 support. The time has come however, where increased
16 funding is vitally needed. Council discretionary
17 contracts are not eligible for cost of living
18 allowance increases. This is making it increasingly
19 difficult for us to attract and maintain quality
20 staff and continue to offer the wide array of
21 programs we are known for. Increased funding will
enable us to keep providing youth throughout the city

1
2 with the edge they need to succeed. Your support and
3 advocacy on our behalf are requested. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Very good. Thank you for
5 your testimony. You just, you passed. You all
6 passed. Okay, last on the panel.

7 DANIELLA RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon Council
8 Members. Thank you for allowing me to speak with you
9 about the 2027 Preliminary Education Budget. My name
10 is Daniella Rodriguez and I live in Williamsburg,
11 Brooklyn. I am an autism and disability rights
12 advocate here with the No Alternatives for Children
13 NAC Youth Council. I am here to discuss travel
14 training and why the city should invest additional
15 funds to make this service available to more
16 students.

17 Travel training is a beneficial service that is
18 offered by the New York City Department of Education.
19 However, it is not available to every student who
20 needs it. Travel training helps students with
21 disabilities learn to navigate public transportation
systems. Something that may seem like one skill but
is in fact a consolation of skills, including ones
that may be obvious like such as planning a route and
navigating different subway stations.

1
2 But many of us also have to learn things like
3 knowing when it makes sense to change your plan if a
4 train line is running late or there are multiple
5 trains canceled and being comfortable doing so. I am
6 autistic and I also had an IEP while I was in school.
7 While I taught myself how to navigate the subway
8 system, additional support would have helped me with
9 my transition to college, as I have to take the
10 subway on a daily basis to go to college on the upper
11 east side in Manhattan.

12 I know that there are many students out there who
13 want to go to college or they want to go to work but
14 feel limited in their options because they are unable
15 to use public transportation. Travel training can
16 encourage independence for our students so they could
17 travel using the right skills and thrive in the
18 world. It is vital that the city should invest \$2
19 million to expand travel training services for
20 students with disabilities. When we invest in travel
21 training, we are investing in their future and
success. Every student should have the access to
accommodations and supports they need to succeed.
Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your
3 testimony. I really appreciate it and thank you for
4 your book recommendation earlier. If you weren't
5 here, she uh recommended the Bell Jar. So, that's
6 our recommendation for today.

7 I want to thank this panel for your testimony
8 today. Uhm, and uh, again, the time you're taking to
9 advocate uh for something that's important to you and
10 your friends and your community is really important,
11 we deeply value it. Thank you so much. I'm going to
12 call the next panel. Kulsoom Tapal, Abigail Chen,
13 Theodore Tien, and Olivia Li.

14 I'm going to call on deck, which is going to be
15 the next panel after this one, so just be prepared.
16 Ebonie Simpson, Ben Kofman, Elmer Reyes, Peyton Cruz,
17 Anderlis Feliz-Pena, Abigail Segura, Kaeole Naroti
18 who is going to be the next panel after this one,
19 okay? And when you're ready you may begin. Please
20 make sure your microphone is on. You push the button
21 and it will turn red.

OLIVIA LI: Okay, thank you. Uhm, good afternoon
everyone. First, I want to thank Chair Dinowitz and
the rest of the Council for allowing this
conversation. My name is Olivia Li and I am a

1
2 sophomore at Hunter College High School. I am a
3 youth advocate at the Asian American Student Advocacy
4 Project ASAP. ASAP is CACF'S citywide youth
5 leadership program.

6 In third grade, my teacher sent home a field trip
7 permission slip for our parents. As soon as I got
8 home, I began translating it into Chinese for my mom.
9 As I read through the sheet, I realized that even I
10 couldn't understand some of the terms. I became
11 frustrated. I, myself for being unable to
12 communicate something that seemed simple to my mom
13 and at my mom for being unable to understand my
14 education experience.

15 At the time, I was upset. My teacher had
16 described the forum as something for our parents to
17 complete. Yet, I was the one responsible for making
18 sense of it. That makes me wonder now, why do
19 schools rely on students to bridge language gaps for
20 their families? Why can't these schools instead
21 provide proper translations?

22 Having to translate for our parents is sometimes
23 framed as a valuable experience in developing
24 leadership and language skills. But why is it our

1
2 responsibility to integrate our parents into the
3 school system?

4 My mom's English proficiency and my Chinese
5 ability shouldn't have to play a role in her
6 participation in my academic life. Instead, schools
7 need to take responsibility for being more inclusive
8 of all families by offering better translated
9 material and language support. My experience is not
10 unique and it reflects a larger issue. Many AAPI
11 students today are placed in similar situations, with
12 immigrant parents being unable to speak fluent
13 English. These parents often feel both excluded from
14 the school system and ashamed that they cannot
15 support their child more.

16 My dad for instance, only speaks Chinese and it
17 is nearly impossible for him to be involved in my
18 academic life. Like other immigrant parents, he
19 wants to be involved in his children's school life,
20 but these parents are not given that chance. The
21 children's immigrant parents often feel stressed,
guilty and frustrated. It is unfair and harmful to
place those responsibilities on us and lead us to
feel isolated or anxious as we navigate through a

1
2 school system that is not designed to include our
3 parents.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Please finish your last
5 thought. Thank you.

6 OLIVIA LI: Okay, uhm, we need to baseline \$4
7 million for immigrant family communications and
8 outreach to engage our families in the school system
9 and to make education accessible to them because all
10 families deserve to be part of their child's
11 education journey.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much Olivia.

13 OLIVIA LI: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You may begin when ready.

15 ABIGAIL CHEN: Hi and good afternoon. I want to
16 thank Chair Dinowitz and the rest of the Council for
17 allowing this conversation. My name is Abi Chen and
18 I am a senior at the Clinton School and I'm a youth
19 advocate at the Asian American Student Advocacy
20 Project, ASAPs Anti-Bullying and Harassment Campaign.

21 First, I want to acknowledge that while I feel
grateful to go to school that tries to incorporate
discussions of issues surrounding bullying, I still
see issues surrounding bullying in AAPI identity.
Whether people are intentionally trying to make

1
2 harmful comments or they think that something is just
3 a joke. And for example, in 10th grade, a girl who
4 was also Chinese Korean American like I was, uhm,
5 stopped me at my locker to express how she was upset
6 after someone said she was on the yellow team in PE
because she was yellow.

7 And I helped talk to the person who caused the
8 harm and it wasn't any punishment or harsh
9 consequence but that small talk helped the student
10 understand the impact of her comment and why it was
11 problematic and allowed my friend to feel supported
and heard.

12 And this experience made it clear to me that
13 there is a need for more to be done so that students
14 understand the true harm in othering these
15 microaggressive comments can have and causing
16 students to feel ashamed about their racial identity
or feel like an outsider.

17 And at CACF and ASAP, we believe that safety
18 isn't policing students or punishing students for
19 wrong doing but it means the presence of student
20 wellness. And this is just one example of the
21 comments that I've heard in my school community and
similar comments are hurting other students around

1
2 the city. And a frequent pattern that we see at ASAP
3 is students who are not reaching out to teachers
4 because they feel like no one would understand and
5 when we do share, many incidents go unaddressed and
6 often while some people may be punished,
7 understanding of the impact of their action often
8 doesn't occur and the harm caused to the person in
9 this school community is not repaired. And therefore
10 at CACF, part of our team's mission is to advocate
11 for restorative justice training for teachers and a
12 greater cultural understanding among school staff.
13 However, cultural understanding requires ongoing and
14 sustained conversation, not just a one time assembly
15 or celebration of AAPI heritage once a year.

16 And for this to be effective in schools,
17 sustained professional development for school staff
18 and restorative justice and continual anti-AAPI bias
19 training for staff is critical.

20 The city must prioritize fostering understanding,
21 empathy and growth among students. Students like
myself deserve and need to be heard, seen and
supported in our public schools. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much Abi,
your friend is very lucky to have you as a friend but

1
2 I think as you articulated she shouldn't just have to
3 rely on luck of having a friend like you. I think
4 you're absolutely right. Thank you. You may begin
5 when ready.

6 THEODORE TIEN: Good afternoon. First, I want to
7 thank Chair Dinowitz and the rest of the Council for
8 allowing this conversation. My name is Theo Tien and
9 I am a junior at [INAUDIBLE 442:36] High School. I
10 am also a youth advocate at the Asian American
11 Student Advocacy Projects, ASAP's Anti-Bullying and
12 Harassment Campaign.

13 Being Asian American has always been a crucial
14 part of my identity but it has also come with moments
15 where I felt misunderstood. There is one instance in
16 class where a classmate made a joke about Asian names
17 being too hard to pronounce and my teacher just
18 laughed along.

19 Experiences like that made me feel isolated at
20 school and lacking support. I was also dealing with
21 the pressure to meet expectations tied to the model
minority myth, feeling like I always had to succeed
and couldn't share when I was struggling.

This made it difficult to take care of my health,
especially in a school environment where there aren't

1
2 enough spaces to openly talk about these challenges.
3 All these experiences together made school feel
4 overwhelming in ways that aren't always visible to
5 others.

6 Over time, I realized that what I was
7 experiencing reflects what many AAPI students go
8 through. The silence and lack of action in
9 situations show how bullying and harassment towards
10 AAPI students are often ignored. In addition to
11 being a model minority, AAPI students are often seen
12 as perpetual foreigners. In 2024, my team collected
13 stories from AAPI students across 22 New York City
14 High Schools on their experiences with bullying in
15 school.

16 AAPI students were asked to move to a different
17 lunch table because of their food, their accents were
18 being made fun of and they were asked if they were
19 terrorists. When schools don't effectively address
20 these issues and without education that builds
21 empathy, harmful stereotypes perpetuate and students
are left to navigate these experiences on their own.
School staff should be required to have professional
development in restorative justice, deescalation,
trauma informed practice, and anti- AAPI bias. We

1
2 need to ensure social workers and educators have
3 access to training in cultural sensitivity, religion,
4 ability, race, gender and sexuality.

5 These solutions are important because they go
6 beyond acknowledging the problem and they aim to
7 create real changes in how schools respond to and
8 prevent bullying.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Finish your last thought
10 please.

11 THEODORE TIEN: We need \$6 million to fund
12 restorative justice efforts, which will also improve
13 school climate in a way that will support students
14 wellness and safety. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. You know what
16 I love about what Theo and Olivia did when I said
17 finish your last thought. They said, alright, we
18 need \$4 million, \$6 million. Like, yeah. Alright,
19 love it, alright next.

20 KULSOOM TAPAL: Thank you Chair for the
21 conversation. My name is Kulsoom Tapal. I lead the
education policy work at the Coalition for Asian
American Children and Families. More than 18 percent
of students in New York City identify as AAPI and
CACF advocates for the most marginalized AAPI

1
2 students and all New York students, including English
3 Language Learners, immigrant and refugee students,
4 low-income students, students with disabilities,
5 students who are facing housing challenges and we
6 demand a budget that prioritizes the needs for all of
7 them.

8 And so, we are uplifting some priorities that are
9 coming out from the Coalition for Equitable Education
10 funding and ask for the following needs to be funded
11 and baselined, some of which you've already heard
12 from our student leaders. \$5 million for mental
13 health continuum. So, AANHPI students are severely
14 impacted by mental health challenges. 80 percent of
15 Asian American teens have experienced in person or
16 online bullying. According to CDC data, suicide was
17 the leading cause of death amongst Asian Americans
18 age 15 to 24 and the second leading cause of death
19 amongst Native, Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders.

20 Addressing these elements and mental health
21 challenges and bullying requires sustained funding
and implementation of restorative justice practices,
which is why we're also asking for \$6 million for
restorative justice to be baselined to improve school
climate and address these root causes. \$5 million for

1
2 early childhood outreach and \$10 million for infant
3 and toddler childcare seats. 17.5 percent of early
4 childhood students are AAPI and many AAPI families
5 rely on outreach efforts to understand what resources
6 are available to them. Equally important is to
7 ensure that these seats are actually available in
8 densely populated AAPI communities and neighborhoods
9 like Jackson Heights or Sunset Park.

10 Lastly, many families in AAPI communities rely on
11 in language and accessible communication, which is
12 why we're uplifting the ask for \$4 million for
13 immigrant family communications and outreach. And we
14 urge you and the City Council and the Mayor to fully
15 fund and baseline these programs. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much Kulsoom
17 and I want to thank this panel for their testimony
18 today, to Olivia, to Abi, to Theo and to Kulsoom and
19 I will now call the next panel which is Ebonie
20 Simpson, Ben Kofman, Elmer Reyes, Peyton Cruz, and
21 Anderlis Feliz-Pena, Abigail Segura, and Kaeole
Naroti. And on deck, we have Andrea Alonso
Rodriguez, Sebastian Martinez, Guadalupe
Tinontilla(SP?), okay sometimes - sometimes it's me,
sometimes it's the handwriting, sometimes both. And

1
2 Jairo Santamaria. Did I get that one right? Okay
3 and you may begin when ready.

4 EBONIE SIMPSON: Hi, good evening. Uhm, good
5 evening to Chair Dinowitz and honorable members of
6 the Committee on Education. Thank you for the
7 opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of
8 Generation Citizen. I am Ebonie Simpson. I am -
9 have the privilege of serving as the executive
10 director for the mid-Atlantic region for Generation
11 Citizen. We support civic engagement and the power
12 of young people throughout the country by providing
13 them the tools, knowledge and skills to advocate for
14 their local communities.

15 We strongly believe in the power of young people
16 to enact real change and to ensure a just and
17 inclusive democracy at large.

18 Through our Community Based Civics curriculum and
19 policy efforts across the city and state, middle and
20 high school students are engaged in an immersive
21 project based civic education where they take a
hands-on approach to identifying issues in their
schools and their communities. They utilize core
practices like root cause analysis, landscape
analysis, policy research and stakeholder engagement.

1
2 And the classroom becomes a microcosm of democracy in
3 action.

4 Uhm, while we provide robust professional
5 development, coaching, and interfacing with public
6 officials, uhm, like Council Member Rita Joseph,
7 Council Member Gale Brewer, who is on the Committee
8 and has been working with Frank McCourt High School
9 in some really important subway accessibility work.
10 Council Member Harvey Epstein who was at our recent
11 Civic State in January. So, we really just thank you
12 so much for your partnership and championship.

13 I'm here for three core reasons, to express deep
14 gratitude for your staunch commitment and investment
15 in civic education in New York City. Uhm, thanks to
16 your investment from the civic education in New York
17 City Schools initiative, Generation Citizens is able
18 to provide our programming at no cost to 5,125
19 students across 205 DOE schools, so we're really
20 thankful for that.

21 I also happen to be former Co-Executive Director
of the Lower East Side Girls Club where I created the
New Girl City Civic Engagement Initiative and you all
have been supporting that since 2018, so thank you
for all your commitment and I pass it on to one of

1
2 our amazing educators Ben Kofman and students from
3 Lion Charter School in the Bronx.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

5 BEN KOFMAN: Thank you Ebonie. Good afternoon
6 Chair Dinowitz. Uh, thank you for the opportunity to
7 testify today. My name is Benjamin Kofman. Like
8 you, I'm an alumnus of Bronx Science. An area you
9 now represent and I was raised and educated in New
10 York City Public Schools.

11 Now, I am a social studies teacher at Lion
12 Charter High School in the Bronx and I have witnessed
13 how funding decisions directly impact our students
14 ability to learn and thrive. This year, my students
15 participated in community based civics through
16 Generation Citizen. The opportunity to explore
17 community issues and understand the political process
18 on a hands-on level was a powerful educational
19 experience.

20 My students' projects on topics just food
21 insecurity and youth empowerment to the face of
growing neighborhood gang influence illustrated their
ability to leverage political power to address
tangible challenges. As a teacher, I bear witness to
a myriad of struggles that my students endure. From

1
2 the mundane chaos of a teenage life dominated by
3 social media to obstacles so fundamental that no
4 child should have to face alone. I've had students
5 experience the upheaval of housing insecurity, grief
6 from loss of parents and loved ones or trauma from
7 seeing their community members fall victim to drug
8 abuse and gang violence.

9 Our school is in fact luckier than most. We have
10 two full time guidance counselors dedicated to
11 student mental health, as well as student uhm, full
12 time family coordinators provide holistic student
13 support. I can see the difference when my students
14 feel they have a safe space within the school, the
15 building becomes a beacon of hope rather than a
16 source of dread where my students know they can be
17 heard and helped. I'm proud of their ability to
18 advocate for their needs and how our staff encourages
19 students to treat their mental health needs
20 seriously.

21 Asking for help and receiving it from a mental
health counselor, these are skills that most adults
do not have and it's an invaluable asset that my
students will leave school with beyond graduation.
Unfortunately this does not reflect the reality of

1
2 the vast majority of our city's schools. According
3 to a report from the Office of Former Comptroller
4 Brad Lander, nearly 40 percent of city high school
5 students report uhm, depression. 70 percent of
6 schools fail to meet national staffing standards for
7 social workers and half fall short for guidance
8 counselors and this gets especially exacerbated for
9 English Language Learners who are often overlooked
10 when it comes to basic services.

11 The report for the described structural gaps, I
12 ask the Council to meet the Comptroller's goals for
13 student mental health resource funding. Thank you
14 for considering my testimony and supporting our
15 students.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you so
17 much. Alright, you all ready? Alright, go for it.

18 PEYTON CRUZ: Good afternoon and thank you for
19 the opportunity to testify at today's hearing. My
20 name is Peyton Cruz and I am in 12th grade at Lion
21 Charter High School. Last semester, my class
participated in a community based civics project
through Generation Citizen.

For our project, we discussed issues affecting
our school and community and built conscientiousness

1
2 around one topic to address together. Our classes
3 focusing on youth empowerment and our goal is to
4 reduce the influence of gang violence on children in
5 the community.

6 I'm testifying today because I notice in our
7 community there is a significant bad influence on the
8 youth when it comes to gang violence. A lot of that
9 influence comes from family, friends or even
10 strangers who see kids that are struggling in life.

11 I chose this topic because it is something that I see
12 every day and it's not something that should be
13 occurring for the youth on a regular basis.

14 Realistically as students, we encounter gang
15 influence going to school, being in school, and in
16 our community of Huntspoint, which is not new to us.

17 I think this is important to our students because
18 there is a lack of resources in our community and in
19 our school. Kids are going through struggles that we
20 can't see causing them to be susceptible to gang
21 influence. They are vulnerable as people so young,
they can't express themselves.

What I learned about the impact of youth
empowerment is that there is a silent majority of
students who can't express themselves within their

1
2 community and honestly don't feel safe or comfortable
3 enough to speak to their parents.

4 This is the sad truth because it leads parents
5 questioning how they are as parents and leading them
6 to not understand what's going on with their
7 children. Children that are under this influence
8 also tend to be lost in themselves not wanting to
9 trust others leaving them scared to do normal
10 necessities children would want to do.

11 This issue in my opinion, involves the city
12 budget because the city can help fund mental health
13 programs to help these vulnerable kids under the
14 influence of gang violence, struggling to express
15 emotions to people. Going into decisions being made
16 today, we can strengthen funding for programs that
17 can help fund mental health on deeper levels.

18 Since the majority of children struggle with
19 mental health leading to them to be at risk. I think
20 I can list multiple moments or stories from this
21 problem I am speaking on where I have seen the impact
of this issue first hand but there are multiple
encounters where I can see students in our community
hanging outside with the wrong people or bringing

1
2 gang related influences into the school, which can
3 cause them to act out upon their behavior.

4 I am asking the Council to make mental health
5 programs a top priority by fully funding them so
6 people can see the significance of this problem and
7 why these types of programs have such an impact on
8 our students and thank you for considering my
9 testimony and for supporting New York City students.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Good. Thank you Peyton.
11 Breath. You did the whole last thing in one breath,
12 very impressive, great. Alright.

13 ELMER REYES: Good afternoon. Thank you Chair
14 Dinowitz and Education Committee for the opportunity
15 to testify to this hearing. My name is Elmer Reyes
16 and I am a 12th grader at Lion Charter High School.

17 Last semester, my class participated in community
18 based civics project through Generation Citizen. For
19 our project, we discussed issues affecting our school
20 and community and build consensus around one topic to
21 address together. While classes focus on food
insecurity, our goal is to get funding to build and
maintain a food pantry at school for students and
their families.

1
2 I am testifying today because food insecurity
3 shows up in classrooms every day and it affects how
4 students learn, participate, and feel at school.
5 Food insecurity is part of a bigger pattern of
6 inequity. When the city cuts funding to schools in
7 communities like ours, it makes these gaps even
8 wider. We need more investment, not less to make
9 sure every student has what they need to succeed. My
10 focus issue connects to the budget because students
11 dealing with food insecurity relies on school based
12 support. I've seen students skip lunch because they
13 want to save food to bring home to their families.
14 That shouldn't be a choice any young person has to
15 make and it affects their energy and focus for the
16 rest of the day.

17 I am asking the Council to protect and increase
18 funding for the school based programs that support
19 students facing food insecurity. Like mental health
20 service, community school support, and after school
21 programs.

18 Thank you Chair Dinowitz and the Education
19 Committee for considering my testimony and for
20 supporting New York City students.
21

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Elmer, thank you so much
3 for your testimony. I just have to say, I'm - first
4 of all, everyone testifying should be very proud of
5 themselves but yours particularly uh spoke to me
6 because it just reminds me of the things that I saw
7 when I was teaching with those kids who would like
8 take home extra sandwiches because that was the food
9 they were going to eat and it's just so - it's very
10 sad, very depressing that those issues still persist
11 when there's so much food out there, particularly in
12 Huntspoint, where all -so much food in New York City
13 flows through there, so.

14 BEN KOFMAN: Yeah, we were proud of their
15 project. It covered how the Huntspoint market isn't
16 serving their own neighborhood. Out of curiosity,
17 where did you teach?

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I taught at - uh for 12
19 years the Kennedy Campus and at the Walton Campus.

20 BEN KOFMAN: Sure.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: The other side of the
Bronx and then a short time at Nest Plus M.

BEN KOFMAN: Yeah, totally other side of the
city.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Totally other side but
3 issues aren't that different that we're all still
4 fighting for equity with. Uh, next, testify please.

5 ANDERLIS FELIZ-PENA: Good afternoon. My name is
6 Anderli Feliz and I am a 12th grader at Lion Charter
7 High School. Thank you for letting me uh, be within
8 this testimony. Uhm, last semester my class
9 participated in a community based civics project
10 through Generation Citizen. For our project, we
11 discuss issues affecting our school and Committee and
12 built consensus around one topic to address together.
13 Our class focused on a reduction of gang influence
14 and our goal is to advocate for programs and
15 opportunities to reduce the influence of gang
16 violence within the children in the community.

17 I'm testifying today because gang influence
18 affects the safety and future of students within our
19 community. When young people lack support or
20 opportunities, they may turn to gangs, which can lead
21 to violence and limit success. This issue matters
because perfection works better than students being
unable to succeed because of negative influences or
being punished for something they cannot control.

1
2 Providing education, mentorship and positive
3 programs gives students better choices and helps
4 create a safer community. Our class chose this issue
5 because gang influence affects student safety,
6 learning and future. It is important because it
7 creates fear in schools and neighborhoods, making it
8 harder for students to feel secure and succeed. We
9 learn that gang activity impacts not just students
10 but also families. The entire school community as
11 well. These issues connect to the city budget
12 because funding decisions affect access to prevention
13 programs, mentorships and safe spaces where they can
14 talk.

15 The city budget is and can be a place to fund
16 these programs available to the youth for further
17 support for their mental health within their
18 environment. In order so we can nurture
19 visionaries and scholars, which can make the future
20 happen. Within my district, I have seen many
21 students feeling pressured or influenced to join
groups from pressure or a sense of belonging when
there aren't enough positive choices available. We
need the support of programs that can develop
interest within the youth and guide them towards a

1
2 better future. It is the school's job to provide the
3 necessary tools for students to succeed and feel
4 safe. Thank you for considering my testimony and for
5 supporting NYC students. It was a pleasure to
6 advocate for my community.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you so
8 much Anerlis. Next.

9 KAEOLE NAROTI: Good evening, my name is Kaeole
10 Naroti. I'm a freshman at La Guardia High School.
11 I'm here because of the restrictions on eligibility
12 for the student OMNI card is making it harder for my
13 peers to move around the city and access many
14 opportunities.

15 When I was in middle school, I nearly qualified
16 for the student Metro Card. Despite not using it to
17 get to and from school, the ability to take
18 transportation for free has really improved my life.

19 I use the Metro Card to go to art classes in
20 Manhattan, which has helped me to get into my highly
21 competitive fine arts program at La Guardia and even
the ability to stand in front of you today.

My student OMNI card allows me to travel from
Brooklyn to events in Queens and meetings in
Manhattan without thinking about the cost of

1
2 transportation. But this privilege is something that
3 a lot of students are given, simply because they live
4 less than half a mile from their school or take the
5 school bus. These are objectively arbitrary things
6 that shouldn't determine our independence. If I had
7 lived a little closer to my school, suddenly a lot of
8 things I can do now would not be possible. Simply
9 because it would cost too much to get there.

10 With the current price of transportation going to
11 and from an after school activity three times a week,
12 would cost about \$72 out of pocket. Money that
13 students with OMNI cards would not have to spend.

14 According to the New York City's schools data,
15 73.5 percent of students who attend school are
16 considered economically disadvantaged. An extra \$70
17 plus dollars a month is simply not possible for a lot
18 of families.

19 They shouldn't be expected to pay that much for
20 something so important to our growth and enrichment.
21 A lot of the things that colleges and jobs look for
are things we do outside of the classroom. This
gives those who can't afford transit a disadvantage
and reinforcing an already existing wealth gap. I
implore you to ensure enough funding is allocated to

1
2 extend the student OMNI program to include all
3 students in New York City Public School system so
4 that we can help students take advantage of all the
5 great opportunities our city provides them with.

6 Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you and can you
8 pronounce Kaeole? Can you say it again?

9 KAEOLE NAROTI: It's Kaeole. Like Kaeole.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Kaeole. Thank you,
11 Kaeole.

12 ABIGAIL SEGURA: Thank you Chair for the
13 conversation. Hello, my name is Abigail Segura and
14 I'm testifying before you all today in solidarity
15 with my peers at the Ya-Ya Network.

16 The dilemma around school policing versus lack of
17 restorative justice funding is something that I've
18 experienced first hand throughout my educational
19 journey here in NYC. The conversation takes me back
20 to a time, for instance, during my 8th grade year,
21 pencils were a privilege but in house suspensions
were ritualistic. Where there was one guidance
counselor per 300 students, yet 20 officer trail down
halls filled with 12 and 13 year olds.

1
2 In the midst of my 9th grade year, police
3 officers roamed the halls and bathrooms, antagonizing
4 students and telling them they deserved prison for
5 not being in class. Substitutes took on the role of
6 teachers and young undeveloped friends, replaced
7 mental health counselors. There wasn't enough money.
8 There never was and yet both schools seemed to have
9 one common ground. Restorative Justice Counselors
10 and mental health counselors were scarce yet they
11 always had enough funding for a station with the
12 police officers. Officers trailing down halls,
13 questioning students in bathrooms or students right
14 outside of class.

15 To many, it might seem that some students are
16 more problematic than others. And their reputation
17 subjects them to overpolicing but even in that case,
18 isn't it ironic that our first resort is to criminal
19 children of concern rather than give them a support
20 system full of resources. Teens are simply a product
21 of their circumstances, not just a situation that
they have going on at home but the lack of support
that they receive at school.

Do we seriously think children in already
impoverished neighborhoods want to go to their own

1
2 school and get profiled by the police? One thing we
3 normalize treating children in development as we do
4 grown adults behind bars. Because to criminalize
5 children is not to get rid of behavioral issues, it
6 is to allow those issues to marinate under the
7 surface and in time rise up.

8 Council Members, in the name of all the children
9 who have been ritually villainized and yet never
10 guarded, we ask that you to redirect \$80 million from
11 filling vacancies among the NYPD school safety agents
12 to providing 500 positive school climate coordinators
13 to lead restorative justice practices in schools.

14 In the youths best interest, put an end to
15 funding systems that push students away and start
16 funding systems that help us grow. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That was perfect timing
18 again. Masterful. I want to thank this panel for
19 their testimony today and look forward to future
20 conversations. Thank you so much.

21 Uhm, okay, the next panel I said was on deck is
22 Andrea Alonso Rodriguez, Sebastian Martinez,
23 Guadalupe Tinontilla and Iairo Santamaria. And then,
24 and then on deck if you'll get ready, Germanyoni

1
2 Lopez, Sophia Vazquez, uh, Shari-Wesjsa-Stewart,
3 Katie Caster, Ruth Aguirre.

4 I kind of want to switch it up. I will start on
5 my left. You weren't expecting that were you. We'll
6 start on my left, your right. You'll be testifying
7 first today. You're disappointed but uh, I got to
8 switch it up sometimes alright. Go for it, whenever
9 you're ready.

10 ANDREA ALONSO RODRIGUEZ: Okay, hello, good
11 afternoon. My name is Andrea, I have been a
12 restorative justice leader on campus at a community
13 school in Bushwick with Make the Road New York. This
14 is my third year coming here to speak. I'm here
15 because I care about real school safety, not just the
16 appearance of safety.

17 Every young person deserves to feel safe,
18 respected and supported in their school. That is not
19 the case in my school I attend. Instead, I have seen
20 students get punished for going through real life
21 struggles that they have no agency in. I have seen
people get suspended for situations that could have
been handled in conversation with understanding and
with care.

1
2 While being an RJ youth leader, I've learned
3 better ways to communicate how to be accountable for
4 my actions and how to deescalate conflict within my
5 peers and yet the city continues to invest in more
6 policing and surveillance instead of support.

7 As students we feel that every day walking to
8 school being greeted by security scanners, being
9 checked with a wand and seeing school safety with
10 weapons on their belt. It doesn't make us feel safe.
11 It makes us feel like we are the enemy or the
12 problem.

13 This is not what safety looks like. Real safety
14 looks like support. Real safety looks like being
15 heard. Real safety looks like restorative justice.
16 So, I'm asking you, stop choosing punishment over
17 support, fully fund restorative justice in all
18 schools and protect and expand our programs and
19 divest from excessive school policing because schools
20 - because students need more surveillance. We need
21 support. If you really care about our safety then
start listening to us. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for your
testimony.

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2 IAIRO SANTAMARIA: Uh, good afternoon and thank
3 you for having me and thank you for allowing me to
4 testify. My name is Iairo Santamaria. I am 18 years
5 old and I am a senior at the Academy for Excellence
6 and Leadership. I am also a youth leader for
7 Bushwick Campus Student Success Center.

8 Uhm, today I am here to talk about how the
9 Student Success Center has changed the direction of
10 my life and allowed me to change the direction of
11 other people's lives.

12 The Student Success Center at Bushwick Campus
13 founded in 2007 through student advocacy fills a
14 critical gap in college support for underserved
15 students today.

16 Today, students - the SS- the SSC are serving 34
17 high schools with over 17,000 students across the
18 city providing critical guidance, especially for
19 first generation immigrants, low income and students
20 of colors who have historically lacked adequate
21 support in accessing higher education.

22 This academic year, I have been a youth leader
23 and this opportunity has had a profound impact on my
24 life. I have grown in confidence, communication and
25 leadership. Helping my fellow students is an honor.

1
2 I have met new people, learned new things and learned
3 who I wanted to be when I grow up.

4 I now support and take on real responsibility as
5 a leader. I discovered that I want to give back,
6 support others and create opportunities for those
7 without guidance. I joined the Youth Leader Program
8 because of my little brother. He is an 11 year old
9 6th grader. I joined to show him what is possible
10 and to make sure he has better opportunities and
11 support when he reaches high school.

12 At my school there are only two guidance
13 counselors for more than 250 students, which is a
14 heavy weight to bear. In terms of college
15 counselors, there is only one that remains in the
16 entire campus and her name Ms. Vazquez. She is at
17 our school only because of the Student Success
18 Center, making a difference for so many students and
19 helping guide their future. My responsibilities at
20 the SSC has allowed me to lend hands to students
21 whether helping them in putting their information for
college applications or financial aid or providing
them with genuine assistance.

I feel inspired to become a better person because
of this opportunity and I have been inspired to do

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more and offer my hand to others. I feel that I have given my all to all my students and the people that I work with, whether my counselor or my youth leaders.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You just want to finish your last sentence? Your last idea please.

IAIRO SANTAMARIA: Uh, and this is why I sit here today to urge the Student Council - the City Council to continue to fund the Student Success Center and make sure that students like me can grow more and become more.

Investing in the Student Success Center is investing in students' futures, opportunities in bigger communities like ours.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much.

HAILEY ORTIZ: Hello, I am Hailey Ortiz and I will be speaking on behalf of Guadalupe, who wasn't able to make it today.

Hello, my name is Guadalupe.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can you state your name, I'm sorry, can you state your name again?

HAILEY ORTIZ: Hailey Ortiz.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Hailey, thank you.

HAILEY ORTIZ: Hello, my name is Guadalupe. I am a high school senior and youth leader at Make the

1
2 Road New York. I came to the United States from
3 Mexico at an early age after spending most of my
4 childhood there. Starting school in New York City
5 was a big adjustment, especially because in Mexico we
6 didn't have police in schools. Only teachers and
7 staff who support us daily. It was difficult to get
8 used to not seeing my teachers first thing in the
9 morning and instead being yelled at by officers while
10 going through metal detectors.

11 I've seen how fear and uncertainty affects
12 students and families, especially with the ICE raids
13 happening in our communities, which makes schools
14 feel unsafe for many of my peers. I face many
15 challenges adjusting to my new environment. One of
16 the biggest challenges I faced when I came back to
17 this country was discrimination.

18 Students mocked the way I spoke, mocked the way I
19 spoke because of my different accent. When I tried
20 to make friends, other students ignored me saying
21 they didn't want to be friends with me because they
didn't understand me. What I didn't expect was
facing the same discrimination and racism by adults
who were supposed to be there to protect me.

1
2 When my principal was disciplining me, I tried to
3 advocate for myself by explaining that I was new and
4 didn't realize I was breaking rules. That's when an
5 elementary school officer commented on my background.
6 He said, it's because you're Mexican that's why.

7 The passive aggressive tone made me feel
8 humiliated and afraid to keep speaking up. At that
9 moment, I didn't feel protected. I felt interrogated
10 and silenced by authority. A feeling that I still
11 remember now.

12 As a high school student, I've never felt safer
13 than I do now. My school has strong mental health
14 support. When my father was in and out of the
15 hospital for two years, my counselor supported me
16 every day and even organized a t-shirt fundraiser to
17 help with his medical bills. They prioritized
18 understanding over punishment and it shows. We
19 haven't had any major conflicts in my school because
20 of the strong and supportive community these students
21 centered resources create. These resources are
critical now as many students fear family separation
and harassment by any type of law enforcement.
Without support, fear takes over and learning stops.

1
2 During the Adams Administration, more funding went
3 towards policing in our schools.

4 I have seen first hand that when schools invest
5 in care and support, students succeed. I urge the
6 City Council to redirect funding from school police
7 to programs that actually keep students safe and
8 supported, like mental health services, guidance
9 counselors and restorative justice programs. Every
10 student deserves to feel safe, supported, no matter
11 what they look like or where they come from. Thank
12 you.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you and thank you
14 for testifying on behalf of your friend. Thank you.

15 SEBASTIAN MARTINEZ: Good afternoon. My name is
16 Sebastian and I am a senior in a community high
17 school in Bushwick, Brooklyn and uh, Make the Road
18 New York Leader. I have had the privilege of working
19 with Restorative Justice with a Restorative Justice
20 Coordinator at my school for two years now. I have
21 learned how to emotionally regulate and help others
do the same. I'm here to talk about restorative
justice in schools and the importance of these
programs. New York City has an opportunity to create
more space for RJ to happen in schools. Expanding

1
2 the number of coordinators and providing staff with
3 more deescalation and circled training, would help
4 schools feel better equipped to handle student
5 conflicts. With the right support, these situations
6 could become meaningful conversations where students
work through their differences together.

7 Instead, students get suspended for issues that
8 could have been otherwise been resolved. I've seen
9 this first hand in my school where two of my close
10 friends got into a fight and afterward, the school
11 sat them down and forced them to resolve it on the
12 spot. On the surface, it looked resolved but the
13 real problems were never addressed. Both of them
14 still had grudges and animosity toward each other.
15 The root of the conflict was never really talked
16 through and it all happened because there are not
17 enough RJ practitioners on campus who can guide these
18 conversations in a more thoughtful and lasting way.

19 The city decides where the money goes and what
20 positions are created and right now, Restorative
21 Justice is not receiving the investment it urgently
needs. Schools require dedicated funding, trained
staff and protected time to implement RJ effectively.
Students in this city deserve schools where conflict

1
2 is treated as an opportunity for growth, not just
3 punishment. Restorative Justice is not just an add
4 on, it is a proven approach that creates lasting,
5 meaningful change in school communities.

6 By being an RJ Youth Leader, I have learned that
7 the core foundation of RJ is building strong, healthy
8 relationships. Schools -

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Finish your last thought,
10 yeah.

11 SEBASTIAN MARTINEZ: Uhm, yeah, RJ directly
12 addresses these challenges by fostering environments
13 where students feel seen, heard and respected and it
14 should be implemented in every school. Thank you for
15 your time.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you and thank you
17 all for your testimony today. And similar to a
18 previous panel, it's wonderful that you're uhm,
19 you're RJ Ambassadors. Is that your - the title?
20 What's the RJ, Restorative Justice leaders? Leaders,
21 it's wonderful but it shouldn't rely on schools being
fortunate enough to have students who care like you
do and proactively seek it out. It should be uhm,
sort of built into all of our schools. I think

1
2 you're absolutely right. So, thank you for all of
3 your testimony today.

4 I'll now call the next panel uhm and Germanyoni
5 Lopez, Sophia Vazquez, Shari-Wejsa-Stewart, Katie
6 Caster, Ruth Aguirre.

7 Graduate students, okay and on deck we have
8 Diaraye Bah, Alina Flores-Veliz, brianna Lucero, Gray
9 Bruce, and Allison Revelo Castillo. That's on deck.

10 We will start from the left, your right. You are
11 starting, you got this alright.

12 GERMANYONI LOPEZ: Good afternoon Chair Dinowitz,
13 Committee and Council Members. My name is Germanyoni
14 Lopez and I'm currently a high school senior
15 attending the Beacon school. For the past two school
16 years, I have been a student researcher with the
17 Latinidad Curriculum Initiative. As a student
18 researcher, I have worked along TC students,
19 educators and fellow New York City Public School
20 students to develop a culturally responsive
21 curriculum that bridges the gap between students and
education.

I have facilitated online and in person town
halls and served as a panel speaker at the Hispanic
Education Summit 2025 and at our Tiatus Event where

1
2 our educators and students presented projects curated
3 during their time with Latinidad researchers. And
4 where I was able to work directly with numerous
5 educators who were equally driven to share the Latina
6 culture amongst their students but lacked the
7 resources and support to do so.

8 Our work together felt invaluable and makes up
9 the fabric of the lessons and the curriculum today.
10 I have watched intergenerational groups of New
11 Yorkers come together for the Latinidad Curriculum
12 initiative to support the need for curriculum that
13 acknowledges the culture, history and are of the 40
14 percent of New York City Latino public school
15 population and beyond. As a student I have seen with
16 my own eyes the importance of highlighting one's
17 culture and the education system. Growing up as a
18 Mexican American student in the South Bronx, I have
19 never once questioned my culture, identity, and place
20 in school until I went to high school. 40 minutes
21 away from my family, friends and safety net lies a
school that I thought was a guarantee to accomplish
when my family couldn't.

Yet throughout my four years of high school I
have realized the need for an education that both

1
2 acknowledges my chicano history while simultaneously
3 upholds a rigorous curriculum. Despite New York City
4 having some of the best public schools, I have not
5 been able to ignore the disparities plaguing our
6 schools. Namely prioritizing test scores over
7 student integration and culture acceptance.

8 In my junior year I grew tired of the
9 segregation in our school system and decided to join
10 the Latinidad team after realizing this work was
11 rooted in a shared desire to feel represented in the
12 curriculum and to push for change that the Latinidad
13 curriculum has helped create.

14 Today, I sit before you all hoping that you all
15 are just as driven to challenge the disparities
16 within our education system. Through supporting the
17 funding, through supporting and funding the Latina
18 Curriculum Initiative, I believe that education isn't
19 only about test scores and data but rather the social
20 culture reflected in schools.

21 Students care about their education when they
believe their education cares about them. That is
why LCI is important work to support. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Did your
speech say standing before you?

1 GERMANYONI LOPEZ: Yeah.

2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay. You're fixing to
3 fly, that was very, very talented, very good.
4 Alright, you can begin when ready.

5 SOPHIA VAZQUEZ: Okay, thank you so much. Good
6 afternoon Chair Dinowitz, Committee, Council Members.
7 My name is Sophia Vazquez. I am currently a doctoral
8 student at Teachers College, a former educator of New
9 York City Schools and a member of the Latinidad
10 Curriculum initiative team. I'm here to deliver
11 testimony on behalf of Dr. Ezekiel Dixon-Román,
12 Director of the Edmund W. Gordon Institute for
13 Advanced Study and member of the leadership team of
14 the LCI.

15 So here is the testimony. We are grateful for
16 the Council's support in our first two years and
17 respectfully make our budget request of \$2.35 million
18 on behalf of Teachers College. Founded in 1973, the
19 Gordon Institute is committed to critically examining
20 and reshaping the lives and education of socially
21 precarious and racialized populations.

Through the development of a culturally
responsive ethnic studies curriculum and the
centering of students, teachers and community

1
2 interest. The LCI is one of many initiatives that
3 follows the mission and legacy of the Gordon
4 Institute that seeks to enable the success of all New
5 York City Public School students.

6 Given the over 85 percent of educators are using
7 AI in classrooms, we introduced a focus on AI and the
8 LCI for 2026. We're developing and conducting a
9 survey on Latina youth understandings, uses and
10 perspectives on ethics and fairness with AI, as well
11 as how English or Spanish prompting and AI generated
12 output may impact them. This survey data will be
13 used to inform culturally responsive professional
14 learning and curricular content with AI.

15 Full funding of our proposal will allow us to
16 engage youth in workshops with the AI survey data and
17 to develop curricular materials to design in pilot
18 lessons and resources.

19 It will enable us to use this AI survey data and
20 implications in a series of workshops with educators
21 to develop professional learning frameworks and
modules. Through the workshop series, we will learn
from educators how they are using AI while also
developing professional learning and collaboration
with them.

1
2 In this rapidly changing technological landscape
3 of education, we thank you for your time.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Please wrap it up. There
5 you go, thank you so much.

6 SOPHIA VAZQUEZ: You're welcome. Oh, the red
7 light has to be on. Yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: It's on, you got it.

9 SHARI-WEJSA-STEWART: Okay, good evening. My
10 name is Shari-Wejsa-Stewart and I'm a doctoral
11 student at Teachers College Columbia University and
12 former high school social studies teacher.

13 I'm speaking on behalf of the team led by Dr.
14 Rina Cortina, that has been working on the Latinidad
15 Curriculum Initiative. This initiative is a citywide
16 effort to develop a culturally responsive curriculum
17 and professional learning for New York City Public
18 Schools, reflecting the histories, identities, and
19 contributions of Latino communities.

20 I am here to testify to what we accomplished in
21 our second year and ask for funding next year to
continue this crucial work.

Over the past academic year, we have written 20
lessons for grades 6-9 structured around our four
pedagogical pillars, which together foster inclusive,

1
2 interdisciplinary and student centered learning. We
3 have also created a cohort of 20 teachers from
4 multiple districts who have been writing additional
5 lesson plans to support the curriculum. This year,
6 we held nine curriculum writing sessions guiding
7 teachers from planning and standards alignment to
8 assessment and differentiation so they could design
9 lessons that reflect students' identities and
10 experiences.

11 To support the professional learning of New York
12 City educators to implement the curriculum, we host a
13 series of knowledgeable building workshops bringing
14 together teachers, scholars and school leaders to
15 explore how Latinidad can be taught across
16 disciplines.

17 In October, participants examine Latinidad and
18 intersectional identities. November workshops focus
19 on narratives of Latinidad in New York City,
20 including immigration and activism. In January,
21 educators explore the role of music and arts and
deepening students' understanding of identity in
community. And in March, teachers worked to
translate these ideas into classroom ready lessons on
activism, history and community wellbeing. Such as

1
2 exploring how Community Gardens serve as space as a
3 cultural preservation, resilience and collective
4 care.

5 Teachers' responses have been overwhelmingly
6 positive, with many requesting more workshops. One
7 described a session as a rich and powerful workshop
8 with insights I will use to prepare ideas for
9 learning. While another called the work
10 groundbreaking. Healing the inner childhood of many
11 Latino people who have not been represented for so
12 long.

13 This work is building a strong foundation, not
14 just new materials but a growing community of
15 culturally responsive educators. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, your timing is
17 competitive with that of the youth. Good job. Next
18 please.

19 KATIE CASTER: Alright, good afternoon Chair
20 Dinowitz, Committee, and Council Members. My name is
21 Katie Caster and I am a former special education and
ELA teacher and I am currently a doctoral student at
Teachers College and a member of the Latinidad
Curriculum Initiative or LCI.

1
2 I'm here to deliver testimony on behalf of Dr.
3 Limarys Caraballo, Co-Director of the LCI. This is
4 her testimony.

5 We are grateful for the City Council's support in
6 our first two years, and respectfully make our budget
7 request of \$2.35 million on behalf of Teachers
8 College. Our team is uniquely positioned as academic
9 leaders in a partnership to develop and implement a
10 cultural responsive and inclusive and accessible
11 Latinidad curriculum. The LCI centers student,
12 teacher and community perspectives as it is invested
13 in the learning achievement and postsecondary success
14 of all students in New York City Public Schools.

15 In 2025, we led with our expertise and worked
16 directly with students and teachers to include
17 multiple voices developing our conceptual framework
18 and blueprint, which is the outline vision of our
19 initiative. This blueprint and our report are
20 publicly available on our website.

21 In 2026, we had an overwhelming response to an
open call for student and teacher inquiry groups with
over 300 students and teachers applying to
participate. We formed a cohort of 60 students and
teachers due to the available funding and this

1
2 intergenerational cohort supported the team in
3 developing an elective course on Latinidad, modules
4 and lessons for all high school students. We have a
5 teacher and a student cohort member here with us
6 today who will share or have shared their
7 experiences. Full funding of our proposal will allow
8 us to build upon all of these innovations to make
9 resources available to all teachers, develop
10 elementary curriculum, implement scalable
11 professional learning and support citywide
12 implementation of this curriculum and create an
13 online platform for teachers and students across all
14 five boroughs.

15 We look forward to contributing to the important
16 goals of this Committee of making access - equity
17 access and critical hope a reality for all of our
18 students but especially for those who are most
19 underrepresented.

20 Thank you for your time.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much. You
may begin when ready.

RUTH AGUIRRE: Good afternoon, Buenos tardes
Chair Dinowitz, Committee Members and members of the
Council. My name is Ruth Aguirre. I am a music

1
2 teacher at PS 189 in the heart of Washington Heights,
3 a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, and a
4 curriculum contributor to the Latinidad Curriculum
Initiative, LCI.

5 I testify today on the transformative power of
6 the Latinidad curriculum for NYC students and
7 families. New York City's history thrives on the
8 contributions of diverse people. When students see
9 their communities' achievements reflected in lessons,
it affirms their identity and builds self-efficacy.

10 At LCI's Talleres en Comunidad workshops, high
11 school students gained new knowledge of Latino
12 culture, sparking gratitude for seeing people from
13 their communities represented. The students also
14 sought advice on their educational and career
15 aspirations, as most of the presenters were graduate
16 students and leaders in professional fields, also of
Latino heritage, who could relate to their
experiences.

17 These connections during students' formative
18 years provide a foundation for self-efficacy and
19 plans for a successful future in New York City and
20 beyond. Latinidad topics also boost engagement and
critical thinking. At my school, where 93 percent of

1
2 students are Hispanic, many of them of Dominican
3 heritage, music lessons from Latin America ignite
4 excitement.

5 Students compare and contrast rhythms, share
6 family stories, and create new lyrics. These
7 innovative students are in the process of becoming
8 the next wave of New York City cultural and thought
9 leaders.

10 In closing, the Latinidad curriculum serves as a
11 mirror for students who see themselves represented in
12 it and a window for others seeking to learn more
13 about the people in their world. It celebrates
14 Latino art, music, stories, and resilience, enriching
15 all New Yorkers.

16 When New York City shows support for this in our
17 schools, the message is clear: our students' cultures
18 are important, celebrated, and essential to our
19 city's future. Let us all commit to supporting the
20 Latinidad curriculum. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you very much.
Thank you to this panel for your testimony. Uhm, we
have a slight change in the order. I know I have
certain panels on deck. We're going to wait one more
round, apologies for the confusion. Uhm, the next

1
2 panel is Madison Mounty, Sophie Stelboum, Matt
3 Chalko(SP?), Janice Wyman uh Shornstein, Gilberto
4 Alvarado.

5 Hmm, we'll start with Madison. You may begin
6 when ready.

7 MADISON MOUNTY: Alright, good evening Education
8 Chair Dinowitz and members of the Education
9 Committee. My name is Madison Mounty, and I serve as
10 the Director of Government Relations and Advocacy at
11 the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

12 New York City stands at a pivotal educational
13 moment: rising hate incidents, the fading presence of
14 survivor testimony, and increasing historical
15 misinformation converge to create an urgent need for
16 media literacy. That's where our programs come in.

17 Our current City Council supported workshop,
18 Combatting Hate in Digital Spaces, is a learning
19 experience designed for Middle and High School
20 students. Learners explore the formation of online
21 identities and examine how digital systems such as AI
and the algorithm influence and manipulate individual
actions in digital spaces.

 This workshop supports student reflection on how
their digital selves are shaped, and equip students

1
2 with holistic strategies for ethical online
3 engagement that situates them as contributors to the
4 reduction of digital harm online hate speech, bias
5 bigotry and bullying.

6 Funding for FY25 was used to deliver a total of
7 463 workshops and assemblies to over 11,000 public
8 middle and high school students in 47 schools across
9 the five boroughs. This year, we are continuing to
10 work in partnership with schools in 12 council
11 districts to schedule these workshops and assemblies.

12 Our new initiative request, Witness to History is
13 a workshop for students in grades 9-12 that uses
14 survivor testimony from the Holocaust and the Rwandan
15 Genocide to teach how history is created, remembered,
16 and communicated.

17 Research in genocide and human rights education
18 shows that testimony-based learning is among the most
19 effective ways to reduce dehumanization and build
20 lasting ethical awareness. Enhanced restoration of
21 funding through the Speaker's Initiative, Citywide
Initiatives, as well as youth and local discretionary
funding at the levels requested will allow us to
provide workshop sessions for as many as 14,000

1
2 students and expand to schools and communities beyond
3 our current reach.

4 We look forward to our continued partnership with
5 the City Council. Thank you for your consideration
6 and we hope to have your support.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. The timing is
8 beautiful this evening. I love it.

9 Good afternoon Chair Dinowitz and other members
10 of the Education Committee. My name is Sophie
11 Stelboun and I am a program and operations
12 coordinator at the Trust for Public Land in New York
13 City.

14 Since 1996, Trust for Public Land has partnered
15 with city agencies and many City Council Members to
16 convert over 230 asphalt lots into vibrant
17 school-community playgrounds. Featuring shade trees,
18 gardens, athletic courts, running tracks and outdoor
19 classrooms, these sites provide close-to-home places
20 to gather, exercise and play for students and
21 neighbors alike.

Numerous studies show that access to outdoor play
and nature relieves stress, increases physical
activity, improves mental health, and decreases
social isolation for both adults and youth. These

1
2 playgrounds depend on annual custodial funding to
3 ensure they remain safe, clean, and accessible to the
4 community outside of school hours.

5 While roughly 270 sites receive this essential
6 funding for maintenance through PlaNYC and the Parks
7 Department, it is possible to open more than 300
8 additional sites to the public, through baseline
9 funding for custodial support. The Division of
10 School Facilities estimates that it costs \$72,000 per
11 year to open a schoolyard to the public. Adding 15
12 schoolyards per year moving forward, as stated in
13 Council Member Brewer's Bill 0566, would cost the
14 city a little over \$1 million per year - an easy,
15 cost-effective way to increase play space within a
16 walkable distance from home, while prioritizing those
17 in environmental justice areas.

18 Parks and playgrounds are more crucial than ever,
19 affording economic and research based solutions to
20 public health and loneliness in every neighborhood.

21 Thank you for the opportunity to address this
Committee this afternoon. We greatly appreciate your
attention to these important issues.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much. one
quick question for uhm, for Madison. Sorry for

1
2 Madison. Similar to the questions I had for the DOE
3 about restorative justice, uhm, you know the work
4 that you guys do is I think inherently good but do
5 you have any sort of metric evaluative tool you use
6 to demonstrate these programs are positively
impacting our students?

7 MADISON MOUNTY: Yeah, I can certainly go back to
8 the education team that collects the holistic view of
9 data based on return visits from schools, our
10 incident response when things occur at specific
11 schools and how teachers and students respond. So, I
can reach out to you separately on that.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much and
13 thank you to this panel for your testimony today.

14 Okay, now after the brief interlude, Diaraye Bah,
15 Alina Flores-Veliz, Brianna Lucero, Allison Revelo
Castillo, and Gray Bruce.

16 We'll start from my right, your left, we'll start
17 with you and you'll begin whenever you're ready.

18 ALINA FLORES-VELIZ: Okay, good afternoon. My
19 name is Alina Flores, I am a student at the Young
20 Women's Leadership School of the Bronx and I'm a
21 Youth Activist with the Ya-Ya Network.

1
2 I'm here to talk about the importance of funding
3 mental health resources in schools and share a bit of
4 my experience regarding that. Within my school, my
5 time to talk to our counselor felt limited.

6 Considering it's one staff that counts for 300 plus
7 high school students. That being said, I never felt
8 like my time to talk about my personal issues
9 impacting myself and wellbeing was valued or
10 important enough since it was so hard to get time
11 with my counselor.

12 Students come to school to not only learn but
13 also feel safe. We should feel that our stories are
14 valid and heard. Therefore, our funding for
15 counselors in schools should be a necessity that we
16 shouldn't have to fight for.

17 So, I am here asking you to freeze the hiring of
18 new school cops and reinvest those funds into real
19 support through more counselors, social workers and
20 restorative justice programs. By shifting at least
21 \$75 million uhm, directly into schools to hire
community based staff who actually keep students
safe.

1
2 This would allow our students the support they
3 need in their journeys they face. Thank you for
4 listening.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much.

6 ALLISON REVELO CASTILLO: My name is Allison
7 Revelo Castillo. I'm a student representing Ya-Ya
8 Network. Today, I am here to speak about the
9 importance of supporting immigrant students in our
10 city schools. Many immigrant students like myself,
11 come to school not only to learn but also find
12 safety, stability and opportunity. I still remember
13 how my elementary school resources for bilingual kids
14 were very scarce. Children who had immigrated and
15 didn't speak English were opted out by a single
16 guidance counselor. She was not even a teacher and
17 didn't know all of her different languages.
18 Communicating was very hard. Now, it's even harder
19 for immigrant children as they always have to be on
20 the lookout for ICE.

21 Therefore increased funding for bilingual
education programs, school counselors and staff who
understand the needs of immigrant communities is
essential to create welcoming environments.

1
2 This funding must include a \$4 million budget for
3 immigrant family communities and outreach to ensure
4 families stay informed and connected to schools.
5 Additionally, policies like Intro. 460, which include
6 eliminating the gang database, critical to protecting
7 immigrant students. Such measures help ensure that
8 minor incidents do not have lasting consequences on
9 students immigration cases, allowing young people to
10 learn, grow and contribute positively to their
11 communities without fear. Thank you for listening.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your
13 testimony. Whenever you're ready, you may begin your
14 testimony. If you see the red light on, that means
15 the microphone is on.

16 BRIANNA LUCERO: Hi, my name is Brianna and I'm
17 from BHS and a youth leader Circle Keepers. I come
18 before you all since the budget cuts threatens the
19 immigrant family communications and outreach
20 initiatives and this unfortunately impacts
21 immigration - immi- oh my gosh, committ- communities
that are built on immigrants.

Uh, children and parents are always in fear about
like, if they're going to lose somebody. If
something is going to happen while they are not close

1
2 to each other and I think that that's not a way any
3 child or person or adult has to live and I hope that
4 uhm, that - uhm, I don't know. Uhm, that this can
5 like uhm, that this can just like show you that
6 people are scared and that we are all students and
7 that we just want you to reconsider where, where,
8 where the money goes because we want to - we want to
9 be able to help our community and not be able to just
10 live in fear because there are people that are really
11 smart and willing to go to school but are held back
12 by that. Because of surveillance and wrongful
13 accusations that they don't deserve to live in fear
14 or constant stress, I hope that this can change your
15 mind and thank you for considering my testimony and I
16 thank you for your time.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your
15 testimony and all the people who you're advocating
16 for, the people living as you say in fear and in
17 stress are also deeply grateful for your advocacy
18 today. Thank you.

18 DIARAYE BAH: Good afternoon Chairman and members
19 of the Committee. My name is Diaraye, I am a high
20 school junior and I am a leader at Make the Road New
21 York. Council Member Williams represents where I

1
2 live in Jamaica and Speaker Menin represents the area
3 where I go to school.

4 I am here today because I want New York City to
5 invest more resources for mental health support,
6 restorative justice and student success centers in my
7 school. We do not need more school cops. There are
8 six schools in my building. The majority of students
9 walk through a main entrance where the first people
10 they see every morning are school cops. It feels
11 like I'm walking into jail. Their presence makes me
12 feel like I've done something wrong or that I am in
13 trouble. I should not have to feel this way.

14 I come to school to learn. I want to feel like I
15 belong there but the constant presence of school cops
16 makes me feel like people were - people from my
17 background are dangerous and need more surveillance.
18 That's racist. Black immigrant students like me are
19 capable of achieving amazing things. We just need
20 genuine support and resources to grow.

21 Instead of wasting money on school cops, we need
to invest in real school safety, like restorative
justice and mental health support. School police
cause direct harm to young people. They escalate
conflicts in schools and disproportionately punish

1
2 Black and Latinx students. There is no proof that
3 school police prevent conflict in our schools but yet
4 the New York City budget currently prioritizes
5 funding school police instead of fully funding my
6 education.

7
8 New York City has the largest school police force
9 in the country. As Mayor Adams - sorry - as Mayor
10 Mamdani and this City Council begin making positive
11 changes, we are calling on you to stop recruiting,
12 hiring and training school police.

13
14 If we stop hiring new school cops and cut the
15 vacant school cop positions, we could immediately
16 have billions of dollars to invest in real school
17 safety.

18
19 Under the new administration, young people and
20 schools are under attack. These threats are really
21 scary. All young people deserve to feel safe and
respected in schools regardless of immigration
status. We need this New York City Council to pass a
budget that protects young people and invest in real
school safety by expanding funding for restorative
justice, mental health and student success centers.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, if you could
3 finish up your last thought please, I'd appreciate
4 it.

5 DIARAYE BAH: Yeah, no problem. In the near
6 future, I see myself going to college, going to law
7 school and becoming an immigration attorney. Invest
8 in me, invest in the young people. We need police
9 free school now. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much. The
11 last panelist.

12 GRAY BRUCE: Uhm, thank you for the opportunity
13 to speak with you today about the proposed budget.
14 My name is Gray Bruce and I am a senior at School of
15 the Future High School. Today, I am testifying on
16 behalf of the Coalition for Equitable Education
17 Funding. A group of more than 120 organizations,
18 advocating for the resources needed to ensure every
19 student receives a high quality education with a
20 focus on those who have the greatest needs.

21 We are pleased that Mayor Mamdani's Fiscal Year
2027 Preliminary Budget extends in baselined funding
for two essential initiatives: preschool special
education services and summer programming, however,
the Preliminary Budget relieves out funding for other

1
2 critical education programs that are currently
3 benefiting thousands of New York City students and
4 their families.

5 The following programs are funded for this year
6 only and are therefore at risk of being rolled back
7 or eliminated as soon as this July. Restorative
8 justice which helps students stay in schools, repair
9 relationships and resolve conflicts that are being
10 expended. The Mental Health Continuum, which provides
11 expedited mental health care to students at 50 high
12 need schools. The Learning to Work program, which
13 provides support to over age undercredited students
14 to help them earn a high school diploma and develop a
15 post-secondary plan, Sensory Exploration Education
16 Discovery, otherwise known as SEED, which supports
17 students with intensive sensory needs, infant toddler
18 childcare seats in high needs communities, which are
19 programs that just got up and running this January
20 and represent the first city funded non means tested
21 childcare for infant and toddlers, early childhood
education outreach, which helps families learn about
early childcare programs, immigrant family
communications and outreach, which helps families
receive information about their child's school and

1
2 language and mode they can access and student success
3 centers, which allow trained youth leaders to build a
4 culture of college going and help their peers with
5 the college admissions process.

6 We call on the city to baseline funding for these
7 programs in the Fiscal Year 2027 budget so that
8 students and families will know that they can
9 continue relying on these programs in the future
10 years and to make additional investments that are
11 needed to support students, especially those who have
12 the greatest needs.

13 Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I
14 would be happy to answer any questions you have.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you
16 Gray. Uhm, just a moment of personal privilege just
17 for Alina and Allison and all the other young ladies,
18 women from Young Women Leadership Academy. You have
19 a dynamite teacher in Ms. Ritz who is so incredibly
20 proud of you. And I can tell you from my personal
21 experience, she was my co-teacher my very first year
when I was a teacher and I know that I learned so
much about our teen, our teenagers, about being a
teacher from her and she's doing incredible things in

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the classroom and you're so very lucky to have her as your teacher.

I want to thank this panel for their testimony today and call the next panel. Reinaly Bran, Mariama Jalloh, Sadea Rahman, and Miley Gomes. Okay and on deck we have Esperanza Vasquez, uh, Armani Allayah Raymond, Hadia Ali, Kasadi-it's hard to read that, Kasadi with a K? And Yaretzi Vidals Hernandez.

Uhm, and for the translation, uhm who are we looking for? Who is doing the translation? Okay, we have a translator in the back. [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 503:07-503:13] okay.

TRANSLATOR: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 503:17-503:19].

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm sorry. We'll start from my right, your left. You may begin whenever you're ready. Whenever you are ready, you may begin.

MARIAMA JALLOH: Hi, my name is Mariama Jalloh. I'm also a senior at the Young WOmEn's Leadership School of the Bronx and I'm a youth activist at the Ya Ya Network. I am here today to talk to you about mental health resources in schools and specifically, I want to express the lack of help I have received from my school that dates back to when I was a middle schooler.

1
2 I've always had a problem with stress, whether
3 that was my future, my homework or my home life. It
4 always felt so overwhelming to deal with, so much so
5 that it overflowed my mind with so much anxiety.
6 Since I was - since I was and still am very hyper
7 aware of myself, I knew that the help I needed was
8 going to be from my school counselor.

9 Everything was going great. I was given sessions
10 and I saw my mental state improving the more sessions
11 I had access to. But my sessions had to end because
12 my counselor had too much on her plate, being one of
13 two counselors throughout the whole school building.

14 I'm not alone. I know that you know that there
15 are many students that yearn for the same mental
16 health access as me. I also know that you know that
17 one or two counselors to a school of 800 kids or any
18 amount of kids is not enough. The confidence from a
19 child and teen, knowing that they have many support
20 systems that they can go to school, should not be
21 normalized. That is why I am asking you to provide
more funding for the programs in the mental health
continuum and direct \$80 million to hire 500 positive
school climate coordinators that would provide more
mental health capacity in schools. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Mariama?

3 MARIAMA JALLOH: Yeah.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Sorry, thank you so much.
5 Next.

6 REINALY BRAN: Hello Education Committee. My
7 name is Reinaly Bran. I am a student at the Young
8 Women's Leadership of the Bronx and an activist at
9 the Ya Ya Network Action Committee. I'm here today
10 because I want to talk about the fact that more
11 counselors are needed in schools instead of cops.
12 Not only are cops intimidating, but they are also not
13 a very good solution to keeping the school safe as it
14 can negatively impact a students mental health more.

15 I still remember my times of going through a
16 metal detector in my school, a place where I am
17 supposed to feel safe and protected. It honestly
18 unsettles me every time they do one of these surprise
19 checkups. I can't even imagine how kids who have
20 them every day in their schools feel. I can still
21 recall a time where my school had an event along with
another school, a game night. As soon as I got
there, I was greeted by metal detectors and soon
after a wand held metal detector. It felt like an
invasion of my personal space and I had to grab onto

1
2 the table and put a leg behind me as well as other
3 stances for them to check me, all because I had a
4 quarter in my coat pocket that I wasn't aware of.

5 This is why we want no funding for new or
6 existing students surveillance and scanning
7 equipment. We are calling on the New York City
8 Council to freeze hiring of school cops and forbid
9 the city from filling empty positions. And instead
10 to provide an 480 million funding to hire 500 school
11 based roles responsible for training staff and
12 implementing restorative justice and healing centered
13 programming. In addition to this, we demand that the
14 baseline funding for restorative justice increases
15 from \$17.6 million to \$22.6 million. Thank you for
16 listening.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your
18 testimony.

19 MILEY GOMES: Good evening. My name is Miley
20 Gomes. I am a youth activist with the Ya Ya Network
21 and a 9th grader at the Beacon school. I am here
today because every student deserves access to real
mental health support and school environments rooted
in care, dignity, and safety. Currently, that is not
the reality for many of us.

1
2 I remember a day when a student in my school was
3 having a panic attack and during class. They were
4 visibly overwhelmed, shaking and didn't know where to
5 go. When they tried to get help, the nurses office
6 was already full and there wasn't a counselor
7 available. They didn't know where to go.
8 Eventually, they were sent back to class without
9 getting the support they needed. Moments like that
10 stay with you. Because in that moment, it sends a
11 message that our mental health isn't a priority and
12 when students don't get help, it affects everything.
13 Our focus, our attendance, and our ability to
14 succeed.

15 The solutions are clear and they already exist.
16 Schools need restorative justice practices and
17 consistent accessible mental health support, trained
18 staff, deescalation spaces, and service students can
19 actually access when they need them. That is why we
20 are calling on the City Council to invest \$80 million
21 to hire 500 school climate coordinators, increase
restorative justice funding from \$17.6 million to
\$22.6 million, and sustain programs like the \$5
million mental health continuum.

1
2 If we want safer schools, we need to invest in
3 care, not punishment. Students shouldn't have to go
4 through struggles and worries just to get through the
5 school day. Thank you for your time.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Miley, thank you for your
7 testimony.

8 HADIA ALI: Hello, my name is Hadia and I'm a
9 high school senior at School of the Future High
10 School and I'm a proud first gen immigrant and I'm
11 here to ask the city to baseline the \$4 million for
12 immigrant family outreach and communications. Around
13 COVID, the city was able to secure \$4 million for
14 immigrant family outreach because it was recognized
15 that immigrant parents were being - were not getting
16 communication from schools and were being left out
17 from receiving services that are incredibly
18 important.

19 The program helped ensure that immigrant families
20 have access to the information that they need about
21 their children's education to access services and
resources. It is critical for this initiative to
continue giving the increasing numbers of newcomer
immigrant families in New York City as well as the
toxicity of the federal policies. I'm glad to learn

1
2 that over COVID, the school system added money to
3 make immigrant communications and engagement better.
4 And while it's still not perfect, we can't go back.
5 In fact, we need to do more to support and protect
6 immigrants.

7 One of my friends whose parents speak a less
8 common Russian dialect, which is much less common
9 than Bangali, the language I speak, uhm, she has an
10 offer for an afterschool stem curricular, which
11 requires her to leave school premises. This extra
12 curricular is something that she deeply enjoys and is
13 a way for her to get further experience in stem that
14 is beyond what her school had available for her.

15 The school however, did not have a translator or
16 translated permission slip for her parents. The
17 school did not call with the translator and since the
18 family spoke very little English and she was not
19 fluent, the information that they were able to infer
20 from the call was missing the crucial fact that she
21 would be leaving school premises and how to get in
22 contact with her.

23 This is a safety risk for her and her family.
24 Without the translation, it leaves her to - out of
25 contact with her parents when she is outside of

1 school. And it should not be a burden on her for her
2 to translate.

3 So, I want to say that I'm happy we have this
4 money now but I'm scared that the city would lose it.
5 Because we need to do even more to improve how we
6 communicate with immigrants, this is why we are
7 asking to baseline \$4 million for immigrant family
8 outreach.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Uhm, I'm sure
10 your teachers and family are so proud of you and
11 again Ms. Ritz is texting me saying she's felling,
12 that's like really proud. Alright, so I hope you are
13 all very proud of yourselves and I know your teachers
14 and your families all are. Uhm, I'd like to call the
15 next panel. Uhm, Esperanza Vasquez, Armani Alia
16 Raymond, Hadia Ali, Kasadi uhm, I can't read the
17 handwriting, I apologize, Yaretzi Vidals Hernandez.
18 You may begin.

19 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
20 512:09-512:20]

21 TRANSLATOR: Good afternoon City Council.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm sorry, can you, can
you please speak into the microphone.

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TRANSLATOR: Good afternoon. My name is Esperanza Vasquez and I am the mother of two children.

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 512:31-512:35]

TRANSLATOR: I was born in Mexico.

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 512:37-512:39].

TRANSLATOR: I was born in Mexico, my two children were born in the Bronx in District 9.

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 512:44-512:45].

TRANSLATOR: The oldest one is in University.

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 512:48-512:51]

TRANSLATOR: The second one came out of the New Settlement.

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 512:54-512:57].

TRANSLATOR: I am - I am a leader of the Parents Committee in the Bronx.

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 513:02]

TRANSLATOR: Since 2001.

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2 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
3 513:04-513:14].

4 TRANSLATOR: And for me, for me it's a great
5 opportunity for me to be here in front of this panel
6 and to maybe hear the name of the other parents.

7 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
8 513:26-513:29].

9 TRANSLATOR: To be able to give a better
10 education to our children.

11 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
12 513:33-513:40].

13 TRANSLATOR: To be able to give a positive
14 education and to work with you all in regards to the
15 budget.

16 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
17 513:47-513:52]

18 TRANSLATOR: This organization called INAUDIBLE
19 513:54 in the Bronx was founded in 1996.

20 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 514:00]

21 TRANSLATOR: I joined in 2001.

 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
514:04-514:09]

 TRANSLATOR: And we've been working together.
It's led by parents from the community.

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ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
514:13-514:17]

TRANSLATOR: We're also part of many coalitions
in the City of New York to work together.

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
514:23-514:30]

TRANSLATOR: The purpose is for us to be able to
give the education to our children and for them to
integrate to the US society.

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
514:38-514:50].

TRANSLATOR: And so we work together with Ya-Ya's
parents, who exposed today or who talked today.

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
514:54-515:07].

TRANSLATOR: So, our organization is also part of
the Coalition Dignity of Schools.

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
515:12-515:15]

TRANSLATOR: And we work towards-

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
515:18-515:23]

TRANSLATOR: And we also need you to please
support the counselors, the social workers.

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ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
515:28-515:34]

TRANSLATORS: To invest more in education, not in
suspensions but in positive programs.

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
515:40-515:44]

TRANSLATOR: Because all these positive programs
allow our children to go to university, rather and
not to jail.

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
515:51-515:59]

TRANSLATOR: Because Afro Americans and Latinos,
we have more challenges when our children want to go
to university than other people.

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
516:05-516:08]

TRANSLATOR: This is the reason why I'm here
today as a Latino mother.

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
516:12-516:19].

TRANSLATOR: That's why I'm here as a Latino
mother who doesn't speak English, as a support to
other parents who -

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ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
516:25-516:31]

TRANSLATOR: So, our children can go to
university and part of this society because they were
born here.

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
516:36-516:41]

TRANSLATOR: I get very excited when I talk about
this because it is my passion and to work towards
education.

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
516:47-516:50]

TRANSLATOR: And that's why we work together with
many coalitions.

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
516:52-516:57]

TRANSLATOR: And that's why I'm a leader in the
Parents Committee.

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
516:59-517:03]

TRANSLATOR: We have to work together as a team
together.

ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 517:06]

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2 TRANSLATOR: We have to work together with the
3 Department of Education altogether.

4 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
5 517:11-517:18]

6 TRANSLATOR: So, we need them - we need you to
7 put our financing for our public schools programs.

8 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
9 517:23-517:27].

10 TRANSLATOR: This is my testimony today.

11 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
12 517:27-517:30]

13 TRANSLATOR: For our communities, our students
14 and New Yorker children.

15 ESPERANZA VASQUEZ: Gracias.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Gracias uh, [SPEAKING IN
17 SPANISH 517:36-517:41] Thank you.

18 HADIA ALI: Good afternoon Chair Dinowitz and
19 Members of the Committee. My name is Hadia Ali and
20 I'm a senior in Middle High School and a youth
21 organizer with the Ya Ya Network in DSC. I would
like to share with the Committee something I
witnessed last week.

After a school festival when students were
leaving, a play fight broke and got out of hand.

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2 Within seconds, two NYPD Officers rushed in but in
3 trying to break it up, they pushed my friend up
4 against the wall and began cuffing him, even though
5 he was defending himself. He was left standing
6 outside with no jacket in the cold in handcuffs and
7 as they walked him to the car, more police arrived
8 and soon over 15 officers formed a barricade around
9 students.

10 When we expressed our concern for our friend
11 asking whether he was being arrested and where he was
12 being taken, not only were we not reassured but we
13 were blatantly ignored and dismissed. Instead of
14 deescalating the situation, their response escalated
15 it into something it did not need to be.

16 And the fact that there was such a large police
17 presence in the neighborhood immediately after a
18 school event that was almost entirely Black students
19 is not coincidental and it's not one incident. And
20 it's not one incident, it reflects the broader
21 culture in and around Black and Brown communities in
schools where we're constantly fed the myth that more
policing means more safety, when in reality it leads
to further criminalization of young people.

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2 With proposals like the Buffer Zone Bill 175A,
3 that kind of policing would only increase in our own
4 communities and we know that that kind of presence
5 has never been tied to our young people and only
6 criminalizes them. This is why we are calling on the
7 city to freeze the hiring of new school cops and
8 reinvest those funds into real support through more
9 counselors, more social workers and restorative
10 justice programs. By shifting at least \$75 million
11 directly into schools to hire community based staff
12 who actually keep students safe.

13 As a senior, I've spent the past four years
14 watching my school respond to conflict, peaceful
15 demonstrations and everyday issues with punitive
16 policies and hostile measures. I've seen friends
17 transfer out, be suspended and others lose trust and
18 faith in our schools ability to protect their
19 wellbeing and their futures. However, because of the
20 work of members of this coalition, I have faith that
21 we can move towards education policies that can
actually respond to the needs of students but only if
we choose to fund the support systems that truly help
us. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Hadia.

1
2 YARETZI VIDALS HERNANDEZ: Good afternoon Chair
3 Dinowitz and members of the Education Committee. My
4 name is Yaretzi Vidals Hernandez and I'm currently a
5 CUNY student from District 40. I'm currently a youth
6 organizer at the Ya Ya Network and with the Dignity
7 in Schools coalition. Both organizations to advocate
8 for the elimination of policing in schools, increase
9 of restorative justice resources, and for further
10 protections for immigrant students.

11 I stand here before the Committee to talk about
12 the protections that are needed to protect not just
13 immigrant students but immigrant families in general.
14 As a daughter of two immigrant parents, my first
15 language was Spanish, not English. I grew up
16 receiving English as a second language services to
17 improve my English comprehension and to be prepared
18 to succeed throughout my academic career.

19 My elementary school was well funded and had the
20 resources necessary to communicate with immigrant
21 parents and was a privilege that I continue to
receive throughout the rest of my school years.
However, I'm aware that not all schools in the city
have the funds to offer the same resources to

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2 immigrant parents and cannot provide comprehensive
3 training for school staff.

4 Therefore, I am asking the Education Committee to
5 invest in providing a baseline funding of \$4 million
6 to fund communication and outreach between the DOE
7 and immigrant families. By overcoming language
8 barriers, families will be able to engage with their
9 school community and become aware of their child's
10 progress in school.

11 It would also alleviate the pressure off of our
12 students to be both an excellent student and being
13 the translator for the family, which is something
14 that I've personally experienced and I know so many
15 students have well, especially first generation
16 students. I'm also asking for the Committee to
17 ensure that all students - all schools have a
18 comprehensive school response plan to ICE that
19 includes the training of school staff in order to
20 protect their immigrant students. We need to protect
21 our students and strengthen immigration guidance
across all schools. Without this the city will be
failing our students.

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2 Thank you for listening and I hope that the
3 Committee can take this demand into consideration and
4 create careful and concise action. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for your
6 testimony. Thank you for your words today.

7 [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 522:10-522:13]. Uhm, I'm going
8 to call again three names that uhm, were called
9 earlier. They didn't come down. If they're here,
10 then please come down and if you are a student and
11 you haven't testified but would like to, please fill
12 out a slip in the back so we can get you on a panel.
13 Paulina Maluska, Ami Aradia, Anina Jalloh.

14 Okay, we'll begin with you on my left, your
15 right. You may begin when ready and state your name
16 for the record.

17 AMMY HEREDIA: Hello, my name is Ammy Heredia,
18 I'm a student. I'm a high school student, senior at
19 Community School in Brooklyn. I am also a youth
20 leader at Make the Road New York and Youth Urban
21 Collaboratives.

With the current federal Administration, New York
must continue to protect immigrant students by moving
away from all forms of school policing and punitive
practices. It is time to redirect funding from

1
2 systems that fuel the school to prison and
3 deportation pipelines and invest in systems that
4 truly support and protect students like me.

5 After a long day at school, I am here because I
6 care about real safety. Not because I want more
7 police in schools. I want more counselors, mental
8 health, restorative justice and college access.
9 Schools should be a place where students feel safe to
10 learn and grow. There's no evidence that police in
11 schools prevent conflict. If anything they make it,
12 they often make it worse.

13 In my experience, having police in my school is
14 disruptive. Every morning, we arrive on time for
15 school but we're forced to stand in long lines
16 waiting to go through scanning and metal detectors,
17 which makes us late to class. On top of that, the
18 school police often speak to us disrespectfully and
19 pull students aside for extra searches. It feels
20 like there's no way to win despite my best efforts to
21 be on time and do well.

I do not feel welcome. Instead, I feel targeted.
I have seen my friend humiliated and embarrassed for
unnecessary searches that turn out to be nothing.
During the scan they suspected my friend of hiding

1 something in her shirt, so they have taken her inside
2 the bathroom and lifted up her shirt for a full
3 search. Nothing was found. She came out angry and
4 that moment stayed with her for the rest of the day
5 and honestly affected all of us who witnessed it.

6 We all still remember that moment vividly.
7 Experiences like this make schools feel less like a
8 place of learning and more like a place where we are
9 treated with suspicion instead of care.

10 At the same time, I have two teachers, my ELA
11 teacher and my Modern United Teacher who make me feel
12 truly safe in school. They've supported me through
13 tough times and also helped me grow as a student.
14 Just seeing them smile when I walk in reminds me that
15 I am in the place where I am valued. Now imagine
16 every student had a supportive staff like them. The
17 impact would be powerful. Instead of being greeted
18 by police yelling at us in the hallways, we would
19 have - we will be met with care and respect and the
20 support we need to succeed.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Make sure your
microphone is on and then state your name for the
record. Is the red light on? Just push that - there
you got it, yeah.

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2 PAULINA MIEWSKA: Good afternoon Chair Dinowitz
3 and to the members of the Education Committee. My
4 name is Paulina Miewska and I, like many of you used
5 to, attend a New York Public - a New York City Public
6 High School which is Brooklyn Latin as a sophomore.

7 I am also a youth leader with the Circle Keepers
8 and a proud member of the Dignity in Schools Campaign
9 New York.

10 In middle school, I had two counselors for over
11 450 8th graders. With proportions like these,
12 students only got attention after they had engaged in
13 some form of bad behavior. This is because our
14 overworked staff could only attend to the problem
15 after the fact. Our schools need the time and
16 resources to address the students' feelings before
17 they act on them. This is why we are here to
18 increase mental health and restorative - this is why
19 we are here to increase mental health and restorative
20 justice funding and redirect money away from
21 policing. Students don't misbehave for no reason.
High school can be hard and judgement and police
interventions don't make it any easier. Statistics
of student misconducts are not something to say kids
these days to. But they are a plea for help.

1
2 Kids these days are being treated like criminals
3 by school police. Kids these days are taught to
4 think of themselves as criminals and kids these days
5 are conditioned to be criminals and the people who
6 condition them act shocked when they carry that
7 mindset into adulthood. Help abolish the school to
8 prison pipeline. Help us bring respect back to
9 hallways and help us do that by raising restorative
10 justice funding from \$17.6 to \$22.6 million. Give
11 our schools funding that will support more mental
12 health professionals in learning spaces and give
13 youth afterschool programs to practice restorative
14 justice. Do this and build a safer future for the
15 younger generations. Thank you so much for your
16 time.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for your
15 testimony today. Our last student panel will be
16 August Hoyt, Juniper Wang, and Charles H.

16 Alright, let's switch it up. Yeah, we'll start
17 on the left and go your right my left and we'll go
18 across.

19 AUGUST HOYT: Hello and good afternoon to the
20 City Council's Education Committee. I am August
21 Hoyt, a sophomore at Bard High School Manhattan and a

1
2 member of the Transportation Alternatives Youth
3 Activist Committee or TAYAC for short. TAYAC is a
4 group of teens who advocate for better transportation
5 options for New York City students - oh, I see uhm,
6 and uh we are doing that through our Expand Student
7 OMNI Campaign.

8 You've already heard from one of our other
9 community members a little earlier uh, but I'm here
10 today to express the concerns of both myself and many
11 of my fellow peers surrounding the deactivations of
12 student OMNI cards. It is not an uncommon occurrence
13 for student OMNI cards to suddenly not work, leaving
14 students without a means of paying for the subway or
15 bus and either resulting in fare evasion or students
16 being forced to pay out of pocket.

17 I've personally had my student OMNI card
18 permanently deactivated over a half dozen times since
19 they were first distributed over a year and a half
20 ago, as have many of my peers. My card will also
21 often decline at the turnstile before working again
the next day. However, there is virtually zero
clarity from the DOE regarding these deactivations
despite the fact that school transportation
coordinators and the MTA have stated to us that only

1
2 the DOE has the power to deactivate student OMNI
3 cards.

4 When this lack of clarity and the lack of
5 procedure for how these students cards are
6 deactivated predictably results in fare evasion. It
7 puts students and particularly students of color at
8 risk of confrontations with the law enforcement.
9 Please make sure that the DOE is completely
10 transparent about these deactivations, stating how
11 often and why cards are deactivated, as well as
12 creating a clear procedure for what students should
13 do when their cards do not work, such as telling
14 station agents to let students whose cards are
15 deactivated through the turnstiles in the upcoming
16 school year. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you August.

18 CHARLES HAHN: Hello, good afternoon. My name is
19 Charles Hahn and I'm a junior at Bronx Science. I'm
20 also part of the Transportation Alternatives Youth
21 Activist Committee and I'm here to talk about the
concerns over the student OMNI ride limit. Uhm, to
many of our students their city is an amazing and
dynamic city. Uh, that offers a wide range of
afterschool activities and responsibilities. Uhm and

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2 it is a great gift to be able to take advantage of
3 this city's expansive transit system and students in
4 the city need to and want to use it. Many have
5 friends and family in other boroughs with long
6 commutes to school. Uh, long commutes to school
7 activities and jobs or with responsibilities to
8 family members.

9 In a survey we have administered to almost 400
10 students, more than a quarter of the respondents
11 mentioned the difficulties their ride limits places
12 on their daily lives. For many students, paying a \$3
13 fare just to go to and from school, home, and other
14 commitments are simply too much.

15 We should never force a student to risk an arrest
16 or to be stranded far from home or to forgo an
17 opportunity because the commute pushes them over the
18 ride limit. I am often given the responsibility to
19 pick up and drop off my little sister from her middle
20 school and that, which the trip alone breaks the four
21 ride cap. Bringing her home I have to pay out of
pocket for the both of us since she also doesn't have
an OMNI card due to taking the yellow bus. Many
students in the city have far greater

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2 responsibilities for their families, friends and
3 futures that the city should be investing to support.

4 Unlimited rides are already precedent in many
5 cities in this country, Washington DC, San Francisco,
6 Seattle and more and New York is lagging behind on
7 such a small commitment that takes the weight off of
8 shoulders of so many students like me who are just
9 trying to get the most out of this great city. We
10 can't hide the joys of the city for its students
11 behind a ride limit. We ask the DOE to expand the
12 ride limit and to make it unlimited. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Charles. Bronx
14 Signs. I'm glad someone from Bronx Signs testified.
15 You did a school proud.

16 CHARLES HAHN: Thank you. Thank you.

17 JUNIPER WANG: Hello, I'm Juniper Wang, a member
18 of the Transportation Alternatives Youth Activist
19 Committee and current student at La Guardia High
20 School. We believe all New York City students should
21 have affordable public transportation that is easy to
access without barriers. Student OMNI cards are a
key part of this and recent changes have gone a long
way to improve student life. Yet the current student
OMNI program falls short of being perfect. If a

1
2 student loses or damages their card, they likely face
3 wait times of two or more weeks before getting a
4 replacement. This forces them to pay out of pocket
5 or fare evade and risk the consequences. No student
6 should ever have to make these decisions. The
7 Department of Education has the ability to resolve
8 these burdens through improved logistics, training,
9 and planning. The budget should ensure enough
10 funding is allocated to transportation needs within
11 the Office of Pupil Transportation to make these
12 changes happen.

13 Additionally OPT has delayed the rollout of
14 digital cards and has not made an effort to push for
15 cards made out of more durable material, which would
16 lessen the impacts of these burdens. Students should
17 be able to request the replacement card and receive a
18 new one on the same school day. This process should
19 be frictionless and should not require extra effort
20 from students to simply get access to transportation
21 they need daily.

70 percent of 350 students surveyed said they
were not able to get a new card on the same day they
requested it. Personally, when my card was damaged,
I had to wait three weeks to get a replacement

1 because the supply of cards at my school ran out.
2 There was no indication of when a new shipment would
3 arrive and when it finally did arrive, it had been
4 multiple weeks and multiple trips to the office. And
5 this was just to get the same flimsy paper card that
6 will eventually get damaged again. Students deserve
7 more reliable and durable cards that are easy to
8 replace and alternatives that eliminate friction with
9 the system. These improvements need to be properly
funded in order to be the most effective. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much. Yeah,
11 it almost seems like a no brainer. If the card gets
12 damaged, uh, replace it and then of course for
13 whatever mysterious reason bureaucracy or other
14 things get in the way, we don't know what it is but
15 in the meantime, you can't get to school and you
16 can't pick up your little sibling and you can't get
17 to your events you need to get to on the weekend and
18 it's just - it's just mindboggling. So, I thank you
19 for all of your testimony today and especially all of
20 those who are testifying about the OMNI card. Such a
21 no brainer to make this - to make this work,
especially with technology these days or kids these

1
2 days, technology these days, it should be a no
3 brainer, yes. Thank you for your testimony.

4 JUNIPER WANG: Thank you so much.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Uhm, we now move to
6 grownups. Alright, our first panel. Can we give it
7 up for the students by the way? [APPLAUSE] who came
8 here to testify. Yeah, I mean I got to say, that
9 really is a special thing. They are testifying on
10 behalf of tens of thousands of their friends of their
11 own experiences and as many students asking to come
12 here to testify, imagine how many students are unable
13 to or just don't know that our public forums in city
14 government exists, which speak to some of what the
15 students were talking about, civics education. This
16 is really part of it, so I'm very grateful for all
17 the students who came out today.

18 Uhm, Karen Rogel, Cities for Streeters, Albania
19 Jimenez, Erika Myers Hyde and Asher Rodriguez. We'll
20 start on my right, your left. Alright on my right,
21 you may begin when you're ready.

18 KAREN ROGEL: Hi, thank you Education Committee
19 for allowing us to speak today. Uhm, good afternoon.
20 My name is Karen Rogel. I am here on behalf of
21 Emanuel Novie who couldn't be here today. So, today

1
2 I am here to support New York City's youngest
3 learners. I stand with Literacy and Community and
4 City's First Readers, a citywide initiative grounded
5 in the belief that literacy begins at birth and is
6 built through strong relationships between families,
7 communities and trusted local organizations.

8
9 Together we work closely with children from ages
10 zero to five, their caregivers to ensure that our
11 youngest New Yorkers enter kindergarten ready to
12 learn and thrive and succeed. City's First Readers
13 is rooted in a simple but powerful idea, parents and
14 caregivers are a child's first and most important
15 teachers. By investing in culturally responsive
16 community based early literacy supports, like
17 coaching for caregivers, access to books, programming
18 embedded in their neighborhoods, we empower families
19 with tools, confidence and resources to nurture their
20 children's development from the very start.

21
22 The early years from birth age to five, are the
23 most critical in a child's development. This is when
24 language, literacy, and social emotional foundations
25 are built through everyday interactions, like
26 talking, reading, singing and playing.

1
2 City's First Readers recognizes that these
3 moments happen not just in classrooms but in homes,
4 libraries, community centers and across entire
5 neighborhoods when we invest in the ecosystem we
6 created lasting impact. We understand that the
7 Council's regulatory authority is limited, however,
8 the Council plays a critical role in oversight and to
9 compel transparency and reporting that helps ensure
10 these programs are reaching the communities that need
11 them most and delivering meaningful impact. If we
12 are serious about closing these achievement gaps, we
13 must start early. We cannot wait until students are
14 already struggling. We need to meet them and their
15 families where they are in the very beginning.

16 Our youngest learners cannot advocate for
17 themselves, so it is our responsibility to speak up
18 for them. So, our message is clear, invest early,
19 invest equitably and invest consistently in the
20 future of our children. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

ERIKA MYERS HYDE: Good evening Chair Dinowitz
and members of the Education Committee. My name is
Erika Myers Hyde and I am the Director of Development
for Salvadori Center. I have spent over a decade

1
2 working to expand access for high quality education
3 and enrichment opportunities for young people,
4 particularly those from under-resourced communities
5 in New York City.

6 At Salvadori, we use the build environment to
7 provide steam education services that stem from A for
8 the arts and in our case, architecture to schools,
9 afterschool programs and NYCHA community centers all
10 across the five boroughs.

11 Last year, we reached over 12,000 students at 145
12 different sites, several of them in districts
13 represented by the Committee. Through hands-on
14 project based learning, students develop skills and
15 collaboration, creativity and problem solving just
16 like architects, engineers, and designers. We are
17 grateful for the Council's support through CASA
18 Digital Inclusion and Literacy, Afterschool
19 Enrichment and the Speakers initiative, which bring
20 these programs to students across the city.

21 We thank the Committee and the Council for their
commitment to equitable school funding. Too often,
schools serving students with the greatest needs lack
the resources to provide a well rounded education.
Project based steam learning requires robust

1 materials and hands-on experiences for students. To
2 support these efforts, we ask the Council to expand
3 CASA and Digital Inclusion and Literacy Initiatives
4 so more young people can access programs like
5 Salvadori. Thank you for your continued commitment
6 to New York City students.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for your
8 testimony.

9 ALBANIA JIMENEZ: Hello Chair and members of the
10 Committee. Thank you for the chance to testify on
11 education priorities for the upcoming Fiscal Year.
12 My name is Albania Jimenez. I am the Chief of
13 Advocacy and Community Mobilization at Literacy in
14 Community or LINC, the Lead Organization of City's
15 First Readers.

16 LINC provides early literacy programs in all five
17 boroughs, serving families with children from birth
18 through age five. Our goals are empowering families
19 to prepare their children for school and instilling a
20 life-long love of learning.

21 Over the past 12 years, the city has increasingly
implemented educational programs that move into this
space, outside the traditional K-12 framework. First
Universal PreK, then 3K and most recently 2K. What we

1
2 need now is a citywide framework that recognizes
3 early literacy not as an optional enhancement, but as
4 the heart of a child development system. Why?
5 Learning to read starts from birth. Over 80 percent
6 of a child's brain is developed by age three; 90
7 percent by age five and the research is clear,
8 experiences in the earliest years shape cognitive
9 growth, executive functioning, and long-term
10 academic, social, and health outcomes.

11 The foundations of language development and
12 reading ability are built long before a child ever
13 enters a classroom. If we are serious about reaching
14 the ambitious New York City Reads goal of universal
15 reading proficiency by 2035, we must infuse early
16 literacy into universal childcare settings and into
17 every childhood system such as our pediatric public
18 health system.

19 We are here at LINC to support. Uhm, we are
20 willing to create with you guys the education
21 ecosystem. So, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And I know LINC is, we
have a literacy zone in my office through your work
and I know the incredible work you do in our local
libraries and the community. Not just with the kids

1
2 but with the families, which is such an incredibly
3 important uh, like part of your work. That is the
4 core of your work and I see the results first hand.
5 So, thank you for that work. Last, we are ready.
6 Please state your name for the record and you may
begin.

7 ASHER RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon Chair Dinowitz
8 and the Education Committee. My name is Asher
9 Rodriguez. As a lifelong New Yorker, I have
10 benefitted from many DYCD funded programs and
11 attended and graduated DOE schools. Between
12 benefiting from all these programs, working with
13 youth as a Paraprofessional in Community District 4
14 and with Children's Aid and the organization which is
funded by DYCD, I was extremely disappointed when I
saw the Preliminary Budget.

15 The responses of agency does not support in
16 regards to specialized programs. For Special
17 Education and LGBT students, it's completely
18 unacceptable. These two populations contain some of
19 our most vulnerable students. We need more social
20 workers and support workers in our schools to help
21 our students thrive and reach their full potential.

1
2 Our students are still seeing the effects of
3 being out of school due to COVID. Our students are
4 struggling academically and with their mental health.
5 Having more counselors, social workers and support
6 staff will help aid all parts of our students'
7 learning. Please fund more arts programs. As a
8 graduate of Celia Cruz Bronx High School of Music, I
9 could testify that music education is so important.
10 I had to learn time management between doing my math
11 homework and learning my clarinet solo.

12 Also, my parents originally put me in music
13 classes as a former therapy to help me communicate
14 and connect with the world around me. You never know
15 which kid will participate in a choir or pick up an
16 instrument and it truly changes their life. Please
17 fund more afterschool and career development
18 programs, specifically in my home community of East
19 Harlem. There's simply not enough Work, Learn and
20 Grow spots and students shouldn't have to travel.

21 Afterschool recreational programs truly help
parents but also help students discover who they want
to be in the world. A personal example I have is a
mentor from my afterschool program introduced me to
my local community board and now the Chair of the

1
2 Youth and Education Committee. Something I never
3 would have gotten involved in on my own. Growing up,
4 I had an IEP and my mentors from these programs
5 taught me that I'm so much more than labels. When I
6 eventually came out and didn't have much support from
7 my family, my mentor supported me and I found even
8 more community through the LGBT Centers youth space.
9 I am doing more than my parents ever imagined and
10 it's truly because of these programs.

11 I do this advocacy so my students can have all
12 the same opportunities I have and I won't stop until
13 they do. Please fund youth programming in East
14 Harlem and all of New York City. It truly matters.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your
16 testimony. My son is also playing the clarinet, so
17 you got something in common. Uhm, I just need to
18 know, what inspired you, if you don't mind sharing,
19 what inspired you to become a paraprofessional in our
20 schools?

21 ASHER RODRIGUEZ: I had a Paraprofessional and
she was awesome, so I just thought I mias well do it.
I was approached by my old principal and I love it.
It's fun. It's awesome.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm so glad and just like
3 someone helped you my friend, uh, you are now
4 helping, you work with one student?

5 ASHER RODRIGUEZ: Yes sir. One eight year old
6 who I think I'm getting some of the - what I gave
7 many of my teachers including you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That's right. Wow, it's
9 wonderful uh to see you testifying. All of you but
10 actually you especially, wonderful to see you
11 testifying today and advocating, just like the
12 students for people who need advocates and helping
13 students who need help and I think I'm so incredibly
14 proud of you and uhm, so thrilled at where you are
15 and what you're doing right now. So, thank you for
16 not just testifying but for all that you're doing for
17 our youth and our city. Thank you. Thank you to
18 this panel.

19 Our next panel is Randy Levine, Gregory Brender,
20 Dr. Colette Solis, Sharee Gibson and Evan Stone.

21 Okay, Randy, you may begin when ready.

RANDY LEVINE: Thank you for this opportunity.
My name is Randy Levine, I'm Policy Director at
Advocates for Children of New York. While we
appreciate that the Preliminary Budget baselines

1 funding for preschool special education services and
2 Summer Rising, other impactful education programs
3 still have funding set to expire this June.
4 Immigrant Family Outreach, Restorative Justice, the
5 Mental Health Continuum, SEED, Learning to Work, and
6 more must be extended and baselined this year. And
7 given the pressing unmet needs we see daily in our
8 work with families, the city must do more than
9 maintain the status quo. To better support students
10 and save money in the long run, the city should add
11 funding to ensure every preschooler with a disability
12 receives the services and classes they need. The
13 promise of universal childcare must not leave behind
14 children with disabilities.

15 \$100 million to address the shortage of service
16 providers for students with disabilities across grade
17 levels, mandated services are not optional. \$20
18 million to expand effective reading intervention for
19 middle and high school students. Families should not
20 have to sue for private tutoring so their children
21 can learn to read. \$8 million to hire behavioral
specialists. Schools should be able to call upon
professionals with the expertise to support them and
meeting students' behavioral needs. \$8 million to

1
2 hire English Language Learner Instructional
3 Specialists. Schools with high numbers of ELLs
4 should have a dedicated professional ensuring these
5 students receive appropriate academic support. \$3
6 million for interim transportation for students in
7 foster care awaiting school bus service. Students
8 placed in the care of the city should be able to get
9 to school. \$2 million to expand travel training,
10 teaching students with disabilities to use public
11 transportation promotes independence and expands
12 access to jobs while reducing reliance on yellow
13 school bus service. And \$450 million in capital
14 funding to make more schools accessible. Nobody
15 should be turned away from a school because they
16 can't get in the building.

17 Our written testimony has more about each of
18 these priorities. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you and I want to
20 repeat, uh clarify, \$20 million for middle and high
21 school students reading interventions?

RANDY LEVINE: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So important. I don't
think uh, uh, it's unclear to me whether the
Department of Education is fully aware of the fact

1
2 that so many of our middle schoolers and high
3 schoolers are not reading on grade level and they
4 need the interventions but they need the support
5 centrally because right now, it's just well, let's
6 just get them to take the Regents despite what they
7 actually need in order to learn how to read. So, I
8 thank you for uplifting that. Everything else you've
9 uplifted but I just particularly want to highlight
10 that. Thank you.

11 GREGORY BRENDER: Thank you so much for the
12 opportunity to testify. My name is Gregory Brender
13 here on behalf of the Daycare Council of New York.
14 We're the membership organization of New York City's
15 Early Childhood Education provider organizations and
16 we work towards a future where all children have
17 access to high quality early childhood education and
18 the providers and the workforce have the tools and
19 resources needed to offer it.

20 Uhm, we are thrilled that many of our member
21 organizations are going to be part of the exciting
expansions of early childhood education that we've
long advocated for. Uhm, however we know these
investments only succeed if early childhood providers
and the workforce of the infrastructure needed to

1
2 operate sustainably. And we look forward to working
3 with both the Administration and the City Council to
4 ensure these expansions create stability for the
5 early childhood education providers.

6 Uhm, our written testimony has many
7 recommendations. I'll go through a few of them. In
8 terms of stabilizing uhm, early childhood providers,
9 we'd like to see cost escalators put into the current
10 renewals of contracts. We're very glad that
11 Department of Education is renewing contracts and
12 that there's going to be a process involving
13 providers for uhm, figuring out what the next RFP is
14 going to look like. However, contracts are being
15 renewed at their 2021 values and that does not take
16 into account uhm, increased costs for rent,
17 utilities, insurance and other costs.

18 So, we urge the city to implement at least three
19 percent cost escalators in the renewed contracts for
20 birth to five programs. We also urge the City to
21 ensure on time payments and to increase advances to
75 percent of contract value, which is the value
guaranteed in the birth to five RFP but it allows
providers to plan if they get that early.

1
2 Finally, we had uh, we really appreciated the
3 conversation today about holding schools harmless
4 from enrollment based penalties, since early
5 childhood provider organizations do not control their
6 own enrollment. We're urging that the city also hold
7 provide - early childhood education providers
8 harmless from enrollment based penalties. And I hear
9 that's the bell but we have a few more
10 recommendations in our testimony and really grateful
11 for your work on this.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: We will certainly take a
13 look at your written testimony. Thank you so much
14 for coming today and for testifying. We appreciate
15 your testimony and your work.

16 GREGORY BRENDER: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: The next panel is Kimberly
18 Olsen, Naveed Hasan, Andrea Ortiz, Chauncey Young and
19 Molly Senack.

20 Kimberly, you can begin whenever you're ready.

21 KIMBERLY OLSEN: Wonderful, thank you so much
Chair Dinowitz, City Council staff for the
opportunity to testify today and happy Arts in our
Schools Month!

My name is Kim Olsen, and I am proud-

1 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Only one month?

2 KIMBERLY OLSEN: A whole month music, dance,
3 theater, visual arts, we celebrate it all.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Arts in our school year
5 but please continue.

6 KIMBERLY OLSEN: Uhm, I'm testifying today as
7 part of the It Starts with the Arts coalition -
8 calling on our city to improve arts education
9 delivery and transparency in New York City. This
10 means hiring certified arts teachers to help meet the
11 class size mandate, funding the Support for Arts
12 Instruction Initiative, reforming DOE's MTAC contract
13 process, and baselining funds for DCLA to support
14 cross agency arts education efforts.

15 Our city's access gap is a direct result of an
16 accountability gap. Currently, our ability to track
17 the impact of city investments in arts education is
18 significantly hampered by a concerning decline in
19 data transparency.

20 While we advocate for the increased funding
21 needed to reach every child, we must simultaneously
demand the restoration of arts education transparency
metrics that have fallen away since the pandemic.

1
2 Nearly 20 years ago, to try to ensure that
3 schools maintained arts programs, after the
4 elimination of Project Arts, the city developed the
5 arts count survey and annual arts in schools report.
6 However, the amount of data that was reported has
7 shrunk significantly in recent years, especially
8 since the pandemic.

9 For example, New York City Public Schools no
10 longer publicly reports on arts education
11 participation rates, elementary instructional hours
12 in the arts, family and parent involvement and arts
13 education quality, just to name a few.

14 We need to build upon the Term and Condition
15 that's been included in Schedule C to include these
16 metrics. This disappearance of reporting since the
17 pandemic has effectively shielded systemic inequities
18 from public view, stalling our progress toward
19 universal arts access. Yet, what data we do have
20 continues to show that less than a third of middle
21 school students are meeting New York State arts
learning requirements and that's not acceptable.

These issues of transparency extend beyond
offered instruction, meaning opaque contracting
processes for arts nonprofits and obscured timelines

1
2 for approval that can stretch 18-28 months long
3 ultimately leading to lost learning opportunities. We
4 have a window of opportunity to define our city's
5 future and that starts with the arts. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much.

7 MOLLY SENACK: Good evening. Thank you so much
8 for the opportunity to testify. My name is Molly
9 Senack, I handle education and employment advocacy at
10 Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York.

11 There are several interconnected barriers that
12 contribute to New York City public school students
13 with disabilities being twice as likely to drop out
14 of high school as their nondisabled peers. There is
15 a lack of accessible curricula and physical school
16 buildings. There is - there are critical staffing
17 and resource shortages, a lack of available seats,
18 significant backlogs in receiving mandated services,
19 and lack of long-term, baselined funding for critical
20 education programs.

21 Funding programs for a year at a time puts
communities in an inherently uncertain position. A
program that is only guaranteed funding for a year is
going to have more trouble attracting, hiring, and
retaining qualified staff.

1
2 Simultaneously, students and families are asked
3 to rely on the content of programs whose presence
4 they can't depend on. The impact of the uncertainty
5 of how to invest in these programs is felt long
6 before any cuts are actually made. Therefore we
7 stand with the Coalition for Equitable Education
8 Funding in calling on the city to extend and baseline
9 funding for critical education programs. The details
10 of which are in my written testimony. We also echo
11 several other funding asks made today including and a
12 minimum \$100 million investment to address shortage
13 of service providers, a \$2 million investment to
14 expand the travel training program and expanded
15 investments in school based mental health clinics.
16 We also would like to address the fact that as of
17 right now, around 69 percent of New York City Public
18 Schools are exclusionary to students with certain
19 disabilities and as a result, ask for an additional
20 \$450 million in school accessibility projects to
21 achieve the goal of making 45 percent of schools
fully accessible by 2030.

The rest of my testimony is submitted in writing.
Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much.

1
2 ANDREA ORTIZ: Hello, I'm Andrea with the Dignity
3 in Schools New York. Public schools should be places
4 where young people feel safe, supported and able to
5 learn, yet many - yet for many students particularly
6 Black, Brown, immigrant, LGBTQIA and students with
7 disabilities punitive discipline and policing creates
8 barriers to learning and undermine their wellbeing.

9 Therefore, Dignity in Schools caused the city to
10 expand school based restorative justice, mental
11 health supports and immigrant protections and
12 redirect money away from policing into proven safety
13 infrastructure.

14 We urge the Council to invest \$80 million to hire
15 school climate coordinators and 500 priority middle
16 and high schools, baseline the remaining \$6 million
17 in restorative justice funding said to expire and
18 increase funding by another \$5 million, bringing the
19 total from \$17.6 million to \$22.6 million, including
20 \$2 million for training and technical assistance and
21 \$3 million to support paid student leadership
opportunities and restorative justice.

 These investments are achievable. By freezing
hiring on school safety agents, eliminating vacancies
and not backfilling through attrition, the city can

1
2 save up to \$90 million in one year to reinvest in
3 these priorities. While we appreciate that the
4 Mayor's Preliminary Budget baselines funding for
5 Special education and summer program, it fails to
6 protect restorative justice, the mental health
7 continuum and immigrant family outreach while doing
8 nothing to reduce school policing or surveillance.

9 We also call on the city to protect immigrant
10 students and families from President Trump's nasty
11 detention and deportation plan including
12 strengthening immigration and preparedness policies
13 offering comprehensive training for staff, students
14 and families, enhancing data privacy and passing
15 Intro. 798 to eliminate the NYPD gang database.

16 Finally, it is clear that mayoral control has
17 repeatedly failed communities even under progressive
18 leadership. Mayoral control has been responsible for
19 budget caps, reversal of integration policies,
20 creating more Charter Schools and cutting restorative
21 justice programs.

Therefore, we are asking for the city to fund a
commission of parents, educators, students,
advocates, experts and researchers to engage

1
2 communities in designing a truly democratic school
3 governance assistance to replace mayoral control.

4 You saw many of our students testify here today,
5 all of this would be able to be happening and in more
6 if we just allow students to lead. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much. Next.

8 CHAUNCEY YOUNG: Good evening Chair Dinowitz and
9 New York City Council Members. My name is Chauncey
10 Young, I'm a Bronx parent and the Director of the New
11 Settlement Parent Action Committee.

12 For nearly 30 years, the Parent Action Committee
13 has been led by Bronx parents who believe that every
14 child deserves access to a quality education. Our
15 members are extremely concerned about the state of
16 New York City Public Schools and are advocating for
17 equitable funding at both the city and state level.

18 The city needs to invest in our schools and our
19 families. An investment in the social emotional
20 supports for families and students. Our students and
21 families need trauma responsive care and culturally
22 responsive healing centered practices.

23 We know that schools in our city are - we need to
24 know that our schools in cities are safe and a
25 sanctuary for our immigrant families and students.

1
2 We hope with the support and guidance of the New York
3 City Council that New York City Public Schools will
4 remain a safe place for all students regardless of
5 their immigration status.

6 We also join with the Coalition for Equitable
7 Education funding and calling to the city to restore
8 funding and baseline funding for key education
9 programming, student success centers, learning to
10 work, restorative justice, mental health continuum,
11 reading intervention, early childhood education
12 outreach, immigration - uh, immigrant family outreach
13 and communication and to make additional investments
14 to support students with the greatest needs.

15 Year after year, we have seen these programs cut
16 and then restored for a single year making it
17 extremely difficult for long term planning for the
18 programs. A city budget is a moral document. It
19 shows the city and our leaders' priorities. We need
20 to ensure that we're investing in practices that heal
21 and lift up our students and families and end the
school to prison pipeline. We ask you to invest in
the future of our children and in the future of New
York City. Thank you so much.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Kimberly, I just have a
3 question about the arts. You were talking about arts
4 education metrics. Uhm, if you recall from my uh,
5 the, the earlier in the hearing you know, 500 hours
6 ago or if any of the - it's true. Uhm, do you relate
7 the uhm, removal of metrics for arts education to the
8 removal of arts programs themselves? Do you see it
9 as a correlation? Do you see one causing the other?
10 In other words, when they started removing these
11 metrics, did that cause the schools to divest or the
12 system to divest from the arts or tell me your
13 analysis of that?

14 KIMBERLY OLSEN: Sure, I think, to be honest,
15 it's really hard to say because we simply don't have
16 the data to be able to make informed decisions around
17 that. I think that we found is that data and having
18 these reports and the survey was intended to be an
19 accountability measure for our school leaders, who
20 oftentimes are the ones making decisions as to what
21 level of arts is present within our schools.
22 However, that idea has simply fallen away in the past
23 two decades. And so it really depends on who is the
24 school leader, who is the overarching superintendent,
25 as to how much it is valued within a school community

1
2 and until we have better metrics and better - I
3 should say, till we have that data restored in terms
4 of what's being reported, we simply don't know and
5 ultimately that's a disservice to our young people
6 and disservice to the workforce as well behind these
opportunities.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And do you think those
8 metrics uhm were satisfactory or do you think they
9 could be more robust in terms of measuring? Again,
not just input as we said earlier but output.

10 KIMBERLY OLSEN: Oh, 100 percent. I think that
11 that was a nice starting place but there's much to
12 build from there. I think Chicago has a really
13 incredible model called the Creative School
14 Certification, that looks at a mix of not only
15 participation and access but also quality of arts
16 education. We simply just don't want students to
17 have exposure too. We want them to have sequential
18 high quality arts education learning opportunities.
19 That's really the crucks of what we're getting at and
20 until we have more information about that and that
21 there is better reporting on this, we're not going to
be able to get universal access.

1
2 What gets measured gets done and we have to
3 understand where we're at.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That's right, so we need
5 to start measuring the arts in our schools because if
6 it gets measured it gets done. You met some students
7 from La Guardia High School here. You met some
8 students from Engage with Our Arts, you met an adult
9 here who said that music was one of the things that
10 got him through high school.

11 So, I want to thank you all for your testimony
12 today and I will call the next panel. Naveed Hasan,
13 Yasmin Najji, Aracelis Lucero, Jon Harriman. Okay
14 Naveed, why don't you - you're the closer, oh you're
15 a team. Alright then have at it. You do you.

16 YASMIN NAJI: Good evening Chair Dinowitz and
17 members of the Education Committee. Thank you for
18 the opportunity to testify. My name is Yasmin Najji,
19 I am the product of New York City Public Schools, the
20 child of immigrants and a constituent of New York
21 City's 11th City Council District, and I am the
22 Manager of Education Policy at the New York
23 Immigration Coalition or NYIC.

24 The NYIC is a statewide network of more than 200
25 organizations that support immigrants and refugees

1
2 across New York State. For more than 30 years, we
3 have worked to expand educational access and
4 opportunity for immigrant students and English
5 Language Learners. We also convene the Education
6 Collaborative, a coalition of more than 30
7 organizations working directly with immigrant
8 students, families, and schools across New York City.
9 I am here today with members of the Education
10 Collaborative who will speak to what they are seeing
11 on the ground, in schools, and communities across the
12 city.

13 Across those schools and communities ELLs are a
14 significant and growing part of the student
15 population. In the 2024-2025 school year, more than
16 1 in 6 students in New York City Public Schools was
17 identified as an ELL. These students are not only a
18 significant part of our school system, they are
19 central to the future of New York City as the next
20 generation of leaders and workers.

21 Immigrant students strengthen our schools every
day. They bring languages, perspectives and
experiences that enrich classrooms and in recent
years, newly arrived students have also helped
stabilize enrollment across the school system. But

1
2 right now, there are two challenges we are hearing
3 consistently across our network. The first is
4 safety. Families are increasingly worried about
5 immigration enforcement and that fear is affecting
6 whether students are showing up to school.

7 The second is access to high quality education.
8 Even when students are in the classroom, too many are
9 not receiving the services they are legally entitled
10 to. These challenges are interconnected. Students
11 need to feel safe coming to school and they need to
12 receive the support they are entitled to once they
13 are there.

14 Our panel today will speak to both of these
15 challenges and the steps the city can take to address
16 them. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Yasmin.

18 JON HARRIMAN: Thank you Chair Dinowitz and
19 members of the Education Committee. My name is Jon
20 Harriman, and I am the Director of School Support for
21 New York at the Internationals Network, and we are
proud to work alongside the organizations in the
Education Collaborative of New York Immigration
Coalition.

1
2 Internationals Network has 17 schools across New
3 York City and has supported 20 more schools together
4 serving more than 20,000 students. One of our 17
5 schools is ELLIS, on the Kennedy Campus, which is
6 celebrating this week, the return of Dylan Contreras
Lopez to school after a long time in detention.

7 Internationals Network is an education nonprofit
8 organization successfully supporting schools to
9 provide immigrant and refugee students with high
10 quality education and with graduation rates
11 consistently exceeding the city and the state
averages.

12 At this time, the students and families we serve
13 are facing an incredibly challenging moment,
14 including: difficult and complex decisions navigating
15 daily routines and formerly routine immigration
16 appointments; concerns about ICE presence around
17 school perimeters and on common paths both to and
from school; and abrupt family separations due to
detention and deportation.

18 In a student panel a few weeks ago, students
19 talked about the joy and safety of being in school
20 with their teachers and with their classmates and in
21

1
2 strong contrast, the feeling of fear that they have
3 with the presence of ICE in their communities.

4 As a retired Internationals principal and
5 speaking with other principals, I know these fears
6 and concerns impact emotional well-being, attendance
7 and ability to focus on classwork and that the needs
8 of both students and families have shifted
9 dramatically.

10 We are grateful for the New York City Public
11 School policy on nonlocal law enforcement and we're
12 also grateful for the incredible work that the City
13 Council Members have done to support our schools and
14 our students. Thank you for your consideration and
15 for your continued support of our public schools and
16 also for our newest New Yorkers.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Jon.

18 ARACELIS LUCERO: Good afternoon or now good
19 evening, I think. Thank you to Chair Dinowitz.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Soon, it will be morning
21 again.

ARACELIS LUCERO: And the Education Committee for
this opportunity to testify on behalf of immigrant
children, youth and families. My name is Aracelis
Lucero, I am a public school parent, a former New

1
2 York City Public School student, the daughter of
3 immigrant parents and now the Executive Director of
4 MASA. A community based organization in the Bronx
5 that supports Latino and indigenous children, youth
6 and families to develop as strong learners and
7 leaders so that they can contribute to the broader
8 community. And we also offer KYR's in schools for
9 parents and youth.

10 While ELLs make up close to 70 percent of the
11 student population based on 2025 data, only 51
12 percent of current ELLs are graduating high school in
13 four years versus the city average of 81 percent. We
14 also know that many ELLs are performing well below
15 their grade level in reading and math. Even though
16 data show that multilingual students have the
17 potential to out perform their peers, when offered
18 appropriate support.

19 While some programs have - while some progress
20 has been made, we know we can do better. Simply put,
21 English Language Learners are not receiving the
required supports they need to thrive. Some ways
ELLs aren't being properly supported that overall
schools struggle to provide bilingual or ENL
services. Even when they do, English Language

1
2 Learners are not receiving the required instructional
3 minutes they are entitled to. Many teachers do not
4 have the specialized support or adequate training
5 needed to serve English Language Learners. Families
6 are often unaware of their children's language
7 service rights and are kept in the dark about what is
8 being done to ensure their children are thriving
9 academically and language justice continues to be an
10 issue for immigrant families and many parents aren't
11 aware of their right to receive translation and
12 interpretation services.

13 At MASA, we provide academic and social emotional
14 supports to English Language Learners in grades K-8
15 and their parents at our afterschool program and
16 we've come across parents who aren't even aware that
17 their children are designated ELLs. They are not sure
18 what they can do at home to help their children and
19 when additional support is available in schools for
20 example, on a Saturday program, they aren't always
21 clear to parents that this is an option for their
22 children despite schools reporting to us that all of
23 these programs are meant to be target ELLs as well.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much.

20 Alright the closer.

1
2 NAVEED HASAN: Good evening Chair Dinowitz,
3 Council Member Wong and members of the Education
4 Committee. Thank you for holding this hearing. My
5 name is Naveed Hasan, I am a public school graduate
6 from District 21. I had English as a second language
7 student back in the 1980's. A parent to two public
8 school kids in upper Manhattan and an elected member
9 for the panel for Educational Policy, which is the
10 New York City Board of Education.

11 I am here to close our panel's testimony by
12 translating the challenges my colleagues described
13 into the concrete policy and budget solutions where
14 the Council must lead. As you have heard from
15 Yasmin, Jon and ourselves, our immigrant and ELL
16 students face a crisis of both safety and service.
17 When a parent is afraid to take their child to school
18 or a student lacks legally mandated ENL support, the
19 city fails its promise of a sound, basic education.
20 To address these gaps, we urge the Council to
21 prioritize the following in the Fiscal '27 Budget:
First, we must codify safety through interagency
collaboration. Informal DOE policies are
insufficient. We need a coordinated approach
including the NYPD, MTA, yellow bus vendors and more

1
2 to ensure that students are protected while traveling
3 to school, on field trips and during afterschool
4 activities. We ask the Council to in trying and
5 expanded guidance regarding interactions with
6 nonlocal law enforcement into local law.
7 Chancellor's regulations are not enough.

8 Second, this must be supported by funding for
9 mandatory training. We must ensure that every adult
10 interacting with our students from principals to bus
11 drivers, knows exactly how to maintain a true
12 sanctuary environment.

13 Finally, we must bridge the instructional gap
14 with an \$8 million investment. We are calling for
15 the creation of an ELL instructional specialist role.
16 This funding would pilot the position in 50 high need
17 schools providing specialized pedagogical coaching
18 that our overstretched teachers and immigrant
19 families desperately need.

20 Immigrant students are stabilizing our enrollment
21 and represent the future of our city. That future
depends on actions taken in this budget. New York
City must ensure students feel safe entering our
schools and receive the high quality education they
deserve once inside. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Very good, very good
3 timing. Thank you for your testimony and two things,
4 one, glad to see some Bronx representation here.
5 Very nice. Is Bronx, is Bronx here by the way
6 besides this panel. Okay, we got one. Why I see
7 your address on the slip, that's why I knew to say
8 it. But - so I cheated but I also want to thank you
9 for your work and support for Dillon who is as I said
10 ten hours ago, we are so thrilled that he is
11 returning to school back with his friends, back in
12 his school community and I know you were part of
13 that. So, thank you so much for your work and
14 leadership for him. Thank you.

15
16 NAVEED HASAN: Thank you. It was 301 days in
17 custody, so thank you.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes, it's 301 days too
20 many. Next, I'm going to call up Natasha Buhosa, Eva
21 Gray, Kyle DeAngelis, and Eman Gad.

Have you also planned and coordinated? No, okay,
so I'll start on my right, your left. You may begin.
Whenever you're ready, state your name for the record
please.

EMAN GAD: Oh sure, alright good afternoon Chair
Dinowitz and members of the Committee. My name is

1
2 Eman Gad and I am the Policy and Advocacy Manager at
3 Girls for Gender Equity or GGE.

4 As a small, Black, queer and immigrant led
5 nonprofit doing critical racial gender and sexuality
6 justice in the context of today's hostile world, the
7 funding we receive is imperative to the development
8 and growth of Black girls and gender expansive youth
9 of color across New York City.

10 Therefore we sit before you today to request
11 continued support from the City Council for our
12 Fiscal year '27 youth programming so that GGE may
13 continue to address the educational needs of young
14 people across the city. We also urge you to support
15 the Dignity in Schools Campaigns call for a Fiscal
16 Year '27 budget that fully invests in the public
17 school resources and restorative practices that will
18 protect our most vulnerable communities.

19 A tax against DEI and racial justice work have
20 led foundations to steer away from funding gender and
21 racial justice work. We face a budget deficit, which
underscores the urgency of securing multiyear funding
and a stronger partnership with City Council to
stabilize operations and sustain impact. The
Alliance on Gender Equity or AGE is requesting

1
2 \$300,000 in the form of a new City Council initiative
3 to sustain this work.

4 AGE is a youth led space for civic engagement,
5 leadership development, and community building. In
6 November 2025, we held a town hall with over 70 young
7 people from all five boroughs. We heard from them in
8 six priority areas, with issues coming up that are of
9 direct interest to this Committee, specifically
10 excuse me, a demand for a more holistic inclusive and
11 affirming curriculum for youth of color as well as
12 concerns about safety and discrimination in school
13 policies. GGE is continuing to do the work and
14 expanding our reach despite financial constraints.
15 With that \$300,000 to support the AGE initiative, we
16 hope to continue equipping young Black girls, queer
17 and gender expansive youth to fight for a New York
18 City that is resilient against harmful national
19 forces working against them.

20 We are also requesting \$350K towards our Young
21 Women's Advisory Council program funded by Young
Women's Leadership Development Initiative for
political education empowerment, \$200,000 towards our
Sister Survivor program, \$100,000 towards our Sports

1
2 Training program and \$250 in ACI funding. Thank you
3 so much.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you.
5 Thank you Eman, thank you.

6 KYLE DEANGELIS: Uh, good evening Chair Dinowitz,
7 Council Member Wong, uh my name is Kyle DeAngelis. I
8 am honored to be testifying here tonight but i have
9 to say I'm even more honored to be a third grade
10 teacher at PSM 368, the Bill Lynch School in Harlem.
11 Unlike the students that I have the privilege of
12 teaching, it's safe to say that I'm old enough to
13 remember what New York City schools were like way
14 back in 2020 and 2021.

15 In those years, when the twin pandemics of
16 COVID-19 and racialized police violence converged, a
17 common refrain emerged in the education world and you
18 can say it with me if you remember it too. "We're
19 not going back."

20 That four-word commitment contained boundless
21 promise, the promise that we would not revert to an
education system that treats students as numbers on a
spreadsheet, but rather we'd build a new system in
which trauma-informed care, culturally sustaining

1
2 practices, and academic excellence would all go hand
3 in hand.

4 Six years later, that commitment has yet to be
5 realized. This Council, working in tandem with the
6 current Mayoral Administration, has the opportunity
7 to start rectifying that broken promise. The Dignity
8 in Schools campaign, with whom I am testifying today,
9 is calling for a number of budgetary investments that
10 would transform our schools into the safe and just
11 schools our students deserve: \$80 million to hire
12 School Climate Coordinators in 500 priority middle
13 and high schools; baseline the remaining \$6 million
14 in restorative justice funding set to expire, and
15 increase funding by another \$5 million, bringing the
16 total from \$17.6 million to \$22.6 million, including
17 the addition of \$2 million for training and technical
18 assistance, and \$3 million to support paid student
19 leadership opportunities in restorative justice.

20 By freezing the hiring for School Safety Agents,
21 eliminating vacancies, and not backfilling through
attrition, the city can save up to \$90 million in one
year to reinvest in these priorities. Additionally
we're also calling for the City Council to protect
immigrant students and families by strengthening

1
2 preparedness policies, offering comprehensive
3 trainings for NYCPS staff, students, and families,
4 enhancing data privacy and passing Intro 798 to
5 eliminate the NYPD's Gang database.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

7 KYLE DEANGELIS: And I want to say as a classroom
8 teacher, I'm personally interested in the magic
9 doorbell that makes people stop speaking immediately.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, it didn't make you
11 stop speaking immediately. So, I guess it's not that
12 magic. Thank you. Thanks Kyle.

13 Can you uhm, make sure your microphone is on
14 please?

15 EVA GRAY: Oh, I'm sorry.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: There, thank you Kyle.

17 EVA GRAY: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Always a teacher, always
19 helping out. Look at that. Can't help it, I love
20 it.

21 EVA GRAY: Hi, my name is Eva Gray and I'm a
Special Education Teacher at a high school in
District 17 in Flatbush. I am here to support
Dignity in Schools advocacy for restorative justice
funding. Uhm, funding for immigrant family outreach

1
2 and mental health services. I'm also an NYC Teaching
3 Fellow and I'm a graduate student at Brooklyn
4 College. New teachers are facing burnout at a
5 massive level and honestly experienced teachers as
6 well.

7 The current model of uhm, of integrated
8 coteaching frankly doesn't close the gaps in
9 education faced by students with disabilities. Right
10 now, schools face chronic absenteeism which often
11 stems from poverty and housing insecurity. We need
12 resources within our schools that support creating
13 welcoming communities for our students including
14 those with disabilities and those with immigrant
15 backgrounds.

16 Right now, we have one social worker at school
17 who works at nine different campuses and we have
18 teachers who are burned out and simply don't have the
19 time and bandwidth to support youth with mental
20 health and behavioral challenges that impede
21 learning. Uh, we have an Administration that's quick
to suspend students and expel them for preventable
issues which are often escalated by police who assume
students are violent.

1
2 We need schools to create - we need schools to be
3 inviting communities uhm, that invite students in the
4 classroom, so that they can benefit from the
5 curriculum the DOE has already invested in. And uhm,
6 and the experience of the amazing educators that are
7 in our schools already. Uhm, and the support staff
8 within the building as well. Honestly, we need
9 mental health resources and immigrant outreach as
10 well as restorative justice and we need these
11 programs because the DOE needs to retain educators
12 and provide true quality education for all students.
13 Thank you so much.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for your
15 testimony. A fellow New York City Teaching Fellow,
16 Fellow Special Education Teacher. Thank you so much.
17 Eva, Kyle, Eman, thank you so much for your testimony
18 today. I will now call the next panel. Uh, it's
19 penmanship. Uh, Vama Naik, Yainel Beltre, Sandra
20 Mitchell, uh, Immani Wilson, and Charlotte Pope. Can
21 we start with the Bronx?

UNIDENTIFIED: The Bronx?

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I know, let's start with
the Bronx alright.

1
2 SANDRA MITCHELL: Bless you, thank you, thank
3 you. I'm so happy to be here, honored to be here
4 because I saw your name in that voting poll and I
5 checked it. I filled in the circle, Dinowitz. So,
6 thank you for having the space for us to testify. I
am a returning -

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I don't mean to interrupt
8 you, can you make sure to state your name for the
9 record.

10 SANDRA MITCHELL: I'm sorry. My name is Chaplain
11 Sandra Mitchell and I'm the Chaplain that always has
12 on all the colors. You're like, we're not wearing
13 it. So, I'm always in trouble but uhm, my name is
14 Chaplain Sandra Mitchell and I'm from the Boogie Down
15 Bronx, born in Harlem but raised in the Bronx. I was
16 a foreign exchange student from Harlem to the Bronx
17 and I began teaching at five.

18 My friend from Puerto Rico to the Bronx, she
19 taught me Spanish and I taught her English at five
20 years old and so uhm, I'm here today on behalf of the
21 Parent Action Committee with the New Settlement
Committee and uhm, i'm here with a lot of Committee's
but uh, I love the Parent Action Committee, because
it has given me access to Dignity in Schools to Make

1
2 the Road, to Ya Ya, and I've seen them grow up. I
3 will be returning back to college and I will be the
4 student with the disability. I have it, it doesn't
5 have me. So, I want to see investment for people
6 with disabilities like myself, uhm as far as dyslexia
is concerned.

7 I don't have dyslexia but I've lost my sight and
8 now I can see you again and uhm, I just so excited
9 about this panel, about this Committee because I feel
10 in my spirit, that you have your eye on the prize and
11 you're going to make things happen. You're going to
12 fix it in '26. So, I want to know, I want to know
13 how much is going to be allocated for people with
14 disabilities as far as dyslexia is concerned.

15 A lot of my colleagues in the community and in
16 also politics, they have dyslexia. They are ashamed.
17 They don't want anyone to know. Also, I am a mental
18 health consultant and also, I deal with policy. Just
19 because a person acts a different way doesn't mean
they should have a label. So, I want to know what
policies will you put in place to make sure that
people are not misdiagnosed?

20 I know a lot of people who are, especially
21 college students. They're just full of energy and

1
2 all kinds of stuff and they just get the label and
3 it's disintegrating to their soul. So, I want to
4 know, is anyone thinking about this? Dyslexia? And
5 also labels of mental health. I want to know that
6 and I'm not sure if people are thinking about that.
7 They just say oh, those people but I'm one of those
8 people that was mislabeled and so, I wanted to say,
9 we need to make sure that we have the mental health
10 continuum in all schools and also, on our jobs
11 because this life is stressful and we don't need more
12 stress, so I have a feeling that you are thinking
13 about it. You might not have written anything about
14 it but I think you're thinking about it because
15 mental health should just be like going to get a
16 check up.

17 So, that's my take for the Bronx.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Uh, thank you for your
19 testimony and I - you know I'm not sure, well, I do
20 know what other people in New York City think. We
21 all love all of our students and especially in this
Council where we are fighting for every dollar and
all the policies and the oversight to make sure all
of our students, especially those with disabilities
get the support that they need and deserve.

1
2 Uhm, and you use the phrase, what other people
3 say is those kids. And or those students, those
4 people and you'll notice I never say that. I say our
5 kids. I say our students, our neighbors because it
6 is all of our collective responsibility to support
7 our students and our neighbors. So, that's the
8 values of me, of this Council and that's behind all
9 of the work we do. So, I appreciate that question.
10 Thank you.

11 Can you make sure your -your- there you go.

12 YANIEL BELTRE: Uh thank you Chairman Dinowitz
13 and members of the Committee for the opportunity to
14 provide this testimony today or tonight. My name is
15 Yaniel Beltre and I am the Policy Analyst and
16 compliance specialist at Hispanic Federation. A
17 Latino nonprofit membership organization seeking to
18 advance and empower Latino communities through
19 program and legislative advocacy.

20 As a leader in Latino advocacy, our network has
21 grown to over 780 member and partner organizations
nationwide, including 200 located here in New York
City. The vastness of our local network has led to
the creation of our HF LEAD Latino Education Advocacy
Directors Lead Coalition consisting of leading

1
2 educational advocacy organizations committed to
3 improving Latinx academic outcomes and opportunities
4 in New York State. A major priority for LEAD is
5 ensuring that the needs of Latino students are met by
6 identifying and supporting effective practices
7 through public policy advocacy research and the
8 advancement of a shared educational agenda.

9 Today, in alignment with our mission to advocate
10 for Latino students, we strongly request that the
11 City Council allocates a total of \$5,507,000 in
12 Fiscal Year '27 for the Latina Curriculum Initiative,
13 which is building a culturally responsive curriculum
14 that reflects the histories, contributions, and lived
15 experiences of Latina communities in New York City.

16 This upcoming fiscal year marks a third year of
17 the Latinidad Curriculum Initiative now more than
18 ever, as Latino students face increasing political
19 and social threats, it is vital to strengthen school
20 experience for children and youth of all backgrounds
21 by providing intradisciplinary curricula framework
that empowers learners of all ages to study,
understand and appreciate the history, culture and
intellectual contributions of Latinx.

1
2 New York City operates one of the largest and
3 most diverse school systems in the United States.
4 Currently, New York City K-12 public school systems
5 serves over 900,000 students with over 40 percent
6 identifying as having Latin American and/or Caribbean
7 heritage. Within the student population exists a
8 shared sense of latinidad pride in connection to
9 culture. However, despite the large presence of
10 Latino students in New York City Public Schools, the
11 diverse histories and leadership and contributions to
12 our city and beyond remain underrepresented in
13 classrooms.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: If you could finish your
15 last thought please.

16 YANIEL BELTRE: Okay. To successfully meet the
17 goal of Fiscal Year 2027, we strongly urge the
18 Council to approve the request for \$5, 507,000 for
19 Fiscal Year '27 for the Latinidad Curriculum
20 Initiative. Not only will this funding be vital in
21 sustaining the implementation of the program, but it
will also ensure that every Latino student feels
heard and seen in their classrooms and we thank you
for your time and look forward to working with you

1
2 all to serve Latino students through cultural and
3 equitable initiatives.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for your
5 testimony. Our next panel is Madison Pinckney,
6 Hellia Botsaries(SP?), Paul Anthony Urbineck, and
7 Laurie P.

8 Are you a team that has prearranged your order?

9 UNIDENTIFIED: Can I go first?

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You sure can.

11 AJ BOTSARIS: Okay, hello, nice to see you all.

12 Uhm, thank you for this opportunity to speak with you
13 about the Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Education
14 Budget. My name is AJ My name is AJ Botsaris from
15 Bayside, Queens. I just graduated from Townsend
16 Harris High School and I attend NYU right now.

17 I am a former DOE student with a disability, as
18 well as a member of the Youth Council of the
19 Transition Alliance. I am here to advocate for an
20 increase in funding for travel training, which helps
21 students with disabilities learn the skills needed to
navigate public transit and travel independently.
Travel training is currently offered through New York
City Public Schools, using one on one instruction to
teach students with disabilities how to navigate

1
2 public transit between their homes and schools while
3 building their sense of confidence and agency.

4 I was eligible for bus service via the DOE Office
5 of Pupil Transportation from kindergarten to twelfth
6 grade, and between sixth and twelfth grade, I was
7 involved in 3 separate bus accidents. Each time, it
8 took upwards of 2 weeks for that service to resume,
9 and in the interim, our ability to attend school was
10 vastly compromised.

11 OPT would consistently fail to answer phone
12 calls, provide parents with incorrect information,
13 habitually arrive late to student homes and school,
14 and make it near impossible for students to attend
15 school in conditions as simple as heavy rain. For
16 students that solely rely on OPT transport, it would
17 be in their best interest to train them for MTA
18 service; not only will that rectify these situations,
19 but it will provide them with a life skill that will
20 open doors for developing independence.

21 As a student with an Individualized Education
Plan myself, as well as generalized anxiety disorder,
I was promised travel training services upon
admission to high school. However, these promises
never came to fruition, and due to my irrational but

1
2 insurmountable fears of MTA transit, it wasn't until
3 senior year of high school that I independently
4 overcame that fear and was able to ride home by
5 myself.

6 I missed out on countless extracurricular
7 activities and was even ridiculed by my peers for my
8 inability to independently travel. Travel training
9 is an invaluable skill for students with disabilities
10 that will improve their experiences in DOE schools
11 and empower them to achieve their goals.

12 I am calling on the city to invest \$2 million
13 into the expansion of travel training to better serve
14 our students with disabilities. Investing in this
15 service will allow them to travel between home and
16 school, internships and eventually post-secondary
17 education or employment—ultimately, this is a
18 fantastic way to foster independence, agency,
19 self-advocacy and determination within our students.
20 Thank you for your time.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you so
much AJ and I know you have to go but I do want to
thank you. You can go because the thank you is for
you and for everyone just to understand that every
time a student gets up here and says I have or I had

1
2 an IEP or I have a disability, it does an incredible
3 service for all of those other students who need help
4 and are either ashamed or afraid to say something.
5 To say what they need and advocate for themselves.
6 So, I want to thank you for not just your advocacy
7 but for the \$2 million uhm, for the program but just
8 for getting up here and being an example for other
9 students with IEPs, so thank you.

10 AJ BOTSARIS: Thank you. I'm very lucky that my
11 mom is educated in special education and I was raised
12 to be proud of myself, so.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. You can make
14 sure, uh, push the button. There you go.

15 PAUL ANTHONY URBANEK: Okay. Good evening Mr.
16 Dinowitz. Uhm, and I want to thank you for this
17 opportunity to speak about the Education Budget for
18 the upcoming year. My name is Paul Anthony Urbanek
19 and I am a former New York City public school student
20 with a disability. I have AST to be specific and I
21 am a member of the Youth Council for the Transition
Alliance.

Today, I am here to discuss the need to increase
funding for travel training, which helps students

1
2 with disabilities learn the skills needed to navigate
3 public transit and travel independently.

4 Learning how to independently navigate New York
5 City is important for so many reasons. A. It opens
6 possibilities for people. B. It builds a sense of
7 self-worth. C. It saves the city money and D.
8 sometimes it means a lot more.

9 When I was younger, I would travel around the
10 city with my mother on trains and buses. I loved
11 going around the City with her. When my mom got sick
12 with cancer, she would trust me to go to the store
13 alone to buy groceries and to go to church to say her
14 prayers.

15 When I was 18, my mother passed away and I had no
16 one else. Then I entered the foster care system. At
17 that time, my school became very protective of me and
18 they didn't think I was ready or in the right
19 condition to be travel trained. I didn't agree with
20 them and I felt like I was being cheated and that my
21 future was being delayed against my wishes. It took
me more than four years for the Department of
Education to finally travel train me even though I
continuously asked to be travel trained.

1
2 The DOE kept telling me I just needed to wait.
3 Again, this was during the pandemic, so that was one
4 excuse. All this time I had to rely on Access A-Ride
5 to go anywhere including to my job I had at the time.
6 Anyone who knows, knows you can't rely on
7 Access-A-Ride. I would ask myself, "if my job
8 believes in me and relies on me to complete my work,
9 then the school should believe in me as someone who
10 is capable of using the city's transit system.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can you finish your -
12 thank you, can you finish your last thought please?

13 PAUL ANTHONY URBANEK: Oh yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

15 PAUL ANTHONY URBANEK: So, yeah, eventually I was
16 travel trained and I want to say too many students
17 who are - who are - er, you can read the rest of my
18 testimony, I'm sorry.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, you don't have to
20 apologize. Thank you and we'll accept your written
21 testimony. There's no need to apologize. Thank you
so much for your testimony this evening. I'll go on
to the next panelist please.

MADISON PINCKNEY: Hello and thank you. My name
is Madison Pinckney and I am an attorney at Advocates

1
2 for Children of New York, and I am here testifying
3 today on behalf of the Transition Alliance, which is
4 a coalition of more than 20 organizations that are
5 dedicated to improving transition planning for
6 students with disabilities in New York City.

7 I am here to discuss the need to increase funding
8 for travel training, which helps students with
9 disabilities learn how to independently travel, which
10 exponentially expands their post-secondary
11 opportunities while reducing the reliance on yellow
12 school bus service.

13 Uhm, travel training is currently offered
14 primarily through NYCPS District 75 Travel Training
15 Program, which uses one-on-one instruction to teach
16 students with disabilities how to navigate public
17 transit. However, the program is small, serving only
18 a fraction of the students who need it.

19 Through our work at the Transition Alliance we've
20 seen first-hand how travel training can change the
21 trajectory of a student's life. I worked with a high
school junior who dreamed of becoming a chef and she
was accepted into an afterschool vocational program
that would give her hands-on kitchen experience but
the program didn't offer transportation, and she had

1
2 never learned to navigate public transit safely on
3 her own. Her parents tried to get travel training
4 but they couldn't access it and so they worked
5 tirelessly to travel train the student herself.
6 Successfully teaching her how to take public transit.

7 This wasn't just about transportation but because
8 she could get there, she could participate and
9 because she could participate, she could get a future
10 aligned with her goals. But many students - uh
11 parents don't feel equipped to teach these skills to
12 their children. And while NYCPS offers a range of
13 internships and workbased learning opportunities,
14 most of them don't provide transportation and without
15 the ability to travel independently, many students
16 with disabilities are effectively shut out. And this
17 is combined with the limited capacity of the travel
18 training program in District 75.

19 And therefore, we're calling on the city to
20 invest \$2 million to expand access to travel training
21 so that it can serve more students with disabilities.
Investing in travel training will support the
independence of these students by promoting their
ability to travel between home and school, to
internships and ultimately post-secondary education

1
2 and employment. Thank you and I'm happy to answer
3 any questions.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your
5 testimony. I'm going to call the next panel. Pamela
6 Koch, Alison Garbariru, Vama Naik and as they're
7 coming up, you know as the Transition Alliance,
8 testified, I just want to update you on Local Law 18
9 of 2023. A bill that I passed that allows the
10 Department of Education to electronically transmit
11 IEP and assessment data to the college of the
12 students choice and we've been working with CUNY on a
13 memorandum of understanding and by the end of this
14 year, this school year, they have testified that all
15 students with IEPs going to CUNY that the information
16 will automatically be transferred to CUNY. So, CUNY
17 will now have the data necessary to proactively reach
18 out to the students with disabilities, make sure they
19 know what their rights are, what accommodations are
20 available, and ideally use that assessment and IEP
21 data to provide accommodations at the college level.

22 So, to all the people working on the transition
23 from high school, from high school to college, I want
24 to first thank you and second, remind you that you
25 have an alli and a former special education teacher

1
2 and someone who has passed legislation to make that
3 transition easy and systemically easy, not uhm, just
4 by requiring teachers to check more check boxes but
5 by making the systems talk to one another, so that
6 our students can get the best education possible and
7 the accommodations that they need and deserve.

8 Uhm, we will go from right to left on this panel.
9 You may begin when ready.

10 PAM KOCH: Great, because I was the opener uhm,
11 so thank you Chair Dinowitz and Council Member Wong.
12 And I've actually really enjoyed hearing all my
13 fellow New Yorkers talk as well. My name is Pam Koch
14 and I am the Faculty Director at the Laurie M. Tisch
15 Center for Food, Education, and Policy at Teachers
16 College Columbia University.

17 Since FY20, we have had generous support from the
18 City Council for our Food Education Hub. Take a
19 moment and think about the last time that you ate.
20 Maybe you had a meal that nourished you, so you are
21 your best version of yourself and fully present. Or
maybe you are hungry with thoughts about food,
clouding your mind. Maybe you had a quick snack,
with calories but few nutrients so feel foggy. All
New York City school students deserve to be well

1
2 nourished so they are fully present and ready to
3 learn every school day. Sounds simple? It's not.
4 Many New York City families are stretched thin,
5 limiting their food budget. Federal programs such as
6 the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program SNAP
7 are being cut. Many communities have limited access
8 to fresh, whole foods where it is easier to get chips
9 and candy bars than apples or carrots.

10 We eat what is available, hence two thirds of
11 school-aged children's calories are from
12 ultra-processed foods.

13 In the 2022-2023 school year, they launched the
14 Chefs Council to create school meal recipes that
15 showcase the cultures of New York City with fresh,
16 cooked, plant-forward meals and launched a "Roadmap"
17 for food education.

18 Since then, we have moved into action. Schools
19 receive grants for food education, working with our
20 Food Education Coalition members to get students
21 inspired by gardening, cooking and advocating for
food equity and justice.

From 2023-2025 the Chefs in the Schools program
placed 70 Chefs in schools working with kitchen staff
on preparing schools. This school year we are going

1
2 to continue this and what we need is to keep this
3 momentum going, is to continue funding our food at
4 HUB for \$250,000, expand food education grants to
5 reach all students and increase support for school
6 food service members who feed our children. Thank
7 you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

8
9 VAMA NAIK: Good evening. Uh, Chair Dinowitz,
10 members of the Education Committee, good evening.
11 Thank you for your continued support for food and
12 nutrition education across New York City. My name is
13 Vama Naik and I am a graduate student at Teachers
14 College, Columbia University and also an intern at
15 the Laurie M. Tisch Food Center.

16 Working at the Tisch Food Center in the policy
17 and communications sphere has been one of the
18 highlights of my nutrition schooling, as it has
19 allowed me to see into the possibilities of my future
20 career as a dietitian and nutrition education
21 advocate.

I am thrilled to be here with the Food Ed
Coalition in endorsing the following key policy
initiatives: First, we implore the Council to expand

1
2 access to grants for Food & Nutrition Education for
3 New York City Public Schools.

4 Growing up, I never saw my South Asian culture
5 represented in the cafeteria food I was served, the
6 lesson plans I was taught, and the books I was
7 assigned to read, and I also saw first-hand the quiet
8 and unsettling grip that food insecurity had on my
9 fellow students.

10 We have the opportunity to change this narrative
11 through increasing funding for food education
12 programs, and this need is also heightened with the
13 loss of Federal SNAP-Ed. Increased grant funding for
14 food and nutrition education is vital to ensure that
15 this important work continues.

16 Second, we call on the Council to invest in
17 School Food Service Workers. A comprehensive review
18 of New York City's food service workforce would help
19 to evaluate career pathways, titles, wages, kitchen
20 staff to student ratios, and professional development
21 opportunities.

22 Finally, we urge the Council to strengthen Food
23 and Nutrition Education in NYC by renewing funding
24 for the Food Ed Hub. With this renewed funding,
25 future interns and students like myself can continue

1
2 to explore careers within policy, education, and
3 build meaningful connections with the Food Ed hubs
4 through educators, community advocates, and
5 non-profit directors, who are the heart of making
6 positive change within NYC's food sphere.

7 Thank you for your time and consideration.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Vama. And thank
9 you Chef's in schools. You got a good program. I
10 visited that a few months ago at PS 95 in my district
11 and the way the kids, they - our kids love like good
12 food and it's almost a no brainer and you know you
13 were sort of saying in your testimony, our kids love
14 good food. They don't need the ultra-processed
15 stuff. If we just provide them the opportunity to
16 experience it themselves. So, thank you and thank
17 you for that work.

18 ALISON GARBARINI: Okay, Chair Dinowitz and
19 members of the Education Committee. Thank you for
20 your time and the opportunity to submit this
21 testimony. My name is Alison Garbarini and I'm a
22 research associate at the Tisch Food Center. We're a
23 leader in food and nutrition education and school
24 food research.

1
2 Since 2019, City Council has funded our Food Ed
3 Hub - which promotes collaboration and
4 resource-sharing in the food and nutrition education
5 space.

6 The Hub is home to our Food Ed Coalition, a group
7 of more than 300 food and nutrition advocates,
8 program leaders, and school community members. We're
9 thrilled to join our Coalition in endorsing the
10 following policy initiatives.

11 First, we ask the Council to expand access to
12 grants for Food and Nutrition Ed. New York City
13 provides grants for schools to hire external food and
14 nutrition education providers. Our Coalition brings
15 these providers together for meetings and provides
16 workshops on research-backed components that can make
17 their programming more likely to inspire positive
18 food choices.

19 Increasing funding for these programs is vital.
20 Only 456 of about 1,800 New York City schools
21 currently receive support. With the loss of Federal
SNAP-Ed, increased funding for Food and Nutrition Ed
is more important than ever.

Secondly, we call on the council to invest in
School Food Service Workers. Our research findings

1
2 show that adequate staffing and liveable wages are
3 needed to retain school food staff. This support
4 will have positive downstream impacts, improving
5 school meal quality, meal participation, food
6 security and food and nutrition education.

7
8 Finally, we urge the Council to renew funding for
9 the Food Ed Hub. In addition to supporting our
10 Coalition, the Hub uplifts food and nutrition ed in
11 many ways. We host and support impactful events,
12 like conferences, community gatherings, and
13 professional development opportunities.

14
15 For example, on June 1st this year, we'll host
16 with New York City Public Schools with the Food and
17 Nutrition Education summit at Teachers College. This
18 will bring together food ed providers, teachers and
19 admin from the 456 schools with the Food Ed grants.
20 We also amplify the voices of food and nutrition ed
21 through our weekly digest, blog and social media to
an audience of nearly 11,000. We operationalize our
research and share policy recs, curricula and online
tools that bring food and nutrition education to life
in New York City classrooms.

With renewed funding, we will continue to build
community and capacity - facilitating collective

1
2 action and advancing health equity and nutrition
3 security for all. Thank you for your time and
4 consideration.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. You just beat
6 the buzzer, very good thank you. Now you can
7 breathe. Thank you for your testimony today and for
8 of course for the work that you do. Thank you.

9 Our next panel, Violet Lahive, Miles Toussant,
10 Cassie Schwerner, Lizbeth Lucero, Louisa Foy,
11 Michelle Kraus, and Megan N.

12 Maybe you're a doctor, I don't know. Did you
13 bring food? It's a trick question because I want it
14 to be yes but you're not supposed to have food in
15 here, so. It's a trick. Uhm, do you have a secret
16 order that you collaborated on beforehand? No, okay,
17 I'll start from my right and move on, so we'll start
18 with you.

19 MILES TOUSSANT: Good evening Chairman Dinowitz
20 and esteemed Council. My name is Miles Toussant and
21 I am a chef with Wellness in the Schools. I
22 appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today. My
23 role places me inside school kitchens across New York
24 City where I get- I work alongside school food
25 service workers to prepare meals at scale. I see

1
2 both what is possible and what is challenging within
3 our current system. School meals are one of the
4 largest public nutrition programs in the city and
5 they should be a cornerstone of every child school
6 experience. Many students - for many students, these
7 meals are not supplemental, they are essential.

8 Ensuring their quality and consistency is a
9 matter of both public health and educational
10 opportunity. Delivering high quality nutritious
11 meals requires more than good intentions. It
12 requires well supported - a well supported workforce
13 right now. Many school kitchens are operating with
14 limited staff, tight schedules and insufficient
15 resources. These constraints make it difficult to
16 cook from scratch, introduce fresh ingredients or
17 consistently meet higher standards for meal quality.
18 Investing in school food services is one of the most
19 effective ways to strengthen this system.

20 Adequate staffing leaves a livable wage. Wages
21 would allow the kitchen to operate more efficiently,
reduce burnout and create the conditions needed to
improve the food being served. We also recommend a
comprehensive review of New York City's food service
workforce. This review should examine career

1 pathways, job classifications, wages, kitchen staff
2 to student ratios and access to professional
3 development. A stronger workforce structure will
4 directly support better outcomes for students. When
5 we build this right system, when the staff are
6 trained we end up with a greater result and a
7 certainly more positive result.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Miles.

9 LOUISA FOY: Good evening Chair Dinowitz and
10 members of the New York City Council Committee on
11 Education. My name is Louisa Foy and I am a Chef
12 with Wellness in the Schools. Thank you for the
13 opportunity to testify tonight.

14 In my work in New York City Public Schools, I
15 spend my days not just cooking but connecting with
16 students, talking with them about what they're
17 eating, encouraging them to try new foods and helping
18 them build healthy habits that can last a lifetime.
19 For many of these students, the meals they receive at
20 school are the most consistent source of nourishment
21 in their day.

That's why nutritious school meals must be
treated as an essential part of a child's - of every
child's education. When students are well fed, they

1
2 are better able to focus, participate and thrive in
3 the classroom. When they are not, learning becomes
4 that much harder. This is not about food. This is
5 about equity. Every child deserves access to fresh,
6 healthy meals, prepared with care, regardless of
7 their background or neighborhood.

8 I've seen how powerful a well prepared meal can
9 be. When we serve flavorful, culturally relative
10 foods, students are more willing to engage, try new
11 things and feel respected but I've also seen the
12 strain on school kitchens when staffing is limited.

13 When there aren't enough hands, it becomes harder
14 to prepare meals from scratch, harder to connect with
15 students and harder to deliver the equity that our
16 children deserve. That's why we are calling on
17 Council to invest in school food service workers.
18 These workers are at the heart of the system yet they
19 are too often under resourced and under paid.
20 Adequate staffing and livable wages are critical to
21 ensuring that school kitchens can function
effectively and that students receive the meals they
need.

We also urge a comprehensive review of New York
City's food service workforce, including career

1 paths, job titles, wages, kitchen staff, to student
2 ratios and professional development opportunities.

3 Strengthening these systems will allow us to improve
4 meal equality - quality, expand food education and
5 better support students - students health and
6 wellbeing.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Louisa. Thank
8 you so much for your testimony today. Appreciate it.

9 MEGAN NORDREN: Good evening.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can you make sure your
11 microphone is on?

12 MEGAN NORDREN: Yup.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

14 MEGAN NORDREN: Good evening, uh, thank you Chair
15 Dinowitz and Council Member Wong and the Education
16 Committee for this opportunity to speak and for your
17 ongoing commitment to public education. Uhm, my name
18 is Megan Nordgren. I'm with New York Sun Works. We
19 are a nonprofit that builds hydroponic farm
20 classrooms in New York City Public Schools. In our
21 farm classrooms, we use hydroponic technology to
educate students and teachers about the science
sustainability and bring quality stem education
through the lens of urban farming as they grow

1
2 delicious and nutritious vegetables right in the
3 classroom. We are now partnered with over 350
4 schools here in the city, reaching 140,000 students
5 and we are in every single City Council district,
6 proudly.

7 Two weeks ago, the New York Board of Regions
8 passed new requirements for climate education
9 ensuring that kindergarten through 12th grade
10 students will learn about the causes, impacts and
11 solutions to the climate crisis. This requirement
12 will go into effect in the '27, '28 school year. And
13 as an organization that's been bringing climate
14 education into the public schools for 16 years, we
15 applaud the decisions. Students and teachers
16 statewide overwhelmingly support an increased focus
17 on climate education to achieve a greater
18 understanding of the causes, impacts and solutions.

19 It is our responsibility to prepare students to
20 confront the challenges of our times and science is
21 our greatest tool. However, these new climate
education requirements currently represent an
unfunded mandate. And our schools, many of which are
already undergoing major financial strain, you know

1 we're going to be expected to implement new
2 curriculum and train educators without funding.

3 Organizations like ours, New York Sun Works are
4 uniquely positioned to help bridge this gap. Uh, New
5 York Sun Works works directly with the public schools
6 to provide hydroponic classrooms and training by
7 investing in programs like ours, the city can ensure
8 climate education is not only implemented but
9 implemented effectively and equitably across all five
10 boroughs.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your
12 testimony.

13 VIOLET LAHIVE: Good afternoon CHair DInowitz and
14 members of the Education Committee. My name is
15 Violet Lahive and I'm the coordinator of the
16 Coalition for Community School Excellence. We are a
17 network of advocates and nonprofit partners committed
18 to sustaining and strengthening the Community School
19 strategy in New York City.

20 New York City's Office of Community Schools or
21 OCS now supports 419 schools across the city.

1
2 Community schools are centered on community and
3 family voice, grounded in evidence, responsive to
4 local needs and built with infrastructure for long
5 term impact. They're also a cost effective
6 investment with strong returns for students and
7 families. Despite this growth in success, the system
8 faces ongoing challenges including instability in
9 federal and state funding, inefficient contracting
10 and procurement systems and understaffing at OCS.
11 These barriers limit the city's ability to fully
12 realize the potential of the strategy.

13 We urge the city to take three key actions.
14 First, expand OCS's staffing from 20 to 28 positions,
15 and move toward a 15:1 program manager-to-provider
16 ratio. This investment would strengthen oversight,
17 improve contract timelines and stabilize provider
18 partnerships. Adding dedicated data analysts would
19 also improve evaluation and accountability.

20 Second, the city should partner with community
21 based organizations to redesign procurement processes
ahead of fiscal year 2028 contract renewals.
Streamlining contract registration and payment
systems will reduce financial strain on providers and
allow them to focus on service delivery.

1
2 Third, the city should expand the community
3 school strategy to additional schools while
4 maintaining fidelity to the model. And finally, city
5 actions must be paired with state investment. We
6 urge City leaders to join us in advocating for fully
7 funding in modernizing foundation aid, alongside
8 creating a dedicated community schools funding
9 stream. Thank you for your time and commitment to
10 New York City students.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Alright, thank you so much
12 for your testimony. Thank you Violet.

13 MICHELLE KRAUS: Sorry, good evening, my name is
14 Michelle Kraus and I am a social worker in the
15 Disability Justice program at New York Lawyers for
16 the public interest. Thank you Chair Dinowitz and
17 members of the Council and to the Education Committee
18 for the opportunity to testify. I will focus on
19 systemic gaps in school based mental health services
20 for students with disabilities and the urgent need
21 for sustained transparent and adequately funded
supports. Let me first introduce N.L., a six year
old Latino student who came home from his District 75
school with unexplained bruises, despite having a one

1
2 to one paraprofessional. His school could not
3 account for the injuries.

4 Since then, he has experienced significant
5 emotional and developmental regression and is afraid
6 to return to school. At the same time, his mother
7 has received conflicted reports about his academic
8 functioning and her requests for appropriate
9 behavioral support services that previously led to
10 meaningful progress have gone unanswered.

11 This is not an isolated incident. It reflects
12 broader system failures, inconsistent service
13 delivery, lack of accountability and insufficient
14 access to appropriate mental health and behavioral
15 supports.

16 Currently between 7,000 and 10,000 students are
17 classified as emotionally disabled in New York City
18 Public Schools. Though need far exceeds this number.

19 Up to 40 percent of high school students report
20 persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness.
21 Despite this, the city has not established a
comprehensive adequately resourced continuum of
school based mental health care.

Existing investments remain fragmented and time
limited. Students face long waitlists, inconsistent

1
2 access and disruptions in care, as we've heard pretty
3 much all day. According to the NYC Comptroller, 71
4 percent of schools do not meet the recommended ratio
5 of one social worker per 250 students and 53 percent
6 do not meet the recommended ratio for guidance
7 counselors.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Could you finish just that
9 last thought?

10 MICHELLE KRAUS: Sure, sure.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Maybe five seconds please.

12 MICHELLE KRAUS: Sure, uhm, in addition to
13 funding caps, there's a lack of transparency in
14 centralized data. The Department of Education does
15 not currently provide clear, accessible information
16 on mental health service availability.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

18 MICHELLE KRAUS: Utilization or outcomes.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

20 MICHELLE KRAUS: Thank you very much.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your
22 testimony. I just got to say, I love - I love the
23 uh, like the diversity of causes on this panel and
24 they're all so important and require critical

1
2 investment from our city, so I just want to thank you
3 again. Please continue.

4 LIZBETH LUCERO: Chair and Members of the New
5 York City Council on Education Committee, thank you
6 so much for the opportunity to submit this public
7 comment. My name is Lizbeth Lucero, I'm the Deputy
8 Director of Advancement and Communication at the
9 Urban Assembly. I'm here to highlight the impact of
10 the Urban Assembly and to express our deep gratitude
11 to the Council for its successful support of Bayside
12 Affinity funding for the fiscal year '26 budget and
13 making this funding recurring, the city has responded
14 to the voices of students, educators, and communities
15 and have recognized the role that Affinity
16 organizations play in strengthening New York City
17 Public Schools.

18 This stability allows organizations like ours to
19 plan, innovate, and deliver impact with greater
20 consistency and reach. Across our 23 schools,
21 serving nearly 8,000 students, the Urban Assembly
advances the model with public education that
integrates social emotional learning, post secondary
readiness and targeted 9th grade success systems.
Together our family of unscreened public school

1
2 achieved a 92 percent average graduation rate this
3 past school year. In addition the Urban Assembly
4 serves as an innovative hub with the New York City
5 public school education ecosystem by developing,
6 piloting, and scaling effective practices across our
7 network, our organization helps strive forward
8 thinking solutions that benefit not only our schools
9 but the broader system. The Urban Assembly's
10 approach demonstrates how intentional data informed
11 systems combined with whole child support can create
12 meaningful scalable impact. Our work strengthens
13 schools, supports educators and ensures that students
14 not only graduate but are prepared for what comes
15 next. I encourage the Council to continue investing
16 and partnering with organizations like the Urban
17 Assembly that deliver proven results for New York
18 City Students. Thank you so much for your time and
19 for your continued commitment to educational equity.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Lizbeth.

21 CASSIE SCHWERNER: Good evening. Thank you Chair
Dinowitz and thank you to the whole Committee. Uhm,
my name is Cassie Schwerner, I am the Executive
Director of Morningside Center for teaching social
responsibility. We are one of DOE's primary partners

1
2 in delivering restorative practices to New York
3 City's public schools.

4 At Morningside we work to create healthy school
5 climates and culture and yes, that means circles but
6 it means so much more, all of which I think
7 demonstrate the necessary practices that we're urging
8 you to continue.

9 We help schools combat racism, homophobia,
10 islamaphobia, and antisemitism, just to name a few
11 and as you heard from the young people today and
12 thank you for being such tentative listeners, those
13 all seem to be on the rise. We assist paras in
14 developing vital skills and conflict resolution. We
15 set up peer mediation programs at all grade levels.
16 We train hundreds of teachers in Tier 1. We work
17 with D75 schools where we have seen nonverbal kids
18 participate in circle practice, truly amazing. I can
19 continue this list but the point I want to leave you
20 with tonight is this: we are living through a
21 catastrophic time in our city, in our country, in our
world's history. Our SEL needs and emotional and
mental health needs are absolutely overwhelming right
now.

1
2 Not only for the families terrified by ICE but
3 all the unhoused families whose children go to our
4 schools and also the families of trans kids, also the
5 littles who will be diagnosed at some point as being
6 on the autism spectrum or having ADHD. But right
7 now, don't have a name or a remedy for the shame that
8 they experience in their classroom. The neuroscience
9 is clear. Our brains are hardwired for connection.
10 It's a fundamental base layer of safety from which we
11 are capable of growth and learning. We need to be in
12 relationship but we often don't know how. When
13 students connect, they feel safe. They have a voice.
14 They are seen and we know that we can relax the
15 McDillias flight or fight response.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you so
17 much and thank you for bringing brain science into
18 it.

19 CASSIE SCHWERNER: Absolutely and you'll see more
20 of it in my written testimony.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I can't wait. It gave me
a little PTSD of grad school.

CASSIE SCHWERNER: You can handle it.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You're right, it was fine.
Thank you so much to this panel for your testimony.

1
2 I'm going to call the next panel. Morgan Little,
3 Paul McKenney, Osinat Gomez, Virginia Johnson,
4 Michael Exstract, Lauren Brazier.

5 On deck, alright, Adriana Aviles, Ellen
6 McQue(SP?), Adelo Ramirez, Barbara M.. Your address
7 is unknown, you wrote unknown address if that's
8 helpful. And Elijah Neshira(SP?). Alright, well
9 let's do another, okay rema Esquierdo(SP?), Lupe
10 Hernandez, Chijinduj Obiofuma, Nyah Berg, and Dr.
11 Brenda Triplett.

12 That was the Price is Right music by the way. In
13 case anyone missed the reference. Thank you,
14 appreciate it. Whoever says one dollar first by the
15 way, you can have the gavel. Let's see, we'll start
16 on the right and we'll go down my right, your left
17 and we'll go all the way down.

18 CHIJINDU OBIOFUMA: Okay, hello and thank you.
19 My name is Chijindu Obiofuma. I am the Special
20 Education Policy Manager at Advocates for Children of
21 New York and I am speaking today on behalf of the
Arise Coalition, which I coordinate.

Arise comprises parents, teachers, academics,
advocates and allies who worked since 2008 to
advocate for systemic solutions, the challenges faced

1
2 by New York City Public School students with
3 disabilities and their families.

4 Those challenges are numerous and the city must
5 make the investments needed to provide every student
6 with the special education evaluations, services and
7 programs they have a legal right to receive. But I
8 want to use this time to discuss the particular
9 challenges posed by the lack of school buildings that
10 are accessible to students, families, educators and
11 community members with physical disabilities.

12 Today, more than 35 years since the passage of
13 the Americans with Disabilities Act, only about one
14 third of New York City Public Schools are fully
15 accessible. When schools are inaccessible, students
16 often have to travel long distances to receive their
17 education and miss out on opportunities to build
18 formative relationships with students in their own
19 communities. Inaccessible schools also raise
20 employment challenges for educators and staff with
21 physical disabilities, while limiting opportunities
for relatives and community members with physical
disabilities to attend important gatherings like PTA
meetings or school plays.

1
2 Five years ago, the situation was much worse.
3 With fewer than one in five schools fully accessible,
4 so we are encouraged by the city's progress with the
5 funding allocated to school accessibility. However,
6 the \$800 million in the 2025-2029 Capital Plan is
7 insufficient, given that New York City Public Schools
8 itself estimated that at this pace, it will take ten
9 five year capital plans to reach full accessibility.
10 Conversely, \$1.5 billion in sustained funding for
11 school accessibility would enable us to achieve this
12 in half that time.

13 We are asking for the city to allocate at least
14 an additional \$450 million in the 2025-2029 Capital
15 Plan for school accessibility projects, bringing the
16 total investment in the current capital plan to \$1.25
17 billion. With that money, the city can make an
18 estimated 45 percent of New York City public schools
19 fully accessible by the end of the current plan and
20 come that much closer to realizing the promise of
21 ADA. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Ms. Obiofuma. I
19 do want to thank you actually for also distinguishing
20 and articulating physical disabilities because
21 disabilities can look like a lot of different things,

1
2 so I just want to thank you for articulating physical
3 disabilities and clarifying that. Thank you. Thank
4 you.

5 LAURAN BRAZIER: Thank you Committee Chair
6 Dinowitz.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Just move the microphone a
8 little bit closer. Move the mic closer, you don't
9 have to move your head closer, yeah.

10 LAUREN BRAZIER: The whole -

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, yeah, move the whole
12 thing, yeah.

13 LAUREN BRAZIER: Uhm, thank you Committee Chair
14 Dinowitz for the opportunity to speak on behalf of
15 Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City or BBBS of
16 NYC. My name is Lauren Brazier and I am the Director
17 of the Workplace Mentoring program. I'm here today
18 to advocate on behalf of the thousands of young
19 people that we serve across all five boroughs and to
20 request that the City Council support our
21 organization's enhanced request of \$1.33 million. An
ask we are making in direct response to losing
critical federal funding.

We are additionally submitting a \$90,000 Speakers
initiative request to increase recruitment of

1
2 volunteers in Queens. Recent research from Harvard
3 University and the US Department of Treasury revealed
4 that BBBS mentoring model closes the socioeconomic
5 gap by two-thirds, among the most powerful
6 interventions documented for breaking cycles of
7 poverty. BBBS mentees are 20 percent more likely to
8 enroll in college and experience a 15 percent
9 increase in their lifetime earnings when compared to
10 their nonmentored peers.

11 I oversee the Workplace Mentoring program which
12 matches high school students with corporate
13 volunteers to prepare them for post-secondary success
14 and every day I get to see special moments like bigs
15 supporting their littles to update their resumes,
16 prepare college applications or practice for a job
17 interview.

18 I have seen so many moments when a student's eyes
19 light up and they finally feel excited and hopeful
20 for the future again. And they get there with the
21 help of their mentors and the impact shows up in the
classroom. Our school partners tell us what a
difference our program makes, sharing that the
seniors in our program regularly outperform their
peers in areas of college and career readiness.

1
2 I feel lucky to work at BBBS of NYC where I get
3 to be a part of making these impacts. I did not have
4 a mentor in high school and like many of my peers, I
5 took on crippling financial debt to afford my
6 education and looking for funding from you all to
7 continue that so young New Yorkers don't have to make
8 that choice.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you and
10 you articulated something more important than any
11 test scores, like that change in a child's face. If
12 the face lighting up and smiling and so, thank you
13 for sharing that.

14 MICHAEL EXTRACT: My turn?

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: If you wish.

16 MICHAEL EXTRACT: Sure, thank you Chair
17 Dinowitz.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You waited this long, you
19 mias well start.

20 MICHAEL EXTRACT: I certainly did. I was
21 actually going to say I really admire your stamina,
the whole, the whole group here. Uhm, anyway, good
evening. My name is Michael Extract. I am
Co-President of the Parent Association at The Clinton
School in Manhattan's District 2.

1
2 I want to start by acknowledging that many
3 schools and students in the city face far greater
4 challenges than ours. I've seen many of them today.
5 Uhm, I'm speaking today because even a well
6 functioning in demand school like Clinton cannot meet
7 the class size mandate under the current conditions.
8 At Clinton, many classes have as many as 34 students.
9 The school has explored every option, reconfiguring
10 space, adding classrooms, adjusting schedules. But
11 the conclusion is clear, without reducing enrollment
12 or adding significant new space, compliance is not
13 possible.

14 So we need to be honest about the tradeoffs.
15 There are only a few viable paths: reduce enrollment
16 at over-capacity schools, or expand into additional
17 space.

18 I understand that reducing seats at popular
19 schools is very controversial. Uhm but if we are
20 serious about smaller class sizes and about equity we
21 cannot maintain the status quo and expect different
22 results. There is also a critical structural issue.
23 School funding is tied to enrollment. If you reduce
24 the number of students without adjusting funding,
25 you're asking schools to do more with less. That's

1
2 also a set up for failure and this matters for
3 students.

4 Overly large classes make it harder to attract
5 and retain excellent teachers and harder to meet the
6 needs of students across a wide range of learning
7 levels and abilities.

8 Uh, that range is a strength but in large classes
9 it makes truly differentiated instruction much more
10 difficult. Uh, if the DOE is committed to equity.

11 It must align class size goals with enrollment space
12 and funding. I agreed - I'm sorry, I urge the
13 Council to require a school level implementation plan
14 that does exactly that. If we want smaller classes
15 we have to make the structural decisions that allow
16 them to exist, otherwise we're setting schools up to
17 fail at a goal that we have set for them and
18 ourselves. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for your
20 testimony.

21 BRENDA TRIPLETT: Hi.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Hi.

BRENDA TRIPLETT: Good evening. Thank you.
Thank you to Chair Dinowitz and members of the
Education Committee for the opportunity to submit

1
2 this testimony this evening. My name is Dr. Brenda
3 Triplett, I am the Senior Educational Director for
4 Educational uhm achievement and partnerships at
5 Children's Aid. Uhm, one of the largest child
6 welfare agencies in New York City. I am a retired
7 public school administrator with nearly 35 years of
8 service to children and families. And now, I work to
9 improve outcomes for approximately 500 school aged
10 youth in foster care across New York City
11 predominantly in the Bronx.

12 I would like to recognize the progress made to
13 prioritize the educational rights of youth in foster
14 care, a long fought victory by advocates across the
15 city. However, there's still a significant gap in
16 providing adequate guaranteed transportation to youth
17 in foster care waiting in OPT bus route. This is my
18 7th year raising the issue in this seat before this
19 Committee. I don't have a lot more time guys.

20 Today, I would like to focus on youth in foster
21 care with multiple disabilities and special needs.
22 Many of these high acuity children wait for weeks and
23 even months for adequate school transportation. And
24 in the meantime, many are placed in private cars
25 driven and/or chaperoned by child welfare staff who

1
2 are not appropriately trained for this
3 responsibility.

4 Recently, I served as a co-chaperone for first
5 grade student Aby on her commute from Queens to her
6 foster home in the Bronx. Aby is nonverbal, she has
7 multiple disabilities including hydrocephalus and
8 severe dermatitis.

9 I witnessed staff struggle to safely - may I
10 continue?

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Just finish your last
12 thought please doctor.

13 DR. BRENDA TRIPLETT: Sure. Changing her school
14 was not an option, as there were no openings in
15 District 75 school.

16 In partnership with Advocates for Children of New
17 York, I urge the city to include \$3 million to
18 guarantee reliable, appropriate safe bus
19 transportation to students in foster care, especially
20 prioritizing those students with the highest needs.
21 Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Dr. Triplett.

DR. BRENDA TRIPLETT: Yup.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Alright, one of the other
guys with a book recommendation from earlier.

1
2 ADELO RAMIREZ: Yes. Thank you everyone. New
3 York City needs money.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can you make sure you
5 state your name for the record sir?

6 ADELO RAMIREZ: Oh, Adelo Ramirez.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: There you go.

8 ADELO RAMIREZ: New York City needs money but
9 raising property taxes is not a solution. I agree
10 with Council Member Wong, we should be cutting
11 unnecessary spending but not placing more - uh, uh,
12 not placing more burden on working families. The
13 real solution is prevention and prevention starts
14 with financial literacy. There is no salary big
15 enough if we don't know how to manage money.

16 When we teach financial skills throughout middle
17 and high schools, we build habits early. By
18 adulthood, students are prepared for the real world.
19 Right now, most are financially illiterate and that's
20 why they don't understand how their parents sort of
21 complain.

22 Taxing billionaires isn't the answer either. We
23 should be learning from them and inviting them to be
24 role models so our youth don't grow up depending on
25 government support. I'm living proof of what

1 financial education can do. In 2011, the SBA under
2 Mayor Bloomberg reached out to me. I told him I
3 needed to learn financials because I had a business
4 with no structures. Within a week, they sent me to
5 Lehman College in the Bronx where Ms. Lurtis Martinez
6 taught me financials in excel. That changed my life
7 and that's when I became an author creating a
8 workbook. Once I implemented financial systems in my
9 business, I found my why. I asked myself why schools
10 never taught me this. We spend about \$1.4 million
11 per year for every teen who ends up in detention. My
12 financial literacy workbook would cost the DOE about
13 \$60 million to implement citywide. If we prevent
14 just 8 kids from entering in the system in the first
15 year, the program pays for itself and if we need help
16 with the initial cost, that's where we can invite
17 billionaires to contribute.

18 I am also reaching out to Ms. Oprah Winfrey to
19 explore implementing my workbook in her school in
20 South Africa because financial literacy shouldn't
21 stop.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Finish that
last sentence. Financial literacy shouldn't-

1
2 ADELO RAMIREZ: Okay, shouldn't stop. Should
3 follow every child in the world.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much. Thank
5 you very much. Alright.

6 ADRIANA AVILES: Hi, how are you?

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Hi.

8 ADRIANA AVILES: My name is Adrina Aviles and I
9 am what is considered by the DOE a parent leader.
10 I'm sorry, good evening members of the Education
11 Committee. Thank you so much for having this long -
12 it's the first time here. It's really a long day but
13 uhm, I am considered by the DOE a parent leader, as
14 Mr. Wong knows. What does that term mean? I've been
15 involved in countless parent organizations ever since
16 my daughter was uh in kindergarten and now she is a
17 freshman in Savannah College of Art and Design.

18 I can go through the alphabet soup in the DOE.
19 They are countless and I am currently within my first
20 year within the citywide council of high schools and
21 in my last year as a president of DIstrict 26
Presidents Council. Most of these, I have been
elected to serve and I am still very involved locally
in my son's two schools. One in high school, the

1
2 other in middle school and additionally I am involved
3 citywide as well.

4 I have three children, my daughter the artist
5 student, my son in high school is somewhat about
6 academics, and our current 8th grader is a sports
7 kid.

8 Today, I come to you as a parent who has
9 experienced many failures as well as successes of the
10 DOE and to sound the alarm. I come to you to sound
11 the alarm and to plead for your collaboration,
12 support and accountability. It's not going to cost
13 any money here. When it comes to the DOE and their
14 plunge into the deep waters of AI. Without giving
15 our children safety floatation devices and this comes
16 on the helm of the new high school called, Next
17 Generation Technology High School.

18 Our daughter, let me tell you our story. Our
19 daughter was a junior in high school, when i did
20 realize the devastating impact of Chat GPT AI.

21 As a child suffering from the impact of COVID and
to her socialization, she did take comfort in the
virtual spaces for friendship. These same spaces
gave her a false comfort. She did form an abusive
relationship with an AI character, which made her

1
2 feel less and demoralized her to the point where she
3 did suffer emotionally. There's nothing like getting
4 that phone call from the school that your child
5 wanted to self harm and she was taken via ambulance
6 to the hospital psychiatric emergency room. This has
7 been our journey and I plead as a parent to please
8 demand transparency as well as safety plans put in
9 place from the DOE in regards to AI. Thank you very
10 much.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you and thank you
12 for sharing such a personal story with our city.
13 Thank you.

14 NYAH BERG: Good evening.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: No pressure but I think
16 you're the last one.

17 NYAH BERG: Great. I would like to thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: The last in person anyway
19 we have some Zoom but like uh, no pressure. Go
20 ahead. We'll see what you got.

21 NYAH BERG: Wonderful. Uh, thank you for
allowing my testimony and for listening to all of us.
It's 8:09. Uhm, my name is Nyah Berg, I am the
Executive Director of New York Appleseed. Uh, I am
submitting testimony on behalf of the Integration

1
2 Coalition, which is a coalition that we convene to
3 address school segregation and advance integration.

4 I am here today to call attention to a critical
5 gap in the proposed education budget, the lack of
6 dedicated investments to advance school integration
7 and inclusion, specifically, we are calling for a
8 baselined funding of \$2 million annually beginning in
9 fiscal year 2027 and continuing for three years to
10 support implementation of laws passed by the Council
11 in 2019 that bolstered integration planning and
12 initiatives.

13 There is a track record of success for diversity
14 planning initiatives that had access to state or city
15 funding to support community engagement, planning,
16 implementation, examples such as ours in letters 305
17 United. District 13's larger diversity efforts,
18 District 15 diversity plan, have demonstrated what is
19 possible when communities work intentionally towards
20 integration and what is possible when they have the
21 funding to do so. And all those examples, school
districts had either received a city diversity grant
awarded in 2019 or some type of state funding and
both those funding streams have since expired.

1
2 The City Council has historically been a crucial
3 partner in advancing integration. They passed the
4 School Diversity Accountability Act in 2015 and tied
5 to my ask is the 2019 two local laws, 224 and 225.
6 One established the Permanent School diversity
7 Advisory Working Group that would hold annual
8 hearings and report on its recommendations and the
9 other was so that every school district was allowed a
10 city diversity working group.

11 With the Mayor and Chancellor expressing
12 willingness and understanding to support remedies for
13 historic school segregation, a \$2 million annual
14 investment is a modest but essential step to
15 operationalize these laws, turning existing mandates
16 and data into real community driven plans and
17 programming across the system.

18 In addition to our call for funding, I'll just
19 really quick uplift what's already been said. We
20 also believe that schools not only should be
21 integrated but also inclusive so we echo the ask for
the additional \$450 million for school accessibility
projects in the Capital Plan. Thank you for your
time and I have our written statements here that I
can give to you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your
3 testimony. Thank you to this final panel for your
4 late night testimony. You all did great. Uh, this
5 concludes the in person portion of our public
6 testimony. We will now move to remote testimony. If
7 you are testifying remotely, please listen for your
8 name to be called. Once your name is called, a
9 member of our staff will unmute you. You may then
10 start your testimony once the Sergeant at Arms sets
11 the clock and queues you to begin.

12 Phoebe Assenza, you may begin once you are
13 unmuted and the Sergeant queues you.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

15 PHOEBE ASSENZA: Uh, good evening. I'm Phoebe
16 Assenza, I am a parent at PS 89 in Brooklyn, which is
17 located in DOE District 22. I'm here today because
18 our school's class size reduction efforts are being
19 undermined by DOE enrollment decisions. By denying
20 our schools request to cut our PreK program by one
21 section and reducing our kindergarten classes from
three sections to two, the DOE is maintaining an
overcrowding problem that our school and our parent
community are trying to fix. Right now, our second
graders are on track to be placed in two classes of

1
2 approximately 33 students each next year. Uhm in
3 order to comply with the law, our principal and our
4 superintendent, our local superintendent have asked
5 the DOE's enrollment office for relief.

6 Instead, we were assigned three kindergarten
7 sections of 25 students each when our building can
8 really only physically support about two sections of
9 20. So, I want to be direct with this Committee. We
10 need you to press the DOE to align enrollment
11 decisions with class size law requirements.

12 Schools should not be forced to make a choice
13 between manageable class sizes and space for
14 enrichment. And local superintendents should not be
15 powerless to cap intake at schools that are already
16 over capacity. We know smaller classes are
17 fundamentally and objectively good for students,
18 they're good for teachers. Our school has done
19 everything it can to accommodate the mandate, only to
20 be denied funding for new teachers, new construction,
21 and enrollment caps. So, this has caused families to
leave our school and our district, our local
district. Uhm, for families of neurodivergent kids
in particular for which a classroom of 33 students,
even if it's an ICT classroom, it's still anathema to

1
2 their educational needs and the overcrowded
3 classrooms have driven some families to pursue
4 private school instead of engaging with the public
5 system.

6 So, I'm asking this Committee to use its budget
7 authority to attach real conditions, no new DOE
8 dollars without enrollment accountability.

9 SERGEANT AT ARM: Thank you for your testimony.
10 Time has expired.

11 PHOEBE ASSENZA: For every overcrowded school in
12 the city. Thank you for the time.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much and as a
14 reminder to everyone on Zoom, the Sergeant will call
15 time but additional testimony can be submitted. A
16 written testimony can be submitted online.

17 The next person I will call is Ro Ford.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

19 RO FORD: Hi, good evening. Hi, good evening.
20 I'm in PS 89 in Brooklyn New York in District 22, one
21 of the three worst districts in the city for class
size compliance. I want to take you on a tour
tonight of my kids' school where 53 percent of the
kids are in economic need.

1
2 So, it's been a long hearing. I've been on since
3 9:30. I know you've all been in the room since then
4 but I'd ask you to imagine tonight being 7 years old
5 trying to focus at 2 p.m. when your lunch ended more
6 than four hours ago because your school is so
7 overcrowded that your lunch starts at 10 o'clock in
8 the morning. Imagine being 5 years old in
9 kindergarten in a class so crowded over the legal
10 limit, being told it's acceptable. That's what we
11 learned today, it's acceptable because the new school
12 is in the capital plan.

13 And that school won't open until you're in middle
14 school. Imagine being a teacher with 33 kids in
15 front of you. For perspective, that is more than all
16 the City Council members that came in attendance
17 throughout the day today, all the DOE and all the SCA
18 staff on the dais combined.

19 These are actual examples from my kids, their
20 teachers and their school and while few people
21 mentioned today that the chairs there at the dais are
uncomfortable, at PS 89 students take music in a room
with no furniture because of overcrowding, there's no
space for it.

1
2 Next year, unless something changes now, third
3 grade is projected to have two classes of 33 kids
4 each. DOE is requiring the school to admit 20
5 percent more kids than the school has seats for.
6 Because this is a budget hearing, I'm asking the
7 Council to press DOE on a basic question using our
8 school as a case study. How can DOE deny our schools
9 request for class size funding, zero dollars granted
10 because of a lack of physical space and at the same
11 time insist that we continue to accept far more
12 children than our school has seats and rooms for.
13 Our principal and superintendent both requested to
14 reduce enrollment for the next school year based on
15 the building's physical limits but someone at DOE
16 denied it. And DOE also had a class size webinar and
17 asked parents citywide to submit feedback on class
18 size. Many of us did, we never received even an
19 acknowledgement of our message. We emailed, we
20 followed up. I even wrote to the Chancellor
21 directly, no response. So, Chair Dinowitz, I want to
ask you-

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you for your testimony.
20 Time has expired.

1
2 RO FORD: Directly, who is responsible for making
3 these two completely contrary uhm, things at DOE?
4 Surely there is a middle ground that we can demand
5 now before releasing another dollar to DOE.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for your
7 testimony. Thank you so much. Janice Wienman.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

9 JANICE WEINMAN: Thank you Chair Dinowitz and the
10 members of the Committee for this opportunity to
11 testify at today's preliminary budget hearing. I'm
12 Janice Weinman Surenstein, the Chief Executive
13 Officer of the Education Through Music. For the past
14 34 years, Education Through Music has made high
15 quality in school music education a reality for
16 350,000 children who would otherwise have limited or
17 no exposure to the arts. We do this by partnering
18 with underresourced schools in New York City to
19 create a comprehensive high quality and sequential
20 music program that serves as a core subject and
21 reflects the needs of children.

We also hire high quality music teachers and
place them at a fraction of the cost that a school
would normally have to pay. We are currently in 51
Title 1 schools, 95 percent of students are students

1
2 of color, 23 percent have special needs, and 85
3 percent are living below the poverty line.

4 The benefits of music education are undeniable
5 and far reaching. Research evaluations and our
6 schools partners testimony continue to demonstrate
7 that music supports children's cognitive social and
8 emotional development in robust and certainly
9 incredible ways and we do have data. We have
10 collected data and we have found that students who
11 take music education do far better in language arts,
12 English language arts and in mathematics, as well as
13 in attendance, than students from comparable
14 backgrounds and in comparable schools.

15 Beyond these general benefits, music has shown to
16 play a critical role in helping migrants and we do
17 serve migrants as well and students from low income
18 backgrounds feel a greater sense of belonging in
19 schools and increasing their engagement and overall
20 wellbeing. Thank you so very much for partnering
21 with us and the opportunity to testify today. We
thank you for the support you have given us in the
past and we look forward to your continued support in
the future.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you and I have seen
3 your - first of all, congratulations on your position
4 and I have seen the work of your program at PS 103
5 and what our kids are doing there is just incredible.
6 Incredibly moving, uhm, I see the parents in the
7 audience when I attend are incredibly moved as well.
8 So, your organization is doing wonderful work for our
9 children, so thank you for that. Thank you.

10 Uhm, our next witness - our next person to
11 testify is Benjamin Tocker.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

13 BENJAMIN TOCKER: Good evening. My name is Ben
14 Tocker. Thank you to Chair Dinowitz and the City
15 Council Education Committee for allowing me the
16 opportunity to testify at this hearing tonight. I'm
17 here representing Graham Window. We've been
18 providing support and services to children and
19 families in New York City for 220 years. I'm sharing
20 testimony tonight on behalf of my colleague Dawn
21 Grant, who is the supervisor of education services at
Graham.

As an agency representative of Graham, I know how
important it is for students to have reliable school
transportation starting as soon as they are placed in

1
2 foster care or when they switch placements. For
3 students in care, being able to stay at their home
4 school can be a critical source of stability during a
5 very difficult and traumatic time for them.

6 State and federal law recognized the importance
7 of this stability by requiring New York City Public
8 School Districts to provide transportation. However,
9 it could take weeks or months for this transportation
10 to be arranged. There is a few examples
11 demonstrating why the city must provide interim
12 transportation for students in foster care who are
13 still awaiting bus services. We have foster parents
14 who face repercussions at work because they are busy
15 escorting students to and from school. There is
16 agency staff that are kept from doing other important
17 work because they're spending four hours or more
18 every day arranging transportation for foster care
19 students.

20 Students are often unable to use the rideshare
21 unless they have a chaperone available to them. And
22 so, some of the feasible solutions that we're
23 suggesting is the city contracting with
24 transportation providers that are already using
25 vetted drivers. Uhm, such as Kid Car who operates in

1
2 New York City and doesn't require additional
3 chaperones. Using ACS or other city agency owned
4 vehicles uh that include escorts, which is what's
5 done for children in the children's center. Uhm,
6 creating a dedicated interim transportation services
7 for those students who are awaiting their busing
8 service, hiring chaperones or reimbursing the
9 parents, the staff and the chaperones who are
10 stepping up to fill the gap. There is much more that
11 the city could be doing to support students in foster
12 care and we ask that the city invest \$3 million to
13 provide interim transportation for students in foster
14 care who are awaiting bus service. Thank you very
15 much.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you and thank you
17 for timing it perfectly. Our next panelist Tanesha
18 Grant.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

20 TANESHA GRANT: Good evening Chair and members of
21 the Committee. My name is Tanesha Grant and I am the
22 Founder and Executive Director of Parents Supporting
23 Parents New York, a Black-woman-led organization,
24 built by parents, for parents.

1
2 We are proud to stand as a member organization of
3 the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding and
4 support their funding recommendations. Let me be
5 clear, PSPNY is not theoretical. We are on the
6 ground, every single day, doing the work this system
7 has failed to do. We are educating Black parents.
8 We are organizing Black families. We are helping our
9 community understand how to navigate a system that
10 was never designed with us in mind.

11 I know what it feels like to be unseen in
12 classrooms that lack care and cultural understanding,
13 especially as a former foster care child and when I
14 became a parent at 18, I realized that this system
15 doesn't just fail children, it abandons parents too.
16 So we built something different. Not just a seat at
17 the table, we built our own table. And now I'm here
18 to say, your budget must catch up to the reality we
19 are living in and the Anti-Blackness we are dealing
20 with.

21 First, fund parent empowerment like it actually
22 matters. Black parents are still being left in the
23 dark about: Title I Funding; School Leadership Teams;
24 Parent Advisory Councils; and CECs and then blamed
25 for not being "engaged."

1
2 Let's be honest, that is not a parent problem.
3 That is a funding and access problem. If you are
4 serious about equity, then invest in: Parent
5 leadership; Grassroots organizations; And real,
6 culturally responsive outreach. Because at PSPNY, we
7 are already doing the things without the resources.

8 Second, stop playing with the Black Studies
9 Curriculum. Fund it fully. Implement it properly.
10 Our children deserve to see themselves in their
11 education every single day, not just during February.
12 And if teachers are not trained, and schools are not
13 held accountable, then it is just another empty
14 promise.

15 Third, our children deserve dignified learning
16 environments. Not buildings that exclude them.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 TANESHA GRANT: We need fully ADA-accessible
19 schools and sensory-friendly, standalone spaces for
20 students with autism. And I'll send in the rest.

21 Thank you Chair.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much Tanesha
for your testimony. Our next panelist is Diana Diaz.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

1
2 DIANA DIAZ: Thank you Chair and Committee
3 members for the opportunity to present testimony
4 today. My name is Diana Diaz and I am the Director
5 of the Early Cure and Education Institute for the
6 Committee First Connections and Families. Our team
7 supports childcare and early learning programs and
8 family access to childcare birth to school age. In
9 our work, as a childcare resource and agency as a
10 family childcare network.

11 As the state and the city are making historic
12 commitments to address the childcare crisis for
13 families who want to take the time to ensure that
14 systems are developed in a way that sustains the
15 existing quality care programs and restores the -
16 thrive system that can truly deliver the promises
17 being made. CCF continues to [INAUDIBLE 657:13] in
18 corporation of family childcare programs both and
19 independent in New York City childcare system design.
20 This modality of care is a necessity to deliver
21 [INAUDIBLE 657:26 relies on universal childcare.

18 I will refer to our full testimony for further
19 details on what we are seeing but a few points I
20 would like to raise here today. As a result of 3k
21 and planning that fail a meaningful efficacy, it is

1
2 estimated that over 1,300 efficacy programs close
3 between 2014 and 2019. Mostly female, person of
4 color and immigrant led sector has been - will fully
5 help to some of the lowest wages across all
6 occupations in the state. This includes 20 percent
7 of providers and 80 percent will remain independent.

8 A recent new school report found that take home
9 pay for family daycare providers in New York City is
10 over \$19,000 and roughly \$15,000 for a whole family.
11 When accounting the additional hours worked by
12 providers, the median hourly rate for family daycare
13 providers is \$4.81.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

15 DIANA DIAZ: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your
17 testimony. Uh, Janelle Barth.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

19 JANELLE BARTH: Hi, thank you so much Council
20 Members. I am a parent to a current second grade
21 student at PS 89 in District 22 in Brooklyn. I am
concerned about class sizes at my child's school. As
of right now, our three second grade classes will be
consolidated into two classes of 33 students each
next year. In order to get closer to compliance of

1
2 the CLass Size Law, both our principal and
3 superintendent asked the Office of Enrollment for
4 relief by capping kindergarten enrollment to two
5 sections instead of three. Instead we were assigned
6 three kindergarten sections each with 25 students
7 when our building can only support two sections of
8 20. When we advocate for our children, we are met
9 with platitudes about our excellent teachers being
10 able to rise to the occasion or promises of future
11 actions with no clarity on how and when they will be
12 executed. Meanwhile prime real estate lots across
13 our district are scooped up for a luxury apartment
14 development, which will only exacerbate enrollment
15 problems within our schools.

16 The DOE continues to do little to create space
17 for the hundreds of overcrowded schools like our own.
18 While the DOE and SCA continue to argue about who was
19 at fault, our children lose out on the rich
20 educational experience and personal attention they
21 would receive with smaller class sizes. There is
clearly no concrete plan or timeline to ensure all of
our children benefit from reduced class size. We
need solutions that move forward from good intentions

1
2 to action. Thank you for your time and
3 consideration.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Next is Tamika
5 Mapp.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay Janelle, I'm sorry
8 Tamika, we'll come back to you. Jenny Veloz.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, one moment please.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Please unmute the Chambers
12 please.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Alright, Tamika Mapp.
14 Lets try this again, Tamika Mapp.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

16 TAMIKA MAPP: Alright, thank you so much Chair.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Alright.

18 TAMIKA MAPP: Hi, my name is Tamika Mapp. I am a
19 District Leader for the 68th Assembly District for
20 Part D and a parent. I'm here to speak on the respect
21 check. A living wage for paraprofessionals and the
reality families are facing with 2K and 3K. Respect
check is a step in the right direction. Acknowledge
that Paraprofessionals who support our most
vulnerable children everyday are underpaid and

1
2 overworked but let's be clear, our check is not a
3 living wage. We need a permanent pay that reflects
4 their value. At the same time the city made a major
5 shift. We moved children out of the family childcare
6 programs but we did not move the support systems with
7 them. Working parents must rely on these providers
8 for before and afterschool care. Now families are
9 left scrambling, programs aren't fully prepared and
10 the very providers who held our communities together
11 are being pushed out without fair pay.

12 We didn't replace the system, we created a gap.
13 So, I'm asking for real solutions, pay
14 paraprofessionals a living wage, restore before and
15 afterschool care for 2K and 3K and invest in family
16 childcare providers like the essential workforce they
17 are. Because you cannot build a strong education
18 system on the backs of unpaid workers and you cannot
19 support children if you fail the people who care for
20 them. And I sent my testimony for the rest of it.
21 Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Tamika. Next is
Jenny Veloz.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

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2 JENNY VELOZ: Thank you and good evening. So, my
3 testimony is going to focus on early care and
4 education and new funding from the city and state to
5 strengthen 3K and pilot 2K programs offer an enormous
6 opportunity to reach more families with the care they
7 need. As New York advances its path toward universal
8 childcare, we urge city leaders to continue using
9 data on child and family needs, particularly those
10 with the greatest need of early care to inform how
11 the city delivers and expands its ECE services. It
12 is critical to approach a path to universal childcare
13 with a focus on those most marginalized by our
14 existing system, including children with
15 disabilities, immigrant families and families
16 experiencing housing instability or homelessness. We
17 are grateful that the FY27 Preliminary Budget
18 baselines \$70 million for preschool special education
19 services, evaluations, and staffing.

20 This will be critical for reducing waitlists for
21 services which are currently in violation of the
legal rights of children with disabilities. However,
several key ECE initiatives from last year's budget
have not been restored and we urge the city and
administration to restore and baseline \$5 million for

1
2 ECE outreach, as well as \$10 million for the infant
3 and toddler childcare pilot, expanding childcare
4 access to families with children zero to two in high
5 need neighborhoods. Securing a path to universality
6 also requires the city to commit to essential system
7 reforms including pay parity per ECE work continuing
8 to convert school day, school year seats to extended
9 day, year around ECE seats. And ensuring that family
10 childcare workforce is fully integrated and equitably
11 compensated in any expansion efforts.

12 Additionally, we join our partners in the
13 Campaign for Equitable Education funding and urging
14 restorations for Learning to Work for the SEED
15 program, Restorative Justice, immigrant family
16 communications and outreach, the mental health
17 continuum and student success centers.

18 So, thank you for the opportunity to testify
19 tonight.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for your
21 testimony. Glendaliz Valdez.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

22 GLENDALIZ VALDEZ: Good evening Chair Dinowitz
and Committee members. Thank you for the opportunity
for today. My name is Glendaliz Valez and I am the

1 coordinator of youth services for the Committee for
2 Hispanic Children and Families and we work in close
3 partnership with our schools delivering wraparound
4 services through and beyond our school based
5 programs. CHCF demonstrates the value of connecting
6 community based partners with schools to
7 comprehensively meet the unique needs of the students
8 and their families. CBOs like CHCF strategically
9 coordinate the funding and resources outside of the
10 school budgets to serve the holistic needs of the
11 students, the school and the surrounding community.
12 We thank the city for their efforts to baseline
13 impactful programs for children and youth, such as
14 community schools, arts programming, and high impact
15 tutoring. However, the Fiscal year '26 budget left
16 several programs vulnerable by extending and not
17 baselining their funds. We call on the Council to
18 adopt Mayor Mamdani's proposed extension and baseline
19 for summer programming into restore and baseline for
20 the following programs that are at risk of being
21 rolled back or eliminated as of July 1st. Programs
like Learning to Work, SEED programs, restorative
justice, mental health continuum, immigrant family
communications and outreach and also student success

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2 centers. Thank you all for your time and have a
3 great evening.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for your
5 testimony. Next, Lupe Hernandez.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

7 LUPE HERNANDEZ: Good evening. Thank you Chair
8 Dinowitz and the Committee members that are still
9 there. My name is Lupe Hernandez, she, her,
10 pronouns. I am a New York City public school parent
11 here talking in my own personal capacity. Although I
12 have held many roles as many others have spoken on
13 the dais today as a parent leader.

14 One of - many of the things that I wanted to
15 speak about today has been raised by the students and
16 I just want to empower many of their voices. But as
17 a parent of a student with a disability, I want to
18 raise the need for the respect for Para check. I
19 also want to raise as a member of the transportation
20 for our students in temporary housing and foster
21 care, the \$3 million that's needed for interim
transportation for those that are still in foster
care. I also believe that the students spoke very
highly about the OMNI expansion and as a student of
uh, as a parent of a student who rides the school

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2 bus, we also need to increase the funding for travel
3 training.

4 The OMNI expansion uhm could be able to reduce
5 some of the bus services but it also should not be an
6 either or, meaning our students should be able to
7 train and do the travel training program, as well as
8 still having their bus service as a backup.

9 In order for our students to have access to all
10 of our school buildings, we need to get the \$450
11 million needed for the accessibility capital plan.
12 Less than one-third of our public schools are
13 accessible and that is just not equitable.

14 I would like to also lean in on what our partners
15 are asking in regards to restoring and baselining the
16 funding for Learning to Work programs. This provides
17 the support for overage, undercredited students to
18 help them earn a high school diploma and even develop
19 a post secondary plan.

20 And that also really helps our -

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

LUPE HERNANDEZ: Thank you very much and I will
submit the rest in written testimony. Have a good
evening.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Have a good evening too.
3 Thank you so much for your testimony. If there is
4 anyone else present in the room who has not had the
5 opportunity to testify but wishes to do so, please
6 raise your hand or your virtual hand.

7 See no hands. I would like note again, that the
8 members of the public can submit written testimony to
9 testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72 hours of this
10 hearing. Uhm, I want to give a big thank you to the
11 Sergeants. You've been here for 11 plus hours to
12 Grace, to Alajandro, to Andrew, to Theo to Katie to
13 Alia and to Council Member Wong for sticking it out
14 all the way to the end and for all your support and
15 work. Yeah, Council Member Wong, that's right. Uhm,
16 there's clearly a lot of work to do in ensuring our
17 city's education budget is meeting the needs of our
18 students and supporting the work of our students and
19 is transparent and accountable to us in the Council
20 and to us in New York City to make sure those dollars
21 are going to where they need to go and that is
22 directly to supporting our students.

23 So, I want to thank you all again and with that,
24 this hearing is adjourned. [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 May 15, 2026