

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Jointly with

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS,
LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL
INTERGROUP RELATIONS

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April 8, 2025
Start: 10:21 a.m.
Recess: 4:10 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

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

Carlina Rivera
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Eric Dinowitz
James F. Gennaro
Jennifer Gutiérrez
Shahana K. Hanif
Kamillah Hanks
Shekar Krishnan
Linda Lee
Farah N. Louis
Mercedes Narcisse

Pierina Ana Sanchez
Lynn C. Schulman
Althea V. Stevens
David M. Carr
Crystal Hudson
Chi A. Ossé
Sandra Ung
Nantasha M. Williams

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

Paul Thompson
Executive Director of NYC Public School Arts
Office

Cordelia Veve
Chief of Curriculum and Instruction at NYC
Public School Arts Office

Hannah Berson
Deputy Executive Director at NYC Public School
Arts Office

Melissa Jacobs
NYC Public School Arts Office

Audrey St. Clair
NYC Department of Cultural Affairs Assistant
Commissioner for Program Services

Lance Polivy
NYC Department of Cultural Affairs General
Counsel

Arden Armbruster
Independent Budget Office

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

Nabira Zainab

Urban Assembly School for Leadership and
Empowerment Brooklyn

Ashely Marquez

Urban Assembly School for Leadership and
Empowerment Brooklyn

Shimah Zyra

Urban Assembly School for Leadership and
Empowerment Brooklyn

Sarah Stone

Teacher at Urban Assembly School for Leadership
and Empowerment Brooklyn

Dr. Abby Emerson

Education Professor

Melody Emerson

Shanta Thake-Ehrenkranz

Chief Artistic Officer at Lincoln Center for the
Performing Arts

Kimberly Olsen

Executive Director of NYC Arts in Education
Roundtable

Araya Henry

K-12 Initiatives and Youth Learning at Whitney
Museum of American Arts

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

Damian Bazadona
Situation Project

Dionne Figgins
Artistic Director of Ballet Tech Foundation

Niko Siraisi
Ballet Tech student

Julienne Buenaventura
Ballet Tech alumni

Daria
Fiorello LaGuardia High School

Aurora Mae Dunlau
Fiorello LaGuardia High School

Maryam Badran
Midori and Friends

Quadiar Dunn
Midori and Friends

Parka Tabersio [sp?]
Midori and Friends

Jennifer Dayton
Director of Education ad Midori and Friends

David Freudenthal
Carnegie Hall

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

Skye Kowaleski
Director of Artistic Programs, Learning and
Engagement at Brooklyn Arts Council

Lucy Sexton
New Yorkers for Culture and Arts

Trenton Price
Executive Director at Salvadori Center NYC

Cecelia McDell [sp?]

Marissa McDell [sp?]

Rachel Cohen
Libraries Equal Literacy

Salma Baksh
Libraries Equal Literacy

Jenny Fox
Libraries Equal Literacy

Lauren Comito
Executive Director at Urban Librarians Unite

Rachel Watts
Executive Director at ArtsConnection

Courtney J. Boddie
Vice President of Education and School
Engagement at New 42

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

Tia Powell Harris
Vice President of Education and Community
Engagement at New York City Center

Gina Costanza
Music and Model Teacher at PS123K Bushwick

Ariel Savransky
92nd Street Y

Roy Rosewood
Public School librarian

Lyndsay Werking
American Composers Orchestra

JL Marlor
American Composers Orchestra

Nancy Bedard
Brooklyn Legal Services

Jackie Cruz
NYC Art Teachers Association

Lisala Beatty
Music and the Brain

Ambreen Qureshi
Educational Video Center

Francesca Thomas
Educational Video Center

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

Nichole Touzien
Dancewave

Loyi Malu
Third Street Music School

Paul Menard
Education Through Music

Brian Wagner-Yeung
New York State School Music Association

Shirley Aubin

Eve Wolff
Dancing Classrooms

Arlene Laverde
Queens College

Sami Shumays
Flushing Town Hall

Ginger Meagher
Theater Development Fund

Megan Muttreja

Jessica Patrick
Brooklyn School District 15

Sharon Brown

Noni Lenore Jones

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

Zalykha Maria Mokim
Librarian

Lulu Fogarty
Symphony Space

Emily Grant
Kaufman Music Center

Jacqueline Cofield
Whitney Museum of American Art

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3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning. Good
4 morning. Welcome to the New York City Council
5 hearing on the Committee on Education joint with
6 Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International
7 Intergroup Relations. At this time, please silence
8 all electronics, and do not approach the dais. I
9 repeat, please do not approach the dais. If you are
10 testifying today, make sure you fill out a slip at
11 the back of the room with the Sergeant at Arms. If
12 you need any questions-- if you have any questions or
13 concerns, you can contact us and we will kindly
14 assist you. Thank you for your cooperation. Chair,
15 you may begin.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Good morning and
17 welcome to today's hearing on ensuring equity and
18 access in the arts. I am Rita Joseph, Chair of the
19 Education Committee, and today we're joined by
20 Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and
21 International Intergroup Relations and Chair Carlina
22 Rivera. Thank you to everyone who have signed up to
23 testify. We're very much looking forward to hearing
24 your testimony. At today's hearing we will also hear
25 testimony on the following legislation: Intro 1125
sponsored by Council Member Lincoln Restler,

Resolution 741 sponsored by Council Member Carlina Rivera, and Pre-considered Resolution T20253318 sponsored by Council Member Susan Zhuang and Robert Holden. We will hear more about this legislation shortly. Arts education is a key component of a well-rounded education that fosters creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Research has constantly shown that participation in arts enhances academic performance, improves social/emotional learning, and increase student engagement. For students from historically marginalized communities, espouses to arts education provides an essential avenue for self-expression, cultural affirmation and access to potential career pathways in creative industries. In a city as diverse as New York City where over 180 languages are spoken in our schools, the arts serves as a universal language that connects and empowers our students. New York State Department of Education mandates that all students receive instructions in multiple art disciplines throughout their education and has set learning standards in dance, music, theater, and visual arts. However, reports have shown that New York City Public Schools is falling short of ensuring

that all students receive arts education required by state law. Middle school access is of particular concern with only 31 percent of eighth graders meeting the state requirement of two semester of art instructions in different disciplines in the 2023-2024 school year. Additionally, while the majority of school provides some level of education access, the full range of discipline remains limited. In the school year 2023-2024, 85 percent of schools offered instruction, at least two art forms, decreasing to 66 percent for three art forms, and less than half of school offering all four core art forms. Further, there are persistent disparities in access for English language learners, students with disabilities, and students of color who are often less likely to receive comprehensive art instructions. Teacher availability is also a growing concern. While the number of full-time certified art teachers increased by 13 percent between school year 2022, 2023, and 2024, there are still significant teacher shortage. In 2023-2024 school year, 82 percent had no full-time theater teacher, 81 percent had no full-time dance teacher, and 52 percent had no full-time music teacher. Adequate funding and

spending on arts education is another critical issue.

Despite New York City Public Schools utilizing \$41

million in federal stimulus funds for arts education

programming in fiscal 2024. At FY26 Preliminary

Budget hearing last month, New York City Public

Schools testified that in school year 2023-2024, 290

schools lacked certified art teachers. How can New

York City Public Schools justify such a substantial

investment when so many schools remain without

certified arts education? Although New York City

Public Schools allocated \$41 million in city funds

for education for arts education in FY2025 to replace

expiring stimulus funds. This funding is not yet

baselined in FY2026 budget creating a significant

fiscal cliff that could jeopardize art programming.

The Council has called on the Administration to fully

restore this funding and we will continue to advocate

the sustainable long-term investment in arts

education. At today's hearing, the Committee is

seeking to understand the decision-making process

behind current art education policies, the challenges

schools face in providing comprehensive art education

and what steps can be taken to ensure that all

students have equitable access to the arts. This

hearing will also provide an opportunity to explore innovative art programs, long-term solutions that prioritize arts education as an essential part of every students' experience. Finally, we will hear testimony on Intro 1125, a Local Law to amend the Administrative Code of City of New York in relations to requiring Department of Education to report on school librarians and library access in New York City Public Schools. Resolution 741, designating May 10th as Judith Jamison Day in New York City to honor her life, her legacy as a dancer, choreographer, and long-time artistic director of the ground-breaking Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Pre-considered Reso T2253318 recognizing May 10th annually as Chinese American Railroad Workers Memorial Day in New York City. Thank you to all the members of the Education Committee and the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, International Intergroup Relations who have joined us today. I would like to also thank Committee staff Nadia Jean-Francois, Chloe Rivera, and Andrew Lane-Lawless, Grace Amato [sp?], as well as my own staff Juvanie Piquant [sp?], and Joel Desouve for their work today. I also want to acknowledge my other colleagues who have

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3 joined us here, Council Member Zhuang, Council Member
4 Louis, Council Member Dinowitz, Council Member
5 Narcisse, Council Member Carr, Council Member Hanks,
6 Council Member Williams, and Council Member Hanif,
7 and Council Member Restler, and Council Member
8 Gutiérrez on remote, and Ung on Zoom as well.

9 Opening statement, now I will turn it over to my Co-
10 chair Council Member Rivera for her opening
11 statement.

12 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you, Chair
13 Joseph. Good morning everyone. I'm Council Member
14 Carlina Rivera, Chair of the Committee on Cultural
15 Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup
16 Relations. We are pleased to join the Committee on
17 Education today to look at how public school children
18 are engaging with arts, and to make sure that their
19 access to the arts is equitable. And we are here to
20 ensure that the partnership between DOE and DCLA is
21 as strong as possible. Today, one in five New York
22 City public schools lack a certified arts teacher.
23 To address this we ask for accurate data and greater
24 transparency in reporting that demonstrates student
25 access and participation. Having the arts in your
life should not depend on where you live, your

background, or where you go to school. The arts are critical to every child's development. It enhances academic outcomes, fosters creativity and builds the socioemotional skills that students need to thrive in school, work, and life. With Create NYC adopted in 2017, we now have a 10-year comprehensive cultural plan that over 188,000 artists, cultural organizations, and agency representatives, experts, and residents of New York City help to develop. The plan which was designed as a road map to guide the future of arts and culture of our city spotlights this important issue we're here to talk about today. to address the issue of arts education, Create NYC identified several strategies: Support arts instruction across grades K through 12; coordinate efforts across agencies to provide quality arts and culture education during school and in afterschool hours; broker introductions between cultural organizations and DOE public schools and district superintendents to make possible more frequent school field trip and assemblies; clearly define and provide models for quality arts integration into other subjects for DOE leaders, educators and arts and/or museum educators; and partner with the City's

2 cultural organizations to support their work in
3 training teachers and administrators, and in
4 education students. We can agree that those are well
5 worth doing, and it is profoundly important that
6 Create NYC, the City's cultural plan has so much to
7 say about educating our children's public school--
8 our city's public school students in the arts.
9 Clearly, this is a job for the arts and cultural
10 community, as well as the public schools, and that is
11 why the Committee on Cultural Affairs is co-
12 sponsoring this hearing. We believe we have an
13 important seat at the table, and that 188,000 New
14 Yorkers who participated in putting together Create
15 NYC put us here. I look forward to hearing from DCLA
16 about its CDF grant making and the latest round of
17 funding, 422 of the 1,078 CDF grants awarded were
18 just about 40 percent, were identified as having an
19 arts education component. I look forward to hearing
20 from DCLA about its administration of the CASA
21 initiative which seeks to provide equitable access to
22 the arts for children after school in all boroughs. I
23 know that we will also be hearing about some exciting
24 work being done by cultural organizations to bring
25 arts education to our public school students. We

have invited Lincoln Center, the Whitney Museum of
American Art, Ailey Dance Kids, the New York City
Arts and Education Roundtable, and Damian Bozadona
Situation Project to talk with us about what they do,
as well as quite a number of the talented and
dedicated organizations that met with us every week
on the famous Culture at Three Zoom call for arts
leaders in New York City. I also want to shout out
all the young people that are here to also testify.
I am looking forward to hearing from each and every
one of you. Today, we will be holding a hearing on
my proposed resolution celebrating the extraordinary
life and contributions of Judith Jamison, an
outstanding artist and a towering figure in the world
of modern dance, and the former artistic director of
the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater who passed
away on November 9th, 2024 at the age of 81. The
resolution designates May 10th annually as Judith
Jamison Day in New York City, commemorating her
profound influence on dance and culture. Together,
we celebrate and reflect on Judith's legacy whose
passion and artistry will continue to resonate within
and of course beyond the world of dance. I want to
thank the committee staff who put together this

hearing, Christina Yellamaty [sp?], the Committee's
Counsel, Regina Paul, the Committee's Policy Analyst,
Sandra Gray [sp?], the Committee's Finance Analyst.
I would like to thank my staff Katie Loeb [sp?] and
Eddie Amador [sp?]. I also want to thank all the
Sergeant at Arms and the City Council staff that work
every single day to ensure that this chamber is open
to the public and people are able to testify and that
their voice matters. With that, I will turn it back
over to Chair Joseph. Thank you all for being here.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Chair
Member Rivera. Before we sear in the Administration,
we will also hear remarks from other Council Members
sponsoring legislation being considered at this
hearing. First, we will hear from Council Member
Restler, sponsor of Intro 1125. Council Member
Restler?

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so
much Chair Joseph for your partnership on 1125, and
thank you, Chair Rivera. Appreciate you both
creating the opportunity to hear this legislation.
I'd also just-- I know we got some students from
PS261 here somewhere. Just want to say how thrilled
we are to have all of our students here advocating

3 for librarians for the arts. It's really special to
4 have you to the council. You know, about 20+ years
5 ago, essentially every school in New York City had a
6 librarian. Today, 16 percent of schools have a
7 librarian, 16 percent. Over 80 percent of public
8 schools in New York City do not have a librarian.
9 That is disgraceful. A school without a library is
10 like a grocery store without vegetables. We are
11 failing to do our job. And you know what's even more
12 shocking, 30 percent of public schools in New York,
13 480 schools, don't have a library-- don't have a
14 library. How are we expecting our students to learn?
15 How-- this Mayor claims that literacy is his number
16 one goal and that he cares about it deeply, and 480
17 schools in New York City don't have a library. It's
18 disgraceful. It is absolutely embarrassing. And
19 intro 1125, something that we've worked on with
20 library advocates from across the City would help
21 change that. It's time for us to get the data.
22 Chair Joseph and I and library advocates have sat
23 across the table from DOE multiple times. We've
24 asked for real data on what's going on with school
25 librarians, what's the plan to actually expand the
presence of librarians in the schools, and we haven't

gotten one. So we have no choice, but to legislate.

It's time for the DOE to provide real-time data to all of us so that we can understand what schools have librarians, what schools have libraries, what access to libraries our students have, because we all know that when libraries are present in our schools, when our librarians are present in our schools it boosts literacy. It improves access to information. It improves research skills. It improves test scores. Librarians and libraries make a transformational difference. It did in my life. I imagine it did in the lives of every single Council Member that's up on this dais today, and too many of our students are being deprived of it. I really am grateful for the opportunity for the hearing on 1125, and hopefully we can get it passed into law very soon. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council Member Restler. Next, we will hear from Council Member Zhuang, sponsor of Pre-considered Reso T2025338. Council Member Zhuang?

COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Thank you, Chairs. Today I'm here to talk about American history. Part of our history was missing in most textbooks in our society. Most workers who built the

3 Transcontinental Railroad across the east coast and
4 the west coast are Chinese, but you will not see any
5 Chinese railroad workers in the group photo, making
6 the completion of Continental Railroad in 1869, 100
7 years later. But we find something about Chinese
8 railroad workers, nearly 2,000 pounds of bones from
9 Chinese workers were found from the dessert of the
10 Central Pacific Railroad sections. Under each
11 railroad sleeper, they have skeleton of a Chinese
12 railroad worker. The most dangerous part of the
13 railroad was completed with the blood and the sweat
14 of Chinese railroad workers. Right here, in our
15 city, my team actually find the article here from
16 Brooklyn Daily Times in 1876 wrote: "250 Chinese
17 railroad workers arrive to Brooklyn to work on
18 Rockaway branch of Long Island railroad." Even
19 today, the original railroad they built was still
20 used. Laylen Stanford [sic] was one of the four
21 business man to make a lot of money from the Central
22 Pacific Railroad which was built with Chinese
23 railroad workers. He used that wealth to co-found
24 Stanford University, which is good thing. After the
25 railroad completed, less than 20 years later, despite
the money he made off the Chinese railroad workers,

3 he endorsed the Chinese Exclusion Act. The federal
4 law prohibits immigrants of Chinese and other Asian
5 labor for 10 years, and the [inaudible] they are
6 residents already in the U.S. and become citizens.
7 It was the first major U.S. law to restrict
8 immigration based on national origin and race. This
9 day will not only memorialize the brave and
10 commitment of Chinese Americans, but all the
11 immigrants who built the railroad that connected the
12 world [sic]. We cannot erase the contribution of
13 immigrants who give everything to our country.
14 Chinese culture is about community. We work
15 together, even without common dialect. We find ways
16 to help each other. That's what we all need to do as
17 New Yorkers. Let's not forget our collective
18 history, which involves people of all culture. We
19 cannot create a version of America that erases
20 history. Our history needs to be cherished and
21 respected. I'm grateful to be here to hear the
22 forgotten history of America and the push to make May
23 10th the Chinese American Railroad Workers Memorial
24 Day. I want to thank Council Member Holden to give
25 me his resolution and I want to thank all my

3 colleagues who co-sponsored this resolution. Thank
4 you.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Council
6 Member Zhuang. Finally, I'd like to remind everyone
7 who wishes to testify in person that you must fill
8 out a witness slip which is located on the desk of
9 the Sergeant at Arms near the entrance of this room.
10 Please fill out the slip even if you're already
11 registered in advance that you'll be testifying in-
12 person today. Also note that we will not be voting
13 on any legislations today. To allow as many people
14 as possible to testify, testimony will be limited to
15 three minutes per person whether you're testing in-
16 person or on Zoom. I'm also going to ask my
17 colleagues to limit their questions and comments to
18 five minutes. Witnesses who are here in-person will
19 testify before those who are signed into Zoom
20 webinar. I will now turn it over to Committee
21 Counsel Nadia Jeanfrancios [sp?] to administer the
22 oath.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair.
24 Good morning. Now, in accordance with the rules of
25 the Council I will administer the affirmation to the
witnesses from the Mayoral Administration. I will

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3 call on each of you individually for a response.

4 Please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell
5 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
6 before these committees and to respond honestly to
7 Council Member questions? Paul Thompson?

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: I do.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Cordelia Veve?

10 CORDELIA VEVE: I do.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hannah Berson?

12 DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BERSON: I do.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Melissa Jacobs?

14 MELISSA JACOBS: I do.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Audrey St. Clair?

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ST. CLAIR: I do.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lance Polivy?

18 GENERAL COUNSEL POLIVY: I do.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may
20 begin your testimony.

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Good
22 morning Chair Joseph, Chair Rivera, and all the
23 members of the Education, Cultural Committees here
24 today. I am Paul Thompson, the Executive Director of
25 the New York City Public School Arts Office. I am
joined today by Cordelia Veve, Chief of Curriculum

and Instruction with the Division of School
Leadership at the New York City Department of
Education, Hannah Berson, our Deputy Executive
Director of the Arts Office, and other New York City
Public School colleagues. We are honored to be here
today with you to discuss the important topic of arts
education in New York City Public Schools. This
Administration is dedicated to ensuring that all
students receive a well-rounded culturally responsive
education with arts education as a key focus. Dance,
digital media, music theater arts, and visual arts
aren't just extras. They're vital parts of the
complete education that enables students to thrive.
When I was appointed Executive Director of the Arts
Office in September 2022, I was tasked with ensuring
equitable art support for all schools and as the
first building leader and practicing artist to lead
the arts office in nearly 30 years. The arts have
always been personal for me. Growing up as an
undiagnosed dyslexic in the Bronx during the 70s and
80s, traditional school wasn't a safe or supportive
space, but the arts were a safe space for me. I
immersed in the emerging art forms of hip-hop. I
discovered discipline, the ability to tackle complex

challenges and the life affirming power of self-expression, ultimately leading to a Masters of Musical Arts Degree and a career in the music which most recently included being featured on the 2025 Grammy Award-winning *No More Water, The Gospel of James Baldwin* by Meshell Ndegeocello. As an educator in 2005, I founded the Urban Assembly School of Music and Art, a general education arts high school for students who struggled in traditional settings which I led for 18 years. In joining the Arts Office in 2002, I brought with me a wealth of experience and a deep belief in the arts as a tool for equity and transformation. Since then, I have focused on aligning our work for greater collaboration and impact, ensuring that every student has access to safe, creative spaces where they can thrive. Shifts we have made: after a thoughtful 10-month analysis of the Arts Office staffing and programs, it became clear that while we were effective in supporting audition based and screen specialized schools, we were falling short in meeting the needs of schools without resources or expertise of these premier programs. To address these gaps, we developed a new logic model focused on expanding our reach and better

supporting the arts aspirations of all New York City
Public School students, especially those in
historically underserved schools. This model
reorients our work around three core pillars.
Leadership support: empowering principals and
superintendents to integrate the arts into core
instruction and SEL practices. Teacher support:
Building teacher capacity in effect blueprint aligned
arts pedagogy to support academic and emotional
growth; and pathways or direct student programing,
expanding student pathways to develop artistic
talent, showcase work and access college and career-
ready opportunities in the arts. By centering our
work on these pillars, we are strengthening arts
education citywide and ensuring that all students
regardless of background have access to meaningful,
high-quality arts learning experiences. The state of
New York City Public School arts: to access the state
of the arts across New York City schools, the 2023-24
City Council public arts reporting Local Law 123
provides key data on arts access and instructional
requirements. Some of the most important findings
include 94.8 percent serving grades one to fifth--
I'm sorry-- serving grades one to five offer at least

one arts discipline in each grade, though only 24.4
provide all four disciplines. For grades-- for the
sixth grade, 94.8 percent of schools offered at least
one arts discipline while just 10.1 percent provided
all four. Amongst eighth graders, 91.2 percent
received two half units of arts instruction, but only
31.1 percent did so in two different disciplines as
required with just 21 percent of schools meeting the
benchmark for 90 percent or more of their students.
At the high school level, 99.8 percent of graduates
met the arts instructional requirements. However, 73
of the 831 schools serving grades seven through 12 or
8.8 percent lacked a certified arts teacher. We are
proud that over 90 percent of students participate in
some art form instruction within our schools, a
reflection of the dedication and passion of our
teachers teaching artists and school leaders across
the City. However, we recognize this is still not
enough, and there's much work to be done. The Arts
Office is committed to reaching every student,
ensuring that all young people have access to
meaningful high-quality arts education that amplifies
their voices, honors their identities and supports
their dreams. Key new initiatives: Since taking

leadership of the Arts Office, a key part of re-
imagining our work has been the creation of the Arts
Hub, a professional-grade facility in downtown
Brooklyn featuring a black box theater, two dance
studios with sprung dance floors, and a sound
recording studio. Launched in the spring of 2003,
the Arts Hubs brings our strategies to life by
serving as a space where students, educators and
artists can collaborate, create and learn. It has
energized our office by centering New York City's
world-class artistic talent, including resident
curator Meshell Ndegeocello as our first artist
resident, and artist like Jason Mraz [sp?], Sanford
Biggers [sp?], and the Labyrinth Theater Company as
artist residents. The Arts Hub enables student
engagement, offers top tier professional learning for
educators and strengthens cultural partners. By
scaling programs, piloting new initiatives and
fostering collaboration, it ensures arts education is
accessible, sustainable, deeply embedded in New York
City Public Schools. Full-scale operations are
planned for spring 25/26. Additional innovations
include leadership and teacher support. Utilizing
the Arts Hub as a launch pad, the Arts Hub has

developed several new avenues to support school
leaders and teachers. The Principals Fellow Program
equips school leaders with the tools and knowledge to
integrate arts into their school's core instructional
mission. To-date we have supported four cohorts of
principal fellows totaling 170 principals citywide.
We've significantly expanded teacher support,
providing ongoing professional development and
resources to almost 3,000 licensed arts teachers and
have enhanced teacher leadership through the creation
of Arts Office Leaders, our AOLs. We champion arts
initiatives and offer peer support within the
district and boroughs they work in. Additionally, we
have fostered a vibrant model for teach community
building, providing collaborative space where
educators can share best practices and be reminded of
the importance of continuing to practice the craft as
artists. Pathways Direct student programing: The
Arts Office's new Arts Pathway pilot initiative, aims
to ensure that students and families have consistent
meaningful access to arts education from early
childhood through high school. This work focuses on
aligning arts programs across school levels early
childhood to elementary, elementary to middle, and

middle to high school. By identifying gaps and collaborating with school and district leaders to create entry points for students all along the way. The goal is to remove barriers such as inconsistent programming, lack of multilingual information, geographic challenges and high material costs. While longstanding summer programs like middle school arts boot camp and summer Arts Institute remain key to this framework, we've launched several new initiative to expand aces. In the summer of 2024, district and borough-based programs brought arts instruction directly to communities with limited access, like an all Bronx strings program for middle high school students and a dance bridge program in East Flatbush connecting elementary and middle schools. We also launched an Early Childhood strings program in three schools serving 3K and Pre-K providing free in-school violin instruction comparable to private offerings, including both group and individual lessons. In the spring 2024, we piloted work-based learning at the Arts Hub offering high school project-based arts experience, mentorship from educators and artists, and stipends. Following its success, the program will expand in the spring to sites in East

Williamsburg and Far Rockaway. Additionally, we've continued to author partnership grants to help schools bring in trusted arts partner. In 2025 we awarded \$4.7 million to 289 schools citywide. This includes the multilingual learners, students with disabilities, grant up to \$15,000 per school which spans include in-school arts instruction for multilingual learners and students with disabilities, and the Early Learners grant up to \$10,000 which supports arts engagement in 3K, kindergarten and strengthens family and community connections through the arts. The grant programs this year benefitted from a thorough inventory of reflection. Key staff members created rigorous logic models for both programs identifying a specific outcomes. Each grant should help school's recipients achieve. We then reworked the grant's process and protocols including the application materials, scoring rubrics and grant timelines to be aligned with the logic models, and even more rooted in school's real world needs. No longer do schools and arts partners have to guess as to why they may or may not have been awarded a grant. The rigor of our program and processes are now clear. We must also express our deep, deep gratitude to the

3 City Council for its unwavering commitment to arts
4 education, now in its third year of extraordinary
5 support. This year, the Council has generously
6 increased its support by providing \$4 million to the
7 support for arts instruction grants, reinforcing its
8 dedication to ensuring to equitable access to arts
9 for all students. In partnership with Arts and
10 Education Roundtable, the Arts Office worked to
11 organize the distribution of this critical funding
12 which has expanded arts learning opportunities to an
13 additional 239 schools, enriching educational
14 experiences for over 53,000 students across every
15 City Council district. These students have had the
16 invaluable opportunity to engage in meaningful hands-
17 on collaboration with the city's esteemed cultural
18 partners, experiences that not only nurture their
19 artistic talents, but also foster creative confidence
20 and a lifelong appreciation for the arts. I now
21 would like to turn to Intro 1125 which would require
22 New York City Public Schools to report on school
23 libraries and library access. The proposed
24 legislation will provide essential data to identify
25 and address the shortage areas. Literacy remains a
major priority for us, and we recognize the value of

ensuring that every student has access to high-quality library materials whether it's in the digital library, the classroom or the school. We are actively recruiting new libraries through our Home-grown School Librarian New York State Education Department Certified Training Pipeline, Teacher to Librarian. Though there is still much work to be done in our school buildings, we are proud that over two million books have been borrowed from our digital libraries just this year alone. We also recognize there are some gaps in what data can be collected in our systems and look forward to working with the Council to be able to accurately report on libraries. In conclusion, as we look forward to the future, the arts will continue to play a crucial role in shaping not just the cultural vibrancy of New York City, but also its economic growth. The arts offer critical social/emotional learning opportunities helping students process emotions, build resilience and develop empathy. Re-imagining the Arts Office is essential to creating a more expansive and equitable arts ecosystem, ensuring that our programs meet today's needs and lay a foundation for the future. We are developing data-driven systems to measure

progress, assess impact and distribute resources equitably. These systems support responsive and sustainable initiatives such as the Arts Hub and teacher development programs. Our vision is to provide every student regardless of background access to high-quality arts education and clear pathways to creative growth. Achieving this mission requires bold thinking, sustained investment and a commitment to breaking down barriers, embedding the arts as a core element of education for the future success of our students and the prosperity of New York City. I thank you for the opportunity to testify today and look forward to answering your questions.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I'd like to recognize Council Member Shekar, Council Member Lee, and Council Member Ariola.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ST. CLAIR: Good morning Chairs Joseph and Rivera and members of the Committee's. I am Audrey St. Clair, Assistant Commissioner for Program Services at the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs here to testify in regard to today's topic, ensuring equity and access in arts education. First, to introduce myself, I came to my role at DCLA in February of this year

3 after serving for seven years in New York City Public
4 Schools Arts Office where I was a member of Paul
5 Thompson's incredible team of professionals. So
6 today's topic is something that's very close to my
7 heart. Most recently, I served as the Arts Office's
8 Director of Arts Partnerships where among other
9 things I co-facilitated the Support for Arts
10 Instruction Initiative in collaboration with the New
11 York City Arts and Education Roundtable and the New
12 York City Council. I also oversaw all aspects of
13 Arts Partnerships grants, a program that administers
14 millions of dollars in grant funding to hundreds of
15 schools across the city to bring programming from
16 cultural nonprofits into the classroom. This
17 experience has made for a great transition to my new
18 position at DLCA where I can continue to foster
19 partnerships between our amazing cultural sector and
20 the City's public schools. NYC is home to one of the
21 world's most remarkable cultural communities. This
22 is a resources that our students deserve to be
23 connected with, to learn from, and to engage with.
24 One study found that former art students are 55
25 percent more likely to have completed post-secondary
coursework by adulthood and 29 percent more likely to

earn a four-year college degree by age 32. The arts help young people to express themselves, to understand the world around them, to build confidence and develop their creative thinking. That's why I've dedicated my career to supporting arts education, and I'm so proud of the work being done both at DOE and DCLA to foster accessible, equitable arts education opportunities across the City. At DCLA we support arts education through several of our agency's funding programs. To start with my unit at the Agency, Program Services, we support hundreds of arts groups doing this work each year. This support comes through programs like the Cultural Development Fund and through the City Council initiatives that we proudly collaborate with you to administer. For instance, in FY25 more than 420 CDF grantees proposed arts education projects. That's 400 nonprofits working across disciplines in all five boroughs to deliver high-quality arts programs to students in our city. a few example of the arts education programing and organizations we're currently supporting through the CDF include Arts Connection which offers comprehensive, innovative classroom-based and professional learning arts education programs and

resources reaching over 25,000 New York City Public School students and educators across the five boroughs. Programs facilitated by 115 expert teaching artists span disciplines including music, dance, theater, media, visual arts, curatorial studies, and art criticism. Dancing Classrooms delivers social dance programs to more than 450 classrooms and 100+ title one NYC metro area schools serving at least 13,000 K through 12 students in 2024-25. Activities include a 10-week social ballroom residency, 16-session dancing with rhythms and stories, afterschool social dance clubs, and adapted sensory steps for students with disabilities. Education Through Music which provides school-wide curricular music programs for 20,000 students attending 55 under-resourced elementary, middle, pre-k through eight and high schools in all five boroughs ETM focuses on in-need schools located in low-income neighborhoods primarily serving BIPOC children. Marquis Studio Partnership Program which brings engaging arts learning to 10 high-need schools in all five boroughs. Partnership schools receive subsidized or no-cost residencies in an array of arts disciplines, and four of the 10 partnership schools

3 are in NYC's Special Education District, District 75
4 which exclusively serves students with multiple or
5 severe disabilities. Midori and Friends which works
6 with 11 school partners in the Bronx, Brooklyn,
7 Manhattan and Queens to serve 980 K through 12
8 students. The Play to Learn program provides
9 instrumental instruction at eight schools, teaching
10 students to sing and play ukulele, harp, violin, and
11 woodwinds. Midori and Friends teaching artists can
12 provide services in English, Spanish and Japanese.
13 Public Color whose year-round design studio programs
14 engage low-income NYC middle and high school students
15 in project-based learning and creative problem
16 solving. This year, over 600 students will
17 participate in Public Colors school year and summer
18 design studio programs. Studio in a school whose in-
19 school visual arts education residencies are
20 providing more than 9,000 students and 730 teachers
21 across the five boroughs with high-quality arts
22 education in the current school year, and Midtown
23 Management Group whose engaging emotions through
24 theater utilizes hands-on experiential musical
25 theater workshops to promote social/emotional
learning using music, dance, acting, improvisation,

theater games, and pre-selected books and themes.

Groups offering arts education programming are receiving \$27.1 million in support through the CDF in FY25, and as the programs I mentioned above, equity is woven tightly into how we distribute CDF support.

This year we were proud to introduce a new equity fund as part of the CDF. The equity fund provided 264 organizations operating in areas of New York City with the lowest median income and highest poverty rates with \$2 million in additional funding. This initiative helps to ensure that public resources are directed to areas of the city where they are needed most and makes a major investment in the overall wellbeing and vibrancy of some of New York's most vulnerable communities. In addition to these hundreds of programs DCLA supports through the CDF, we also work with you to administer the Council-funded Cultural After Schools Adventures, or CASA program. CASA provides a wide array of high-quality arts and cultural experiences to students enrolled in afterschool activities in grades pre-K through 12. For FY25, DCLA's Program Services Unit distributed more than \$14 million in CASA awards to 139 arts and cultural organizations in partnership with 704

schools. In collaboration with their designated arts organization, schools participating in CASA programs engage in arts and cultural activities that aim to provide arts rich experiences for students, staff and families. Another Council initiative we're proud to partner with you on is Art, A Catalyst for Change. For FY25, this program is providing more than \$400,000 to pair arts groups with 19 schools, empowering students to use their voices to raise awareness and ultimately end gun violence through art. This innovative program shows how the arts can be a driver not just of our city's economy but of strong, healthy, safe communities across the five boroughs. DCLA's Materials for the Arts Program is another amazing one-of-kind source of support for arts education in our city's schools. All 1,600 DOE schools are eligible to access MFTA's programs and warehouse which offers a huge range of free supplies that art teachers can receive completely free of charge. Last year alone, nearly 700 schools received free supplies from MFTA, and the team in the MFTA Education Center works closely with DOE to make sure that teachers are aware of this remarkable resource and to train educators how to bring creative reuse

into the classroom. For example, MFTA's field trip program brought over 6,000 students from schools serving low-income students to the warehouse for arts enrichment and education activities. This year, for the first time, thanks to support from a number of donors, these field trips were offered to hundreds of schools free of charge. MFTA's teacher training courses offer week-long intensives of 36 hours each for over 250 public school teachers with 90 scholarships targeting educators from schools and low income communities. MFTA's in-school residencies embed teaching artists in 20 schools across NYC reaching over 8,000 more students and their teachers each year. In 2023, MFTA launched a new program called Afterhours Teacher Shopping. One day a month, the MFTA warehouse is kept open late specifically to accommodate the schedules of teachers. Along with offsite events cohosted by MFTA and the DOE Arts Office to bring the warehouse directly to schools, MFTA has made a concerted effort to engage teachers and students in every corner of the City. And the high level of engagement from DOE teachers proves that it is paying off. Suffice it to say, MFTA is a major way that DCLA and DOE collaborate to bring

innovative, sustainable and affordable arts programming to city schools. DCLA's partnership with the 34 members of the Cultural Institution Group also provide our city students with a remarkable range of experiences in science, arts, and cultural engagement. The CIG which includes museums, performing art centers, zoos, and botanical gardens across the City received over 1.3 million visits from students in the most recent year we have data for. Members of the CIG also have thoughtful, far-reaching education and youth engagement initiatives that involve young people deeply in their programming. for instance, the New York Botanical Garden, NYBG, runs school programs that see over 90,000 K through eight students participate annually, fostering a love for nature through hands-on learning-- through hands on learning experiences. The garden also offers family programming such as the Edible Academy where families can explore plant science, healthy eating and sustainability through interactive activities. Snug Harbor Cultural Center has several programs for young people including Youth Matters Teen Ambassadors, a free month-long weekend career exploration program for high school students. During

school breaks they offer a variety of programs to engage students such as Heritage Farm Hay Day, Urban Wetlands Warriors, Forest Explorers, Garden Ecology and Design. The Museum of the Moving Image offers a semester-long afterschool animation course through the Cultural After School Adventures, or CASA, program where approximately 166 eighth grade students learn how to create their own animated films through a combination of critical viewing, project-based learning, and workshops on visual story-telling and narrative structure. Weeksville Heritage Center runs the STEAM Weeksville Program, and afterschool enrichment initiative developed with local organization, Divas for Social Justice and teaching artist Pamela Tetay [sp?]. The program highlights the history of Weeksville and its contemporary relevance through STEAM-based enrichment activities. The public theater's Teaching Teachers program is an annual series of professional development workshops for elementary, middle school, and high school teachers across New York City that trains them in dynamic performance-based approaches to Shakespeare's works. Last but not least, DCLA's Percent for Art Unit has worked closely with the School's

Construction Authority for years to commission permanent works of public art that enrich our public education spaces across the five boroughs. 251 project have been completed since the program started 40 years ago with 36 installed in the last three years. Recent highlights include artist Tijay Mohammed's mural, Respect for All, installed in the Bronx's Aurelia Greene Educational campus, and Artist Daniel Bejar's, A History of Us, an installation exploring U.S. History and the new Academy of American Studies in Queens. DCLA is proud to partner with the City Council, the DOE and the Arts and Culture Sector to bring robust arts partnerships to children, families and communities in all five boroughs. Thank you, Council Members, for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.
First series of questions is for New York City Public Schools. Good morning. It's still morning, right?
Yeah, morning. What is New York City Public Schools overarching strategy for ensuring equitable access to arts education across all public schools?

3 CORDELIA VEVE: Good morning. I got that
4 one, Paul. So, I'm very happy to be sitting here.
5 As the Chief of Curriculum and Instruction, I get to
6 work with all of the teams that provide academics and
7 instructions to students across the City. Arts just
8 being one of the teams, and I think that's one of the
9 pieces that we need to see as important. We see arts
10 not as an enrichment opportunity, but part of the
11 core academic experience that all students deserve to
12 have. So therefore, our strategy is similar to our
13 strategy for all of our other content areas. We
14 believe that in order for there to be a strong and
15 enriching program for students across their academic
16 experience, we need to provide students with high-
17 quality instructional materials, tools, and
18 experiences, and then also provide unprecedented
19 amounts of support to educators. You heard Paul
20 speak about what the Arts Office has re-envisioned in
21 terms of their three pillars of support to schools,
22 and to superintendents. What they do is they support
23 leadership, because we know that leaders are the ones
24 who make decisions about how things show up in their
25 schools. They also have to support teachers around
high-quality instructional practices. Those are

2 grounded in the blueprint for the arts. And then
3 also, thinking about how are we expanding the
4 programs that we know are good for students. We know
5 that we would want to just rush out and send those
6 programs to all schools, but we know that if we want
7 them to sustained, they need to be phased and they
8 need to be supported. That is what the Arts Office
9 is doing. We spoke about a couple of those programs.
10 The strings program that's happening in the Bronx,
11 dance programs that are happening, they're really
12 thinking about how do we make sure that we're not
13 just doing these for compliance or superficial
14 reasons, but that these are going to be lasting
15 experiences for all of our students.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You said you include
17 school leadership, teachers. Is there space to also
18 engage parents in this space?

19 CORDELIA VEVE: I think absolutely.
20 Speaking as a parent and also as a former school
21 leader, I know that arts are one of the ways that are
22 the best ways to putting the parents into the school
23 building and also to help ensure that their students
24 are having access to experiences that they know are
25 fulfilling for them.

3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And we gave
4 instructions before we started. How do you evaluate
5 the effectiveness of this arts education program, and
6 metrics do you use to assess students' engagement and
7 outcome? Because you know, a good educator always
8 assess, make adjustments, and then--

9 CORDELIA VEVE: Absolutely. And so I
10 think Paul spoke a little bit about the data that
11 they use across the City and also thinking about
12 district specific, but really the assessment of an
13 instructional program lies in the hands of
14 principals. And so their work with principals is
15 critical, too. It's making sure that principals
16 understand what does a high-quality arts experience
17 look like, and really a high-quality arts experience
18 is very similar to a high-quality academic
19 experience. We want to make sure that there are
20 standards aligned. We want to make sure that they're
21 grade-appropriate, and we want to make sure that
22 they're inclusive and accessible to all students.
23 And so that's just the baseline for any academic
24 experience, and then building up the understanding
25 for leaders around what does that look like in an
arts discipline classroom. That's the work of the

2 Arts Office to work with the principals to think
3 about how does that show up in the blueprint for the
4 arts in Danielson in your specific classrooms.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And that's one of
6 the domains for principals as well, having arts and
7 being evaluated. And when you take that data, right,
8 how do you make changes if you see any changes that
9 are needed? How-- what does that look like?

10 CORDELIA VEVE: So, thinking about the
11 citywide data?

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah.

13 CORDELIA VEVE: So, I think one of the
14 things that the Arts Office has done with their data
15 reporting is to disaggregate it by districts, because
16 again, this is a huge thing, and superintendents are
17 really the ones who are going to be able to make
18 shifts and changes in their districts. Actually, I
19 was just meeting with Council Member Dinowitz, right,
20 talking about if we wanted to see a change in the way
21 that reading is happening across the district, that a
22 superintendent really has to take that on and believe
23 that that is a priority and communicate that to their
24 principals. And so by disaggregating the data by
25 districts and then sharing that with superintendents

2 and having distinct conversations with
3 superintendents about the data for their district,
4 then we can really think about what is the approach
5 that is appropriate for your district and reflects
6 the needs for your specific district? As we know,
7 each district across the city is very, very
8 different, and we have to address the specific needs
9 of those districts.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Of course. We don't
11 expect the cookie-cutter model, of course. But once
12 they get that data and they apply the
13 recommendations, have you seen any of the
14 recommendations applied?

15 CORDELIA VEVE: I'm going to turn that
16 over to Paul to speak about the specific work that
17 they've done in districts.

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Yes, thank
19 you. So, one of the ways-- and again, to reiterate,
20 historically the Arts Office was exceptional at
21 supporting teachers.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Right.

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: One of the
24 things that we brought in is a real focus on
25 supporting principals. I can tell you from firsthand

experience in the 18 years of being a principal of an arts school for unscreened, no audition students, I didn't have a relationship with the Arts Office which to me was kind of crazy, because I'm actually an artist. And so one of the things that we wanted to do is make sure that we emphasized the way we reimagined our office so that it actually worked within the model of how the bureaucracy works. So, of the 170 principal fellows that we have an example of some direct work is we recently surveyed 170 of them, again, within 48 hours, 140+ of them replied. And the thing that we were surveying was trying to understand how we could best support them with new facility upgrades, and so we are in the process right now of supporting all of those schools that replied to our survey with facility upgrades. And so those are the real in-time ways in which we're using data to implement our practice.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And that's real-time investments as well.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, thank you for that. Does New York City Public School employ art educators in various ways, including through cultural

3 arts organizations, general education teachers? How
4 do New York City School assess the quality of arts
5 education when it's not delivered by certified art
6 teaches? How do you measure that?

7 CORDELIA VEVE: So, it's a baseline.
8 It's the same as whether it is a certified teacher,
9 right? If I'm a general education teacher and I am
10 teaching an arts course and the principal is coming
11 in and looking at my classroom, they're using the
12 same lens that they would be using if it was a
13 certified arts teacher. Same way if there is a
14 community-based organization that is providing arts
15 instruction. We still want to make sure that its
16 standards aligned. We want to make sure that it's
17 grade-appropriate. We want to make sure that it is
18 ensuring accessibility and inclusion for all
19 students. And then also thinking about the arts
20 blueprint and going back to making sure that it's
21 ensuring that students are having opportunities to
22 make art, that they're building their arts literacy,
23 that all of those things are happening. And so while
24 they may not be having the same sort of official
25 evaluation as a teacher, we still want to be looking

3 for the same elements that we would be looking if we
4 were looking in a teacher's classroom.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.
6 Accountability-- so in 2007, New York City Public
7 Schools you introduced Art Counts, a quality
8 improvement accountability initiative. Could you
9 provide an update on that initiative?

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Are you
11 referring to the survey? I just want to make sure we
12 answer the right question.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes, sir. Thank
14 you.

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Could you
16 repeat that again, please?

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: In 2007, New York
18 City Public Schools introduced Art Counts, a quality
19 improvement accountability initiative. Can you
20 provide an update on that initiative?

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Alright, so
22 the survey continues. We continue to make
23 adjustments to how it aligns with the present work
24 that we're doing. Again, one of the things that I
25 have found truly remarkable in this position is all
of the different forms of data that come into our

office that loosely speak to each other as we try to create an accurate understanding of how the arts are living in schools. So presently we use the survey as part of collecting supplemental data from hard data, quantifiable data from either STARS or DHR. Yes. And so one of the things that we initiated as we've tried to reimagine how our art survey works are some SEL questions which did not previously exist in our historical reporting. And so we're asking questions like percentage of schools reporting that the arts were central to their instructional mission, to their schools core instructional mission. These were not a focus area historically. Another question is the percentage reporting that the arts were a driver of schoolwide SEL practices. Again, this is data that we're getting from the survey and it gives us some grounding in how we think about working with principals, because not all principals have the luxury of also having a life as an artist. Many principals really understand, you know, the running of their buildings, how to deal with compliance, making sure that all the babies in their building are taken care of. So, we really emphasize working with principals and understanding just the liberating

3 force of having the arts at the core of their
4 school's instructional mission, creating that safe
5 space for SEL practice to happen, because really
6 without that safe space you can't create the
7 community where productive struggle takes place which
8 is the home of all learning.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And we always say
10 that SEL should not be separate. It should be
11 incorporated in every aspect of the educational
12 journey. So when we talk about principals, how do
13 you hold them accountable for the amount of
14 participation rate or quality of art learning in
15 their school buildings? I know we do the Danielson,
16 but what else do you do?

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Do you want
18 to take that one?

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I like the debate.

20 CORDELIA VEVE: So, it depends, right, on
21 the grade level, because reporting happens in
22 different ways at different grade levels. Also, the
23 recommendations from the state differ by grad level,
24 right? So, when we're talking about the K through
25 six experience, that doesn't have a hard and fast
recording into STARS in the same way that our seven

3 to eight, and nine through 12 reporting happens. And
4 so the arts survey really does serve as our way of
5 understanding the participation rates of students by
6 school and also by district for K through six. You
7 can look at STARS data to see the participation rates
8 for students in the seven through 12 range, because
9 those are graduation requirements and assigned to
10 credits.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Have you ever had to
12 visit a school to go and make some adjustments to the
13 programming?

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Well,
15 again, I think it's important that the nuance of this
16 is that accountability for principals falls under the
17 superintendent, and so one of the things that we
18 tried to highlight again to wrap our office around
19 the ways in which the system actually works, is to
20 ensure we're partnering with superintendents so that
21 they get the information that they need to help
22 support, and if necessary hold principals accountable
23 to the work that they're doing. So one of the ways
24 we've done that-- again, we're going to keep coming
25 back to the ways that we've tried to reimagine the
office. We've created in the arts report a new--

literally, it's a pull-out. We thought we were making the report shorter. We actually like doubled the size of it because what we did was create a pull-out for each superintendent, each district, so that they have a raw snapshot of what the data is for the schools in their district, and primarily through that mechanism we visit with superintendents throughout the year to help them calibrate understanding what the data is saying, and then absolutely members of the Arts Office visit schools. We have a band of members in our office that are borough arts directors. There are seven of them. There are one in each borough, but there's two in Queens and two in Brooklyn just given the size. And the thing that's important about the borough arts director is to understand in our reorganization is that since we've come on board, we've designated that borough arts directors work with principals. Their primary responsibility is to work with principals, and so they are going out and working with schools regularly around calibrating around this type of work.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Have you set any goals to improve the amount of participation in

3 quality of arts education in our schools at system
4 wide school districts individual school levels?

5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: So, I want
6 to just be clear. I want to just give you some
7 numbers and then talk to you about sort of how we're
8 thinking about it. And so, when we think about
9 schools in grades one through five, this is where in
10 understanding the arts recommendations from the state
11 and how they're being employed. It can at times be a
12 bit of a hairball. And so in grades one through
13 five, 92.5 percent of schools are serving at least
14 one arts course, right? The idea would be that they
15 have access to all four which of that only 24.4
16 percent are meeting that. But again, these are
17 recommendations from the state. And so we like to
18 really think about through a data perspective are
19 schools meeting the state requirements, and if they
20 are, how can we continue to support them so that they
21 continue to do that work, and if they're not, how are
22 we thinking about moving in and supporting them to
23 either provide resources, professional development?
24 Again, so much of this revolves around developing a
25 new mindset within the principal community. No one
hates the arts, but not everybody understands the

3 exact value of what it does in creating a safe space
4 for students in your building.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct, not
6 everybody understands the value. Everybody likes
7 going to great theater, but they don't know the work
8 that goes into it. Absolutely. What specific art
9 education indicators are used to factor related to
10 school progress, quality review, principals annual
11 performance reviews? And we talked about Danielson.
12 Domain Four is one of them.

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Yes, so
14 again, we predicate everything we do around either
15 Danielson for teacher support. So, all of our-- and
16 that's either where we're working with principals or
17 teachers. Again, because there's a good amount of
18 calibration that you have to do to understand
19 Danielson through an arts lens. The other thing that
20 we do, again, is just use the blueprint for teaching
21 in the arts as the baseline for what the best
22 practices are. so, as we develop our programs,
23 whether it's P fellows, whether it's the three large,
24 sort of, citywide experience, PD experiences that we
25 provide for teachers annually where we get upwards of
3,000 teachers showing up at our PDs, or the much

3 smaller borough-based PDs that we do for teaches, we
4 try to ground all of our work in Danielson and the
5 blueprint.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And those PDs, are
7 they taking place in cultural institutions or taking
8 place in regular buildings? If we really want our
9 school leaders to really be part of that world, we
10 got to make sure they're also in that environment. I
11 always tell my superintendent, every PD for her
12 principal should take place in a cultural
13 institution, at a zoo, at the botanical gardens,
14 somewhere-- some form of art should be involved her
15 PD.

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: So, yes,
17 yes, and yes. You know, we have the unique
18 distinction of I would argue living in the cultural
19 arts capital of the world. We have, as I think it
20 represented here today and will be represented later,
21 incredible arts partners that we work extremely
22 closely with. So, whether PDs are happening that are
23 centrally generated or they come from teachers and
24 the teacher community so that we help to foster and
25 develop, whether they're being provided by arts
partners, we absolutely not only do them in schools,

3 school buildings, because we think that's important,
4 but we also think yes, getting out and seeing these
5 institutions is super important. I would just add,
6 that is one of the reasons why we created the arts
7 hub. So, this is the first time where artists that
8 call New York City home have been invited to come
9 into a professional facility and have been asked to
10 make art, and that art is then leveraged in how we
11 provide professional development to leadership and/or
12 teachers and the kinds of programs that we develop
13 for students. And so we have incredible world-class
14 talent like Meshell Ndegeocello providing very small
15 intimate concerts for 30 or 40 principal fellows at a
16 time at the arts hub. It's like better than being at
17 the Blue Note. And principals cannot believe that
18 this is the core of the kind of professional
19 development that we're offering, and if there's any
20 question when they arrive if they want to work with
21 our office-- because again, we're not statutory,
22 right?

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Right.

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Their
25 working with us is a choice to some degree. After we
provide the kinds of world-class experiences we do

3 for them, there usually is never an upset customer,
4 and that sets the framework for the new kind of
5 relationship our office is trying to develop with
6 those leaders.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I'm
8 going to pass it over to Chair Rivera.

9 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Hello. Thank you so
10 much for your dedication of course to the City and of
11 course to the students and families. I'll start with
12 some questions on how DOE determines which schools
13 receive the partnerships. So, DOE reports that 81
14 percent of schools responding the annual arts
15 education survey partner with at least one cultural
16 arts organization, and in both of your testimony you
17 really discuss how you work together. You touched on
18 it as much as you could in the time that you were
19 given. But how does DOE determine which school
20 receive these partnerships and what support is
21 provided to schools that lack external arts
22 partnerships, including how DOE supports schools that
23 lack full-time certified arts teachers, particularly
24 in the Bronx and Brooklyn where there is a very, very
25 low percentage?

3 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: So, thank
4 you for that question. So, again, to just get into
5 the ecosystem, schools are free to use their budgets
6 to bring in cultural partners that align with their
7 school mission and the core values that they're
8 trying to move forward. And so one of the things
9 that we do as an arts office-- again, you're going to
10 get sick of me saying this, but this is why we work
11 with principals, because principals are the people
12 who control the budgets in schools and align the
13 instructional vision, and so we support just as a
14 general, always trying to recommend different
15 cultural partners to help supplement the work that
16 principals are doing in their building and to help
17 move their mission. And so that's just sort of a
18 blanket way in which we try to support schools.
19 Another way that we do directly is through the
20 funding of our arts grants. So, you know, we support
21 through multi-lingual learners and students with
22 disabilities and also-- yeah, supports for arts
23 instruction grant. We're supporting almost 300
24 schools in helping to provide them with them the
25 resources. And the majority of those schools are
bringing in those cultural partners and so there's a

real marriage in how the arts office works with the arts and cultural community to make this happen. I have to also just say again, the support that Council provided with the \$4 million was instrumental in helping us really think about and export more resource for schools that didn't get the funding from our other grants program's and was spread throughout the city. And again, the majority of those grants are used to bring in cultural partners into their building. So, it's a main strategy that we use.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Well, we know that grants are absolutely critical. In the latest round of CDF grant making which is for fiscal year 2025, 442 of the 1,078 CDF grants awarded, where just about 40 percent were identified as having an arts education component. 207 listed their type of education service as arts and education, 108 as art skills, and 107 as arts exposure. What was the total amount of funding they received and can you explain those three types of education services: arts and education, art skills, and art exposure?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ST. CLAIR: So, the FY25 CDF award total for the 422 organizations that offer arts education programming is \$27,139,035.

3 And the education program categories that we track
4 are arts exposure. These are projects that define a
5 specific number of performances, lectures,
6 demonstrations, installations, exhibitions. We also
7 track art skills, which are projects that emphasize
8 sustained and regular training, including developing
9 mastering of skills and competencies in artistic
10 disciplines as well as arts and education. These are
11 projects that schedule regular cultural activities to
12 promote intellectual awareness and growth. This can
13 look like hiring a teacher artist or a community-
14 based organization coming into the school to
15 collaborate with classroom teachers and the staff to
16 provide high-quality and robust arts education
17 experiences with students.

18 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Would you say that 40
19 percent is a fairly consistent percentage from year
20 to year that is the number of CDF grants that include
21 in arts education component?

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ST. CLAIR: Yes,
23 over the last three years, that percentage is fairly
24 steady between 35 to 40 percent, and just to note
25 that we do not dictate what organizations submit in

2 their applications, but yes, that percentage is
3 fairly the same.

4 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And would say that
5 providing arts programming in public schools is an
6 important priority of CDF grant making?

7 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ST. CLAIR:
8 Absolutely. Equity is really the bedrock value of
9 DCLA and it's built into how we administer the CDF at
10 every level. So this year we were proud to include
11 the new equity fund in our CDF awards, and through
12 this fund, 264 organizations operating in areas of
13 New York City with the lowest median income and
14 highest poverty rates receive \$2 million in
15 additional funding. And CASA is another great driver
16 of equity. Every Council Member gets to make CAS
17 designates and their communities, and no one knows
18 our districts better than you do. So, this ensures
19 that these funds are reaching deep into NYC
20 communities and neighborhoods.

21 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: How do you ensure
22 that students from underserved neighborhoods have
23 equitable access to the arts?

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ST. CLAIR: so,
25 again, through the equity fund really having our arts

3 and cultural organizations steward high-quality,
4 robust experiences for children and low-income
5 communities. It is a great way that we enable and
6 steward our arts and cultural partners to really be
7 experts in terms of what their target audience needs,
8 including the students, families and communities and
9 their own neighborhoods.

10 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And what metrics do
11 you use to track participation in-- and the success
12 of the arts education program that you fund through
13 CDF, and do you compile data from across the grants
14 you fund to take a broader look at participation and
15 success of the CDF grant making?

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ST. CLAIR: Yeah.
17 So, every year we do collect final reports from our
18 grantees to evaluate the overall success and
19 effectiveness of their programming, particularly with
20 the audience that they serve, and because we rely on
21 our arts and educational partners to educational
22 partners to best know their constituents and
23 education. We certainly rely on that data to provide
24 insight to the CDF for the following application
25 cycle.

3 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And how do you track
4 school partnerships funded by the cultural
5 institutions group allocations CDF grant making and
6 any other DCLA-funded or DCLA-administered
7 initiatives? And also have, you considered an arts
8 and education grant-making stream?

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ST. CLAIR: So, we
10 continue to rely on our end of year reports to glean
11 data in terms of the effectiveness of arts
12 educational experiences through the CDF. And in
13 terms of an arts and education program funneled
14 through the CDF, that is certainly something that
15 we'd be happy to discuss and partner with you, as
16 well as our friend and colleagues at the DOE in order
17 to explore in the future.

18 GENERAL COUNSEL POLIVY: And as for CIGs,
19 we've been so proud to partner with you, Council
20 Member Rivera, on what reporting looks like for our
21 CIGs in terms of their CASA and initiative funding,
22 and so those final reports come in to our CIG unit as
23 well.

24 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Right. I know we're
25 working on how to ensure we don't overly burden any
organization with additional administrative

3 responsibilities. They work so hard to put together
4 these important reports. You know, our goal here
5 really is the equity piece. I know it's a word that
6 we use quite a bit. It's really important and I
7 think the messaging that we all recognize that all
8 boroughs are not equal right now. And there is real
9 data that proves that. many of the people in this
10 room, including the people at the dais, you all are
11 so committed to this work, you realize that you can
12 walk into a Manhattan school likely to see more arts
13 taking place than maybe in certain parts of Queens,
14 the Bronx, Brooklyn or even Staten Island. The
15 Independent Budget Office is going to testify later
16 in this hearing. The written testimony they released
17 publicly this morning show that 90 percent of
18 Manhattan public schools worked with the CDF grantee
19 in fiscal year 22, and we're looking forward to more
20 data from your agency so we can have even more
21 updated numbers. But only 56 percent of Queens
22 schools and 66 percent of Staten Island schools did.
23 What do you think contributed to these considerable
24 differences across the boroughs?

25 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ST. CLAIR: That
could be for a myriad of factors and reasons. And so

I think it's important for us to continue to analyze the data and understand specifically what the contributing factors are to those outcomes, and being really intentional in partnership with the arts and culture sector with the DOE, with City Council in order to address those gaps as quickly and as soundly as possible.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And we've heard in DCLA's past hearings, your testimony, that the one way to increase the number of CDF grantees from outside of Manhattan is to encourage organizations in the outer boroughs to apply for CDF grants, but we also know that where organizations are based is different from where programs occur. I understand you do collect program location data from CDF grantees. Do you know the percentage of CDF programs that actually take place in each of the boroughs?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ST. CLAIR: So, thank you for that question. That is a data point that I don't have directly with me, but I'm happy to follow up with the team and get back to you as soon as I have more information.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So, we love to work on that and hopefully have annual reporting. We

think that's a really, really important piece in
figuring out programs that are actually taking place
in the schools. In given that most CDF awards go to
organizations located in Manhattan, but number of
awards and amount awarded, what are you doing to
ensure that the programs are equitably distributed?
You have the reporting. You're encouraging
organizations from outside of Manhattan to apply.
What else are we doing to make sure that there's
equitable distribution across the boroughs?

GENERAL COUNSEL POLIVY: One of the
things that we're doing is we're partnering closely
with the Council this year. Our team has put
together a package of materials that can go on social
media, that can go out in your email blast and if
it's distributed to CED and to your office and all
the Council Members so that they have this package of
tools to reach out to groups and constituents to make
sure that they know that the application is live.
Something that we spoke to you about during our last
hearing that we were targeting by the end of March
and we're thrilled to share with you today that the
application went live on March 31st, putting us well
ahead of pace from last year.

2 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: We would be
3 thrilled to help with that. I mean, we would love to
4 use whatever resources we have in our platform to
5 reach as many individuals as possible. I'd say this
6 room is a pretty good place to start. IBO's written
7 testimony also mentions that the data set of CDF
8 locations provided to them does not include any
9 measure of the depth of engagement at each location.
10 So, for example, how many hours of arts engagement
11 took place at the location over the year? Is that
12 something that DCLA tracks? And if so, how?

13 GENERAL COUNSEL POLIVY: I think just as
14 you mentioned in your earlier question, Council
15 Member Rivera, we're always trying to balance the
16 benefit of the additional data with the additional
17 burden placed on our grantees, and we're happy to
18 continue to think about what data we're receiving in
19 our final reports from CDF grantees. I'm happy to
20 connect with you and your office to make sure that
21 we're getting that balance just right.

22 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So, it would have
23 been some of your, I guess, challenges. Is there
24 something the City Council can do to help your
25

3 agencies meet those challenges and even reach some of
4 the goals that you've set for future fiscal years?

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ST. CLAIR: so, we
6 are actually really excited to partner with you to
7 recruit panelists for the FY26 CDF application which
8 is currently live. We do know that last year we were
9 fortunate to have the support of the Council serving
10 as panelists, but that is definitely a way that we
11 want to continue our partnership in order to ensure
12 that all voices are at the table and have an
13 influence of the overall outcomes of the awards.

14 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Well, thank you.
15 and I know we're also working on the timeline on our
16 panels to ensure that we're really aligning with the
17 fiscal year so that people can make sure that they
18 can plan their year with enough time, and of course
19 that they get their money as soon as possible. I want
20 to thank you for your answers, for your partnership.
21 I know we're going to go back to the Chair, and of
22 course, my colleagues with questions.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Chair
24 Rivera. Before we move forward, I'd like to
25 acknowledge Cornelia Connelly Center. Where are you?
You here?

3 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Hi.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Welcome to City
5 Hall.

6 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Yay.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'd like to
8 recognize Council Member Stevens who's joined us and
9 Council Member Sanchez on Zoom. I have a couple of
10 follow-ups. How have delays with DCLA have affected
11 CDF and CASA each year? Schools usually complain
12 that they do not receive programming until February
13 or March. Can you tell me why there's a delay? If
14 school starts in September, why are we starting in
15 February and March?

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ST. CLAIR: there
17 were significant reforms that were put in place in
18 order to ensure a more robust distribution of arts
19 experiences for New Yorkers in all five boroughs.
20 So, because of those reforms and other additional
21 priorities there were delays, and the overall
22 notification of awards, but because we have released
23 the FY26 CDF application as of March 31st, we are
24 excited about the opportunity to accelerate the
25 timeline to ensure that arts education organizations
as well as students benefitting from those

3 opportunities will be able to have programming sooner
4 rather than later.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Full year
6 programming versus we cut off students short when we
7 start later on in the year. And remember, sometimes
8 this is the only access they have to art education is
9 in our school buildings. So I'm looking forward for
10 you guys to do better for our New York City students.
11 What -- you said the delay. How do they impact the
12 quality of this programming if there's a delay, and
13 what causes the delays in the first place? I know
14 you said because you're reforming, but what overall
15 cause delays?

16 GENERAL COUNSEL POLIVY: The schedule,
17 the cultural development fund process remains fairly
18 standard year to year. And so the biggest driver of
19 when awards are going to come out is when the
20 application is launched, and that's why we keep
21 emphasizing how proud we are that the application
22 launched this year on March 31st, putting us well
23 ahead of the pace of when the application launched
24 last year. Knowing that it launched in late March,
25 that means that we can backtrack from there to ensure
that awards are going to go out much earlier in the

2 year. As we discussed in our last hearing with the
3 Council, this will be a progressive process where we
4 make up several weeks each year to keep getting the
5 timeline earlier and earlier so that it's as close to
6 budget adoption as possible. And we're confident
7 that by continuing to partner with the Council and by
8 continuing to work as hard as we can on our dedicated
9 team that we will be able to get this timeline much
10 closer to your expectations.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So the new-- with
12 this new system in place, the timeline would not be
13 February and March? What does that timeline look now
14 with your improvements being made?

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ST. CLAIR: So, we
16 anticipate having panels in the summer time. The
17 application will close May 8th in which we will begin
18 the panel process in June through August or
19 September. We anticipate announcing the award
20 notification late fall, early winter.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, we still got
22 work to do on that. And we're here to work with you
23 as Cahir Rivera said. Before we move on to Council
24 Member Narcisse I'd like to recognize the students
25

2 from IS93. They were here. They played the
3 percussions earlier at our rally, right?

4 [applause]

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Art in the City
6 Council in real time. Council Member Narcisse?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Good morning
8 still. Thank you, chair. Can you give me an
9 overview of how an organization can participate in
10 CASA? What criteria does DCLA use to determine
11 whether a cultural organizations is eligible to
12 participate in CASA?

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ST. CLAIR: CASA
14 is our Cultural After School Adventures program which
15 is eligible to students and schools in all five
16 boroughs, and the beauty of CASA is that City Council
17 Members are able to designate the schools and the
18 arts organizations that do this incredibly important
19 work in the after school space. We rely on City
20 Council to make those determinations in terms of the
21 best fit for organizations as well as schools that
22 can benefit from the wonderful opportunity that CASA
23 provides.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: So, any
25 organization that the Council Member--

3 GENERAL COUNSEL POLIVY: Any organization
4 that--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing]
6 Any organ--

7 GENERAL COUNSEL POLIVY: submits a
8 complete application on time to the Department of
9 Cultural Affairs is eligible for designation.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: What feedback
11 mechanisms are in place to assess the success of CASA
12 programs at different sites?

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ST. CLAIR: So, we
14 do have an end of year survey in order to assess the
15 overall success of the CASA grant and the impact that
16 they've been able to make in that school community.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thanks. And I
18 have to say thank you to everyone that was at the
19 rally to fight for arts in our school. And from your
20 statement, to understand the world-- I mean, the arts
21 help young people to express themselves, to
22 understand the world around them, to build confidence
23 and develop their creative thinking. I believe in
24 all that. So we should say that every school
25 building should have arts in it, right? So, how
many schools that we have in New York City.

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ST. CLAIR: 1,600
3 public schools.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Alright. So
5 how many arts teachers that we have in New York City
6 that's actually teaching?

7 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ST. CLAIR: I'll
8 defer to my colleagues at the DOE.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: And if I may
10 add since my time going to go on, I want to know how
11 many school have arts, some part like dance, you
12 know, any-- I mean, musical, any drama, whatever. So
13 can you tell me if all our school building have that,
14 something going on?

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: So, I'm
16 going to read some numbers out to you. So, the total
17 number of arts teachers that we presently have in the
18 system is 3,558.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: And for the
20 schools?

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: So--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing] Is
23 all the schools have art teacher right now?

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: So, no.
25

3 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: How many that
4 don't have art teachers?

5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: So, this is
6 one of the things that we prepared, Chair Joseph, I
7 feared having to say to you, because I know how
8 serious you are about your data, but in all
9 seriousness, especially in the elementary school
10 grades where common branch teachers can teach arts
11 courses. So it makes it difficult to disaggregate
12 this data, and so we're working with the data office
13 on our end. We just couldn't turn some of this data
14 around in time, but we are more than happy to follow
15 up with an answer to this question.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: My point is,
17 all stated from your statement-- all statement here,
18 how important it is to have arts, because myself
19 personally from the little country where I came from,
20 we had arts. So, New York City is the leading city,
21 is the capital of the world. The reason that we're
22 so excited-- people love this city, I can tell you
23 because of artists. So, therefore, let's work
24 harder. I know how difficult it is. I'm not a-- I'm
25 a dreamer somehow, but I'm a realist. So we're going
to have to just push a little harder to make sure our

2 kids are exposed to arts somehow from Pre-k,
3 Kindergarten to where they're supposed to go in
4 college. So, thank you. Because I leave it and I'm
5 beneficiary-- I'm benefitting from artists in my
6 home, and I know how important that is. So, thank you
7 so much for your time.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
9 Member Narcisse. Now we're going to turn over to
10 Council Member Dinowitz who's going to ask what is
11 happening with the Bronx and arts education.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you,
13 Chair Joseph. My question is what is happening the
14 Brooklyn with arts education.

15 [laughter]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I can say what
17 happened to Brooklyn, too.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: She fed me my
19 lines.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We could do comedy
21 here, too. That's art.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: it was great.
23 You see, I was a theater kid who never knew his
24 lines.

3 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: So, again,
4 I think my being here is a representation of the
5 Administration's desire to really address the
6 inequities that are inherent in our system, and it
7 really can't be not stressed enough that embedded in
8 our system, whether we like or not are massive
9 inequities. So, one of the things that really gets
10 in the way of equitable arts instruction is just
11 looking at the formula for funding for individual
12 schools. And so audition schools, screen programs,
13 these are programs that get an extra per-pupil
14 allocation to execute arts instruction in the ways in
15 which everyone sort of recognizes and--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: [interposing] I
17 hear that. I just want to pause you, because I don't
18 think the addition schools and the screen schools
19 account for the vast inequity between the Bronx and
20 the other boroughs. Is that fair that those numbers
21 don't add up?

22 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Well, this
23 is all I was going to say is that the rest of-- the
24 majority of schools are dealing with a funding
25 formula that is very different. And so depending on
where you are, you're just dealing with a different

level of funding and access. So, to answer your question directly, the decisions around how principals use their budgets is-- lives with the principal. And so one of the things that we do to ensure that we're supporting all schools, whether they're in the Bronx or Brooklyn or up in Washington Heights or out in Bushwick or Brownsville which again we are pointing all of our programs in these areas to ensure that we are doing the mindset shift with principals so that they understand how to put the core of their arts in their instructional vision. And then we also help them to understand how to resource their programs by--

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: [interposing]

But I mean, let's-- I appreciate you telling principals that. But let's be real. Schools are evaluated based on criteria. Those criteria include Regent scores-- and I'm talking high schools now, of course-- Regent scores, credit accrual, attendance, other quantitative data, and then maybe there's like culture, like what's the school culture like. In any way are the evaluation criteria for our schools and our principals being looked at so that there are actually incentivized to incorporate the arts into

3 the curriculum beyond-- well, this is a nice thing to
4 do and we encourage you to do it.

5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: So, I'm
6 going to be frank you. As a principal for 18 years
7 in an unscreened, no audition school, the priority
8 was not to make sure we had arts and culture. The
9 priority was to graduate our students and meet the
10 state graduation requirements. I'm here to tell you
11 that with the students that we served, we would not
12 have been successful if we had not used the arts as a
13 core space for students to exercise their voice.
14 Many of the students that we got as 9th graders were
15 functionally illiterate, and for a 15 or 14 or 16-
16 year-old to admit at that late stage that they have
17 difficulty reading is in many ways an impossibility.
18 So for us, I can tell you, we proved this because we
19 had graduation rates that were in the 80 percentile.
20 The arts were the thing that enabled students to feel
21 safe, because they were able to exercise their voice
22 and create community, and so one of the things that
23 we're doing is making sure that we are doing a
24 wholesale mindset shift. Alright? This is not just
25 let's throw some money at this and all of a sudden
like arts are going to solve this. this is really

3 about how the arts are implemented to push SEL work
4 so that students feel safe to admit I don't know how
5 to do this thing, and we then can get into the work
6 of the productive struggle that all students must
7 enter to learn how to do something like--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: [interposing]

9 You know, I appreciate that, and that's sort of the
10 exact type of leadership we want in our schools, but
11 unfortunately it's not the leadership we're seeing
12 system-wide. You taught the arts. I taught in an
13 arts school, and I have the experience of having a
14 superintendent come to my school, the theater school,
15 where three days in a row the theater teacher said to
16 her, would you like to see the theater class in this
17 theater school, and the superintendent was like, no.
18 Freshmen Regents algebra, freshmen Regents ELA,
19 that's it. And so I'm sure for every story you give,
20 there are as many stories like mine where the
21 principals maybe want to do the right thing, maybe
22 believe to their core that incorporating the arts is
23 the right thing, is academically the smart thing.
24 It's the right thing by our children, because I think
25 you're right, one of the biggest struggles are
children have is just simply saying I need help,

here's what I need, whether it's academic or social/emotional. And so the question isn't just are you encouraging it, are you providing resources, but how our evaluation criteria being changed? How is the mindset being changed, not just through your division but through the entire teaching division at the DOE? And we can appreciate those stories and still recognize that it doesn't feel like these inequities are being met, especially when you also see academic outcomes in the Bronx are poorer than other boroughs, and then the principals are faced with a decision. Do I take you for my superintendent, or do I feel this other gap with the arts? We know that the arts and the academic subjects are intertwined, that they support one another, but I do not believe that the DOE outside of you and the people at this table see it that way. What strides are being made with the DOE as a whole to recognize what you and I both know to be true?

CORDELIA VEVE: I think there are strides being made, right? I think even in light of stimulus funding sun-setting, there was a commitment to continuing funding into the fiscal year 25. And so I think-- you know, often we put money where our mouth

3 is, and so that is a first step, right? And then I
4 think, you know, Paul is talking about how do we
5 change mindsets. I do not think that there are
6 superintendents that are saying no don't spend money
7 on arts, but they're saying we have a level of
8 priorities, right? And so our work is to think about
9 how does the arts fit into those priorities.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Well, I
11 recommend, because the principals like teachers, like
12 students, like any human is going to go based on
13 incentives, and if you include the arts in your
14 measures of student outcome just like the ELA and
15 math credits are, I think you're going to see a lot
16 more investment in the arts, and you're going to see
17 a lot more principals like you who incorporate the
18 arts into their curriculum which I can tell you
19 having been a teacher. You could tell me after
20 teaching-- being a principal for 18 years bolsters
21 the academics. It makes them better at every
22 subject, but it sounds like there's still not
23 movement being made to include the arts in the
24 measures of student outcome just like we measure math
25 and English and other academic subjects. If I'm

3 wrong, tell me I'm wrong. But with that, I want to
4 thank the Chairs and hand it back to them.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Chair
6 Dinowitz. As you mentioned, arts is a way that we
7 found students found their voices as well, and you
8 mentioned that. Students will come and say I can't
9 read, but through that medium they were able to find
10 their voice. So I think that's something there for
11 us to explore, how do we continue to integrate them
12 together so we can have better outcomes. Council
13 Member Restler?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Great. Thank
15 you so much. I am getting myself organized. I was
16 just a concession in park opening so I have some
17 baked goods if anybody wants them. I can't eat them
18 all myself, because it may be more than the allotted
19 amount, but if I share them it's legal. So it's from
20 Bread's Bakery, the first opening of Bread's in
21 Brooklyn. So, it's for-- anyone who needs one, I got
22 you. So I want to talk about libraries. I know that
23 that's a shock, school libraries. So, how many--
24 currently how many certified librarians do we have
25 operating in New York City Public Schools, and how
many functional libraries do we have in New York City

1 COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL
2 AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 90

3 Public Schools? Take your choice. Bring over more.

4 You want-- Eric gets the--

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Focus,
6 focus.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Eric gets the box
8 [sic]-- alright, sorry. We're focused. I'm focused.
9 I'm sorry. This is important. Arts and education,
10 libraries. How many certified librarians do we
11 currently have operating in New York City Public
12 Schools today? How many functional libraries do we
13 have in school-- functional school libraries do we
14 have today? Turn on the mic, please.

15 DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BERSON: We
16 currently have about 250 certified school librarians.
17 The number might be a little bit bigger. Some of
18 them came from our Teacher to Librarian program where
19 we've recruited certified teachers and have helped
20 them gain their school librarian certification.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay. So-- and
22 how many functional libraries do we have currently in
23 New York City Public Schools?

24 DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BERSON: By
25 functional libraries we have over 1,000 buildings
with libraries, and from those facilities being

3 standpoints, space planning stated that 1,039 school
4 buildings with libraries, but they may not all have a
5 functioning library program.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay. And why
7 don't we try it a different way. How many schools
8 don't have libraries? Is-- Chalkbeat reported 480.
9 Is that number accurate?

10 CORDELIA VEVE: So, I don't think that we
11 have a full count of the schools that do not have
12 functioning libraries. I think we've spoken about
13 how there are lots of different data systems that we
14 use to collect. And so we use school space planning
15 to identify the space that exists.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay.

17 CORDELIA VEVE: And then we're able to use
18 DHR data to find out how many certified librarians
19 that we have, and then we have to cross-reference
20 with the number of schools that are co-located. So,
21 right now we don't have a final number on that.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay, so I just
23 want to be clear. Showed up to a hearing on a bill
24 that's all about tracking how many librarians and how
25 many libraries we have functioning in our schools and
we can't answer the basic question of how many

2 schools in New York City don't have a library. The
3 Department of Education cannot answer the question of
4 how many schools in New York City don't have a
5 library. Do you want to try again? Is the
6 Chalkbeat article the reported 480 schools in New
7 York City that don't have a library, is that
8 accurate?

9 CORDELIA VEVE: We can get back to you on
10 whether that's--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] But
12 come one, I don't want to be getting back. I don't
13 want people coming back to me. We have a hearing
14 where we have a bill where we're going to ask the
15 most basic questions and you don't come prepared.
16 It's frustrating.

17 CORDELIA VEVE: I understand that, and I
18 agree--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]
20 This is literally the most elementary question for
21 this bill and you don't have an answer.

22 CORDELIA VEVE: We agree that having
23 libraries is incredibly important.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But you don't
25 have data on how many schools don't have libraries.

3 It's reported that 30 percent of schools in New York
4 City don't have libraries. That's an embarrassment,
5 but you don't even have the data to show it which is
6 why we need to pass this bill. Let's come back to
7 the lack of libraries in our schools. So state law
8 requires that every middle school and every high
9 school with at least 700 children has a school
10 librarian, is that right?

11 CORDELIA VEVE: Yes, that's correct.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And yet, we're
13 totally failing that and not in compliance with state
14 law, is that correct?

15 CORDELIA VEVE: [interposing] We are
16 working--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] Yes
18 or no?

19 CORDELIA VEVE: We're working towards
20 improving that number, and have started--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]
22 Okay, so let's go back on the data. So there's 250
23 school librarian-- certified school librarians today.
24 How many certified school librarians were there at
25 the beginning of the Adams administration?

2 CORDELIA VEVE: Roughly the same amount.

3 It--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]

5 Okay, so you say that we're improving--

6 CORDELIA VEVE: [interposing] It's
7 increased slightly, because retirements.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Increased or
9 decreased slightly?

10 CORDELIA VEVE: Decreased.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Decreased.

12 CORDELIA VEVE: Well, it stayed the same.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So a moment ago
14 you said that we're improving the number of-- and
15 we're making efforts and progress on that, but in
16 fact, we haven't. We've made zero progress on this,
17 and just about everything else in the Adams
18 administration in terms of the number of actual
19 certified librarians in our schools. So, let's go
20 back a little further. 20+ years ago we had just
21 about a certified librarian in every single school.
22 Is that right?

23 CORDELIA VEVE: Basically.

24

25

3 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So what has
4 happened in 20 years where we've decided it no longer
5 matters for us to have librarians in schools?

6 CORDELIA VEVE: I agree with you that
7 this is a place that we need to improve.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Can you explain
9 why we've suffered a devastating loss of librarians
10 in our schools over the last 20 years and seen no
11 improvement whatsoever under Mayor Adams?

12 CORDELIA VEVE: I think there's a
13 national shortage of school librarians across the
14 country, and that we have created a pipeline to
15 increase the number of certified school librarians.
16 We've sought funding to pay for that, and have worked
17 to reach principals to help them develop school
18 library programs.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Can I just do one
20 more topic, if that's okay? Literacy, I think we
21 would say that the Mayor's top priority at the DOE in
22 his 3+ years has been literacy, is that right? Is
23 that a fair characterization?

24 CORDELIA VEVE: That is.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: That is, okay.
And we would all agree that the presence of

3 librarians in our schools improves our literacy
4 outcomes, is that right?

5 CORDELIA VEVE: We agree.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Great. So, why-
7 - so we agree that literacy is the Mayor's number one
8 priority. The presence of librarians in schools
9 improves literacy outcomes. Why has there been no
10 improvement in the actual presence of librarians in
11 our schools over these three years? And then I'll go
12 a level further. Do you all analyze the presence--
13 what schools have librarians based on the literacy
14 data in those school districts and in those schools?
15 Are we sending our certified school librarians on a
16 needs basis to the 250 schools that are struggling
17 the most around literacy goals and prioritizing those
18 places for where we're deploying our librarians? How
19 are we making those decisions? Is there a
20 correlation between our inadequate literacy outcomes
21 and where we're deploying our very limited school
22 librarians?

23 CORDELIA VEVE: Well, so I think first
24 off, the-- again, budgetary decisions are at the
25 hands of the principal, and so principals make
decisions about whether they're hiring a librarian or

3 not, and so when we're talking about those 250
4 certified librarians, they may already be in place in
5 libraries. We're not-- we can't at-will re-disperse
6 them to other schools. what we can do is as we think
7 about the teacher to librarian pipeline is where we
8 think about where do those graduating librarians go
9 and think about do we send those to the schools that
10 are most in need.

11 DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BERSON: In
12 addition to that, we've developed a citywide digital
13 library on Zora [sic] and every student in New York
14 City Public Schools has access to the collection of
15 over 50,000 titles with millions of copies of
16 materials, and we've circulated over two million
17 titles just in the school year alone.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yeah. Look, I
19 imagine you're two of the people in the Department of
20 Education who most want more librarians in our
21 schools and care about this and are advocating for
22 it, and you're probably annoyed that I'm badgering
23 you and being a jerk. You're the people are sent up
24 here to represent the Administration and we're
25 disappointed by the outcomes in the-- I'm
disappointed. I'll speak for a single-- first-person

3 single. I'm disappointed by the outcomes in this
4 administration and the lack of the presence of
5 librarians in our schools. It's not personal. I
6 apologize if it came across that way. I just want to
7 be clear, the outcomes are deeply problematic, and
8 they're not work-- it's like a serious problem and we
9 need to bring attention to this issue. We need more
10 librarians in our schools. We need to make an effort
11 on hiring. We need to dedicate the necessary
12 resources. We're out of compliance with the state
13 law. We need the State Education Department to start
14 stepping up and stepping and forcing the DOE to do
15 its job which is to ensure that we have a librarian
16 in every single school. Thank you very much.

17 CORDELIA VEVE: I'll just say we are in
18 support of the bill.

19 [applause]

20 CORDELIA VEVE: We are in support of the
21 bill. We want to have further conversations about
22 how we can ensure that the data is appropriately
23 gathered and reported, and so I think we need to have
24 more conversations about how we can do that.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: We'd be happy to
follow up to work that out and make sure we have the

3 right language in the bill and appreciate your
4 support. Thank you very much, Chairs.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
6 Member Restler. Just want a quick follow-up. So in
7 your pipeline, how many librarians do you have in the
8 pipeline that will be ready and to be dispersed in
9 New York City Public Schools?

10 CORDELIA VEVE: After cohort four, we'll
11 have about 100 librarians. We've just about put
12 through 90 teachers and have impacted 115 schools
13 with over 77,000 students now having access to school
14 librarians and school library program.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How do you
16 prioritize where you're going to place those
17 librarians?

18 CORDELIA VEVE: As we stated before, the
19 principals are still are empowered to make the hiring
20 decisions. So we encourage principals and work with
21 them to build out a school library program and
22 provide as much support to develop that program. We
23 have developed a program called Vital Libraries where
24 we are able to provide a grant to schools to build
25 out that program and develop a library advisory

3 committee, and hopefully make it a sustainable part
4 of the school community.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what is the goal
6 to grow that workforce, the librarian workforce?
7 This year it's 100. What's the year for the next--
8 what's the goal for the next five years?

9 CORDELIA VEVE: I would love to have a
10 number for you, but it's all based on funding.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: All based on
12 funding. Quick question for learning. Is there-- as
13 Council Member Restler said, is there a correlation
14 between schools who have librarians-- who don't have
15 librarians? What do those reading scores look like?
16 Do they tend to do better? What are we looking at in
17 order to know what we're prioritizing in terms of
18 academics and having librarians in schools? I know
19 my librarian, Ms. Pratt, was everything to our school
20 building and writing and reading and making the love
21 of books. And this is where you get your book talk
22 from, right? This is where you get all of your
23 writing skills, and teachers can't do everything as
24 much as we wanted to, but in that library magic was
25 happening, and we got to continue to bring that magic
across the City?

2 CORDELIA VEVE: I think that-- well, I
3 was just going to say I agree, as a daughter of a
4 librarian. However, as we mentioned before, with
5 Council Member Restler, we don't have the exact
6 numbers of the schools with librarians. That's
7 something that we can definitely work at, and I agree
8 with you, but it makes a strong argument for us to
9 take a look at how the literacy rates are aligned
10 with librarians. Then also what happens when a
11 librarian is added to a school building.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, that would be
13 really amazing for our New York City kids, because we
14 want to get that data, because as school leaders and
15 school principals and a forever-educator, data drives
16 our instruction. So, I don't want to-- New York City
17 Public Schools are not something I complain about all
18 the time. Your data is never dating, never. So we
19 want to make sure you have data so we can better be
20 partners, right? So, if you have data, we can--
21 that' show funding come in place. We'll know where
22 to plug in the gaps. If I don't know what you need,
23 I can't fund you. Have a follow-up.

24 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: I just have a data
25 ask as well. Can DCLA make the data from year-end

2 reports available? I know that some of the
3 information is available. Some information we're
4 discussing as potentially adding to this reporting in
5 terms of aggregation. Some of the reporting and
6 information is not available to the Council or to
7 advocates. So we just want to in the spirit of
8 transparency.

9 GENERAL COUNSEL POLIVY: Of course.
10 We'll look into that and get back to you.

11 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Okay. I'm asking for
12 your commitment, so I hope to-- I hope to have it as
13 soon as possible. And thank you. Thank you, Chair
14 Joseph.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Of course, Chair
16 Rivera, any time. cultural competency, how does New
17 York City Public School ensure arts education is
18 accessible to diverse linguistic and cultural
19 backgrounds of New York City Public Schools? As I'm
20 mentioning in my opening, we have about 180 languages
21 spoken in New York City.

22 CORDELIA VEVE: So, I know that the Arts
23 Office partners with the Office of Multilingual
24 Learners, and they provide additional professional
25 learning for arts teachers that is grounded in

2 insuring accessibility for multilingual learners in
3 their classrooms, and I know Paul can talk with more
4 specificity about what those actual professional
5 learning offerings look like as well as the arts
6 grants that they make that are targeted towards
7 multilingual learners.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And that includes
9 ESL teachers being at those trainings as well, right?
10 Or bilingual teachers as well?

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: So, one of
12 the things that we do, again, to support teachers
13 throughout the year is we have three large grounding
14 full-day professional development experiences along
15 with a full annual calendar of professional
16 development that we provide in the boroughs.
17 Embedded in all of our practices because we believe
18 good MML practices are good for all students in the
19 same way good SWD practices are good for all
20 students, because you just don't know from any given
21 moment who's in your classroom, because students that
22 aren't actually diagnosed with an IEP really may
23 benefit from the supports that are provided by
24 embedding these kinds of practices in all
25 professional development, so. Embedded in what we do

2 with all arts teachers are these practices. There's
3 also-- we have someone on the art staff that
4 specifically is tasked with helping to partner and
5 think through the best SWD and MML practices. And so
6 one of the things that we are working on right now--
7 in fact, we just allocated the funding for it is a
8 web presence, a website that will be able to provide
9 specific resources for students-- for teachers in
10 supporting students with MML needs.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And another
12 population of our students that are always left
13 behind in programming, special education. Is
14 students in special education being removed for art
15 classes to receive mandated services? How is that
16 incorporated?

17 CORDELIA VEVE: Sure. So, you know,
18 students having mandates services usually in terms of
19 related services versus an ICT or SE [sic] model,
20 obviously not our recommended to pull students from
21 arts, but we also know that schools are making
22 decisions and they have a lot of conflicting
23 priorities, and so they have to think about the
24 resources that they have available. I think one of
25 the ways that we're thinking about how can we reduce

the amount of times that this has to happen, because I don't think that we will ever be able to eliminate it fully, because of like very specific unique needs that a students has is really thinking about how can related services be integrated into core content classes inclusive of the arts. And that's something that we talk about with our colleagues in dial [sic] to think about how might speech be integrated into the core classes so that students do not have to be pulled out of their core content classes inclusive of arts.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Are you thinking of a push-in model that might work?

CORDELIA VEVE: Exactly. And that-- there are models that exist already, and so just thinking about how that happens, but I do think we have to be cognizant of the fact that based on the needs of a variety of students based on very specific needs, we may not be able to eliminate that completely.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Have a-- for ICT model, how would that look, because then you can do a push-in because you have both educators there? You

2 have your gen ed, you have special ed right there.

3 How can you do a push-in for ICT model?

4 CORDELIA VEVE: So are you talking about
5 a push-in for related services and--

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Related
7 services that can also incorporate arts in it.

8 Because we're-- one of the things I'm seeing as the

9 Chair and even when I was an educator, our students

10 with special needs get left behind for everything.

11 Even Summer Rising, they can't stay to a full day

12 because there's no bus to bring them home. There's so

13 many different barriers. How do we remove some of

14 those barriers and allow students to also enjoy arts

15 education?

16 CORDELIA VEVE: So what I would say is if

17 we're talking just about either a special class or an

18 ICT model, I don't think that removes students from

19 arts programming, right? Those classes then follow

20 the regular program of a school, and so the Arts

21 Office then does work on thinking about how are we

22 making sure that arts instruction is inclusive to all

23 within those models. I think when we're talking

24 about students being pulled out of an arts class to

25 receive services, we're talking about related

2 services. That might be counseling, the hearing
3 services, PT, OT, so on and so forth. And so
4 thinking about what are some models that exist for
5 those to be integrated, whether it's into their
6 English class or to their arts class so that they
7 don't have to be pulled from core content.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That would make a
9 lot of sense. How are these students being tracked,
10 the students-- our special education students? How
11 do you track to make sure they're getting their
12 services and getting a little bit of art, a little
13 bit of something?

14 CORDELIA VEVE: Well, students who-- so I
15 think-- they're getting art, right? Because they're
16 part of the general population within the schools
17 that are receiving art. And so special classes are
18 not eliminated from receiving arts in that school,
19 and when we talk about the percentage of students
20 within a school that are getting arts education,
21 that's inclusive of all, I think we're talking about
22 like unique cases where a student is pulled out and
23 that really has to live within the school, right?
24 Because those services recommendations are reported
25 in SESUS [sic]. That would just be for specific

students and not sort of a school-wide view, and so schools have to be cognizant. And going back to Paul's thing about this, this is really a mind shift thing. So principals when they're making programming decisions have to believe that the arts are important and the arts are important for all students, and as they're making programming decisions, keep that in the forefront of their minds.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: School leaders. How does New York City Public School assess whether students with disabilities are receiving equitable arts, both in inclusion settings and also in District 75? I think earlier DCLA talked about their programming in D75.

CORDELIA VEVE: So, I think with the new reporting structure of disaggregating the arts in schools report by district, we do have reporting distinctly for District 75, and thinking about how DC75 students are being included in arts education, and Paul can talk to you about the specific numbers, but I know that D75 actually has somebody who is in charge of arts and coordinates with the Arts Office to ensure that they are giving equal access to the arts that all other district are providing.

2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Yes, so I
3 just want to add also the unique nature of District
4 75. They actually have a fulltime dedicated arts
5 director that is embedded in the district office, and
6 so they work with us in collaboration. And I have to
7 tell you, we learn a tremendous amount from them in
8 helping us push our programming. So we work very
9 closely together. And according-- just for some data
10 points. According to the 23/24 Arts in Schools
11 Report, arts across District 75, we had 93 percent of
12 District 75 schools reporting providing visual arts
13 instruction and 84 percent offered music, 66 percent
14 offered theater, and 59 percent offered dance. And
15 so again, while there is far more work to be done,
16 there is a baseline of dedicate professionals who
17 believe in this work, who can continue to help us do
18 what is the mind shift that systemically we're trying
19 to affect.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How about our D79
21 school site and D75? Have certified art teachers?
22 How often that teacher is covering three to four
23 sites?

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: So, this is
25 another one of those opportunities where

1 unfortunately I get to say to you we'll have to get
2 back to you with that specific data. one of the
3 things I will just say anecdotally is that-- one of
4 eh things that we find in tracking is that D79 sites
5 in particular are one of the places where we find
6 where there might not be an arts teacher, and so this
7 is something that we deeply have to look at and
8 continue to support in the work that we're doing.

9
10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: D79 also covers our
11 justice-involved students. Are we meeting their
12 needs also with arts education?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Again, we
14 support all of the superintendents in our work, and
15 again, this something that we-- and specifically with
16 this population, the arts-- and this is not
17 hyperbole-- could potentially help save some of these
18 kid's lives. And so this is ongoing work that we are
19 navigating around. And again, in our two years of
20 working and reimagining how we do this work. It's
21 something that we're dedicated to focusing on and get
22 back to you with more data.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. How's arts
24 education being used in D75 and other school settings
25 to advance IEP goals?

2 CORDELIA VEVE: Can't speak specifically
3 to students' IEP goals, but I think what we see with
4 the dedication in D75 to integrating the arts, that
5 that definitely has to be part of their belief that
6 being a part of the arts will help benefit the IEP
7 goals. I think we can turn to our colleagues in Dial
8 to find out more about what those IEP goals look like
9 aligned to arts education.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: and I've been getting
11 calls about this, class size. With the
12 implementation of class size reduction mandates, how
13 is New York City Public School ensuring that
14 dedicated art space such as music rooms, dance and
15 visual classrooms are preserved and maintained for
16 intended use, and my art teachers are not arts on
17 wheels, pushing carts around, but they have a
18 dedicated space for students to really enjoy art?

19 CORDELIA VEVE: so, of course, here
20 representing the Arts Office, we believe that the
21 arts having a dedicated facility is the ideal. What
22 is being done around the class size mandate is that
23 principals have been asked to submit plans about how
24 they're going to address that, specifically around
25

3 space, and only those plans where there is not a
4 reduction in programs are being approved by the City.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You wanted to say
6 something? Chair Rivera? Okay. Art facilities, the
7 Arts in School Report found that 52 percent of
8 schools do not have dedicated art classrooms. What
9 impacts does that have on the instruction quality?
10 And are there any plans to expand art facilities in
11 school that currently lack dedicated space for arts
12 instruction.

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: So what we
14 were able to pull from the school year 24/25 from the
15 School Construction Authority reporting is that there
16 are 1,222 school buildings with arts rooms, and there
17 are 4,081 arts rooms throughout the City. This
18 averages out to about 3.34 art spaces per building.
19 And so look, I ideally, we are dedicated and believe
20 in having standalone arts classrooms to help support,
21 you know, the bases of undergirding arts instruction.
22 However, you know, the current reality is that in
23 many spaces schools are sharing buildings, and so
24 this is a very difficult thing that is challenging
25 for us. but one of the things that we as an arts
office is trying to do again by working with

2 principals who make the decisions around how they're
3 buildings are utilized with our principals fellow
4 alone, again, we have over 140 that we targeted. And
5 again, it's-- we represented this as if you come to
6 the Arts Office and you work with us in the unique
7 kind of professional development that we will
8 provide, we were able to then leverage through this
9 administration ensuring that the plans that we
10 develop with them at putting the arts of the core of
11 their instructional vision, we were then able to come
12 in and help do facility upgrades for them. So we are
13 looking forward to making sure that those facility
14 upgrades are completed by the end of this school
15 year, and we look forward to our next cohort of 70+
16 principals for next year where we can also hopefully
17 provide this kind of opportunity.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many do you
19 have?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Total
21 principal fellows? We have 170.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And the dedicated
23 spaces that you're building out, how many are you
24 building out?

3 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: We had 140-

4 -

5 DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BERSON: We had
6 140 principal fellows able to avail themselves of
7 this opportunity. It is to both build out new art
8 spaces as well as to refurbish those that already
9 exist. So things like paint jobs, new furniture,
10 providing dumpsters for the really glamorous work of
11 emptying out rooms that need to be repurposed for
12 arts usage, things of that nature.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. what is
14 New York City Public Schools doing to hold school
15 accountable until it achieve its hundred percent
16 compliance with state regulations? I know you're
17 going to say it's the school leader again, but what
18 are we doing?

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: You got me.
20 You got me. Yeah, so again, this lives with school
21 leaders, and so one of the things that we're trying
22 to do is make sure that we're working with
23 superintendents and principals to do this mind shift
24 work to ensure that they understand the importance of
25 having the arts really move their instructional
visions.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Because in 2023, the
3 Data Arts Repot found that only 31 percent of eighth
4 grade students met New York State required for two
5 semesters of arts instructions in two disciplines.
6 What challenges are middle schools facing in meeting
7 their requirements, and how does New York City Public
8 Schools plan to address that?

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: So, this is
10 a thorny subject I've loved to embrace in my time at
11 the Arts Office now. So, first, it is important to
12 clarify that the state-- of the state requirements.
13 So, under New York State Ed regulations, students in
14 grade seven and eight must receive two half-units of
15 study in the arts, equaling about 108 hours. The
16 instruction is to occur across two different
17 disciplines. So it is the first time in a student's
18 trajectory where there is actually a specific
19 designation that you experience two different
20 disciplines and get credits in those disciplines.
21 The struggle here is -- there is a few, but I would
22 argue one of the biggest ones is just the larger
23 staffing, right? So just the teacher pool sides,
24 right? Because in a middle school in those two
25 grades, a principal is making a decision around who

3 they staff, and so you're making decisions around do

4 I have two arts teachers to ensure that I am making

5 sure that these students are getting two different

6 ones, and what we're finding in most instances is

7 that schools really struggle to do that, but with

8 that said, it is true 31 percent of students are

9 receiving the two units, but 91.2 are receiving the

10 two units in one discipline. So it is not-- it

11 certainly doesn't meet the state mandate, but it is

12 also to say that students aren't going without art.

13 So one of the things that we do, again, is to put our

14 hands in the dirt and really get in there with

15 principals so that they understand like, hey, this is

16 state-- not only is this a state mandate that is very

17 important, but also let us really think about, like,

18 what does your data look like, how is your literacy

19 looking? Like, what are some of the problems that

20 you think the arts might help mitigate or solve? How

21 do you get more parents in the building? How do you

22 fix a problem when showing up-- students showing up

23 late for first period? Is there a way in which we

24 can work with you that the arts can be embedded in

25 your core instructional mission to help move these

things along? And so this is just one byproduct of

3 really how we're working to mitigate this problem,
4 but it is a real one.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The data is saying
6 it's a real problem, and that's why we're talking and
7 seeing how we can fix it. And middle school is
8 important. I don't know, Ms. Joyce Bradford was my
9 music teacher in middle school, and I still remember
10 that. I can't draw, so I didn't remember my art
11 teacher, but I do remember Ms. Joyce Bradford. As
12 you mentioned-- you just mentioned that you have to
13 get-- put your hand in the dirt and get down with the
14 teachers. Are we doing that across the city to like
15 roll up our sleeves and be like, listen, we have to
16 do this. This is mandatory. It's not an option. And
17 we keep saying that, right? The arts should not be
18 an option just like social/emotional learning should
19 not be just on the side. It should be embedded in
20 our-- everything that New York City students do. the
21 arts is everything that can change your trajectory--
22 trajectory of a young person, and that's why I even
23 asked if you are involved in D79, our students who
24 are criminal justice involved, because art could
25 change.

2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Absolutely,
3 and I sit here as evidence of that. My own life
4 story is really centered in this idea of what the
5 arts can do for someone. So, I'm in full agreement
6 with what you're saying.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: But how do we meet
8 the law? Because we're not meeting the mandate of
9 the law. So how do we meet that law? How do we
10 comply with the state law?

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Again, I
12 think it's working with principals to understand the
13 importance. It's working with superintendents so
14 that they understand the nature of what the law is
15 requiring. And I also think it's about us thinking
16 through the teacher pipeline issue. So, you know,
17 one of the things that is super important for us and
18 one of the things that we work very closely in
19 supporting is there are two organizations that are
20 really exceptional at supporting teacher pipeline
21 work. One is the Arnhold Graduate Education program
22 at Hunter College. The other is the Arthur Miller
23 Foundation Scholars Program at City College, and
24 these are both public/private partnerships that have
25 transformed the number of dance and theater teachers

in our system. And so not only are teachers supported while they do their classwork, they're also supported once they graduate and land in a school with stipends and specific professional development that we work with these partners to help provide. And so these are some strategies that we believe are concrete that obviously they don't live in our ability to mandate, but they do speak to the rigor with which we're trying to align our office to how the culture of our bureaucracy actually works.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. For the funding-- \$41 million in 2024, \$41 million in federal stimulus dollars were used for art programming. \$25 million of this funding was distributed through school allocations. How was the other \$16 million spent?

CORDELIA VEVE: In FY24, the other \$16 million was also allocated to schools through a SAM [sic].

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: In FY20-- in Fiscal 2025, how much of the \$41 million in city dollars that replace the federal dollars went directly to school, and how is the remaining funding being spent?

3 CORDELIA VEVE: So, again, part of it was
4 allocated through a SAM, and then what we wanted to
5 do was make sure that we were being strategic and
6 aligning the funding streams with the work of the
7 Arts Office, and so the additional funds that were
8 used from the \$41 million last year are being put
9 through to schools through the arts office to align
10 with some of the facilities upgrades that Paul spoke
11 about as well as high-quality instructional
12 materials, tools, and experiences for all students.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. The Ace
14 Guide which lists New York City Public School vendors
15 providing programming, field trips and PD across art
16 discipline has been experiencing issues.
17 Organizations report they've been unable to update
18 their profile, contact information, or even be added
19 to the platform for at least six years. What's being
20 done to address the issue with the platform?

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: We share
22 your frustration.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yay, and I'm sure my
24 advocates feel the same.

25 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Yes, we
share the frustration of our friends in the arts

partner community. We're dedicated to working with
DIT to help rectify some of these issues. I hope I'm
also not talking out of school, but we are also in
the beginning conversations of developing an online
platform that would provide a heat map. We have a
public and private partnership that would enable us
to do this. right now, it is being negotiated
through legal to make sure that the capacity for us
to do this is actually there, but we are hoping as
part of the reimagining of the office that this kind
of a platform will again change the face of how
families, teacher-- how we all understand what are
the arts that are happening in our schools and how we
do make the kinds of decisions that we want to make
for our children in us supporting school leaders and
teachers and parents just making educated decisions
around where they want to have their kids.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. The art
world wants to know, what can the arts community
expect for the tool to be back online? When are you
going to be back online?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: We'll have
to get back to you on that after reaching out to
DIIT.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. And can the
3 arts community update the profile or be added to the
4 platform? The people want to know.

5 DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BERSON: I know
6 they do. We do, too. But you know, as we're in this
7 kind of transition moment where we hope to be
8 pivoting from the traditional Ace's guide into this
9 new kind of 21st century version which is the online
10 map platform that Paul just spoke to. We are just
11 thinking through kind of what we can have as an
12 interim resource for everyone that is accurate and up
13 to date, while not putting so much of the time and
14 resource into that while we're trying to pivot to
15 this new model.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Were the partners
17 notified of this change, or it was a surprise?

18 DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BERSON: It
19 should not have been a surprise. It was announced at
20 our Arts in Schools Report release in December of
21 2024.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What is New York
23 City's plan for ensuring that the list is more
24 representative of the 700+ arts and cultural
25

2 organizations that it says partners with schools last
3 year?

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: So, I think
5 again, the answer to that question really lies at the
6 core of how we're trying to reimagine building this
7 heat map, because building the heat map would
8 completely transform the ways in which arts partners
9 are included in being represented in that ecosystem
10 along with schools, being able to represent what
11 schools have from the DOE perspective, what courses
12 are they offering? What kind of connected pathways
13 from, you know, elementary to middle to high? You
14 know, if you want to be able to go for an audition
15 track, that will be able to be articulated for you if
16 you want to be able to stay in your home community.
17 And so all of that is at the core stages of the
18 things that we're beginning to plan right now.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'm sure that the
20 arts community will be very happy. In compliance,
21 what percentage of New York City Public Schools
22 currently meet the state's art education by grades
23 one to three, four to six, seven to eight, and nine
24 to 12?

2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Yes. So in
3 elementary school right now, grades one through five
4 we have 92.5 percent of school servings, grades one
5 through five, offer at least one arts discipline per
6 grade. However, 24.4 percent of those schools
7 offered all four disciplines to each grade. In sixth
8 grade, 95.1 percent of schools offered at least one
9 discipline, but only 10.1 percent offered all four
10 disciplines at that grade. Again, we get into the
11 reality of seven and eight. 91.2 of eighth graders
12 received the required two half units in arts
13 instructions, but only 31.1 did so with two different
14 disciplines. Additionally, only 21 percent of
15 schools met this benchmark for 90 percent or more of
16 their students. High school, 99.8 percent of high
17 school graduates met the state-mandated arts
18 instructional requirement.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is this-- what
20 school year is that?

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: This is
22 23/24.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, it's not what
24 you're offering. I was looking to see who's meeting
25 the standards, and for this year.

2 CORDELIA VEVE: You mean current data
3 live for students for this current 24/25 school year.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You'll get this to
5 us? I know that's what you're going to say, right?
6 See I know what you were going to say. You going to
7 get--

8 CORDELIA VEVE: [interposing] That's--

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] You're
10 going to get back to me?

11 CORDELIA VEVE: Then I won't say it.

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: I'll own
13 it.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yep. So, thank you
15 so much. You'll be getting a follow-up letter from
16 us with lots of questions that you were supposed to
17 answer, but didn't have the answers. So thank you
18 for being here. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you so much.

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THOMPSON: Thank you
21 very much. We really appreciate your support.

22 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And of course, we
23 always encourage you to stay and listen to the many,
24 many groups that have signed up to testify. They're
25 doing incredible work.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes. I now open the
3 public hearing for testimony-- public testimony. I
4 remind members of the public this is a government
5 proceeding and that decorum shall be observed at all
6 times. As such, members of the public shall remain
7 silent at all times. The witness table is reserved
8 for people who wish to testify. No video recording
9 or photography is allowed from the witness table.
10 Further, members of the public may not present audio
11 or video recording as testimony, but may submit
12 transcripts of such recording to the Sergeants at
13 Arms for inclusion in the hearing record. If you wish
14 to speak today in today's hearing, please fill out an
15 appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms and wait to
16 be recognized. When recognized, you'll have three
17 minutes to speak on today's oversight topic, ensuring
18 equity and access in the arts. If you have written
19 statement or additional written testimony you wish to
20 submit for the record, please provide a copy of that
21 testimony to the Sergeants at Arm. You may also email
22 testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72
23 hours of this hearing. Audio and video recording
24 will not be accepted. I will now call the first
25

2 panel. Arden Armbruster? If I butchered your name
3 I'm sorry-- IBO.

4 ARDEN ARMBRUSTER: Good afternoon, Chair
5 Joseph, Chair Rivera, and members of the Committees
6 on Education and Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and
7 International Intergroup Relations. My name is Arden
8 Armbruster, and I'm a lead budget and policy analyst
9 at the New York City Independent Budget Office, IBO.
10 We are an independent, nonpartisan City agency that
11 conducts fiscal and policy research for the City.
12 Thank you for the invitation to testify today. I will
13 be speaking about IBO's analysis of school-based
14 programs funded through the Cultural Development
15 Fund, CDF, a competitive grant program administered
16 by the Department of Cultural Affairs, DCLA. I'll be
17 sharing just a few findings from IBO's recent
18 research, but our written testimony includes
19 additional details. We also conducted an analysis by
20 school district which will be available on our
21 website. IBO looked at the CDF-funded programs and
22 arts teachers staffing at traditional public schools
23 using data from the fiscal year 2022 CDF grant cycle
24 and the 2021-2022 school year. Our research showed
25 that around three-quarters of schools citywide

received a CDF program, and a similar share of schools had at least one licensed arts teacher. Just over half of schools had both a CDF program and a licensed arts teacher, but these programs and teachers were not evenly distributed across boroughs. Compared with schools in other boroughs, Manhattan schools were more likely to have at least one licensed arts teacher, and on average they had the highest share of teachers who were art teachers. 90 percent of Manhattan schools received a CDF program. In Queens schools were about as likely to have an arts teacher on staff as Manhattan schools, but they were the least likely of all the boroughs to host a CDF program. Only about half of schools received a program in FY22. Staten Island schools were the second least likely to receive a CDF program and they had the fewest arts teachers as a percentage of all teachers. Nearly one in 10 schools in Staten Island and in the Bronx had neither a licensed arts teacher, nor a CDF program. Otherwise, Bronx and Brooklyn schools were fairly similar in our research, with the Bronx having a slightly larger share of schools for the CDF programs in Brooklyn, and Brooklyn schools is more likely to have an arts teacher than schools in

the Bronx. Manhattan-based CDF grantees provided the vast majority of CDF programs in schools, about four out of five programs. However, they were more likely to partner with schools outside of Manhattan than within the borough. CDF grantees from other boroughs typically worked in schools in their borough, particularly organizations from the Bronx and Staten Island. The data IBO used from this research have some limitations. In a small number of instances, programs that appeared to be school-based were excluded because they could not be definitely matched to a known school address. Additionally, the CDF data don't quantify depth of engagement, as Chair Rivera mentioned earlier such as the number or length of visits. The data do not include the timing of visits, so some of these programs may be after school. Accordingly, the intention of this analysis is not to equate CDF programs to instruction by a licensed teacher. Rather, our hope is that this can shed light on the distribution of services to help plan and coordinate the many programs through which the City provides access to arts education. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I'm happy to answer any questions.

2 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you so much
3 for your testimony, and we saw some of the tables in
4 the actual physical copy that you presented. If
5 Manhattan-based organizations are primarily working
6 with schools outside of Manhattan, do you have a
7 breakdown of which boroughs they're working in?

8 ARDEN ARMBRUSTER: Yes, we do. So, as I
9 said, 65 percent of school programs conducted by
10 Manhattan-based CDF grantees occurred outside of the
11 borough of management, leaving 35 percent in
12 Manhattan. So if we break down the 65 percent, we
13 get 24 percent in Brooklyn-- so the next most likely
14 borough for them to work in-- 20 percent in the
15 Bronx, 17 percent in Queens and three percent in
16 Staten Island.

17 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Yeah, you mentioned
18 that Queens schools were the least likely to host CDF
19 program followed by Staten Island. I know you shared
20 some of the percentages for each borough and
21 citywide, but some of the data you used-- well, the
22 data is from fiscal year 2022 CDF grant cycle. Why
23 not use more recent data?

2 ARDEN ARMBRUSTER: So, the time of the
3 analysis, 2022 was the most recent dataset provided
4 to us by DCLA.

5 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Did you request more
6 data from DCLA?

7 ARDEN ARMBRUSTER: We did. We first
8 requited the data in October of 2024 for FY23 and
9 FY24 was not available at that moment, but we put in
10 the request then.

11 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Okay. And you-- can
12 you remind the committee about IBO's charter mandated
13 powers as they relate to data access?

14 ARDEN ARMBRUSTER: I would be happy to.
15 So, the charter states that IBOs director shall be
16 authorized to secure such information, data,
17 estimates, and statistics from the agencies of the
18 City as the director determines to be necessary for
19 the performance and functions and duties of the
20 office, and as such agencies shall provide such
21 information to the extent that it is available in a
22 timely fashion.

23 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And if you could
24 just tell us very briefly-- you talked a little bit
25

2 about it, but how the research was conducted and how
3 easy would it be to replicate it for other years?

4 ARDEN ARMBRUSTER: Sure. So, I think on
5 its face it's pretty straightforward. You want to
6 know how many schools had a CDF program or matching
7 the location address information for the CDF
8 grantees. That is produced as part of the end of
9 year reporting, to address of traditional public
10 schools in this case. So we used District one
11 through 32 and District 75. But we did run in to a
12 few challenges that we were able to I think
13 satisfactorily address. One of them is-- the DCLA
14 addresses aren't sort of validated, so you'll have
15 spelling errors and things like that that we need to
16 clean up to be able to match to the DOE addresses
17 which are maintained by our education team and
18 quality checked. And then you have the co-located
19 schools. Schools are on a compass where you might
20 have five schools at one address, and then if you're
21 matching to the CDF data then you might have, you
22 know, sort of five programs at five different
23 schools. So, we had to go through manually and sort
24 of assign programs based on a description of the CDF
25 data. And then the last thing I'll mention on sort

2 of challenges front is that the District 75 schools
3 where you do have schools that have multiple sites,
4 we did see a couple of instances where you do have
5 schools that have multiple sites. we did see a
6 couple of instances where if there was a D75 school
7 or appeared to be a D75 school and we had to sort of
8 assign it back to the main location to make sure
9 that we were sort of capturing that, that school.
10 But those-- both the campus issue and the D75 issue,
11 really small number of programs that were ultimately
12 able to sort of assign to a school and include in the
13 data. Saying all of that, having undertaken this
14 once, I think that I have some ideas of how we might
15 do it faster in the future. And then one thing I
16 wanted to mention sort of from the perspective of an
17 analyst that would reduce the amount of time needed
18 to conduct an analysis like this and also improve the
19 quality of sort of the matches that we're talking
20 about is to include a school ID in the CDF reporting
21 data. I know this is something the Council does for
22 some of its recording. These are called DBNs,
23 district borough numbers, and it would allow us to
24 match directly on that DBN instead of on an address
25 where you might have just an accidental flipping of

numbers and address, or avenue with to v's that can
complicate the research process. So, I think that
would improve the quality of the match.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you. Alright.
Well, I want to thank you. the analysis, the
information is incredible how you've put it together
and really sort of highlighted what a lot of us knew
already which is great that we have Manhattan
organizations going outside of Manhattan, but we also
want to ensure that the organizations actually rooted
in these communities are being supported. So, also
improving the process and the reporting itself, we
certainly want to work with you on that, and ensure
that all of our charter mandated responsibilities are
fulfilled. So, thank you for your research and for
your dedication.

ARDEN ARMBRUSTER: Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Melody
Emerson Simpson [sp?]--- Simp? Melody Emerson?
Nabira Zainab. Ashely Marquez? Shima Zayura [sp?]?
Sarah Stone? Abby Emerson?

NABIRA ZAINAB: I would like to thank
Council Member Restler for supporting the bill 1125-
2024. Good morning everyone. My name is Nabira

Zainab and I'm a senior at the Urban Assembly School
for Leadership and Empowerment in Brooklyn, New York.
I live in District 45, represented by Council Member
Farah Louis. Today I'm here to testify in support of
bill 1125-2024 which mandates the Department of
Education to report annually on school libraries and
library access in DOE schools. During our research w
constantly thought about how the lack of library
resources might impact us in various ways. In
conducting research for our civic action project in
our government class we uncovered a significant
finding. Schools with certified librarians
experienced notably higher graduation rates. For
example, according to the article study finds that
high poverty schools with a certified teacher
librarian achieve a five-year graduation rate of 79
percent, stating that low-income schools that employ
accredited librarian report a graduation rate of 76
percent over five years. In stark contrast, the
schools without certified librarians show a
graduation rate of only 43 percent. This gap is
especially troubling for our Title I school UASLE
where the absence of certified librarians places my
peers and me at a disadvantage. Our extensive

research clearly demonstrates that students in schools with certified librarians perform better academically. Enthusiastic librarians not only inspire a joy of reading, but also help students cultivate essential research and media literacy skills. By requiring the Department of Education to provide detailed information on the number of certified and non-certified librarians, the time students spend with them and the operational status of school libraries, bill 1125-2024 will illuminate the critical resources available to students. It is essential for Council Member Farah Louis and the Committee to support this bill, as it emphasizes the vital role of libraries in education and ensures that all students regardless of their background have access to certified librarians for their academic success. Thank you for your attention, and I urge you to support bill 1125-2024.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Next?

ASHLEY MARQUEZ: Good morning. My name is Ashley Marquez and I am 17 years old. I live in Boerum Park in District 44 and my Council Member is Simcha Felder. I am currently a seniors at USLE in Borough Park. I am testifying today to support the

3 bill to require the Department of Education to report
4 on school librarians and library access in New York
5 City Public Schools. I'm here-- libraries and
6 librarians are essential to students' success, and I
7 know this from personal experience. I used to attend
8 High School of Telecommunication where we had an
9 amazing library. It was a safe, quiet place where I
10 could focus and learn. The library had books,
11 computers and printers, but more importantly it had a
12 librarian who was already to help. I still remember
13 asking about life during the American Revolution.
14 The librarian took the time to help me understand by
15 providing resources, not just memorizing facts. Now,
16 at my current school we don't have a library. When I
17 have questions, my teachers try to help me, but they
18 are often busy. There's no quiet place to study, and
19 at home it's easy to get distracted. I really miss
20 having a librarian and someone dedicated to support
21 my learning. Every student deserves access to a
22 student library and librarian. I hope you'll support
23 the bill so that all students in New York City can
24 have the same opportunities as I once did. Thank
25 you.

3 SHIMA ZYRA: Good morning. My name is
4 Shima Zyra [sp?], a high school senior at the Urban
5 Assembly School for Leadership and Empowerment in
6 Brooklyn, New York. I live in District 40 with Rita
7 Joseph as my Council Member representative. Today I
8 am here to represent the 495 students in my school as
9 well as all New York City students who understand the
10 urgency of the libraries count bill. I testify in
11 support of the 1125-2024 bill to require the
12 Department of Education to record the accessibility
13 of libraries in schools. Not only is this issue
14 detrimental to the college readiness and academic
15 success of students, but it's also in violation of
16 pre-existing laws. According to the New York State
17 law on school libraries, Section 91.1 states that a
18 library has to be established and maintained in every
19 school and there should be a minimum number of books
20 based on school size. Section 91.2 mentioned that
21 each school district has to have a certified library
22 media specialist unless an alternative arrangement is
23 approved of. Clearly, not every New York City school
24 is complying with these state laws, and recognizing
25 the severity of this issue is not possible without
data collection. It is alarming to my peers and I

that New York City Department of Education does not already have data on the accessibility of libraries. This bill will not only strengthen pre-existing laws, but hold New York City schools accountable for their violation of state laws. Yes, it will take time and planning, but passing this bill will be monumental because the students in this city need more transparency and need more clarity from the Department of Education. I attend a Title I school with a majority immigrant study body that does not have access to a library. This means that my peers and I do not have a designated space to work on our assignments or the support of a librarian for research projects and finding books to read. Is it truly equitable for our city to continue accepting the disparity between public schools, or is it time to reform our education system to serve the students? Because when you improve the lives of students, you improve the lives of all citizens in the city. We highly advise you to move forward with this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.

SARAH STONE: Hello. My name is Sarah Stone. I have the privilege of teaching 12th graders at the Urban Assembly School for Leadership and

Empowerment, Title I DOE school, located in City
Council District 44 and community school district 20.
Thank you to all the City Council members who have
responded to our students' advocacy emails and
invitation to speak at our school. In our 12th grade
Participation in Government course, students chose a
civic action issue to focus on, and the lack of
library access at our school resonated with many
students and teachers, as you can tell. I'm joining
my students here today in support of bill 1125.
Transparency in data is the first step towards
ensuring that all New York City Public School
students have access to the comfort, imagination,
resources, research opportunities and learning
experiences provided by school libraries staffed by a
certified school librarian. As a government teacher
in the age of social media, fake news, increased
polarization, and parallel web universes, digital
literacy is obviously a critical skill for our
students. I often find I don't have the time or the
resources to adequately build those critical skills.
Librarians can serve as resources to students and
teachers alike and identifying and utilizing credible
sources which our students need to navigate our ever-

changing and often hostile world. Libraries are an incredible hub of information and librarians are an incredible resource to support students in building research and critical thinking skills so necessary for their next steps beyond graduation. In order to build young advocates able to not only navigate the world as it is, but to advocate and create a better future, students need access to libraries in school. In order to create a more just and inclusive world, we first need to be able to imagine the world as it could be. Books allow that imagination to grow. Libraries provide windows of opportunity and imagination of students as they dream of the world they deserve to live. Every New York City Public School student, especially these three right here, deserve access to a school library to expose them to the possibilities beyond our school brick walls and to provide them with the 21st century skills necessary to achieve those possibilities. Thank you for supporting the passage of this bill.

DR. ABBY EMERSON: Hello. Thank you for having me here today. ten years ago I was a fifth grade teacher at a school on the lower east side and that had a fabulous library and wonderful librarian,

and while I had a relatively robust classroom library in my own room, nothing compares to having a fully-functioning organized, high-interest current supply of books for students. The ability to send kids to get books they were excited about on an ongoing basis was critical to my reading instruction. Our librarian also welcomed families in the morning and younger siblings were able to access books as well. We also partnered with her to work on research projects. She taught lessons related to digital literacy, research skills, tech skills and alike. The library also served the two collocated schools within our building and so it served as an important bridge between two very different and frankly very segregated schools. I'm here today to speak in strong support of Intro 1125. My name is Doctor Abby Emerson. I'm a former elementary school teacher and now a current education professor and parent of three children in DOE schools. I was really surprised to learn that the DOE doesn't track library data already, and this seems like one small but highly necessary step to getting libraries into our schools. I had some figures here about, oh, this number of libraries and whatnot, but frankly today I've heard a

lot of different numbers between the rally outside
and in here, and I think that's kind of the point is
we aren't really clear on what's going on and then it
makes it really hard to advocate as necessary, so we
need that. The science of reading is a hot topic in
education these days, and there are a number of
benefits to the practice sin the NYC Reads program.
Phonics instruction is coming back, and that's great,
but I have heard concerns from educators that
sometimes there's too much emphasis on phonics
without also providing high-interest books that kids
want and choose to read, and it's that balance that
we absolutely need. So, strong phonics program must
be accompanied by access to quality texts that a
school library would do. Years ago I worked at
another New York City School that had a book room,
and teachers could access the books, but without a
librarian it quickly devolved, and busy teachers
couldn't maintain it. Books would obviously
disappear into classrooms, not returned. So the
librarian is what makes it functional. And another
thing I was thinking about that I heard today is that
for my daughter's school, my children's school,
building space is a key issue. I'm sure everyone in

our school community would love to have a library,
but frankly I can't even advocate for because there's
literally nowhere in the building for it to go, so it
kind of-- we're at a stall there. We've heard today
a lot about the research, test scores, graduation
rates, morale, all of these things go up when a
librarian is employed. So, I encourage us all to
think about this and support 1125 as a critical step
to ensuring all New York City students have access to
some amazing benefits. Thank you.

MELODY EMERSON SIMPSON: Hello. My name
is Melody Emerson Simpson, and I live in Brooklyn
District 36. I'm seven years old and I'm in second
grade at the Brooklyn Brownstone School. I am here
today to try to help get a library in my school. My
school doesn't have a library, and I would really
like one. My favorite books right now are the
Chronicles of Narnia and the Real [inaudible]. When
I read books at the library, I feel like I'm going to
a different world, just like Lucy, Peter, Edmund, and
Susan in the most famous book of the Chronicles of
Narnia. I would love libraries to practice my
computer and research skills. Please support Intro

2 1125 so that I can have a library at my school and
3 all schools. Thank you for your time.

4 [applause]

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.
6 I'm currently reading Diary of a Wimpy Kid
7 [inaudible]. That's my favorite graphic novel
8 series. I even have a copy autographed by the
9 author. So thank you for that. We'll keep fighting
10 for libraries, alright? Chair Rivera and I, we got
11 you. Thank you. The next panel is Shanta Thake on
12 Zoom, Kimberly Olsen, Araya Henry, and Damian
13 Bazadona. Am I saying it wrong? If I am, forgive
14 me.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin on Zoom.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Shanta Thake, who's
17 on Zoom.

18 SHANTA THAKE: Yes, hello. Hi, everyone.
19 Sorry to not be there in person. Good morning members
20 of the committees. My name is Shanta Thake, the
21 Ehrenkranz Chief Artistic Officer for Lincoln Center
22 for the Performing Arts. We appreciate you taking
23 the time to emphasize the importance of equitable
24 access to arts education. Today, this education
25 landscape is different with the pervasiveness of

technology, information overload, and the ongoing
impacts of the pandemic on student learning. Yet,
the need for truly deep arts education experiences
for everyone has never been more essential to the
social/emotional learning of students. This requires
an increase in funding for arts education in all
public schools, more partnerships with arts educators
and elevating arts education within the core
curriculum. We are constantly evolving how our
programs can better serve students, including
leveraging new technologies. Lincoln Center is
considered by many as the birthplace of teaching
artistry. We developed a systematic approach to
student-centered discovery-based arts learning which
has since grown nationally and internationally. The
Lincoln Center campus is home to 11 resident arts
organizations serving the entire lifecycle from
infants participating in We Bop [sic] as Jazz Lincoln
Center to older adults enrolled at the Julliard
School's Extension program. Exposure to the arts
improved skills like language acquisition, memory,
motor coordination, spatial awareness and support
social/emotional learning. A few examples of our
work in collaboration with the NYC School's Arts

Office Middle School Arts Audition Boot Camp served over 400 students representing 173 public schools across five boroughs last summer. For the inaugural season the festival orchestra of Lincoln Center, nearly 300 Summer Arts Institute students received free coaching, observed a rehearsal of the orchestra, attendance a performance, and selected student chamber ensembles performed at Lincoln Center. Building off that success, we launched the free Young Artist Pipeline to serve students as early as sixth grade in developing skills in the arts with nearly 100 students enrolled from Title I schools. We also recognized visibility as part of creating a culture of belonging. Initiatives like Access Ambassadors and Passport to the Arts recognize that access needs must be integrated in the creative process and not an afterthought. The legacy of San Juan Hill [sp?] with Centro [sic] and Shaunberg [sp?] Center underscores the importance of those whose stories are told. Last summer we worked with United Way to host the Black Studies Book Mobile and integrate San Juan Hill into New York City's School's Black Studies curriculum, sharing the stories of creative New Yorkers like the [inaudible] Josephine Baker [sp?],

2 Arturo Shamberg [sp?] and many more. And lastly, we
3 invest in teachers and invite educators to imagine
4 the next 50 years of teaching artistry at Summer
5 Forum this July. Participants will leave with new
6 tools, fresh ideas, and an expanded community to
7 propel their creative vision for the arts education
8 forward. Current New York City Public School
9 educators will be granted free admission. The
10 Resident Arts Organizations at Lincoln Center share a
11 vision for encouraging and exploration of human
12 creativity and--

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Your time
14 is expired. Thank you.

15 SHANTA THAKE: Thank you. Can I have
16 just one more second? And wonder--

17 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: [interposing] Yes,
18 please finish your last thought, yes.

19 SHANTA THAKE: Okay, great. We look to
20 the arts to bridge divide, celebrate differences and
21 encourage us to question what is and imagine what can
22 be. Thank you so much.

23 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

3 KIMBERLY OLSEN: Thank you so much, Chair
4 Joseph and Chair Rivera, esteemed committee members
5 and council staff for your championing of arts
6 education. My name is Kim Olsen and I'm proud to be
7 the Executive Director of the New York City Arts and
8 Education Roundtable. I'm here as part of the It
9 Starts with the Arts Coalition echoing the urgent
10 need to prioritize transparency in arts education
11 across our city schools and communities. We deeply
12 appreciate the commitment of this council to ensuring
13 equity and access in the arts, and we want to commend
14 the work of New York City Public Schools Arts Office
15 for their ongoing initiatives to supports arts
16 education across the five boroughs. We also
17 recognize the essential role of the Department of
18 Cultural Affairs in enabling hundreds of
19 organizations to deliver essential arts education
20 services. However, New York City cannot provide
21 equitable access, meaningful participation or quality
22 arts instruction for all students without greater
23 transparency in terms of how arts funding is being
24 spent and how student engagement is measured.
25 Currently, our understanding is impeded by a reliance
on broad reporting that doesn't always accurately

3 reflect the reality on the ground. For example, the
4 most recent Arts in Schools Report states that 99
5 percent of schools provide arts instruction in at
6 least one discipline. Yet, that statistic doesn't
7 really verify actual access or participation for
8 students. The current reporting methods also lack
9 clarity on how quality arts education is to find and
10 measured in our schools. The insufficient
11 transparency also applies to funding allocations in
12 spending, making it unclear how arts education
13 dollars are distributed and utilized at the school
14 level, and how it compares to recommended per capita
15 spending. Furthermore, the lack of transparency
16 extends to arts partnerships while over 700 arts
17 organizations partnered with schools last year.
18 Delays in award contracts, contracting processing and
19 payments significantly hinder the good work
20 happening. Organizations are waiting years for MTAC
21 [sic] contract approvals leading to lost educational
22 opportunities for students, financial hardships for
23 organizations and thousands of dedicated teaching
24 artists who rely on this income to live and work in
25 New York City. Even the month-long delay of CDF
award letters can have a devastating impact when you

are living paycheck to paycheck like so many teaching artists in our community. The reality is this, what gets measured gets done. We need a clear, comprehensive and publicly accessible understanding of the current state of arts education in every school and accountability on the cross-agency plan to move towards universal access. This includes data on access across all art forms, students participation, enrollment rates, the number of certified arts teachers and cultural partners for school, resources being allocated at the individual school level alongside clear benchmarks for goal setting and measuring success. Without this, it's impossible to effectively identify and address existing inequities. Let us move beyond broad statistics and reports to gain a clear understanding of the challenges and successes in arts education across our diverse school system. By prioritizing data transparency and investment in the arts, we can truly begin to build a stronger, more creative and more equitable future for all of our students. Thank you for your time and consideration.

ARAYA HENRY: Good morning. Thank you
Chair Rivera, Chair Joseph, and members of the

committee for the opportunity to speak about the
Whitney Museum of American Arts' work providing arts
education in New York City schools. I am Araya
Henry, Manager of K through 12 Initiative and Youth
Learning at the Whitney, and I lead programs that
serve youth audiences. These programs include our
team program Youth Insights, our school visits which
are free for New York City Public Schools, online
lessons, school partnership programs, and a teacher
training program called Teacher Exchange. Our K
through 12 initiatives use works of art from our
collection and special exhibitions to build critical
thinking, enhance curriculum, foster dialogue, and
encourage innovative classroom practices. Today, I
want to spotlight our school partnership with Gotham
Professional Arts Academy which is a Title I public
high school located in Bed-Stuy Brooklyn. Since
2008, the Whitney has worked with Gotham students and
teachers. Each year offers in-depth multi-session
programs connected classroom curriculum. This past
year we had over 460 touch-points with Gotham's
community including in-class programs, museum visits,
artist events, and family engagement nights.
Students engaged with special Whitney exhibitions

using art to explore themes of inheritance, identity and social change. The Whitney also recognizes the critical need for arts programming that meets schools where they are. This spring, we are piloting a new partnership at Ellis Prep Academy, a public transfer high school in the Bronx serving newly-arrived immigrant students. Our program brings teaching artists directly into classrooms, helping students engage with contemporary arts in ways that support their language development and academic success. Partnerships like those at Gotham and Ellis are only possible with continued investment. Arts education raising academic achievement, supports social/emotional learning and builds stronger communities. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to ensuring equity and accessing the arts.

DAMIAN BAZADONA: Hi, I'm Damian Bazadona. I'm founder of Situation Project, and thank you for having me. This has just been a remarkable experience surrounding myself around all the amazing work that's happening in the arts and culture community. It's a little bit of imposter syndrome for me, because this is a little bit outside of my normal lane of work. Last 20 years I've spent running a

2 marketing agency where my job is to bring audiences
3 in to arts and cultural experiences. We're in the
4 cultural capital of the world. There's some
5 remarkable cultural experiences and my entire job is
6 about filling those seats. One of the truths that
7 happened that I've recognized over the past 20 years
8 is that there's consistently year after year millions
9 of seats that go empty, and that's millions every
10 single year, predictably. Broadway alone, just for
11 example-- these are public numbers-- about 1.5
12 million seats go empty every single year. And at the
13 same time I think we've learned all today, we've
14 talked about it, kids in the city are not getting
15 adequate access to the arts, arts exposure, arts
16 education, arts are missing from a significant number
17 of kid's lives. I believe, as know everyone else in
18 this room does that arts are important. I look at
19 it-- I think of arts as avocado for the soul. It is
20 a nourishment that is critical to the growth and
21 support of our children and our communities. And so
22 when I look at the millions of empty seats that are
23 happening throughout the year in the cultural capital
24 of the world, I wanted to do something about it. So
25 in 2011, I founded Situation Project which was my

2 for-profit company creating a nonprofit institution
3 that enabled us to open doors to live shows where we
4 saw open inventory. In addition, we opened up career
5 opportunities. So for the kids to realize all the
6 amazing jobs that are in the arts and culture
7 community, which I don't think it's talked about
8 enough, high-paying jobs in the arts and culture
9 community that we're going to need for the city to
10 thrive. In addition taking them on school tours to
11 understand higher education and how you can continue
12 to advance you career in the arts if you choose to do
13 so. We've done a lot with a little. My for profit
14 company where I've made personal investments in this,
15 we cover the overhead and operating costs, every
16 money-- any ounce of money that comes in goes 100
17 percent to programming. Since we've launched the
18 organization we've reached over 100,000 students.
19 That's the number that we've broken recently that I'm
20 extremely proud of. My Executive Director Samara
21 Berger is here, Eliza Palter, a lot of other people
22 are a big part of this, but this is truly a project
23 of passion, money that I personally put in and we've
24 raised by private donations of people who support
25 this. But as proud as we are of 100,000 students, I

2 think that's just made a small dent of the 13 years
3 we've doing it. It's like skimming rocks in the
4 ocean. One of the-- the primary reason I want to
5 come today is to provide testimony that I think that
6 there's hundreds of millions of dollars of untapped
7 equity, right around us right now. There will be
8 three to five million empty seats this year in the
9 cultural capital of the world, and if you put a value
10 on those tickets, it comes out to a significant
11 number. I think there is an opportunity for private
12 and public partnerships to be discussed, move
13 forward. At Situation Project we are committed to
14 continue to do that, and I personally will do
15 whatever I can to help support that. Thank you for
16 having me.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you so much. I
19 used your statistic last night at an event about how
20 many seats are left.

21 DAMIAN BAZADONA: Oh, thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And people couldn't
23 believe it. So I appreciate all of you doing the
24 great work that you do.

3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for all
4 that you're doing. We do talk about career pathways
5 in the theater world. That's an untapped resources,
6 and New York City Public Schools should create a
7 pipeline. I know they are. They do have a future-
8 ready program that taps into that. Maybe we need to
9 expand to make sure these are great union jobs, and
10 this is where equity will come in and access. Thank
11 you all. Niko Siraisi, Julian Ventura [sp?]- I
12 couldn't read the handwriting, sorry. Dionne
13 Figgins, Aurora Dunlau, Maddy Didaline [sp?], Ava
14 Emhoff [sp?], and Daria Ashcamonia [sp?].

15 DIONNE FIGGINS: Okay, hello everyone.
16 Thank you all so much for having us today. My name
17 is Dionne Figgins. I'm a professional performance
18 artist with over 25 years of experience in New York
19 City and I'm the Artistic Director of Ballet Tech
20 Foundation. Our mission is to introduce New York
21 City Public School children to the beauty, integrity
22 and joy of dance which we have been doing since the
23 founding of our school in 1978. We have reached over
24 950,000 students with our tuition-free programming,
25 giving students from every neighborhood in our city
the opportunity to participate. Since 1996, Ballet

Tech Foundation has operated the fourth through eighth grade New York City Public School for Dance in partnership with the New York City Department of Education, and because of this we are uniquely positioned to speak about the importance of the New York City government support of arts education and the impact it has on the children of our city.

Through this private/public partnership, our students receive a robust academic education provided by the Department of Education integrated with intensive dance training provided by Ballet Tech Foundation.

It has been proven that arts integration and education contributes to the development of life and career skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication that are vital to the cognitive and expressive demands of the 21st century.

Because of our school's model, students who may struggle academically, but do well in dance have shown the ability to transfer learning and dance to other areas and demonstrate academic improvement over time. Our student's state test scores consistently far exceed citywide averages and graduating eighth graders are regularly accepted into public arts high schools, distinguished ballet academies, and public

high schools with strong academic programs. Under one roof, our students develop the skills to succeed in whatever direction they choose because of their dual dance and academic education. Our alumni, one of which is with us today, have gone on to become professional dancers, and renowned companies such as New York City Ballet, and Martha Graham, and have also pursued careers as lawyers, EMTs, chefs and professional soccer players. Investing in arts education is critical to the development of our city's children. The success of our students, many of whom would not have had the opportunity to learn dance without Ballet Tech's tuition-free programs have been made possible by the City government support, and we urge the City Council to prioritize universal access to arts education so that all of New York City's children can experience the same benefits of a robust arts education. I'm joined here today by one of our students and one of our alumni who will also give their testimony.

NIKO SIRAISSI: Hello. My name is Niko and I'm a seventh grade student at Ballet Tech, and I'm honored to be here representing Ballet Tech. Every day at my school, I spend half of my day in

academic classes and the other half in dance. I love being a student at Ballet Tech, because we all share a common interest in dance, and it helps create a strong, close knit community. Learning dance teaches me discipline and persistence which influences other areas in my life physically, mentally and emotionally. If I'm ever frustrated in my academic classes, the skills I've learned in dance helps me to reset and center myself. This persistence helps me to improve and learn more in my classes. Dance is a big part of my life and is something I prioritize both at school and home. I hope to be a dancer and choreographer when I grow up because I love sharing my technique with others. Ballet Tech is helping me achieve this goal because I get a glimpse at the professional side of being a dancer. Getting to experience a daily rehearsal schedule and performance like performing at the Joyce Theater helps me set up for success. I think it is important that other students have the chance to learn dance or another art form, because it is something that anyone can do. Dance brings so much joy to my life, and I want to share that joy with other people. Dance also has the power to shape someone's future. So many

3 professionals became who they are because of the
4 exposure of the arts when they were young. Learning
5 dance has taught me that I can be whatever I want to
6 be if I put my mind to it, and I think that is
7 important that all students in New York City have the
8 same opportunity. Thank you.

9 JULIENNE BUENAVENTURA: Good afternoon,
10 everyone. My name is Julianne Buenaventura. I'm an
11 immigrant from the Philippines and raised in Jackson
12 Heights Queens, and I am a proud product of the magic
13 created at Ballet Tech. I joined the school in
14 fourth grade and graduated middle school in 2016.
15 Back in 2010, a team from Ballet Tech visited my
16 public school in Queens to audition third grade
17 students for their Introduction to Ballet Program. I
18 was one of three students from my school who
19 participated in a weekly field trip program to take
20 beginner ballet classes on-site with transportation,
21 dance clothing and shoes provided. At the time, I
22 was already taking ballet classes at my local studio
23 in Queens, but transferring to Ballet Tech's fulltime
24 school was a game-changer for myself my family. To
25 have access to high-level training from esteemed
professionals in the field in a historic building for

the arts, completely free of cost was an immense privilege, perhaps one that I didn't realize until I grew up. Last May I graduated from SUNY Purchase with a major in dance, and currently choreographing and teaching around New York City, and I'm a teacher here at Ballet Tec, including the program that brought me to Ballet Tech in the first place. I can confidently attribute many of my professional skills to my time here at Ballet Tech, self-discipline, organization, expressing myself and leading my life with passion, and being able to connect with my peers and new ones, to name a few. I see now in my 20s how lucky I was to have a school as eccentric as ours in such a formative period of my upbringing. New York City is a city where people make magic happen, a city where culture emerges and thrives. I owe it to my students and the larger New York City public school system to urge you to invest in the youth of New York City, to infuse their daily education with the arts, as they are the ones who grow up to make the city what it is, the arts capital of the world. It is my wish that all students in all boroughs of New York City will have access to the arts just like I did.

3 Thank you for having me speak today. Have a
4 wonderful day.

5 DARIA: I'm an 11th grade student in
6 Fiorello LaGuardia High School in New York City. My
7 name is Daria, and I'm here to testify for the bill
8 1125 about annual report on school libraries in NYC.
9 So for an immigrant, this year is my second year in
10 an American school. Coming from an educational and
11 economical background in which libraries were not a
12 part of school life, I never expected it to become a
13 significant part of my social and academic in high
14 school, but now I know how much experience they make.
15 When I think about it, a complex of [inaudible]
16 interest became achievable because of the functioning
17 library in our school. As low-income student, the
18 library is a place for me to access resources for
19 research papers, projects and arts references in my
20 community from teachers who I personally know and
21 trust. As an academic tutor, the library is a focus
22 place to help students with their work, again, with
23 all the needed resources. As the President of the
24 Feminist Club in LaGuardia, the library is a
25 connecting point between my club and the broader
school community, a place to conduct meetings and

2 promote our work. Without the working library and a
3 librarian in our school, I would never be able to
4 support such [inaudible] interest. School libraries
5 are not only about academic support of students, but
6 also about the trust bond between each individual
7 student at the school community. So, if the system
8 of public schools in New York City isn't up to give
9 students a right to access a functioning library with
10 a certified librarian, this right must be fulfilled.
11 We encourage you to support the bill 1125 to require
12 reporting on school librarians and library access in
13 New York City public schools. Thank you.

14 AVA EMHOFF: Hello my name Ava Emhoff and
15 I'm a student at LaGuardia High School. I'm here to
16 testify to the importance of libraries in schools.
17 To talk about the importance of libraries and
18 librarians, I first have to talk about lunch. I'm not
19 a very social person. If I'm in a room with people I
20 don't know, chances are I'm not saying a single word.
21 Going into my sophomore year, I found myself in an
22 odd social situation of not knowing where to eat
23 lunch. My friends hated going outside, but I hated
24 having to scavenge the school for 10 minutes trying
25 to find an empty and quiet place for us to settle

into. So, one day when I wondered into the school library and found everyone with headphones in and many people sitting alone, I figured it was a good escape for the 40 minute period. Through those 40 minutes of me connecting with the library, I was also given the opportunity to bond with MS. Heely [sp?], our amazing library. From the small ways when I began entering to my finally asking if I can volunteer, something she quickly accepted and started with teaching me the combination of library systems we utilized, I knew Ms. Heely is someone who truly loves LaGuardia community and the library. I've never seen someone light up the way she did when teaching me Dewey Decimal, and it made me so much more passionate about respecting the library and its contents. This has only strengthened as time passed. From the free book section that has saved my family hundreds from Barnes and Nobles trips to opportunities that get me places such as City Hall, a librarian is someone-- a librarian who cares is someone that can make the biggest change in schools. Over time, my friends eventually began joining me and now in my junior year, I spend time connecting with

2 my friends in the cafeteria. I will never forget
3 what public libraries have done for me.

4 AURORA MAE DUNLAU: Hello. My name
5 Aurora Mae Dunlau., and I'm a freshman at Fiorello H.
6 LaGuardia High School. I'm here today to testify to
7 support the bill that the DOE should record the
8 accessibility of libraries and librarians in NYC
9 public schools. To start off, I'm a very avid reader
10 and I've always loved reading since I was very young.
11 I started reading when I was two and I've always been
12 a bookworm, reading over 10 books through a school
13 year, and I found the library as a safe place where I
14 can enjoy books and learn and grow with my other
15 students. When I was looking through high schools
16 and choosing which high schools to go to, I saw
17 LaGuardia as a place with a lot of creativity and I
18 loved the library they had there. As a freshman this
19 year with a lunch period where not many of my friends
20 are in it, I found the library as a safe place where
21 I can study and do homework, use the resources, use
22 the printer for my classes and find different books
23 that I would love to read. I find that a lot of my
24 friends have stopped reading or have-- when I ask
25 them about what books they like to read have said,

oh, I don't read. And when I inquired further, it's because they haven't found books that they're interested in. And the importance of a library and a librarian is that in libraries they get to organize and represent different books. I find that Ms. Heely has put together different things on our Instagram and different like mystery books to encourage students to read and encourage students to find books that they actually enjoy, and I feel that that's really important because I don't all of my friends to not just be reading, and through the librarian and through our library they have found books that they're actually interested in and it will help them grow as a reader. And also, we have different resources for music and plays and the different arts that we have in our schools, and I was shocked to hear that a high percentage of schools don't have libraries and don't have these resources. We have different prep books and SHSAT or SAT books that we can use for students to get high grades and it's a really important resource for students to be learning and growing. And overall, it's just such a welcomed community and I've found so much love from Ms. Heely and just like enjoyment when I go there in the

3 library, and I think it's just really important to
4 continue that and to have it all the schools and all
5 the NYC public schools. So I urge you to support
6 this bill. Thank you.

7 MADDY DIDDERLINE: Good afternoon Council
8 and Committee Members. My name is Maddy Diddlerline
9 [sp?]. I am a 16-year-old student at LaGuardia High
10 School, and I have been a victim of library loss.
11 Don't get me wrong, our school is lucky enough to
12 have a functioning library and a wonderful librarian,
13 Ms. Heely, but we are part of the decreasing number
14 of New York City public high schools that have our
15 own library that is easily accessible to students.
16 Currently, I am a volunteer helping our librarian Ms.
17 Heely keep our shelves in order, and I am considering
18 a potential career in library science. I know
19 firsthand how important libraries can be for
20 students, and I didn't fully realize just how
21 important they were until I lost mine. I didn't start
22 out my life loving to read, but I was not exactly a
23 popular child within my class, and none of my fellow
24 students were particularly shy about the fact that
25 they thought I was weird. I found my first solace
from that fact in my small class library which my

teachers always seemed to sit me directly next to.

But the best place in that school for me as a child

was our school library. Our librarian, Ms. Hood, was

a kind woman who always helped you find what you were

looking for. Nothing was better for me than burying

my nose in a book and escaping from the world for a

little while. When I eventually did make friends,

they always knew to leave me alone when I was

reading. By the age of nine I prided myself on being

able to finish a 400-page book over the span of a

singular day. In sixth grade when we were given

access to clubs in the middle school section, I was

so excited to finally sign up to help Ms. Hood in the

library. I had two books checked out in my sixth

grade year when my classes all ended abruptly in

March of 2020. I read those books for weeks. I bought

discounted books online for me to continue my pursuit

of reading. I read and reread and reread every book

I had throughout the entire pandemic, and we finally

got to go back to school, the thing I was most

excited about was to go back to the library.

However, as I learned during the pandemic, Ms. Hood

had retired and a school would not hire her

replacement for three years, and by that time the

damage had already been done. Since I had lost my access to free books, I stopped reading, and I found out one day that all of my favorite books were written for 12 year olds, and I was not thrilled. Funny enough, my comeback to reading came from a book from our school library that I had not returned for several months. It comforted me when I was having issues and I have continued to read and I'm back to being an avid reader. Who I am today is because of my experiences with school libraries, and I know how-- I know how difficult it is.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Go on. Go ahead.

AURORA MAE DUNLAU: I know how difficult it is to lose access to your libraries, and many students need these libraries to be able to thrive, and unless we know exactly which students do not have access to these libraries, we do not know exactly who needs them the most. This is why I think we should-- as you should as a council pass Intro 1125. Thank you for your time. Apologies.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for hearing and you're not alone in the reading the little-- I read kids' books and I was an educator for 22 years before I became a Council Member. So, keep

reading the books you love and enjoy, whether they're five-year-old, 12-year-old, keep reading it. Because I'm still stuck in Diary of a Wimpy Kid, so-- and I'm a big fan of Dan Gutman books. I read all of his series. So, it's okay. Thank you for sharing. Ms. Heely? Thank you. Thank you. Thank you all. Thank you. Ballet Tech, I'm coming for classes. You'll be seeing me. Next panel is Jen Dayton, Parlene Tuberio [sp?]- if I miss, just forgive me-- Claire, no last name, Midori Friends, Vance Krishmayov [sp?], Maryam Vunduran [sic], Badran. Quadiar Dunn. Thank you for joining us. Once you sit you may start.

MARYAM BADRAN: Hello there. My name is Maryam, and I'm a bassist. That's how I almost always introduce myself now. I'm a high school senior currently participating in the Midori and Friends 2025 Next Gen program. I am honored to be here today. Sometime in the past few years, I no longer was someone who just plays bass guitar, but a bassist. It's become a part of who I am, and I most certainly would have never become half the person I am today if it weren't for music. Specifically, I would have never become who I am today if it weren't for music education. Music class changed my life.

Before, there was no way I would ever ask to speak here. I was and still am in many ways very shy and kept to myself, but music has a way with uncovering our true selves. Music moves our souls and shows us parts of ourselves that we didn't even know existed. For me, it helped me find my voice and express myself through the strings of the bass, and for others it has done so much more. When I'm playing music with others, we speak in a language that only musicians understand and it is a wonderful language. We speak through reality, pain, and even school is on that list which is why I want to help others learn this musical language. I'm lucky to have an amazing teacher, Mr. Anderson, who has always believed in me and my classmates. Throughout rough times in school, he helps us express our emotions and gives us a safe space to be ourselves and be loud and take space in the world for ourselves. But again, I'm lucky. Many people don't have that. Many people don't even have music class or any art class at their school. To quote John Keating in the Dead Poet's Society, "We don't read and write poetry because it's cute, we read and write poetry because we're members of the human race, and the human race is filled with

passion." I'd like to generalize this a little bit.

We don't make art because it's cute. We make art

because we are members of the human race, and the

human race is filled with passion. Imagine all the

kids who could have grown up to be the next Bowie or

Davinci but never had the chance to find their

passion. We need education in the arts. We need our

freedom. That's why I urge City Council to protect

and expand arts education in all New York City

schools, fund programs like Midori and Friends,

support music teachers, and make sure every student

no matter where they live has access to the arts,

because we aren't just shaping future artists, we're

helping young people find their voices, their purpose

and their place in the world. Thank you.

QUADIAR DUNN: Good morning. My name is

Quadiar. I'm a 10th grader in Special Music School in

Manhattan. I'm also part of the Next Gen Musician

Program with Midori and Friends, and I'm here today

because I believe music education should be a right

and not a privilege. At my school we're passionate

about music, but we don't always have what we need to

grow. One of the biggest challenges we face is not

having enough venues or spaces to perform. There

aren't many platforms where young musicians like us can share our work with the community. Without access to real performance spaces, it's hard to gain experiences, build confidence or feel like our voices are truly being heard. That's why I'm advocating for increased performance opportunities for musicians. Many musicians struggle to find platforms to showcase their talent. By providing more opportunities to perform we could open real paths to building careers and even change musician's life. Joining Next Gen has changed the way I think about music. It's not just something I do. It's how I express what matters to me. In this program, I connected with students from all over the City. We talk about the issues we care about, like mental health, safety in our neighborhoods, and access to the arts, and we use music to raise our voices. We don't all come from the same place, but music brings us together. It gives us a safe space, a purpose, a way to lead. We're asking the Council to invest in music education, not just for students who already have it, but for students like me who are trying to make the most of every opportunity. That means funding for better access for rehearsal and performance spaces,

3 support for music programs and making sure every
4 school has certified arts teachers. Thank you for
5 listening and for believing for what arts can do for
6 students like me across New York City.

7 PARKA TABERSIO: Hi, my name is Parka
8 Tabersio [sp?]. I am a freshman at SUNY Purchase, and
9 I am also a alum at Theater Arts Production Company
10 and Midori Next Gen Musician Program. I have been a
11 member of Midori and Friends for about two years now,
12 and I've seen them do tremendous work when it comes
13 to bringing groups from different backgrounds
14 together to make something beautiful. In times like
15 these where mental health is declining, and things
16 are starting to feel less hopeful, it's such a
17 beautiful thing to see a community come together and
18 make something as powerful as music. Music is
19 something we sometimes take for granted. It has
20 helped us through our daily lives and has almost
21 become a necessity. It brings light to dark
22 situations and helps community in a way that few
23 others can. But when we don't have access to things
24 like instruments because the cost of the piano is the
25 same as one month of rent, it can make someone feel
trapped. Like we don't have an outlet to express

their emotions. That's why we need music. We're in an age where the world feels like it's collapsing on itself, and we have no way to stop it. We just have to keep going, but sometimes that feels like the hardest thing to do. so if we could all just having something that brings us joy and gives us a creative outlet, it can lift spirits and make the future feel a little brighter. Music sends a message. It brings people together. That's why we need it, and that's why we need to be able to afford it so we can keep creating something beautiful not just for ourselves but for our communities. I urge City Council to invest in the accessible, equitable arts education across New York City to fund programs like Midori and Friends so that every student no matter where they come from or what they can afford has the chance to experience the power of music, because we-- when we invest in music, we invest in healing and connection in the future of our city. Thank you for listening.

JENNIFER DAYTON: Good afternoon, Chair Rivera, Chair Joseph and the Committee. Thank you for being here with me today. My name is Jenn Dayton. I'm the Director of Education at Midori and Friends, and I've been working in arts education over

the last decade across multiple cultural institutions across the city. It's my honor to be with the students who are here with me today. There were more, but they had to make it to their after school commitments. And I'm here to share what we do at Midori and Friends and to advocate for the arts alongside my colleagues. For 33 years, our organization has serviced over 300,000 students, many who would not receive music education or instrumental programs at their schools. One of our flagship programs is Next Gen Musicians. It's a citywide youth advocacy and leadership fellowship for high school students across all the boroughs. Next Gen is more than a music program. It's a way for high school students to come together across backgrounds, identities and boroughs to speak about what they care about, what matters to them and the change they wish to see or support to be continued. Whether it's mental health, immigration, access, equity and education, each student chooses an issue that personally affects them and then creates an original music advocacy campaign inspired by that cause. They meet with local officials, they speak with their peers, they attend rallies and speak at their rallies

and they advocate for arts education within their districts, communities and schools. They're here today and they've chosen to be here to get an excusal from school to speak on behalf of their communities, because they believe in the power of the arts. Music education is not a luxury, it's a right. It's essential. It's a safe space where students find their voice. They learn to listen to others. They see what's possible, even when the world outside their classroom might tell them otherwise. Nearly 300 schools in our city lack a certified arts teacher. I've heard stories myself of music educators who have left and gone to different districts that have completely changed the students' life due to funding cuts. Many schools have little to no instruments or if they have them, they need significant repairs or in a closet not being used. Students travel long distances to make it to these music education programs. Despite these challenges they show up, they create, they advocate, they connect. Our students shouldn't have to fight for access to the arts. That's why we're asking for your continued commitment to ensure every school has a certified arts teacher, invest in instruments,

equipment and facilities, address transportation and access barriers, support Midori and Friends request for our new citywide music initiative that will help grow the Next Gen program to bring students together across the boroughs, and most critically listen to the students. Let their voices guide us where our investments don't. To close, I want to share the words of one of our Next Gen musicians, "Music gave me a voice when I didn't know how to speak up. It helped me see I wasn't alone and now I'm helping others to see that, too." Thank you for your time today, for standing with us, for my colleagues standing with us as well, and for helping to advocate for the power of the arts. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much. Next panel, David Freudenthal, Lucy Sexton, Judith Insoll [sp?], Skye Kowaleski-- just can't read it-- Martha's Neighborhood. And Lucy's on Zoom.

UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you. And thanks again for the creative time. I'm going to watch that.

UNIDENTIFIED: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Trenton Price [sic]?
You may begin.

2 UNIDENTIFIED: [inaudible]

3 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Lucy, you can go
4 ahead.

5 UNIDENTIFIED: Okay with you?

6 UNIDENTIFIED: Prefect.

7 UNIDENTIFIED: Okay [inaudible]

8 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you. Thanks for
9 holding this. Thank you both for listening to my
10 agitated self. [inaudible]

11 UNIDENTIFIED: [inaudible] Take care.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: David?

13 DAVID FREUDENTHAL: Chair Joseph, thank
14 you very much for the opportunity to testify. David
15 Freudenthal from Carnegie Hall. As you've heard from
16 me and us before has a deep commitment to work with
17 the City Council and with the City's many human
18 services agencies, deep partnerships with a dozen
19 agencies. None more central to our work than DOE and
20 the Office-- the Arts Office. I come today really to
21 underscore the testimony that you'd hear from these
22 extraordinary colleagues and students and educators.
23 I mean, I got to say about the importance of Arts
24 Education in our-- you know, to our schools and our
25 city. I just-- you know, to your all credit, I could

2 not get in to this hearing. I was waiting outside for
3 a while, because you packed the house. So apparently
4 this is a popular issue. A lot of people care about
5 it, so it's good you're holding it. you know, my
6 testimony captures the asks that are of the field,
7 and I want to underscore Kimberly Olsen and the Arts
8 in Education Roundtable's call for the ways that the
9 City Council can help to ensure arts teachers in
10 every school and robust arts education in our system.
11 You know, it makes a case very well. I just note from
12 the, you know, testimony you heard today, I think it
13 really calls to how unique New York's ecosystem is.
14 What other city has this many private cultural
15 partners with this deep commitment to this public
16 school system. I mean, no one else has this. You
17 know, we're all raising private money and doing all
18 we can. It's a massive private investment in our
19 city schools that is incentivized and needs the
20 public support for this to occur. Carnegie Hall is
21 spending \$10 million on this. The City is, you know,
22 not putting in anything near, what we're raising on
23 this work. We're serving like 54,000 students. We're
24 in 350 schools, 550 educators. I mean, just some
25 numbers on, you know, on what we're doing, but all of

our partners are all across the City are doing
extraordinary work in this space. And I do want to--
I appreciate that in the earlier testimony with the
city agencies there was a lot of inquiry about the
CIG's role in this work. Carnegie Hall is proud to be
with CIG, and to underscore that support for the CIG
helps us to do-- and to the cultural community, you
know, through cultural affairs also helps us to do
this work and to underscore the request on cultural
affairs for \$75 million baseline. And I used my
time. Thank you all very much.

SKYE KOWALESKI: Thank you so much Chair
Joseph and Chair Rivera. I'm really glad to be able
to speak here today. I am here to support the It
Starts with the Arts Coalition, calling on our city
to prioritize funding for arts--

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: [interposing] Excuse
me, could you just state your name for the record?

SKYE KOWALESKI: Oh, great. My name is
Skye Kowaleski. I'm here to call on our city to
prioritize funding for the arts in New York City
schools. My name is Skye Kowaleski. I'm the Director
of Artist Program, Learning and Engagement at the
Brooklyn Arts Council. The Brooklyn Arts Council

centers and empowers artists through programs that
build and invest in a self-sustaining Brooklyn artist
community. We envision Brooklyn in which authentic
and diverse creative voices are accessible to all,
where our artists are supported, thriving and
recognized as fundamental to a healthy and engaged
society. And we know that a core piece of realizing
this vision is ensuring that every student across
Brooklyn has access to a quality arts education. We
employ 32 teaching artists across 50 residencies in
over 80 classes serving an estimated 2,500 students
across Brooklyn each year. We offer a wide variety of
programming for students in digital, literary,
performing, and visual arts. We're also proud to
partner with organizations like the Arts in Education
Roundtable to forward equitable labor practices for
our teaching artists so that they can ensure that
they have the resources they need to continue to
deliver responsive arts education to students across
the borough. Approximately 83 percent of our funding
for these programs comes from partnerships with the
City through a combination of CASA and catalyst
grants. So we could not operate these programs
without the steadfast support of our Council Members

2 and the Department of Cultural Affairs, and we're
3 really grateful for your support. However, each
4 year, uncertain budgets and delays in funding
5 notifications and city payments mean that we are
6 either fronting the money to deliver our services, or
7 we are significantly delaying our programs resulting
8 in a loss of arts education for the students.

9 Programming is most effective when it begins at the
10 start of the school year so that students can create
11 routine. The current funding structure does not
12 allow for this. January is usually the earliest that
13 we can start, and we can only do this by taking out a
14 bridge loan to hold us over until we receive city
15 funding which comes with significant administrative
16 costs. Over-archingly inflation and rising costs of
17 labor and administration has left us operating these
18 programs with a growing shortfall. Between 2022 and
19 2024, our operating costs rose 35 percent, yet the
20 funding stayed stagnant. Cuts and continued
21 stagnation in funding has and will continue to
22 necessitate cuts in our programming. If we cut, for
23 example just two weeks of programming from each of
24 our in-school residencies, that's approximately a
25 loss of 300 hours in arts education programming each

3 year. That's an estimated 300 hours of childcare
4 that each students' caregivers are losing as a
5 result, an estimated 300 hours less investment in the
6 livelihood of our teaching artists, and it's 300
7 hours that could be spent nurturing students'
8 creativity, innovation, helping them develop self-
9 confidence, critical thinking, improve academic
10 performance, motor skills, problem-solving skills--
11 the list goes on. Thank you so much for your time
12 today.

13 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you for your
14 testimony. Next panelist, Lucy Sexton on Zoom.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

16 LUCY SEXTON: Hi, I'm here. Can you hear
17 me? Okay, good. Thanks so much for allowing me to
18 testify. I was there in-person at the amazing rally
19 put on the by the New York City Arts in Education
20 Roundtable this morning. My name is Lucy Sexton. I'm
21 with New Yorkers for Culture and Arts. I'm here to
22 support the Roundtable's call for transparency. If
23 we do not know the problem, we cannot attempt to
24 solve it. We need to know how are the kids that are
25 not getting arts in education in their schools? It
is not enough to say we have this many that are

getting it. Where are they, and who's not getting it, and how do we fix that problem? We need the data in order to do that. I want to put forward one other bit of information in terms of where and who. There was an extraordinary re-update to the social impact of the Arts Project Report done by the University of Pennsylvania-- extremely rigorous research effort. And in the update which was just done and just released, it said that the robust arts and culture in a neighborhood has the most impact on low-wealth neighborhoods. So, when you have a low-wealth neighborhood that has lots of arts and culture, the kids test scores are 91 percent higher than in a comparable low-wealth neighborhood that lacks culture and art. So we may not be able to do everything that is necessary and that those neighborhoods need, but we can do this. We can afford to do this, and in fact, we can't afford not to do it. We need to know where the holes are. We need to make sure those holes are being addressed and that every kid particularly in low-wealth neighborhoods has access to robust arts and education in their schools, after school and in their neighborhood. I support the Roundtable's call for restoration of the \$41 million

2 in arts education and a call for transparency, and I
3 also support a call for an additional \$75 million
4 added to the baseline of the Department of Cultural
5 Affairs which supports so many of those cultural
6 organizations which partner with schools and provides
7 services to those kids. Thanks so much for hearing
8 my testimony.

9 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you so much to
10 everyone on this panel. Our next panel--

11 TRENTON PRICE: [interposing] Is there
12 someone else on Zoom, or should I go next?

13 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Okay, sorry.

14 TRENTON PRICE: Am I on? Alright. Thank
15 you, Chair Rivera and Chair Joseph and members of the
16 Committees on Education and Cultural Affairs in
17 Libraries. I'm Trenton Price. I'm the Executive
18 Director of the Salvadori Center. I'm a former
19 middle school teacher, a school leader and district
20 leader for arts education in the New York City Public
21 Schools before joining Salvadori two years ago. At
22 Salvadori we provide STEAM education services, that's
23 STEM plus the A, and in our case, arts and
24 architecture, to schools, afterschool sites, and
25 NYCHA community centers across the five boroughs.

For context, last year Salvadori taught over 12,000 students at 145 different schools and NYCHA community centers across the five boroughs. We are grateful to have the support of multiple City Council Members including yourself through CASA and Digital Inclusion in Literacy grants. I want to thank you for hosting this joint hearing and putting magnifying glass up to arts education and bringing a megaphone to the work that so many of us care so deeply about. As we say, it starts with the arts. At Salvadori we have seen firsthand the impact that investment on arts education can have. For example, our residencies explore and have kids creating community models that reflect their values or monuments of things that are important to them. Amplifying student voice is one of the most powerful things that creative education can do. In East New York and in Astoria last summer, middle school students learned about design and then applied that learning to their NYCHA community centers. In the fall, we were able to then realize those renovations, bringing the young people's visions to life. That's the type of authentic design and arts education that every child deserves. Having worked in arts education for many years, I know it is

one of the first things that can get cut when funding gets tight. But to the contrary, schools and cities that know the true value of arts education know that tight times are when we need to double-down on the arts. A recent study with NYU showed that Salvadori elementary school students showed increased self-efficacy up to a year after our residency. What could be more important than an individual's believe in their ability to succeed which impacts motivation, effort, and persistence? Investing in arts education is an investment in our future. I join my colleagues in urging the city to take action to ensure that students have access to high-quality arts education including extend and baseline the at-risk arts education funding that was previously funded through federal stimulus, ensure every school has a certified arts teacher, restore and enhance support for arts education initiative, increase and restrict the DOE arts funding to be spent on the arts, ensure nonprofit providers have contracts and payments from DYCD in a timely manner, restore and increase baselined for the Department of Cultural Affairs, improve data transparency and accountability from the public schools about arts education access at each

2 school, and expand CASA and digital inclusion and
3 literacy grants which have remained flat for years.
4 I thank you for facilitating this joint hearing. We
5 are grateful to be of service to New York City's
6 children, and we stand ready to do more. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Jeremy
8 Grant? Sophia Guierra [sp?], Giovanni Stall [sp?]-
9 IS93, are you still here? They left. Thank you.
10 Lauren Comito, Jennie Fox, Mansa Micda [sp?] and
11 Cecelia? Salma [sp?]? And Rachel Cohen?

12 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And a quick public
13 service announcement. Is Shya Hawkins [sp?] still
14 here from Urban Assembly Maker Academy? No? Okay.
15 We found the ID. We'll turn it into the Sergeant.
16 Thank you.

17 CECELIA MCDELL: My name is Cecelia
18 McDell. I am a seven years old. People call me Ya-
19 ya [sic]. But I have a question for you? Why do we
20 need school librarians? Well, what if you wanted a
21 book, but you did not have it? That's why we need
22 school librarians. School librarians have so many
23 books. They just might have a book you want. And
24 when I walk past the library, I am so sad when it is
25 closed. I feel so sad that if I was in a cartoon,

3 then I would be in the ocean, because I cried so
4 hard. Please bring back school librarians. Thank
5 you.

6 MARISSA MCDELL: Hi, my name is Marissa
7 McDell [sp?] and I'm a proud public school parent of
8 Ya-ya. Thank you, Ya-ya and Genevieve [sp?]- and a
9 student of the Library Science program at CUNY Queens
10 and I urge you to pass Intro 1125. I want you all to
11 take a moment and close your eyes. Now I want you to
12 picture yourself as a kid in your school library.
13 Can you remember that feeling? Can some of you even
14 remember your librarian's name or face, or the book
15 they handed you, the book you needed at just the
16 right moment, the book that made you feel seen. When
17 I talk to parents, grandparents, and even mayoral
18 candidates, they all get the same sparkle in their
19 eyes when thinking about that space and what it meant
20 to them. And yet, we continue to deprive our kids
21 of this same feeling. Our kids are growing in a
22 mediated world much different than the ones we grew
23 up in, and yet, we are depriving them of media
24 literacy they desperately need. We want our kids to
25 read more and we write articles about how they don't
have reading stamina to finish books, and yet, we

deprive them of book clubs, the joy of reading for
pleasure and a place that not only encourages that
practice, but is an entire location dedicated to it.
We go on about poor literacy scores, and yet, we
deprive our kids of something proven by decades of
research to increase not just reading scores and
comprehension, but all academic standings. We want
our kids to feel safe at school, and yet we deprive
them of community and a third space where everyone
feels welcome. Every single kid deserves a library
and a certified school librarian. Our kids deserve
better. These feelings should not be a privilege.
And I just wanted to add that this shouldn't be down
to the principals to have to make these choices, but
it should be a citywide policy. Thank you for your
time.

RACHEL COHEN: Good afternoon. My name
is Rachel Cohen. I'm the parent of a first-grader at
PS261 in Boerum Hill, Brooklyn, and activist with the
Public School Parent Campaign, Librarians Equal
Literacy, which is fighting to bring back school
librarians in all New York City public schools.
Before my daughter started kindergarten last year, I
just assumed that the library in her school was

staffed with a school librarian and she'd get to go
there at least once a week just like I did growing up
as a public school students in a very small town in
New Jersey. Soon after the school year started,
however, I was excited to see there was a Banned
Books Week event planned in the library, but it was
at that event I learned our school had not had a
librarian for over a year, and the library was being
used as a meeting room. I also learned that our
school was not the exception, but the norm. New York
City Public Schools have lost about 80 percent of
their librarians over the last 20 years. Like me,
many families often assume a certified librarian is
still a given in their child's school, but New York
City's 1,600 public schools only have about 260
certified school librarians on staff, or some other
small number as different people have said today,
leaving the vast majority of schools lacking
librarians. Without certified librarians in place,
students miss out on the numerous data-backed
educational benefits of an active school library
program. Having librarians is proven to boost
literacy, research skills, test scores and graduation
rates. And in this climate of censorship, librarians

also safeguard student's freedom to read. Many of the librarian-less schools throughout the city include middle and high schools which are mandated to have librarians under New York State Laws, and high-poverty schools are even less likely to have a librarian in their budget. A school library is the best, most-equitable opportunity for many students to access and learn to navigate and evaluate an array of books, media, and information technology. The Librarians Count bill, as we've taken to calling Intro 1125, is a crucial first step. We need to know the size and shape of the librarian loss problem before we can fix it, but we need to go farther. We don't need to just know the problem. We need to really address it. and Librarians Equal Literacy is calling on the Mayor, the Chancellor, the City Council to acknowledge the data-backed schoolwide benefits the certified librarians commit to safeguarding all students' right to access and freely read from a robust collection of diverse books, media, and information technology, and staff and fund certified school librarians in all public schools in all neighborhoods and districts in New York City, not just the wealthiest. Thank you.

3 SALMA BAKSH: Good afternoon. It's
4 afternoon at this point. Thank you to the Committee
5 Chair and to the Committee for giving me the
6 opportunity to deliver testimony. My name is Salma
7 Baksh and for the past few months I've had the
8 privilege of working closely with Council Member
9 Joseph as I pursued my passion of ensuring that every
10 single New York City school has a librarian and a
11 library. This is included in an op-ed in Chalkbeat,
12 which you guys should totally check out, and a public
13 awareness campaign. And then I also met Jenny and
14 Rachel, two incredible leaders with Librarians Equals
15 Literacy, and I'm just happy to be supported by so
16 many passionate people. But I'm currently a first-
17 year at Smith College and less than a year ago I was
18 a student at Forest Hills High School in Queens, one
19 of a few New York City high schools with a
20 comprehensive library program. As a student entering
21 high school after quarantine, I needed a space where
22 I felt connected, welcomed and supported, and I found
23 that space in my school library. The second time I
24 entered the library, my school librarian, Ms. Clemmis
25 [sp?] who's here today-- Ms. Clemmis referred to me
by my name. This was a big deal for me as a 15-year-

old because I was one of thousands of students in a
New York City high school. I wondered why she had
taken the time to learn my name. This small act of
kindness reeled me into the library. It was a space
filled with diverse books, games, and crafting
supplies. It was maintained by two passionate and
hard-working librarians. At a time when many teens
are struggling with isolation and mental health
challenges, we need school libraries. For me and
many others at my high school, the library was a
third space and a safe haven, but this wouldn't have
been possible without Ms. Clemmis and Mr. Hetcko
[sp?]. Librarians transform a room of books into
spaces that foster community, socialization and
acceptance. Every student needs and deserves access
to a school library. Yet, Chalkbeat estimates that
only 16 percent of New York City schools has a
librarian on budget. When we neglect our school
libraries and librarians, students have the most to
lose. I was lucky to attend a high school with a
well-funded library and two incredible librarians, but
it shouldn't be up to luck. We must stop leaving
school library access essential education services up
to chance. Inconsistency is inequity. Thank you.

3 JENNY FOX: Hello. I'm Jenny Fox from
4 Librarians Equal Literacy, a parent-led campaign to
5 get school librarians and libraries back into our New
6 York City schools. I want to start by thanking
7 Council Members Joseph and Restler who introduced
8 bill 1125 and have been fighting alongside us since
9 2022, as well as Chair Rivera and the other members
10 here today. We're now in 2025 and living in the era
11 of Project 2025, Moms for Liberty, book bans, and the
12 obliteration of DEI initiatives. Make no mistake,
13 there's a reason why school libraries are a part of
14 this playbook, a fact that only confirms how crucial
15 they are for students and our society. Educating our
16 kids and our future populous is more important than
17 ever. we must do all that we can to protect against
18 those who seek to stifle literacy, those who seek to
19 stifle access to information and the skills to
20 evaluate it, those who seek to erase representation
21 for our most vulnerable student populations. School
22 librarians are on the front lines of protecting our
23 students' rights to access information, to read
24 freely, and to be represented. School librarians are
25 not just to have. They're now more critical than
ever. Sadly, New York City schools have lost an

estimated 80 percent of certified librarians in the last 20 years, shuddering school libraries across the City. There are people sitting in Washington right now who would like nothing better than an ignorant, illiterate, New York City populous. Are we going to give them what they want, or are we going to become a beacon for other cities, a bastion of literate, information-savvy next-generation New Yorkers? Intro 1125 is a first step in solving the school librarian loss problem. Pass this bill, but don't take your foot off the gas. Pass this bill, double down and go harder, ensure that our schools are meeting every literacy need of every student, not just those in the wealthiest neighborhoods. Make New York City schools models of literacy, intellectual freedom, equity and representation. Give them librarians and libraries. Thank you.

LAUREN COMITO: Hello. Thank you so much to Speaker Adams, Chairs Joseph and Rivera and all the committee members for the opportunity to speak today on Intro 1125. My name's Lauren Comito. I'm a librarian, a public librarian here in New York City and Executive Director of Urban Librarians Unite, a 501C3 library worker organization that advocates for

2 and supports urban library workers across the U.S.

3 I'm also a New York City public school parent, PTA

4 Treasurer because I can't ever say no to signing up

5 for things, and I really need to learn how to do

6 that. as a public librarian, I am so fully and

7 completely unqualified to fill the role of a school

8 librarian and I have occasionally heard-- none in

9 this room-- elected officials say, well, the public

10 librarians can go do it. No I can't. You cannot put

11 me in a room with 30 kids for like an entire day. I

12 cannot handle that. I can take them in dribs and

13 drabs with maybe their parents taking care of them,

14 and that is-- that's my role. School librarians are

15 special. They are-- I don't know that I've ever seen

16 one sit still. Somehow they manage to serve the needs

17 of entire school communities, sometimes between three

18 schools in one building, meeting the curricular needs

19 of all of the teacher's research needs. They're kind

20 of magical unicorns-- with an ever-changing

21 curriculum. The lack of school librarians creates a

22 resource gap that public libraries cannot fill.

23 There is no way for us to do it. If you've ever

24 tried to find a book on a specific topic for a

25 research project with like an eight-year-old, and

3 you've gone a couple days too late, you're just sort
4 of out of luck. We don't have 30 copies with books
5 on Benjamin Franklin. It's just not a think. But
6 also a public librarian I get to see the results of
7 what happens when we don't have a comprehensive
8 library education in New York City schools, and that
9 looks like adults who can't find books
10 alphabetically, occasionally. It looks like adults
11 looking for work who are trying to create a resume
12 and don't-- aren't able to fully evaluate the, you
13 know, validity of the website they're using to do it,
14 spend an hour or two hours inputting all of their
15 work information only to get to the end of that
16 website, and be told they have to pay 10 bucks for
17 the PDF that they just spent all of that time
18 entering their information for, because they couldn't
19 look at it and say, oh, no, not this one. That's
20 what school librarians teach. They teach you how to
21 evaluate information, and what happens when we don't
22 have them is that. So, the first step to addressing
23 the school librarian shortage is to determine the
24 extent of the problem, and I urge you to support
25 Intro 1125 and require the DOE to provide this

3 information so we can get people what they need to
4 live their lives.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.
6 Tia Powell Harris, Rachel Watts, Eric Edwards, John
7 Skidone [sp?], Gina Costanza [sp?], Ariel Savransky,
8 Courtney Boddie, Roy Rosewood, Christine Gavin.

9 RACHEL WATTS: Good afternoon. My name
10 is Rachel Watts and I'm the Executive Director at
11 ArtsConnection. We're a nonprofit arts education
12 organization that's been providing arts programming
13 in New York City Public Schools for 46 years. I've
14 been affiliated with the organization for 27 of those
15 years, and over the years we've probably served
16 somewhere in the numbers around three million young
17 people. I had a prepared speech that you have there,
18 and I think the questions that came from the Council
19 Members, from all of you, really inspired me, and I
20 think I want to just focus on two elements of the
21 questions that have to do with what do we mean by
22 equity and what do we mean by mandated requirements?
23 New York State is not one of the 29 states in the
24 U.S. that requires the arts as a core subject. So
25 the things that are these benchmarks that we have are
really suggestions and it's why we're in school--

there are schools that don't have arts specialists teaching the arts in the schools, because those questions that you were asking about, how do we know how are those things being lived up to? It's hard to when you don't have the arts as a core subject in the school system. The other thing is what we mean by equity and access. I've worked in-- ArtsConnection works in all five boroughs in all art forms, and we have been able to get CASA grants, very luckily we've been able to get those kinds of grants. We've been at a school on the Upper East Side that got two CASA grants. When we work in schools in Brooklyn and the Bronx where we know there's need, it's like, what we mean by equity, and really looking at what that is. I'm also about to say two bad words. I'm a Black woman, the first Black woman to-- and the first woman and the first person of color to lead ArtsConnection. I started the role in 2020, and in that year, that was the year that DCLA started to cut our funding. Over the last five years we have lost 66 percent of the funding which has cut me down at the knees as a leader in terms of being able to sustain the work and really be impactful in the schools. So those are the two things that I just wanted to focus on. And then

the other thing that has happened for me in the 27
years of advocating for the arts is realizing it's
not that people don't value the arts. That's that
I've always been saying, people don't value the arts.
It's actually they do value it, and they're nervous
about young people being able to problem-solve.
They're nervous about young people being able to
think critically. They're nervous about young people
being able to ask questions, and that's why it's
always something that gets cut right away when
there's a difficult moment in our lives. Thank you
so much for your questions and the time you're
allowing us to speak to all of you today. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Next,
please.

COURTNEY J. BODDIE: Thank you. Thank
you for the opportunity to give testimony on behalf
of the New 42 and the New Victory Theater. My name
is Courtney J. Boddie, Vice President of Education
and School Engagement at New 42. Additionally, I am
the co-chair for the Arts Committee, advocating for
arts access to the Mayors Panel for Educational
Policy. I'm a constituent of Chair Rita Joseph's
district, and I'm also the daughter of an educator

and a librarian, so I'm very pleased to be here. At the New 42 we take deep pride in fulfilling our mission to make extraordinary performing arts a vital part of everyone's life from the earliest years onward. Research has proven that quality early arts exposure can have a positive impact on social/emotional development of young people. Through the new Victory Education program we engage our school partners in neighborhoods throughout the five boroughs to create accessible, more authentic pathways to pre-k through 12th grade students to experience transformative power of the arts amongst their peers. The education program is underwritten by two million dollars and is one of the largest and most expansive providers of live performing arts for kids in New York City bringing affordable, dynamic arts education programming to 130 to 150 school partners each year. Seventy-six percent of these school partners represent New York City Public Schools, 70 percent are classified as Title I, serving students living in low-wealth neighborhood, and a handful-- quite a few numbers actually-- of our partner schools are District 75, serving students with disabilities and some D79 schools, particularly

on one in East New York that we partner specifically
with their librarian. This year, our 138 school
partners have access to deeply subsidized two-dollar
tickets to school-time performance at our historic
New Victory Theater. Free in-classroom workshops led
by our trained teaching artists to deepen the
experience of the live presentations, and provide a
creative space for innovative play, meaning making
[sic]. We also provide free summer dance programming
and arts-based resources for educators to implement
the arts in their classroom. And our Bring Your
Family program provides over a thousand free
performance ticket annually to families living in
NYCHA housing. Access for all is a core tenant of
our organization, and we hear time and time again
that often coming to the New Victory is their
student's first time going to a theater, being on a
train for a field trip, and generally feeling
radially welcomed. We positively impact up to 19,000
New York City students each year, and beyond
improvements in writing achievements, school
engagement, and higher education aspirations, New
42's own quantitative research proves that exposure
to live performing arts strengthens collaborative

skills, nurtures self-confidence and optimism. And I just want to close with a quote from one of New 42 youth core ushers and a Queens College student, Augustin Romeo [sp?], "New 42's work is important because it reaches a lot of different people. It gives young people the opportunity to have a deep love for arts and adults the chance to connect with their inner child. That's the kind of organization and city I want to be a part of." We thank you for striving to activate equitable arts access for all New York students, and I and New 42 are proud to be partners with the City. Thank you.

TIA POWELL HARRIS: My name is Tia Powell Harris and I serve as Vice President of Education and Community Engagement at New York City Center. It is an honor to testify today about the work we do to bring high-quality accessible arts education to New York City public school students. City Center, a CIG, was founded in 1943 by Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia as the people's theater, and our commitment to that founding vision continues today. Alongside our on-stage dance and musical theater productions, art education and community engagement programming, these offerings are designed to meet students where they

are, in classrooms, in our theater, and in community centers throughout the five boroughs. In the 2023-24 school year, our arts education work engaged nearly 7,000 students and educators across 50 schools and we are on track this year to serve nearly 10,000. These programs include a wide variety of in-school workshops and semester-long residencies in both dance and musical theater. Importantly, our work does not end in the classroom. Each participating student is invited to attend a live performance on our main stage through our Lynne and Richard Pasculano student matinee series. These matinees paired with custom study guides and professional development opportunities for educators are a cornerstone of our approach, helping students connect what they learn in school to the world-class artistry they see on stage. Our production of Rag Time had a particularly profound impact on our students and teachers. As one teacher shared, "Opportunities like these show students what is possible in theater and reinforce that shows are for them, too." The production's historical themes also sparked meaningful dialogue. After act one ended with the death of an unarmed Black woman, one student asked her teacher, "Why did

they kill Sarah when she wasn't going to hurt anybody?" Opening the door to critical conversations that extended well beyond the stage. Accessibility is a core value at City Center. We offer deeply-subsidized tickets to ensure our performances are within reach for all schools, with additional discounts for those in our residency program. I want to thank the City Council for your leadership and your investment in arts in culture across five boroughs. As you continue to examine the equitable accessibility of arts education, I urge you to consider the impact of programs like ours and the opportunity that lies in expanding them to reach even more New York City students. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

GINA COSTANZA: Thank you to Chair Joseph and Chair Rivera. I stand in support of It Starts with the Arts Coalition calling on our city's prioritized funding for arts in New York City Schools. My name is Gina Constanza, and I'm the Music and Model Teacher at PS123K in Bushwick, Brooklyn. I once read that every child is the light of someone's life, and I have the privilege of teaching 500 of the lights of Bushwick every single

day. My classroom is a place where students can show up as they are. Each class, they get to make music, learn something, have fun, and get a big hug if they need it. It's a place where my students feel like they belong even if they're currently unhoused, if they are new to this country, or if they have a gender, a different gender expression or identity from their peers. Last week, I had a non-speaking student use an augmented and alternative communication device share eight unique words. Another previously non-speaking student spontaneously said xylophone and then played a xylophone for her peers. Now she stops by my classroom at the same time every day. I think she's still trying to relive that high of that performance. I have been able to provide the best education possible to my students because of federal funding, a series of grants from several nonprofits in this room, and a generous grant from the City Council. My classroom is fully stocked with instruments and technology. Thanks to that grant from the City Council this year, my students are currently collaborating with professional artists to beautify our school by painting a mural that expresses what they love and value about our school

3 community. I'm asking the City Council to not only
4 keep investing in the education of my students, but
5 to expand the investment to more communities. Arts
6 education should be available to all students, not
7 just some. As the immediate past President of the
8 Music Educators Association of New York City, also
9 known as MEANYC, I have seen what happens in the
10 communities who do not have the same resources that
11 my students do. I'm calling upon the City Council to
12 provide equitable funding of the arts to all schools
13 to ensure opportunity for access for more students
14 across NYC. About one in five schools do not have a
15 certified arts teacher. If they do not have arts
16 education in middle school, how will they be prepared
17 to audition for the screen arts high schools? How
18 will they gain access to educational opportunities
19 that will change their lives. I met you, Council Member
20 Joseph, at the middle school arts audition boot camp
21 where my summer job is. we help kids from Title I
22 schools prepare auditions to get into the screen arts
23 high schools, but I'd like to imagine a world where
24 that summer job didn't exist, where we didn't have to
25 provide those opportunities. I'm asking the City
Council to ensure universal access to art education

by mandating that every school has a certified arts teacher. It's time for arts programs to thrive, not only in some zip codes, but across the entire city. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

ARIEL SAVRANSKY: good afternoon. Thank you, Chair Rivera and Joseph, for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Ariel Savranksy. I'm the Director of Government and Community Relations at the 92nd Street Y. We are a nonprofit culture on community center in Manhattan. Since 92nd Street Y's founding more than 150 years ago, we have offered services for people of diverse racial, religious, ethnic and economic backgrounds. By offering scholarships, subsidies and opportunities for New York City Public School students to attend events at 92nd Street Y, we ensure that all people can participate in our programming. I want to start out by saying thank you to the Council for our eight CASA awards, one of which is Council Member Rivera's district, PS116. We provide a creative movement class for kindergarteners and first graders. These enable us to reach kids who otherwise would not have access to after school programs. Our arts programs reach over 7,000 public school students and teachers

across all five boroughs. Programming provides opportunities for in-depth classroom visits from top teaching artists and innovative curriculum design, interaction with 92nd Street Y main stage talent from around the world, and unparalleled access to professional internships and other early career opportunities. Arts programming includes opportunities for elementary school students to explore a variety of dance and music genres, opportunities for high school students to attend live concerts or readings at 92nd Street Y for free and interact with featured artists, a series of workforce development programs, and Teen Arts Week which is a citywide annual celebration of the arts created for teens by teens. This past March, so a few weeks ago, we had 45 cultural institutions across all five boroughs offer classes, workshops and performances for over 1,000 teams throughout the City and some of those organizations were represented here today. 92nd Street Y has built strong collaborations with our schools through proactively engaging with principals, teachers and arts liaisons and understands their unique needs. Partial or full subsidies are provided to most participating schools, ensuring that cost is

not a barrier to participation. Approximately 80 percent of the FY25 partner schools have Title I status, and over 70 percent of students come from families living in poverty. Ensuring equity and access is integral to our mission, and we look forward to continuing to work for the New York City Council to ensure that all New Yorkers can access high-quality arts and culture programming. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

ROY ROSEWOOD: Thank you, Chair Joseph and Chair Rivera, for the opportunity to speak on Intro 1125. My name is Roy Rosewood, a resident of City Council District 29 and a public school librarian of 11 years in the City of New York. I'd like to begin by sharing with you just what that means. I started in the lower east side at New Explorations for Science, Technology and Mathematics, a public K to 12 school. At NEST+M [sic] I balanced read-alouds for kindergarteners with teaching seventh graders how to evaluate websites and high school seniors how to cite their sources, sometimes, all in the same day. I also hosted open mic's for students to share their talents in a safe space, ran creative writing workshops and gaming clubs for all ages, and

always made sure books found their way into the hands
of young readers. I'm now at the High School for
Construction Trades, Engineering and Architecture, a
Title I CTE high school in Ozone Park where I wear
many hats, a teacher of research skills, college
essay coach, the coordinator of our schools, peer
tutoring program, a collaborator on social/emotional
learning events, and a partner with community-based
organizations such as Day One and South Asian Youth
Action, also known as SAYA, on programs to better
support our students. During my time at CTA, I've
also connected our students with the Civic Engagement
Commission's annual People's Money Project, and with
a note of appreciation to Council Member Schulman
who's unable to join us today and her staff, on the
participatory budgeting ballot initiatives for
District 29 all so that our students can make
connections between their lives and the power they
have as citizens. I share all this with you to give
some context for the great range of services provided
by any number of school librarians throughout New
York City running their own school library programs.
Some of that number you know is constituents. Some
of that number have even submitted testimony from

today's hearing. Yet, for all that, I cannot tell you just what that number is. That number, the number of school librarians in New York City Public Schools, as well as the number of school libraries, we do not know how many there are. There is not enough reliable data as of now to know how many there are, let alone what district and neighborhoods they can be found. That is why this bill is so important. We have to know where we need more school libraries and where we need more certified school librarians so that we can then work to help those neighborhoods and school communities get what they need. With the data gathered from this bill, we will finally know what neighborhoods need the most support building or renovating libraries in their schools so that students will have dedicated spaces to learn such skills as to how to do research, to fall in love with reading and to become lifelong learners and give back to their communities. This bill will let us also know which school districts have thriving programs that can be used as models. There's a reason that you can't spell the word accountability without the word count, and for school libraries and school librarians, to count in all the ways I've shared with

the committee today and all the ways that make school
libraries so invaluable to our communities, they must
first all be counted. Thank you.

CHRISTINA GAVIN: Hello. My name is
Christina Gavin and I'm a librarian at Midwood High
School in Brooklyn. It's in Council Member Louis'
district. I live in Council Member Joseph's district.
My students enjoy accessing a library that's full of
diverse contemporary books in different languages and
formats. There are lots of graphic novels, tons of
manga, board games, arts and crafts materials, and
computers. Our library is home to multiple clubs,
and we've also hosted author visits where students
are able to come together and meet an author, ask
questions about become writers themselves and have
their books signed. Students do their homework,
collaborate with their peers and study for tests.
The library is a wonderful space where students can
choose their own adventure, learn, explore and create
without worrying about grades or wrong answers.
School librarians also collaborate with classroom
teachers to provide instruction on research methods
or identifying misinformation. Unfortunately, this
is my 13th year in the DOE. I worked for five years

3 as a special ed teacher at three different school
4 buildings in the Bronx, and until I became a
5 librarian myself, I had not worked in a school that
6 had a functional library. Many of my students report
7 that this is the first time they've had access to a
8 library in their school or they had one in elementary
9 school but not in middle, or vice versa, and this is
10 a common refrain across the City. That's
11 unacceptable. New York City Public Schools are the
12 largest school district in the country, in the city
13 that's the hub of industry, the center of the
14 financial world. In many regards, New York City is
15 the most important city in our country, but we're not
16 leading in school library access. There are about
17 1,600 public schools, but only about 300 certified
18 school librarians which works out to about one
19 librarian for every 3,000 students, but we know that
20 not every student even has access to a librarian. I
21 say about 300 certified school librarians, because in
22 June 2022 a reporter filed a FOIL request and found
23 443 people with the certified library-- certified
24 school library need a specialist degree in New York
25 City DOE. In May 2023, another reporter filed a FOIL
request and found 260 librarians. So we can see--

it's very unlikely that there was a drop over 200 in
one year, so this data is not precise. It can't be
disaggregated by borough or district unlike the more
robust Art Counts reporting that we heard about
earlier. The New York State Commissioner of
Education's regulations mandate that every school in
New York State have a school library staffed by a
pedagogue and that every secondary school have a
certified school librarian. However, for example,
the Harlem Council of Elders frequently cite the
statistic that about 90 percent of Harlem secondary
schools do not have a library. It is well beyond
time to right this wrong. Every New York City public
school students deserves a librarian in every school.
Intro 1125, the Librarians Count bill brings us one
step closer to that reality and to giving our
students the library access they deserve. By letting
us see the scale and magnitude of the problem so that
it can be addressed borough by borough, district by
district, school by school. I also want to make one
real quick clarification. Earlier Council Member
Restler asked about the Teacher to Librarian program
and how many librarians are in the pipeline. It was
mentioned that in cohort four there are 100 future

librarians. There are 100 future librarians in every single cohort since from 124 which is a span to process of more than four years. There are not 100 people in cohort number four. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Che Bufford, Arjan Singh, Dogra [sp?], JL Malor, Lyndsay Werking, Leslie Arenza [sp?], Shia Malcolm Hawkins [sp?], Lisa Labadie [sp?].

LYNDSAY WERKING: I'm just noting that Che and Arjan had to leave, but I'll mention them briefly. So, they're not going to be joining us at the table.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, hold on one second.

LYNDSAY WERKING: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Francesca Thomas [sp?], Ambreen Qureshi, Jacqueline Cruz, Dr. Thomsioh, Tom Lebinger [sp?], Nancy Bedard.

LYNDSAY WERKING: Thank you, Chairs Rivera and Joseph, for the opportunity to testify today. It's always a pleasure to be here. My name is Lyndsay Werking. I am the Director of Development for the American Composers Orchestra. I'm honored to be joined today by my colleague JL Marlors, my

colleagues Che Burfford and Arjan Singh had to scoot out. Argan is teaching, so that is a good for him to not be able to stay, and Che had to go to class. For 30 years, ACO's Music Education programs have positioned music composition as a gateway to creative thinking, problem-solving and self-expression in partnership with New York City Public Schools. Accessibility is a priority. ACO teaching artists like JL and Arjan have dual language skills, extensive experience teaching classes with multi-language learners, and experience working with students with disabilities. Che Bufford was introduced to our composition classes in high school, and it put him on a path to a musical career. He wrote his very first works as a junior in high school, and he is now a 24-year-old pursuing his doctorate in composition at the Columbia University-- in class as we speak. Our biggest challenge in delivering music education to New York City students is navigating the timing of applications and awards from the Department of Cultural Affairs and the Department of Education. This is the single largest impediment providing consistent services to our needy student. I call upon this committee and the New York

City Council to address the delays in the funding process and make it easier for organizations to partner with schools. We understand that the Council discretionary awards are for a single year only. These are incredibly important resources for arts organizations and schools. The very delayed timing of these awards is problematic as discretionary awards should be moved out to avoid these asap after the Council makes designations. This year we waited until February for awards that were made last June. ACO's 2023-24 partnership with M428 whose population consists almost entirely of newly-arrived immigrants, was funded by an arts partnership grant for multilingual learners and students with disabilities from the Department of Education. For the current school year, not only was this funding not renewed, the notification came during the final week of September. As a result, M427 told us they could not continue the partnership. This left us little time to seek alternative funding source to keep two-year partnership moving forward into a third year we need awards to be announced at the beginning of the fiscal year in order to provide the sort of consistent year-round high-quality services that our students

deserve. Furthermore, our teaching artist deserve to know what classes they will be teaching and what income they will be receiving with more than a month or in extreme cases, a week's notice. Finally, we need to lighten the bureaucratic load on principals and assistant principals that they have better bandwidth for creating connections between the activities going on within their walls and the larger community. We are grateful that arts grants from the Department of Education exist. However, the department requires that a school staff member submit the grant. Even though our grants writer supports the creation of the grant proposals and materials, they cannot finish the final step. This requirement places and undue burden on the school. Thank you for your time and consideration.

JL MARLOR: Chairs Rivera and Joseph,
thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is JL Marlor. I am a composer, teaching artist and the Education Coordinator at American Composers Orchestra. ACO has partnered with NYU to examine the impacts of music education on mental and behavioral health. Early results show consistent improvements in engagement, mood, anxiety, depression, fatigue,

and self-esteem. The research is proof of what I experience every week in the classroom. The work of a teaching artist is powerful. It often feels like social work. I encourage the committee and City Council to create and expand programs that link and embed arts programming in academic classrooms. At Lennox Academy, ACO provides free weekly musical instruction to students who otherwise would not get this hands-on instruction. ACO is consistently removing barriers. Students who would not self-select music are often the students who benefit the most from these programs. Let me tell you one story of one of these students who I taught at IS229 in the Bronx. This student had a great personality. She was inquisitive, loud, and expressive, but she was also disruptive. I felt that she was desperate for attention and care. Through the ACO curriculum, we created identity-based original songs. I asked questions like, what did you hear growing up. What songs play in your home, and what kind of music does your family like. She almost always declined participation. I always supported her. Over the course of the year, I checked in with her regularly without judgement. It was powerful for her to be in

a playful environment where she could completely be herself without barriers. She began participating more. She began participating more. She ended up writing a song about never giving up, being strong, and the importance of resilience. We performed it together, me playing guitar and her singing in front of the class. During our check-ins she shared with me that she was in an unsafe environment and was being physically abused by a parent in her home. As she built up self-confidence and esteem, she finally felt comfortable and empowered enough to get help from a school counselor, and over the next few weeks, she was moved into a different home situation, one that she was moved into a different home situation, one that she chose. Music education gave her the agency to change her reality. I watched her turn her disruptive habits into action. She very literally found her voice. I must emphasize that this change happened because I was in her classroom three times per week, starting at the beginning of the school year. We don't see these kinds of results when our classes happen only once a week or start in the middle of the school year. I echo Lyndsay's call to the Council to address delays in the funding process

3 and make it easier for organizations to partner with
4 schools. With school budgets and grant notifications
5 confirmed in July, our work would be transformed, and
6 by extension, so too would the lives of thousands of
7 New York City students. Thank you.

8 NANCY BEDARD: My name is Nancy Bedard
9 and I'm a Senior Staff Attorney in the Education
10 Project at Brooklyn Legal Services, Legal Services
11 NYC. Thank you for this opportunity to testify at
12 this hearing, and all your efforts to support
13 students in public school. We also deeply appreciate
14 City Council support of [inaudible] which we know
15 provides legal representation to low income
16 communities throughout New York City, and our mission
17 is to fight and seek racial, social, and economic
18 justice for low-income New Yorkers. For decades
19 studies have shown that education in arts decreases
20 the odds of school suspension, improves students'
21 academic, their behavior and their occupational
22 aspirations. While all students benefit from an arts
23 education, students with low social economic status
24 make most significant gains. Studies have found that
25 low-income students with experience with the arts
stay in school longer than their peers, are three

3 times more likely to earn a bachelor's degree and
4 much more likely to work in a professional career.
5 Access in the arts improves academic performance for
6 low-income students and can serve as a potential
7 means to educational reform. Some statistics
8 unfortunately about suspension in New York public
9 schools in 23-24, 27,724 total suspensions with 38
10 percent of all those suspensions went to Black
11 students, 38 percent of them went to students with
12 disability. Although these student groups only make
13 up 20 and 22 percent of the entire school population.
14 When students are suspended, they're more likely to
15 struggle academically, engage in risky behavior, drop
16 out of school, and end up ultimately with lower
17 paying jobs. New York City is a global cultural
18 capital and one of the most diverse cities in the
19 world. Historically, though, neighborhoods have been
20 segregated based on income and race, and our public
21 education system unfortunately has failed to provide
22 arts education in an equitable and sufficient way.
23 As a result, access to arts education in schools
24 unfortunately are even more limited to low-income in
25 Black and Brown students and communities in a
disproportionate way. In 2007, the New York City

Department of Education aimed to address these inequities, but in practice the gap has only widened. In 2014, the Comptroller released a report indicating that schools in the poorest neighborhoods, including south Bronx and central Brooklyn, consistently fell shorter in compliance with these requirements. So, what I'd like to say in closing is that we cannot continue discrimination in arts education in New York City, and we ask that we close that gap. Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify.

JACKIE CRUZ: Good afternoon. Thank you to Chairperson Rivera and Joseph and the committee for this opportunity. My name is Jackie Cruz. I am a retired bilingual art teacher of 30 years in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. I am now the interim Acting President of NYCATA, New York City Art Teachers Association, a committee of the UFT, and I just want to speak about the irony of what is going on in this city. New York City is considered the arts capital of the world. We have the Met, MOMA, the Whitney and many more museums, along with Broadway, Julliard, Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, Dance Theater of Harlem, New York City Ballet, Ballet Hispanico to name a few. All of these arts places are-- create a

very lucrative tourism industry in our city, and yet, our New York City students who should be fully exposed to the plethora of arts around them are not adequately. If we face the irony of what's going on, we have to do something to improve art education and make it equitable for all. It is when students have the opportunity to immersed in the arts and to learn to create and forge their own masterpieces that they will truly thrive and understand the human needs for the arts. With every society that our students study from the past, it is through the arts that students learn most. It is how people attain knowledge of culture and history. How can we only teach them to take tests to show their understanding? We must ensure that every school has the funds and certified art teachers to give our children the ability to flourish and grow as artists. Back in 2001, when we were undergoing 9/11, our fifth graders were horrified at what they witnesses out of the windows of our school, and our very next project starting in October was to-- I gave them black and white paint, and I taught them about Picasso's [inaudible] and it created amazing large pieces that hung on a wall outside our auditorium, and one of those pieces is

3 now on permanent display at the 9/11 museum. It is
4 with the arts that kids are nurtured to promote
5 social/emotional wellness. Studies have shown that
6 art improves academic outcomes, prepares students to
7 enter the workforce and increases parental
8 involvement and attendance rates. For some kids, it
9 may be an art class that keeps them coming back to
10 school every day. This city must establish a
11 realistic equitable foundation for arts instruction
12 in every school to support pathways to a bright, bold
13 future for all. That's why we're asking for your
14 support to guarantee arts education for all. Thank
15 you.

16 LISALA BEATTY: Thank you so much, Chair
17 Joseph and Chair Rivera, for this opportunity. My
18 name is Lisala Beatty and I'm the Director of Music
19 and the Brain. We are a program of a nonprofit
20 called Building for the Arts, and for the last 20
21 years I've spent my time thankfully with this program
22 in hundreds of schools in New York City as we support
23 music education. Music and the Brain is a
24 foundational school day music program and we
25 integrate musicianship and piano learning as a
pathway to lifelong skills for kindergarten through

12th graders. Neurological research shows that learning to read music and play an instrument like the piano is akin to a full-body workout for the brain. The arts help motivate every kind of learner to succeed, and our New York City students really need focus. They need critical and creative thinking, fine motor, social, and emotional skills to succeed. Certified music and other New York City arts educators struggle to find resources to teach. They need curriculum materials, instruments and classroom space to give students meaningful arts instruction, and the arts teachers of course have a tremendous opportunity to impact most students. I see every student in the building. But they need community support. Music education in particular strengthens fine motor skills, confidence, literacy, math skills, and more, and for 28 years Music and the Brain has improved school and life skills for more than 58,000 New York City students annually. We impact 160 music teachers each year, and we are currently partnered in 152 public schools across each of the five boroughs. That also indicates 49 City Council districts. We provide schools with-- who have music teachers a robust general music curriculum

3 and a diverse repertoire, 16-station piano keyboard
4 labs, a web platform with a virtual piano that
5 students can access at home, and ongoing support for
6 music teachers. Columbia University research shows a
7 correlation between school partnership with Music and
8 the Brain and higher scores on third grade
9 standardized ELA and math tests, including English
10 language learners, along with dozens of other areas
11 of impact. We never charge New York City schools for
12 our resources, and we haven't done that for now
13 almost 30 years. But we have over 35 New York City
14 school applications on a waiting list, and Building
15 for the Arts, our parent organization, has applied
16 for \$50,000 of City Council support to maintain and
17 expand our program through three citywide
18 initiatives. In closing I'll just say that I am a
19 proud product of New York City Public Schools. I'm a
20 performing vocalist. I've gotten to travel the world
21 because of music. Everything I've done has been
22 impacted by music education, and I thank you for your
23 time and consideration and support for arts
24 education.

25 AMBREEN QURESHI: Thank you, Chair Joseph
and Chair Rivera and the City Council, for your

steadfast support of arts across New York City. I'm
here as a member of it Starts With the Arts Coalition
calling on our city to prioritize funding for the
arts education. My name is Ambreen Qureshi and I'm
the Executive Director of EVC, Educational Video
Center. EVC's Media Arts Education programming and
broader initiatives help young people heel, grow,
thrive as learners, leaders and artists. We build
capacity of teachers in public schools to create
transformative learning environments and use original
media to disrupt systems and narratives harming BIPOC
youth and their communities. For the last 41 years,
EVC has supported positive life and career pathways
for over 30,000 BIPOC and working-class young people.
We've trained over 1,100 teachers and created 245
highly-acclaimed youth-produced documentaries that
have gone on to win over 180 awards, including two
White House honors and an Emmy. Alumni from our
programs have gone on to work at the Urban World Film
Festival, CNN, and become members of the
International Cinematographers Guild. As the economy
tightens and more budget cuts loom, financial
constraints are already impacting the EVC community
and everyone here testifying. Some of our partner

schools simply do not have the funds for art teachers, yet their students already facing barriers to graduation require arts credits to graduate. These schools increasingly rely on EVC as a provider of credit-bearing arts programming to ensure that their students stay on track to graduate while also exploring possible careers in the media arts. Yet, we often have to wait list schools and students because the demand is so high and funds are so scarce. Over the last three years alone, EVC has served almost 1,700 students who have secured over 2,500 credits towards high school graduation and earned over half a million dollars in paid internships. Students use their EVC films and portfolios to apply for colleges including youth like Alexis from Brownsville who never had made a film before EVC. She received a full scholarship to Ithaca College, graduated from a top film school in New York, became the President of the Black Student Union, and is now working as a production assistant on Marvel's Daredevil. Without access to our free programs, Alexis and the many young people like her might never realize their dreams to become artists and help make our city a more vibrant, creative, and

inclusive democracy. Alexis is an inspiration for so many, like our current student Frannie who-- from East Harlem-- who will share her testimony shortly. We join everyone testifying here today in asking the City to prioritize funding. We join everyone testifying here today in asking the City to prioritize funding for arts education programs. We also encourage the City Council to increase the overall allocation to the citywide afterschool initiative enrichment. Thank you again for your time and support.

FRANCESCA THOMAS: Good afternoon everyone. My name is Francesca Thomas, but you can call me Frannie [sp?]. I prefer to be called Frannie. Thank you. I am a youth producer at Educational Video Center, or EVC as we like to call it. I am currently a senior at Lower East Side Preparatory High School. I am from East Harlem, born and raised, and I have been in New York City my whole life. I am the daughter of two immigrant parents from Honduras. Immigrants deserve to be heard and share their stories, and not be judged for the color of their skin. My journey at EVC has been a long one. I've been in EVC youth documentary workshop program

for two years now, and have made seven documentaries about stories that me and my peers want to tell from our perspective. All these documentaries I did with a group of students from diverse backgrounds, and I really like working together with them. We learned a lot from each other. EVC is a safe space where students can be themselves and we work together as equals in our classroom. I have learned and grown a lot at EVC over the last two years. I really like interviewing, doing research, using the green screen, and editing on the Dolby. I like helping my peers who are just learning to edit, too. And did I mention, I like making new friends? I am currently making my final documentary this semester on the housing crisis in New York City before going off to college. I am proud to share that I pitched this topic to my group and students voted on it. A film that I made with other students last year called "The Grass Isn't Always Greener" about workplace exploitation of migrants was selected to the Haitian Dominican Film Festival and I got to attend. It was the first film festival I have ever been to and our film was the only one made by high school students. I was nervous because I didn't know what to expect from people

1 watching the film, but they loved it, and we won an
2 award. At the festival, I realized how much EVC has
3 changed my life and how much work me and the group
4 put into this documentary. It was a special moment I
5 won't ever forget. I will be attending City College
6 in the fall and will be studying film production. If
7 I didn't have access to EVC's program I wouldn't know
8 what I wanted to do in the future. I would have been
9 stuck for the rest of my life trying to figure things
10 out. I am speaking out today because I want to make
11 sure all students across New York also get access to
12 life-changing arts programs like I did. This will
13 make our city a better place. I think the City
14 Council should fund organizations like EVC and many
15 more arts organizations, because they bring diverse
16 students together to just create. They help build
17 young people's confidence inside and out and help
18 make art about social issues in New York City and the
19 rest of the world as well. If funding is cut for
20 arts education across all schools, it will be very
21 sad because art is a way for students to express
22 themselves and also to learn skills for future jobs.
23 Also, EVC stands on business all the time.
24 Throughout making films, EVC has helped me and other
25

youth to speak out, stand up what we believe in, and
fighting for our power and rights and not letting
others tear us down. We all have a story to share.
Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for
sharing. That was awesome. Loyi Malu, Anthony Ball
[sp?], Amanda Selwin [sp?], Janice Rumi [sp?], Just
forgive me. Eve Wolf [sp?], Nicole Touzien, Shirley
from PEP [sic]. Arlene Laverde, Brian Wagner [sp?]?
You may begin. Start on this end.

NICOLE TOUZIEN: Chair Rivera, Chair
Joseph, members of the committee and staff, thank you
for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of
Dancewave where I serve as Executive Director.
Dancewave is intentional with its efforts to increase
accessibility to dance. We explicitly name equitable
access as part of our mission, vision and core
values, and we also back this promise through focused
action. I'll use my time to share some examples for
your awareness and continued advocacy. Our keystone
program brings together youth across 50 New York City
public schools for cutting edge dance and performance
training with professional choreographers. We
provide free and low-cost access to over 500

3 deserving and under-resourced young artists each year
4 at the Dancewave Center through city and private
5 investments. While we focus heavily on financial
6 accessibility, we acknowledge that inequity takes
7 many shapes and that there are other barriers to
8 participation. With NEA funding, we piloted a
9 community company program, bringing our signature
10 performance training curriculum from the Brooklyn-
11 based Dancewave Center out to partner sites like
12 MS308 in the Bronx. In communities where arts
13 programs like this do not exist, Dancewave is able to
14 provide real and needed solutions. Dancewave Through
15 College and Beyond is another program seeking to
16 tackle systemic inequity specifically regarding
17 access to college and careers in the arts. We
18 provide high school youth with the information and
19 support necessary to navigate the college search
20 process, including the opportunity to audition for
21 dance programs without the expense of travel and
22 audition costs for each school. Each year, we
23 transition 400 youth into collegiate and professional
24 training programs at over 50 colleges with one
25 million dollars in scholarships awarded to
participants. Despite the current climate, Dancewave

remains steadfast in stewarding life-affirming arts experiences for all New Yorkers. we look to our elected leaders in the New York City Council to stand with us, to advocate for our work and to ensure that the City of New York remains the cultural capital of the world by deepening its investment in the arts and cultural organizations that keep our city thriving. Thank you for your time and interest in learning more about our work and our deep commitment to the people of New York City.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Can you state your name for the record?

NICOLE TOUZIEN: I sure can. It's Nicole Touzien at Dancewave.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

LOYI MALU: Good afternoon Chair Rivera, Chair Joseph and staff and members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations and Committee on Education. My name is Loyi Malu and I'm the Director of Student Services Inclusion and Engagement at Third Street Music School Settlement in Council Member Rivera's district. Third Street is a nonprofit community music school that provides on-site and off-site music

3 and dance education programs to over 6,000 students
4 annually. I'm testifying today to call on our city
5 to prioritize fiscal year 26 funding for arts
6 education in New York City schools and communities.
7 The arts are a core component of a well-rounded 21st
8 Century education. Despite the numerous benefits,
9 access to arts education in New York-- for New York C
10 City youth remains inequitable, and public schools
11 serving lower income communities are historically the
12 most likely to face funding shortages. They tend to
13 have fewer partnerships with cultural organizations
14 and their students earn 25 to 30 percent fewer arts
15 credits. Meanwhile it is lower income students who
16 stand to benefit the most from consistent access to
17 arts education. Lower income students with high arts
18 participation have lower drop-out rates, score higher
19 in math and English and are three times more likely
20 to graduate college than their peers who are not
21 enrolled in arts programs. Third Street is one of
22 hundreds of cultural organizations bringing arts
23 education programs into New York City communities by
24 sending professional teaching artists into our vast
25 network of 35 public schools and community sites,
some of which we've partnered with for 30 years.

3 Through these partnerships we reach over 4,000
4 students annually with arts education programs. I
5 administer Third Street's partnerships with five
6 public housing and community centers where our arts
7 education programs have a deep impact on students in
8 these communities. Third Street partners with
9 University Settlement to deliver a broad range of
10 music and dance community programs to these sites,
11 reaching over 200 students with afterschool arts
12 education in a safe and supportive environment. Over
13 95 percent of students at Third Street served through
14 these partnerships live below the poverty line,
15 making our programs all the more critical, impactful
16 and necessary. Arts education is essential to young
17 person's development, equipping them with the
18 skillset they need to succeed in high school, college
19 and beyond. Third Street requests your support to
20 grow our essential education programs, and I implore
21 the council to invest in New York City's youth and
22 ensure that students of all backgrounds can access
23 invaluable arts learning opportunities. Thank you for
24 the opportunity to testify today.

25 PAUL MENARD: Good afternoon, Chair
Joseph, Chair Rivera and members of the Committee. My

3 name is Paul Menard. I'm the Assistant Director of
4 Institutional Giving at Education Through Music, and
5 I'm a last-minute swap-out for Doctor Janice Weinman
6 Shorenstein who is our Chief Executive Officer.
7 Education Through Music is a nonprofit organization
8 dedicated to bringing music education to underserved
9 students in Title I schools throughout New York City.
10 I am here today to emphasize the urgent need for
11 equitable city funding to support arts education in
12 our public schools and to express deep concern over
13 the proposed amendments to the foundation aid formula
14 which are projected to reduce New York City's public
15 school funding by \$358 million. Fifty-two percent of
16 New York City schools still lack a fulltime certified
17 music teacher on staff, leaving many students without
18 access to the transformative power of music
19 education. For over 30 years, education through
20 music has provided K-12 music education at under-
21 resourced schools as part of their core curriculum,
22 ensuring that under-served students, particularly
23 those in Title I schools receive a comprehensive and
24 equitable education. ETM currently partners with 55
25 schools to support 20,000 students every week across
all five boroughs providing trained music teachers,

instruments, a robust curriculum, and professional development for educators. As you have already pointed out, Chair Joseph, research consistently shows that music and arts education improves student's engagement, enhance academic performance, fosters social/emotional learning, and even contribute to higher graduation rates. Furthermore, music has been shown to play a critical role in helping migrant and low-income students feel a greater sense of belonging in schools, increasing their engagement in overall wellbeing. We are deeply concerned that the proposed changes to foundation aid formula will only widen this gap, disproportionately affecting students who rely on public education the most. If enacted, the amendments could lead to the elimination of essential arts programs, depriving tens of thousands of students of the opportunity to engage in music and creative learning. As the State re-examines its funding formula, we urge policy-makers at both the city and state level to explicitly incorporate dedicated support for arts education. We urge the City Council to prioritize investments in arts education, ensuring that organizations like Education Through Music can continue to provide their

3 life-changing curriculum amid the looming \$350
4 million cut to New York City Public Schools under the
5 revised foundation aid formula and potential federal
6 reductions to the Department of Education. Thank you
7 for your time and your commitment to the future of
8 New York City students.

9 BRIAN WAGNER-YEUNG: Good afternoon.

10 Thank you for inviting stakeholders in arts education
11 to testify today. My name is Brian Wagner-Yeung and
12 I am the Neurodiversity and Accessibility Chairperson
13 for the New York State School Music Association or
14 NYSSMA. I am also a music educator for New York City
15 Public Schools, proudly teaching at P370, a District
16 75 school in south Brooklyn. I'm also an adjunct
17 instructor at CUNY Brooklyn College where I prepare
18 future music educators and an independent educational
19 consultant. Per the Every Student Succeeds Act, the
20 arts are included in the language of the law as
21 providing a well-rounded education for all, not some,
22 but all. Every student should be designed a pathway
23 for success, including through the arts. As you have
24 heard throughout today, accessible arts education
25 offers endless benefits for all. I have seen
countless times why access to arts education benefits

every student. Here are some examples from my own classroom and experience. Participation in music has increased my students' self-esteem, self-worth and self-concept. Participation in music has impacted language, social skills, emotional regulation, independence, empowerment and empathy. You talked earlier about meeting IEP goals through the arts. This is what I do every single day with every single student. Access to music has created a culture of welcome and belonging. You also talked about SEL earlier. Again, what we do every single day with all of our students. The music and the arts are sometimes the only subject area where students can thrive or found success. I have found this with my students. Access to a high-quality music program allows students to have future career pathways through the arts. Access to local and statewide artistic experiences stay with our students for the rest of their lives. As a NYSSMA Chair and as a previous NYSSMA student, I remember going to NYSSMA festivals, and I-- those are memories that stay with me for the rest of our lives. Music and the arts reaches every student academically, emotionally, socially, personally, culturally, intrinsically, and more. The

arts bring joy, passion, voice, emotions, release,
safety, escape, identity, compassion, and
relatability to all. How can we not ensure that
every one of our students has access to this? These
examples are due to access to arts education in our
schools. Therefore, I urge you to fully support arts
education in all of our New York City schools. To do
this, we can ensure arts education is fully-funded
and accessible to every student in every program in
every school. All schools have the funds to hire
certified arts educators to develop high-quality
instruction and experiences. Opportunities to use
the arts to support lifelong learning are provided in
all of our schools, and the arts should establish
partnerships with our New York City communities and
cultural institutions and develop pathways to career
and readiness that will support our local economy.
Thank you for your time.

SHIRLEY AUBIN: Good afternoon, Chair
Joseph, Chair Rivera, committee members, City Council
Members. My name is Shirley Aubin and I'm the Queens
Borough President Donovan Richards Appointee for New
York City Public Schools Panel for Educational Policy
and a long-time parent leader, and I'm speaking on my

own capacity. And thank you for the opportunity today. I'm in support of amending the administrative code to reporting on school librarians and the uses and access to school libraries in schools, because libraries will play a key support and pivotal role in ensuring equity access in the arts and cultural relevance sustaining education. The historical inequities in resources and opportunities are commonly seen in un-invested schools and communities in marginalized schools in marginalized groups. All libraries and cultural arts institutions and in the international intergroup relations can help close those gaps in these inequities. I believe the library is the ultimate community center, the ultimate community center in our communities, because it service infants to senior citizens. Libraries are supplemental resources and support for all schools, especially internet access, workshops, programs, technology and digital context. Libraries also give us direct access to the arts through books, films, pictures, music, etcetera, but also the cultural path that they provide to visit these cultural institutions in our New York City. the libraries not only prevent-- have culturally relevant and

3 sustaining education, also the experience in the
4 environment along with the cultural institutions are
5 linked to shape our wellbeing of our well-rounded
6 scholar and community members. Could you imagine the
7 impact if we have many public libraries in all our
8 public schools with all the resources they can have
9 to supplement them and create those environments to
10 where they can flourish. We need to ensure that
11 cultural institutions are in each-- enough of them in
12 each of our boroughs and have them partner with
13 schools within and outside of the boroughs-- will
14 prove beneficial. If they're exposed to arts at a
15 young age, we know that significant positive effects
16 on children's cognitive, social, emotional, and
17 academic development. For instance, they'll score
18 better on tests. Low income students is four more
19 times likely to be recognized for academic
20 achievement and three more times likely to receive an
21 awarded for school attendance, and is very key,
22 especially in the high schools to give them other
23 reasons to make sure they show up for school. Re-
24 emphasizing CRC and discovery of self-voice, arts is
25 enormous impact on social/emotional learners and
increase emotional intelligence. Seventeen percent

improvement in peer interaction-- 20 percent increase
in emotional regulation. I'm going to skip down
because you have my testimony at hand. Besides self-
esteem, there are three key points for my testimony--
not to be cut off from the budget. We want to
improve math scores and reading scores. We should
not be cutting the arts in the schools, because the
arts enhance in grades in fabric of core subjects and
show real life applications, and the arts show more
related issues on how it impacts our lives, how we
can relate to it, the students to the subject
matters, and we need to push STEAM and not STEM to
ensure equity within our-- within our communities.
And just diversify and offer more pathways to this.
in closing, libraries and cultural institution ties
to cultural and responsive sustaining education and
social/emotional wellness which aligns with New York
City Public Schools, New York City Reads, New York
City Solves, Art Counts, New York City Cares. It
simple, art opens the mind to possibilities,
beauties-- and beauties that individuals can produce
and see in the world. It resonates. It has a
lasting impression, greater appreciation of arts.
And bottom line, these initiatives promote critical

3 thinking and problem-solving versus wrote learning.

4 Do we want communities that are filled with robotic-
5 like members or do we want caring, inspiring,
6 innovative, solution-based approach minded,
7 productive community members making our city excel
8 and beautiful. Thank you for letting me speak a
9 little longer.

10 EVE WOLFF: Good afternoon, Chairperson
11 Joseph, Chairperson Rivera and all the members of the
12 committees. I'm Eve Wolff, Executive Director of
13 Dancing Classrooms. Thank you for holding this
14 important hearing. For 30 years, Dancing Classrooms
15 has cultivated engaged learners, collaborative
16 leaders, and inclusive spaces to the joyful art and
17 practice of social dancers. We are proud to be one
18 of the largest dance education providers to New York
19 City schools. Each year, our teaching artists bring
20 our culturally responsive programs to more than
21 12,000 students and over 100 schools and afterschool
22 sites across all five boroughs at no cost to students
23 or families. Principals and teachers have seen how
24 our programs foster creative, academic and
25 social/emotional skills like motivation,
perseverance, connection and listening that helps

3 students become engaged learners. Access to dance
4 education helps kids build active, healthy habits and
5 equips young people against mental health challenges
6 like isolation and low self-esteem. In a recent
7 evaluation of our early elementary program in
8 Community School District Six, teachers showed clear
9 gains in student engagement and attendance on days
10 dancing classrooms programs were offered. As one
11 teacher put it, "After the students had dance class,
12 they returned to the classroom in good spirits and
13 energized. It definitely motivated them, especially
14 students who struggle in the classroom." Additional
15 research show that after experiencing our 10-week
16 program for fourth through eighth graders, 95 percent
17 of students-- that is nearly all of them-- showed
18 increased engagement and motivation. Eighty-nine
19 percent saw an increase in self-discipline and focus,
20 and 93 percent strengthened their collaborative and
21 team-building skills. The benefits of arts education
22 should be available to all students, not just some.
23 To that end, I join my colleagues in the It Starts
24 with the Arts Coalition in urging our city to
25 maintain its strong support for high-quality arts
education through the restoration and enhancement of

3 dedicated funding and initiatives. Thank you for the
4 opportunity to testify. The Council's support on
5 arts education has been and remains critical to
6 enabling every student regardless of background or
7 ability to reap the academic and developmental
8 benefits of the arts. We are proud to partner with
9 New York City to deliver the world-class education
10 that we know will empower our children to lead,
11 healthy, productive, and rewarding lives. Thank you.

12 ARLENE LAVERDE: Good afternoon, Chairs
13 and members of the Committee Council. Thank you for
14 the opportunity to speak in support of bill 1125,
15 annual reporting on school librarians and library
16 access in New York public schools, and thank you to
17 the New York City students who have spoken so
18 eloquently on the importance of school libraries. I
19 am Arlene Laverde, a recently retired New York City
20 educator with over 30 years of experience. I have
21 served as President on New York City School Library
22 Association and the New York Library Association, and
23 I'm currently the advisor for the School Media
24 program at Queens College, preparing future school
25 librarians. Throughout my career I have seen
firsthand how essential school libraries are and

certified librarians to school students' success.

New York's state law mandates school libraries in all
schools and certified librarians in secondary

schools. Yet, many schools are not meeting this

requirement, leaving students without access to these

critical resources. Certified librarians do far more

than manage books. They are certified teachers,

teachers of information, media, and digital literacy,

and champions of independent reading, skills crucial

in today's world. Research shows that independent

reading improves student performance across all

subjects, and librarians create the environment that

nurtures a love of reading. It is no coincidence that

many of the top-performing New York City schools,

Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Tech, Bronx Science, Townsend

Harris where I just retired from have certified

school librarians running active school libraries.

However, the shortage of certified school librarians

is a critical issue. Queens College graduates

approximately 15 to 20 school librarians each year,

yet the demand for qualified professionals far

exceeds this number. Without sufficient numbers of

certified librarians, it becomes difficult to place

student librarians in student teaching experiencing,

impacting the training and preparation for the next generation of educators. It's a catch-22.

Principals must be held accountable for their failure to prioritize hiring certified librarians, as this directly impacts the quality of education and

resources available to students. I'd like to share

how school libraries, specifically my school library

has impacted New York City students. At Townsend

Harris I can tell you I remember vividly a student

walking into the library with a book and pointed at

the cover and said, "She looks like me." This young

African-American student was like, "If there were

more books like this, I would read more." Well, I

took her by the hand and I said let's find them all.

We walked the library discovering book after book she

could connect to, and that moment changed her

relationship with reading. I collaborated with a

senior government class to teach constitutional

rights focusing on the freedom to read, and I will

skip on to the end. This bill is essential to

transparency and accountability. Every student

deserves access to a library, a certified librarian

to help them develop the skills they need to thrive.

Thank you for your time and your support.

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so, so
3 much. Sami Shumays, Ginger Meagher, Deanie Seldahom
4 [sp?], Megan Muttreja, Jessica Patrick, Frias Dabul
5 [sp?], and Mefor Mumbo [sp?]. Tai Zimi [sp?]? We
6 lost them? Samantha Lee? Jocelyn Chen [sp?], Sharon
7 Brown? Is anyone else in the room that registered
8 and I did not call your name? No? That's just the
9 supporting cast? Yeah?

10 SAMI SHUMAYS: Thank you, Committee
11 Chairs and Council, for sticking through this very
12 long hearing. My name is Sami Shumays and I'm Deputy
13 Director at Flushing Town Hall, one of the small six
14 and a steering committee member of both the Latinx
15 Arts Consortium of New York and the Cultural Equity
16 Coalition of New York. Flushing Town Hall serves
17 Queens and all of New York City with extraordinarily
18 diverse culturally relevant programs including music,
19 dance, visual arts, and theater programs, arts
20 educational programs for students and senior
21 citizens, and re-grants [sic] and professional
22 development programs for artists in small
23 organizations in Queens. We are a DOE contractor
24 serving around 15,000 students annually. Social
25 impact of the arts has been well-documented, but I'd

like to offer a perspective that I haven't heard anyone say in this room so far in this hearing which is that equity is more than just about making sure that everybody has equal access to the arts. It's also a question of which arts and cultural forms people have access to, especially young people. Arts educational offerings in the DOE should reflect the rich tapestry that is New York City. forms like western, classical music, ballet, and fine arts have been rightly celebrated, but for example, so too should other classical and folk art forms such as Chinese opera, Indian contact [sic] dance, Korean Minoi [sic] painting be celebrated in our schools as well as other art forms that have been passed down through generations. Whether our students come from households that play salsa or Chopin, they should know that their arts are valued and uplifted as much as their neighbors. They should understand that their creative spark and their cultural heritage matters. When we uplift the arts and cultural forms produced by people from around the globe, it can be a transformative experience, building stronger community as well as spreading the benefits of the arts and culture more justly. Representation is

important, not just in our faces, but in our languages, music, dance, cuisines, religions, and social forums. The message to our children is that they have value, their voice matters. Their participation in school matters. Their participation in our city matters. Flushing Town Hall, we've always insisted on this type of inclusive representation, and like many of our fellow cultural institutions, we are able to provide arts education programs to New York City schools that do include diverse cultural forms which otherwise would not be available if it weren't for outside institutions like ours. Some of our CASA programs in 2025 include traditional Mexican dance, Korean dance, music and painting, Columbian music and dance, West African dance and drumming. We have master teaching artists on our roster offering additional things like Mexican paper arts, Native American history and culture, Caribbean drumming, etcetera, just to name a few. This is one reason among many that cultural institutions are a necessary partner of the DOE and need to be funded in order to survive and continue to provide our services. I'll just quickly summarize. We're facing a 53 percent cut in the Mayor's budget.

We're going to be decimated unless you all baseline and add \$75 million. I'm also very supportive of the \$41 million in arts education funding-- It All Starts with the Arts. And one last thing, I really appreciate you calling for transparency and really pressing the Administration on transparency in all these ways, and I'll note that the bill passed three years ago, 1184, calling for transparency at the Department of Cultural Affairs, but I've yet to see the enforcement of that bill. Yet to see the Department of Cultural Affairs report transparently, but the City Council passed that bill already. So, with all your calls for transparency, I hope that there's some enforcement.

GINGER MEAGHER: Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to speak to this joint oversight hearing and for chairing this, Council Member Joseph and Rivera. My name is Ginger Meagher and I am the VP of Programs at TDF, formerly the Theater Development Fund, the nation's largest nonprofit service organization dedicated to building and sustaining audiences for live performance. I'm here today to speak in support of setting a baseline budget of \$75 million for arts and culture in FY26

and to urge the City Council to support the individuals and organizations that connect New Yorkers to the arts, many of whom have spoken today and who are our partners. TDF is driven by the conviction that the arts belong to all of us. Access to the arts is correlated with benefits for individuals and communities, associated with lower rates of depression and loneliness, lower crime rates, and increased civic engagement. At TDF, we realized these benefits by lowering the barriers to access for all, but especially for young people. Each year, TDF school programs bring over 13,000 public schools students from 49 council districts to the theater free of charge. We supplement tickets to shows with in-class workshops with trained teaching artists or post-show discussions with theater luminaries. For students with hearing and vision loss we offer accessible performances featuring open captioning, ASL interpretation, audio description and touch tours. In 80 percent of the schools we serve we are the sole partnering arts providers. We do this to ensure that young people feel welcome to their birthright of New York City theater and are represented in all of their glorious diversity, and

we see results. Last year, 94 percent of teachers we worked with observed in their students higher self-esteem and confidence, and a greater ability to empathize with their peers. To further this, last year we launched a new initiative called the Graduation Gift that invites all New York City public and charter school graduates to get a free TDF membership and come and see a free Broadway show on grad night this year, May 7th. To date, we have enrolled 5,500 graduates. I want to thank you for the many years of support the city has provided to TDF. This year we've applied for new funding for TDF school programs through the Speaker's List education programs for students and support for arts instruction. TDF is not eligible for CASA. So, City Council initiative funding is critical to our ability to reach more students, teachers, and schools. In a time when fear and uncertainty are daily feelings for the students in this city, we can give them tools and ways to express themselves with joy and humanity. We can help them to resist depression and speak in their authentic voices because art and theater give us those tools and make us better for it. Thank you for your time today.

3 MEGAN MUTTREJA: Good afternoon, Chairs.

4 Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak today.

5 My name is Megan Muttreja. I'm a resident of Brooklyn

6 New York and a parent to two children in the New York

7 City Public School system at PS261 in Brooklyn. I'd

8 like to take my time to cover two items. The first

9 is what it's like in a public school library when

10 there is no fulltime certified librarian. Our

11 library occupies a sunny room on the second floor of

12 our building. On the occasions when we have been

13 able to get a part-time librarian with grant funds or

14 PTA money-- which I'll add is not very equitable--

15 there has been someone able to check books in and out

16 and do some general organization of the room, but

17 that's about it. Currently, we have no one. Parents

18 are expected to step in, but we are an inadequate

19 substitute. Return books are piled high at the desk

20 with no one to check them in. Our nonfiction section

21 is dated with no one around to read the old books and

22 purchase new books. Parent volunteers open the room

23 in the mornings two times per week so they kids have

24 an opportunity to get books, but truly this is Band-

25 Aid that does nothing to provide what a fulltime

professional can bring to the room. Even when we have

had part-time help, I've been struck by how many parent volunteers have to come in to shelve books just to keep the room functional. For some kids like mine, there will always be plenty of books at home, but for many of the kids at our school, the library is the primary place where they can access books they can read for enjoyment. And I'd like to add that DOE representatives here today talked about Zora [sic] as being some sort of a replacement for a library. A digital library is not sufficient replacement for a physical library and a professional librarian. We would never throw art supplies on a table and call that an art class, and we shouldn't be calling a room with books or a digital library the same thing as a certified librarian. I also want to draw attention to an important part of a certified librarian's job, digital literacy. It's a different world than what I grew up in, and I'm regularly thankful I did not have to deal with social media as a kid. Following the inauguration in January, my 10-year-old starting coming home from school with stories about a friend who was buying into all sorts of MAGA fringe ideas from the internet. I had to explain to him that no, Kamala Harris did not kidnap 300 Ukrainian children.

A school librarian is a key part in teaching kids about reputable sources, explaining that not all things we see on the internet are true and giving kids the skills they need to tell truth from fiction, which is sadly more important now than ever. We've been assured that digital literacy is taught by teachers in the school, but with everything else teachers need to get through, this has been woefully inadequate. A librarian is trained for this. It's part of what they do. Thank you for supporting Intro 1125.

JESSICA PATRICK: Good afternoon Chair Joseph and Chair Rivera and members of the Committee. My name is Jessica Patrick and I live in Brooklyn's School District 15. I'm the parent of a transgender third grader. I'm also the parent lead of our school's Gender and Sexuality Alliance and an active member of the PTA. Today, I'm here as a parent and advocate for LGBTQ+ students in our public schools, especially our transgender and non-binary youth. Our GSA meets every month in our school library, but our students can't check out the books. Why? Because we don't have a certified librarian. I'm here in support of Intro 1125 and to speak about the quiet crisis

unfolding in our schools and how it's impacting some
of our most vulnerable students. For LGBTQ+
students, school can be a place of isolation,
harassment, or invisibility, but a library staffed by
a trained and compassionate librarian can offer
something radically different. It can be a
sanctuary, a place to find not just books, but
belonging. Librarians are often the first adults to
connect with students about their-- about finding--
with affirmation information about gender identity,
queerness and mental health. They curate stories
where LGBTQ+ characters aren't defined by their
struggles, but celebrated in everyday ways with joy,
love and possibility. They build community, offer
care and create refuge. Without them, these
lifelines vanish. This matters. LGBTQ+ youth are
four times more likely to self-harm and worse, and
that risk is even higher for trans and non-binary
kids. Affirming stories, trusted adults and safe
spaces don't just help, they actually save lives, and
yet, our city is letting this critical support system
disappear. Librarians are not just keepers of books.
They are protectors of the truth, defenders of
inclusion, and sometimes the only adult in a school

3 who quietly tells a queer or trans kid, "You belong
4 here, and you are enough." We must do everything we
5 can to bring librarians back into all of our schools
6 for all of our children, and the first step is this
7 bill and finding out how many public schools in New
8 York City are missing librarians. Thank you.

9 SHARON BROWN: Hello, my name is Sharon
10 Brown. Before I begin, remember Israel. Release the
11 hostages. Let Yahweh's people go. Defend Israel.
12 The Cultural Affairs, Library International--
13 libraries should not have homosexual and sexually
14 graphic material for children. Children should be
15 barred from these books as well as other banned books
16 of a sexual nature. They've had drag shows and
17 different things like that in school, and they
18 cracking down on that, and I'm glad that they don't
19 have the librarians to give them the books about
20 homosexuality and transgender. This is Judeo
21 Christian nation. We are currently putting prayer,
22 Bible and different things like that back in school,
23 and we are kicking out the transgender agenda. So,
24 the libraries are not going to have these books, but
25 we can update the libraries with technological-- and
make them technologically savvy as well as books and

paper materials. They can also get into the technological age. It can be updated easily and also build more from scratch. There's also audio, video, podcasts, movies screening of biblical nature as well as other things like that, but we are eradicating the transgender agenda from schools, and we don't want that--

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Can I also ask you to stay on topic.

SHARON BROWN: in the library.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The hearing is about arts education and ensuring education-- equity and access.

SHARON BROWN: Okay, so we do not want the children have to access to homosexual material, but we want them to have access to Judeo Christian--

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Ma'am, I ask you to respectfully stay on topic.

SHARON BROWN: Yes. The access I would want them to have--

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] And equity.

SHARON BROWN: is Jewish and Christian material. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Is there
4 anyone else left in the room who wishes to testify?
5 Please see the Sergeant at Arms and fill out a
6 witness slip. We will now turn to virtual testimony.
7 To our virtual panelists, once your name is called a
8 member of our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant
9 at Arms will set the timer and give you the go-ahead
10 to begin. Please wait for the Sergeant of Arms to
11 announce that you may begin before delivering your
12 testimony. First panelist, Noni Lenore Jones?

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

14 NONI LENORE JONES: Good afternoon
15 esteemed committee, Council Members, and all in
16 attendance. My name is Noni Lenore Jones and I'm a
17 retired English teacher of the New York City schools.
18 I appreciate the opportunity to give my testimony in
19 support of art in education. I began teaching
20 English at my beloved boys and girls high school in
21 the 70s, and yes, I'm dating myself, because I want
22 you to know I'm still an educator in my own school,
23 [inaudible] Academy. As an English teacher in a boys
24 and girls high, I came in and did my five classes and
25 I was very happy to do so. I love teaching. I also
taught dance after school, traditional African dance

3 and Diaspora. My wonderful supervisor, Mrs. Spooler
4 [sp?], noticed that I was being there pretty much
5 many days until five o'clock teaching dance after
6 school after my five classes. So he said to me one
7 day, "Wow, why don't you teach in the theater
8 production class?" And I said I can teach arts in
9 school as well teach English? I was so, so thankful
10 that I did so. And as a result, in my mind, I
11 realized I could put the two together in my one day
12 working day from 9:00 to 3:00, teach English and
13 teach dance. So, as a result of putting the two
14 together, I realized the importance of art in the
15 education in my day, in my students' day. Let's
16 respect the importance of art in education. Put it
17 in our schools. Keep it in our schools along with
18 science and math is so important, but let's let the
19 students see in their mind the importance of art,
20 because it's incorporated in their day from 9:00 to
21 3:00. So, as a teacher, I'm happy to say that my
22 school, my students did well in academics, you know,
23 reading and writing, but those who didn't do well, I
24 asked them what would you like to do. I had to get
25 my students. I had to make sure that they could
learn. So they would say oh, I might like singing or

2 playing an instrument. So I said oh, yeah, okay then.
3 Let's talk about that. What instrument would you
4 like to play? So that is a way I was able to get to
5 my students. Is the word art in the word heart? I
6 think it is. Because the arts help us get to the
7 heart of the matter. Our academic [inaudible]. We
8 got two sides as they say, left, right, all that
9 [inaudible]. So when my students would engage in
10 teaching-- I'm talking about what they love from
11 their heart, yes, indeed. Okay. We went to an
12 exhibit in a museum. I took them to listen to music,
13 and then of course, I would say [inaudible]

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you for your
15 testimony. Your time's expired.

16 NONI LENORE JONES: Yes. Thank you so
17 much and I do hope that we recognize the importance
18 of art in our education in our schools. Thank you so
19 much.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Next
21 panelist, Zalykha Maria Mokim, Lulu Fogarty,
22 Jacqueline Cofield, Emily Grant.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

24 ZALYKHA MARIA MOKIM: Hi. Thank you so
25 much for having me. I really do appreciate it. My

3 name is Zalykha Maria Mokim. I'm one of the few
4 librarians left in our city's public schools. Before
5 being a librarian I was an ENL [sic] teacher as well
6 in our greater city, and today I'm also speaking as a
7 public school mother. To everyone hearing my
8 testimony today, I'd like to ask you when you were in
9 school did you have a library and did you have a
10 librarian? Do you believe that children in our city
11 should have the opportunity to [inaudible] to have a
12 safe [inaudible] learning and to work with a teacher
13 on their own independent inquiry [sic]? Throughout
14 our city libraries have been gutted. Don't get me
15 wrong, they're spending money on renovations, but
16 these renovations are being done without librarian
17 staffing. We're also building new buildings. For
18 example, I live here in Queens. We're going to have
19 a brand new building on Northern Boulevard, but I
20 wonder are these rooms that are being called
21 libraries going to be accessed to their full
22 potential? Because if not, if it don't have a
23 librarian, it's just a space. In our budgets books
24 are being bought. The collections are not being
25 curated or developed with the population of students
in mind [inaudible] to come. Private schools in our

3 city offer access to the most affluent children, but
4 our public schools are denying the basic educational
5 rights to a library with a librarian, and also the
6 arts. I want my child and all the children in our
7 city to have the same opportunities as those kids who
8 go to Dalton and Spence [sic]. Libraries are not a
9 luxury. Libraries are a necessity. Thank you so
10 much for having my voice.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Lulu Fogarty?

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

13 LULU FOGARTY: Thank you. Hello and
14 thank you to Chairs Joseph and Rivera and City
15 Council for your support of arts education. I'm Lulu
16 Fogarty, a New York City public school kid and
17 Director of Education at Symphony Space. I'm also a
18 new mom of a future New York City public school kid,
19 and I'm calling our city to prioritize funding for
20 arts in New York City schools. Symphony Space is a
21 performing arts and arts education organization
22 located at 95th and Broadway. Since 1980 our
23 education programs have reached over 300,000 New York
24 City students in all five boroughs from the pre-k to
25 12th graders who participate in our global arts
workshops and performances to the ESOL and ABE

learners and All Right [sic], our unique model for arts based adult literacy. And Dan Gutman visited our day camp for book lovers two summers ago. For over 40 years our global arts program has led New York City school students on a journey of exploration and celebration of traditional arts from around the world. We've served over 17,000 public school students in 50 schools this year alone. For some students these programs are a window into unfamiliar cultures. For others, our programming provides a mirror in which they see their own histories represented and valued. As for conveying our impact, I leave that to a teacher at PS75 who said, "As a result of what your Native American teaching artists do, my students are able to see and witness that Native American culture is very much alive." While we can't change the past, we can preserve history to teach the young people that will lead in the future. That is what the arts do. On our stages and in our classrooms they open up the world. Our artists and staff prove that the arts aren't merely add-ons to the school day, but that careers in the arts are essential to the economic tapestry of our city. We all agree that every child should have access to the

arts, and we've heard the statistics all day. Arts organizations like Symphony Space are an essential stop-gap for student access to the arts. And as education, art and basic human rights are under attack nationally, New York City has the opportunity to be a shining beacon for the nation by investing heartily in arts education just as we've enshrined equal rights into our state constitution. That is why I join my colleagues of the It Starts with the Arts Coalition to call on you to support initiatives such as baselining arts education funding, requiring DOE funding to be spent on the arts, increasing funding for the DCLA and prioritizing timely processing of contract renewals and extensions. The support of the City Council and this dedicated committee is crucial as we collectively keep New York City the most vibrant arts landscape in the world. We are so grateful for your service and for your tenacity in this challenging time. Thank you for your time and consideration.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Jacqueline Cofield

[sp?]?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Emily Grant?

3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

4 EMILY GRANT: Thank you, Chair Joseph,
5 Chair Rivera and members of the Committee for the
6 opportunity to speak. My name is Emily Grant and I
7 currently serve as co-interim Executive Director of
8 Kaufman Music Center. Located in Lincoln Square,
9 we're home to Merkin Hall, Lucy Moses School, and
10 Special Music School, a K-12 New York City public
11 school that offers free music education to 300
12 students. At Special Music School students receive
13 free daily music instruction, private lessons,
14 ensembles, music theory, music technology,
15 performance opportunities, all woven seamlessly into
16 their academic day. This model works. Special Music
17 School students consistently rank among the top
18 performers on our state exams, and we've maintained a
19 100 percent graduation and college acceptance rate,
20 while 31.5 percent of Special Music School students
21 are on the economic need index. These high academic
22 outcomes are not a coincidence. We show the impact
23 that an arts program can have, but the results are
24 not just about music. They're about holistic human
25 development and we've heard that over and over today.
We know also it takes tremendous resource to realize

one's potential as a young musician, and so many children in our city face barrier to accessing even the most basic elements of arts education. It's why we created Pathways, a program designed to support low-income elementary and middle school students with personalized plans to help them overcome the specific obstacles each may face to thrive as musician learners. The support includes free private lessons, a free instrument, travel [inaudible], help with audition prep, whatever it takes to open the door. We believe every child deserves to experience the profound transformative benefits of the art. Students need the arts woven into each and every day of their school lives, not just for enrichment, but as an essential part of their path to adulthood. We are deeply grateful for the Council's past support and respectfully ask for continued support for Special Music School, Lucy Moses School which is the home of our Pathways program, and our special initiative funding request to expand our music tech program. And thank you again for your time, your investment in and advocacy on behalf of New York City's young people, and your attention to this critical issue.

3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is Jacqueline
4 Cofield online? If the following panelists are
5 logged on, Jacqueline Cofield? No?

6 JACQUELINE COFIELD: Hello? Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Hi.

8 JACQUELINE COFIELD: It wouldn't let me--
9 okay. Can you hear me? Okay. Hello. Sorry I have
10 to go outside and pick my daughter, so I'm not sure
11 if you called me earlier. Okay. So I'm glad that I
12 didn't miss you. So, good afternoon Chair Rivera,
13 Chair Joseph and members of the Council. Thank you
14 for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Dr.
15 Jacqueline Cofield. I'm an [inaudible] Teaching
16 Fellow at the Whitney Museum of American Art, a
17 former New York public school teacher, and a proud
18 member of New York City Arts and Education Roundtable
19 [inaudible] committee. Across classrooms, museums,
20 and community-based programs I've seen the life
21 changing power of arts education, especially for
22 Black, Brown, multilingual and economically
23 marginalized students. I now work with pre-service
24 teachers and in-service educators at City University
25 New York, teaching at Hunter College as an adjunct
assistant professor, helping them build inclusive

curricula that integrates the arts across disciplines, but too often their passion runs up against underfunded schools, limited resources and systemic barriers. Citywide data shows that 31 percent of 8th grade students met New York State learning standards for the arts last year. Nearly one in five New York City public schools, 379 in total, still lack a certified arts teacher. These are not just statistics. They reflect an ongoing structural inequities that deny young people access to identity development, cultural affirmation and critical engagement. The research is clear, students in robust art programs see increased attendance, academic outcomes, emotional wellbeing and social connections. A recent Harvard study confirms that arts learners foster not only academic growth, but also builds relationships and [inaudible] emotional connection. It helps teachers and students connect beyond restrictive test-driven environments, building trust and understanding, including with ESL students for whom visual and performance-based modalities are for a more inclusive and affirming [inaudible] expression. The arts expand opportunities for teaching and learning by offering multiple entry

3 point, activating multiple literacies [sic], honoring
4 diverse intelligence, and cultivating curiosity,
5 collaboration, and creativity, skills that every
6 learner needs and every educator can nurture. As an
7 educator in higher ed, I'm [inaudible] witness of how
8 the arts foster belonging in classrooms where
9 students feel unseen. This is not extra. This is
10 essential, and it benefits the entire school and I
11 would argue the broader community. Yet, delays in
12 MTAC approvals, shortened residencies and contract
13 bottlenecks continue to threaten this essential work.
14 as a member of It Starts with Arts Coalition, I urge
15 you to baseline the \$41 million in at-risk arts
16 education funding, ensure every school has at least
17 one certified art teacher, protect and expand funding
18 for partnerships with cultural organizations, and
19 ensure that DOE arts allocations are used as
20 intended. Equity in education must include art.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time
22 has expired.

23 JACQUELINE COFIELD: Let's fund-- okay.
24 That was it. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Well, I guess this--
if there's anyone here who hasn't testified, please

3 fill out an appearance slip. Okay. I just want to
4 say that we're-- we are here to supports arts in
5 education that is inclusive and diverse and that
6 embraces all identities in New York City, including
7 and especially those of our gender-expansive youth. I
8 just want to include that for the record. And I want
9 to thank Chair Joseph for being an incredible leader
10 in this space, and to all the staff, thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Chair
12 Rivera, and I want to echo your sentiments, echo your
13 sentiments on the record. Thank you. If the
14 following panelists are logged on and would like to
15 testify, please use the raise hand feature and a
16 member of our staff will unmute you: Audra Jones
17 Desumo [sp?], Tim Lorde [sp?], Tony Mascochi [sp?],
18 Daniel Amario [sp?], and Ariela Ronstein [sp?]. If
19 you are on, please raise your hand. No hands. Then
20 this concludes our hearing for today.

21 [gavel]
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1	COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS	280
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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 6, 2025