



Department of  
Education  
Chancellor Richard A. Carranza

**Testimony of the NYC Department of Education  
on Youth Civic Engagement Opportunities and Intro. Nos. 561 and 672**

**Before the NYC Council Committees on Education and Youth Services**

June 13, 2018

Phil Weinberg, Deputy Chancellor, Division of Teaching and Learning

Good afternoon Chairs Treyger and Rose, and Members of the City Council Education Committee and the Committee on Youth Services. My name is Phil Weinberg, the New York City Department of Education's (DOE) Deputy Chancellor for Teaching and Learning and I am joined by Norah Lovett, Executive Director for Social Studies and Core Curriculum Implementation. We are pleased to be here today to discuss the Administration's work to create strong civics instruction and civic engagement opportunities for all of our students. Our goal is for students to graduate high school as empowered critical thinkers who are ready to chart the course our City and our country take.

We believe civic education is an essential part of every student's core academic program. That is why as part of our vision for Equity and Excellence for All, earlier this year we announced a significant investment in civic education through our new *Civics for All* initiative. Our focus is on teaching the foundations of the United States government and the democratic process in order to build a more engaged, active citizen and informed voter. All of us know how important that is. Yet, the National Assessment of Education Progress reports that only one-fourth of high school graduates understand how the American political system works, the principles of democracy, the United States' role in world affairs, and the roles and responsibilities of being an active citizen. With one in every 300 Americans being a New York City public school student, we know we are uniquely positioned to change this reality.

First and foremost, we are developing state-aligned *Civics for All* curricula for grades K-12. Resources and lesson plans will build our students' knowledge of systems starting with the classroom and schools, then the political systems of communities, the City, state and the entire nation. The DOE will engage multiple perspectives and voices by collaborating with teachers, partners and organizations across the City to support curriculum development, piloting lessons, and implementing the curricula. Once the piloting of all lessons has been completed, successful lessons will be published in the *Civics for All* curricula for distribution to schools by fall 2019.

In addition to curricula, we will also support all our schools in bringing theory to practice. Students will actively learn about civic practices that include how to contribute appropriately and meaningfully to public processes, voting, volunteering, jury service, and joining with others to improve society. Students will learn how to start and lead organizations within schools and how to conduct community-based research and present findings to their communities.



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As part of *Civics for All*, on Monday, May 21, 2018, we held our first ever citywide Student Voter Registration Day (SVRD) with the goal of registering every eligible young person to vote as early as possible. Every high school was invited to hold an SVRD event supported by a Resource Guide with suggested lessons and activities. SVRD is a partnership with DemocracyNYC, the City Council, the New York Immigration Coalition, the NYC Board of Elections, and NYC Votes. I thank those of you who participated, and I look forward to your continued support of this initiative.

In addition, we plan to bring participatory budgeting to every high school, piloting the process at up to 50 high schools in the 2018-19 school year. Similar to the participatory budgeting effort the City Council has kicked off across the City, we will provide \$2,000 per high school for students to identify priorities and direct spending on. By school year 2020-21, we will implement participatory budgeting at every single high school, creating engaging learning opportunities that will support young people in knowing how to engage democratically, how to build stronger communities, as well as how to participate in budgeting decisions.

*Civics for All* will build on this Administration's existing work to strengthen civics and social studies education:

This includes NYC's *Passport to Social Studies* curriculum, which has been adopted by over 70 percent of the City's elementary and middle schools in just its second year. The *Passport* is a comprehensive instructional resource for teachers in grades kindergarten through 8, organized around units of study that are guided by essential questions. Teachers are encouraged to customize the *Passport* to meet their individual students' and classrooms' needs.

It also includes our Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) Debate Tournament - made possible by the City Council's generous support and ongoing commitment - which provides schools across the City with the opportunity to regularly engage in competitive debate. The MSQI debate program is the largest middle school debate league in the country with 60 schools participating since the 2014 school year. An evaluation of the MSQI Debate program has shown a positive impact on civic engagement, as well as overall improvements in literacy and academic performance for students.

The DOE's Office of Safety and Youth Development and Office of Field Support also provides engagement and leadership opportunities for students. Students from each borough are selected by their high schools to represent their school on Borough Student Advisory Councils (BSAC). Each of the seven BSACs meets with their Field Support Center to discuss and address policies and practices that impact their respective school communities and to engage in decision making that leads to tangible changes. Currently, the BSACs consist of 265 students citywide.

Students from each BSAC are then selected to represent their boroughs on the Chancellor's Student Advisory Council (CSAC) and submit proposals to senior DOE leadership and suggest policy changes. Two CSAC representatives are elected each year to be the student representatives on the Panel for Educational Policy.



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DOE also works with NYC Service to support Youth Leadership Councils (YLC). In the past two school years, we have trained 36 schools within 20 campuses and are looking to expand this program to work with all high schools in the City.

We are also proud of our Justice Resource Center - part of the City's Career and Technical Education offerings - which administers and facilitates learning experiences that expose students to basic law principles and practices. This program includes moot court, run in partnership with Fordham University School of Law at 48 high schools, and mock trial, run in partnership with the New York State Bar Association at over 50 high schools.

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss our investments in civic engagement for our young people. We believe ensuring that all of our students graduate ready to lead our City and our country is a whole City effort. We are grateful for your partnership in this effort and we look forward to ways to deepen our collaboration.

I will now turn to the proposed legislation.

Intro No. 561 requires the DOE to report information regarding parent-teacher associations (PTA) and parent associations (PA) in public schools. Specifically, the bill would require the DOE to report on, among other reporting requirements: whether a school has a PA or PTA; the number of members; the dates and results of each election; the number of staff members and their job titles, the number of meetings held; and the annual income, fundraising activities and expenditures for each PTA or PA.

While we support the goal of the proposed legislation, we have concerns regarding the scope of the reporting requirements. As you are aware, Chancellor's Regulation A-660 (CR A-660) governs all aspects of PA/PTAs and was developed after significant consultation with parents. CR A-660 also recognizes that PA/PTAs are autonomous and self-governing, and that school officials' oversight of PA/PTAs is limited. Pursuant to CR A-660, we do not currently track the detailed information proposed in the bill.

We believe information on PAs or PTAs is important for school communities and the DOE, and we look forward to working with the Council to narrow the scope of the proposed legislation to meet the goals of providing useful information that is consistent with current DOE regulations and what we currently track.

Intro. No. 672 requires DOE to provide information about the department of citywide administrative (DCAS) examinations. We support the goal of the legislation. DCAS would be required to provide DOE with the information.

I will now turn it over to Susan Haskell, Deputy Commissioner, Youth Services, at the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development. We will then be happy to answer any questions you may have.



**Department of  
Youth & Community  
Development**

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**OVERSIGHT HEARING  
“Youth Civic Engagement Opportunities”**

**SUSAN HASKELL  
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER**

**JUNE 13, 2018**

Good afternoon Chair Rose, Chair Treyger, and members of the Committee on Youth Services and Committee on Education. I am Susan Haskell, Deputy Commissioner, Youth Services, at the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). I am joined by Darryl Rattray, Associate Commissioner, Youth Services and Strategic Partnerships. On behalf of Commissioner Chong, thank you for the opportunity to testify today about youth civic engagement.

DYCD supports an array of programs for young people, including youth workforce development, afterschool programs and community centers. All DYCD programs for youth are shaped by the interrelated concepts of positive youth development, social and emotional learning, and youth leadership development. Within this framework, youth civic engagement activities and opportunities are essential to allowing youth to build leadership skills, learn how to affect change, be civic-minded, and have the chance to reflect on their actions.

Civic engagement activities are embedded in the quality program design of DYCD funded programs at three levels:

- At the provider level, throughout the City
- Specific DYCD funded initiatives to promote civic engagement
- Citywide events and enrichment opportunities

At the provider level, civic engagement activities are designed to respond to the needs and interests of the program participants and local community. Examples of such activities include:

- Planting of tree mulch as part of a beautification project at a local park
- Doing "Random Acts of Kindness" during the holidays, by visiting family shelters to deliver food, blankets and gifts
- In response to parent requests, hosting a book giveaway to support participants to increase literacy skills
- Participating in a community rally against gun violence

In addition to the activities at the provider level, DYCD supports specific civic engagement initiatives. These include:

Summer of Service is an annual community service initiative. Participants of DYCD funded programs gather throughout the summer to engage in 10 to 15 community service projects such as mural painting, volunteering at a senior center, and planting trees. Summer of Service includes youth voice, community partnership, and exploration of issues. It ensures that the service hours demonstrate the impact that young people can make through efforts that address community needs. Projects support skill-building in critical thinking, collaboration, and communication.

My Brother's/Sister's Keeper Youth Council engages high school youth to work with networks of borough-based youth councils at Beacon and Cornerstone centers across the City. Young people identify social justice issues important to the local community and to New York City. The Youth Council's goals are to:

- Develop leadership skills and inspire youth to take leadership roles
- Create authentic opportunities for young people to shape responses and solutions to community issues
- Cultivate an ethic of service in young people

In the current program year, the Youth Council completed a participatory action research project on public safety that included youth-police relationships. Young people collected data from peers and neighbors through collaborative meetings, listening tours, and a youth survey they designed.

At Beacon and Cornerstone Community Centers, youth councils inform a center's program design. The councils consider ideas for new program offerings and discuss improvements or changes to existing programs. They also serve as a mechanism for youth to explore community and social issues, and develop strategies to take action. For example:

- At the Sonia Sotomayor Cornerstone in the Bronx, the youth council hosted a "How to Keep Your Community Safe" meeting that included presentations and panel discussions with local police officers.
- At the Ocean Bay Cornerstone in the Rockaways, the youth council hosted an LGBTQ conference and forum to address issues of concern to LGBTQ youth. This youth council also held a youth voter education event in mid-April.
- At the Gerard Carter Center on Staten Island, the youth council partnered with the Mayor's Action Plan on Neighborhood Safety to host a youth career fair.

In DYCD's School's Out NYC (SONYC) middle school programs, youth leadership is an essential component. When we launched SONYC in 2014, it was critical to infuse leadership building activities into the programs because middle school students are at the developmental stage where they are starting to make real choices for themselves. SONYC programs help youth harness their growing sense of self and voice. On a validated youth leadership survey developed by the American Institute of Research, youth attending SONYC programs have positive perceptions of their attitudes and skills: 99% see themselves as motivated, self-aware, and persistent; 94% see themselves as inspirational, confident, active listeners, and persuasive; and 94% see themselves as purposeful, conveners and perspective-takers. These vital skills help young people take action and affect community change.

Through the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and Ladders for Leaders, we have partnerships to expose youth to city government, and learn about careers in the public sector and public policy. City agency worksites have included the Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Transportation, Health and Hospitals, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, and the Department of Design and Construction. We also want to thank the City Council, for the strong partnership we've established together -- last year, 26 Council Members and the Progressive Caucus hosted a total of 195 SYEP and Ladders participants. We are working with Council Members to establish placements for this year's program. We will build on these partnerships this summer, and further strengthen the types of civic engagement-themed SYEP jobs as follows:

- In Staten Island, SYEP participants will assess and respond to environmental needs in the North Shore
- In Brooklyn, participants will discuss healthy intergenerational relationships between young people and older people, and explore careers in senior care
- In Manhattan, participants will research food justice issues and develop a healthy foods campaign to support communities in a “food desert”
- In the Bronx and Queens, participants will learn about government elections, and develop a democracy project to explore voting policies, and create public awareness campaigns

In addition to these specific program initiatives, DYCD hosts citywide events and enrichment opportunities for DYCD program participants with a civic engagement dimension, while connecting to young people from different communities across the City.

The Young Citizens conference is DYCD’s annual youth leadership conference, that highlights and celebrates service learning projects taking place in DYCD-funded programs. Projects include the arts, civic engagement, sports and leadership, and youth councils.

In partnership with the New York City Urban Debate League, DYCD established a Debate League for participants of DYCD funded SONYC programs. Participants competed in tournaments and researched constructive arguments to support and refute a specific topic.

“Step it Up,” is the culmination of a months-long dance competition that begins in January. Ten final teams compete for the citywide grand prize. Each year in Step it Up, the competition requires success in dance as well as a public awareness campaign focused on social issues relevant to young people. This year’s theme was anti-bullying and bullying prevention. The Step It Up dance final was held on June 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

As part of DYCD’s overall goal to support youth leadership and civic engagement we are pleased to work with the City Council to promote Participatory Budgeting (PB). During the April PB vote week, we alerted DYCD providers to encourage their program participants to vote. The offices of Council Members Levine, Gibson, Torres and Williams held vote sites at their local DYCD Spring into Health Fair. We thank the Council Members for this collaboration. To encourage DYCD-funded providers to get involved in next year’s PB cycle, we hosted an information session for DYCD staff, led by the Council’s Community Engagement Division. Two workshops were held at the Young Citizens Conference, for provider staff. We are also encouraging all Council Members to have SYEP youth placed in their office, work on PB-related projects and tasks.

It is essential for young people to develop leadership skills and to be connected to their communities. DYCD funded programs strongly support young people and foster their civic engagement. We look forward to the continued partnership with the City Council to meet the needs of the City’s youth and create opportunities for them to grow and thrive.

Thank you again for the chance to testify today. We are ready to answer any questions.

New York City Council Committee on Youth Services and Committee on Education  
June 13, 2018

Prepared by Denis Yu, Program Coordinator, The Coalition of Asian American Children  
and Families

Testimonies of  
Andy Cai, Sophia Zheng, and Edison Zhu (submitted by Denis Yu)  
Asian American Student Advocacy Project (ASAP) Youth Representatives,  
The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families

My name is Denis Yu and I am the Program Coordinator for the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF). CACF would first like to thank Committee Chairs Deborah Rose and Mark Treyger and the other members of the New York City Council Committee on Youth Services and Committee on Education for holding this important hearing.

CACF is the nation's only pan-Asian children's advocacy organization. Our mission is to improve the health and well-being of Asian Pacific American (APA) children and families. CACF promotes better policies, funding, and services for APA children and families. CACF challenges stereotypes of APAs as a "model minority", and advocates on behalf of underserved families in our community, especially those struggling with poverty and with limited English skills.

In New York City, APAs are by percentage the fastest growing racial community, doubling every decade since 1970 and constituting over 15% of the population, speaking over 40 languages and dialects from approximately 100 different regions of origin. Of the over 1 million APAs in New York City, **1 out of 2 APA children are born into poverty, 78% of APAs are foreign-born, and 28% speak little or no English.** These statistics show the barriers to acculturation, community development, and civic engagement, including voting and participating in government as electeds, for the APA community.

CACF believes that youth, the future generation of leaders, play a fundamental role in creating positive change for the community. In 2004, CACF established a youth leadership program called the Asian American Student Advocacy Project (ASAP). Through this program, CACF trains APA public high school youth from various backgrounds and neighborhoods to address and advocate on the many APA issues by providing them with the opportunity to build their leadership and advocacy skills. ASAP Youth Leaders advocate for educational reform, including implementing a more diverse and inclusive curriculum and improving resources for minority students, to reduce bullying and improve student outcomes. Through ASAP, APA youth have had the opportunity to be civically engaged, including testifying at City Hall public hearings, speaking with legislative representatives, and developing campaigns on important issues. Through their work, they also inspire others in the APA community to be civically engaged by voting and using their voices to make a difference for themselves and the community. Today, we have Youth Leaders from ASAP here to testify about the importance of youth civic engagement.

CACF supports youth civic engagement and the proposed legislation today for Intro 0561 and Intro 0672, which would all provide information, resources, and support for all students and families to be civically engaged and make a difference.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify.





### **Youth Testimonies:**

CACF for the past 14 years have organized a city-wide youth leadership group, the Asian American Student Advocacy Project (ASAP). CACF trains APA public high school youth from various backgrounds and neighborhoods in ASAP to address and advocate for the many issues that APA youth face. In this following document, CACF will be providing 3 testimonies from our young people that will share their experiences on bullying in NYC public schools.

### ***Testimony of Andy Cai, Senior, Stuyvesant High School***

Good afternoon. My name is Andy Cai and I am from Brooklyn. I am a senior at Stuyvesant High School. I am here as a student leader from the Asian American Student Advocacy Project (ASAP). We are a citywide youth leadership program under the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF) comprised of Asian Pacific American (APA) public high school students from around the city. I want to thank the Committee on Youth Services and the Committee on Education for holding this hearing.

Through ASAP, I realized there are people who advocate for issues in the APA community and they actually make an impact. I was accustomed to the stereotype that APAs are quiet and don't speak out so this was shocking for me to hear. What was even more shocking for me was that the high school students also made impacts. The previous cohort of ASAP youth leaders helped get a bill passed through City Council. I didn't think that people my age were capable of creating change in government. I was excited about the prospect of making an impact in my community, but I got nervous thinking about the type of work those high school students were doing. They spoke with Council Members, other government officials, and press. I wasn't a good public speaker and I was scared of making mistakes and embarrassing myself in front of others. I wanted to do the behind the scenes work like setting up meetings and helping others prepare to speak.

In 2016, we started a campaign to support Resolution 0792-2015 which establishes January 30 annually as Fred T. Korematsu Day in New York City. To gather support for resolution 0792, we had to meet with Council Members and their legislative directors to discuss the importance of Fred Korematsu Day and the impact it would have.

ASAP trained and prepared us to meet with Council Members and their office. We learned how to email and call Council Members' office to set up meetings. I sent emails and set up a meeting with the legislative director of a Council Member. I didn't want to go to the actual meeting because I was scared of speaking to a government official. I didn't have much confidence in my public speaking skills. The Program Manager of ASAP and my fellow ASAP youth leaders encouraged me to go to the meeting. They told me it would be good experience and it would help me improve my public speaking. I decided to listen to them and did multiple mock legislative meetings with my fellow youth leaders to prepare.

Despite all of the preparation, I was still nervous going into my first legislative meeting. As I waited to speak, I nervously shifted in my seat. When I finally spoke during the meeting, I tried to calm myself, but I still stumbled over my words. Luckily, I didn't make any major mistakes. I



realized that speaking to a government official wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. For most of us there, it was our first time meeting with a government official. Although we couldn't get the Council Member to sponsor the resolution, we came out of the meeting feeling happy and proud that we actually had a meeting with a government official and it went well. This encouraged us to keep working to gather support. The following year, we set up more meetings and I didn't feel as scared. I got more comfortable speaking with elected officials as I went to more meetings.

ASAP empowered me and improved my self-confidence. Over the last three years with ASAP, I enthusiastically attended meetings with numerous Council Members, testified at City Hall hearings and helped get Resolution 0792 passed. I never would have thought I would do any of those things three years ago. I wasn't sure if Council Members would listen to us high school students. They are powerful people who decide what laws get passed in New York City and we're just students. ASAP helped me gain the skills and experience to speak before you today. It's also taught me that my voice and the voice of high school students matter.

Thank you once again for holding this hearing and giving me the opportunity to testify.

***Testimony of Sophia Zheng, Junior, Manhattan Hunter Science High School***

Good afternoon everyone, I am Sophia Zheng. I am a member of the Asian American Student Advocacy Project (ASAP) from the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF) and a junior at Manhattan Hunter Science High School. It is my great pleasure to speak here today. Thank you to the Committee on Youth Services and Committee on Education for holding this hearing today.

I was born and raised in China for 15 years. When I was young, I felt the strong sense of social responsibility, even though my parents barely talked to me about the importance of my role in society. I was told by most adults that youth cannot change anything. Because my voice was barely heard, my passion for engaging in politics and society weakened. Some youth around me do not even care about politics and making a contribution to society. In my sophomore year, after immigrating here for several months, I was lucky to catch an opportunity that changed me and society -- joining ASAP.

In ASAP, I started learning about the barriers and inequalities embedded in the New York City system and the policies that impacted the Asian Pacific American community. We are also encouraged and supported to improve New York City's public education system through policy advocacy. In the past years, ASAP youth leaders worked on developing a campaign to have more inclusive and diverse curriculum in schools. We believe that there are still tensions between racial and ethnic groups, and that learning about different communities and having diverse role models would address harmful stereotypes and prevent bullying.

One major campaign we have worked on is the Fred Korematsu campaign. Council Member Daniel Dromm approached us to support Resolution 0792, which establishes January 30th as Fred Korematsu Day in New York City. We thought that it was a great opportunity to honor such an important civil rights leader and to practice our advocacy skills. We met with the Chair of the



Committee of Cultural Affairs, Council Member Van Bramer. We also contacted council members to set up meetings with their office. After 35 council members supported the resolution, a public hearing was held in City Hall on October 25th, 2017, and ASAP was the only youth group who testified, which emphasized the need for youth's voices. As ASAPers spoke at the first inaugural celebration for Fred Korematsu Day this past January, I told myself: Hey, good job.

After the campaign, I have been asking myself many times: what did I gain in the process? To carry out campaigns like this, ASAPers have developed multiple strategies and skills to organize community members, facilitate meetings with decision makers, and prepare presentations. We also improved our task management, teamwork, effective communication, and public speaking skills. Most importantly, we gained the strong sense of social responsibility and know the fact that we, the youth, the future generation, can have a positive influence on history.

What would I be if I did not have the opportunity to attend ASAP, if I was not told about the issues in our community, if I was not seen as an important part of society? Again, I'm lucky that I have the chance to engage in society. But what about my peers, who are the future of our country? For us, civic engagement opportunities are as important as education, where we can be informed, trained to think critically and take action, and are provided with a platform to exert our power and potential. I'm glad that there are opportunities like ASAP, but there should be more, since many youth should be aware of the influence they can have on society.

I believe that, when I look back in ten years, I will truly realize and appreciate the effect that youth civic engagement opportunities such as ASAP have had on my entire life.

Thank you again for having this hearing and giving me the opportunity to speak about my experiences.

***Testimony of Edison Zhu, Junior, Bronx High School for Science (submitted by Denis Yu)***

Good afternoon. I'm Edison Zhu, a junior at the Bronx High School of Science. I am a Youth Leader from the Asian American Student Advocacy Project (ASAP), a youth leadership program under the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF). I want to thank the Committee on Youth Services and the Committee on Education for holding this hearing today.

I grew up in a bubble. In a low-income community where crime and poverty is evident, people were repelled by its reputation. For me, it's an environment that I could be committed to and improve upon. But I did not know how to make a lasting impact. All I had were short-term solutions, like giving out articles of clothes and care packages to those in need or going out on weekends to volunteer and fundraise. I didn't really consider getting involved politically because I didn't think getting involved politically was possible for a teenage boy living in a community with no political presence. My family and this community did not engage in politics at all. Thus, I felt like the world of politics and representatives from the New York City legislature seemed far beyond me.



All I needed was a push. I lacked confidence and knowledge, but I gained confidence and knowledge about politics from ASAP, ASAP has led me to my realize that politics isn't as far away as I thought. It can be just an email or phone call away. ASAP empowered me to become more politically aware and involved by showing me how to bring positive change through advocacy. Now, I am confident that I can carry out advocacy work without worry and take progressive steps to achieve educational reform and improve my community. Opportunities to learn and engage politically and civically are important to get youth not only interested in politics, but to show youth that they can make a difference for themselves and for their communities.

What distinguishes a civilian from a citizen is the responsibility to serve and defend the nation. Students may not be able to defend the nation, but we can serve to better our nation. We can serve for a better future where there is peace and equity. But we can only serve if we're given the confidence and the appropriate guidance from those before us who have given back to their home school and community. I want to once again thank you all for holding this important hearing, and for giving me this opportunity to testify.

**To:** The NYC Council Committee on Education  
**From:** Viviana Perez, Civics Program Director at Democracy Prep  
**Date:** Wednesday, 6/13

Democracy Prep is a national network of charter schools, with over 20 schools across the country. Since its inception Democracy Prep Public Schools has been a pioneer of civics education, with the mission to educate responsible citizen-scholars for success in the college of their choice and a life of active citizenship.

Democracy Prep's motto is: "*Work Hard. Go to College. Change the World.*" However, these components don't have to happen in that order. The opportunities provided throughout a scholar's K-12 experience teach Democracy Prep scholars how to change the world as early as kindergarten.

### **Our Civics Education Program**

Each school has a Civics Coordinator, whose role is to foster a civic-minded culture at his or her respective campus. This is a full-time staff member who takes on an leadership additional role. That person works with the Civics Program Director to create civic engagement opportunities for their school and involving students and other staff in the process. We firmly believe it is our duty as educators is to ensure all scholars learn about issues in their communities and are capable of taking positive and meaningful action on the issues about which they are passionate.

The civics education program focus scholars to learn certain dispositions such as to follow current events and be well informed about the issues that impact them. Additionally we prepare them to be articulate public speakers so that they can learn how to clearly articulate a vantage point and make that known to key decision makers. The final focus is for scholars to be able to influence advocate for constituents or community groups. This involves scholars will learning how to work with others in order to build coalitions, seek consensus, negotiate compromise and manage conflict.

There are civics graduation requirements to earn a Democracy Prep diploma. In Each scholar must demonstrate mastery of 10 civics skills, such as teaching and mentoring, along with create a project and pass their Change the World class.

The Change the World project serves as the culmination of a student's civic education at Democracy Prep. The CTW project is completed during their senior year and includes a Change the World class, which is trifurcated across three

trimesters. First, during a Sociology of Change unit, students examine case studies to gain a strong understanding of why movements for change begin, who joins, how they are organized, and how they are sustained. Next, after selecting the discrete issues on which they want to focus. Students undertake a Research Methodology that provides them instruction on how to set goals and measure the success of their project. Finally, with the assistance of a DPPS teacher-mentor, students complete an independent study that consists of final their CTW Projects, a 15-20-page research paper, and an oral defense before a panel consisting of faculty, administration, and board members.

What distinguishes the CTW project is that each and every DPPS student creates and executes an innovative project that engages stakeholders and works to make the community and country a better place for the common good. The CTW project is also designed to have a wide reach: the majority of projects are designed to impact more than 100 people. At any given time during the school year there are hundreds of food drives, park clean-ups, and other youth-driven community events. For example, one student intends to create a YouTube page with lessons, tutorials, and insight on empowering young African-American women to succeed in school and college. This student has created both a distinct curriculum and a plan to advertise the channel that could result in reaching hundreds or thousands of people. On a local level, another student is creating a mentoring program targeting young men who self-identify as having experienced an unstable home environment.

In addition to the graduation requirements, each school, regardless of the region, has students participate in three school wide civics events a year. The first is a get out the vote campaign, the second is political engagement and the final is community service.

The get out the vote campaigns start in when scholars are in kindergarten and continues until their senior year. At the elementary level the focus is for scholars to sing chants to encourage others to vote on Election Day. As they progress into middle and high school they concentrate on voter registration prior to the election.

Additionally, we also encourage political participation, whether it is writing letters or visiting their elected representative and lobbying about their elected representatives about topics of importance to them. This is always opt- in and scholars are not forced in to partisan politics.

Finally, each school will host a day of community service. The DP day of community service allows scholars and staff to use their human and social capital to address community needs. Schools are encouraged to spend the

year forming a partnership with a local organization in order to hold the day of service in conjunction with the partner organization. The day of community service has three goals: introduce Democracy Prep scholars & staff to a culture of community service, identify high needs areas in our respective communities and target our resources towards those needs, and foster a sense of community connectedness across DP schools and with each respective community.

In addition to these opportunities available at all campuses, the Civics Coordinator also works with the Civics Program Director to plan civics initiatives that are focused on that school community. For example one NYC middle school might select to study food insecurity during the course of the year while another one might decide to focus on mental health.

### **Importance of Civic Education**

A recent study by the Pew Research Center found that the United States lags behind other developed nations in voter turnout.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center found that only a quarter of Americans can name all three branches of government.<sup>2</sup>

Democracy Prep's civics program is seeking to reverse this lack of political and civic engagement. A study by Mathematica found that Democracy Prep increases the voter registration rates of its students by about 16 percentage points and increases the voting rates of its students by about 12 percentage points.<sup>3</sup> Now more than ever our nation needs to reinvigorate civics education in order to involve more of our citizens in our democratic processes.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/05/21/u-s-voter-turnout-trails-most-developed-countries/>

<sup>2</sup>

[https://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/americans-are-poorly-informed-about-basic-constitutional-provisions?utm\\_source=news-release&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=2017\\_civics\\_survey&utm\\_term=survey&utm\\_source=Media&utm\\_campaign=e5f213892a-Civics\\_survey\\_2017\\_2017\\_09\\_12&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_9e3d9bcd8a-e5f213892a-425997897](https://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/americans-are-poorly-informed-about-basic-constitutional-provisions?utm_source=news-release&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2017_civics_survey&utm_term=survey&utm_source=Media&utm_campaign=e5f213892a-Civics_survey_2017_2017_09_12&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_9e3d9bcd8a-e5f213892a-425997897)

<sup>3</sup>

<https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/the-impact-of-democracy-prep-public-schools-on-civic-participation>



Testimony of

Laura Jankstrom  
Director of Civic Engagement Programs  
Citizens' Committee for Children

Before the

New York City Council  
Committee on Education  
Committee on Youth Services

*Oversight Hearing: Youth Civic Engagement Opportunities*

June 13, 2018



Good morning. My name is Laura Jankstrom and I am the Director of Civic Engagement Programs at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC). CCC is an independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe.

I would like to thank City Council Committee on Education Chair Mark Treyger and the Committee on Youth Services Chair Deborah Rose and all the members of the Committees on Education and Youth Services for holding today's oversight hearing on Youth Civic Engagement Opportunities.

CCC appreciates the measures that Council Members undertake in their districts to provide opportunities for youth civic engagement, including youth voter registration efforts, engaging youth in Participatory Budgeting and local Community Boards, offering internships to high school and college students, and other discreet efforts by members and committees to increase youth input and participation.

CCC would also like to recognize Council Member Levin, who recently announced the creation of a Youth Policy Council. Youth in grades 8-12 will work with Council Member Levin, Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon, and State Senators Brian Kavanagh and Velmanette Montgomery to "review existing City and State legislation and propose ideas that affect the lives of young people and all New Yorkers." We applaud this effort and look forward to hearing from the youth who are engaged in this process.

We also appreciate the Administration's commitment to increasing opportunities for young people to engage with policy, practice, and advocacy within their schools and communities:

#### **Department of Education**

The Department of Education engages dozens of students citywide through its 7 Borough Student Advisory Councils (BSACs). Each BSAC is made up of student representatives from participating schools in their catchment areas who work with adult DOE staff to identify and address issues that students are experiencing in school. Student and adult leaders from each BSAC engage in ongoing training by CORO New York Leadership Center to gain strategies to bring "greater youth voice to DOE policies and practices that impact student success".<sup>1</sup> Two of these student leaders are chosen annually to participate as non-voting members of city's Panel on Education Policy.

#### **NYC Service**

Through NYC Service, the Administration began an initiative in 2015 to engage 10% of the city's high school students in Youth Leadership Councils (YLCs) by the year 2020. Interested students apply online for specific YLCs, which are supported by adult staff at various City agencies and community-based organizations. NYC Service describes the

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<sup>1</sup> Coro New York Leadership Center. Youth Leadership Academy Program description 2016. (website) Available at <https://coronewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/YLA-Program-Description-2.pdf>. Accessed June 5, 2018.

program as a way to “give youth across the city the opportunity to grow as civic leaders and advocates for change in their City”.<sup>2</sup>

CCC is here today to support the expansion of youth civic engagement opportunities and is grateful for the opportunity to share what we have learned through exposing young people to local government and engaging them through public policy research and advocacy.

## I. The Importance of Youth Civic Engagement

A healthy and vibrant democracy is dependent upon the participation of its citizens through voting, jury service, and other expressions of engagement with society and community. Yet, in the 2016 presidential election voter turnout was just 56%<sup>3</sup> and in the New York citywide elections in 2017, just 21.5% of citizens of voting age cast a ballot. When looking specifically at the youth vote, turnout among 19 to 29-year-olds was 55.4% in the 2016 presidential election and 13.5% in the 2017 citywide elections.<sup>4</sup>

Despite low voter turnout, 61% of Americans believe changes to the structure of our government are necessary to make democracy work today and only 25% express any amount of confidence in elected officials.<sup>5</sup> These sentiments are demonstrated through a recent surge in protest movements and polarized political discourse in the media, and may represent an opportunity to engage populations that have historically had low levels of civic participation, including youth. By harnessing the energy that exists in this highly charged political climate, we may be able to involve more youth in civic life long before they are eligible to vote.

In addition to the societal benefits that come from the robust civic engagement of citizens, there is evidence that these types of activities also contribute to the health and well-being of individuals. Voting and volunteering correlate positively with health and mental health outcomes, and all forms of civic engagement are positively associated with subsequent income and educational attainment.<sup>6</sup> Researchers also posit that civic engagement opportunities have the potential to hit all the benchmarks of successful youth development strategies, including problem identification, skills building, connection to community, teamwork, and youth-adult partnership. Youth who are involved in effective youth development programs have demonstrated a more

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<sup>2</sup> NYC Service. NYC Youth Leadership Council Description and History 2018. (web page) Available at [https://www.nycservice.org/organizations/index.php?org\\_id=2947](https://www.nycservice.org/organizations/index.php?org_id=2947) Accessed June 5, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> “The Public, the Political System and American Democracy”. Pew Research Center, April 2018. Available at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/05/21/u-s-voter-turnout-trails-most-developed-countries/> Accessed June 5, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> New York City Campaign Finance Board, *2017-2018 Voter Assistance Annual Report*, April 2018. Available at <https://www.nycclfbo.info/pdf/VAAAC-2018.pdf> Accessed June 5, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> “The Public, the Political System and American Democracy”. Pew Research Center, April 2018. Available at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/05/21/u-s-voter-turnout-trails-most-developed-countries/> Accessed June 5, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> PJ Ballard, LT Hoyt, MC Pachucki. “Impacts of Adolescent and Young Adult Civic Engagement on Health and Socioeconomic Status in Adulthood”. *Child development*. January 23, 2018. Available at Wiley Online Library <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/cdev.12998> Accessed June 5, 2018.

successful transition to adulthood and those programs that offer opportunities for civic engagement promote greater lifelong civic participation.<sup>7</sup>

In the United States, there is a vast socio-economic divide in civic participation, and children from wealthier families and communities have more opportunities for civic learning and engagement. Parental education level is a predictor of a young person's exposure to discussions about social and political issues, private schools and public schools with wealthier student bodies offer more civic opportunities, and youth from low income communities have a higher risk of dropping out of school and/or becoming justice-involved, both of which are predictors of low levels of civic participation.<sup>8</sup> The socio-economic disparities in civic participation are interesting, given the fact that low-income youth may benefit most from the policy changes that participation in the civic practices of advocacy and activism can bring about. In addition, empowering the voices of young people from marginalized communities decreases negative health outcomes associated with poverty.<sup>9</sup>

## II. CCC's Youth Civic Engagement Programs

In 1999, CCC became concerned about the alienation of young people from civic life and the lack of opportunities available to them to participate in their community and become educated regarding the responsibilities involved in being a thoughtful and contributing citizen. We came to believe that our public institutions should be more intentional regarding the opportunities offered to young people to support their development as civic participants.

It was at this time that we developed YouthAction NYC, which has grown over the years into a multi-faceted after-school program that reaches hundreds of students each year. Central to our YouthAction programming is the belief that civic engagement opportunities must occur and be supported long before a young person is old enough to vote, and that youth-led advocacy can and should positively influence schools and communities, as well as cities, states, and the nation. Through our YouthAction programming we offer a rigorous introduction to local civic life and experiential training to equip students with the tools to advocate on behalf of themselves, their schools and their communities.

Youth Action NYC is made up of three component programs:

1. **Youth Community Leadership Course (YCLC):** An after-school course for public and private high school students that engages youth in problem identification, problem solving, research and analysis, and improves their understanding of the workings of government and the role that young volunteers can play in making a difference in their communities and the city. The course is a ten-week program (one three-hour session per week) held in the fall and spring and serves up to 50 youth per year.

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<sup>7</sup>"Results-based public policy strategies for Promoting Youth Civic Engagement". Center for the Study of Social Policy, November 2011. Available at <https://www.essp.org/policy/papers/Promoting-Youth-Civic-Engagement.pdf> Accessed June 5, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Flanagan, Constance; Levine, Peter. "Civic Engagement and the Transition to Adulthood". *The Future of Children*, Vol. 20, No. 1. Spring 2010. Available at <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ883084.pdf> Accessed June 5, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Wallerstein, Nina. "Empowerment and health: The theory and practice of community change". *Community Development Journal*. Vol. 28 No. 3. (218 – 227) July 1993.

2. **YouthAction NYC Membership:** Graduates of the YouthAction Community Leadership Course have the opportunity to stay involved in the program as YouthAction Members and continue to practice fact-based advocacy and research on issues affecting New York City youth. Members meet once a week after school to analyze social policies, current events, and specific community issues, and to develop policy and budgetary recommendations to make New York City a better place for every young person. Over the years, YouthAction Members have played a critical role in advancing specific policy measures, including increased funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program, the passage of Raise the Age New York, universal school meals, expanded after school and summer programs, increased capacity for the RHY system and more. Through meetings with city and state elected officials, the creation of public service announcements, and by convening other youth advocates throughout the city, YouthAction members have helped raise awareness about and move the needle on a multitude of issues.
3. **Peer Training:** Each year, several participants are trained to become peer-to-peer trainers and work with other youth development programs, schools, and after-school programs to provide peer training on advocacy, the city budget process, and issues facing children and families in New York City. Peer Trainers meet once per week and lead workshops and trainings with partner groups throughout the school year. They reach up to 300 young people through these trainings annually.

An important component of our YouthAction programming is when the youth get to meet with elected and appointed officials and their staff. It is hard to overstate the profound effect that these meetings have on young people, especially when youth realize that their leaders are people who are just like them, with diverse experiences and struggles that young people growing up here can relate to. Our youth have also met with many staff, eager to listen to and learn from our youth. Young people often leave these meetings with a profoundly different, more positive view of government that they had going in as well as a sense of their own agency as citizens. We want to thank the City Council and Administration for giving young people a seat at the table, and we look forward to future meetings.

### **III. Recommendations for increasing youth civic engagement**

In the fall of 2017, our YCLC cohort conducted research on youth civic engagement opportunities that are supported by the New York City Council and Administration, specifically looking at Borough Student Advisory Councils (BSACs), NYC Service Youth Leadership Councils (YLCs), Participatory Budgeting, and Community Boards. Students surveyed 230 New York City youth, ages 13 – 19 to get their opinions and also visited programs and agencies that provide youth with the opportunity to weigh in on policy issues that affect their lives. Their Findings and Recommendations are attached to this testimony.

CCC's recommendations support those that the youth developed and are further informed by our involvement in 2 working groups that have been convened to address the topic of youth civic education and engagement, the Sustainable Strategies Working Group and the New York State Campaign for Civic Education:

**A) New York City schools should educate students about city and state government**

A section from our YouthAction participants' findings reads as follows: "From our own experiences in NYC public schools, and from what we learned in our discussions with both other students and the adults who facilitate civic engagement programs, it is abundantly clear that New York City schools spend little to no time educating students about the structure and function of New York City government. Very few students could name their City Council Member, articulate the purpose of a Community Board, or name a single city government official outside of the Mayor." There is an obvious opportunity to incorporate learning about state and local government into social studies classes, but educators across disciplines can find interesting ways to include this content. For example, a math class could analyze the city budget, or an English class could do a close reading of a speech made by the Mayor.

**B) The Department of Education and NYC Service should strengthen their outreach efforts to get more youth involved in BSACs and YLCs**

Of the youth surveyed by YCLC participants, 80% of students had never heard of BSACs and less than 2% had participated. Less than 50% had never heard of Youth Leadership Councils and 97% had never participated. There is no information on the DOE website about BSACS, and it is unclear how schools and students can become involved. NYC Service does have a functional web page for YLCs, but students reported that it is not particularly informative, appealing, or user friendly. Both DOE and NYC service should engage youth in thinking through how to strengthen their outreach to young people, both online and through schools and community-based organizations. YLCs in particular have the potential to reach students that may not ordinarily have access to civic engagement opportunities, as many are run in NYCHA facilities and police precincts low-income communities.

**C) All Council Members should participate in Participatory Budgeting and allow youth to be a part of the process**

According to the City Council website, 26 Council Members offer Participatory Budgeting in their communities<sup>10</sup>. In those districts, starting at age 11, youth can vote, volunteer, and facilitate the process. Through a partnership with Coro New York Leadership Center, participating Council Members can also nominate youth from their districts to participate in the Participatory Budgeting Youth Fellowship, which "offers high school students intensive training, hands-on experience, and ongoing support to promote greater youth involvement in Participatory Budgeting (PB) in their communities and citywide."<sup>11</sup> Participatory Budgeting is one of the most authentic opportunities that young New Yorkers have to be a part of civic life, and should be expanded to all districts.

**D) Public Hearings related to youth issues should, whenever possible, be held when school is not in session**

While we recognize that it is not feasible to have all public hearings outside of normal school hours, we believe greater efforts can be made to hold hearings on issues related to youth on days

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<sup>10</sup> New York City Council. Participatory Budgeting (website). Available at <https://council.nyc.gov/pb/participate/> Accessed June 5, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Coro New York Leadership Center. Participatory Budgeting Youth Fellowship Program description 2018. (website) Available at <https://coronewyork.org/coro-programs/pbyf/> Accessed June 5, 2018.

when school is not in session, such as school breaks, professional development days for teachers, and days set aside for testing. Though they are not yet able to vote, youth should be allowed to weigh in on the issues that impact them.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

In conclusion, CCC is grateful to the City Council and Administration for its interest in increasing youth civic engagement in New York City, and look forward to working together to strengthen and improve opportunities for young people to participate in their communities and their city in meaningful ways.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.





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## Fall 2017 YouthAction Community Leadership Course: Youth Voice in Public Policy

**Citizens' Committee for Children's (CCC) YouthAction Community Leadership Course (YCLC)** is a youth advocacy training program for high school students from New York City. CCC is a seventy-four year old independent child advocacy organization whose mission is to ensure that every child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe. Since 1999, YouthAction NYC has introduced aspiring young leaders to civic engagement and advocacy opportunities.

During this ten-week advocacy training program, YCLC participants meet once a week after school to research and analyze youth issues, and to develop policy and budgetary recommendations to improve the lives of young people in New York City. This semester, the YCLC focused on youth voice in NYC, specifically looking at Borough Student Advisory Councils (BSACs), NYC Service Youth Leadership Councils (YLCs), Participatory Budgeting, and Community Boards. Students surveyed 230 New York City youth, ages 13 – 19 to get their opinions and also visited programs and agencies that provide youth with the opportunity to weigh in on policy discussions that affect their lives.

### Findings and Recommendations

#### Overview

New York City has several ways in which it attempts to civically engage young people in discussions around school and other public policies that affect their lives. Four major city-sponsored initiatives for doing this are the Department of Education's **Borough Student Advisory Councils**, the Mayor's Office of NYC Service **Youth Leadership Councils**, the City Council's **Participatory Budgeting** program, and **NYC Community Boards**. We applaud these initiatives, and wish to see them strengthened so that youth may more authentically contribute to shaping public policy in New York City.

From our own experiences in NYC public schools, and from what we learned in our discussions with both other students and the adults who facilitate civic engagement programs, it is abundantly clear that New York City schools spend little to no time educating students about the structure and function of New York City government. Very few students could name their City Council Member, articulate the purpose of a Community Board, or name a single city government official outside of the Mayor.

Over 95% of the youth we surveyed believe that young people should be involved in creating public policies with local community and government leaders and 70% indicated that they would be willing to spend some of their free time meeting with school and/or government officials to discuss issues and policies that affect the lives of youth.

- We **recommend** that, starting in elementary school, all NYC schools incorporate lessons about local and state government into their curriculum.
- We **recommend** that, as part of these ongoing civics lessons, students be made aware of opportunities that exist for them to engage in programs and initiatives that elevate youth voice in public policy discussions.
- We **recommend** that when City Council hearings relate to issues that impact youth, they be scheduled to begin later in the day so that young people can participate without being forced to miss school.

#### **Borough Student Advisory Councils (BSACs)**

Borough Student Advisory Councils (BSACs) are groups of student leaders from New York City public schools that come together with Department of Education staff to discuss and take action on issues that are happening in their schools. Every public high school in NYC is eligible to send students to their respective BSAC meetings, though not every school does so. It is unclear how schools and/or individual students sign up to participate in BSACs, as there is not a central website that describes what BSACs are, how they function, or how to get involved. We learned that 2 BSAC students are chosen to sit as non-voting members on the Panel for Education Policy, which is the governing body for the NYC





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Department of Education. Of the 230 youth we surveyed, over 80% had never heard of BSACs and less than 2% had ever participated.

- We **support** Borough Student Advisory Councils and the opportunities they afford youth to build leadership skills and participate in school policy discussions.
- We **recommend** that the Department of Education have a web page dedicated to BSACs, outlining both the process by which schools can sign up to participate and how youth can join.
- We **recommend** that more than 2 youth be appointed to the Panel for Education Policy and that all youth members have voting rights.

#### **NYC Service Youth Leadership Councils (YLCs)**

NYC YLCs, an initiative of the Mayor's Office of NYC Service, are groups of youth in city-sponsored organizations that meet to discuss "policy, practice, and advocacy" issues that affect their lives and communities. The goal of this initiative is to have 30,000 youth participating by 2020. Some YLCs are affiliated with government entities (i.e. NYPD, New York City Housing Authority, NYC Parks) and some with community-based organizations. It is unclear how effective Youth Leadership Councils are at elevating youth voice in public policy, and we could not ascertain whether youth are able to discuss their policy priorities with stakeholders in city government. About 95% of youth we surveyed have not participated in a Youth Leadership Council and less than half are aware of their existence.

- We **support** the Mayor's Office of NYC Service's Youth Leadership Council initiative to have 30,000 youth participate in YLCs by the year 2020.
- We **recommend** that NYC Service improve its website in a way that is appealing to youth and more efficiently outlines the various YLCs, how to get involved, and what the work will look like.
- We **recommend** the creation of a task force, primarily made up of NYC youth, to figure out how to get more students involved in YLCs using social media and other networking strategies.
- We **recommend** that all YLCs be guaranteed meetings with relevant city policymakers in order to advance recommendations related to their respective causes.

#### **Participatory Budgeting (PB)**

Participatory Budgeting is a process in which a New York City Council Member sets aside money from the public budget (usually around \$1 million) and allows constituents from his or her district to come up with and vote on ideas for how to spend the funds. Currently, 31 out of 51 City Council Members participate. Youth can get involved and vote as soon as they turn 11 years-old. Unfortunately, close to 80% of the youth we surveyed had never heard of PB and 95% had never participated.

- We **support** the Participatory Budgeting process, and **recommend** that all 51 City Council Members open this opportunity up to their constituents.
- We **support** the involvement of youth in the PB process, and are especially glad to see that even elementary and middle school students are eligible.
- We **recommend** that PB staff from Council Member's offices visit all NYC schools to present about the PB process and the opportunities youth have to get involved.

#### **Community Boards (CBs)**

Community Boards are comprised of 50 volunteer community residents, appointed by Borough Presidents, that meet to discuss various community concerns and advise the city on issues related to land use, schools, public safety, and more. In 2014, the City Council passed a resolution to allow 16- and 17-year olds to serve as Community Board Members. Of the youth we surveyed, about 60% had never heard of Community Boards and 97% had never participated.

- We **support** allowing 16- and 17-year olds to sit on Community Boards, and **recommend** the age be lowered to 13.



Testimony by Anyhara Garcia  
International High School of Health Sciences  
June 13, 2018  
New York City Council Education Committee

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing. My name is Anyhara Garcia and I am currently a Senior at the International High School for Health Sciences and an incoming freshman at the The City College of New York. As an alumna of Generation Citizen's Action Civics, I participated in Generation Citizen's Action Civics program during the second semester of my senior year in my high school, which is located in Council Member Daniel Dromm's district, District 24.

GC is an education program designed to get civics education back into middle and high school classrooms in an action-oriented way and empower young leaders to exercise their civic duties and participate in civically engaged activities. Throughout the semester-long program, GC partners with schools to implement a twice weekly Action Civics curriculum during in-class time to educate middle and high school students about how to confront and take effective action to address community issues by engaging directly with politics.

Students start by debating what they would change if they were decision-makers in their school, their city, or their state. Then students build consensus to choose one issue impacting their community to focus on addressing collectively. The students analyze the underlying root cause(s) of the agreed upon issue and then collaborate to develop and execute an action plan, which may involve lobbying elected officials to advance budgetary, legislative and/or policy solutions, or building a coalition. The program culminates with Civics Day, the end-of-semester student finale where students present their action projects at a science fair style exhibition event.

After coming to an agreement, the issue that my class decided to focus on is making CUNY tuition free. As immigrants and minorities, we experience many obstacles here in New York City. Many of our classmates suffer the disadvantage of being undocumented. This barrier prevents them from having the chance to apply for federal financial aid. As a result, many are not able to pay for college tuition in either two-year or four-year colleges. It is hurtful to see people's dreams die due to the lack of money. Having in mind that this goal impacts all New York City and that it will take a lot effort, dedication and persuasion, we proceeded on researching the main roots causes of the problem. During an intensive research process we discovered an organization that is also working to solve this issue and with their help we decided on an action plan.

We are supporting New York Senate Bill S4749 proposed by Senator Toby Ann Stavisky. This bill makes both CUNY and SUNY free, however, since 2011, it has been stuck in the Higher Education Committee. Regarding this fact, this bill is the first step to a greater change. As a part of our advocacy campaign, we are using social media to attract readers to a blog. The blog has a video with testimonies of people who have a connection to this issue ([make-cuny-free-76.websself.net](http://make-cuny-free-76.websself.net)). Furthermore, it also has a copy of the bill and ways to contact your representative(s). This will give people the chance to communicate with their local

representative and to let them know how important this matter is to every one of us. Our goal is to get people to support it so that next year's seniors won't be forced to choose between college and work.

Participating in GC had a profound impact on me and my classmates. As we started this project we didn't know how important it is for everyone to be civically engaged. Over the course of our semester, we started to notice how easy it was to talk with our elected representatives. We were shocked that there are so many community meetings happening around us that we never had knowledge of, including that we could come here to City Hall to testify at public hearings and make our voices heard on issues that matter to us. I was so shocked by that the last time I was here a few weeks ago.

Many of our classmate register to vote and decided to keep working on this project beyond the classroom. We learned about the process of decision-making and how essential our voices are. During the time of the school shooting in Florida, we exercised our First Amendment right and participated in the National Walkout Day on March 24, 2018. This did not just only give motivations to seniors, but it also set an example to juniors, sophomores, and freshman as we saw them joining us during the walkout. All of this was accomplished with the help of our Generation Citizen class, which empowered us to use our voices and to action that will lead to bigger change.

As the City Council considers ways to foster youth civic engagement, I would say that GC's Action Civics program is a way to get young people involved in civics and it disproves the misconception that you do need to be of a certain age in order to be engaged in politics. Through this program teenagers are shown that school is not just about learning but also about exercising what you learn.

As I conclude my testimony, I would like you all to keep in mind how important it is to encourage our youth to be civically engaged. I've seen number of children from various NYC schools, who have so many wonderful ideas on how to help improve their own communities. These are children form the future generation. Let's actually make America better again by educating and encouraging the future generation.

Thank you all so much for this incredible opportunity to speak to you today. A special thank you to Generation Citizen for allowing me to voice my concerns and sentiments on this matter. Thank you so much to the Council Members and the community for listening to me. And as GC says, "Don't talk about change. Lead it."

**Brilla Public Charter Schools**  
**Reyes Claudio, Network Director of Operations**  
**Testimony Presented to the New York City Council Education Committee**  
**June 13, 2018**

Brilla Public Charter Schools respectfully submits the following testimony in support of Introduction bill 0672.

My Name is Reyes Claudio and I am the Network Director of Operations for Brilla Public Charter Schools located in the South Bronx. I am also a proud mother of three boys under the age of 8, one of which currently attends Brilla and another whom will attend this August. I often think about the life choices they will make as teenagers and how it will make or break them as adults. My hope as an administrator in an educational institution is to inspire our students to a path of higher education, realize their own potential and make an investment for the betterment of their future and communities. We are building tomorrow's leaders and leaders serve different roles in communities. The reality with all that children face is that college isn't the only path our students will end up taking. The goal is to give every student the opportunity to attend and graduate college if that is their desire and path. For the other students that for countless reasons have different paths what are we doing? This bill will not guarantee anything for anyone that does not want it. What it will do is increase student awareness of civil service exams, making potential employment information more accessible and encourages students to pursue an alternative path to employment. Our students attend Public Charter schools, the key word being public. They deserve to have the same information shared with them about these opportunities as high school students graduating from DOE schools. I ask you to treat not only my children equally but all children attending Public Charter Schools.

Thank You

**The New York City Charter School Center**

**Erik Joerss, Director of Government Affairs**

**Testimony Presented to the New York City Council Committees on Education  
and Youth Services**

**Oversight Hearing on Youth Engagement Opportunities and Introductions**

**561-2018 and 672-2018**

**June 13, 2018**

The New York City Charter School Center respectfully submits the following testimony in regards to Intro- 672 and thanks the New York City Council Committee on Education Chair Mark Treyger and Youth Services Chair Debi Rose for providing the opportunity to comment.

The Charter Center supports Intro-672, which would require the DOE to distribute information about the civil service exams to students, but we are concerned that § 21-988, as it is written, excludes charter students from the opportunities the legislation grants to the students in traditional public schools. We suggest altering the definition of "school" in this section to read: a school of the city school district of the city of New York or a charter school located in the city of New York.

The Charter Center is pleased to be joined by students and faculty from Democracy Prep and Brilla Charter Schools to share the work they do to include civic engagement as part of the student experience.



**Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council (CPAC)**

**Website: [www.cpacnyc.com](http://www.cpacnyc.com)**

**Email: [infocpacnyc@gmail.com](mailto:infocpacnyc@gmail.com)**

**Twitter: [@cpacnyc](https://twitter.com/cpacnyc)**

**Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/cpacny>**

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1st Vice-Chair - Nancy Northrop  
Recording Secretary - Ayishah Irvin  
Corresponding Secretary - Celia Green**

**Co-Chair - Jessamyn Lee  
2nd Vice-Chair - Pamela Stewart  
Treasurer - John Gavros  
Parliamentarian - Susan Crowson**

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June 13, 2018, CPAC Testimony in relation to:

**Int. No. 561: By Council Member Treyger - In relation to requiring the reporting of information regarding parent-teacher association and parent association chapters in public schools.**

The Chancellor Parent Advisory Council is a council whose members, the president or delegate of each President Council, represents the PA and PTA of all public schools in New York City.

I would like to start by saying that I believe that the organization I represent should be a better partner to City Council than it has been to this point. We have a lot of knowledge, contact and access to the everyday life and on the ground parent associations and public schools and I feel we need to share it.

Likely as a consequence of this missing partnership I have read the proposed legislation only recently and did not have an opportunity to interact with the committee or with Council Member Treyger, while this proposed legislation was still on a drafting stage.

This proposed legislation doesn't have an explicitly stated goal. I will consequently have to make some assumptions on what the ultimate goal might be. It seems that, in line with many recent efforts that the City Council has undertaken, this legislation would like to address inequality and disparities in the public school system, by collecting information aimed at studying the financial disparities that exist in schools PA's and PTA's.

I would like to highlight the fact that any initiative that can successfully address injustice, disparity, and inequality in the NYC school system will find CPAC as a strong supporter; consequently you should not regard any concern or suggested modification as an opposition to a greater equity, but rather as an attempt to improve the legislation.

I would like to stress that according to the NYCDOE PA and PTA's should not primarily be viewed as fundraising enterprises but as organizations aimed at empowering the parent community to discuss problems, propose and enact solutions as well as foster collaboration between the parent body and their school.

Consistent with that view I see PA and PTA primarily governed by the right of association sanctioned by the Universal Declaration of Human rights as well as the United States Constitution, so I ask that no legislation is entered that might threaten the exercise of these rights.

In general, while there are Chancellor Regulations that suggest certain rules of conduct to guarantee that PA and PTA represent all parents in the schools and that there are clear rules of dialogue between DOE staff and PA/PTA's I would not want to transform the Department of education into PA/PTA's regulating body, because that will necessarily stifle the power that PA/PTA have in addressing inadequacy and promoting changes within schools.

In this proposed legislation you are requiring that the New York City Department of Education makes available a number of information regarding PA and PTA's.

You ask the Department of Education to report on (and consequently be empowered to collect information about):

A list of all PA/PTA

The number of parents registered as members of these PA/PTA

The number of school staff registered as members in each PA/PTA including the job titles of such staff members

The frequency of meetings established in the bylaws of each PA/PTA

The average attendance of each PA/PTA meeting

The dates and results of each PA/PTA election

The annual income for PA/PTA fund raising activities

The total funds raised for each PA/PTA

The annual expenditures for each PA/PTA

Unfortunately these request show some level of misunderstanding on what PA and PTA are and what they are not.

An example of this misunderstanding is the fact that any parent or guardian of a student enrolled in a school is a member of that PA/PTA, there is no additional requirement, no required dues, nor any official count. The same goes for Teachers in the case of a Parent/Teacher association. All schools in the NYCDOE are required to have a PA/PTA, by default making all parents and guardians of public school students members of a PA/PTA. Requiring schools to publish a list of all PA/PTAs infringes on the basic expectation of privacy; and more egregiously jeopardizes the safety of our most vulnerable populations -

our undocumented parents, our families living in domestic violence shelters, those with orders of protection, and more, not to mention the human resources nightmare created for the DOE when making public the personnel information at schools with PTA's.

One question that we need to ask ourselves is: if the DOE is tasked to collect these data points, how will it gather it? It would have no other way but to require that any PA/PTA, in order to be recognized as the official PA/PTA of any given school, must provide this information to them. Additionally, the data requests included in the proposed legislation omit requests for data that would contextualize the requested information, i.e. the number of students enrolled in a school; the school's Title 1 status; how the PA/PTA's annual income compares with the school's annual budget. Beyond the collection of data, how will it be interpreted and what are the actionable implications for volunteer parent-led organizations?

Enacting this piece of legislation as written would create new requirements for PA/PTA to comply with and a higher level of organization skills needed to be a member of the executive board. Engaging parents and guardians systemwide remains such a challenge for schools that in recent years, Chancellor's Regulations were changed to require PA/PTA's to only elect a president (versus three official officers) to remain in good standing with the DOE. While the most organized PA/PTA's could theoretically comply with these additional requirements, the vast majority of PA/PTA's would find it at least challenging, and for some the added frustration might make the difference between forming it or not.

Independently of disparities in the amount raised by PA/PTA across schools, the sum of all PA/PTA fundraising activities amounts to bread crumbs compared to the NYCDOE budget.

PA/PTA's are independent bodies run by parent volunteers for the primary purpose of building community among school stakeholders. There is no legal requirement that PA/PTA's engage in fundraising activities. To require the DOE to monitor financial activity among those organizations that do



beyond the mandated reporting within the Chancellor's Regulation is to distract wildly from the primary causes of school inequity. To be blunt, no number of bake sales will ever cancel the ill effects of continued systemic underfunding of NYC's public schools by the state government.

I believe that this proposed law, as written, is trying to address inequity in a way that is bound to be ineffective, problem-ridden and potentially at odd with freedom of association and basic privacy laws. My recommendation is to bring this legislation back to the drawing board. I urge the members of City Council to read the Chancellor's Regulations A660 to learn what financial reporting measures are already in place for PA/PTAs; to go back to your home districts and talk to school superintendents, principals and parents to ask whether they see PA/PTA activities as a significant contributor to fiscal inequities among schools. As you hopefully redraft this legislation, I compel you to include CPAC and other elected parent bodies in the conversation to establish clear goals City Council would like to achieve, and together draft a more informed proposal to that achieve those goals.

Thank you.

Marco Battistella – Co-Chair, Chancellor Parent Advisory Council



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**New York City Council  
Committee on Education  
Honorable Mark Treyger, Chair  
Committee on Youth Services  
Honorable Deborah Rose, Chair**

**Testimony of YMCA of Greater New York  
Presented by Michael Rivadeneyra, Senior Director of Government Relations**

**Oversight Hearing: Youth Civic Engagement Opportunities  
June 13, 2018**

Good afternoon, my name is Michael Rivadeneyra, Senior Director of Government Relations for the YMCA of Greater New York, and I will be testifying on behalf of the YMCA. Before presenting my testimony, I wanted to thank Chair Treyger, Chair Rose, the members of the Education Committee and the Youth Services Committee, as well as the Speaker, for holding this important hearing on youth civic engagement opportunities. It is a ripe moment to have this hearing as we witness the rise in youth activism. Access and opportunities to civic engagement are essential to a healthy democracy and strong community.

New York City's YMCA is committed to empowering youth, improving health, and strengthening community. Our organization of over 4,000 employees works every day to help people make positive changes in their lives and we invest in the communities we serve. With 24 YMCA physical branches and more than 100 community sites across the city, the Y is among the city's largest providers of human services spanning from infancy to adulthood — and an important anchor, convener, and catalyst for transformational change in underserved communities.

One of the primary ways the Y reaches the community is through our youth programs, which helps put kids on the path to success by developing skills for life, community, and leadership. Civic engagement is a critical way we to develop those skills. Through programs like Youth & Government, Teens Take the City, Leaders Club, and most recently Student Voter Registration Day, the Y develops leadership and civic engagement in teens in all five boroughs. Across all of our youth programs, the Y helps young people build the social emotional skills necessary for success. Middle schoolers and high schoolers that participate in our youth programs receive academic support, develop public speaking skills and communications skills, and learn the value of community service. Furthermore they learn from the Y that their voice matters. That their

experiences and insight are highly valued by adults and this frequently empowers them to become more involved in their schools and in their broader community. In turn, we all benefit from their increased engagement.

The first civic engagement program I would like to touch on is our Youth & Government program. It is a national Y program that is supported by Y-USA, which was first established in New York State in 1936. The program brings thousands of teens throughout the state to participate in a model government structure to experience how our nation's democratic process works. Through guided instruction over several months during the school teens select an issue that stir their passions, then they learn to debate public policy, write legislation, and one weekend a year gather in Albany to take over the State Capitol. Proposed legislation that originated with Youth & Government participants has even gone on to be presented by actual legislators and signed into New York State law.

At a more local level, Teens Take the City, the YMCA of Greater New York's signature teen civic engagement program, serves over 1,000 youth from all five boroughs. This dynamic leadership-development and community organizing program offers teens opportunities to get involved in issues affecting them and their communities. Participants embark on a 20-week afterschool experience during which they learn about City government, including Community Boards, the City Council, the Mayor's office and City agencies. Teens engage in community mapping and interviewing activities to determine how to better their community. Then they work in small groups to identify a policy proposal idea that they develop, research, and draft into legislation. Midway through the program teens gather in Brooklyn Borough Hall to first present their policies to peers and conduct elections for all the citywide positions and Borough President positions. Near the end of the school year the program culminates when the teens take over City Hall to present and defend their policies in the Chambers. It should be noted that this year participants tackled issues such as food security, substance abuse prevention, school safety, and police brutality.

Another Y signature leadership program, Leaders Club, focuses on the growth of social emotional learning. Leaders Club is a life-changing experience for teens. Over an eight-month period more than 1,200 teens participate citywide. The experience helps teens improve their leadership, communication, and social skills, while experiencing new ways to give back and grow as human beings. Teens meet weekly in small groups to develop and implement projects aimed at providing valuable service to their local community and participate in annual leadership retreats hosted by Y Camps in New York City.

Recently, the Y participated in NYC Votes' Student Voter Registration Day (SVRD) on May 21, which as you all know was championed by Council Member Helen Rosenthal. SVRD was designed to shape teens' lifelong outlook on the democratic process and the role they can play as individuals within a greater community. Teens participating in the electoral process and experiencing democracy at work in a personal and up close manner is an invaluable learning experience. Directors of the Y Scholars/Rowe Scholars program (which focuses on creating college access for those who would otherwise not attend college) participated in a train the

trainer workshop conducted by the League of Women Voters, where Directors learned how to register eligible voters and how to train others on the process. Our Directors trained 15 teens on how to register their peers to vote, our teen volunteers and staff were in seven high schools throughout the city, where they registered 70 of their peers. Leading up to SVRD, the students were trained and engaged in conversations about the positive and negative impact of voter turnout, decisions that local elected officials make, such as Summer Youth Employment Program, the City budget, and housing, and the overall role of the City Council. All of which highlight the importance of voting and the importance of voting in local elections.

As you can tell, leadership and civic engagement is an integral part of the YMCA's mission to empower youth in New York City. We appreciate your support, leadership, and partnership in helping us accomplish this mission every day — and helping more youth learn, grow, and thrive. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to continuing our successful collaboration and to working with your committee and the City of New York for many years to come.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me at [mrivadenevra@ymcanyc.org](mailto:mrivadenevra@ymcanyc.org) or 212-630-9717.

**Testimony to the New York City Council  
Joint Hearing of the Committee on Education and Committee on Youth Services**

**Delivered by Joseph R. Rogers, Director of Public Engagement / Senior Researcher  
The Center for Educational Equity at Teachers College, Columbia University**

**Re: Oversight – Youth Civic Engagement Opportunities**

**June 13, 2018**

Good afternoon. My name is Joseph Rogers and I serve as a senior researcher and director of public engagement with the Center for Educational Equity at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Preparing students for their important civic responsibilities as members of a democracy has historically been an essential role of schools in the United States. In most states, preparation for civic participation is also central to the *right to education* afforded by the state constitution.

In New York, the state's highest court ruled in the *Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE)* case that **the state government has a constitutional obligation to provide all students "the opportunity for a sound basic education" that prepares them for productive civic participation** and competitive employment. This means **every school must be equipped to help all students** develop the knowledge, skills, and habits they need to be effective civic participants when they graduate from high school, along with being prepared for college and careers.<sup>1</sup>

As co-counsel for *CFE*, Michael A. Rebell, presently Teachers College professor of law and educational practice and the executive director of the Center for Educational Equity, partnered with parent and student leaders, educators, advocates, and other key stakeholders, in a statewide coalition that fought hard to win this right. The New York City Council raised awareness about and provided important support for this work.

And yet, as we found in an intensive statewide study that we published a few years ago, over two-thirds of the study schools, 12 of which were in New York City, reported that, among other resource deficiencies, they lacked essential educational resources to equip students with adequate civic knowledge and skills. Particularly in under-resourced schools with high concentrations of students living in poverty, civic-preparation activities and instruction are often the first to go in times of fiscal constraint. School newspaper, student government, mock trial, Model U.N.,

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<sup>1</sup> Rebell, M.A., Wolff, J.R., & Rogers, J.R. (2017). *Essential resources: The constitutional requirements for providing all students in New York State the opportunity for a sound basic education*. New York, NY: Center for Educational Equity, Teachers College. Available at [http://www.centerforeducationalequity.org/center-welcome/EssentialResources2017-FINAL\(1.9.18\).pdf](http://www.centerforeducationalequity.org/center-welcome/EssentialResources2017-FINAL(1.9.18).pdf).

debate, and athletics are often eliminated. Core instruction in social studies and civics, as well as civics electives, are given short shrift as schools narrow their focus to information that can be assessed using standardized tests.<sup>2</sup>

The current state of civic life and our democratic institutions has generated great interest in this topic. For example, the New York State Education Department recently signaled the state's commitment to preparing students for civic participation by including a "college, career and civic readiness index" concept in its Every Student Succeeds Act plan. We would like to see New York lead the way in equipping young people to strengthen our democracy.

On Election Day last fall, the Center for Educational Equity launched a multi-faceted educational-rights initiative focused on strengthening students' preparation for civic participation here in New York and nationally. Through that initiative, "Securing the Future of Our Democracy," CEE is working with Teachers College colleagues, educators, parents and students, and other leaders in the field to:

- fill critical knowledge gaps through research;
- develop legal strategies;
- engage the public; and
- build a coalition to advance a common policy agenda.

Over the past year, CEE has been closely analyzing the substantial gaps in civic preparation that exist in schools here in New York and nationwide. Rebell has written a book, *Flunking Democracy: Schools, Courts and Civic Preparation*, published in April, that examines these issues in detail. And we will soon release our findings from a pilot study on high school students' access to civic-preparation opportunities. That research includes in-depth case studies of six public schools, including three New York City high schools.

Consistent with our educational-equity mission and work, we seek to ensure that all students receive a meaningful opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills, experiences, and values, including the belief in their ability to effect change, that they need to be capable civic participants—and that all schools, particularly schools attended predominately by students in poverty and students of color, are equipped to provide resources, services, and supports to make this happen. Our goal is to facilitate the collaboration of a diverse set of partners across the political spectrum within the city and around the state to advance this right.

Key components of that work were on display at our May 23rd *Reinvigorating Civics Education in New York* joint conference with Generation Citizen, which we hosted at Teachers College. That day, a richly diverse convening of stakeholders explored New York's civics-education landscape through solution-oriented dialogue on how to reinvigorate civics education in our schools, boost civic-engagement pathways beyond the classroom, and realize New York students' constitutional right to civic preparation. Important insights and recommendations

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<sup>2</sup> Rebell, M.A., Wolff, J.R., & Rogers, J.R., Jr. (December 2012). *Deficient resources: An analysis of the availability of basic educational resources in high-needs schools in eight New York State school districts*. New York, NY: Center for Educational Equity. Available at <http://www.centerforeducationalequity.org/publications/safeguarding-students-educational-rights/DeficientResources.pdf>.

presented that day included those of outstanding young leaders from local high schools and colleges, leading state education policy makers Regents Chancellor Betty Rosa and Deputy Commissioner Angelica Infante-Green, school-based educators and administrators, legislative analysts and advocates, and our own Michael Rebell.

And earlier this spring, we convened over 35 city and state leaders to launch a New York coalition to advance preparation for civic participation. This coalition aims to:

- strengthen state education policy, practice, and resources with the goal of supporting all students' right under the New York state constitution to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need to “function productively as civic participants”;
- raise awareness about that right; and
- mobilize the expertise of students, parents, educators, researchers, advocates, attorneys, youth development specialists, and philanthropy to work collectively toward these goals.

We look forward to collaborating with—and serving as a resource for—you and your colleagues as you seek to ensure high-quality civic-learning opportunities for *all* New York City students.

Thank you for your time.



**Testimony to be delivered by DeNora Getachew, New York City Executive Director of Generation Citizen to Joint Hearing of the New York City Council's Education and Youth Services Committees regarding Youth Civic Engagement Opportunities**

Good Afternoon Members of the City Council's Education and Youth Services Committees:

My name is DeNora Getachew and I'm the New York City Executive Director of Generation Citizen, a nine-year-old national nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to educating and empowering the next generation of civically engaged citizens. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's timely and important hearing about the youth civic engagement opportunities. Thank you to the City Council for investing \$1 million in Generation Citizen over the last two fiscal years. We could not have scaled our local impact to educate and empower over 7,000 New York City public school students without the Council's investing in our Action Civics program.

America is experiencing a civic reckoning, partly as a result of the aftermath of the tragic events in Parkland, Florida and the incredible leadership and vision shown by the young leaders there in the face of their tragedy, but also due to the particularly politically divisive politically climate we are living in right now. Society is finally realizing what many academics and advocates have known for a long time, political disengagement and illiteracy are rampant, especially in our city and our nation's most underserved communities.

Generation Citizen, or GC, bring civics education back into the classroom through a new, engaging pedagogy: Action Civics. GC partners with teachers and schools to help them implement our standards-aligned Action Civics education program twice weekly over the course of a semester, often added to History, Social Studies, the state-mandated Participation in Government class, or similar in-school class time. We use two models to implement our Action Civics curriculum: college volunteer, or Democracy Coach model; and teacher-led, professional development model. Our two models are unified by a shared Action Civics curriculum, our innovative approach to advocacy planning and support, and supplemental resources for students, teachers, and schools.

The key components of Action Civics are that:

1. It must be student-led and personally affect the students;
2. Students must conduct research and analyze the root causes of their issue, and develop an action plan or a goal;
3. Students put plans into action by meeting with target legislators and policymakers and by drafting legislation, proposing budgetary solutions or advocating for increased youth voice in government decision-making affecting the issue;
4. Students present their action plans to community leaders at our end of semester capstone event, Civics Day;
5. Students must have an opportunity to reflect and explore concrete ways to remain active, politically engaged citizens beyond the classroom; and
6. Students become prepared and motivated for long term political engagement.

Through Action Civics, students learn about democratic structures and processes by directly engaging with them, as well as with each other, to address one or more issues they care about, such as affordable housing, bullying, gun violence, police brutality, or sexual assault – the top issues in GC NYC's classrooms this year. Students learn valuable academic and life skills, like public speaking, collaboration, critical thinking, and how to work through difference. They also gain firsthand experience engaging in an important lifelong habit, understanding how they can directly inform and influence change in their community through the democratic process.

**Don't talk about change. Lead it.**



GC has educated and empowered approximately 14,000 students nationwide this year through our work in New York City and 5 additional sites: Rhode Island, where we were founded on Brown University's campus; Massachusetts; the Bay Area, California; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; and Central Texas, as well as piloting "remote programming" in San Diego, California; and Camden, New Jersey.

GC is on the front lines arming the next generation with the knowledge and skills to participate in twenty-first democracy and not just be slacktivists. While our mission is to bring civics education to all students, we focus on addressing those impacted by the "**civic engagement gap**" plaguing our society. Research shows that young people nationwide are receiving unequal civic learning opportunities and that students in low-income schools, when compared with just average socioeconomic status schools, are 50 percent as likely to study how laws are made, and 30 percent less likely to report having experiences with debates or panel discussions in social studies classes. So in NYC, and in our 5 sites nationwide, we focus on the most underserved communities. We are cultivating the New American Majority to engage in democracy as a way to bring equity back into our democracy.

While there are many reasons for the lack of overall civic participation, one root cause of the problem is that civic engagement is not seen as a high priority in our schools today, and too much of our efforts are focused on elections and the experience of voting. But that's just one action on one day. GC believes Action Civics is a concrete and systemic solution to re-engage young people in the local political system for the long-term, and to collectively strengthen our democracy.

**Thanks to the New York City Council's \$1,000,000 investment through the *Civics Education in Schools Initiative* in Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018, Generation Citizen New York City has:**

- Educated over 7,000 middle and high school students in over 50 New York City public schools.
- Launched college partnerships with 4 new CUNY colleges – Baruch College, John Jay College, Medgar Evers College, and Queens College, and deepened our partnership with Hunter College to recruit over 200 Democracy Coaches (college interns) to co-teach Action Civics and serve as peer-to-peer mentors to public school students.
- Cultivated the future civic workforce by providing CUNY college interns with stipends for teaching Action Civics in over 280 New York City public school classrooms.

We are excited by the de Blasio Administration's Civics for All initiative through the equity and excellence umbrella. As the City's largest Action Civics provider, which has educated over 18,000 students since launching the New York City site in 2011, we look forward to working with the Administration to develop and scale Civics for All using GC's Action Civics curriculum and pedagogy, and make New York City a national model for effective civics education.

GC is not naive enough to think that our work in the classroom alone can save our democracy. We know that Action Civics is the start of a young person's lifelong civic journey. We also know that there is too much emphasis on getting our youth to vote and not enough emphasis on how to engage them in the spectrum of civic engagement activities. That's why we created this Go Beyond the Ballot toolkit, which articulates 6 clear ways that our young people, and adults too for that matter, can stay civically engaged. I call the Committees' and administration's attention to the toolkit as you work together to consider ways to build out local programming to encourage youth to further their civic journey.

**Don't talk about change. Lead it.**

On the point of civic engagement opportunities beyond the classroom, last fall we submitted comments in response to the Department of Youth and Community Development's Summer Youth Employment Concept Paper. In our submission, we recommended that SYEP should be expanded to include additional focus areas, such as government and civic professions. We believe such internships, similar to GC's Community Change Fellowship (CCF), can help stem the civic engagement gap, while simultaneously ensuring that the city is cultivating the future civic workforce.

By way of brief overview, GC's CCF program is a six-week summer youth leadership development program for alumni of our in-school Action Civics program who have already demonstrated their commitment to civic engagement. Fellows work four days per week at a government agency, elected official's office, or advocacy organization to apply their civic knowledge and skills in the workforce. GC also provides Fellows with professional development and workforce readiness skills – from workplace communication to resume writing – as well as coalition-building, policy research, storytelling, and media training to prepare them to share their civic engagement stories and learn how to leverage the media to advocate for policy change.

I would be remiss if I did not mention other youth civic engagement pipelines like Participatory Budgeting; Youth Leadership Councils; Student Voter Registration Day, which GC has participated in since its inception; and Community Boards where 16 and 17 year olds can serve thanks to successful advocacy by GC and other coalition members.

If we continue to deemphasize civics education in our schools, it's no wonder that young people do not understand the importance of democratic participation. GC recently released a bold plan to reinvigorate civics education nationwide, using three strategies over the next three years: (i) strengthening our existing program; (ii) expanding our program portfolio to prove the efficacy of the model in rural communities; and (iii) advocating for Action Civics for all students statewide leveraging the state mandated Participation in Government one semester civics course. On the latter subject, GC NYC recently hosted a policy conference with the Center for Educational Equity at Teachers College, Columbia University to discuss how we can reinvigorate civics statewide. We look forward to partnering with the Council to shape our state advocacy agenda.

We appreciate the Council's vision and leadership investment in GC to ensure that the next generation of New Yorkers develops the civic knowledge, skills, and agency necessary for them to become active and engaged stewards of our 21st century democracy for the long-term. I will now ask Anyhara Garcia, alumna of GC's Action Civics program from the International High School for Health Sciences, to share a youth perspective about how Action Civics can empower young people to become civically engaged.

Thank you to the Committees for your consideration of this testimony.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor  in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Shona Gibson

Address: Chief of Staff

I represent: FNCC, DOE

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/13/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Denora Getachew (Get-a-cho)

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

I represent: Generation Citizen

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Anyhara Garcia

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

I represent: Generation Citizen, International Hs for

Address: Health Science



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6-13-18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michael Rivadeneira

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

I represent: YMCA of Greater NY

Address: 3 West 83rd St. NY NY 10023

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/13/15

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ERIC JOHNS

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

I represent: NYC Charter School Center

Address: 111 Broadway

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Susan Haskell

Address: DYCD Deputy Commissioner

I represent: for Youth Services

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Darryl Rattray

Address: Dx 0

I represent: Associate Commissioner

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/1

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rafael Claudio

Address: 413 East 144th Street

I represent: Brilla Public Charter School

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/13/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joseph Rogers

Address: 525 West 120th Street, #219, New York, NY 10027

I represent: Center for Educational Equity at Teachers College, Columbia University

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

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



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 672+561 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/13/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sarah Zapler

Address: 150 Ocean Ave Brooklyn, NY 11225

I represent: IntegrateNYC

Address: 601 W 26th Street NY, NY 10001

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 672+561 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/13/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Julisa Perez

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

I represent: IntegrateNYC

Address: 601 W 26th St NY NY 10001

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor  in opposition

Date: June 13, 2018

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Laura Junkstrom

Address: 14 Wall St. 4C New York NY 10005

I represent: Citizens Committee for Children

Address: Leff Ocean Pkwy Brooklyn NY 11218

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor  in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Viviana Perez

Address: 7767 Park Ave, NY NY 10035

I represent: Democracy Prep Public Schools

Address: 180 Conyngham Street, BK NY 11211

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/13/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Andy Cai

Address: 1453A Bay Ridge Parkway Brooklyn, NY 11228

I represent: Coalition for Asian America Children and Families

Address: 50 Broad Street #1837, New York, NY 10004

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/13/2018

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sophia Zhang

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

I represent: CACF

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



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/13/2018

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Denis Yu

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

I represent: The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families

Address: 50 Broad St, New York, NY 10004

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 561 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/13/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MARCO BATTISTELLA (CPAC Co-Chair)

Address: 95 BAXTER ST #17 NYC

I represent: CPAC

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

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



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor  in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Norah Loveti

Address: Director, Social Studies

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

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

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor  in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Paul Weinberg

Address: Deputy Chancellor

I represent: teaching & learning

Address: DOE

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