**Testimony of NYC Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña
on DOE's Response to Incidents of Bullying, Harassment
and Discrimination in NYC Schools,
and Efforts to Improve School Climate
Before the NYC Council Committee on Education**

**October 30, 2017**

Good morning Speaker Mark-Viverito, Chair Dromm and Members of the Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss DOE's work to ensure that all of our schools provide a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment for all students and staff and the proposed legislation under consideration today. I am joined by Elizabeth Rose, Deputy Chancellor for the Division of Operations at the DOE, and Lois Herrera, CEO of the Office of Safety and Youth Development. I would like to thank the Speaker and City Council for their leadership and longstanding partnership on these issues.

The safety and security of students and staff is our top priority. We are heartbroken by the tragedy that occurred in the Bronx, and we mourn the loss of a young student's life. The Special Commissioner for Investigation is conducting a thorough investigation, and we remain dedicated to ensuring that this never happens again. All parents must feel certain that their children are safe in our schools. While we know we have more work to do, we are pleased that last school year was the safest on record and crime in schools was at an all-time low.

Providing students with safe, nurturing learning environments is at the heart of our Equity and Excellence for All agenda. As part of this work, the City has launched initiatives such as Single Shepherd and the Community Schools model to help students succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. As you may know, this Administration has implemented important school climate reforms across the City, and is investing $47 million annually in school climate initiatives and mental health supports to ensure that schools are equipped with the critical resources to effectively manage incidents and address underlying issues. We also work hand in hand with the NYPD School Safety Division to provide safe learning environments in all school buildings.

As part of this commitment, today I am announcing the launch of new anti-bullying initiatives to better serve students and families, and also ensure schools are providing safe and inclusive learning environments in every school building. We also recognize that all members of a school community have vital roles to play in preventing bullying. We are seeking greater input from parents, and building robust accountability systems.

Last month, the Mayor and I hosted a discussion with parent leaders on school safety, and the feedback we received informed several of the new initiatives. These reforms include:

- **Bullying Complaint Portal:** Family engagement is critical to strong school communities and the Bullying Complaint Portal will be an easy-to-use tool for families to report online any incidents of student discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying. Families who report incidents of bullying against their children will receive an electronic acknowledgment of receipt and will be informed of the outcome of the investigation. Launching in 2019, the portal will increase access for families and help the DOE determine where additional resources are needed at schools across the City.

- **Mental Health First Aid Training and Community Workshops:** Families, community members, staff, and students will also be provided with Mental Health First Aid training and workshops on bullying prevention and reduction. The trainings will be offered in partnership with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and ThriveNYC, and will cover the five-step action plan for assessing, identifying, and offering assistance to students in crisis.

- **Anti-bias and Anti-bullying Training for Staff:** In January, DOE will offer Kognito training—a web based anti-bias interactive training—for all school-based employees, in addition to anti-bias training that is conducted by the Anti-Defamation League for school staff. Additionally, parent coordinators will receive training on topics including creating a supportive environment, identifying bullying, and supporting those involved in bullying.

- **Increased Protection from Bullying for Students:** The DOE will implement a new protocol that requires schools to develop individual student action plans to address instances when there are several substantiated claims of bullying against the same student.

- **Funding for Student-led Clubs that Promote Diversity and Equity:** The City is dedicating $1 million to support the establishment of student-led clubs in middle schools and high schools, including Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) and Respect for All (RFA) clubs.

- **Targeted Support for 300 Schools:** Schools with high incidents of bullying rates will receive targeted social-emotional support to train staff and support students. Programs for these schools will focus on self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

These new initiatives will build upon ongoing work to ensure that all schools have safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments.

In partnership with the City Council, we have significantly expanded training on restorative practices, which help schools create and sustain positive, inclusive climates and respond to situations involving harm. Research shows that bullying is often an insidious, secretive behavior, more easily committed when the student who is the target and the bully do not know one another well. Restorative circles help students build relationships, take ownership of their own behavior,

repair any resulting harm, and stand up to bullying. Bullying thrives where people are anonymous. Restorative circles break that anonymity. In collaboration with our community-based partners, we have updated our training and student advisory curriculum; it now includes a unit promoting diversity, which we incorporated into all of our training in restorative practices.

In spring 2016, we introduced the following restorative practices programs in schools with high numbers of incidents:
- City Council Restorative Justice Program—a multi-tiered program involving 25 schools;
- Restorative Practices for an Entire District—in this case, 35 schools in District 18;
- Building Internal Capacity of Restorative Practices Trainers—the DOE has trained 42 internal staff members to serve as trainers of restorative practices;
- Restorative Training for Warning Card campuses—to support the 32 schools on the original five Bronx campuses where the warning cards were piloted; and
- Safe and Supportive Opportunity Program Expanded—which offers social, emotional, and progressive discipline supports to 20 of the most challenging schools.

Thanks to these initiatives, in school year 2016–2017, suspensions decreased in these schools by 23.1 percent compared to the prior school year, and 38.5 percent compared to two years earlier. Citywide, suspensions decreased by 6.4 percent compared to the prior year. During the same time period, there was an 8 percent decrease in school-related arrests and an 11 percent decrease in the number of summonses issued by the School Safety Division. As part of today's announcement, we will be expanding our district-wide restorative justice pilot to three additional districts.

We know that kids are not able to learn and thrive if they are facing unaddressed mental health challenges, so we have made unprecedented investments in mental health resources and services—which, for the first time, are available to every City school. In partnership with ThriveNYC, we have expanded our offerings and have: 285 school-based mental health clinics, 272 school-based health clinics, nearly 100 mental health consultants, and 120 more social workers in high needs districts. Other services include mental health screenings for students, expanded mental health training for nearly 7,000 teachers at 500 schools, youth suicide training and social-emotional learning training for all pre-k social workers and staff. In addition, we have hired additional guidance counselors.

We have also expanded Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Schools (TCIS), a four-day, evidence-based training on how to de-escalate situations and prevent incidents from developing. Developed by Cornell University, the course helps school personnel teach students developmentally appropriate and constructive ways to manage feelings of frustration, failure, anger, and pain.

Many of the initiatives I have discussed were informed by recommendations from the Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline. Launched in 2015, the task force aims to reduce the number of students who are subject to arrests, summonses, and suspensions in school in a way that both leads to safer schools and protects the dignity and future of students. The task
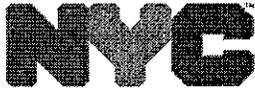
force is co-chaired by the DOE and the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ), with representatives from City agencies, community organizations, unions, universities, service providers, and the City Council.

As you know, Chancellor's Regulations A-831 and A-832 prohibit all forms of student-to-student bullying and intimidation, sexual harassment, and bias-based behavior on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, or weight. The policies and procedures of CR A-832, which conform to New York State's Dignity for All Students Act (DASA), extend to behavior that happens on school grounds, school buses, at all school-sponsored activities, programs and events, and "on other than school property when such behavior" interferes with the educational process.

Three criteria distinguish bullying from other kinds of misbehavior and incidents. Bullying is aggressive behavior that is usually repeated over time, involves an imbalance of power, whether physical or social, and is intended to cause some kind of harm. Regardless of the form it takes, bullying, including cyber-bullying, is prohibited by the Discipline Code.

All reports of bullying, harassment, or intimidating behavior are thoroughly investigated, whether reported by students, parents, staff, or other individuals. Any staff member who witnesses a student-to-student incident of bullying, harassment, intimidation, or discrimination—or who has knowledge or information or received notice that a student may have been the victim of such behavior—is required to promptly report the alleged act. In school year 2016–2017, 3,281 material incidents were reported to the New York State Education Department as required under DASA. A material incident is a violation of CR A-832, in which a student creates a hostile school environment for another student by conduct and/or verbal or written acts, including cyber-bullying.

The Discipline Code outlines the disciplinary responses and/or supports and interventions that may be imposed based on the findings of the investigation. We believe that the most effective behavioral response involves positive supports that teach students the social, emotional, and behavioral skills necessary to participate and learn. Students who have experienced bullying, harassment, intimidation or discrimination received tailored supports, including but not limited to an individualized support or safety plan, guidance support and peer support groups.

While a student or parent can report an incident of bullying, harassment, or discrimination to any school-based staff, CR A-832 also requires the principal to appoint at least one full-time RFA liaison in each school to whom anyone can report incidents of bullying. Concerns and complaints about bullying and intimidation can be sent directly to the RFA email address, RespectForAll@schools.nyc.gov, which is monitored by staff within the DOE's Office of Safety and Youth Development (OSYD). Upon receipt, OSYD investigates and notifies the appropriate Field Support Center (FSC) for follow up and support. As part of their annual Youth Development Consolidated Plan, schools are required to submit a Respect for All plan for preventing and addressing harassment, intimidation and/or bullying.

Educators play vital roles in school life, and a key focus continues to be professional development—to build awareness and sensitivity, and to increase staff capacity to prevent and intervene in bullying behavior and bias-based harassment. For example, all RFA liaisons are required to attend a mandatory two-day training that was developed in collaboration with the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN), Operation Respect, and other organizations. In June 2017, OSYD launched the NYCDOEResorativePractices.org webpage, which offers nine training videos on restorative practices.

In addition, earlier this month, OSYD developed and introduced three modules that principals are required to turnkey to staff. These modules focus on bullying, including information on how to support a victim of bullying, de-escalation, and school climate.

Cultivating emotionally intelligent school and district leaders is critical to supporting inclusive and collaborative environments at schools. We are partnering with Dr. Marc Brackett of Yale University to train all 46 superintendents and many principals across the City around emotional intelligence. This training is grounded in research and the new national Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, which is about Equity and Cultural Responsiveness. We are also piloting a program to create lab-sites for this work around equity, excellence and empathy in 16 districts across all boroughs and grade levels.

We recognize that there are particularly vulnerable student populations who may face bullying, harassment, and discrimination both within and outside of school including students with disabilities and LGBT students.

All of the initiatives we have discussed are inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, special needs, and housing status, and we have not only built internal capacity to support these populations, but also have partnered with outside organizations to offer staff training. All of this work is aligned with the existing bullying work we have spoken about today, and seeks to expand the specific supports to LGBT students, students with disabilities, students in temporary housing, and others who need added support, as well as their families and staff. We especially appreciate the Speaker and Chair Dromm's support in this area and look forward to your continued partnership.

In addition to central training, OSYD works closely with FSCs to provide direct support to schools on a daily basis. Each FSC, for example, has a school climate and culture manager who works with other FSC student services support staff to address climate and culture in schools. Superintendents and school climate mangers also monitor incident reports routinely and review the School Survey data to determine if schools show trends or spikes in incidents related to bullying or harassment. OSYD, on a regular basis, shares data with superintendents and the FSCs to identify schools in need of support or those that are seeing successes and can serve as a resource for other school communities. Schools that indicate troubling data are provided targeted support in partnership with superintendents and school climate managers. Supports provided to

schools include onsite intervention, school-wide professional development, or tailored training that does a deeper dive for schools with similar trends.

The DOE's Division of Family and Community Engagement has also worked with parents on this topic. The Chancellor's Parent Conferences have all included presentations on bullying, and we held seven of these conferences in Mandarin, Spanish, Bengali, and Arabic during 2016–2017 to better reach parents. Our parent coordinators have access to a website that includes videos and training modules on bullying. In addition, this weekend I spoke to over 300 PTA presidents about addressing bullying in their schools. As a result of these conversations, we are creating training modules for parent leaders, and I will focus on this topic in my next parent leader and teacher newsletters.

We continue to work with our partners at the NYPD School Safety Division to maintain and strengthen safe and supportive learning environments for our students. This includes work to establish safety protocols and procedures in schools, develop school safety and emergency preparedness plans, and provide training for school safety agents across many topics, such as: conflict resolution; crisis de-escalation; collaborative problem solving; gang prevention; and anti-bullying. In 2016, we partnered with the School Safety Division to introduce "TeamUp Tuesday!" in which officers from local precincts led students from grades K-12 in activities focused on teamwork and leadership. In addition, the School Safety Division hosts annual events to empower students to reduce verbal and physical confrontations in their schools.

I would now like to turn to the proposed legislations.

Intro No. 1538 requires the DOE to list on its website the name and contact information of the designated Respect for All liaison at each school. We are in support of this bill as it will provide students with increased access to this critical information making it easier to report bullying or harassment.

Preconsidered Intro No. __ requires the DOE to report information on student-to-student bullying, harassment, intimidation, or discrimination. Aligned with the new Bullying Complaint Portal, the proposed legislation will provide greater transparency and accountability around school incidents, and will provide the DOE with critical additional information regarding where targeted resources and supports may be needed. We look forward to working with the Council on this legislation.

Intro. No. 461 requires the DOE to distribute information regarding summer meals. We are in support of this bill as it is consistent with information already distributed to school communities and advocacy groups regarding the availability of summer meals. We welcome the Council's support and partnership in ensuring that all children have access to nutritious meals over the summer.

While we have made significant strides to build safe, supportive, and inclusive school communities for all students, we know there is more work to be done and we are deeply

**Department of
Education**

*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

committed to that work. We look forward to continuing to partner with the City Council. I am now happy to answer any questions you may have.

TESTIMONY OF THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

REGARDING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S RESPONSE TO INCIDENTS OF BULLYING,
HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION IN NYC SCHOOLS,
AND EFFORTS TO IMPROVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

OCTOBER 30, 2017

Good afternoon. My name is Anthony Harmon and I am the Director of Parent and Community Affairs for the United Federation of Teachers. I also run the union's Be BRAVE Against Bullying program. I'm joined here today by Jeffrey Povalitis, the Director of the UFT's Safety and Health Department. On behalf of the UFT president, Michael Mulgrew, and our members, I want to thank Councilman Danny Dromm and members of the City Council Education Committee for once again putting a spotlight on the topic of bullying in our schools.

One of the UFT's daily missions is to make sure students feel safe at school and members work in safe and supportive environments. Focusing on student bullying is a big part of that, and has been a priority of the UFT since the union was founded. A positive school climate is an essential prerequisite for teaching and learning. As educators, we know all too well that students aren't going to be engaged in teaching and learning if they're trying to navigate chaotic hallways, stairwells, lunchrooms and playgrounds, or if their interactions with other students and adults in the building are not based on mutual respect.

We know many of our schools are clamoring for additional support. While some schools have implemented comprehensive and effective building-wide initiatives to combat bullying, others are still struggling with too few resources or the training to make meaningful change.

We also know that the Department of Education has gathered a lot of data about school climate, but we are deeply concerned that the DOE is doing very little with that information to help the schools begging for assistance.

Schools are a reflection of what's going on in society, and if you believe as I do that the world has become a meaner and uglier place, with racism, sexism and religious intolerance in the news every night, you better believe that tension we're all feeling rubs off on kids as well. We can't insulate students from the outside world, but we can try to ensure that their school experience is safe and nurturing, and perhaps we can even help them navigate challenges.

The UFT has a robust health and safety team, and we have also made significant investments in several anti-bullying programs including BRAVE and the Positive Learning Collaborative. These two programs complement each other beautifully. BRAVE focuses on combatting student bullying, while the Positive Learning Collaborative helps schools implement school-wide approaches in creating a calm, safe environment in which teachers can focus on teaching and kids can really learn.

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**BUILDING RESPECT, ACCEPTANCE AND VOICE THROUGH EDUCATION**
We launched BRAVE —Building Respect, Acceptance and Voice through Education — six years ago to fight bullying in schools. This year, our phones at BRAVE have been ringing off the hook with requests for anti-bullying training. In fact, just a couple of days ago, we trained a group of 4th-grade teachers and we have more sessions planned. Workshops like these require a specific approach, because a 4th grader understands language and concepts at a different level than a middle or high school student.

Our next series of trainings will focus on the needs of LGBTQ students, and how to support those students as they navigate their years in school. These trainings have a direct impact on the quality of life in school, and they are made possible thanks to the support of this committee and the City Council as a whole. As we try to keep up with the demand, we are now training additional UFT personnel so they can reach more teachers and students.

**THE POSITIVE LEARNING COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM — A WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH**
We believe that an effective way to resolve bullying issues at a school is through a whole-school, whole-child approach. That's what you frequently hear from us when we talk about everything from our Community Learning Schools to the Positive Learning Collaborative program. When it comes to tackling bullying, every adult in the entire school, including custodians, lunch staff, safety officers and secretaries, must be part of the conversation. Every adult must convey the same, consistent message to students and handle issues with the same supportive approach. That means that everyone must be trained. Otherwise, there are gaps. Bullying and harassment thrive in those gaps.

The Positive Learning Collaborative program is a systemic approach that establishes a foundation of respect and tolerance throughout a building. The Positive Learning Collaborative is a joint venture of the UFT and the Department of Education that aims to do something hard: change the behavior of children through restorative practices. The goal of the Positive Learning Collaborative, or PLC, is to move away from punitive, after-the-fact discipline and replace it with proactive practices that can change individual student behavior and how staff responds to it, and in the process, transform the school climate for everyone.

PLC trains all school-based staff, starting with the principal and the UFT chapter leader, using Cornell University's 26-hour course in therapeutic crisis intervention. This in-depth training teaches the skills and strategies needed to support young people in crisis. Since PLC's inception, more than 1,800 educators have completed this intensive training.

Staff report tangible improvements in school climate. We've seen an increase in the number of students who say they are more comfortable talking to adults about personal issues; staff members say they feel better equipped to manage challenging behavior in the classroom. We've also seen a more consistent application of the new school discipline policy. As important, school staff report they feel more valued, that their voices are heard and that they feel increased trust toward the school administration. We have included testimonials from three of our schools at the conclusion of this testimony, and we encourage you to read them.

Every school should be provided with this type of school-wide training. Professional development should include topics that cover child development and how to respond to conflict. Training should also include how to de-escalate situations that invariably happen in classrooms or hallways.

## EXPAND AND ENHANCE RESPECT FOR ALL

As we move forward, we hope the city and the Department of Education will continue to expand and enhance its Respect for All initiative. It's a well-meaning program that promotes tolerance and understanding within schools, and the UFT has wholeheartedly supported the idea since its inception. Now, however, the DOE needs to take it to the next level.

As I mentioned earlier, schools are clamoring for strong anti-bullying programs. The DOE needs to redefine and expand the goals of Respect for All and put money, appropriate curriculum and resources behind that goal.

We also believe that it's time to rethink, and maybe eliminate, the so-called Respect for All liaison position, which is essentially an unfunded, untrained and undefined role. In reality, the liaisons are most likely putting together some student activities for Respect for All Week such as creating posters for the school, but otherwise, most don't have much in the way of authority or dedicated time to work on anti-bullying programs.

As an alternative, we recommend the DOE put in place a trained team at each school. Headed up by the principal and other administrators, these teams must include staff members with whom kids feel comfortable speaking, regardless of whether those staff members are a counselor, a safety agent or a sports coach. This team should be given extensive training and must be given dedicated and specific time to spend with children. And lots of it. Working with children in crisis means listening to them, and that takes time and expertise.

Because in the end, it's not about putting a name on a chart or hanging inspirational posters around the school. Those types of activities may certainly help reinforce important lessons, but they don't prevent bullying. They certainly are no help when a child is in crisis or a problem is rapidly developing in a hallway or classroom. But working together, trained personnel can make a difference in ameliorating the conditions that encourage bullying, and trained personnel can defuse a situation as well.

## IMPROVE TRANSPARENCY IN THE SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEYS

The DOE has a wealth of data at its disposal, thanks to the school environmental surveys. That data shows that some of our schools are clearly crying out for intervention. I'm talking about places where the numbers show morale and respect are down. Places where students and teachers are reporting that bullying incidents are prevalent inside the building.

The question is, once the DOE has the data, what does it do in response? In other words, transparency and reporting are good, but only if the information leads somewhere. What can schools that need help expect to receive in terms of support and guidance? Our students and staff are honest in these surveys, but to what end? They clearly say they want to tackle bullying. They want to prevent tragedies. But they're drowning and looking for a lifeguard.

The DOE needs to take action in these schools. We need assurances that the DOE will be responsive to the needs in these school in a direct way, including appropriate funding, personnel and programs including counselors, behavior intervention services and anti-bullying training.

We are also recommending a change in the way the information is gathered and communicated, so parents have a better understanding of what's happening in their schools and schools can dive into issues related to bullying. As they exist now, the survey's questions and the data gathered are designed to mesh with the categories found in the DOE's Framework for Great Schools. While that may help us understand schools on the macro level, we believe the category of "supportive environment" is too broad because it combines safety data with a host of topics including strength of pedagogy and help with college applications.

All of these things do contribute to a supportive environment, but a bad score could mean one of several things. Kids might not feel safe but a low score could also mean students question the quality of the college advice they're receiving or they're not learning how to think critically. We recommend that categories such as safety and bullying be broken out and reported separately.

### ADDING KEY PERSONNEL
Some students come to school angry, frustrated and depressed. Counselors are the key to not only responding when crises occur, but also preventing situations from escalating. We work hard to get students the support that they need, but we are greatly concerned about the shortage of mental health professionals at schools. We've made strides in this area under Mayor de Blasio with the hiring of hundreds of guidance counselors in the last few years, but the caseloads for these professionals are still too high. Our schools need more counselors, and what's more, they need more mental health professionals including psychologists and social workers. The only way for these professionals to effectively do their jobs is make sure caseloads are reasonable.

It's also worth noting that many educators believe that there's not enough time in the day to address all the mental health issues we observe. Some of those services — along with other programs and a scheduled recess where kids can blow off steam — have been lost to longer pedagogical blocks of time. We may want to take another hard look at school programming, and try to incorporate additional time for students to take advantage of mental health programs and time just to be kids.

### CLOSING THOUGHTS
Every child comes to school with a story. While extreme poverty, homelessness, and mental health issues play a role in creating enormous stress on students, we also know that bullying is just as prevalent in some schools with less poverty where students may not have obvious challenges. This is why, even though we know some of these situations can be addressed on a case-by-case basis, the UFT emphasizes improving the overall school climate.

The biggest barrier in reducing bullying in our schools is the lack of resources and support at the school level. We are calling on the Council to help us advocate for these tools and funding. The DOE and school administrators are understandably juggling an increasingly long list of competing priorities when it comes to budgeting, but we strongly believe that the only way to achieve our goal is to make improving school culture a priority. More training, more resources and more personnel — those are the investments we need to make. Working together, we can make that happen.

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# TESTIMONIALS ABOUT THE POSITIVE LEARNING COLLABORATIVE (PLC) PROGRAM

## P.S. 55 BENJAMIN FRANKLIN SCHOOL, the Bronx

PLC began work with CS55 in the South Bronx three years ago. The school, situated in the center of one of the highest concentrations of public housing in the city, was struggling. Upon entering the school, it seemed as if the lights were off. The dimly lit entryway was gray, covered with 100 years of dirt. The halls of the school were loud and chaotic. Children fought constantly and were suspended for the infraction, nearly 300 times in 2014, the most in the school's history. Staff also aired their grievances publicly, and most of them transferred out at the end of every school year.

After the PLC's surveyed the staff on the school climate, the entire staff and administration held open conversations and began planning together. A plan to rehabilitate the building was discussed with the principal and custodian. PLC worked to coach effective positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) and behavior support teams helped the staff work together rather than continuing an adversarial relationship. A restorative approach to discipline is now in place preventing suspensions, strengthening relationships and keeping kids in class.

The result? Suspensions are down more than 200 percent and major behavior incidents are practically nonexistent. The beautiful halls of the 104-year-old school building are quiet as teachers teach and children learn. Educators now leave the school to retire, not to escape. Children are no longer walking the halls and are in classrooms ready to learn. The school's ELA proficiency level has increased five-fold since the PLC began working with the school in 2013 while math proficiency saw a 10 percent increase in the same time period (2013-2017). The school also went from a culture rated by the state of New York as developing to well-developed this past school year.

— Joshua Fox, Behavior Specialist for PLC

## P.S. 94 KINGS COLLEGE SCHOOL, the Bronx

When I was assigned to teach a 12:1:1 with students who had many behavior incidents the year before, I knew a morning check in was essential. I began to Google "morning meetings" and spoke with our school Guidance Counselor. With her support and my research, we began our Morning Meeting. I didn't realize it then, but we were doing "circles." This year, through the support of PLC, our grade has been formally supported in "restorative circles" and that support has enhanced my practice and the impact it has had in our classroom. Circles are an opportunity to create a sense of community, hear your students' voices, and set the tone for the school year.

I have learned so much about my students, my paraprofessionals, and myself through circles. When anyone visits our classroom, they say that every person in our room is a participant and our interactions are engaged and respectful. While our classroom is not without struggle, that is one essential truth that remains the same regardless of what's going on and I attribute it to taking that time in the morning to do our daily circle. That circle tells everyone in our room, "We care about what you think. We care about your dreams and aspirations. We want to help you become a better version of yourself. We want to learn from you. You matter."

You can see the impact of our circle when you compare the beginning of the year to now. We have less behavior incidents, our students are productively engaged, and students who were not verbal or social are making tremendous strides. I know that it's hard to fit in the million things that we are asked to fit in as educators. For me it was simple. There is very little learning going on when you have disruptive behaviors. Those behaviors don't lessen unless there's a buy in from both sides. In our classroom, we are invested in each other and genuinely care what we think about each other. For us, PLC and circles made that possible.

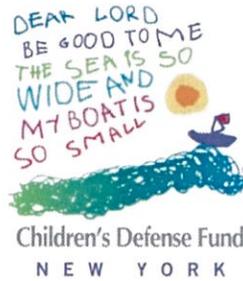— Pearlina Nelms, Special Education Teacher

## P.S. 42 CLAREMONT, the Bronx

Restorative circles have been embraced by our staff not only as a method of strengthening relationships among students but also as a means for building relationships with parents. Our kindergarten team made it a point to start their monthly parent workshops last year with a restorative circle. Not surprisingly, this team had the highest number of parents attend the workshops each month!

— Lucia Orduz Castillo, Principal

At P.S. 42 we have been doing a lot of work with restorative circles. During parent engagement, once a month, we have Teach Me Tuesday for our families. During Teach Me Tuesday, classroom teachers show families a strategy that they can do at home with their child to further develop a specific skill. My co-teaching partner and I begin every Teach Me Tuesday with a restorative circle with our parents. Parents get to share what they enjoy doing, what they are unsure about and even ways they work with their child at home. It so amazing to see families come together as a community and express themselves.

— Tara Doherty, Special Education Teacher

DEAR LORD
BE GOOD TO ME
THE SEA IS SO
WIDE AND
MY BOAT IS
SO SMALL

**Children's Defense Fund**
N E W   Y O R K

**Testimony for the New York City Council Committee on Education
Oversight Hearing on DOE's Response to the Incidents on Bullying, Harassment, and
Discrimination in NYC Schools and Efforts to Improve School Climate
October 30, 2017**

Good afternoon. My name is Charlotte Pope and I am the Youth Justice Policy Associate with the Children's Defense Fund–New York (CDF-NY). The Children's Defense Fund's (CDF) Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a healthy start, a head start, a fair start, a safe start and a moral start in life, and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. Through CDF's Cradle to Prison Pipeline® Campaign–a national initiative to stop the funneling of children, especially poor children and children of color, down life paths that often lead to arrest, conviction and incarceration–CDF-NY works to replace punitive school discipline and safety policies in New York City schools with social and emotional supports that encourage a positive school climate.

Thank you to Chair Dromm, and to the members and staff of the City Council Committee on Education for this opportunity to testify before the oversight hearing on DOE's efforts to improve school climate.

## Introduction

In CDF-NY's work advocating for school climate and safety reforms in New York City we recognize that hostile school environments in combination with differential school discipline and lack of support create additional pathways toward pushing LGBTQ and GNC youth out of school.[1] We appreciate effort to promote affirming and supportive spaces for LGBTQ and GNC young people in schools through Resolution 1442 and for consistently convening hearings that cite the ways education policy must consider the experiences of LGBTQ and GNC students.

GLSEN's 2012-2013 National School Climate Survey[2], including 7,898 students from 2,770 unique school districts revealed that:
- Two in five (39.8%) LGBTQ students reported experiencing at least one detention or suspension.
- 46.7% of LGBTQ Black/African American students, 44.1% of LGBTQ Hispanic/Latino students, and 47.3% of LGBTQ Multiracial students had ever been disciplined at school, compared to 36.3% of LGBTQ White/European students.
- Nearly half of transgender students (45.2%) and students with another gender identity, i.e., those who were not cisgender, but did not identify as transgender or genderqueer (48.9%), had experienced discipline at school, compared to less than forty percent of genderqueer (39.1%) and cisgender female (37.5%) and cisgender male (38.4%) LGBQ students.
- **17.8% of LGBTQ students had been hindered in forming or promoting a GSA or official school club supportive of LGBT issues.**

In our work with the Dignity in Schools Campaign New York, students organize for increased access to healing and safe spaces for LGBTQ and GNC youth to share their experiences in their schools and the implementation of an intentionally inclusive curriculum that promotes positive visibility. With our campaign partners, we achieved a revised student code of conduct in April that for the first time "required

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documentation" of supports and interventions being used in schools.[a] We know that the cumulative impact of lack of support can lead to a loss of academic time, learning, and school pushout.[3] We continue to fight for a policy that mandates the use of guidance interventions as a response to behavioral incidents, as one mechanism of providing supports to young people.

**LGBTQ Students and School Pushout**

I. *LGBTQ youth of color report increased surveillance and policing, and incidents of harsh discipline and biased application of policies in schools, and these same youth are overrepresented in the justice system.[4]*

Factors or experiences that challenge young people's opportunities to remain engaged in school create pathways into the school-to-prison pipeline. In one nationally representative study, non-heterosexual youth were more likely than heterosexual youth to indicate that they had been stopped by police, arrested before the age of 18, expelled from school, and have a juvenile conviction.[5] In another study researchers found strong support for the trend that when LGBQ and heterosexual youth engage in behaviors considered school infractions, the odds are greater for LGBQ youth to have experienced a disciplinary response.[6] These trends are amplified for youth of color, where studies show that they are more likely to be penalized than white youth in school discipline practices and the criminal justice system, even when controlling for their behavior or the considered severity of the infraction.[7] Other studies find that not only are disciplinary responses more frequent, they are also harsher in comparison to their peers.[8]

This research also falls short in encompassing the full scope of punishment, as forms of discipline beyond suspension may be less obvious but still have lasting effects, such as being silenced or discouraged from participating in school, or being regularly sent out of class for self-expression.[9]

II. *LGBTQ youth of color report being blamed for their own experiences of bullying and harassment[10]*

Research shows that LGBTQ youth of color in particular face persistent and frequent harassment and bias-based bullying from peers and school staff as well as increased surveillance and policing, relatively greater incidents of harsh school discipline, and consistent blame for their own victimization.[11] For many students, staff responses may fail to fundamentally alter their risk of being targeted or disciplined as a result of being targeted, and, at worst, students may be penalized for their own experiences of harassment.[12] According to one study, experiences of discriminatory harassment make LGBTQ youth more susceptible to truancy, assault, and disorderly conduct charges relating to self-defense.[13] Thus, higher rates of victimization from bullying for LGBTQ youth leads to being blamed, ignored, or even punished for behaviors that should elicit support rather than punishment from school staff.[14]

III. *GSAs provide affirming spaces to LGBTQ and GNC students who are disproportionately targeted by bullying behaviors, experience differential and often discriminatory treatment in schools, and lack help after incidents occur or patterns of discrimination are brought to the attention of adults.[15]*

The relationship between a GSA and school climate is complementary and mutually informative; for example, GSAs in schools where students perceive greater hostility regarding sexual orientation engage in more advocacy efforts than schools with less hostility.[16] One study suspected that students in GSAs fend better than their non-GSA peers as GSAs provide strong sources of support and advocacy, particularly around school discipline.[17]

Research has identified a number of school-based strategies that would improve the school climate. In one study participants argued that LGBTQ support clubs like GSAs can "make schools safer for LGBT youth and all students" and counter discipline disparities for LGBTQ students.[18] Other reports show GSAs

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[a] The Discipline Code now includes, ""All interventions and supports provided to a student in response to behavioral incidents must be entered into the Suspensions and Office of Hearings Online (SOHO) system, regardless of whether or not a disciplinary action is imposed." The code can be found here: http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/DisciplineCode/default.htm.

as something that "takes action back" to support other students going through similar experiences where school administration does not intervene in instances of harassment.[19] In that case, students used their GSA to change zero tolerance policies and bring in restorative justice, a way of developing a collective sense of justice and advocating for what effective discipline would look like.[20]

We also understand that GSAs cannot operate alone. One 2016 study of NYC schools found:

> Although Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) have the potential to increase visibility and acceptance for LGBTQ students, most of the young people did not have GSAs in their schools. The few who did reported being concerned that the GSA functioned separately from the rest of the school. Some students complained that although their GSAs are supportive around sexuality, they fail to recognize significant intersections of sexuality with race, racism, culture, and disability, homelessness, undocumented status or other intersectional identities. Thus, even students who had GSAs in their schools continued to struggle with invisibility.[21]

For these reasons, efforts to expand the numbers of GSAs in NYC schools must be accompanied by an investment in positive school climate supports and high-quality professional development. The weight of remedying bullying or discrimination must not fall on the operation of GSAs alone.

## Access to GSAs and the NYC School Finder

According to the Department of Education's testimony during the September 14th Council hearing, an informal count of GSAs across city schools uncovered about 200 schools, with over 150 in high schools. The DOE offers a "NYC School Finder" to find high schools "based on what your interests are, where you live, and more!" After searching through the database with key words[b] a total of 103 original schools could be found with some form of a GSA publicly listed. However, the acronym "GSA" only filtered 33 schools, while the word "Gay" filtered 48 schools – with 9 overlapping schools in instances where "Gay Straight Alliance (GSA)" was listed. Two additional schools utilized the name "Gender & Sexuality Alliance", which could be found by searching "sexuality". We support the recommendation made to the DOE during the September hearing that GSAs should be more uniformly listed to enable prospective students to best utilize the school finder and make informed application decisions.

| Borough | # of Schools with GSAs | % of Schools with GSAs | # of Schools Citywide[c] | % of Schools Citywide |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Manhattan | 42 | 40.8% | 203 | 22.5% |
| Bronx | 16 | 15.5% | 225 | 25.0% |
| Brooklyn | 20 | 19.4% | 268 | 29.7% |
| Queens | 17 | 16.5% | 180 | 20.0% |
| Staten Island | 8 | 7.8% | 25 | 2.8% |

We encourage the DOE to consider disparities in access to a GSA as they continue to collect information on where GSAs are located. Our basic research found that the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens were largely underrepresented and that most schools were considered "selective" with 10.7% requiring an audition, 36.9% of schools being screened schools, and 34.0% being "educational option" schools, with some overlap in those categories.

| Demographic | Schools with GSAs | Schools Citywide |
|---|---|---|
| Asian Students | 14.0% | 10.6% |
| Black Students | 23.9% | 33.4% |
| Hispanic Students | 42.8% | 43.3% |
| White Students | 16.6% | 10.7% |
| Students with Disabilities | 17.3% | 20.1% |
| English Language Learners | 9.6% | 12.5% |

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[b] We searched "LGBT" (21 results), "GSA" (33 results), "Gay" (48 results), "Queer" (1 result), "Sexuality" (6 results), "Pride" (1 result), "LGB" (20 results), "Rainbow" (3 results), "GLSEN" (1 result), and "Transgender" (0 results).
[c] This category consists of all schools, excluding Districts 75, 79, and 84, that consist of students in grades 6 through 12 – a total of 901 schools.

| Economic Needs Index | 60.8% | 66.7% |
|---|---|---|

We further found that the average school supporting GSAs were more likely to include white students and less likely to include Black students compared to the citywide average. Intro 1638-2017 would better allow us to understand the disparities in access to a GSA beyond what we see from our limited findings. In particular, we are looking to understand the relationship between access to a GSA and access to other positive school supports, including restorative practices and alternatives to suspensions.

## Recommendations

*I.    Eliminate Zero Tolerance & Address Bullying Through Alternatives to Criminalization*

Through our work with student organizers we have heard instances where LGBTQ students were prevented from wearing clothing deemed inappropriate based on their perceived gender, prevented from choosing to discuss or write about LGBT topics in class assignments, harassed when using the bathroom, and denied the use of their preferred name or pronouns. These stories are all supported by GLSENs national level findings.[22]

Disciplinary policies and practices often serve, either explicitly or implicitly, as a means of policing creative self-expression. For example, schools play an active role in reinforcing the sexual and gender binary by such practices as codifying gendered ways of dressing and addressing discipline and disruptive behavior differently according to gender.[23] Researchers point out the potential role of bias in the ways schools respond to the behaviors LGBQ youth with discipline, and recommend considering whether behaviors labeled school infractions, such as defying authority, may actually reflect coping and protective strategies when faced with hostile school environments.[24]

While a school may develop a strong anti-bullying policy intended to prevent bullying by sanctioning "bullies," its policy may inadvertently lead to the use of its corresponding discipline policy to sanction students who defend themselves against ongoing harassment.[25] In this way, an anti-bullying policy ends up triggering the punishment of the very students it aims to protect. Educators and school systems must also respond to bullying in ways that do not increase justice system involvement for those who may be accused of doing harm. Restorative justice models, for example, seek to repair the damage done to the person or people most directly experiencing harm as well as the school or classroom community through accountability and reparative action.

*II.    Limit the Role of Police in School and Move Funding to Positive Supports*

In one NYC study, LGBTQ youth of color, and gender nonconforming girls in particular, reported lower levels of "feeling safe" with school security. The researchers point out that in their study school safety worked to produce a sense of "relative comfort" for some gender conforming, heterosexual girls but a sense of vulnerability for both LGBTQ and gender nonconforming girls of color.[26] Policies that mandate or encourage direct police or criminal justice action, like the use of criminal court summonses for instances of "disorderly conduct", directly push students into the pipeline and offer no real solutions. While we have been advocating for graduated approaches to discipline in schools, often the mere presence of police in schools leads to the escalation of behavior and referrals to the justice system.[27]

Other contributors to discipline disparities beyond punitive discipline include limited social-emotional supports for LGBTQ students and school personnel's lack of awareness of the experiences and needs of these students.[28] Restorative justice practices and school counselors can help uncover the root of the problem contributing to disciplinary infractions and conflict in school, and we encourage a strategic and ongoing investment in these alternative supports.[29]

*III.    Continue to Expand Training for Teachers and School Staff*

In the absence of effective adult intervention, studies suggest that some LGBTQ students cope by avoiding certain classes, skipping school and/or fighting back against heterosexist bullying.[30] Findings

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suggest that LGBTQ students are often harassed based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation and that teachers are often unsure about how to intervene, leaving LGBTQ youth with a lack of support in school.[31] Schools can provide ongoing professional development tailored to the particular ways in which racism, hetero- and cis-sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and other institutionalized forms of oppression impact formal disciplinary systems, as well as students' informal experiences of school discipline.

### IV.    Continue to Foster Supportive Spaces

Without access to safe spaces, many students miss school to avoid a hostile school climate,[32] which may result in increased school discipline and justice system involvement, making school an even more negative environment.[33] We support Resolution 1442 and the effort to increase access to GSAs and other similar clubs that can help provide identifiable resources or remedy hostile school climates. We further support Introduction 1538, requiring the DOE to report information on its website regarding "Respect for All" liaisons at each city school, and see this as a potential support for increasing the availability of GSAs in each school. Providing this contact information online could help increase conversations of bullying and bias-based incidents, and it could help increase student feelings of safety and empowerment.

### **Conclusion**

CDF-NY is encouraged by Chair Dromm's and the Education Committee's commitment to speaking out against school pushout and fostering safe and respectful schools for LGBTQ and GNC youth. More work must be done to eradicate the school to prison pipeline in New York City's public schools and we thank you for your time and your support in these efforts.

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[20] *Ibid.*

[21] Chmielewski et al. (2016). *Op. Cit.*

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CITIZENS' COMMITTEE for CHILDREN
OF NEW YORK INC

Testimony of:

Grant Cowles
Senior Policy and Advocacy Associate for Youth Justice
Citizens' Committee for Children

Before the
New York City Council
Committee on Education

*Oversight:*
*DOE's Response to Incidents of Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination in NYC Schools and*
*Efforts to Improve School Climate and*
*Intros: 461-2014, 773-2015, 1538-2017, 1565-2017, 1638-2017, T2017-6825 and Reso. 1442-*
*2017*

October 30, 2017

Good afternoon. My name is Grant Cowles and I am the Senior Policy and Advocacy Associate for Youth Justice at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC). CCC is a 74-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe.

I would like to thank City Council Education Committee Chair Dromm and the members of the City Council Education Committee for holding today's hearing about bullying, harassment, and discrimination in NYC schools. I would also like to thank the City Council for introducing a series of bills to strengthen accountability, information access, and support to try to prevent, address and be transparent to parents, students and teachers about bullying, harassment, discrimination and ways to support LGBTQ students in schools. In addition, we are also pleased that this hearing is also addressing two important pieces of legislation aimed at ensuring children are receiving free summer meals.

This hearing to address prevention and responses to bullying in school is vitally important. Bullying, harassment, and discrimination directly and deeply hurts victims in emotional, mental, physical, academic, and social ways, and often with lifelong repercussions. Every New York City student deserves an educational environment where they can focus on their work and experience positive relationships. As we recently saw, failure to address bullying can lead to tragedy for all the youth involved.

While it is essential that schools be free from bullying, it is important to remember that harsh, punitive responses to all misbehavior, including bullying, lead to *less* safe environments and inflict more total harm than good. Bullying in all its ramifications is a complex social outcome that must be addressed holistically to create an environment that protects potential victims while teaching, supporting, and correcting students who engage in bullying in a way that does not push them out of school and take away their own opportunities for an education. Schools can, and must, be safe and supportive environments for *all* students, even students who make mistakes.

CCC commends the Administration and Department of Education for all of the efforts that have been undertaken to address bullying and create a positive school climate in NYC public schools. CCC applauds the school climate reforms that were introduced in 2015 as they explicitly recognize that the best method to create safe and welcoming environments in schools includes eliminating unnecessary suspensions, utilizing proven restorative practices that address school environments, and ensuring students returning to the classroom after temporary removals or suspensions are prepared to learn.[1]

As Mayor de Blasio stated in 2015 when he launched the school climate initiative:

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[1] New York City Department of Education (website). *News and Speeches*. "City Announces School Climate Reforms." Feb. 13, 2015. Available at http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/mediarelations/NewsandSpeeches/2014-2015/City+Announces+School+Climate+Reforms.htm. New York City Office of the Mayor (website). *News*. "De Blasio Administration Announces New School Climate Initiatives to Make NYC Schools Safer, Fairer and More Transparent." July 21, 2016. Available at http://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/628-16/de-blasio-administration-new-school-climate-initiatives-make-nyc-schools-safer-fairer.

No parent should have to choose between a school that's safe for their child and a school where every student is treated fairly. All our schools can and must be both. That's why we are investing in the training and best practices needed to ensure that when problems arise, we fix them first and foremost inside our schools – not by sending a child home or calling 911 needlessly, hurting their education in the process. These changes will help make campuses safer, treat students of every background with dignity, and provide kids with the support they need to learn.[2]

CCC recognizes that addressing bullying is a challenge, but that it is nonetheless imperative. CCC believes that the initial policy changes the administration has taken to create a safe and supportive environment through holistic, restorative, and non-punitive measures is the research-based and best approach, and CCC recommends an even greater commitment to implementing and expanding these policies.

This testimony will provide a basic background of the research about addressing bullying and will then provide recommendations based upon the grounding principles of fostering a safe environment through meaningful accountability, supportive responses, and correcting misbehavior to create safe and welcoming attitudes, behaviors, and communities.

## Background Research and Statistics on Bullying

- Defining Bullying
  The Center for Disease Control has defined "bullying" as "any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or groups of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social or educational harm."[3] This definition of bullying implicitly includes instances of virtual or cyber-bullying conducted through modes of communication that are not in-person (such as texts, social media, and other online platforms).

- Data on Bullying in NYC schools
  The New York State Dignity for All Students Act[4] requires each school district, BOCES, and charter school to submit an annual report of material incidents of bullying, harassment, and/or discrimination that occur during the school year and that involve one or more bias categories (race, ethnic group, national origin, color, religion, religious practice, disability, gender, sexual orientation, sex, weight, and "other" for incidents not covered in other areas).[5]

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[2] "City Announces School Climate Reforms."
[3] The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. *Preventing Bullying: through science, policy, and practice.* Presentation. Available at
http://sites.nationalacademies.org/cs/groups/dbassesite/documents/webpage/dbasse_172366.pdf.
[4] New York State Education Department. *The Dignity for All Students Act.* Available at
http://www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/.
[5] New York State Office of the State Comptroller. *Implementation of the Dignity for All Students Act.* Oct. 2017.
Pages 4-6. Available at http://www.osc.state.ny.us/audits/allaudits/093018/16s28.pdf.

Despite this requirement, official reporting on instances of bullying in schools is very low. Seventy percent of New York City schools reported no instances of bullying in their schools.[6] However, analyses have shown that schools and school personnel are not always reporting instances of bullying, making the official accounting unreliable and unrepresentative of the reality in many school buildings.[7] The Attorney General noted in its 2016 investigation that there was "significant underreporting" in the state bullying data.[8]

The annual survey of students and teachers conducted by the Department of Education show that bullying is a widespread issue and concern in NYC schools. In the 2016-2017 annual survey of students, 43% of the students who responded reported that students at their school harass, bully or intimidate other students some of the time or most of the time.[9] In addition, 36% of teachers reported that students in their school harass, bully or intimidate students some of the time or most of the time. Despite the ongoing efforts to address harassment and bullying, it is clearly still an ongoing issue in City schools.

- <u>National Research on Prevalence of Bullying</u>
  National research similarly shows that bullying continues to be a wide-spread occurrence. According to the Center for Disease Control, which collects national data through the Youth Risky Behavior Surveillance System, in 2015, 20% of high school students reported being bullied on school property in the preceding 12-month period.[10] In addition, approximately 16% of the students reported being bullied electronically. Other national reviews have similarly found bullying rates of between 1 in 4 students and 1 in 3 students.[11]

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[6] Neason, Alexandria. "NYC Says There's No Bullying in 70 Percent of Schools, State Says No Way." *Village Voice*. Sept. 1, 2016. Available at https://www.villagevoice.com/2016/09/01/nyc-says-theres-no-bullying-in-70-percent-of-schools-state-says-no-way/.

[7] See Office of the New York State Comptroller (website). *News*. "DiNapoli: Some NYC Schools Failing to Report Violent Disruptive Incidents." April 28, 2015. Available at http://www.osc.state.ny.us/press/releases/apr15/042915.htm. Zimmer, Amy and Nigel Chiwaya. "How to Navigate New York's Murky System for Tracking Bullying in Schools." *DNA Info*. Sept. 9, 2015. Available at https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20150909/rego-park/how-navigate-citys-murky-system-for-tracking-bullying-schools.

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[10] Center for Disease Control and Prevention. "Understanding Bullying." *Fact Sheet*. 2016. Available at https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/Bullying_Factsheet.pdf. Kann, Laura and et. al. *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2015*. MMWR Srveill Summ 2016;65(No. SS-6): 1-174. Available at https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/ss/ss6506a1.htm.

[11] National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice Statistics. *Student Reports of Bullying and Cyber-Bullying: results from the 2011 school crime supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey*. Aug. 2013. Available at https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013329.pdf.

Bullying is a social activity that often includes individuals beyond the main perpetrator and victim. Research has shown that bullying often involves groups of students who support each other in bullying other students.[12]

Students who are perceived as different from their peers are often at highest risk of being bullied.[13] National research has found that the rate for being victims of bullying among LGBTQ students is nearly double, ranging from 26% to 44%, while the rate for youth with disabilities is approximately 1.5 times as likely as youth without disabilities.[14]

## Recommendations to Effectively Address Harassment, Discrimination and Bullying:

### 1) Efforts to Prevent Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Must Not be Overly Punitive

There are many policies and practices that can help prevent bullying, harassment and discrimination in the first place, and then ensure schools can respond appropriately once it happens to rectify the situation and prevent further harm. These initiatives must be aimed toward creating a safe space for *all* students, and we strongly believe that these policies should not exclude or remove students from the school environment. It may seem tempting to respond to bullying by removing the perpetrators as punishment in an attempt to prevent future bullying, but this approach is not effective.

First, all students, even students who perpetrate bullying, need to be supported in school. The school's mission to educate and support student development must not be ignored for certain students, even students who misbehave and who make poor decisions like participating in bullying or harassment. To be sure, victims deserve and need protections and support as they do not deserve to be bullied. But those who participate in bullying, harassment or discrimination also deserve attentive accountability that teaches them the attitudes and skills to enable them to be positively engaged in a school environment.

Second, no school can punish its way out of bullying or harassment. When looking at individual instances of bullying, they are most often done in group settings and done for social purposes, which implicates many students besides a single perpetrator. Overly-punitive and exclusionary policies (like removal from class or suspensions) as a response to all instances of bullying would mean draconian levels of punishment to a vast number of students. Moreover, punishment-as-deterrence only succeeds in moving the activity to some other place and time where there is a lesser likelihood of being caught, but it does not address the root cause and does not adequately protect bullied students. Policing every act of bullying and harassment cannot be accomplished by school personnel and is not the primary function of educators, especially when much of the bullying is done out of view of school staff and through cyber-bullying methods.

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[12] Espelage, D. L., Holt, M. K., & Henkel, R. R. (2003). Examination of peer-group contextual effects on aggression during early adolescence. Child Development, 74, 205-220.
[13] Bradshaw, C.P., Sawyer, A.L., & O'Brennan, L.M. *Bullying and peer victimization at school: Perceptual differences between students and school staff.* School Psychology Review, 36(3), 361-382. 2007.
[14] *Preventing Bullying: through science, policy, and practice.*

Third, and most importantly, the research demonstrates that overly-punitive and zero-tolerance policies are ineffective at stopping misbehavior and bullying, and instead cause more harm.[15] Harsh, punitive polices often cause the receiver of the punishment to disengage from school, resulting in manifold negative outcomes, such as failure to graduate and involvement with the justice system.[16]

Instead, schools can prevent and properly address bullying through policies that emphasize the dignity and value of every student. This requires a thorough commitment that all students deserve to be free from bullying and those students who do bully must be held accountable in a manner that supports their improved behavior without sacrificing their educational opportunities.[17]

2) <u>Use a Multi-pronged Approach that Applies Restorative and Preventive Practices</u>

Single tactic strategies are less effective than policies that address the entire environment and influences of students.[18] Multi-pronged, holistic approaches use multiple practices and strategies to address school climate and bullying. For example, a multi-pronged approach could utilize a written procedure for responding to instances of bullying, professional development for staff, a dedicated anti-bullying liaison for students to talk to about bullying, school-wide educational events and messaging, in-class facilitated discussions for students, and events with families to educate them on bullying prevention. Multi-pronged approaches are most effective when the entire school community is involved, including students, families, administrators, teachers, and staff such as bus drivers, nurses, cafeteria and front office staff.[19]

Restorative practices are very effective at responding to bullying as it both includes and addresses the larger community that often influences bullying, and it fosters empathy and respect

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[15] Boccanfuso, Christopher and Megan Kuhfeld. *Multiple Responses, Promising Results: evidence-based, nonpunitive alternatives to zero tolerance.* Child Trends, Research-to-Results Brief. March 2011. Available at http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/alternatives-to-zero-tolerance.pdf. Roberge, Ginette D. *From Zero Tolerance to Early Intervention: the evolution of school anti-bullying policy.* 2012. Available at https://nau.edu/uploadedFiles/Academic/COE/About/Projects/From%20Zero%20Tolerance%20to%20Early%20Intervention.pdf. Pennington, Molly. "Zero Tolerance Bullying Policies Aren't Working: here's a better solution." Noodle (website). Nov. 20, 2014. Available at https://www.noodle.com/articles/zero-tolerance-bullying-policies-arent-working-heres-a-better-solution. *Are zero tolerance policies effective in the schools? An evidentiary review and recommendations.* American Psychologist, 63(9), 852-862. December 2008. Available at https://www.apa.org/pubs/info/reports/zero-tolerance.pdf. *Preventing Bullying: through science, policy, and practice.*

[16] *Are zero tolerance policies effective in the schools? An evidentiary review and recommendations.*

[17] *Restorative Practices in Action Journal: for school and justice practitioners.* Journal released at "Restorative Practices in Action: a conference for school and justice practitioners." May 1, 2015. Available at https://www.nycourts.gov/ip/justiceforchildren/PDF/RestorativePracticeConf/RP_Journal.pdf. See also Zimmer, Amy. "Here's How to Reduce Bullying at Your Kid's School." *DNA Info.* Oct. 6, 2017. Available at https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20171006/west-farms/bullying-prevention-nyc-schools (" 'This issue has continued to be a problem and people are seeing now that simplistic solutions such as increasing school security or instituting draconian punishments are not workable,' Hamilton said. 'There needs to a more flexible dialogue to address the problems of both bullies and their victims.' ").

[18] Boccanfuso, Christopher and Megan Kuhfeld.

[19] American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force. *Are zero tolerance policies effective in the schools? An evidentiary review and recommendations.* American Psychologist, 63(9), 852-862. 2008.

among all parties which is lacking when bullying occurs.[20] Restorative practices are a wide set of activities and policies that seek to prevent and respond to harm by restoring individuals through community-driven input and opportunities for listening and reconciliation by all parties.[21] These practices also keep the responsible party included in the restoration process and able to maintain their place in the community, allowing them to not lose their academic progress or to not become disengaged from the entire educational environment.[22]

In addition, universal prevention programs can establish an environment where bullying is unacceptable. Universal prevention programs can include strategies such as school climate initiatives and educational and awareness campaigns within schools. These programs generate consistent and thorough messaging that can create environments that remove social rewards for bullying and provides clear expectations and responses to instances of bullying.[23] This includes using anti-bullying curriculum which teaches all kids that bullying or teasing is wrong. Adults (including teachers, school staff, and parents) need to be able to talk openly and often with students about bullying. When adults keep an ongoing dialogue about bullying, students are more willing to discuss their feelings about bullying and use adults as resources for their decision-making and behavior.[24] The U.S. Department of Education recommends talking about bullying for 15 minutes a day, and provides tips and guidelines for how to talk with students about bullying, available at https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/index.html#Keep. School-wide pledges against bullying are another means to address the environment proactively, and when done appropriately, can be useful vehicles for establishing norms and personal investment against bullying.[25]

Another tactic of addressing the environment to prevent bullying or harassment is to increase the use of structured physical activities, such as organized recess games and athletic challenges.[26] Organized activities can help reduce bullying because they allow high levels of physical exertion, deflating pent-up energy and restlessness that can cause misbehavior and bullying in class or hallway settings. It also promotes cooperation, teamwork, rule-following, patience (while waiting for their turn), sharing, and respect, while actively filling the unstructured time when negative social dynamics, confrontations, or bullying often happens.

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[20] *Keeping Kids in School and Out of Court: Report and Recommendations.* New York City School-Justice Partnership Task Force. May 2013. Available at https://www.nycourts.gov/ip/justiceforchildren/PDF/NYC-School-JusticeTaskForceReportAndRecommendations.pdf.

[21] *Restorative Practices in Action Journal: for school and justice practitioners.*

[22] Fertig, Beth. "Alternatives to Suspension: Inside a 'Restorative Justice' High School." WNYC. April 27, 2015. Available at http://www.wnyc.org/story/alternatives-suspension-inside-restorative-justice-high-school/. Dominus, Susan. "An Effective but Exhausting Alternative to High-School Suspensions." The New York Times Magazine. Sept. 7, 2016. Available at https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/11/magazine/an-effective-ut-exhausting-alternative-to-high-school-suspensions.html.

[23] *Preventing Bullying: through science, policy, and practice.* See also "Here's How to Reduce Bullying at Your Kid's School."

[24] Stopbullying.gov (website). "How to Prevent Bullying." Available at https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/index.html.

[25] Elias, Maurice J. "Student Pledges: preventing harassment and bullying at your school." Edutopia (website). June 13, 2011. Available at https://www.edutopia.org/blog/student-pledges-against-bullying-harrassment-maurice-elias.

[26] Zimmer, Amy. "Dodge Ball and Relay Races at Recess are Curbing Bullying at Some Schools." DNA Info (website). October 18, 2017. Available at https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20171018/morrisania/organized-play-structured-recess-asphalt-green-wellness-in-the-schools.

Victims of bullying can suffer mental anguish that can lead to mental health problems, including higher rates of depressions, self harm, suicidal thoughts, lower academic achievement, feelings of loneliness, and wanting to avoid school.[27] Likewise, the responsible parties who bully often have unaddressed mental health needs.[28] Students who bully have higher rates of delinquent behavior, disliking school, suicidal thoughts, suicidal attempts, substance abuse, and violent thoughts.[29] Increasing access to mental health services, especially on-site school-based mental health clinics, can help support students and address the causes and effects of bullying.[30]

Finally, classroom management techniques that prevent bullying and firmly address instances of bullying when they occur can be highly successful. One study showed that in-classroom techniques to prevent bullying was considered by students to be the most helpful strategy to address bullying compared to all other techniques.[31]

3) Support for Students who are Bullied is Critical

Schools must support students who are bullied in a thorough and holistic manner. It is essential that every student has at least one adult in the school building that they feel comfortable enough to talk about bullying. According to 2011 research by Dr. Ttofi and Dr. Farrington, only about 20 to 30% of students who are bullied notify adults about the bullying.[32] When students have a meaningful relationship with an adult in school, they are more likely to reveal instances of bullying (either instances they experienced or they witnessed), which can allow the adult staff to appropriately respond.[33] It also allows students to provide contextualized information about the student social dynamics that can aid school staff in preventing bullying and correcting circumstances that are close to becoming bullying.

Immediate assistance and caring support can help students manage the effects of bullying. A school environment where teachers and staff are well-trained to support students can help students after incidents of bullying. Some basic steps to support students who have been bullied include: actively listening, assuring the student it wasn't their fault, asking the child what he/she

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[27] Stopbullying.gov (website). "Understanding the Roles of Mental Health Professionals in Community-Wide Bullying Prevention Efforts." Available at https://www.stopbullying.gov/sites/default/files/2017-09/hrsa_guide_mental-health-professionals_508.pdf. (Citing Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010; Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schoenfeld, & Gould, 2008; Reijntjes, Kamphuis, Prinzie, & Telch, 2010.)

[28] "Here's How to Reduce Bullying at Your Kid's School."

[29] "Understanding the Roles of Mental Health Professionals in Community-Wide Bullying Prevention Efforts." (Citing Cook et al., 2010; Klomek et al., 2008; Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001.)

[30] Id.

[31] Crothers, Laura M., Jered B. Kolbert, and William F. Barker. *Middle School Students' Preferences for Anti-Bullying Interventions*. School Psychology International. Oct. 2006. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Laura_Crothers2/publication/238332515_Middle_School_Students%27_Preferences_for_Anti-Bullying_Interventions/links/02e7e53a10ec15dd48000000/Middle-School-Students-Preferences-for-Anti-Bullying-Interventions.pdf.

[32] Ttofi, M.M., Farrington, D.P. (2011). Effectiveness of school-based programs to reduce bullying: a systematic and meta-analytic review. Journal of Experimental Criminology,7(1), 27-56.

[33] *Preventing Bullying: through science, policy, and practice*. See also "Here's How to Reduce Bullying at Your Kid's School."

needs, providing advice, helping them form a plan to resolve the situation, committing to persistent support, and following-up timely.[34]

It is also critical that bystanders intervene whenever instances of bullying occur. One study from 2001 found that when bystanders intervene, bullying stopped within 10 seconds 57% of the time.[35] Bystander intervention is an important strategy for addressing bullying. Even passive bystanders unintentionally promote bullying and harassment by providing the bully with an audience and allowing the hurtful behavior to continue. Teaching children and youth to intervene directly or seek help is an important means to address bullying in schools.[36] There are other useful techniques for how to intervene in bullying, with a collection of techniques available on the U.S. Government's anti-bullying website, available at https://www.stopbullying.gov/respond/on-the-spot/index.html. Some of the main techniques include: getting another adult to help; separate the kids involved; make sure everyone is safe; meet any immediate medical or mental health needs; stay calm; reassure the kids involved, including other bystanders; model respectful behavior when you intervene. Additional resources that educate and empower adults and students alike to intervene when bullying occurs, such as the recent Burger King anti-bullying campaign that features compelling short videos, can be can be leveraged or similarly created.[37]

4) Addressing Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination in NYC Schools and Efforts to Improve School Climate

While the NYC Department of Education has implemented and taken numerous efforts to address bullying, harassment, and discrimination as well as efforts to improve school climate, there is still more work to be done to ensure all students feel safe and supported in their school environments.

This is perhaps more important now than ever when many children and youth are feeling anxiety related to the immigration status of themselves or family members. It is imperative that we make sure New York City students feel safe and free from any form of discrimination or ridicule so that they are best able to learn.

CCC offers the following recommendations to better address bullying, harassment, discrimination, and school climate in NYC public schools:

A. *Ensure all students receive and understand the code of conduct, including the discipline code and the students bill of rights.*

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[34] Stopbullying.gov (website). "Support the Kids Involved." Available at https://www.stopbullying.gov/respond/support-kids-involved/index.html.
[35] Hawkins, D. Lynn., Debra J. Pepler, and Wendy M. Craig. *Naturalistic Observations of Peer Interventions in Bullying*. Social Development, 10, 512-527. 2001. Available at http://bullylab.com/Portals/0/Naturalistic%20observations%20of%20peer%20interventions%20in%20bullying.pdf.
[36] Eyes on Bullying (website). "What Can You Do – Bystander." Available at http://www.eyesonbullying.org/bystander.html.
[37] Pennell, Julie. "Burger King takes on Bullying with New Hidden Camera Ad." Today. Oct. 19, 2017. Available at https://www.today.com/food/burger-king-takes-bullying-bizarre-new-ad-t117731.

New York City has many thorough, thoughtful and important policies and procedures on paper. For these to be effective tools, students, parents, teachers, principals, guidance counselors, and other school personnel must be aware that these documents and policies exist. CCC was recently at an event with the Borough Student Advisory Council members and none of the young people there had previously known about or seen the code of conduct.

Thus, an important step for New York City public schools is to ensure that students receive and understand these important policies and that they know where to go for help if they are feeling bullied, harassed or discriminated against.

B. *Pass City Council Legislation aimed at strengthening accountability, information and supports to parents, teachers and students to prevent bullying, harassment, and discrimination and better support students.*

    i. *Int. 1538-2017, an act to amend the administrative code to require DOE to list on its website the name and contact information of the designated respect for all liaison at each school.*

CCC supports Int. 1538-2017, which would require the Department of Education to list on its website the name and contact information of the designated liaison for bullying prevention at each school, and we urge the Council to pass this bill. The Dignity for All Students Act requires all schools to have a designated Dignity Act Coordinator. The name and contact information for this coordinator should be widely and easily accessible for families and others to contact when they have concerns about bullying. This type of modest change is a positive step towards ensuring youth know where to turn when they need help.

    ii. *Int. 1565-A-2017, an act to amend the administrative code to require the DOE to distribute information regarding educational rights and departmental policies related to interactions with non-local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities*

CCC supports Int. 1565-A-2017, which would require the DOE to distribute information regarding educational rights and policies related to non-local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities, and urges the City Council to pass it. Unfortunately, access to and understanding this information is more important than ever. Many NYC school children are rightfully full of anxiety and fear for themselves and their families. Having information, including information about privacy rights and access to legal information is critical to supporting immigrant students during this difficult time.

    iii. *Int. 1638-2017, an act to amend the administrative code in relation to requiring the DOE to report on gay-straight or gender-sexuality alliance organizations.*

CCC supports Int. 1638-2017, which would require the DOE to report for each middle and high school whether the school has a gay-straight alliance or gender-sexuality

alliance, as well as information about any trainings related to supporting LGBTQ youth. Gay-straight and gender-sexuality alliance organizations provide positive support networks for youth in schools who have historically been unsupported. Moreover, LGBTQ students have also been the victims of bullying, harassment, and discrimination in greater proportions and these organizations have helped combat these realities an support students who have been victims. We are encouraged that these types of organizations have become more prevalent in more schools and have grown in participation, but ensuring these organizations can continue to expand and be available to all students requires additional effort from DOE and other organizations. This bill would positively allow DOE and the public know where gay-straight and gender-sexuality alliances are absent so that work can be done to address these absences. The information about the trainings around LGBTQ issues is additionally useful as it more information can ensure adequate resources and attention is being given to this important topic.

iv.     *T2017-6825, an act to amend the administrative code in relation to requiring the DOE to report information on student-to-student harassment and bullying.*

CCC support T2017-6825, which would require the DOE to report every six months on the number of incidents of student-to-student bullying, harassment, intimidation, or discrimination, as well as several other school activities related to incidents and complaints of bullying. As stated earlier, the current data around bullying is unfortunately lacking. CCC supports efforts to more accurately track and understand the realities facing students in school, and this bill positively addresses this through regular reporting.

v.      *Res. 1442-2017, a resolution calling upon the DOE to provide curricular and other supports to protect LGBQTNC and other vulnerable students and to ensure that administrators, teachers, and students in all middle and high schools are informed, under the Equal Access Act, students have a right to convene and participate in a Gender-Sexuality Alliance at school.*

CCC supports resolution 1442-2017, which would ask DOE to provide information and better publicize information that supports LGBTQTNC youth, including their right to participate in gender-sexuality alliances. These youth deserve adequate support from school personnel in their educational and social development, and they deserve to know they can participate in gender-sexuality alliances, which can provide exceptionally positive supports for LGBTQTNC youth. The DOE should do its best to ensure students can take advantage of these helpful resources and opportunities, and this resolution can demonstrate the City Council's commitment to this idea.

C. *Better track incidents of bullying.*

As stated earlier, the Dignity for All Students Act requires schools to report all incidents of bullying, yet New York City schools are reporting exceedingly low numbers despite surveys and audits showing higher rates of bullying. CCC recommends that the DOE work with its schools to better understand why the reported incidents seems low and then to address these obstacles. While bullying might be hard to track, accurate information

can provide DOE and schools with a better understanding of how students are doing in their schools, allowing them to better protect students who are bullied and better address the individual school environment.

D. *Baseline and increase funding for restorative practices.*

CCC once again thanks the City Council for its investment and restoration of $1.3 million to schools for restorative practices and the Mayor for the additional investment of $1.1 million in FY18. The $1.3 million from City Council funding will continue to fund 25 schools to have dedicated restorative practice personnel and extra training to implement restorative practices throughout their schools, and the Mayor's addition will allow this program to expand to additional schools. CCC will be urging the administration to at a minimum baseline this $2.4 million and add additional funding so that more schools can benefit from this initiative.

E. *Continue implementing the Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline recommendations.*

In 2015, the Administration began the Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline, led by former Chief Judge Judith Kaye and including the Department of Education, NYPD, ACS, and many representatives from education, community, and children's rights organizations, such as CCC. The Leadership Team was charged to make recommendations to improve school climate and reduce suspensions in NYC's schools.[38] It conducted its work in two phases, with recommendations published for each phase. The set of recommendations from these two set of recommendations represent a thoughtful, researched, and comprehensive set of policies and practices that help create supportive and safe school climates with effective responses to student misbehavior. Some of the key principles included recommendations that embrace positive supports to student discipline, improve school climate, promote de-escalation techniques, increase mental health supports, better track and report school climate and safety indicators, and improve supports for youth with past behavior problems.[39] CCC recommends the Administration, Department of Education, and City Council continue their commitment to use these recommendations as the framework for improving school climate and safety issues, which can be particularly useful in addressing instances of bullying.

## Summer Meals

CCC is pleased that this hearing is also addressing summer meals. The summer meals program provides free summer meals to any NYC child under 18, regardless of any other factor. For many low-income students, access to free summer meals is a critical means to ensure they are able to both eat and eat healthy during the summer when school is out.

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[38] The Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline. *Maintaining the Momentum: a plan for safety and fairness in schools. Phase Two Recommendations.* July 2016. Available at http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/sclt/downloads/pdf/SCLT_Report_7-21-16.pdf.
[39] Id.

The City Council is considering two very important pieces of legislation that would help ensure that children and their families are aware of where free summer meals will be available, and would require the DOE to provide data on the take-up rates for summer meals and other school lunch programs.

## Pass Int. 0461-2014 to allow families to more easily participate in summer meals.

CCC urges the City Council to pass Int. 0461-2014, which would require the Department of Education to make public the locations where summer meals will be provided by no later than June 1st of each year. Summer meals are a vital resource for students and families and the city's provision are a great service for communities. When the locations for these meals are provided very late however, families cannot make the necessary arrangements to take advantage of these meals, are unaware of where the meals are located, or are discouraged from seeking them out. The city already provides these meals, it should thus make it as easy as possible for families to participate. This bill would address this by allowing families to know where the meal will be with enough time to plan to participate and enough information to make it easy. The locations do not often change, so requiring the publication of the locations earlier should not be unnecessarily burdensome for the Department of Education to finalize these sites and publicize their locations earlier.

## Pass Int. 773-2015 to require DOE to provide data regarding student participation in school meals programs.

Now that breakfast, lunch and summer meals are all free, there should no longer be a financial barrier to student participation in school meals programs. Annual reports showing take-up rates, will help advocates, providers and schools better understand where there are barriers to take-up such as the quality of the food, knowledge of the free programs and/or the climate of the school cafeteria. Publicly reporting data will help hold DOE and others accountable and help advocates see where more attention is needed.

In conclusion, CCC is grateful to the City Council for its commitment to addressing school climate and reducing bullying in New York's schools, as well as to school meals. We look forward to working with you to support our schools and create safer, more supportive learning environments.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**New York City Council Committee on Education**
**October 30, 2017**

**Prepared by Mitchel Wu, Director of Programs, The Coalition of Asian American Children and Families**

**Testimonies of**
**Luyao Ou (Submitted by Denis Yu), Suzanna Liang (Submitted by Alyssa Vu)**
**Asian American Student Advocacy Project (ASAP) Youth Representatives,**
**The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families**

My name is Mitchel Wu and I am the Director of Programs for the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF). CACF would first like to thank Committee Chair Dromm and the other members of the New York City Council 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 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. CACF promotes better policies, funding, and services for APA children and families.

There is a long history of our youth facing bullying and bias-based harassment in schools. CACF have been working on addressing bullying in schools for over 20 years. We have worked in coalition with many of our member organizations who have faced bias-based harassment, including our South Asian and Arab communities post 9-11. In 2015, CACF along with high school youth form our youth leadership program Asian American Advocacy Project (ASAP) presented recommendations to the White House Initiative for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHIAPPI), as well as organized a listening session for the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) anti-bullying task force. Earlier this year, CACF worked with community partners and the NYC Human Rights Commission to help develop their survey, "*Help us Combat Bias and Discrimination in NYC*", in which a whole section was dedicated to bullying and discrimination in the public schools.

CACF supports the proposed legislation today for Intro 1538, Intro 1565, Intro 1638 and Resolution 1442, which would all provide information, resources, and support for all students and families pertaining to LGBTQ, immigration and diversity issues that would improve school culture and climate.

Nationally, 11% of Asian Pacific American (APA) students said they had been called race-related hate words, compared to 3% of white, 7% of black, and 6% of Hispanic students. 50% of APA students surveyed by Asian American League Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) in 2012 reported experiencing bias-based bullying. Bullying (online and in-person) impacts diverse groups within the APA student population. The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families recommends several approaches listed below:

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:
- **Require schools to use guidance interventions** such as counseling, mediation or community circles before any student can be suspended. CACF has long advocated for the implementation of comprehensive guidance services to support students in all aspects of their development, including supporting socio-emotional growth, college readiness, and intervening in matters of bullying and harassment. Further, schools should provide training at least twice a year to all school staff on how to use guidance interventions when responding to misbehavior.

- **Implement cultural competency trainings for school staff and students**: CACF recommends that the DOE implement cultural competency trainings in a coherent, integrated, and systemized program that discusses the need for cultural competency across races, ethnicities, gender identities, sexual orientations, religions, and physical/mental abilities. A pilot program was conducted a few years ago that provided diversity trainings to school staff but it was never widely implemented, and CACF encourages the DOE to build on these efforts in order to improve school climate and safety for all students.
- **Build a greater infrastructure to support the implementation of restorative justice** in schools. This infrastructure is critical to support learning and networking opportunities where all stakeholders can share best practices, outcomes, and resources to implement restorative approaches. Restorative practices in schools should be used within the context of other holistic, school-wide supportive approaches to managing behavior in school and addressing student behavior. A restorative approach to discipline that is responsive to individual school communities can reduce racial disproportionality in school discipline and increase cultural competency.
- **Disaggregate reporting of racial and socio-economic data for APAs.** CACF has advocated for legislation mandating the collecting and reporting of disaggregated data in city and state social service agencies. The collection and reporting of disaggregated data would spotlight challenges and barriers that APAs face in public school education as many struggle with financial, linguistic and cultural barriers. The reporting of such data would also contradict prevailing perceptions of APA's as a homogenized well-to-do group, and could highlight needs of APA students vis-à-vis bullying and harassment.

RESEARCH AND DATA RECOMMENDATIONS:
Although there are multiple sources of data on bullying at the national and local levels, reliable and detailed data on Asian American students are rare. When Asian student data are included, they are aggregated (i.e., not broken down by specific ethnic groups or ELL status) and still small in number so that detailed analyses are not possible.

<u>**Youth Testimonies:**</u>
APA youth face many challenges such as language and culture barriers, having to take on extra responsibilities both financially and domestically for their families; and in schools, they face bullying, micro-aggressions, and a lack of support when it comes to culturally competent services.
APA youth face significant barriers in school. According to the New York City Department of Education, **1 in 5 APA high school students do not graduate on time or at all. 50% of APAs in New York state are not considered "college ready" by the time they finish high school and that number is higher in urban concentrations such as New York City.**

CACF for the past 12 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 2 testimonies from our young people that will share their experiences on bullying in NYC public schools.

Coalition for Asian American Children and Families
October 30th[th], 2017
New York City Council, Committee on Education
Hearing on Bullying in NYC Public Schools

**CACF**

Coalition for Asian American Children + Families

***Testimony of Luyao Ou, Sophomore, High School of Language and Innovation* (Submitted by Denis Yu)**

Hello, everyone. My name is Luyao Ou. I was born in China and I came to America one year ago. I am a sophomore in the High School of Language and Innovation in the Bronx. I am also a youth leader of Asian American Student Advocacy Project (ASAP) under the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF).

Thank you for holding this hearing, so that I have this precious opportunity to share my testimony. As an Asian American and one of three Chinese in the school, I was constantly bullied by students. They said Chinese is a silly language, they even said something that is not true to make fun of me. They asked me, do Chinese really eat dogs? I said no. But they kept asking, and it's really annoying. When bullying happened to me, I didn't tell teachers immediately. At first, I thought as long as I ignored them, they would stop. But, it was still happening.

Once during class, my classmate had a conflict with me. He said my family and I are monkeys. That was disrespectful to me. He hurt me a lot. Every time these things happened, I will endure them at first. But when I couldn't take it anymore, I would tell my counselor or teachers. They helped me and the bullying didn't happen again, but I lost a lot of friends, and I want to have friends at school. I don't want to be alone, but I don't want to be bullied anymore. Teachers, counselors and school staff should take preventative measures to address this on-going issue before students become isolated from their peers and friends.

I think the reason why I was bullied by my classmates is because they don't respect our Asian American cultures and histories. They thought we are different ethnicities. We have different skin colors and our first languages are different, but we are equal in this world and society. No one is superior to others.

I believe in school when we studying new curriculum teachers should use more cultural and inclusive lessons to teach. United States is a diverse country, it's essential for everyone to know about our communities. We need harmony; so I call everyone to learn more about our cultures, which will result in less bullying, racism, sexism and homophobia. Every child and every student deserves a good environment to study. Everyone deserves a wonderful childhood and a beautiful school life. Thank you again for holding this hearing.

***Testimony of Suzanna Liang, Junior, Stuyvesant High School* (Submitted by Alyssa Vu)**

Good afternoon. My name is Suzanna Liang. I am a junior at Stuyvesant High School and I am a member of the Asian American Student Advocacy Project (ASAP). I would like to thank the committee for holding this hearing on bullying. Throughout my school years, I never felt like I belonged with the rest of my classmates because I was always treated as a foreigner. I was born and raised in America, but I looked different, so I was treated differently.

Coalition for Asian American Children and Families
October 30th[th], 2017
New York City Council, Committee on Education
Hearing on Bullying in NYC Public Schools

# CACF

Coalition for Asian American Children + Families

Ever since elementary school, I realized that people of the same race stuck together. Since I am Asian American, I was naturally a part of the Asian group of people. Even though I tried to join the popular white people group and tried to get along with them, they were always wary of me and intentionally left me out of the group. Not because I "wasn't cool enough" like they passed it off as but because I didn't belong there. Because I didn't fit their criteria for being part of their group, and because I wasn't white; I was excluded from their conversations and I felt invisible. It made me really embarrassed to be the third wheel in the group and for the first time, made me really aware of social bullying. It hurt to understand since I was very little that I was an outsider to my "friends", but I couldn't tell this to my teacher. I didn't feel a strong connection to her and thought that she would consider me as a foreigner as well since she was also white. I doubted she would help me even if she knew I was being bullied.

Similarly, about half of Asian Americans in schools have been bullied, but only 17% of the victims report being bullied at school. I believe that enforcing the mandate for teachers to report bullying when they see it or hear it is important. This would alleviate the fear and insecurities that teachers would ignore all forms of bullying of any group since they required to report any and all bullying in school. I also believe that teachers and students should be educated to know what bullying is when they see it or experience it and when to report it. Teachers and school staff should also be educated on the culture and experiences of the students that they are working with whether it is immigrants, communities of color, or LGBTQ youth and families. I wish I had a teacher who I trusted enough to overcome my fears to tell her about my personal problems. It would have given me the confidence to believe that I deserved better treatment in school.

**Elizabethe C. Payne, Ph.D.**
Director, Queering Education Research Institute (QuERI)
Interim Director, LGBT Social Science & Public Policy Center
Hunter College, CUNY

**TESTIMONY**
**New York City Council Hearing**

**Monday, October 30, 2017**

**Oversight**
DOE's Response to Incidents of Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination in NYC
Schools and Efforts to Ensure Student Safety.

**Int. No. 1538**
A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to
requiring the department of education to list on its website the name and contact
information of the designated respect for all liaison at each school.

Introduction
Mainstream educational conversations on LGBTQ students and bullying are dominated
by risk, risk management, and tolerance discourses. LGBTQ youth are understood as
easy targets, victims, and different in ways that demand their peers and teachers express
tolerance and empathy. The students who target them—the bullies—are understood as
individuals who need school intervention to correct their anti-social behavior. This
bully/victim binary dominates both cultural understandings of bullying and school focus
on addressing it. Most reporting on school bullying looks at the frequency and
distribution of reported bullying behaviors, excluding the contexts in which bullying
occurs and the social function it serves within school environments. Additionally, most
bullying research focuses on individual bullies, why they engage in aggressive behavior,
and how youth behavior can be managed or modified to decrease the frequency of
bullying behaviors.



# QuERI

The Queering Education
Research Institute©

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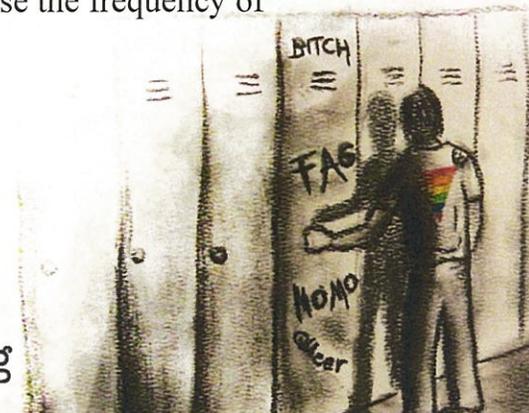
In total, this creates a highly *inaccurate* picture of LGBTQ bullying that implies that (1) youth who target peers—LGBTQ or otherwise—do so as a result of deficiencies in their own psycho-social development; (2) the solution to LGBTQ students' problems in school is to decrease violence and increase tolerance or empathy for the "different" queer students; (3) the totality of the problem is the verbal and physical harassment and that "risk" is the result of this harassment; (4) the problem is brought into the school from "outside"; (5) the problem can be isolated to individual badly behaving students.

The limitations of this mainstream narrative about LGBTQ youth and their school experiences are multiple, but the bottom line is the problem is understood solely in terms of the social and emotional development of individual youth: bullies and victims.

**Questions about how schools are "providing conditions in which [bullying] can flourish" are not explored (Duncan, 2013, p. 257) and school culture escapes examination.** *Additionally, there is no attention paid to the persistent patterns of peer-targeting over time.*

**This is a particularly important point in considering the September 27th tragedy at Urban Assembly School for Wildlife Conservation in Bronx, NY.**

Multiple news sources have reported that Cedeno had been persistently targeted with racist and homophobic harassment and that his social media posts indicated he may have been carrying a weapon because he felt he was persistently under attack. It has also been reported that the two students who were stabbed may not have been those who consistently tormented Cedeno over time, that other students may have played a more significant role in the long-term harassment.

No contextual detail rationalizes one student pulling a weapon out of his pocket and harming another, but it is important to gain some understanding by viewing this tragedy through the sociological research on bullying. The fallacy of the bully/victim binary breaks down when we take into account multiple tormenters over time. As is usually the case, it seems likely that the racist and homophobic bullying experienced by Cedeno was not the work of an individual "bad" student, but rather many students who repeatedly targeted him because his gender and sexuality were outside the "norms" of that peer group. For the bullied LGBTQ student, there are often too many bullies to even name them all as their school experience descends into a swirl of abuse, seemingly from all sides.

Students whose genders and sexualities do not align with cultural expectations for their biological sex are the most consistent targets of bullying and harassment in schools. The

further youth fall from idealized forms of (hetero) masculinity and femininity, the more vulnerable they are to bullying as well as more severe forms of violence.

All youth are vulnerable to targeting if they are different from their peers in some way. But (actual or perceived) LGBTQ youth and girls who are perceived to be sexually empowered or "too assertive" are two groups that are particularly vulnerable to escalating violence that creates hostile, dangerous learning environments. "Slut" and "fag" are two of the most powerful weapons youth use to target gender transgressions (Payne & Smith, 2017; 2013; Payne, 2010; Thurlow, 2001). Research indicates that these words (slut, fag, etc.) are not only used against individuals who are gay or who are known to be sexually active. Instead, they mark any transgression that is considered egregious enough to warrant public, hurtful and stigmatizing punishment.

In other words, gender-conforming hetero-identifying students are able to establish more socially powerful positions by verbally targeting—and thereby separating themselves from—peers who do not conform to idealized standards of hetero masculinity and femininity. Transgressions from idealized gender include both physical and behavioral characteristics, including being considered overweight, shy, too thin (for boys), nerdy, too athletic (for girls), or having too much or too little interest in the "opposite' sex—all infractions of idealized gender. **Most schools fail to see how this is not anti-social behavior but rather highly social behavior that reproduces systems of value about who "counts" and who does not within a school environment.**

As these patterns of aggression escalate, adult interpretations of this behavior shifts and the aggressors are understood to be wielding power over peers who are "weak" in some way. The bully/victim binary emerges as the primary concern and focus of intervention, while the gendered social dynamics, power differences, and *social norms that fostered this violence are overlooked. "Bullying" behaviors are not anti-social but rather social acts that maintain the peer boundaries for "normal" and "acceptable" within a peer context.* Within this narrow frame, proposed solutions have failed to consider how educational institutions assume (and/or expect) heterosexuality and gender conformity of all students and thus limit possibilities for exploring why LGBTQ youth are so vulnerable to peer violence. **Consistent intervention is critical, but not enough.**

As Cris Mayo (2014) argues: [B]ullying as a term does not capture the institutional scope of exclusion that LGBTQ and other minority youth experience. Nor does the term bullying itself necessarily encourage school personnel to *think broadly about exclusionary and hostile experiences students face, especially those that are based on*

*gender and sexual orientation.*" (p. 57) For long term change, we much move away from solely focusing on individual bullies and victims. A sociological framing of bullying changes the problem of in-schools violence from "the product of pathological individuals who are ill-adjusted socially, [to] the interactional reproduction of larger structural inequalities" (Pascoe, 2013, p. 89). This reframing is significant because it "attend[s] to the social contexts in which bullying occurs, ask[s] questions about meanings produced by such interactions and understand[s] these interactions as not solely the province of young people" (Pascoe, 2013, p. 89).

> *In short: School climate and culture must be addressed, alongside consistent intervention work, if we are to see long term change.*
> *Patterns of peer targeting aimed at eliminating difference must be addressed.*
> *Anti-bullying work much include diversity work.*

## New York State Dignity for All Students Act (DASA, or Dignity Act) QuERI Research on Implementation

New York's Dignity for All Students Act (Dignity Act) is notable because it calls for schools to (1) establish clear policies and procedures for addressing peer-to-peer aggression and (2) develop plans for proactively developing inclusive, violence-free school cultures. It goes beyond the bully/victim binary and calls for a pro-active address of school climate and culture.

However, it is up to the discretion of individual school districts to develop proactive strategies, and the state does not have a mechanism for holding schools accountable for implementing proactive approaches.

In order to understand the progress of Dignity Act implementation, the Queering Education Research Institute (QuERI) conducted research in 2015 and in 2017 in public schools around the state regarding the actions they have taken, challenges they have experienced, and the barriers that have delayed or prohibited implementation efforts. Overall, this research indicates that New York schools have focused most of their attention on creating systems for reporting bullying or harassment incidents and investigation procedures. **The findings do not include any meaningful engagement with proactive efforts toward developing positive, inclusive school cultures or addressing patterns of targeting.**

More specific findings include:

- Dignity Act Coordinators are receiving training on codes of conduct, avoiding lawsuits, the language in the legislation, the definition of a bullying act, how to complete forms for incident reporting, and responsibilities for reporting.

- They are not being trained on recognizing bias-based incidents or working with diverse populations.

- No interview respondents reported that their DASA professional development focused on pro-actively creating supportive environments or offered significant education on LGBT students and families in schools.

- When interview respondents were asked about their schools' proactive efforts to develop positive school culture, most educators did not understand what a proactive approach might look like.

- Common approaches to curriculum changes were to "teach tolerance" or "teach empathy." When asked about integrating diversity content and particularly LGBT content into academic curriculum, most participants could not share specific examples of curriculum changes.

- Resistance or hesitation over explicitly recognizing and addressing the needs of LGBT youth and families is occurring at state and local levels.

## DASA Proactive Strategies

Dignity for All Students Act is exceptional when compared to other state's "anti- bullying" laws in its intention for implementation to focus on proactive approaches to improving school culture and climate for marginalized students. However, through our research it became clear that most educators did not understand what a proactive approach might look like. Often, when asked about the proactive steps they had taken, the responses were re-active, naming quick response to bullying through intervnetion as "proactive." This is a typical response, from an interview: "They [teachers] are very proactive-- if anything comes up it's addressed. She [DAC] tells teachers they HAVE to address every comment (you're fat, gay), she tells all teachers they HAVE to say something if a kid says anything offensive, that it's the law." Diligence to intervention was seen as a primary "pro-active" strategy with no recognition that action taken AFTER an offense has occurred is re-active, not pro-active.

**Proactive approaches require understanding the ways students may be marginalized and then taking steps at an institutional level and a classroom level to improve, and thereby reduce incidents before they occur.** Such approaches must be taught through professional development and pre-service teacher preparation and focus on diversity education.

## Conclusions about Proactive Strategies.

DASA clearly communicates the lawmakers' expectations that school employees would develop strategies for creating school cultures where differences are valued, rather than focusing solely on diligent intervention practices. Research participants' inability to answer questions about proactive strategies and their misunderstanding about what it means to take a proactive approach to anti-discrimination or anti-bullying work are clear calls for more precise guidance and information exchange between NYSED and school districts, and **an expansion of teacher preparation and professional development to address diversity and school climate.**

QuERI's recommendations are intended to address the lack of knowledge about proactive strategies for developing inclusive school culture, and the lack of resources available to educators as they engage in these efforts. Our recommendations to the state include:

- PD:
  Delivering better professional development that aims to develop school professionals' knowledge about educating and supporting marginalized student populations.
  Preparing educators who are competent to create and present LGBTQ inclusive and affirming curriculum.
- NYS Teacher Education Requirements:
  Expanding state teacher education requirements to include a full-semester LGBTQ-inclusive multicultural education course, which will better prepare educators for the complicated work of creating affirming environments for diverse student populations.
- Student Curriculum:
  A new New York Diversity Committee that will develop rigorous, pedagogically-sound, and academically-relevant tools for educating students about the talents and achievements of a more diverse range of people including LGBTQ people.
- District and School level assessments:
  Schools and districts should implement diversity and inclusion assessments that also evaluate visibility, honors and awards, and other forms of student recognition.
- School climate measure:
  NYSED should be encouraged to adopt School Climate as a non-academic measure of school success in its 2019 ESSA plan.

## Variations in DAC Responsibilities by Urban, Suburban, Rural:

In our research, Dignity Act Coordinators' reporting of their primary duties varied greatly by school location in a suburban, urban, or rural district. In suburban areas, DAC duties were largely concentrated on staff professional development, with more parent engagement and student counseling and less incident reporting than in either rural or urban areas. In urban areas, responsibilities were overwhelmingly dedicated to reporting of incidents with far less dedicated to professional development. This is concerning as it could be that the ways in which urban schools are implementing Dignity is increasing

discipline of minority students who are enrolled in urban schools in greater numbers than in suburban or rural districts. DACs in rural areas committed the least amount of time to professional development. We have insufficient data to see these findings as conclusive, however the implications of these differences are significant and worth further investigation.

While we do not have data on NYC schools, the patterns from across the state would likely hold in NYC, meaning we can speculate that implementation of DASA has most likely largely focused on reporting.

LGBTQ Inclusion in NY

It is important to note that LGBT identities have not been entirely absent from NYS school curricula in recent years, but their inclusion was most often relegated to HIV prevention lessons in health class or an acknowledgment of World AIDS Day. In more progressive schools, reading a play in English such as Laramie Project-- about the murder of college student Matthew Shepard-- or participation in the annual Day of Silence might have allowed a teacher to open up conversations about sexuality and violence. However, this pairing of LGBTQ identities and experiences with disease, death, harassment and murder continue to mark LGBTQ people as deviant and as victims (Payne & Smith, 2013). As Hackford-Peer (2010) argues, this "systematic inclusion "functions to include discussions about queer people, but only in a negative connotation. When this kind of inclusion is in place, queer people are only present in the school and the curriculum through discussions about dangerous pathological behaviors." Additionally, though New York State does require AIDS/HIV education, it does not require it to be medically accurate and many of the HIV lessons currently taught in NYS date back to the 1980s. Recent QuERI research (2016) on HIV education in New York State found that on average the materials in use in HIV and sex education are 10-12 years old with an average pub date 1999.69. HIV material in use dated back as early as 1983. These depictions of HIV/AIDS are not only providing incorrect health information, but stigmatizing stereotypes of gay men. This is often the only representation of LGBT people in the formal school curriculum. The state AIDS/HIV education requirement (8 NYCRR 135.3) must be amended to include language stating that current, "medically accurate" information must be taught

## Recommendations to the New York City Council Committee on Education

- Evaluate NYC Reporting procedures for bullying incidents and the policies and practices for educating the school community about these procedures.

- Require NYC school anti-bullying plans to address patterns of peer targeting.

- Evaluate and expand multi-cultural/diversity professional development delivered to NYC educators.

- Require that HIV Education taught in NYC schools be current, medically accurate, non-stigmatizing.

- Review the professional development offered in NYC schools on the implementation on DASA and Respect for All for inclusion of LGBT students and for *pro-active* approaches to addressing school culture.

- Require LGBT inclusion in history and language arts curriculum in NYC.

- Endorse that NYSED change requirements in pre-service teacher education to include a full semester course in multicultural and diversity education.

- Endorse that NYSED amend the HIV Education regulation to require current, medically accurate non-stigmatizing information be taught.

- Endorse NYSED adopting School Climate as a non-academic measure of school success in its 2019 ESSA plan.

### About QuERI

QuERI is an independent think-tank, qualitative research, and education center dedicated to bridging the gap between research and practice in improving the school experiences of LGBTQ students. QuERI began in 2006 with the Reduction of Stigma in Schools (RSIS) program—a research-based professional development program aimed at supporting educators in creating more affirming school environments for LGBTQ students and families. It expanded in 2008 to become a research, training, and policy institute. QuERI was founded by Dr. Elizabethe Payne and housed in the Syracuse University School of Education from 2006-2014. It is staffed by graduate student fellows and former QuERI graduate student researchers—now professors elsewhere—and undergraduate interns. Dr. Payne brought QuERI with her as she relocated to Hunter College to direct the relaunch of the LGBT Social Science and Public Policy Center at Hunter College's Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute. QuERI is currently housed in the LGBT Social Science

and Public Policy Center, Hunter College, CUNY. Dr. Payne served on the New York State Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) Task Force, the DASA State Policy Group, and the New York State School Professional Certification Committee on Diversity. She is now serving on the State ESSA Task Force and the current NYSED Dignity Task Force.

For more information about the research and applied work of QuERI, please see the website: www.queeringeducation.org. QuERI can also be found on Huffington Post, Facebook, Twitter @QueeringEDU, and on Academia.edu.

To contact Dr. Elizabethe Payne: ecpayne@queeringeducation.org

## Related QuERI Research Publications:

Payne, E., & Smith, M. (Forthcoming 2017). Refusing relevance: School administrator resistance to offering professional development addressing LGBTQ issues in schools. *Education Administration Quarterly*.

Payne, E., & Smith, M. (Forthcoming 2017). Violence against LGBTQ students: Punishing and marginalizing difference. In Shapiro, H. (Ed.), *Handbook on Violence in Education: Forms, Factors, and Preventions*. Wiley Blackwell.

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Payne, E., & Smith, M. (2014). The big freak out: Educator fear in response to the presence of transgender elementary school students. *Queering Education: Serving LGBTIQQ Students in P-12 Schools, Special Issue, Journal of Homosexuality, 61:399-418.*

Payne, E., & Smith, M. (2013). LGBTQ kids, school safety, and missing the big picture: How the dominant bullying discourse prevents school professionals from thinking about systemic marginalization or... Why we need to re-think LGBTQ bullying. *QED: A Journal of GLBTQ World Making, 1:1.*

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Payne, E., & Smith, M. (2012). Safety, celebration and risk: Educator responses to LGBTQ professional development. *Teaching Education, 23:3, 265-285.*

Payne, E., & Smith, M. (2011). The Reduction of Stigma in Schools: A new professional development model for empowering educators to support LGBTQ students. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 8:2, 174-200.*
Payne, E. (2010). Sluts: Heteronormative policing in the stories of lesbian youth. *Educational Studies: Journal of the American Educational Studies Association, 46: 3, 317 - 336.*

Payne, E., & Smith, M. (2010). Reduction of Stigma in Schools: An evaluation of the first three years. *Issues in Teacher Education, 19: 2, 11-36.*

Payne, E. (2009). Stand up, keep quiet, talk back: Agency, resistance and possibility in the school stories of lesbian youth. In Ayers, W., Quinn, T., & Stovall, D. (Eds.), *The Handbook of Social Justice in Education*. Taylor & Francis.

# THE CENTER

Testimony of

Everett Arthur, JD

Government Relations Associate

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center

In response to the

New York City Council's Committee on Education

On Int. 1538

Submitted on October 30, 2017

To the

New York City Council

Committee on Education

250 Broadway, Committee Room

New York, NY 10007

# THE
# CENTER

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on Council Member Dromm's bill, Int. 1538. My name is Everett Arthur, and I am the Government Relations Associate at The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center, commonly known as The Center. Founded in 1983, The Center has been a home and resource hub for the LGBT community by offering a wide spectrum of programs to ensure that all LGBT community members have the tools they need to lead happy, healthy lives.

At The Center, we believe that you should celebrate who you are, what makes you unique and why you matter. However, for members of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth community, this can be particularly challenging while attending school. According to GLSEN's 2015 *National School Climate Survey*, more than 85% of LGBTQ students experience verbal harassment at school based on a personal characteristic, most commonly related to their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.[1]

For Center youth specifically, the above statistics correspond with their experiences. According to Olin Winn-Ritzenberg, The Center's Youth Education Services Coordinator, Center youth frequently state that they do not want to go to school because they know they will encounter bullying. Again, GLSEN's 2015 *National School*

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[1] Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Giga, N. M., Villenas, C. & Danischewski, D. J. (2016). The 2015 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools. New York: GLSEN.
https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2015%20National%20GLSEN%202015%20National%20School%20Climate%20Survey%20%28NSCS%29%20-%20Full%20Report_0.pdf

# THE CENTER

*Climate Survey* speaks to this point with the following statistic: almost 50% of survey respondents indicated that they were considering dropping out because of the bullying and harassment they faced at school.[2] New York City must do more to protect LGBTQ youth from bullying, and Int. 1538 is a necessary step in the right direction.

Listing the name and contact information of a school's designated Respect for All liaison on its website allows for increased transparency of information that can result in lives being saved and relentless bullying, harassment, and tormenting coming to a halt. The Center commends Council Member Dromm for this important piece of legislation and recommends the passage of Int. 1538.

Although making this information accessible is important, we must not, and cannot, stop there. All New York City teachers must play an active role in deterring anti-LGBTQ bias and bullying in schools. Like Abel, Center youth frequently experience bullying and harassment in front of teachers without intervention. Nationwide, more than 57% of LGBTQ students who experienced harassment did not report the incident to school staff because they doubted that effective intervention would occur or feared the harassment experienced would be magnified if reported.[3] The onus is on all of us to make LGBTQ youth safer where they learn, live, and in their communities. Int. 1538 builds upon citywide efforts to protect LGBTQ youth, and The Center supports its enactment. The Center would be honored to continue to provide guidance as New

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[2] *Id.*
[3] *Id.*

# THE CENTER

York City continues developing legislation and processes that protect all youth from

bullying and harassment.

# TLDEF
Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund

**Testimony of Jillian Weiss**
**Executive Director of the Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund**
**before the New York City Council Committee on Education**
**concerning Int. No. 1538 – Requiring the DOE to list on its website the name and contact information of the**
**designated respect for all liaison at each school**

**October 30, 2017**
**City Hall, 10:00 am**

Good morning, Chairperson Dromm and Members of the Committee. I am Jillian Weiss, Executive Director of the Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund, which has been providing legal services and advocating on behalf of transgender people since 2003.

TLDEF is a non-profit law firm that represents and advocates for the transgender community. It is committed to ending discrimination against transgender people, and to achieving equality for transgender people through impact litigation and education. TLDEF's clients include transgender people of all ages, who come from diverse racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and faith backgrounds. Based in New York City, many of those served by TLDEF live and work in New York City. Notwithstanding the strong laws in New York City that protect transgender people, considered by many to be the strongest anti-discrimination laws in the nation, TLDEF is familiar with the considerable stigma, violence, and barriers to access experienced by members of the transgender community in New York City. As such, it is well positioned to opine on the importance of Int. No. 1538 to the dignity, prosperity, and equal treatment of transgender individuals in their everyday lives.

TLDEF receives dozens of requests for legal assistance each month. These include requests involving children experiencing discrimination in school. Students in school who experience discrimination or bullying because of their gender identity or gender expression are among the most vulnerable of victims. The harassment they receive is often so severe and pervasive that they are pushed out of school, creating life-long difficulty in access to jobs, housing, and health care. As a result, their life opportunities are diminished. Transgender people are disproportionately forced to participate in shadow economies and survival crimes in order to live. These burdens fall disproportionately on Black transgender women and other transgender people of color, leaving them particularly vulnerable to violence and poverty.

These experiences are borne out by studies. The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey (USTS) is the largest survey examining the experiences of transgender people in the United States, with 27,715 respondents nationwide. The USTS was conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality in the summer of 2015, and the results provide a detailed look at the experiences of transgender people across a wide range of issues, such as education, employment, family life, health, housing, and interactions with the criminal justice system.

The following points from the Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey are relevant here:

- Twelve percent (12%) of respondents were out as transgender at some point from Kindergarten through the 12th grade.
- More than three-quarters (77%) of respondents who were out or perceived as transgender in K–12 had one or more negative experiences, such as being verbally harassed, prohibited from dressing according to their gender identity, or physically or sexually assaulted.
- Fifty-four percent (54%) of people who were out or perceived as transgender in K–12 were verbally harassed, and 24% were physically attacked.

- Seventeen percent (17%) of people who were out or perceived as transgender left a K–12 school because the mistreatment was so bad, and 6% were expelled.

These statistics are staggering, and show the extreme vulnerability of transgender students in school setting. The recent case of Abel Cedeno highlights some of the problems that can arise from educational harassment. This student is accused of killing a classmate inside of a Bronx high school last month. He has alleged that the incident occurred because of bullying and harassment he received based on his perceived sexual orientation. Initially charged with murder, a grand jury returned an indictment for manslaughter, a lesser, but still very serious offense. Whatever the evidence may later show in this case, and whatever the outcome may be, it has harshly illustrated for us as parents, educators, lawmakers and citizens the sometimes very high costs of educational discrimination. We must not allow this moment to pass without making every additional effort we can to address bullying and harassment in our schools, where the lives of vulnerable young people can be affected forever in many ways. We must not view this as unimportant or "normal" because we know children sometimes engage in minor meanness and fights. This is not minor. It is not unimportant. This must not be the norm. It is our obligation to ensure that our schools, acting *in loco parentis*, do everything that can be done to protect our precious children.

Int. No. 1538 would help us to protect our children by requiring the Department of Education to report information on its website regarding "Respect for All" (RFA) liaisons at each city school, including their names and contact information, for the reporting of bullying or bias-based incidents. RFA liaison contact information specific to a particular school would also be posted on that school's website. The bill's sponsors have said that providing this contact information online could help to increase reports of bullying and bias-based incidents and, in turn, lead to potential resolutions that help students lead more productive school lives. As Executive Director of the Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund, I provide my support for this concept, and for Int. No 1538, which would implement it.

After 30+ years of being a lawyer and two decades as an advocate, I know from my experience that victims of bullying and discrimination often do not know where to turn. Serious emotional distress can turn inward to destroy self-esteem and create post-traumatic stress, or outward to increase dysfunctional behavior and self-help remedies. Without information about where to turn for help, they can feel they have no one on their side. They may appeal to adults and officials who are not trained in how to help in these situations, and who do not know the strategies that would best help. Among those with high levels of social and economic capital, parents and lawyers sophisticated in the ways of legal relief are available to provide tremendous resources to help. As a parent, of upper middle class background, I know what it is like to use my social and economic capital to help my child when he was in trouble. I would have done anything, and I was able to help because I knew where to go for help and how to press my points to people who would listen. At TLDEF, we can provide legal help to some students, but as a small organization, we can only do so for a very few. Everyone should have equal ability to protect their children. Int. No. 1538 can help move us towards that goal.

Private schools can often provide help to protect transgender and gender non-conforming students because of greater resources. Most of us, however, in public schools without easy access to such resources, struggle and flounder when bullying and harassment occur, because we don't know where to turn for help. The establishment of the RFA liaisons was a very important step in democratizing those protections. But without knowing where to find them, those protections become much less meaningful. I believe that both children and parents must have easy access to the RFA liaisons, using our modern information resources such as school websites, so that they can find someone who can support them when bullying, harassment and discrimination occur. We should not allow the protection of our most vulnerable children to be left up to the socio-economic lottery. These liaisons are called "Respect for All" Liaisons because that is their function: to ensure that all children, regardless of socio-economic status or race or ethnicity or sexual orientation or gender identity or expression – all – will have a place to turn for help to someone who is trained in how to help and knows the strategies necessary to provide that help in the strongest way possible.

On behalf of the approximately 25,000 transgender residents of New York City, and the many more whose gender expression puts them at risk of bullying in our educational system, I want to thank the Chair and committee members for their support of our children, the transgender community, and TLDEF, and express our continued commitment to work with the Council and your committees going forward. That completes my prepared statement. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony. I look forward to answering any questions that you have.

Testimony to be delivered by DeNora Getachew, Executive Director of Generation Citizen, New York City to New York City Council Education Committee Oversight Hearing re: DOE's Response to Incidents of Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination In NYC Schools and Efforts to Improve School Climate

GENERATION CITIZEN

Good Morning Members of the City Council's Education Committee:

Generation Citizen ("GC") appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony at today's public hearing about the Department of Education's response to incidents of bullying, harassment, and discrimination in New York City schools and efforts to improve school climate.

GC is a seven-year-old national nonpartisan, nonprofit dedicated to bringing civics education back into the classroom through a new, engaging pedagogy: Action Civics. Action Civics is a "student-centered, project-based approach to civics education that develops the individual skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for 21st century democratic practice" (National Action Civics Collaborative). It differs from normative, knowledge-based civic education in the same way that taking any "hands-on," project-based, or experiential course differs from reading a textbook. 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, which are impacting their community.

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 deploy two models to implement our Action Civics curriculum: college volunteer, or Democracy Coach model; and teacher led 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. Our goal is to ensure that every student in the United States gains the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in our 21st century democracy as active, lifelong citizens.

GC is focused on reinvigorating civics education in schools through our Action Civics model in order to address America's civic participation problem. Though this problem has been growing in impact over the last several decades, recent data shows that only 23% of eighth graders nationwide are proficient in civics. Worse, young people nationwide are receiving unequal civic learning opportunities: students in low-income schools, when compared with just average socioeconomic status (SES) schools, are half as likely to study how laws are made, and 30% less likely to report having experiences with debates or panel discussions in social studies classes.

In New York, the picture is even more bleak. New York ranked 41st out of 50 states in voter turnout during the 2016 election: just 57% of eligible voters cast ballots. Little more than half that percentage cast votes in the 2014 midterms, and in the September 2017 citywide primary election, approximately 15% of registered Democrats went to the polls.

Indicators of civic knowledge are just as poor. According to a 2011 poll by the Brennan Center for Justice:
- Just 20% of New Yorkers considered themselves "very familiar" with the U.S. Constitution.
- Only two-thirds knew that the President leads the federal government's executive branch.
- Three out of five were unaware that the legislative branch is responsible for passing laws.

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. Generation Citizen takes the position that an effective action civics education and sustained participation is needed to re-engage young people in the local political system, and to collectively strengthen our democracy.

Don't talk about change. Lead it.

In our Action Civics course, students debate issues directly affecting them, like police community relations, domestic violence, or discrimination, and work as a class to decide on one focus issue to address during the semester. Through our student-led program, they develop strategic action plans to effect systemic change on the identified issue, implement the plan by engaging directly with influencers and decision-makers, and present their findings at Civics Day, a semester-end showcase. 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.

Thanks to the Council's $500,000 investment in GC's program through the *Civic Education in New York City Schools* Initiative, GC NYC has doubled our impact in Fiscal Year 2017, educating and empowering approximately 3,400 sixth through twelfth graders citywide. Last year, GC educated approximately 9,000 students 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. We are incredibly thankful that the City Council renewed funding for GC in Fiscal Year 2018 to enable us to empower approximately 3,700 more students to find their voice and become civically engaged this year.

Our data shows that during our 2016-17 school year approximately 10 percent (or 13) of our 131 classrooms focused their action project on bullying and discrimination in their schools and/or community. While that is not dispositive, we do believe it highlights that students citywide are grappling with this very personal and high salience issue. Action Civics educates students about how to research, analyze, propose, debate, and advocate for their collectively determined solution(s), and in many cases throughout GC's history, students have fostered meaningful change as a result. Action Civics provides students with a vehicle to synthesize and propose concrete solutions to address the issues impacting their community. And, once they possess the civic knowledge and skills to address issues impacting their community, they can utilize these skills in the school, as well as in their broader community for the long-term.

I would be remiss if I did not note that GC's partners with the Urban Assembly Wildlife Conservation School, where the tragic incident occurred last month, which is at least in part the impetus for today's hearing. While our college volunteers and students were not in the impacted classroom, they were present in an adjacent classroom at the time. The 3 classes that we partner with at the school have been grappling with the impact that bullying can have on a school community in the wake of that event, including as they determine the focus of their classes' action project this semester. I can share more results on the final projects once our semester concludes.

In conclusion, 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.

We appreciate the Council's investment in GC to ensure that the next generation of New Yorkers develops the civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for them to become active and engaged stewards of our democracy for the long-term. I will now ask Radeha Haque, alumni of GC's Action Civics program and Community Change Fellowship program, to share her perspective about how Action Civics can empower young people to become more civically engaged.

Thank you the Committee for your consideration of this testimony.

Don't talk about change. Lead it.

## NYC Council Committee on Education

Testimony Submitted by The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families, Inc. (CHCF)

October 30, 2017

My name is Diana Noriega and I am the Chief Program Officer for the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, known by its acronym, CHCF.  CHCF has a 35-year history of supporting the LatinX community of New York City.  In that time, we have evolved our programming to combine education, capacity-building, and advocacy to strengthen the support system and continuum of learning for children and youth.  CHCF provides a unique proposition – through our direct service in Early Care, Youth Development and Parent Engagement, we connect and communicate with family child care providers, parents, students, and community members, to reflect their experiences, concerns and needs through our policy and advocacy work.  We are positioned to move communication from the ground up, which is an essential piece of CHCF's identity.

CHCF is currently active in four public schools, providing elementary and middle school out-of-school time programming to 240 students in the Bronx, working as the partner CBO in a receivership community school in the Bronx, and leading a Drop-out Prevention program in one Brooklyn high school. Our staff work in partnership with school leadership, parents, students and community members to enrich the school climate and empower the community.

CHCF firmly believes in the value of investing in a holistically supportive school culture and climate. Students and families should feel welcomed and as protected as possible by administration, educators, and support staff in any public school.  The City Council and the Department of Education (DOE) have taken steps towards achieving a level of safety that would alleviate some of the burden that bullying and bias pose on a student's educational experience.  However, there are other actions that could be taken to meaningfully act on a commitment to creating a holistically supportive environment in *every* public school in New York City.  We believe that investing in policies and practices that build a holistically supportive school climate will work in an intervening capacity, rather than heavily relying on reactive policies that don't demonstrate wide-spread positive impact.

I.   **Officers vs. Counselors**

While we commend the DOE on increasing the number of school counselors by over 250 in the past few years, there remains a disproportionate number of police and security personnel in NYC schools compared to support staff, such as counselors and social workers.  According to research presented by The 74 Million, New York City, while still above the national average of about two counselors per

1,000 students at an average of 2.9 counselors per 1,000 students, has an average of 5.3 security officers per 1,000 students.[1]

Having more police and security officers in schools, while perhaps impacts rates of assault and weapons charges[2], makes it more likely that these individuals are responding to instances of discipline that would be traditionally handled by school staff.  This results in an unnecessary escalation of issues that could be handled through other interventions and restorative practices.  We know that school counselors generally have a positive impact on student achievement[3] and decreased discipline issues[4], especially for low-income students of color.  We understand the presence of officers in schools, however we question the impact of having more officers than counselors and the general message that this sends to students and families.  We must invest more in positive practices that we know work to intervene and support students, not measures to react when instances occur.

II.     **School to Prison Pipeline**

With the higher presence of security officers in schools, we must also consider the overwhelming data that demonstrates that punitive discipline is more often used against students of color, compared to their white peers.  Data collected by the New York State Education Department shows that during the 2015-2016 academic year, Black students were 2.2 times more likely than their white peers to be suspended and represented 35.5% of all suspensions even though they make up only 18% of the total student enrollment.[5] [6]  A recent study through the ACLU presents New York City data that showed that 98.5% of students who were handcuffed by officers as a restraint were Black or Latino.  100% of instances where handcuffs were used, with no ultimate police action, were on Black or Latino students.[7]  With evidence that punitive discipline and police involvement in school discipline are more often enforced against students of color, we must question the ultimate impact this is having within the larger context of over incarceration of communities of color and the school to prison pipeline.

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[1] Barnum, M. (2016, April 4). Who Helps Schools More: Counselors or Security. Retrieved on October 27, 2017 from https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/04/counselors-versus-cops/476478/.

[2] Theriot, M.T. (2009). School Resource Officers and the Criminalization of Student Behavior. *Journal of Criminal Justice 37(3)* 280-287.

[3] Carrell, S.E. and Hoekstra, M. (2014, August 7). Are School Counselors an Effective Education Input? *Economic Letters 125 (2014) 66-69.*

[4] Carrell, S.E. and Carrell, S.A. (2006). Do Lower Student to Counselor Ratios Reduce School Disciplinary Issues? *Contributions to Economic Analysis and Policy, 5(1), Article 11.*

[5] Safe and Supportive Schools Bill Memorandum of Support (2017).

[6] The 2015-2016 suspension data was requested and obtained through a Freedom of Information Law request via the Safe and Supportive Schools Coalition to NYSED and compared to the demographic enrollment data provided on the NYSED website https://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2016&state=yes

[7] French-Marcelin, M. and Hinger, S. (2017). Bullies in Blue: The Origins and Consequences of School Policing. Retrieved on October 27, 2017 from https://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/school-prison-pipeline/bullies-blue.

III. **Restorative Practices**

Knowing the impact of placing more officers than counselors in schools and the role it can play in perpetuating the school to prison pipeline, it is our moral obligation to not only consider, but dedicate our efforts to investing in practices that work to support our students as the developing children and adolescents that they are.  We must embrace practices that intervene in student behavior in order to restore their path towards success.  It is not developmentally appropriate to respond to natural adolescent behaviors and impulses with criminal proceedings.  As one of our coalitions advocates, "New York educators should employ restorative practices that strengthen self-regulation instead of attempting to deter misbehavior through punitive discipline."[8]

IV. **Culturally Responsive Education**

An additional way to invest in school climate and improving supports for our students is by ensuring that the schools and all staff are trained in culturally responsive practices.  The term 'practices' refers to having curriculum that is more reflective of the experiences and varying perspectives that are in the classroom.  It also refers to the training that teachers are given to appropriately interact with and understand their students and families.  Funding was allocated for anti-bias training for all DOE educators, which is a commendable step in the right direction, was supposed to be rolled out before the start of the 2017-2018 school year.  The training has yet to occur and leaves advocates wondering why there was a delay in the commitment to culturally responsive practices and such vital teacher training.  CHCF feels that increasing every educator's ability to respectfully and appropriately interact with all of their students no matter their background would be a tremendous step towards building city-wide school climates that cultivate a sense of welcome, belonging, and support of *every* student and family that relies on the NYC education system to learn and grow.

Thank you for allowing CHCF to submit testimony today.  We appreciate the Education Committee addressing the very important issue of school climate.  The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families will continue to be an ally of initiatives aimed at creating an inclusive and supportive environment for all of New York City's students and families.

**The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families, Inc.**

**Vision**

CHCF envisions a future where Latino children, youth, and families have equitable access to opportunities to succeed, are empowered to realize their full potential, and are affirmed in their culture.

**Mission**

CHCF combines education, capacity-building and advocacy to strengthen the support system and continuum of learning for children and youth.

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[8] Judith S. Kaye Safe and Supportive Schools Bill Memo of Support (2017).

**THE POPULAR CENTER FOR DEMOCRACY**

**Urban Youth Collaborative**

# *Policy Brief:* Young People's Vision for Safe, Supportive, and Inclusive Schools

## INTRODUCTION

This policy brief provides a blueprint for safe and supportive schools.[1] The young people who navigate interpersonal conflict in schools and experience harm due to harsh policing and disciplinary policies, are uniquely situated to lead the dialogue about developing truly safe and just learning environments. This report highlights priorities from the Young People's School Justice Agenda – the vision for safe, supportive, and inclusive schools developed by youth leaders organizing to transform their schools and communities.[*] Supportive approaches to improving school climate are proven to be more effective at helping students address the root causes of conflict and reducing school infractions, thus actually creating safer schools than punitive policies such as suspensions and policing.[2]

When young people close their eyes and think about what they need when they are feeling bullied, need to solve conflict, or want their learning environments to be inclusive, they do not imagine metal detectors and police officers. They imagine safe spaces where they can receive support from staff trained in social and emotional development. When schools allow students to lead efforts to transform school culture and climate, they develop fairness committees, expand peer mediation, build restorative justice teams, and create safe spaces where peers who feel isolated or bullied can build strong and trusting relationships. Students are changing the paradigm of discipline and punishment and advocating for schools to respond to the needs of all students, but especially the most vulnerable students, by pulling every student into systems of support and refusing to expand practices that treat them as disposable.

New York City (NYC) must reimagine safety in its schools by prioritizing what young people need most – comprehensive social, emotional, and mental health supports. This blueprint provides the following recommendations:

- Increase the number of **trained and supervised full time guidance counselors and social workers.** The ratio of student to guidance counselors in underserved schools

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[*] The full Young People's School Justice Agenda is presented in a report by the Urban Youth Collaborative and Center for Popular Democracy, "The $746 Million School-to-Prison Pipeline: The Ineffective, Costly and Discriminatory Process of Criminalizing New York City Students," released in April 2017. The report is available at populardemocracy.org/STPP_Report.

should be 1:100 and at least 1:250 in every other school.

- **Implement Restorative Justice citywide**, focusing on underserved schools. Provide training in restorative practices and funding for schools to hire full-time restorative justice coordinators.
- Create and adequately fund a citywide **mental-health service continuum**. Implementation should focus on bringing support to high-needs schools.

NYC should also cultivate safe and inclusive school environments through the city wide expansion and implementation of Culturally Responsive Education,[3] Comprehensive Sex Education,[4] and Gender and Sexuality Alliances.

Mayor de Blasio's administration has fostered public dialogue around school discipline, limited the use of exclusionary discipline for minor infractions, and provided resources for pilot initiatives to expand the use of positive approaches to school discipline. Under Chancellor Fariña, the Department of Education (DOE) has hired more than 130 new guidance counselors. The New York City Council also made possible the hiring of the first-ever DOE LGBTQ Community Liaison.[5] While these steps represent real progress, far more is left to do. Reforms need to be expanded to scale and be implemented citywide to fully realize a change in culture.

In addition, the city must reverse policies that have proven ineffective at creating safe and supportive environments for students – policies that promote the exclusion and criminalization of students. **In particular, New York City should end arrests, as well as the issuance of summonses and juvenile reports, in schools for non-criminal violations and misdemeanors; institute a moratorium on the installation of new metal detectors in schools, and remove existing metal detectors; and, remove police officers from schools.** The city must divest from systems that harm young people and invest in the support and resources needed to help foster safe and supportive school communities.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. INCREASE THE NUMBER OF TRAINED AND SUPERVISED FULL-TIME GUIDANCE COUNSELORS AND SOCIAL WORKERS

Guidance counselors and social workers provide critical services to create safe and supportive schools. The student-to-guidance counselor ratio needs to be drastically reduced to 1:100 for schools with high needs populations.[6] Schools serving general education students can maintain a 1:250 student to counselor ratio.[7]

NYC currently employs far fewer guidance counselors than needed. A contributing factor to the insufficient staffing levels is a hiring freeze instituted by Mayor Bloomberg in 2009 that set the City's progress back.[8] The current ratio of students to full-time guidance counselors is 1:407.[9] As a point of comparison, the ratio of students to New York Police Department School Safety Division personnel is 1:207.[10]

## *Effect of Counselors and Social Workers on School Safety*

Increasing the number of school counselors has been directly linked to a reduction in fights, bullying, and school infractions. The presence of school counselors has been proven to foster a sense of belonging for young people, and a better relationship between school staff and students.

- One study revealed that additional funding for counselors "reduce[s] the likelihood of disciplinary incidents, such as weapon-related incidents and student suspensions." In addition, "[i]ncreases in counselors moderate relatively severe behavioral problems."[11]
- Students attending middle schools with comprehensive counseling programs reported (a) feeling safer in their schools, (b) better relationships between students and teachers, which was also correlated with feeling safer in school and attending a school where there were fewer problems with the interpersonal and physical environment, (c) greater satisfaction of students with the education they were receiving in their schools, (d) perceptions that one's education was more relevant and important to one's future, and (e) earning higher grades.[12]
- Lower student to counselor ratios decrease "both the recurrence of student disciplinary problems and the share of students involved in a disciplinary incident." These findings were even more pronounced for students of color and students in poverty.[13]
- The implementation of a minimum counselor-to-student ratio or counselor subsidy in elementary schools "reduces the fraction of teachers reporting that their instruction suffers due to student misbehavior and reduces the fractions reporting problems with students physically fighting each other, cutting class, stealing, or using drugs."[14]

### *Policy Recommendation for New York City*

In the last few years, New York City has begun to hire more school guidance counselors and social workers.[15] This is important and has added necessary capacity to some schools, but far too many schools still lack an adequate number of guidance counselors. With a 1:407 student-to-full-time-guidance-counselor ratio across the school system, further and more rapid investment is still urgently needed.

*"Too often, I have seen a lack of support for students, myself included, because there is a lack of guidance counselors in schools. By having one guidance counselor for every 100 students, a counselor's workload will not only lessen, but the depth of the relationships they have with students will deepen."*

*Maybelen, Urban Youth Collaborative*

- **Hire guidance counselors to match the recommended 1:100 student-to-guidance-counselor ratio in high needs schools.** Over the next two years, NYC should reach 1:100 in high needs schools. In the next five years, the City should hire enough guidance counselors to maintain the 1:100 ratio in high needs schools and reach 1:250 ratio in the remaining public schools.
- **Provide sufficient supervision structures for guidance counselors:** Due to the great deficiency in the number of guidance counselors employed by the city, guidance counselors are often unsupervised. To meet the ethical standards of the profession and ensure young people are receiving the best care, guidance counselors must be supervised by experienced professionals.

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## 2. IMPLEMENT RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CITYWIDE IN ALL UNDERSERVED SCHOOLS

Restorative approaches have emerged as one of the most effective methods of shifting school policies toward creating nurturing, inclusive, and supportive schools.[16] Restorative Justice focuses on building strong relationships between everyone in the school community. These supportive relationships often prevent conflict from ever occurring. In dealing with conflict, restorative justice aims to heal relationships by bringing together everyone impacted by wrongdoing and collectively considering the needs and responsibilities of those involved.[17] Restorative practices emphasize holding each other accountable through communal dialogue that promotes inclusivity, constructive engagement and the restoration of relationships, rather than punishment and exclusion. NYC has begun pilot initiatives brining restorative practice training to all schools in District 18 and providing fifteen schools with funding to bring on a Restorative Justice Coordinator.[18]

> *"Punitive measures don't get to the root of the problem and don't provide help for people who have been harmed or have created the harm. Restorative Justice helps resolve conflict and tension, and helps people move forward, create safe spaces and build a supportive community."*
>
> *Julian, Urban Youth Collaborative*

### Effect of Restorative Justice on school safety

Restorative practices have effectively improved school climate and reduced disruptive behavior and incidents involving fighting.[19] For example:

- The implementation of restorative practices in a Philadelphia school reduced violent and serious incidents by more than 52 percent in the first year and an additional 40 percent the following year.[20]
- In Denver, within two years of implementing restorative practices in a school, incidents of fighting fell by 80 percent.[21]
- Within one year, the implementation of restorative practices in an Oakland high school led to a 77 percent reduction in violence and elimination of racial disproportionality in discipline.[22]

### Policy Recommendation for New York City

To reap the benefits of restorative practices, they must be implemented in a robust way. Here are core elements of implementing effective restorative justice:

- **Full-time restorative justice coordinator:** Schools need dedicated personnel for implementation of Restorative Justice practices. This person will drive the creation and delivery of trainings to the whole staff. The restorative justice coordinator will also facilitate restorative circles.
- **School-wide training and practice:** To truly be effective, restorative approaches need to be embedded within the school. To ensure community understanding and investment in this process, the coordinator needs to be given the resources to run regular trainings throughout the year.
- **Leadership of young people and parents:** Young people are necessary to the implementation of restorative practices. Their leadership should be leveraged to develop

and participate in running the restorative practices in their own schools. Parents also shape much of the school culture and their involvement in restorative practices can maintain the continuity between school and home.

- **Community involvement:** Restorative Justice offers schools the opportunity to develop partnerships with community based organizations with experience, expertise, and credibility in developing community solutions for safety beyond punishment and incarceration.

## 3. CREATE A CITYWIDE MENTAL-HEALTH CONTINUUM, STARTING IN UNDERSERVED SCHOOLS

In New York City, antiquated and misguided responses to mental health issues continue to utilize the NYPD as first responders to emotional and mental health crises in schools and communities. In just one year, the NYPD reported intervening during a "child-in-crisis" incident, which reflects a child experiencing what the NYPD perceives as a mental health emergency, 2,702 times and more than 1,300 students were sent to the emergency room for an emotional or psychological need.[23] Ninety-two percent of the young people "in crisis" were Black or Latinx.[24] More than 96 percent of the students who the NYPD reported handcuffing during these incidents were Black or Latinx.[25] Aside from mitigation, this was the most frequent type of police activity in schools.[26] Interactions such as these often re-traumatize vulnerable young people and bring them closer to the criminal legal system as opposed to mental and emotional health support systems.

### *Effect of Mental-Health Care on School Safety*

Effective mental health care in school has been demonstrated to improve the overall health of young people, regulate their behavior, and encourage cooperative problem solving. Access to mental health care has improved behaviors in the school and decreased disciplinary actions.[27] For example:

- A study examined three school-based mental health clinics. All of the clinics reported fewer fights, improved student attitudes and behaviors, fewer suicide attempts, and increased student visits for mental health services.[28]
- A D.C. school based program that provides a continuum of care recorded significant improvements in young people's mental health. More than 40 percent of clients demonstrated measured improvement in problem severity and overall functioning.[29]
- A meta-analysis of the impact of school mental health interventions found that 62.5 percent of the interventions studied "demonstrated dually positive outcomes in regards to both mental health and education."[30]

### *Policy Recommendation for New York City*

NYC must design a network of mental health services to support students along a spectrum of mental health needs. The network should provide the resources and infrastructure necessary to bring intensive support services to students within schools. As recommended in the Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline report released in July 2016, this continuum would connect in-school services with more intensive external services including existing hospital-based mental health clinics.[31]

- **Components of the continuum:** The continuum requires the city to establish school relationships with hospital-based clinics. In addition, call-in centers staffed by experienced mental health clinicians should be established to field calls from schools. These clinicians can help schools evaluate what constitutes a crises and reduce the overuse of emergency rooms. School Response Teams, each working with four schools, would work with students and also help the school officials learn how to better respond to mental health needs. Over a three-year timeframe the whole schools involved in this continuum should be trained in Collaborative Problem-Solving. Full-time school-based Behavioral Health Consultants should be hired to each work with five schools. Finally, the Department of Education should work with community organizations to ensure that there is robust data collection and program evaluation of this continuum.
- **Focus on high need schools:** The city must address the mental health service deficiencies in a comprehensive citywide method. Starting this citywide process with a focus on the highest need schools will have the greatest effect. More than 60 percent of all child in crisis interventions are in just 32 percent of the city's precincts.[32]

*"Being an Afro-Latino LGBTQ man with a disability, I'm often targeted. One day in school I got really upset. The school ended up calling the School Safety Agent up to the classroom. When I saw them it made me even angrier. The school then called EMS. EMS arrived as well as police from the local precinct. At that point, I felt surrounded by police. That made me even more agitated. One put their hand on my arm and I screamed that no one should touch me. I was then handcuffed and taken to the hospital for a psych evaluation. It was really messed up. After this, I was immediately put on suspension and had to go to a Superintendent's Suspension hearing. The school was threatening to suspend me for a year. I couldn't believe it. I went to the hearing and the lawyer helped me to get immediately reinstated at school. Especially for students with disabilities and behavioral plans, like I have, these steps are not supposed to be taken by a school."*

*Markeys, Make the Road New York*

## 4. CREATING INCLUSIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

Ensuring safe schools will require inclusive school cultures. There are several programs, that have the support of young people, which create inclusive environments. Schools should provide Culturally Responsive Education (CRE). CRE is a method of rigorous, student-centered education that cultivates critical thinking instead of just test-taking skills; relates academic study to contemporary issues and students' experiences; fosters positive academic, racial and cultural identities; develops students' ability to connect across cultures; and, empowers students as agents of social change.[33]

In addition, Gender and Sexuality Alliances provide LGBTQ youth the space to express themselves. Starting these alliances with NYC schools will create safer spaces for LGBTQ young people. Finally, implementation of Comprehensive Sexual Education in all New York City schools will provide young people with the information they need to stay safe and the ability to make informed choices.[34]

## 5. End Policing and Punitive Practices in Schools

Policing in NYC schools create extreme racial disparities. For example, Black girls are 12.7 times more likely to be arrested and 6.7 times more likely to be issued a summons than their White peers.[35] Black boys are 7.5 times more likely to be arrested and 4.6 times more likely to receive a summons than White boys.[36] In April 2017, Urban Youth Collaborative and the Center for Popular Democracy released a report, *The $746 Million School-to-Prison Pipeline: The Ineffective, Discriminatory, and Costly Process of Criminalizing New York City Students,* which highlighted more of these disparities along lines of race and disability.[37]

> *"School Safety Agents, to me, are just there to criminalize us with their hand wands, metal detectors, and always giving out summonses. But when you want to talk to a counselor or someone like that, you can't talk with them. They are always busy."*
>
> Brandon, Make the Road New York

Police in schools largely police low-level offenses, including normal youthful behavior. Nearly 78 percent of all arrests, summonses, and NYPD juvenile reports of young people in NYC schools are for misdemeanors and violations.[38] Research continues to show "broken windows" policing and criminalizing normal adaptive youthful behavior fails to correspond with safety, despite the belief that harshly punishing, policing, and incarcerating young people of color creates safer communities.[39] Our school communities should not rely on ineffective policies and practices that create pervasive and persistent racial injustices across multiple city agencies.

### *Effect of Policing and Criminalization on School Safety*
Proponents of school policing and punitive disciplinary action often cite student safety as their primary justification. Yet there is no substantial evidentiary support for the proposition that police presence in schools and suspensions create safe learning environments.[40] To the contrary:

- A 2017 report from the Vera Institute of Justice shows increased incarceration has no association with lower violent crime rates; increased incarceration may actually increase crime; and, incarceration has only a minimal impact on property crimes.[41]
- A 2016 report from the NYPD's Inspector General found "no empirical evidence demonstrating a clear and direct link between an increase in summons and misdemeanor arrest activity and a related drop in felony crime" in communities.[42]
- Policing in schools does not reduce incidents of bullying or fighting.[43] Studies have shown that schools are no safer, even after years of punitive policing and disciplinary measures, than before such policies are implemented.[44]
- After reviewing several empirical studies examining the effectiveness of metal detectors, researchers found that there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that metal detectors reduce school violence.[45]
- Rather than reduce school violence, scholars have found that the presence of police merely criminalizes typical adolescent behavior, such as disorderly conduct, even among similarly situated schools.[46]

### *Policy Recommendation for New York City*
To reimagine safety in schools by prioritizing the social, emotional, and mental needs of young people it is critical that NYC divest from systems that harm communities of color and reinvest

those resources in the priorities outlined in the Young People's School Justice Agenda. Divesting from the criminalization of normal adaptive behavior of young people of color will require:

- **Ending arrests, summons, and Juvenile Reports in schools for non-criminal violations and misdemeanors. Create alternatives to arrests for felonies:** The NYPD should issue an Operations Order to end the practice of arresting and issuing summonses and juvenile reports to young people in school for low-level violations and misdemeanors. These policies will ensure that no student is torn away from their family or community, thrown into the criminal legal system, or made vulnerable to targeting for detainment and deportation by federal authorities.
- **Removing police officers and metal detectors and reallocating school policing funds for safe and supportive school priorities:** As the research demonstrates, police do not create safer schools and the city's current policing system has deepened existing racial inequities. Disciplinary matters should be handled within the school community through restorative practices, not through the criminal legal system. Metal detectors also do not keep young people safe or address the underlying causes of interpersonal conflict. Instead, metal detectors create a flashpoint between students and police and make students feel criminalized as soon as they enter the school building and ultimately disrupts any other efforts to ensure safe and supportive schooling environments.
- **Expunge students discipline records and prohibit sharing discipline records with colleges and universities:** Thousands of students already have discipline records due to overly-punitive suspension practices. The city should expunge young people's criminal and discipline records, particularly in recognition of the racial inequities in punishment.
- **Transform school based punitive discipline:** In addition to shifting away from punitive policing towards restorative practices, school-based discipline must transform. Some concrete policies to advance that change are ending suspensions for B21/A22 Defying Authority; mandating guidance interventions before the use of suspensions; and ending suspensions for Kindergarten - 3rd grade.

> *"So many students end up dropping out because of the police in schools and all these suspensions. Students know that if they get suspended, they know there are jail cells being built for them. The message is clear."*
>
> *Estefany, Make the Road New York*

## CONCLUSION

New York City is on the precipice of moving towards school culture and climate priorities that are designed to meet the social, emotional, and mental health needs of young people, or moving back towards ineffective policies and practices that end up harming students who are most in need. By following the vision of young people New York City can ensure safe and supportive schools and finally break the school-to-prison pipeline. Young people are calling for solutions that address the root causes of bullying and conflict and lift up and recognize their humanity.

Young people have expressed a vision for their future. They see a future filled with hope and powerful contributions towards creating a just and thriving city for all communities. It is a future which depends on deeper learning and on schools that provide the support they need with ample opportunities to grow and thrive. To achieve this vision, New York City must invest deeply in creating citywide systems for hiring guidance counselors and social workers to meet the needed standards, implement restorative practices in all schools, and invest in comprehensive mental

health services that connect school-based mental health care to community and hospital based services. These are the needs of our young people. Youth leaders are prepared to help New York City achieve these goals. City officials must work directly with young people to help drive and implement the progressive policies that will ensure their safety and cultivate learning environments were all young people are valued and brought closer to networks of support.

> *"The spending on the criminal justice system has meant: more beds in jail for black and brown bodies; an explosion of broken windows and abusive policing; and schools that abound with police officers, while lacking the arts and physical education, guidance counselors, college counselors, and restorative justice programs we need. New York must learn from its costly mistake and radically transform our funding priorities. Reinvesting in our communities means we would have an opportunity to grow up in healthy, sustainable environments full of love. For young people like me, investing in our communities literally means the difference between life and death."*
>
> *Zion, Make the Road New York*

# ENDNOTES

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[4] Scott M. Stringer, NEW YORK CITY COMPTROLLER, HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS: A PLAN FOR IMPROVING HEALTH AND SEXUAL EDUCATION IN NEW YORK CITY'S SCHOOLS (2017).

[5] *Compare* NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION REPORT ON GUIDANCE COUNSELORS; PURSUANT TO LOCAL LAW 56 OF 2014; February 15, 2017; NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION REPORT ON GUIDANCE COUNSELORS; PURSUANT TO LOCAL LAW 56 OF 2014; February 15, 2015, *both available at* http://schools.nyc.gov/community/city/publicaffairs/Guidance+Counselor+Reporting.htm; *see also* Rebecca Klein, New York City Schools Take Historic Step Forward For Gay Kids, HUFFPOST (Feb. 3, 2016), https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/jared-fox-nyc_us_56afd1b8e4b09214b14f3b57.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**The Urban Youth Collaborative** is led by young people and brings together New York City students to fight for real education reform that puts students first. Demanding a high-quality education for all students, our young people struggle for social, economic, and racial justice in our schools and communities. Our organizational members include Make the Road New York, Sistas and Brothas United, and Future of Tomorrow.

urbanyouthcollaborative.org                                        @UYC_YouthPower

**The Center for Popular Democracy** is a nonprofit organization that promotes equity, opportunity, and a dynamic democracy in partnership with innovative base-building organizations, organizing networks and alliances, and progressive unions across the country.

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# CID•NY

**Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY**

October 30, 2017

Respect of All Liaison Contact Information – Into. No. 1538

Council Member Domm and New York City Council

Lourdes I. Rosa-Carrasquillo, Esq.
Director of Advocacy

I would like to thank City Council Member Domm and the City Council members for allowing CIDNY to testify.

The Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY (CIDNY) is a leading advocate for New Yorkers with disabilities and fights to ensure full integration, independence and equal opportunity for all people with disabilities by removing barriers to social, economic, cultural and civic life of the disability community.

CIDNY supports Intro. No. 1538 with some caveats.

Requiring that the contact information of a liaison is available and very important to ensure that students and staff can report discriminatory behavior, harassment, intimidation, and bullying. However, CIDNY believes that the liaison be given greater duties beyond collecting complaints.

The Commissioner for the New York State Department of Education has passed regulations that lay out various mandates to protect and ensure the safety of students under the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA).

**Section 100.2 (c) Instructional Requirements.** This section requires that all public school students be instructed in the effects of bullying and cyberbullying. It also requires for all public schools and charter schools when conducting the instruction, to have an emphasis on discouraging acts of harassment, bullying, and discrimination.

CIDNY believes that the liaison should have oversight and train students on said instructions.

**Section 100.2, paragraph (2) subdivision (6) (i).** This paragraph further states that there be procedures by which violators are reported, determined, discipline measures imposed, and discipline measures carried out.

CIDNY believes that the liaison be part of the team that creates such procedures so as to better able to educate staff.

**Section 100.2 (l) and 119.6 Code of Conduct.** The liaison should be a key participant in educating staff, in both public and charter schools, about the code of conduct

**Section 100.2(kk) Reporting.** This entire section is important. CIDNY would like to bring special attention to the second bullet of the regulation states:

"The principal, superintendent, or principal's or superintendent's designee shall lead or supervise the thorough investigation of all reports of harassment, bullying and/or discrimination, and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly after receipt of any written report."

CIDNY believes that the liaison should be the designee or play a key role in the investigation of reports of harassment, bullying and/or discrimination.

In closing, although CIDNY supports Intro. No. 1538, we believe that the serving only as a conduit of gathering information is insufficient. It is too narrowly tailored. The liaison needs to be fully immersed in the development of procedures, implementation, and investigation of harassment, bullying, and/or discrimination.

# Muslim Community Network

Connecting Communities, Creating New Spaces for Engagement

Thank you Councilmembers Dromm, Richards, and Menchaca for your leadership and advocacy on behalf of families in your districts and across the city.

The local law to amend the administrative code of the City of New York, in relation to requiring the Department of Education to list on its website the name and contact information of the designated respect for all liaisons at each school is a service that will give families across the city that added comfort for them and their children. This contact information would help students and their families report bullying incidents, violence, or any problems that may arise with a student or another student who is a witness to bullying.

There has been an increase in bullying and discrimination incidents *to Arab, Muslim and South Asian youth* these past few years. Students do not feel inclined to go to a school staff member because they do not know who to turn to nor do they feel comfortable reporting to a staff member after being victimized. In addition to having the contact information on school websites, we humbly offer the following recommendations to address the needs of the families we serve:

1. Make this information accessible to parents by mailing letters in multi languages for families who don't have access to a computer and/or the internet.

2. It is imperative that the liaison information is advertised in every school using multilingual posters for English Language Learners. The location of posters should in high traffic areas of the schools such as, school building halls, cafeterias, gyms, locker rooms, in front of classroom doors, etc. These posters should also include the room number, names, and the amount of liaisons available in the school building.

3. Urge schools to hold quarterly assemblies for students where liaisons do brief presentations on bullying, harassment, and to discuss the process of reporting an incident and making themselves available. This should also be done with parents in the beginning of the school year at curriculum night as well as parent-teacher conferences.

4. *City release funds for 10 School CRE Pilot Program*

We look forward to working with the Department of Education and the New York City Council to serve New York City students and their families.

Thank You,

Dr. Debbie Almontaser
CEO and Founder of Bridging Cultures Group Inc.
Board President of Muslim Community Network
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# GLSEN®

Becca Mui, Ms. Ed., *Education Manager*
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October 30, 2016

Members of the New York City Council,

Good Morning. My name is Becca Mui and I am the Education Manager at GLSEN – the nation's leading organization focused on ensuring safe and inclusive schools for all students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression. GLSEN has been doing this work since 1990 and all of our policies, programming, and expertise is based in evidence-based research.

Thank you for letting me submit comments in favor of the proposed amendment to add Chapter 11 § 21-975 to the administrative code, ensuring the name and contact information of every "Respect for All Liaison" be published on the New York City Department of Education website. This amendment takes a crucial step forward in ensuring that established requirements for RFA liaisons are implemented in the most efficient and accessible way possible.

I am here representing GLSEN as an expert in my field as the Education Manager at GLSEN, and also as a former elementary teacher, who taught for nearly 10 years right here in New York City. I also served as an Equity and Inclusion Coordinator, and I know firsthand how valuable it can be to a school community to have one person designated to support a positive school climate to and spearhead diversity initiatives.

Last year I also worked closely with representatives from the DOE and partner organizations to update the existing professional development training for Respect for All Liaisons in the city. I have seen firsthand the need for the existence of RFA liaisons and with the council's good faith efforts to include their information publicly, urge you to pass this updated code so that there is zero confusion for students, families, or community members about who can help students facing discrimination, bullying, and harassment.

In GLSEN's 2015 National School Climate Survey, which focuses on the school experiences of LGBTQ youth, we found that nearly 9 in 10 LGBTQ students were harassed or assaulted at school. Of the LGBTQ students surveyed in New York, 65% had faced harassment on the basis of sexual orientation and 50% on the basis of gender expression. Of the victimized students, most never reported the incident to school staff (51%), and of students who did report incidents, only 33% said it resulted in effective staff intervention. It is the responsibility of adults in schools to protect our students, and to make sure that we are providing a safe and affirming learning environment for all. These statistics are staggering and demonstrate the need to keep making changes to improve school climate for all students across the state, and even here in New York City.

Respect for All liaisons receive the training and the skills to address bullying and harassment in schools, and it is critical that their information be easily accessible to anyone needing their support.

Thank you so much for your time,

Becca Mui
Education Manager, GLSEN

**EDUCATORS**
FOR EXCELLENCE
**NEW YORK**

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**Testimony of Educators for Excellence – New York Members**

**submitted to the**

**Committee on Education of the New York City Council**

**regarding**

**DOE's Response to Incidents of Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination in NYC Schools and Efforts to Improve School Climate**

# Testimony of Olinka Crusoe

**192 Bradhurst Ave**
**New York, New York 10039**

Hi, my name is Olinka Crusoe and I am the English as a New Language ( ENL) Coordinator at New Bridges Elementary School, located in Crown Heights Brooklyn. I wanted to become a teacher to fulfill my passion of ensuring students in urban neighborhoods receive a quality and equitable education. In my first few years of teaching, I spent a lot of time lesson planning, attending professional development on practices that would grow my students academically, and calling for the removal of disruptive students. I thrived on a discipline approach which consistently relied on reactive solutions instead of proactive planning. This is why I am urging the city council to support schools by expanding trainings in areas that promote positive school culture.

In my current elementary school, we prioritize educating students and staff in emotional literacy to create a safe and trusting environment. Through the trainings I have received I learned to become more empathetic with students' social and emotional needs and more proactive in supporting students with the tools necessary to overcome emotional barriers.

A culture of appreciation and respect, which is the heart of student-teacher relationships, can only be achieved if a trusting, caring, respectful relationship is developed between students and teachers. In order to support teachers in their development towards such standards, I am asking you all to make it a priority to expand trainings that will train teachers in the language and practices to help ensure our schools are developing a culture where empathy and compassion is a regular practice even through challenging scenarios. I can only imagine the impact I would have had on my former students who were removed from class repeatedly for disruptive behavior if I was trained earlier on how to equally prioritize social-emotional learning with core subjects.

Support teachers by expanding trainings in areas that promote positive school culture and expand teacher career ladders dedicated to establishing positive school cultures.

# Testimony of Christopher Fers

**29 Jacques Ave.**
**Staten Island, NY 10306**

My name is Christopher Fers. I am an elementary special education teacher at PS/MS 46 in District 5 and I am currently at the beginning of my 4th year of teaching. I am writing in support of Educators for Excellence's Safe and Supportive Schools campaign and the proposal to expand the District 18 pilot program to all New York City districts. I am passionate about this issue because too often I see teachers forced to resort to punitive threats and bribes in order to enact temporary change in behavior. As teachers, it is our job to help in raising a child, both academically and emotionally. This entails teaching children to commit to intrinsically rewarding, positive values.

Day after day, I hear students refer to what they do at school as "work." Walking through the hallways, I find students avoiding class by roaming the hallways. I ask, "what are you supposed to be doing right now," to which the student will invariably respond: "doing my work." Rarely, if ever, do I hear students respond with "learning." Children are resigning their world of wonder and curiosity because they see school as a place "to work." We've created school that mimic the look, feel, and pressures of work. Instead, we need schools that are safe spaces to learn, to grow and to explore one's interests, to take those beginning steps on the path to find one's place in the world.

Like many teachers, I face the challenge of motivating and inspiring students with destabilized home lives. These are students who come to school hungry and fear going home on Friday because they are unsure if they'll have any food over the weekend. Many of the children rely on the school to provide them with the only structure and stability they have in their lives. So I ask: what should that place of structure and stability look and feel like? Should it be inspiring, with supportive teachers who cultivate a student's interests and passions with culturally and emotionally responsive instruction? Or should it look like a place of homogenized discipline and work, where a child is an OSIS number with some data to track their reading levels?

By funding initiatives help create establish safe and supportive schools, teachers like me are given the opportunity to help change

schools into places that nurture the whole child. With proper training, schools like mine can become fully equipped to make our schools welcoming, loving places for each individual child.

When a school is able to create a positive culture it is not just a place where children look to for stability and a hot meal. It is a place where a child can take those first steps into being ready for the world.

Let us be clear: education is not a sentimental issue, but a civil rights issue. The right of every child to receive a free and appropriate public education is not just about sending them into a building to be marked present, or to learn phonics and arithmetic and then head home. It is the right of every child to feel safe, welcomed and loved.

# Testimony of Leton Hall

**1406 Edwards Ave**
**Bronx, NY 10461**

My name is Leton Hall and I have been a science teacher in the Bronx for the past 10 years. Growing up in the Bronx, I felt like my teachers were not able to support and challenge me the way I needed to be. I wrote in my application to the New York Teaching Fellows that my experience inspired me to become the teacher I never had.  This premise still holds true as to why I teach today. I want students to see a man of color in front of them supporting and challenging them every day.

But I can't do it alone. I need the support and training necessary to equip me with the skills to address my students' social and emotional needs. As a classroom teacher, inherently you need to also be a counselor . Counselors are not always available, and when a student needs help I should have skills to support them in a crisis. Even a knowing a fraction of what counselors know would go a long way to ensuring my students have the support they need.

Additionally, there aren't enough counselors in our schools. With a high counselor-to-student ratio many teachers are taking on too much, while students aren't getting the support they need. For years we have asked for this, but our counselors are still overburdened and our students go without critical support.

Three years ago, I had a student struggling emotionally with problems and home and with her peers at school. One day, she was not in class when the other students came in and I knew I saw her upset earlier. I looked out for her specifically for this reason. When I asked a student where she was, he replied, "I don't know where she is but I am worried about her. I'm afraid she might hurt herself." I informed the assistant principal and continued to teach my class that period with her in the front of my mind the entire time. After class, I ran around the school looking for her and I saw her sitting in front of the counselor's office. I asked her where she was and why she had not come to class, but before I could even finish I broke down and started crying. What if the counselor wasn't available at that time or out of the building that day? Where would this student have gone for help? Would she have received it in

time?

Growing up, I sought teachers who would support and challenge me to grow. I became a teacher so I could be that person for students. I want the training and resources that allow me to provide even more social-emotional support for students.

# Testimony of Melissa Dorcemus
**146 Tulip Ave**
**Floral Park, NY 11001**

My name is Melissa Dorcemus and I teach Special Education at a Manhattan middle school. Prior to this, I taught for five years at a school in the Bronx where I had the opportunity to work with and learn from a student named Elijah. Elijah wasn't the typical middle school student - yes, he was charming, funny, and good-humored. But his emotional intelligence far surpassed his thirteen-year-old self. I realized this the moment I found out that he was attacked by teenagers who held a gun to his back but let him go, unscathed, because of his ability to de-escalate the situation. Unfortunately, he wasn't able to let go of the trauma that overtook him. So when Elijah returned to school his habits changed: he acted out in class and used his words as weapons. My colleagues and I didn't know how to support Elijah in processing his trauma, and eventually he was sent to our school's "safe room", -a holding cell for students who chronically act out in class or have committed a more serious infraction. And here too, Elijah's behavior remained unchanged so he was reprimanded with an out-of school suspension, compounding the lost learning time from his time in the safe room.

My school's inability to support Elijah academically and emotionally wasn't from a lack of interest or investment. We care deeply about him but didn't have the skills, supports, or training to intervene when he acted out. And unfortunately, this isn't a story that is isolated to my own experience at my one school. In working in New York City, and in being part of a network of educators, I know first-hand that consistent implementation and ongoing training is lacking in our profession and that is felt most deeply when a student is going through a crisis.

To overcome discord and violence, and instead promote healing, teachers must learn to use restorative practices and work with students, families, and the school community to defuse conflicts and reintegrate students when they experience a crisis like the one Elijah experienced after school. While New York City has been promoting non-punitive practices and supports a decrease in suspensions due to insubordination, we, as educators, need more support. This is why nearly 1,000 teachers have signed a letter to the Mayor, the Chancellor, and the UFT president that outlines a need to increase funding for non-punitive discipline practices. I ask that the City Council's Education Committee prioritizes school climate initiatives by advocating for additional funding for teacher professional development focused on non-punitive discipline practices.

# Testimony of Rachael Goeler

**90-22 83rd Avenue, Apt 2F**
**Ridgewood, NY 11385**

My name is Rachael Goeler and I am a District 75 teacher in Queens. I've been teaching high school students on the Autism spectrum for eight years. I've always known I wanted to be a teacher for students with disabilities--to be a voice and advocate for those who don't, or can't, advocate for themselves.

I support the recommendations provided in the Educators for Excellence letter to Carmen Fariña and Mayor de Blasio including expanding the District 18 pilot program to all New York City districts, providing additional professional development to teachers in restorative justice practices, and providing consistent implementation of programs and professional development.

I was shocked to learn that in the 2014-2015 school year alone, over 90,000 students with disabilities were suspended from schools[1]. This lack of knowledge on how to handle some of the challenging behaviors our students can exhibit leaves many general education teachers feeling as if their only recourse of action is to suspend. Providing educators with comprehensive and fully inclusive professional development will reduce this number and a consistent implementation of resources would ensure that number stays low. As a District 75 teacher, we do not suspend our students due to their disability status. In my experience, the major problem in community schools seems to be the inability to appropriately diagnose, and provide support for, students with disabilities. They are seen as nothing more than a disruption that can't be controlled and are repeatedly suspended until they end up in District 75 school like mine or in jail. We fail students every time we label them a disruption and pass them along to the next program, school or "facility." Their learning becomes disrupted and repeated social stigmatization compounds the effects of social-emotional challenges the student may be facing. Students shouldn't need to

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[1] United States Department of Education
https://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/state-level-data-files/part-b-data/discipline/bdiscipline2014-15.csv

be passed along until there's someone who sees them as a whole student. Providing consistent and inclusive professional development will help teachers across the city  gain strategies to help them better understand and educate the students that need the most support in schools that welcome them and understand their needs.

# Testimony of Chiquita Jenkins

**902 Drew St, Apt #126**
**Brooklyn, NY 11208**

As an educator in District 19, I have taught in my district for the past three years. Outside of the DOE, I have taught for a total of eight years. Three years as a 4th grade teacher in a charter school and four years as a UPK teacher in a private school. As a young girl, I knew that one day I would grow up to become a teacher. My eagerness to become an educator was due, in large part, to my first grade teacher, Ms.Kaber. As a child, I was what many people label as an "energetic kid". I was loud, disrespectful, and, most importantly, uncooperative with anyone with whom I came contact. However, Ms. Kaber; she was different. She saw past the labels that were put on me and spoke positive words over. Words like beautiful, exceptional and the word that she still uses this day to describe me; inquisitive. Ms.Kaber saw something in me that other teachers didn't, and it was because of her positive words that I aspired to be an educator just like her.

For the fiscal year 2018 budget, I'm in full support of additional funding for teacher professional development focused on non-punitive discipline practices that supports schools to select the programming that matches the needs of their students and community. As a district 19 educator, school climate plays a significant role in the culture of my school. The students in my district face challenges of financial and emotional needs that trickle into classroom daily. They can't leave these challenges at the school door. Gone untreated, these challenges become "in school" issues when students act out with inappropriate behavior that results in suspensions. Although student's inappropriate behavior is unacceptable, schools often make the problem worse when they try to deal with situations in a manner that create no positive outcome. Teachers are implementing strategies and interventions to a population of students who lack knowledge of what circumstances ignite their conduct and what tactics can be successfully incorporated to lead to a more prosperous outcome.

Adopting the development of programming that matches the needs of students in school will not only decrease the negative behavior of students, but will create a positive school climate that strengthens

student-teacher relationships and better support a student's unique social-emotional needs.

# PEER HEALTH EXCHANGE

Proposed. Res 1442-2017 and T2017-6697 Testimony
NYC Council Committee on Education Hearing

Good afternoon. My name is Rachael Morgan Peters. I am the New York City Executive Director at Peer Health Exchange. Thank you to Education Committee Chair Daniel Dromm for convening this hearing and for your laser-focus on issues related to all young people's health and especially to LGBTQ young people's health and education. And, thank you to the entire Committee for your continued support of comprehensive health education, your dedication to LGBTQ-inclusive health education, your commitment to reducing bullying, and your vision of improving school climate – important issues which can and should fit under the umbrella of a safe and healthy school for all students. Health curricula, and all curricula, should be supportive and inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgender and gender nonconforming students-inclusive of but not limited to Gender-Sexuality Alliances.

The recent stabbing at Urban Assembly School for Wildlife Conservation is a tragedy beyond words. One student died and an 18 year old is indicted on manslaughter charges. As partners that work in public schools across New York City, and former partners of Urban Assembly School for Wildlife Conservation, Peer Health Exchange is deeply saddened by this news.

The violence committed is appalling. We also know that he endured repeated racist and homophobic bullying at school – even if not from victim. Based on research from the NIH, both bullies and people who are bullied are more likely to engage in serious violent behavior. We also remember notorious examples like the Columbine and Sandy Hook shootings, which were committed by reported bullying victims.

Youth violence is a significant public health issue that crosses boundaries of economic status, race, sexual orientation, and gender. The CDC reports that in 2013 1 in 4 young people reported being in a physical fight in the past year. 18% reported that they took a weapon to school, and nearly 20% reported being bullied on school property. In NYC, 1 in 5 public school students are bullied, with higher incidence rates among students that identify as LGBTQ. Bullying of LGBTQ students most often stems from ignorance and fear about transgressing our societal norms around gender and sexuality.

Effective health education can play a strong role in dispelling myths about sexual orientation and gender identity and can build safe spaces for learning and respect, critical pieces to combat bullying. A recent report by Comptroller Scott Stringer shows that the DOE is not providing comprehensive health education — as required by state law — to all middle and high school students, and is not prioritizing "sex ed" as part of a larger health curriculum. I believe that this tragedy is, in part, a failure of lack of effective health education in kindergarten through 12th grade. We praise that this Council has passed a bill calling for a sex ed task force. I am eager for their progressive and bold recommendations for us.

At Peer Health Exchange, we empower young people with the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to make healthy decisions. We are proud to partner with 49 high schools across NYC to teach our skills-based curriculum to 5,700 young people this week. We provide young people the communication and decision-making skills they need to build healthy relationships with

their peers. In addition, we lead an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum to build better understanding and promote inclusion of queer and trans people in aspects of social life beyond LGBTQ 101 trainings.

According to the WHO, scientific research calls for preventative interventions that promote whole community awareness campaigns and efforts to promote sensitivity, mutual respect, and tolerance while prohibiting bullying. This critical work must happen in all of our schools to prevent future incidents of violence and maintain an overall safe, inclusive school environment.

We call on all NYC schools to respond with anti-violence measures that truly work to build a safe, inclusive environment for all students. While the New York City DOE policy promotes this kind of environment for all students, this work is gravely under resourced. We so appreciate the essential work of THRIVE and NYC Unity Project focused on mental health and LGBTQ youth respectively. And applaud the work of Jared Fox, the DOE's first LGBTQ Liaison. That said as a team of one there is an urgent need for more such resources. And these initiatives must work together inside schools.

Despite the media attention around them, installing metal detectors in our public schools will not guarantee more safety in schools. Installing these machines – and the uniformed personnel that attend them – in schools dehumanizes and demoralizes the black and brown young people that attend these schools. Engaging with uniformed personnel and metal detectors is stressful and demoralizing for all students, especially those who identify as LGBTQ, given the higher rates of negative experiences and reactions that these young people have with uniformed officers. It is not a comprehensive approach to this complex issue. Rather it is a quick fix that is part of an unacceptable, broader pattern of race-based social stress that leads to disparities in educational achievement for black and brown students. **What we need is prevention – real resources dedicated to LGBTQ inclusive health education for all students.** So, while we support a bill to track bullying, we urge the council to push further.

We believe all students deserve to attend a school that supports them as unique individuals and provides a safe space to learn. Schools, communities, and City agencies(?) must now come together to build awareness and promote understanding to stem the tide of violence in schools. In our role of delivering health education at Peer Health Exchange, we'll be there with our high school partners every step of the way.

Rachael Morgan Peters, MPH, LMSW (*She, Her, Hers*)
*New York City Executive Director*

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**Sandra Hyatt**
**Testimony to City Council Education Committee**
**October 30, 2017**

Good afternoon and thank you to the City Council and Education Committee Chair Dromm for allowing me to testify today. My name is Sandra Hyatt, I am the mother of a student at Lower Manhattan Arts Academy and a parent leader with the New York City Coalition for Educational Justice, and I want to talk about why Culturally Responsive Education can help address the problem of bullying in our schools.

Bullying is an issue that strikes fear in the heart of any parent. We want our children to be accepted among their peers including at school. No parent wants their child to be singled out, teased, harassed or targeted especially based on race, ethnicity, culture, religion and gender.

A lot of times the solutions schools take to bullying are reactive and not proactive. But how are we ensuring that our schools are supportive places for students on a daily basis? How are teachers and school staff trained to understand race, culture or gender in order to properly respond to the issues they see or hear among students? How are school staff addressing their own implicit biases?

Over the past year, parents of the NYC Coalition for Educational Justice have been championing Culturally Responsive Education. CRE is a way to create safe and supportive school cultures, and provide teachers and school staff with training regarding the diverse identities of students in their school. CRE can help students build pride in who they are, and learn to accept peers who are different from them. Culturally Responsive Education is a preventive measure to ensure that identity-based bullying does not occur. CRE is how we begin to cut bullying off at its knees.

No child should be have to endure bullying. If we as a city are truly serious about eliminating this behavior, we as adults must do the hard work to become aware of and undo our own biases, learn how to create safe learning spaces, and learn how to disrupt identity-based bullying when it comes from students or other adults.

Thank you.

**Testimony for Public Hearing on Oversight:**
**Department of Education Response to Incidents of Bullying , Harassment and**
**Discrimination in NYC Schools and Efforts to Improve School Climate.**

New York City Council
October 30, 2017

Brittany Brathwaite
Senior Organizer
Girls for Gender Equity

Good Morning New York City Council Members. My name is Brittany Brathwaite, Senior Organizer at Girls for Gender Equity. Girls for Gender Equity is an intergenerational organization committed to the physical, psychological, social, and economic development of girls and women. Through education, organizing, and physical fitness, GGE encourages communities to remove barriers and create opportunities for girls and women to live self-determined lives. We are also active members in the Dignity in Schools Campaign.

Thank you  city council members for convening this hearing on bullying, harassment, and discrimination in NYC schools. Girls for Gender Equity has been at the forefront of community -led initiatives working alongside young people to highlight racial and gender barriers and Improving school climate. We have learned that harassment and discrimination is impacting not only students who identify as LGBTQ, but also students of color, girls of color, immigrant students, and students with disabilities.

Our participatory action research performed in 2016, revealed that one in three young people had experienced sexual harassment in schools. Furthermore, students reported experiencing islamophobia, xenophobia, and anti-black racism from their peers, teachers and school administration. Sadly, not only was this omnipresent in many young people's experience in school but because of harsh discipline policies and the absence of any preventative or restorative justice practices, these young people were often punished and blamed for their own victimization (Morris, 2015). Every day, a young person who identifies as LGBTQ must decide between going to school and being harassed and made invisible by a school curriculum that does not acknowledge the contributions of LGBTQ folks OR skipping school and being met with punitive discipline measures for absence, or even worst, truancy charges.

Hostile school environments have profound impacts on the mental, physical, and emotional health of young people and have demonstrated clear pathways into the juvenile detention

system (Moodie & Mitchum, 2014). A major shift needs to occur and I encourage city council to take action by investing resources to support this change, not simply using band-aid punitive measures that are not effective. In New York CIty, Respect for All and the Dignity Act are great intersectional policies on paper. However, without the proper funding or resources attached to them they cannot affect the change they seek to.

We propose that City Council do the following:

1. Investing in holistic, culturally responsive, intersectional and feminist curriculum that uplifts and acknowledges the experiences and identities of all young people.
2. Continue investments in restorative justice practices.
3. Create safe and supportive learning environments for all students by allocating resources and funding for existing policies like Respect for All and the Dignity Act that support the mental, emotional and physical health of all young people
4. Decriminalize learning environments by eliminating zero tolerance policies, removing all police from schools, removing metal detectors and other instruments of surveillance, reducing school-based discipline referrals, and eliminating vague and subjective dress code policies which disproportionately impact girls and TGNC youth of color.

Together we can create the schools that all young people need, want, and deserve. Thank you.

Mi nombre es _Mireya Solis_ y soy miembro de Make the Road NY. Soy la madre de _un niño del 4to grado_. Cuando envío a mi hijo(a) a la escuela, quiero que aprenda en un lugar seguro, especialmente debido a lo que está sucediendo actualmente. No quiero que mi hijo(a) sea intimidado por el color de su piel ni se le pida que regrese a su país. Quiero que mi hijo(a) sienta que pertenece y que es parte de la comunidad. Mi hijo(a) y todos los niños en las escuelas deben tener una red de apoyo de maestros, consejeros y adultos en quienes puedan confiar. Un oficial de policía no ofrecerá apoyo emocional a un niño que necesita ser escuchado y guiado. Hoy pido que los fondos se redirijan hacia sistemas que ayuden a las necesidades sociales, emocionales y mentales de los niños, no hacia prácticas policiales y punitivas.

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My name is _Mireya Solis_ and a member of Make the Road NY. I am the parent of _a 4th grader_. When I send my child (children) to school I want him/her to learn in a safe space especially because of what is going on currently. I don't want my child to be bullied because of his/her skin color or told to go back to their country. I want my child to feel like they belong and are a part of the community. My child should and all children in schools should have a supportive network of teachers, counselors and adults they can trust. A police officer won't offer emotional support to a child that needs to be heard and guided. I ask today that funds be redirected towards systems that help the social, emotional, and mental needs of children not towards policing and punitive practices.

Oct 30,2017

## The ENACT PROGRAM IN SCHOOLS
## Presented by Diana Feldman to City Council Education Committee

Enact is a pioneer in trauma informed work using both creative arts therapy and counseling to help students overcome obstacles in public schools. Professional actors and counselor's known as drama therapists deliver programs directly in classrooms, afterschool and on weekends. Enact has worked in the New York City schools for close to 30 years. To date we have reached over 200,000 students teachers and parents in all five boroughs of New York City. Last year ENACT was in 80 schools.

Enact has a long history of working with very high needs students. Ever since we were called into work with schools after 9/11, we continue to provide crisis intervention programs for acute instances of violence and other destabilizing events in schools and communities. Two years ago after working in the Green school where a horrific school stabbing took place outside in a local park there have been other incidents but, the new recent incident of school stabbing within a classroom of another of our school partners alerts us all. Something must be done immediately to prevent another of these incidents from occurring.

Many of the students we work with in urban neighborhoods live in poverty, many live in the projects where it is not rare for students to encounter gun violence on a regular basis. Some live in foster home and or doubling up living situations. There are a growing number of homeless students in our classes. These stressors are often untenable and create various forms of trauma. What often looks like "bad behavior"- acting out or total withdrawal is often a mask for something else. Trauma can result in failing grades, dropping out of school, bullying or violence. This unrecognized trauma leads to sometimes-irreversible results.

Reports of suicide resulting from relentless bullying must be addressed now. We see it everyday in the schools in which we work. As technology grows from Facebook to Integram to Snap chat and more apps than we know, it has only increased both the positive communications skills as well as the negative impact. Increased bullying from the cyber world is a fact, feelings of anger, fear and isolation from other student's calls on us to do something. The bottom line is students need someone to talk to now! They need a lifeline when that feel overwhelmed and it is often a caring adult that can provide the support.

I believe having a designated adult and every school available to be there for students to lend an ear, provide a referral when needed and take immediate action as necessary will both prevent the horrific recent incidents that we have seen occurring in the schools and also help to educate the school community. This critical supportive action of providing a support person in the school has no downside and it is essential particularly during our stressful political times. Yes, it takes a village to care for students and the more support we can offer will help save lives. Thank you.

Diana Feldman

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to start in saying that I would be remissed if I didn't thank all of those who have worked to help assist my community and all of those affected following the tragic event at the Urban Assembly School for Wildlife Conservation in my district. This includes my colleagues, especially Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Chairman Danny Dromm, Council Member Rosie Mendez and Council Member Ritchie Torres, whose district was also affected by this event. Thank you for your responsiveness and compassion in wanting to prevent a tragedy like this from happening again in one of our city schools.

I, like many in my community and our city, am heartbroken by what has happened, and have had so many questions, so many thoughts and so many emotions about what has transpired.

With so much going on, here at City Hall, in the news and just in our daily lives, it's easy to forget for many of us about how traumatic and significant this event was. But for all of those associated with this school, they are still living this nightmare everyday.

That is especially true for two families in particular. For the family of Matthew McCree, the unthinkable has happened. They have lost a child.

And for the family of Abel Cedeno, their son's future will undoubtedly never be the same, and more than likely, incredibly difficult.

And that's why we have to act.

First and foremost, it's my hope that through this hearing we can not only provide additional answer to my community and all of those affected on what the disparities were at the Urban Assembly School for Wildlife Conservation that led to this event, and identify solutions to make this particular school safer, more tolerant and community oriented.

But we know that this isn't an isolated incident - at this school or any school. Bullying - in all forms - is on the rise amongst our young people; and I would venture to say no one on this panel was exposed to all of the forms of bullying adolescents are exposed to today, with the technology and new means of communication we all use.

This is compounded with the fact that we have also failed to provide schools that are truly safe. No, we don't want schools to look like prisons, but we do want all of those who enter a school building everyday to feel as if they are in a safe environment to learn; and we want parents to feel confident that when they send their son or daughter to school in the morning, that their safety isn't in question.

But data shows that we're not doing enough to ensure that. City statistics pointedly demonstrate that in far too many buildings, a majority of students, teachers and parents do not feel safe while at school. Specifically, in 2016, 45 percent of Wildlife students reported feeling unsafe in the school's hallways, cafeteria, and bathrooms, and 89 percent of students reported that other students got into physical fights at school — the latter four times the rate of just three years earlier. And sadly, these numbers aren't even the worst surveyed. In fact, 80% of student respondent at P.S. 181 in the Bronx, reported that they did not feel safe.

This is compounded with parent feedback data shows that many parents do not feel that their child is safe in DOE schools. In fact, at more than 30 DOE schools, including pre-k, more than 20% of parents taking the survey indicated that their child was not safe at their school.

Additionally, the DOE's 2017 Teacher Survey data demonstrates that a significant number of DOE schools are struggling to foster a positive school climate. For example, at more than 100 DOE schools, 50% or more teachers indicated that they strongly disagreed or disagreed with question 6e, which reads "at this school, order and discipline are maintained." Furthermore, at more than 400 DOE schools, more than 50% of teachers indicated that students at their school harass, bully, or intimidate other students some or most of the time.

And for us as policy makers that should be unacceptable.

Just this past weekend, I was saddened to read in the New York Times that again at the Urban Assembly School for Wildlife Conservation a young man, who had been bullied for years in elementary school and had come to this school hoping for a fresh start, tried to hang himself in a school stairwell because of the bullying he was facing and the failure to find support from those around him. That is hard to read.

While I don't want to place the blame on the administration of the school, on parents, on the students themselves or anyone for that matter - I do know that we can't allow for this to happen.

We must act. We must find solutions.

While here in 2017 and especially in New York City we like to think of ourselves as tolerant, understanding and capable of providing a great education for all children, I think this is a trying example that we still have a long way to go; both in stopping bullying in its tracks and in creating schools that have the resources to assist our students emotionally and that, fundamentally, are safe for all.

With that said, here are some of my thoughts on what we can do better.

First, we need to work to mandate, to the greatest extent feasible, Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI), potentially through expanding the Positive Learning Collaborative which has been found to drastically improve school culture in a number of schools that have implemented it. The Therapeutic Crisis Intervention program has been proven to be effective in helping children or teens learn the most constructive ways to handle a crisis or confrontation. While it is currently offered to educators, the cost and time required to receive this training can be inhibitive. Training for TCI often is done through 30 hour course that the school itself has to pay around $45 an hour per educator or staff member.

I believe that it is imperative that we work to create a model in which faculty, staff and administrators can be trained centrally by the Department of Education at no cost to individual schools. I have requested a fiscal analysis on what this would potentially cost the City to administer.

Secondly, we need to emphasize the importance of restorative justice in the classroom. The incident in my district may have been preventable if a greater emphasis was placed on the importance of utilizing restorative justice approaches to conflict resolution.

A focus on encouraging everyone impacted by a conflict – most importantly the victim - to develop a shared understanding of both the root causes and the effects, could potentially prevent future tragedies from occurring.

The numbers demonstrate restorative justice works. In a period analysis from July 1, 2015 to March 2, 2016, and July 1, 2016 to February 28, 2017, shows overall, the 25 schools experienced a 25.5% reduction in total suspensions. Moreover, there was a 41.9% reduction in principal suspensions and an 8.5% reduction in superintendent suspensions in schools participating in restorative justice.

Furthermore, schools participating in the Restorative Justice Pilot Program accounted for 25% of the decline of total citywide suspensions in SY 2016-17 as of March 1, 2017. I would like to see the Department of Education commit to identifying opportunities to introduce restorative justice practices into our schools moving forward.

Third, we need to create a better system for ensuring all schools have the proper allotment of guidance counselors needed to best address the needs of students.

Urban Assembly for Wildlife Conservation had a mandated number of counseling because more than 30% of the students are considered to have special needs. However not all schools have mandates. I believe that while the current system allowing for individual schools to determine the number of guidance counselors staffed is meritable, there needs to be greater support from the Department of Education on how to best determine what constitutes a proper number of counselors.

Additionally, greater funding should be allocated to allow for schools to hire additional guidance counselors.

I would like to work to create a more scientific and accountable method of ensuring that schools are properly staffed with a proper number of counselors, and to also create opportunities to better recruit and retain these counselors.

Fourth, DOE and the NYPD need to reevaluate the policies and procedures that schools must go through to request additional school safety agents and/or the safety equipment schools believe is necessary.

It has come to our attention that leadership at Urban Assembly for Wildlife Conservation made a number of scanning and SSA requests that were denied. While SSA's have been increased and school safety equipment has been installed following last week's incident, there seemingly is no true plan on how long both the staffing and equipment will last, and it has not been made clear to school leadership where SSA staff is most needed in the building.

Not only do we need to create an opportunity for clarity on the criteria to request additional safety assistance, we need to reevaluate the policies and procedures on how schools can quickly and effectively receive this assistance.

Fifth, I believe along with some of my colleagues that creating an anonymous complaint hotline for students, parents or others to inform the administration on instances of bullying.

If nothing else, this incident demonstrates that currently in our schools there is an underreporting on instances of bullying. Most bullying doesn't just happen in schools, it happens online, in the neighborhood or in the hallway-mostly under the radar of teachers and staff.

The creation of a hotline, albeit by phone, text, or other forms of communication, could work to potentially allow for the anonymous, self-reporting of bullying before it escalates to becoming a potentially dangerous situation.

DOE should also be tasked with providing each building with adequate signage on the hotline as well as provide all students, parents, faculty and staff with notification on how they can anonymously self-report bullying.

And finally, we need to do more to respond to the concerns and needs of the LGBTQIA students. Nationwide, the statistics show that 74.1% of LGBTQ+ students were verbally harassed (for example, called names or threatened) in the past year because of their sexual orientation and 55.2% because of their gender expression. Again, while many of us think that NYC is a bastion of tolerance and resources for the the LGBTQIA community, there still are disparities, notably in the borough of the Bronx.

But after speaking to advocates in the LGBTQIA community who have dedicated their lives to combating bullying amongst young people, I feel confident that there is much we can do, and do now.

That includes anti-bullying workshops for students, gay-straight alliance clubs in our schools, safe space programming, traumatic event assistance and creating partnerships with LGBTQIA organizations who have the resources to make a difference at the community level.

While we know that all the requests above will not work to alleviate bullying, confrontations or crises entirely, we do strongly believe they could go far in helping to prevent additional tragic instances similar to what happened last week. With that said, I know that this panel, particularly our Chairman Danny Dromm, the Mayor and many more have a shared goal of helping to address these issues as best we can.

As a father myself, it hits close to home. To me, perhaps nothing is more important than the issues that directly affect our young people, and particularly their education. It's why I'm proud to be a member of this committee, and why I am committed to finding real solutions to the problems we are discussing today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

New York City Council, Committee on Education
Testimony on the Urgent Evaluation Model for Students in Crisis
October 30, 2017

I.      **Background and Scope of the Problem**

With one in five students experiencing a diagnosable mental health problem, school districts face a formidable challenge in meeting the behavioral health needs of their student population.[i] From a developmental perspective, these needs are manifold and complex, changing as one moves through elementary school, to middle school to high school.  At the same time, having more contact with and access to students than any other child serving system (including pediatrics,) **schools are perhaps in the best position to positively impact student mental health needs on a population based level, particularly with respect to early identification, screening, and treatment.**[ii] A variety of models have arisen to bridge this gap, most notably the School Based Mental Health Clinic model, which embeds mental health clinicians into selected schools.  Recent efforts to further broaden access to mental health supports have included Thrive NYC, the Community Schools initiative, as well as the 100 Schools Project.[iii] The Visiting Nurse Service of New York has developed Rapid Response teams that can be dispatched to schools in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens, to assist with crises in school.  In this way, the Department of Education has made significant strides towards developing a continuum of mental health services, particularly in areas with the highest need. **Even so, gaps remain, particularly for students in crisis and in immediate need of a higher level of mental health care.**

"Crisis" is used here to refer to students posing an immediate safety concern *or* exhibiting behavioral symptoms severely limiting their ability to function at school setting.  In either scenario, students require rapid linkage to specialized mental health resources for evaluation and clinical management, however, this connection is often lacking.  Child and Adolescent outpatient clinics, which would conceivably be the first line of linkage, are often ill equipped to meet these needs in a timely fashion, often with long wait times for intake.  And while a number of clinics have adopted open access practices, access to a child psychiatrist who can assess for safety and/or initiate medication, can often lag by weeks or even months. **As a result, emergency rooms continue to function as the de facto destination for behavioral health crises, as evidenced by the continually rising rates of child mental health referrals.**[iv] Unfortunately, many emergency rooms are poorly resourced to meet this task, in many cases lacking staff trained in child mental health.  Furthermore, most referred students do not even require this level of care, as evidenced by high discharge rates.[v] Assessments can be cursory, focusing primarily on imminent safety risks, and discharge planning limited to providing the caregiver a list of outpatient referral resources.  Due to the fact that many ER assessments occur after school hours, communication can often be lacking, leaving the referring school staff unaware of the clinical recommendations and feedback.  At worst, this can set up a student for repeat visits to the emergency room for the same problem. **The emergency room experience can itself be stigmatizing and stressful, certainly working against engagement for students and**

**families who may be coming in contact with the mental health system for the first time.**
And while there are certainly notable exceptions throughout New York City to the pattern just described, they are insufficient to make up for the overall fragmentation in the service system students and their families experience on a regular basis.

**II.     The Urgent Evaluation Model**

The Urgent Evaluation Model was developed to help address the gaps in services for students in crisis. Recognizing the large number of students sent to the emergency room who do not actually require that level of care (i.e. preventable ER visits,) Urgent Evaluation provides an alternative in the ambulatory setting. Students identified by school staff as being in crisis are referred for same day evaluation. Key elements of the model include:

1. **Referral Criteria:** This can include students with suicidal ideation, self injury, disruptive behaviors, and school refusal. Exclusion criteria includes students in need of immediate medical treatment due to self harm, acute agitation, or those who are acutely intoxicated. This informationis best conveyed through promotional materials explaining the service, as well as open houses/information sessions in which school crisis teams can hear about the program first hand and meet with staff. Identifying and prioritizing outreach to schools with the highest ER referral rates can be particularly effective.

2. **Referral Process:** Essential to the process is a standardized referral form by which schools are able to communicate their concerns to the clinical service, as well as provide clear contact information.

3. **Clinical Evaluation:** Is typically completed on the same day of the referral in an ambulatory (i.e. non acute care) setting. The student is evaluated with parent/legal guardian present. While staffing models may vary, the evaluation includes assessment by a child psychiatrist.

4. **Treatment Recommendation:** Based on clinical assessment, students are referred to the appropriate level of care; in rare instances, this can include referral to the emergency room for further assessment and/or inpatient admission, though typically consists of referral to an outpatient provider or to school based clinical services.

5. **Communication and Coordination:** Pending the guardian's consent, outreach is made to referring staff both to obtain collateral information as well as to convey clinical impression and treatment recommendations. School staff can subsequently follow up with the service with questions, or if further intervention is necessary. This can also lay the foundation for increased coordination and collaboration between school and mental health staff, even outside of a specific consultation question.

**The Maimonides Medical Center Urgent Evaluation Service Model**

Started in the fall of 2013, the Maimonides Model is based out of the outpatient child and adolescent psychiatry clinic. Led by Dr. Anne Buchanan, staffing consists of a child psychiatrist and social worker, along with rotating trainees, who flexibly cover both the urgent evaluation service and consults to the emergency room. Referrals are from local Brooklyn schools, and are conducted between 9AM and 3 PM daily. Initial data analysis

examining the change in ER referral rates after kickoff showed a **50% decrease during a comparable 6 month period.**[vi] Over three quarters of the referrals were related to safety assessment: 39% for suicidal ideation, 24% for self injury and 17% for threats to others. Despite this, only 1 student out of 72 in this initial sample required referral to the emergency room. This very low level of ER referral has remained consistent throughout the operation of the service. With respect to referral patterns, elementary and particularly middle school ended up comprising a much higher rate of referral volume than initially anticipated. Another striking finding was that over 20% of students referred were in some form of outpatient treatment already, but were unable to access services in a timely manner at the time of crisis.

**The Cohen's Children's Center Behavioral Health Urgent Care Model**

Recently opened in May of 2017, the Cohen's model in Glen Oaks, Queens, is based in the Urgent Care suite of the children's medical center. Lead by Drs. Vera Feuer and George Alvarado, staffing consists of a dedicated full time licensed mental health counselor (LMHC,) along with dedicated psychiatry hours, with additional coverage being drawn flexibly from the pediatric emergency room team. In addition to referrals from local schools in Queens and Nassau, **the service also accepts referrals from pediatricians and the larger community.** While initial clinical and demographic data is still being collected, over half of referrals in the first month came from schools, again, with only a very small fraction requiring referral to the emergency room. With over 3000 pediatric psychiatry ER visits per year, of which 950 are from schools, there exists significant potential to draw off preventable ER volume with this service. Efforts are currently underway to outreach to high referring DOE schools in Queens.

III.    **Conclusions**

Establishing consistent and effective crisis linkages is a crucial step towards comprehensive mental health supports in schools and should be a priority. Rather than replacing traditional services such as emergency rooms and outpatient clinics, urgent evaluation services can complement these services to deliver the right level of care, at the right time, in the right setting. Based on initial clinical outcomes and feedback from key stakeholders, this model appears to be a promising prospect for attaining these objectives. In order to achieve maximum impact, however, **it must be brought to scale throughout the city, leveraging local mental health system resources throughout the 5 boroughs.** In general, larger hospital based clinics would be more likely to meet this challenge, both with respect to resources (i.e. psychiatrist hours, space) as well as access to outpatient networks. In order to contain costs, a sustainable approach would look to the repurposing of current resources, realigning what care is delivered, where it is delivered, and by whom. Additionally, short term reform incentive funds, in the mode of DSRIP, would likely go a long way towards spurring this transformation.

Scaling these crisis efforts, schools could establish and maintain more consistent approaches to the management of behavioral emergencies. Linkages to local providers could reduce barriers to communication and set the stage for collaboration and innovation between

these historically siloed systems. **Formalizing linkage to geographic urgent care "hubs" could also support consistent data capture** (currently dispersed across emergency rooms and clinics citywide,) complemented by analytics, to provide a more complete picture of student mental health needs. This, in turn, could aid with allocation of resources going forward, and hasten the implementation of an integrated continuum of mental health supports, spanning both school based and community based settings.

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# Urgent Outpatient Evaluation: Effectiveness in Reducing School Emergency Room Visits

George Alvarado, MD ; Logan Hegg, PsyD

Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Service, Maimonides Medical Center
Brooklyn, NY

**Maimonides** Medical Center

## I. BACKGROUND

◆ Child psychiatric evaluations are a significant and growing source of ER referrals, often due to insufficient community based services for children's mental health (Cooper 2007.)

◆ Recent research examining the appropriateness of ER referrals has indicated that over one third of visits were inappropriate and could have been seen in an alternative setting (Callahan Soto et al 2009.) Among these, school has been found to account for a large portion of these referrals.

◆ Previously presented research from Maimonides Medical Center (MMC) has been consistent with this trend, characterized by high rates of referral (42% of total volume) but low acuity (5% admission rate) (Alvarado, 2013.)

## II. OBJECTIVES

◆ The primary aim of this study is to examine the effectiveness of a clinic-based intervention, the "Urgent Evaluation Service" (UES,) as an alternative to school ER referral. It is our hypothesis that same-day, clinic-based urgent evaluations can serve as a viable alternative to the ER and thereby serve to reduce referral rates.

◆ The secondary aim of the study was to look at demographic and clinical features of patients referred to the service, to help guide decisions about community-based service planning.

## III. METHODS

◆ School based support teams identified as high utilizers of ER referral were invited to a 2 hour in-service at MMC to review referral procedures and to launch the UES.

◆ Evaluations were performed in the outpatient child psychiatry clinic between the hours of 9AM-3PM by members of a dedicated consult team. Variables tracked included age, gender, language, presenting complaint, diagnosis and referral status.

◆ School referral rates to the emergency room were concurrently tracked from January through June and retrospectively examined.
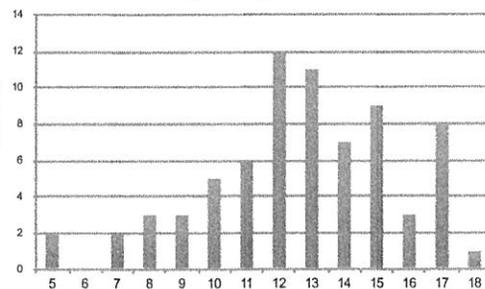
## IV. RESULTS

A. Referral Sources: A total of 72 students were referred and 70 evaluated by the UES from January through June of 2014, representing 7 school districts within Brooklyn.

Figure 1: Referring School Districts (In Red)

New York

★ Maimonides Medical Center

B. Demographics: Referrals were 58% female and 42% male. A significant portion of families (37%) did not speak English, with Spanish being the most common language, followed by Chinese. The majority of referrals were for elementary and middle school aged children.

Figure 2: Age Distribution

C. Reason for Referral: A large number of students were referred for suicidal ideation (39%) as well as self injurious behavior (24%) followed by agitated/threatening behavior (17%.)

## IV. RESULTS (cont'd)

D. Diagnoses: The largest portion of diagnoses was related to adjustment (44%) followed by mood disorders, most commonly Depression NOS.

Figure 3: Diagnoses

- Other 3%
- Anxiety 6%
- Disruptive 16%
- Adjustment 44%
- Mood 31%
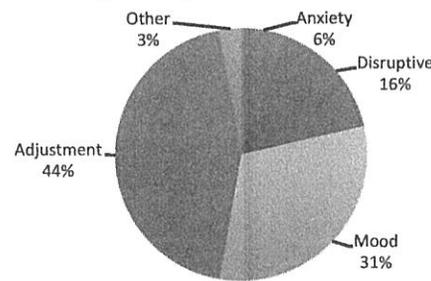
D. Disposition and follow up: All students seen were discharged home the same day, with only one case that required further evaluation in the emergency room. Approximately 80% were not in any form of outpatient tx.

E. Effect on ER Referrals: School referrals comprised 44% (n=185) of all consults seen in January –June of 2013 compared to only 31% (n=93) in 2014, $t(672) = 3.5678$, $p < 0.0004$, $d = 0.27$. The actual number of consults dropped by 50%, with 92 fewer referred in 2014. A comparable drop was not observed from other sources.

Figure 4: School ER Referrals 2013 vs. 2014 (January – June)
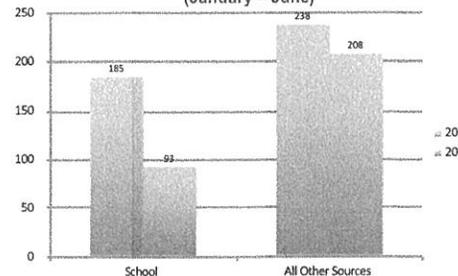
## V. CONCLUSIONS

◆ Same-day, clinic-based, urgent evaluation appears to be a promising alternative to the emergency room for schools faced with students in crisis, producing a 50% drop in ER referral rates in a comparable sixth month period.

◆ Of all the students seen in the service, only 1 required additional services in the ER, indicating that the clinic was the appropriate level of care, and that inclusion/exclusion criteria for the service were functioning properly.

◆ While the majority of students had no outpatient treatment, 20% were engaged in treatment elsewhere, indicating the prevailing difficulties with prompt communication and crisis capacity for many community mental health providers.

◆ Establishing service hours during the school day improved rates of successful contact/communication with referring school staff, often lacking in ER-based assessments happening later in the day. The overall response to this program from local educators was highly positive.

◆ Given the large amount of adjustment diagnoses in elementary and middle school students, future directions could include expanding mental health supports focusing on key issues of coping and resilience, as well as making connecting to appropriate services both within and outside of the school setting.

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**Gale A. Brewer, Borough President**

**October 30, 2017**

**Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President**
**Testimony before the New York City Council Committee on Education**

**Int 461-2014: Summer Meals Information**

My name is Gale Brewer and I am the Manhattan Borough President. Thank you Chair Dromm for including the Int 461-2014 regarding the Summer Food Service Program on the agenda for today's hearing.

As you know, the Summer Meals program is federally funded and serves free, nutritious meals for kids during the summer at hundreds of public schools, public pools and recreation centers, and other sites. The program is a crucial element in our city's fight against childhood hunger and poverty. The staff at the Department of Education Office of School Food and Barbara Turk, Director of the Mayor's Office of Food Policy and her staff deserve much credit in their concerted efforts to feed our children better, healthier and through engaging access points like food trucks. The program can only help families that know about it which is why I am proud to have introduced Int 461-2014 with my friend and colleague, Jimmy Vacca. This practical measure gets the information out early and to electeds and community partners who can reach out to families in their schools while school is in session and throughout the neighborhood.

According to the Food Bank of New York City's 2013 Hunger Safety Net Report, sixty percent of emergency food program participants with school-aged children reported that their children participated in a school breakfast program; seventy percent reported that their children participated in free school lunch.  The City's recent expansion to universal free lunch will only further bridge the meal gap.

The same study found that only one-third of emergency food program participants with school-aged children participated in the Summer Food Service Program with the remaining two-thirds of parents participating in the city's emergency food programs not taking advantage of summer meals because they are unaware of its existence or haven't received details from schools about where and when to take their kids to be fed.

My staff analyzed the changes in site locations from 2015 and 2016 – only 12 sites were removed from the previous year and 24 were added. While there is minimal change in annual

summer meal location siting, for years the information has been publicly released toward the end of the school year if not when school is effectively out due to the whirlwind of activity including field trips and graduations. When parents don't know where to send their kids, many go hungry. For years I along with food and family advocates have urged city officials to publish detailed information on the Summer Meals program earlier in the school year, before the start of exams and graduations, to make it easier to get detailed information to parents and families in multiple languages.

The City's fliers have improved over the years, with general program information in multiple languages. While including a list of locations by borough, they were missing site specific details like the dates of operation (for example, NYCHA, Department of Education and Parks' sites have different start and end dates), meals and service times in English and other languages. The fliers also prominently promote the SchoolFood App – an application that is only available in English. As you know, not all families may be able to afford a smart phone – particularly those who are food insecure and many older adults, including grandparents who care for their grandchildren, may not utilize this type of technology.

Every year since I was elected to this office, my staff creates detailed neighborhood specific fliers for the Summer Meals program from info we receive from the DOE and NYCHA in the first week of June - although it's not publicly made available until later in the month. In addition to English, we produce fliers in Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, French, and Haitian Creole to help parents navigate programs whose starting and closing dates, days of week, hours of operation, and meal offerings vary from site to site. Principals, teachers, advocates, volunteers and staff then distribute these fliers at our borough's Title I elementary schools and deliver thousands of additional fliers to schools, libraries, tenant associations, NYCHA developments, park sites, and senior centers while school is fully in session and throughout the summer. I know that many of my Council colleagues have produced similar fliers for their districts but the inconsistent availability of this information makes it difficult to prepare and distribute fliers in a timely manner.

Int 461 requires the Department of Education to share summer meal information publicly by June 1st of each year, disseminating it to Council Members, Borough Presidents, community boards, community education councils, parent associations, and parent teacher associations. The Department will also have to translate this information into, at a minimum, the top six languages other than English spoken by the population of the city of New York.

I also want to add that with Local Law 25 of 2016, the Council sought to improve language access for the low English proficiency population. While the Department of Education's failure to offer translated versions of the SchoolFood App does not violate the letter of the law or Chancellor's regs on language access, the DOE should work expeditiously with developers to expand access to this vital information on school meals served throughout the year.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer testimony today in support of Int 461-2014, a common sense approach to increasing access to essential summer meals and nutrition. I also want to thank our partners including school principals, teachers, volunteers, Hunger Free America, Community Food Advocates and others for their partnership in distributing flyers every year since 2014.

**Planned Parenthood of New York City**
**Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination in NYC Schools**
**Int. 1538**
**October 30, 2017**

Good morning, I am Elizabeth Adams, Director of Government Relations at Planned Parenthood of New York City (PPNYC). Thank you to Education Chair Honorable Councilmember Daniel Dromm, the Committee on Education, and to Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, for the opportunity to speak on this important issue. Bullying and harassment of lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) and transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) students is a nationwide issue and requires a comprehensive and holistic approach to improve school culture.

The need to address current rates of assault and harassment of marginalized students in schools is urgent. According to the CDC, LGB high school students are significantly more likely to experience dating violence, bullying, and sexual assault than their heterosexual peers and are at substantial risk for suicide, depression, and absenteeism because they do not feel safe for being who they are. Findings from the National Transgender Discrimination Survey (NTDS) also revealed that 78% of TGNC students have reported being harassed. To achieve large-scale change that addresses the concerning rates of assault and discrimination, schools need to see inclusion and safety as core values for all staff to commit to.

As a leading sexual health education provider, PPNYC recognizes the importance of cultivating a supportive and inclusive school environment for all students to thrive. Our educators provide comprehensive sexual health education workshops on a range of topics, including puberty and anatomy, body image, gender identity and sexuality, healthy relationships and consent, and navigating media and minors' rights. Our peer-to-peer program in particular, the Youth Health Promoters, reaches over 5,000 young people each year through outreach and education, workshops and events, and through social media and online engagement.

In preparation for this hearing, PPNYC education staff asked the Youth Health Promoters about challenges they see firsthand in their schools when it comes to bullying of LGB and TGNC students and ways the Respect for All (RFA) program could better address these needs. Conversations revealed the extent to which ongoing teacher training and resources are needed for Respect for All liaisons as well as the importance of involving all school staff in combatting bullying and harassment of marginalized students. As such, PPNYC proposes the following recommendations for improving school culture around bullying and harassment.

First, we are pleased to support Intro. 1538 and its call to post each school's designated Respect for All (RFA) liaison contact information on the Department of Education's website. Students may not know or remember who their RFA liaison is and having the ability to look them up online and contact them privately over email could help increase communication and reporting.

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We encourage additional online opportunities for students to report harassment and bullying in their schools.

> *"I think the implementation of this would be effective for a lot of students in my school especially for students who don't have a voice or are scared to come out and express themselves in person. Students who are scared of coming to the designated liaison in person would find the emailing alternative useful." Mariama, YHP*
> *"Online might be a little better because it would probably give the kid a little more confidence to speak up because they might feel less embarrassed." Mannix, YHP*

We also recognize that students may be hesitant to trust a staff member or reach out for support and so it is important that RFA liaisons are provided with regular trauma-informed trainings and resources to bring back to staff and students. Being seen a trusted resource is an ongoing process and requires a continued commitment to learning and understanding.

> *"This can be effective if the designated person receives proper training and if they already have a good relationship with the students." Kurtis, YHP*
> *"A liaison should be able to provide students with counseling that they may not receive from parents." Mariama, YHP*

Lastly, in addition to ongoing training and support for RFA liaisons, we recommend the DOE also provide resources and learning opportunities for all school staff. If a student doesn't know or trust the appointed RFA liaison, it is critical that another staff member is equipped with tools to respond if a student reaches out to them for support or reports an incident.

> *"I know about many bullying situations and when reported I don't see something being done about it. There's many teachers and staff that disregard the issues or don't stress the situation enough." Ashley, YHP*
> *"If someone is bullied and they talk to someone, they will speak to a teacher who they are comfortable with not a teacher who is assigned the position. What if that staff member and the student getting bullied didn't get along with one another?" Alex, YHP*

We applaud the City Council and the Department of Education's commitment to supporting all students regardless of their gender, identity, or sexuality, and addressing current rates of bullying and harassment of LGB and TGNC students in NYC schools. We urge the passage of Int. 1538 and look forward to continuing to work with the administration in their efforts to foster safe and supportive school environments.

**Testimony of Amanda Melpolder, Child Nutrition Director**

**Hearing Before The New York City Council Education Committee**

**Int 0461-2014 A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to information regarding summer meals.**

**October 30, 2017**

Thank you Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to present testimony today in front of the Education Committee. My name is Amanda Melpolder, the Director of Child Nutrition Policy and Programs at Hunger Free America (HFA). I come today in support of Int. 0461- 2014.

Approximately 1.4 million New Yorkers, including 429,000 children, live in households that cannot afford sufficient food. For these families, Summer months are some of the hardest times, according to federal data calculated by HFA. According to Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry campaign, an average food insecure family spends an extra $300 per month to feed their children over the summer.[1] ***One in five children in New York City struggle against the threat of hunger***. Children lose access to free school lunches and breakfasts when school is not in session. As a result, emergency food providers such as food pantries and soup kitchens report an overwhelming increase in demand during these summer months, and our data shows they simply don't have enough food and other resources to meet this demand.

To help combat the issue of summer hunger, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) implemented the *Summer Food Service Program* (SFSP or summer meals). The summer meals program is a federally funded program administered by the USDA through designated state agencies, who in turn identify sponsors, which locally is the New York City Department of Education Office of SchoolFood. The summer meals program provides free breakfast, lunch and snacks to children 18 years or younger at designated summer meal locations. There is no ID requirement or paperwork to receive these meals; the meals are available to any child who shows up to a summer meals site.

In New York City there are several hundred summer meal sites open to the general public throughout the summer. These sites can be at schools, libraries, parks and pools, as well as a few NYCHA housing units. During the summer meals program, their locations and hours of operation are made available over the summer on the SchoolFood 'Feed Your Mind' app, the

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[1] https://www.nokidhungry.org/pdfs/Fact_Sheet-2016.pdf

USDA's summer meals finder https://www.fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks as well as calling 311, the USDA's national Hunger Hotline or by texting 877-877.

Despite these varied ways the information about the summer meals program is made available to New Yorkers, only about a quarter of kids who would be eligible for free or reduced priced lunches in New York City participate in the summer meals program. In 2015, Hunger Free NYC conducted a Summer Meals Barrier Analysis[2] that aimed to look at factors that affected participation in the summer meals program. The study surveyed low-income parents or caregivers who had children eligible for free and reduced price lunch in New York City. Although convenience was a key factor in determining whether parents and caregivers do or do not take their children to summer meals sites, *half of the families who did __not__ participate in the summer meals program __did not know where sites were located__ or other key program information.*

Int 0461- 2014, stipulates that information about summer meal site locations would be made available by June 1, which is significantly earlier than it is now being provided. HFA believes that this could greatly improve the ability to communicate important information about the summer meals program to the public. In 2017, the summer meals program started on June 29, the first day of summer break in New York City. That could have been nearly an extra month of disseminating the details of the summer meals program to participants.

HFA is a national direct service and advocacy organization, among the various programs we operate, we have run a successful national AmeriCorps VISTA program since 2011. This past year we placed 65 AmeriCorps VISTA Summer Associates in 23 nonprofits and community organizations across the country focusing on Child Nutrition. HFA also hosted a dozen of those Summer Associates for ten weeks here in New York City to promote the summer meals program. HFA was a key partner with SchoolFood in promoting the summer meals program, but even with our dozen AmeriCorps volunteers ready, willing and able to spread the word about the summer meals program, we did not know the locations of all the summer meals sites until the second week into our AmeriCorps program.

I can also personally attest to the time and effort HFA staff and interns made this past spring reaching out to offices of New York City and state elected officials about the summer meals program. While I was able to meet with a dozen or so City Council members and members of the New York state legislature, in none of those meetings was I able to provide an updated list of summer meal sites, because that information was not yet available. I followed up with an email, providing elected officials with the locations of the summer meal sites in their districts, but it shouldn't be just advocates providing this information, so late into the summer. Int 0461-2014 would provide elected officials and the public with that information earlier so all elected officials and community organizations can share that information more broadly with the residents of New York City.

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[2]http://www.hungerfreeamerica.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Summer%20Meals%20Barrier%20Analysis%202016_online_0.pdf

HFA acknowledges the monumental effort SchoolFood makes each summer to serve the millions of meals to New York City's children, and understands the challenges SchoolFood faces in finalizing the list of summer meal sites. We also acknowledge this this challenge involves many parts of DOE and other City agencies beyond SchoolFood. However, as a community partner that dedicates a great deal of time and resources into promoting this program, we agree with Council Member Vacca's efforts in making this vital information more accessible.

This past summer, SchoolFood served 7,456,874 meals, but hunger still exists here in New York City. We hope that you will continue to support the summer meals program, and hope you will vote on Int. 0461-2014. Thank you, I am happy to answer any questions.

**City Council hearing: The Education Committee is holding an oversight hearing on school climate issues as a result of the stabbing in the Bronx school a couple weeks back.**

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# Effective School Climate and Bully Prevention Efforts

Jonathan Cohen, Ph.D.
National School Climate Center; and, Teachers College, Columbia University

My name is Jonathan Cohen. I am Senior Scholar and President Emeritus at the National School Climate Center; Adjunct Professor in Psychology and Education, Teachers College, Columbia University; co-editor of the *International Journal on School Climate and Violence Prevention*; and a practicing clinical psychologist.

Bullying and other forms of school violence represent a serious and prevalent problem for our K-12 students, that often leads to depression, anxiety, anger and even violence[1].

We can reduce bully-victim-bystander behavior when students, educators and parents have a shared commitment to creating safe, supportive, engaging, and healthy climates for learning – in our classrooms and school community – that promote school and life success. Positive school climate and social, emotional and academic learning powerfully supports safe and supportive conditions for learning and school as well as life success[2].

I want to summarize four major research findings and then seven specific steps that support helpful and sustainable school climate improvement and school violence prevention efforts.

**1**) *The most effective ways to support school climate and SEL informed improvement efforts as well as deal with bullying and other forms of school violence are built on a whole-school approach*.

There is not any one "program" that effectively fosters these improvement efforts.

Rather, school leaders can and need to take steps to ignite the intrinsic motivation of educators and other school personnel, students, and parents in the school to work

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[1] American Educational Research Association, 2013

[2] (American Educational Research Association, 2013; Cohen, Espelage, Twemlow, Berkowitz,& Comer, 2015National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016; Zych, Farrington, Llorent, & Ttofi, 2017).

together to develop a shared "vision" about "what kind of school do we want ours to be?" This "vision" or school wide goal foster engagement and provides the foundation for an iterative, data informed school climate improvement process that is designed to further the school communities positive goals as well as addressing barriers, like bully-victim-bystander behavior and student dis-engagement.

**2**) Creating *a welcoming, supportive, engaging and positive school climate as well as intentionally integrating social, emotional and academic learning (SEAL) into school-wide, instructional and relational improvement efforts[3].*

**3**) **A** *positive school climate, SEAL, academic achievement and bullying prevention are interconnected[4].*

Longitudinal studies and comprehensive research reviews show that a positive school climate can contribute to better mathematics, reading, and literacy outcomes. This research suggests that schools that place a strong focus on academics *and* include efforts to improve school climate and prevent violence have increases in academic achievement as well as significant reductions in bullying. Schools that only focus on improving the climate or reducing violence do not seem to significantly raise academic achievement.

**4**) *Every school – like every person – is unique and educational, risk prevention and health promotion efforts need to be individualized in ways that recognize the school communities diversity, strengths, needs and challenges[5].*

*There are **seven steps** that importantly support sustainable school climate, SEAL and bullying prevention efforts that include:*

(i) Insuring that district level policies (e.g. bully prevention, school climate, SEL, disciplinary) are aligned with current research. For example, locally and nationally there is too often a push toward more criminalization. We now know that there are disciplinary policies and practices that support students staying in school and learning rather than feeding the "high school to prison pipeline " [6].

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[3] Cohen, Espelage, Twemlow, Berkowitz,& Comer, 2015; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016; Jones, & Kahn, 2017; Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015

[4] American Educational Research Association, 2013; Berkowitz, Moore, Astor, & Benbenishty, 2017; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016; Jones, & Kahn, 2017; Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015

[5] National School Climate Council, 2009 & 2015

[6] Morgan, Salomon, Plotkin, & Cohen, 2014

Putting more police and school safety agents in our school is not a helpful, long-term strategy.

(ii)  Intentionally working to coordinate traditional academic subjects and the academic school improvement process with school climate, SEL, risk prevention efforts and health-mental health promotion efforts[7].

(iii) Supporting authentic and vital learning communities (PLC's and Network Improvement Communities) where school leaders share the specific school wide, instructional and/or relational improvement goals they are strategically deciding to focus on and their successes and challenges. This is one of the important finings from the growing body of research that focuses on what supports effective school improvement efforts[8].

(iv) Supporting school climate informed leadership development for both educators and students. Supporting youth voice and meaningful inter-generational school improvement efforts is one of several, foundationally powerful improvement goals[9].

(v)  Igniting the intrinsic motivation of students, parents, school personnel and even community members and leaders to develop explicit social norms that support Upstander (rather than bystander behavior). Almost no one wants to be hurt and alone. When Upstander see someone hurting or being hurt, they struggle – in the best sense of the word – to figure out 'what is the right thing to do?' [10].

(vi) Insuring that educators understand "mental health first aid" or how to recognize risk factors and warning signs for mental health and addition concerns as well as concrete strategies for how to help and where to turn for further support[11].

(vii) Understanding what school climate and SEL informed "road maps", guidelines and measurement tools exist[12].

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[7] Benbenishty, Astor,  Roziner, & Wrabel, 2016; Berkowitz, Moore, Astor, & Benbenishty, 2017

[8] Blase, van Dyke, & Fixsen, 2013; Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu, 2015; Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu & Easton, 2010; Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; Fullan, 2011

[9] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009; Jones, & Kahn, 2017

[10] Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott, 2012

[11] Futures without Violence, 2015.

[12] Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; Cohen, Thapa & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2017; National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, 2017; National School Climate Center, 2017;

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The foundational element of all seven steps noted above is fostering student engagement and the process of students and educators learning and working together to understand (1) what kind of school do we want ours to be? (2) What are our current strengths and challenges? And, (3) given the inevitable gap between our "vision" and current reality, what are the most important improvement goals that we all want to work on together?[13]

The good news is that research based school climate improvement "road maps", measurement tools and guidelines exist. These measurement tools include student-parent-school personnel surveys (like the NYC school environment survey; readiness and process measures and community scales that compliment and extend current student-parent-school personnel surveys to begin to really mobilize the "whole village" to support all of our children and school communities). And, these road maps, metrics and guidelines are aligned with the growing body of school improvement science.

These recommendations are – in many ways – aligned with the NYC DOE's *Framework for Great Schools*. I believe that the NYC DOE is invested in supporting positive school climates and social emotional and academic teaching and learning as well as mental health first aid efforts. However, as helpful as restorative practices are, they do not constitute a comprehensive school climate improvement effort. Central office – in NYC and across America -- needs to move beyond programs and continue to support building and district leaders learning from one another about the specific improvement schoolwide, instruction and relational improvement goals and strategies they are using. We can and need to much more powerfully support youth voice and meaningful inter generational school improvement efforts that begin with the positive goals we all want for students as well as targeting the challenges – like mean and bullying behaviors – that so often – tragically – undermine students (and adults) in our schools feeling safe, supported and most able to learn and to teach.

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**Testimony before the New York City Council Committee on Education on Int. No. 461:**
**Legislation to Provide Information on Summer Meals**
October 30, 2017

The CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute advances urban food equity by engaging with students, government officials, and advocates to produce evidence-based research, innovate new collaborative solutions, and provide policy guidance. We strongly endorse Int. No. 461 because it will increase access to nutritious summer meals for children throughout the five boroughs by providing basic information about the program's availability.

The Mayor, City Council, Public Advocate, and Manhattan Borough President all recognize the importance of school meals in the health and wellbeing -- and readiness to learn -- of the city's children, and their financial value to low-income families. The Mayor's decision to adopt universal free school lunch is one of the most significant steps the administration has taken toward making our city truly One New York by expanding participation in the federal school lunch program and ending the stigma that children who qualify for free lunch have endured.

If we can adopt universal free school lunch, we can certainly take simple steps to notify parents of the availability of summer meals online, through local elected officials, school districts, and parents associations, as required by Int. No. 461. The administrative burden will be insignificant, yet the health benefits to those children who participate will be substantial. Lack of knowledge has been identified as an obstacle to participation in the summer meals program, according to a barriers analysis conducted by Hunger Free New York in 2016.  Information about where and when summer meals are served is an easy way to overcome that barrier.

The notification requirements in Int. No. 461 are the minimum that the Department of Education should implement. In fact, the Council and the Mayor should consider additional support to boost participation in the summer meal program, including funding sports, crafts, and educational activities that attract young people to organizations and agencies that serve summer meals. Furthermore, to track the impacts of Int. No. 461, and the recent adoption of universal free school lunch, the Council should consider requiring district-level information about school meal participation, both academic year and summer, to be reported in the Food Metrics report required by Local Law 52 of 2011.

By Council Members Dromm, Menchaca, Ferreras-Copeland, the Speaker (Council Member
Mark-Viverito), Levin, Kallos, Chin, Gibson, Cohen and Rose

*A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to*
*requiring the department of education to distribute information regarding educational rights*
*and departmental policies related to interactions with non-local law enforcement.*

**Testimony by:**  Teresa Arboleda
President, Citywide Council on English Language Learners (CCELL)
(for Identification purposes only)
(ccell@schools.nyc.gov or arboledat@yahoo.com)

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.  While there was not enough time to
coordinate with all the members of the CCELL regarding this testimony, I am confident that I
also speak for them.

Members of the CCELL, as established by New York State Education Law 2590-B, 5.,
deal with  students who are English Language Learners (ELLs) and their families.  They often
engage families in their children's education by providing information about public school
ELL programs and services.  Many of these parents are immigrants and the CCELL provides
them with a forum to voice their concerns about programs and services, and it can be
assumed that many of these families are in an undocumented status.  Interpretation in the
appropriate language is provided at all CCELL meetings and flyers and other documents are
translated.  In April 2017 the CCELL scheduled a presentation by the NY Immigration
Coalition on "How to Support Immigrant Students and Families Given the Current Political
Climate."   This presentation was very helpful in providing vital information in the event a
parent or child is detained by ICE.

In the spirit of providing much needed information to these families I support any
efforts to amend the administrative code of New York City so that proper and accurate
information regarding their education and interactions with non-local laws can be
distributed to them.

**It is strongly recommended that all information imparted be translated into the
main languages that are spoken by the families, which include but are not limited to:
Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Russian, Bengali, Korean, Haitian Creole, and French**.

I support Proposed Int. No. 1565-A to be enacted by the Council as follows:

- Section 1. Title 21-A of the administrative code of the city of New York is
  amended by adding a new chapter 15 to read as follows:
- Chapter 15. Distribution of Information Regarding Interactions with Non-Local
  Law

There is full support for any efforts to provide information regarding the rights and
protections for all students.

**Hearing:** Oversight: "DOE's Response to Incidents of Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination in NYC Schools and Efforts to Improve School Climate"
**Date:** Monday, October 30, 2017
**Testimony by:** Rishi Singh, Director of Youth Organizing, DRUM.


Thank you for convening this important hearing on Bullying, harassment, and discrimination in NYC Schools. My name is Rishi Singh and I am the Director of Youth Organizing at DRUM – Desis Rising up & Moving, which organizes South Asian immigrant communities for immigrant, racial, education, and worker rights. I have worked with many young people and families that have faced the physical and emotional harm caused by bullying.

Bullying and the impacts of bullying are not just limited to student to student interactions. I have seen and heard numerous accounts of bullying by those in power in the school system. When adults who are authorities in the school system harass or discriminate against students we do not usually think of this as a form of bullying, but it is. In fact, it's "institutionalized" bullying because it's embedded in the very fabric of the education system. This can even normalize interpersonal bullying behavior in our schools. This normalization can also result from inaction by the school to address bullying behavior, which can lead to the continuation, escalation, and or the re-perpetration of the bullying behavior both inside and outside of school. School administrators, teachers, and security guards and all adults in the school system have the protections that come with having unions, employment contracts and their position as adults. They are never seen as bullies or held accountable in ways that young people are.

Young people in schools do not have any of these kinds of protections or much support and not many people ask "why" the bullying behavior existed in the first place. All too often, the "why" is never addressed but the results of bullying behavior is often met with zero tolerance. Zero-Tolerance, where the root causes or the "why" behind a student's behavior is never addressed, it is simply responded to with punishment. Rather than nurturing young people to learn and grow from mistakes, youth of color in particular are simply removed and isolated with the use of harsh discipline.

For example, Justin was bullied for months in his middle school a couple years ago. It eventually got to the point where he ended up getting into a fight with the other student. Instead of talking about the "why" and the bully behavior, the school only addressed the fighting. Both students ended up getting suspended with no real resolution. In another example from earlier this year, Salma was being cyber bullied by classmates and it impacted both her school and personal life. When she and her mother attempted to address the situation in the school, they were met with inaction. It eventually escalated to an altercation outside of the school with Salma's friend. The school couldn't do anything and suggested to report the incident to the police. Salma didn't want to involve the police because she didn't see that getting them arrested would solve the problem since previous suspensions made things worse. At no time did the school attempt to utilize restorative practices which could have addressed and begin to repair the harm caused by the situation. The longer schools take to address the root causes of bullying, the greater the likelihood of it escalating.

In another situation, 12 year old Nasir was being bullied by classmates for over 3 months. He even tried to tell their Dean but the Dean dismissed it. He even tried to prove it by taking pictures while it was happening but the students complained and the Dean said if he hears any more complaints from him, he would get suspended. Another student even got him in trouble saying he stole his phone when he purposefully put it in his bag to get him in trouble. The deans didn't listen

to him and he got suspended for 5 days.  The student later apologized for the prank but the damage was already done.

All these examples illustrate how bullying can be normalized in a school setting through inaction and through the use of zero tolerance policies. We want an end to institutionalized bullying, which is toxic to all people in our education system, from teachers to students to parents. We need to take action to undo this harmful system and adults need to unlearn the ways they are either complicit in or perpetuate bullying behavior in our schools. The first step to doing this is to end all forms of Zero-Tolerance policies and begin addressing root causes of problems through investing in the social and emotional well being of young people in our schools. Policies like DASA only go so far and may increase awareness of bullying but it has not transformed the school climate. We need to reimagine what safe and supportive schools look like. It doesn't look like more police, Security Agents, or metal detectors!  It does look like more counselors, restorative justice practitioners, social workers and other positive supports in our schools which can begin to place young people at the center of their own transformation and empowerment. Everyone in the school environment is responsible for creating a climate of safety and support in which all young people are abel to realize their full potential and be their full selves.

**Hearing:** Oversight: "DOE's Response to Incidents of Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination in NYC Schools and Efforts to Improve School Climate"
**Date:** Monday, October 30, 2017
**Testimony by:** Victoria Persaud, DRUM youth member

My name is Victoria Persaud and I am 17 years old. I am also a member of DRUM – Desis Rising up & Moving, which organizes South Asian immigrant communities for immigrant, racial, education, and worker rights. I am providing this testimony because bullying can involve and impact all people in the school system. It is not just a student-to-student interaction but it can also be normalized and perpetrated by those in positions of power in the education system and schools we attend. This form of Institutionalized Bullying has hurt me and can create and foster the conditions that result in or escalate interpersonal bullying behavior.

During my junior year at Thomas Edison High School, I had a teacher who picked on me throughout the school year. She would call on me with expectations to embarrass me in front of the class on a daily basis. There was one incident in which she told the class that everyone has a "gift" that sets them apart from others. She was able to point out the "gifts" that other students possess without hesitation but when it came to me she did not have anything positive to say.  Instead she laughed and criticized me saying I had procrastination habits. It was very hurtful and made me feel embarrassed and I ended up crying in class.

I didn't know what to do about it. I tried to talk to another teacher about what happened and they also dismissed it saying she was new and doesn't have experience and you have to let it go. I ended up writing an email to the teacher explaining how she made me feel. Her response was not what I was hoping for.  She said she was sorry that I felt that way but did not apologize for her actions. It made me feel like I was to blame and I was wrong in feeling the way I was feeling.  This just goes to show that words and action by authority figures in our schools can have impacts not just in the school setting but it can follow a student home because that experience made me undervalue myself.

This is just one example of how institutionalized bullying can impact students. Many times we do not know how to address the situation. Schools try to address bullying by hanging posters, signs, and holding a couple of assemblies each year to let the students know that bullying is wrong and that you will get punished if you bully someone based on race, gender, sexuality, religion, and ethnicity among other things. But in cases where school employees are the ones bullying students or our parents, it not known how to go about addressing the situation.

The Dignity for All Students Act has helped to make bullying more visible. However, if our differences and diversity are not included in the everyday culture and climate of the school, policies like DASA will not have much of an impact. Also our schools do not know how to address bullying effectively and doesn't acknowledge that adults also exhibit bullying behavior in the schools. Many times they just punish students by suspending them when situations escalate which does not address the problem. What we really need is more restorative practices and guidance interventions in our schools, which can really repair harm caused by bullying.

**Hearing:** Oversight: "DOE's Response to Incidents of Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination in NYC Schools and Efforts to Improve School Climate"
**Date:** Monday, October 30, 2017
**Testimony by:** Salma, DRUM youth member

My name is Salma and I am 17 years old. I am also a member of DRUM – Desis Rising up & Moving, which organizes South Asian immigrant communities for immigrant, racial, education, and worker rights. I am providing this testimony because I have faced bullying in my school for months. It impacted my ability to focus on my school work and isolated myself. I didn't know what to do and the school wasn't able to effectively address the situation.

I was being bullying by classmates who uploaded a song about me with lyrics that were inappropriate and called me names. Everyone knew it was about me and it was a very traumatic time for me. My mother even tried coming to the school but given her limited English language abilities, it was hard for them to communicate and didn't provide much help with the situation. The students had been suspended multiple times but it didn't really do anything about the bullying behavior. They even got into a confrontation with my friend outside of school. When I complained to the school they said we should file a police report. That really made me think about what can really address the issue because I didn't want to involve police because it would impact their lives in negative ways.

For too long schools have looked at bullying through the understanding of zero tolerance policies which only looks to punish and never get to the root cause of why bullying is taking place and how to resolve it. I saw first hand how these zero tolerance policies have not helped my situation and how schools enable the school to prison pipeline. I don't think that suspensions and police in our schools are the solution. I believe if our schools were equipped with enough counselors, social and emotional support, restorative justice practitioners, and other alternatives to zero tolerance policies, bullying behavior could be addressed more effectively. We wouldn't see bullying being normalized through inaction by the school and escalate like in my situation if there were adequate resources to address the root cause of the bullying behavior.

I have also seen this play out with my 12-year-old cousin in Middle School. Students were bullying him for over 3 months. He even tried to tell their Dean and the other student said he was making it up so the Dean dismissed it. He even tried to prove it by taking pictures while it was happening but they complained and the Dean said if he hears anything complaints from him, he would get suspended. Another student even got him in trouble saying he stole his phone when he purposefully put it in his bag to get him in trouble. The deans didn't listen to him and he got suspended for 5 days. The student later apologized for the prank but the damage was already done.

This also shows that bullying is not just a student-to-student interaction. In many cases adults who are in positions of authority like deans, SSAs, teachers, and other school administration can bully young people and yet are never seen as bullies or held accountable to their actions or their inaction. However, we as students are policed on our behavior and not given chances to adjust because pour schools rely of zero tolerance discipline. That is why I call on the Department of Education to invest in Restorative Justice, Counselors and other supportive alternatives that can get to the root of bullying behavior and address the harm that was caused.

Council of Supervisors and Administrators Testimony before New York City Council Committee on Education
Hon. Daniel Dromm
Chairperson
October 30, 2017

The Council of School Supervisors and Administrators
Mark Cannizzaro, President

40 Rector Street, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10006
(212) 823-2020
www.csa-nyc.org

## Council of School Supervisors and Administrators Testimony before New York City Council Committee on Education

## Hon. Daniel Dromm

## Chairperson

## October 30, 2017

On behalf of CSA's approximately 6,300 New York City school leaders, we are obliged to add our voices when the subject of bullying is on the agenda.

It has been nearly a decade since the Department of Education introduced specific anti-bullying programs. Yet, here we are today, still trying to properly define bullying, still trying to ascertain when an incident does or does not fit whichever definition is current, still trying to secure the necessary resources to address the matter and still attempting to agree on responses to alleged or confirmed incidents of bullying.

And, here we are, with few agreed-upon answers. The result is that this unresolved problem is dumped into the laps of overworked and understaffed school leaders, who have only unrealistic and unclear compliance procedures to which they can refer. For the most part, they are then held accountable for the inevitable incidents that do arise.

What we do know is that bullying is a real and complex issue with no absolute definition, and that appropriate responses are not "one size fits all." To make genuine progress in recognizing and addressing bullying, all New York City school leaders must be provided with adequate and properly trained personnel. It should go without say that school leaders be provided with the appropriate human resources who

are equipped to identify students who may have serious social and psychological issues. Clearly, the DOE has an absolute obligation here.

Furthermore, the counsellors and social workers assigned to schools must be consistent. They need to be invested in the school and understand its culture. In addition, every school must have at least one assistant principal and, in large schools, several.

All staff needs additional training and education in the latest techniques and approaches to dealing with bullying, including techniques for de-escalating tensions and confrontations. With adequate professional personnel and training, our school leaders will be better able to make informed decisions. These are decisions that should not be second guessed.

Procedures around reporting and compliance are already significant and do not need to be multiplied. But they do need to be clarified. A greater number of procedures will only serve as impediments to addressing serious issues that require a nimble response.

CSA members know and understand the challenges related to bullying. They also appreciate the efforts being made both locally and nationally in confronting this grave issue. Awareness is not enough. For the wellbeing of their students and school communities, they require significantly more support.

HUNTER COLLEGE
NEW YORK CITY
FOOD POLICY CENTER

Testimony to the New York City Council: Committee on Education

Testimony of Charles Platkin, Ph.D., J.D., M.P.H., Executive Director, Hunter College New York City Food Policy Center and Distinguished Lecturer, Hunter College;

*A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to information regarding summer meals. Int. No. 461-2014*

November 3, 2017

Thank you Chairperson Daniel Dromm and members of the Committee on Education for the opportunity to submit this written testimony regarding *A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York in relation to information regarding summer meals.* This proposal would require the Department of Education to share summer meal information in a more timely fashion (by June 1st of each year), so that it can be disseminated to families while school is still in session. With more time for advanced planning, families will be better able to optimize their children's health during the summer months. I urge the Committee on Education and the City Council to support this important legislation.

I am the Executive Director of the Hunter College New York City Food Policy Center, which was created in 2012 to develop collaborative, innovative and evidence-based solutions to prevent diet-related diseases, and to promote healthy eating and food security in New York City. We work with policy makers, community organizations, advocates and the public to create healthier, more sustainable food environments. As such, the Center fully supports the Department of Education's Summer Meals Program, which fights childhood hunger and undernutrition by providing free breakfast and lunch to children 18 and under, even if they don't attend public schools. During the summer, children can get free meals at numerous libraries, pools, parks, public schools and NYCHA facilities.[1] The program is committed to providing healthy food choices and maintaining high nutritional standards in their menu options. This past summer, it was estimated that more than 7.5 million free, healthy meals would be distributed at nearly 1,100 sites in all five boroughs.[2]

The Hunter College New York City Food Policy Center and its partners know that:

- Eating a nutritious breakfast and lunch each day is key to a child's healthy development;[3]
- Nurturing healthy children and families requires access to healthy and affordable meals, a particular challenge among those who live in food deserts or are otherwise food insecure;[4] and
- Providing free, nutritious meals during the summer months serves many who might otherwise go without since school is not in session.[5]

The summer nutrition gap and summer learning slide are interrelated. Affecting low-income children in greater numbers than their higher-income peers, children left hungry often struggle to

succeed when school begins again the following fall.[6] By reducing undernutrition, summer meal programs help to ensure that children return to school ready and able to learn, which can have lifelong consequences.

Now that the Summer Meals Program is in place and expanding, it is imperative that outreach be improved so that more children can benefit. A 2017 Food Research & Action Center study warned that nationwide, there was a decrease of 4.8% in the number of children served by summer nutrition programs between July 2015 and July 2016, marking the first drop in participation since 2011.[7] While New York is considered a top-performing state relative to others, the study showed that our summer programs reached less than a third (29.9%) of students who received lunch during the school year; nationally, that reach was only 15%.[vii] Clearly there is room for improvement, and one of the most successful strategies to grow participation is enhanced outreach and publicity.

The New York City Department of Education, in partnership with the New York State Department of Education, currently sponsors a widespread advertising campaign in multiple languages, and we applaud their efforts to increase awareness, particularly their mobile app showing summer meal sites and daily menus.[8] However, there is evidence that the timing of this outreach sometimes falls short. In the past, information announcing the program has often been made public towards the very end of the school year when there is a flurry of other activities like field trips, graduations, etc. When parents don't know in advance where to send their children for free summer meals, many go hungry. Int. No. 461-2014 would require the Department of Education to get the information out early to community partners, council members, borough presidents, community boards, community education councils, parent associations, and parent teacher associations, who can then reach out to families in their schools (while school is in session) and throughout their neighborhoods. The information must include where and when meals will be available and any eligibility guidelines, and be translated in at least the top six languages other than English spoken in New York City.

Thank you to the New York City Council for your support of the Hunter College New York City Food Policy Center and your leadership in preventing childhood food insecurity. This proposed measure will take important steps to strengthen the Summer Meals Program by making it accessible to more children and families in need. If you have any questions, or for more information about the Hunter College New York City Food Policy Center, visit our website at www.nycfoodpolicy.org or e-mail Dr. Charles Platkin at info@nycfoodpolicy.org.

**References**

[1] School Food, NYC Department of Education. Our Programs. www.schoolfoodnyc.org/OurPrograms/breakfast.htm#summer. Accessed Nov. 3, 2017

[2] NYC Department of Education. News and Speeches. 2016-2017. "DOE Kicks Off Summer Meals Program, Bringing Free, Nutritious Breakfast and Lunch to NYC Children." schools.nyc.gov/Offices/mediarelations/NewsandSpeeches/2016-2017/SummerMeals.htm. Accessed Nov. 3, 2017.

[3] ALBashtawy M. Breakfast eating habits among schoolchildren. J Pediatr Nurs. 2017(36)118-123. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pedn.2017.05.013.

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[8] NYC Department of Education. News and Speeches. 2014-2015. "DOE Announces Start of Annual Free Summer Meals Program for All NYC Children and Youth." schools.nyc.gov/Offices/mediarelations/NewsandSpeeches/2014-2015/Free+Summer+Meails.htm. Accessed Nov. 3, 2017.

# 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: 10/30/17

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Rishi Singh

Address: _____

I represent: DRUM - Desis Rising Up & Moving
(speaking after 4)

Address: _____

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# 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: George Alvarado

Address: 91 7th Ave, Sea Cliff, NY 11579

I represent: Northwell Health

Address: Glen Oaks, NY

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# 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: Dr. Elizabethe Payne

Address: Hunter College

I represent: Queering Education Research Institute

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: _Denis Yu_

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: _____

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: _MITCHEL WU_

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: _____

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: _Alysa Vu_

Address: _____

I represent: _CACF_

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. __1538__ Res. No. _____
☑ in favor    ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: _Nelson Mar_

Address: _℞ 349 East 149th St., Bronx NY 10451_

I represent: _Bronx Legal Services_

Address: _349 East 149th St. Bronx NY 10451_

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# 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: _Gene Miller_

Address: _151 W. 30th St. 5th Fl 10001_

I represent: _Advocates for Children_

Address: _see above_

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# 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: _Jamel Burgess_

Address: _____

I represent: _Urban Youth Collaborative_

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: _Amaye Beltran Navarro_

Address: _____

I represent: _Urban Youth Collaborative_

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: _____

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: _Adrian Alexander_

Address: _____

I represent: _Urban Youth Collaborative_

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: _____

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: _Estefany Valera, Urban Youth Collaborative (Tracy)_

Address: _____

I represent: _Urban Youth Collaborative_

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: Tony Vary Walker

Address: _____

I represent: Urban Youth Collaborative

Address: _____

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# 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: Baith Quinones

Address: _____

I represent: Urban Youth Collaborative

Address: _____

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# 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: Kate Terenzi, Center for Popular Democracy

Address: NY

I represent: Center for Popular Democracy

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. 0461-2014 Res. No. _____
☑ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/30/17

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Amanda Melpolder

Address: 50 Broad Street Suite 1103, NY, NY, 10004

I represent: Hunger Free America

Address: 50 Broad Street, Suite 1103, NY, NY, 10004

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# 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: 10/30/17

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: MIREYA SOLIS

Address: 52-09, -90 St.

I represent: MAKE THE ROORD, NY

Address: 92-10 Roosevelt Ave

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# 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: Deputy Chancellor Elizabeth Rose

Address: _____

I represent: NYC DOE - Division of Operations

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: Chancellor Carmen Fariña

Address: _____

I represent: NYC DOE

Address: 12 Chambers St. NY, NY 10007

# 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: Lois Herrera

Address: _____

I represent: NYC DOE - Office of Safety and Youth Development

Address: 112 Chambers St. NY NY 10007

# 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: Charlotte Pope

Address: _____

I represent: Children's Defense Fund New York

Address: 15 Maiden Lane, NY 10167

*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: Venecia Little

Address: student, should be here after 5:30

I represent: Children's Defense Fund

Address: _____

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## THE COUNCIL
## THE CITY OF NEW YORK

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1538 Res. No. _____

☑ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Brittany Brathwaite

Address: 25 Chapel St. 1006 Brooklyn NY

I represent: Girls for Gender Equity

Address: _____

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## 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: 10/30/17

**(PLEASE PRINT)**
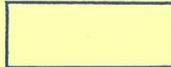
Name: ANNAGINE LEWIS

Address: _____

I represent: PARENT ACTION COMMITTEE

Address: BRONX

*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. 1442-2017

☑ in favor ☐ in opposition

*Date:* 10/30/17
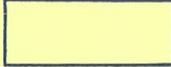
**(PLEASE PRINT)**

**Name:** Rachael Petes

**Address:** 16 Webster Place    11215

**I represent:** Peer Health Exchange

**Address:** 55 Exchange Pl    10005

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## 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:* 10/30/17

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

**Name:** SANDRA W

**Address:** _____

**I represent:** COALITION FOR EDUCATIONAL JUSTICE

**Address:** _____

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## THE COUNCIL
## THE CITY OF NEW YORK

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition
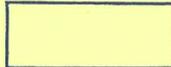
*Date:* 10/30/17

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

**Name:** Nancy Ginsburg

**Address:** 49 Thomas St NY NY

**I represent:** The Legal Aid Society

**Address:** 199 Water St

*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: *NOV 30, 2017*

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: DAVID LUDWIG

Address: _____

I represent: ASPHALT GREEN

Address: _____

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# THE COUNCIL
# THE CITY OF NEW YORK

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1538 Res. No. _____

☐ in favor   ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/30/17

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Mustafa Sullivan

Address: _____

I represent: FIERCE

Address: 2427 Morris, Bronx, NY 10468

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# 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: 10/30/2017.

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: NISHA DASS

Address: 80 Pine St, 28th fl

I represent: Educators for Excellence

Address: See above.

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

**THE COUNCIL**
**THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

1538

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _1538_ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor   ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Becca Mui

Address: 110 William Street, 30th floor, NY NY

I represent: GLSEN ('glisten')

Address: _____

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**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: Jonathan Cohen

Address: _____

I represent: National School Climate Center

Address: _____

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**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: Oct. 30, 2017

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Evan H. Arthur

Address: 208 W 13th St

I represent: The LGBT Community Center

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. ___Education___ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Grant Cowles

Address: _____

I represent: Citizens' Committee for Children

Address: _____

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# THE COUNCIL
# THE CITY OF NEW YORK

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1538 Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/30/17

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: JILLIAN WEISS

Address: 20 W. 20TH ST #705 NYC 10011

I represent: TRANSGENDER LEGAL DEF. & ED. FUND

Address: 20 W 20TH ST #705 NYC 10011

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# 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: 10/30/2017

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Joseph Seck

Address: 2 Astor Place New York, NY 10003

I represent: Hetrick Martin/Harvey Milk HS

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: DeNora Getachew

Address: _____

I represent: Generation Citizen

Address: 110 Wall Street, New York NY 10005

# 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: Raheda Haque

Address: _____

I represent: Generation Citizen

Address: 110 Wall Street, New York NY 10005

# 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: 10/30/17

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Donna Lieberman

Address: _____

I represent: New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU)

Address: 125 Broad Street

*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: Abigail Beatty

Address: 345 Montgomery, Brooklyn NY

I represent: Yaffed

Address: 25 W 45th Street, New York, NY

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# 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: 10/30/17

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Anthony Harmon

Address: Assitant to the President

I represent: BRAVE Director.

Address: UFT

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# THE COUNCIL
# THE CITY OF NEW YORK

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1538 Res. No. _____

☑ in favor    ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Geva Miller

Address: 151 W. 30th St. 5th Fl. New York, NY 10001

I represent: Advocates for Children

Address: See Above

*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: 10/30/17

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Jeff Povalitis

Address: Safety Director

I represent: VFN

Address: 52 Broadway.

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# 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: Rev. Wendy Calden Page

Address: 59 50th Ave

I represent: Parent of two children bullied

Address: in PPE/Bx Carect

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# THE COUNCIL
## THE CITY OF NEW YORK

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Bullying Res. No. early

☐ in favor  ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Sanford Rubenstein Esg

Address: 16 Curt St Bklyn

I represent: Bails a Mother McCree

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: MONICA BARTLEY

Address: _____

I represent: CIDNY

Address: _____

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# 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: DON KAO

Address: 742 E 6th ST #10 NY 10009

I represent: Project Reach - CPC

Address: 39 Eldridge St. 10002

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# 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: 10/30/17

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Walter Logan

Address: 90 _____

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: 10-30-17

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Dashirah Lucas

Address: 1904 Amsterdam Ave SC

I represent: Project REACH

Address: 3a Eldridge St.

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# 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: Jamie Ryan Bren

Address: 1206 Amstead ave bronx NY 10462

I represent: Project reach

Address: 39 Eldrige ave

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# 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: Debbie Almontaser

Address: 717 Westminster Rd

I represent: Muslim Community Network

Address: 239 Thompson St. NY, NY 10012

*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: _Celia Green_

Address: _157 East 46 Street Brookly_

I represent: _CCHS / TD75 Presidents Council_

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: _Diana Feldman-ENACT_

Address: _345 8th Ave 15 C_

I represent: _NY 10001_

Address: _____

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