



## **Testimony of NYC Public Schools on Examining School Safety and Crossing Guard Operations at DOE Schools Before the NYC Council Committees on Education and Public Safety**

**April 29, 2026**

*Testimony of Mark Rampersant, Chief of Safety & Prevention Partnerships*

Good afternoon, Chair Dinowitz, Chair Feliz, and members of the New York City Council Committees on Education and Public Safety present today. My name is Mark Rampersant. I have dedicated my career to ensuring our schools are safe and am proud to serve as Chief of Safety and Prevention Partnerships for New York City Public Schools (NYCPS). Thank you for the opportunity to discuss our comprehensive school safety efforts and our ongoing partnership with the New York City Police Department and its School Safety Division.

Safety is one of Chancellor Samuels top priorities. We know safety is a prerequisite to student achievement, and our approach to safety is grounded in the belief that true—and complete—safety extends beyond physical safety. It also includes emotional safety, built through trusting and supportive relationships that nurture affirmation, dignity, and respect.

Our commitment is clear: we strive to ensure that every school is a safe, secure, affirming, and supportive learning environment for all students, staff, and families. We cannot do this alone and therefore we pursue these goals through deep partnerships with school communities, other city agencies, and community and faith-based organizations. I would like to thank the City Council for your longstanding commitment to supporting NYCPS as we continue to address the issue of school safety and climate.

Our work integrates social-emotional learning, restorative practices, student leadership initiatives, and prevention programming. For example, our restorative practices framework encourages community building, fosters healthy relationships, and promotes student belonging with a focus on positive behavior, conflict resolution, and problem solving. Project PIVOT supports supplemental programming provided by community organizations in the areas of safety and violence prevention and intervention, mentoring, enrichment activities, and leadership development. Our student voice programming provides students with an opportunity to share ideas and feedback and have their voices included in policy and decision making. Although there is still more to do, we are seeing meaningful progress. Year to date, egregious incidents in schools are down by 7%, suspensions overall are down by almost 13%, principal suspensions are down by 11%, and superintendent suspensions are down by almost 20%.

We are always exploring new and innovative ways to strengthen our safety and security procedures. Our Grades, Attendance, Messaging Application (GAMA) allows schools to communicate updates on incidents and activities with staff, students, and families in multiple languages, such as any school closings or, in the case of an emergency, any lockdowns, shelter-

ins, or evacuations. Our Safer Access (Door Locking) Initiative allows for the front door of a school to be locked during the day except for morning entry and dismissal and is accessible to first responders in case of emergency. Our first two phases were completed and these buildings are now equipped with this system.

All of the aforementioned initiatives are designed to function as one coordinated system. Together, they aim to prevent incidents, minimize academic disruption, and support social emotional development. As mentioned earlier, ensuring complete safety is a shared responsibility, one that involves external partners such as the NYPD School Safety Division.

NYC Public Schools and the NYPD's School Safety Division share a strong, longstanding partnership focused on maintaining safe and secure school environments across the city. Together, our agencies develop school safety and emergency readiness plans to support our school communities, including ten monthly School Safety Committee meetings, one of which has to be a Town Hall. Our Office works in close coordination with the NYPD School Safety Division and remains in continual communication regarding supports and interventions for schools. These include ensuring SSA coverage, responding to incidents, providing safe passage, and offering youth programs in our schools such as the NYPD Explorers Program.

School Safety Agents assigned to NYCPS are employees of the NYPD, with recruitment, hiring, training, and supervision overseen by the Department. As vital partners of the school community, School Safety Agents collaborate daily with school administrators, students, families, and community stakeholders. They are often the first individuals who students, staff, and families encounter when entering a school building, and their presence plays a critical role in promoting safety and reassurance.

NYC Public Schools contributes two weeks of training to the NYPD's twenty (20) week School Safety Agent training program. This training focuses on NYCPS policies and procedures, emergency readiness, school climate, de-escalation and problem-solving techniques, restorative practices, crisis support, child abuse reporting, and awareness of specialized districts and programs. These include District 75, which serves students with disabilities, and District 79, our Alternative Schools district. These trainings provide School Safety Agents with the tools to support our students and address behavior in a positive and supportive manner. In addition to trainings for SSA recruits, NYCPS also provides training to Police recruits, on supporting students with disabilities, with a specific focus on students on the autism spectrum and students who are learning to travel independently through NYCPS programming.

Beyond safety infrastructure and training, we partner closely with the NYPD on a range of prevention and youth development initiatives that foster positive engagement. These include the Anti-Subway Surfing Campaign, the Youth Police Academy, and the Flag Football program for students ages 9 to 11. We also work with local precincts to support schools through measures such as assigning School Crossing Guards, increasing visibility for safe passage, and providing post-incident support when needed.



In closing, I want to reiterate that ensuring safety in our schools remains a top priority of this administration. As I have emphasized, safety in our schools is a collective responsibility, and it requires collaboration across agencies, communities, and government partners. With the continued support of the City Council and our internal and external partners, NYC Public Schools remains committed to ensuring safe, supportive learning environments for students across the city. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



Wednesday, April 29, 2026

**STATEMENT OF DEPUTY CHIEF MARY KING  
NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
APRIL 29, 2026**

Good afternoon Chair Feliz, Chair Dinowitz, and members of the Committee on Public Safety and the Committee on Education. My name is Deputy Chief Mary King and I am the Commanding Officer of the School Safety Division of the NYPD. I am joined here today by Deputy Inspector Hwan Kim, the Executive Officer of the School Safety Division, Deputy Chief Thomas Alps, the Executive Officer of the Patrol Services Bureau, who supervises School Crossing Guards across the city, and Admin Contract Specialist Seth Severino of the Budget Management Division. On behalf of Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch, we thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding school safety.

At the School Safety Division, our mission is to provide a safe environment, conducive to learning, where students and faculty can be free from hostility and disruptions which could negatively impact the educational process. It is our responsibility to parents to ensure that the children they entrust us with are kept safe.

We are succeeding at that mission. While no crime level in our schools is acceptable, we are working every day to reduce crime and promote safety, and crime levels are dropping. School-related enforcement is down 6%, and school-related crime is down 5.5% for the school year.

The key to this success is our School Safety Agents, who do the essential day-to-day work of keeping our schools safe. Every public school has at least one School Safety Agent who carries out critical tasks to ensure a safe learning environment. They are responsible for patrolling critical areas within and surrounding the school; monitoring security camera systems to make sure entrances and exits are secure; identifying and removing any unauthorized persons; and preventing weapons and other contraband items from being brought into the school. They also assist in the smooth flow of students, staff, and visitors into and out of the school, maintaining all records of entrances and exits, and provide routine information and directions to visitors.

In emergency situations, they provide a critical first response, notifying supervisors of all emergency incidents; calling for medical, police, or fire assistance when needed; and providing first aid to those who are sick or injured. When there are altercations between students or others in the building, they deescalate and attempt to resolve the conflict, working to separate those involved and prevent harm or violence.

Last year, the School Safety Division was moved to the office of the First Deputy Commissioner to ensure it was receiving the full departmental attention it deserves. Following that move, we have focused on several key improvements and changes to how the School Safety Division operates.

The first change has been to dramatically scale the regularity of communications with our partners in the Public Schools. We have weekly meetings between School Safety Division executives and Public Schools' Borough Safety Directors, and precinct meetings with school principals. In addition to these regular meetings, we confer regularly on incidents pertaining to student safety with both principals and Borough Safety Directors. All of this ensures that Public Schools and NYPD are in lockstep on security and safety.

We have also worked to further strengthen our relationship with Public Schools by increasing our participation in their meetings and programming. The School Safety Division participates in youth town halls and forums, principal's meetings, the youth violence community meetings, school visits, and meetings with City Council members, public education advocates, labor union leadership, and restorative practice training.

None of this would be possible without our School Safety Agents, who are the lynchpin of school security. Our authorized headcount for School Safety Agents is 3,915, and there are 360 School Safety Agent vacancies.

There are a number of ways that we acknowledge and celebrate the critical work our School Safety Agents do as the front line protecting our schools. We formally recognize outstanding work with "Commander's Days," a merit-based award that includes a vacation day to recognize the School Safety Agent's achievement. Our executives also regularly visit schools to meet with School Safety Agents, hear any concerns, and commend them for all that they do. Our School Safety Agents are all recognized at an annual event at Police Headquarters.

We also encourage career advancement by providing our School Safety Agents with training and education opportunities. The NYPD has scholarships available for our School Safety Agents. We also have opportunities for advancement in the School Safety Agent program itself, with discretionary promotions that allow our best Level 1 agents to advance to the supervisor role, called Level 3.

In addition, we support our School Safety Agents through a peer support unit that is specifically tasked with providing guidance, counseling, and emotional support. Our School Safety Agents are tasked with the daily challenge of taking care of others, so we need to do all we can to take care of them.

These efforts are designed to provide School Safety Agents with a supportive environment in which their needs are met, their efforts are respected and appreciated, and they have the opportunity to develop personally and professionally in a rewarding and accomplished career.

These efforts are themselves an avenue to attract new individuals to the School Safety Agent role, but we are also taking additional steps, in collaboration with Public Schools and the Local 237 labor union, to attract new employees. We meet on a monthly basis to discuss hiring strategies and initiatives. We have School Safety Community Outreach that, among other things, informs community members of career opportunities. And we leverage social media platforms to promote

open roles.

In addition to these efforts, we have also established a new role, the Assistant School Safety Agent. After a careful evaluation, we determined that there were some functions of School Safety Agents that could be successfully performed by a more junior person. These include, in particular, managing the front desk, directing visitors, inspecting the building, and maintaining visitor logs and other administrative tasks. At the same time, we realized that there could be an opportunity to build a pipeline of younger people into the full School Safety Agent role. We recruit Assistant School Safety Agents out of school, typically at 18 to 20 years of age, and place them in elementary schools alongside full School Safety Agents, where they perform those designated functions while learning the role that School Safety Agents perform. We have received great interest in the newly created role, and have moved forward with over 100 new hires.

Through these initiatives, we are growing our team of School Safety Agents and supporting them in their critical and rewarding role safeguarding our most important asset as a city—our children.

I would like to take a moment to comment on the bills under consideration today.

**Intro. 788** would require the department to report on employment turnover of School Safety Agents. The department appreciates Council's attention to School Safety Agents and the critical role they play in keeping our schools safe. The department is prepared to provide information about hiring and turnover, provided that a sunset clause is added to ensure that the department's reporting requirements reflect Council's ongoing needs. We look forward to working with Council to tailor the report contemplated by the bill to reflect available and appropriate information and advance our shared goals.

**Intro. 457** would require the department to create and publish a map of locations where crossing guards are posted. We have no objection to publishing this map, which would reflect data the department is already providing pursuant to a budget term and condition, provided that a sunset clause is added to ensure that the department's reporting requirements reflect Council's ongoing needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today, and I look forward to answering any questions that you may have.



**BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT VANESSA L. GIBSON**

**New York City Committees on Education & Public Safety  
Oversight: Examining School Safety and Crossing Guard Operations at DOE Schools  
April 29, 2026**

Good afternoon and thank you to Chair Eric Dinowitz, Chair Oswald Feliz, and the members of the City Council's Education and Public Safety Committees for convening this important hearing today to examine whether we as a City are doing enough to ensure that students, teachers, and other school staff are safe in and on their way to their schools.

When parents send their children to school every day, they are trusting us to make it our highest priority to ensure they are safe in the City's care. This means we must have adequate staffing levels among school safety officers and crossing guards. We have seen too many stories of schools without sufficient staffing experiencing violence, vehicle collisions, or criminal activity. There are thousands of incidents which school safety agents are required to respond to every year, and these are dealt with professionally with coordination between DOE and NYPD personnel.

We ask our school safety officers to do numerous tasks, stretching them very thin. They operate metal detectors to confiscate weapons and other contraband, check identification of visitors, monitor security cameras, coordinate emergency response, conduct hallway patrols, de-escalate and break up altercations, report incidents, and more. This is difficult job, and our officers deserve commendation for their efforts. However, there has not been a sufficient level of staffing to ensure that every student in every school is kept safe.

There is a budgeted headcount of 4,065 school safety agents, but there is a 12% vacancy rate, meaning that there are nearly 500 vacancies. According to Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch, the NYPD is losing 37 agents per month and is struggling to hire more.<sup>1</sup> This is a significant decline in the number of school safety agents from prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, when there were about 5,000 active agents in April 2020.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, there is a significant number of school safety agents who are calling out on a daily and weekly basis due to sick leave, vacation time, and comp time due to forced overtime that necessitates NYPD bringing in floating agents and pulling personnel from some schools to staff higher priority locations.

Similarly, the headcount for school crossing guards has fallen over the past several years, including the elimination of 483 vacant positions in 2023. Citywide headcount is approximately 2,300, a 400-position decline from previous levels, with 150 of these positions currently vacant. There are some schools that have no crossing guards to help protect students as they walk to their school buildings.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://pix11.com/news/local-news/nypd-struggling-to-hire-retain-school-safety-agents/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/city-eliminates-hundreds-of-vacant-school-safety-positions-after-more-than-20-percent-decline-in-safety-agent-staffing-in-citys-public-schools-over-three-years-march-2023.pdf>

Crossing guards direct traffic, manage pedestrian flow, and report unsafe traffic conditions, helping to prevent incidents outside of and nearby schools during morning and afternoon hours. However, despite this important role, crossing guards are paid \$18 per hour and work part time at four hours per day during two shifts, and they are capped at 25 hours per week. Because of this low pay and bifurcated work schedule, there is significant turnover among crossing guards and numerous vacancies in these positions.

From a recent survey of principals in The Bronx's Community School District 12, 31 schools have reported an insufficient number of crossing guards to meet their needs, including six schools that reported having no crossing guards. This is an unacceptably low level of staffing that has resulted in incidents outside of our schools, including students having been hit by vehicles.

The first step that we must take to deal with these issues is to increase transparency so the public knows what is going on in the schools regarding the headcount of these positions and how they are deployed.

Introduction 457, which I have introduced along with Councilmember Althea Stevens, would require the NYPD to create a deployment map of the stationed crossing guard locations across the city and to post that map on the department website. This bill will enable the public to examine the number of crossing guards assigned to their children's schools and in their neighborhoods, giving them the tools to better advocate for their communities. I urge the Council to pass this legislation to ensure that the public has full information about crossing guard deployment.

Additionally, Introduction 788, sponsored by Chair Dinowitz, would require the City to report on the turnover of school safety agents. This would improve transparency about how experienced these agents are and how many agents are leaving these positions each year. This can help the City create appropriate strategies for recruitment, retainment, and deployment of school safety officers, to best utilize the assets that we have to achieve positive outcomes.

Overall, it is clear that the number of school safety agents and crossing guards are insufficient to meet the current demand in our schools and school communities. The City must increase the headcount of these positions, especially considering the decline in staffing levels over the past 10 years. Any level of violence and disorder in our schools is unacceptable, and we must make sure that the school safety division has the sufficient staffing and resources to keep our students safe. I urge the Council to increase the budgeted headcount and pass these important pieces of legislation to protect our young people.

TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF LOCAL 372 | NYC BOARD OF EDUCATION EMPLOYEES  
DISTRICT COUNCIL 37 | AFSCME  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC  
SAFETY  
APRIL 29, 2026  
1:00 PM

Chairman Dinowitz, Chairman Feliz, and distinguished members of the committee, I am Donald Nesbit, Executive Vice President of Local 372 - NYC Board of Education Employees, District Council 37 - AFSCME. It is the honor of Local 372 to present this testimony on behalf of the Level-I and Level-II School Crossing Guards that we represent under the leadership of our President, Shaun D. Francois I. Local 372 respectfully requests: the City to restore the School Crossing Guard vacancy positions and hire additional School Crossing Guards.

Local 372 has long testified that the need to hire additional School Crossing Guards is vital in order to keep our children safe from the dangers of reckless drivers, and to ensure that our School Crossing Guard members are not stretched thin by the continuous decline of staff. Student-pedestrians often face major safety traffic hazards everyday caused by double-and-triple parked cars at bus stops sited in close proximities to school buildings, and School Crossing Guards are often the first line of defense in ensuring the safety of these students. These workers have risked their own health, safety and lives to perform these vital services to the community, and as the number of School Crossing Guards continue to decline, thousands of school children cross main intersections without any supervision, putting our children's safety in jeopardy.

The need for increased protections for our student pedestrians and members of our communities make it essential that the City of New York allocate funding for the additional hiring of School Crossing Guards. In 2023, former Mayor Eric Adams authorized the elimination of almost 500 open school crossing guard positions, completely eliminating the hiring of additional

School Crossing Guards. There have been a number of casualties since. For example, in March 2024 an 8-year-old boy died in Queens after being struck just five blocks from school.<sup>1</sup> And February this year, an 11-year-old girl was killed while crossing the street in Brooklyn.<sup>2</sup> By eliminating these open positions and not hiring additional School Crossing Guards, sends a dangerous message: the safety of NYC school children is not the City's priority. **Local 372 respectfully requests** that the City restore the 500 open positions, and hire additional School Crossing Guards providing our school children with heightened protections as they travel to and from school.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony and for your continued support on behalf of Local 372's School Crossing Guards.

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<sup>1</sup> *Gothamist*: "*Queens parents struggle to get crossing guards after 2 students killed in traffic*," Sept. 27, 2024, <https://gothamist.com/news/queens-parents-struggle-to-get-crossing-guards-after-2-students-killed-in-traffic>

<sup>2</sup> <https://abc7ny.com/post/school-bus-struck-killed-teenage-girl-hit-run-bath-beach-brooklyn/18549142/>



## **Testimony**

**By**

**Gregory Floyd, President, Teamsters Local 237**

**To the New York City Council Committee on Education, Jointly with the  
Committee on Public Safety**

**Oversight – Examining School Safety and Crossing Guard Operations at DOE Schools**

**April 29, 2026**

Good afternoon, Chair Dinowitz, Chair Feliz, and to the members of the City Council Committees on Education and Public Safety. My name is Gregory Floyd, and I am the President of Teamsters Local 237 and Vice President-at Large of the General Board of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. I appreciate the opportunity to address you all today.

As you know, Local 237 represents over 24,000 members who work in all the city's municipal agencies, including the city's public housing facilities, public hospitals, schools and colleges, homeless shelters, ACS facilities, and almost all other municipal agencies.

This afternoon I am here on behalf of the 3,600 school safety agents who, despite being massively understaffed and short-handed, continue to bravely ensure the safety and security of public-school students and staff. Historically, our ranks have numbered 5,500, but today we face a shortage of roughly 2,000 agents. The nearly 30 percent drop is owed to the pandemic, attrition and the inexplicable cancellation of training classes. As a result, our force is badly depleted and our schools, students and staff, are at extreme risk.

The shortage in safety agents has also made it harder to perform basic perimeter patrols during school arrivals and dismissals and makes it difficult to keep school campuses open on nights and weekends to accommodate extracurricular activities.

This is not news or a problem no one saw coming. It is an acute crisis that has unfolded over the last 5 years and has been underscored by increasing instances of violence and

assault perpetrated against teachers, principals, students and our badly unnumbered agents.

Despite the increasing threat to public safety in our schools, along with the skyrocketing cases of hate crimes, the past administration and the New York City Council chose to ignore the problem.

**Indeed, I provided testimony to this City Council at a hearing in January 2021 about the impending dangers caused by a shortage of school safety agents, hoping this legislative body would not allow a reduction in the workforce. But it was at this hearing that a decision was made to cancel a class of 500 School Safety Agents and not hire additional agents for at least two years, creating the shortage we have now.**

And today, we have arrived at the very place I pleaded with the City Council not to allow us to reach - an overworked and outmanned safety agent force, and crisis in our schools.

The significant rise in violent incidents in public schools has been accompanied by the recovery of over 6,000 weapons. Taken together, with the escalation of conflicts around the world and our City as a primary target for terror, I would think the City Council would want its school safety agents at full strength.

I strongly urge this City Council not to double down on its past mistake and do everything in its power to restore school safety agent staffing levels to pre-pandemic levels. They represent the frontline in the protection of schools, students and communities, and they deserve to have the respect and support of the City they serve.

Thank you for the opportunity to address these committees today, and I am more than happy to take any of your questions.

###

April 29, 2026

Dear City Council Members,

I am Salua Baida, the Chair of Queens Community Board 6, sharing community concerns. Thank you for considering the many requests and ideas before you, particularly as we all collaborate to **recruit, hire, and retain more Crossing Guards**— a vital neighborhood need.

**Rain, shine, or snow, Crossing Guards show up for our families.** They put their lives on the line to save children and families from traffic violence, on their way to school and about town. They also must wake before most of us, gear up for the weather that day, get to their posts and serve—then head home or to a waiting point, only to return a brief while later doing that all over again. The role boasts one some of the least convenient work parameters, and pays little too!

**The salary must reflect the sacrifice.** Crossing Guards deserve and require more than the \$18.00 per hour salary over 20 hours of work plus health benefits they currently receive. A starting salary increase to \$25 per hour or more, along with commensurate increases for senior crossing guards, would help attract quality candidates and avoid notorious turnover.

**We must creatively rethink this essential role and its recruitment, together.** The role should include full-time options, where Crossing Guards can work the in-between hours assisting within the schools, and thus earn higher paychecks in this challenging economy. Our recruitment efforts should consider targeted outreach to the retired military veteran work force, retired police and security guards, and other similarly hearty, dependable, and day-time-available individuals. Recruiting local grandparents via civic associations, stay home parents and elders via houses of worship, as well as graduates at gyms and networking events (when they are in between jobs and can commit to a 1 or 2-year Crossing Guard program), could all be useful measures. What is more, programs could include exceptions to avoid detriment to social security and other benefits affected by performing this work. Benefits could include student loan repayment (usually reserved for full-time city employees, as well as opportunity bridges for folks to transfer to other significant city roles after a few years.

**Finally, let's extend citywide campaigns to “all-in” Crossing Guard recruitment amplification!** Local community boards, schools, parent-teacher associations, police precincts, partner NGOs, and other collaborators can go all-in with a concerted effort to recruit within their districts. This can include mayoral and community board social media blitzes (I can see the mayor or board members sporting bright vests!), police and current crossing guards flyering while on-duty when safe to do so, traditional LinkNYC posts, and more. This could also include schools inviting representatives to PTA meetings or assemblies, etc.

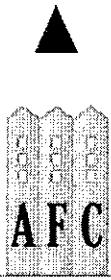
Together, we can ensure that Crossing Guards are paid what they deserve for their strenuous community safety efforts, and that we can effectively recruit and retain them for years to come!

Respectfully submitted,

Salua Baida

Chair, Queens Community Board 6

CB6QueensChair@gmail.com



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

## Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Education and Committee on Public Safety

### Re: Oversight - Examining School Safety at DOE Schools.

April 29, 2026

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about school safety in NYC Public Schools. My name is Naphtali Moore, and I am a Staff Attorney at Advocates for Children of New York. For more than 50 years, Advocates for Children has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds. AFC is also a member of Dignity in Schools New York (“DSC-NY”), a coalition of youth, parents, educators, and advocates dedicated to shifting the culture of New York City schools away from punishment and exclusion and towards positive approaches to discipline and safety.

The City must ensure schools are safe and supportive for all students and staff. Yet safety is undermined when Black students and students with disabilities are treated as threats and subjected to policing rather than support. Extensive evidence shows that punitive responses to student behavior are associated with negative long-term outcomes and do not improve safety.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, trauma-informed care, restorative justice, mental health services, and positive behavioral interventions are proven to strengthen school climate.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, *Replacing School Police with Services that Work* (August 2021), <http://www.bazelon.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Replacing-Police-in-Schools.pdf>; The Sentencing Project, *Back-to-School Action Guide* (August 2021), <https://www.sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Back-to-School-Action-Guide-Re-Engaging-Students-and-Closing-the-School-to-Prison-Pipeline.pdf?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=d7dbe77b-02b8-46a0-8731-bdbe753ef330>; ACLU of California, *No Police in Schools* (August 2021), <https://www.aclusocal.org/en/no-police-in-schools>.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., *id.* As another example, in a study of the implementation of restorative practices in Chicago high schools, researchers found a 35% decline in student arrests in school, a 15% reduction in out-of-school arrests, an 18% decrease in out-of-school suspensions, and improved student-reported perceptions of school climate (i.e., increased feelings of belongingness and safety at school), <https://educationlab.uchicago.edu/projects/restorative-practices/>.



We see the impact of the lack of appropriate support in our case work. As one example, this year we worked with a 10-year-old, 5<sup>th</sup> grade student struggling with an emotional disability who was repeatedly suspended, disciplined, and met with law enforcement intervention in school, instead of receiving appropriate special education and behavior supports. Police are not trained mental or behavioral health professionals and should not be the primary responders to student needs.

Although police interactions with “children in crisis,” when a student in emotional distress is removed from class and transported to the hospital for psychological evaluation, have declined, there were still 2,321 such incidents in the 2024–2025 school year, with persistent racial disparities. Black students, who comprise less than a quarter of students enrolled in NYC schools, accounted for 44% of crisis interventions and 70% of cases involving handcuffing. In our work, we continue to see young students, often with Individualized Education Programs (“IEPs”), met by law enforcement rather than trained school staff or mental health professionals when experiencing behavioral challenges in school.

To invest in school safety, the City must, at a minimum, include the following key priorities in the budget this year:

### **Sustain Restorative Justice funding by baselining the expiring \$6M in funding**

Restorative justice practices enable schools to keep students in the classroom while helping them resolve conflicts and build and repair relationships. Of the \$17M for restorative justice in the FY 2026 budget, \$6M was funded for one year only. The City must baseline the expiring \$6M to solidify its commitment to safety in schools.

### **Baseline the Mental Health Continuum at \$5M**

The Mental Health Continuum is a cross-agency partnership (NYCPS, Health + Hospitals, Department of Health & Mental Hygiene) to help students with significant mental health needs access expedited mental healthcare in 50 schools in the Bronx and Brooklyn, but it is only funded through this June. We strongly urge the Council to prioritize this investment in the mental health of New York City's young people and ensure the Fiscal Year 2027 budget extends and baselines funding for the Mental Health Continuum at its current funding level of \$5M (H+H: \$3.74M, NYCPS: \$787K, DOHMH: \$472K). We appreciate that the City Council’s preliminary budget response calls to restore and baseline funding for restorative justice and the Mental Health Continuum.

### **Hire behavioral specialists to support schools in meeting the behavioral and mental health needs of students (\$8M)**

In many of our cases, students with behavioral challenges are being suspended or are recommended for a private school setting because there’s nobody with behavioral expertise within the public school system who can go to the school and develop a plan to meet the students’ needs. Schools need access to behavioral specialists who can work directly with educators and school staff to model,



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coach, and support the implementation of effective, individualized behavior supports for students, including students with autism and other disabilities, and provide concrete recommendations for helping students remain in the classroom. We urge the City to invest \$8 million to hire at least one behavior specialist per school district.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

**Testimony of Caitlyn Passaretti, Senior Policy Associate  
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York**

**Submitted to the New York City Council Committee on Education and the Committee on  
Public Safety**

**April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

Since 1944, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York has served as an independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, or represent a sector or workforce; our priority is improving outcomes for children and families through civic engagement, research, and advocacy. We document the facts, engage, and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for solutions to ensure that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe.

We would like to thank Chair Dinowitz and Chair Feliz, and all the members of the Education Committee and Public Safety Committee, for holding this hearing focused on school safety. While the main focus of this hearing is on crossing guards and the turnover of school safety agents and other school safety personnel, we would like to use this as an opportunity to uplift the importance supporting school safety by fully funded restorative justice programs and mental health supports.

As a member of the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding (CEEF), CCC urges the restoration and baselining of funding for Restorative Justice program and the Mental Health Continuum in the FY27 Executive Budget. These programs expand care for students and ensure there are opportunities for repair after conflict. Restorative justice programs and practices are alternatives to the traditional form of addressing conflict. It aims to find a permanent solution and bring peace to the victim of the incident; it creates an opportunity to build a different school climate.<sup>1</sup> The Mental Health Continuum is a partnership between Health + Hospitals, NYC Public Schools, and Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, which funds school-based mental health clinics and supports programming and crisis response.

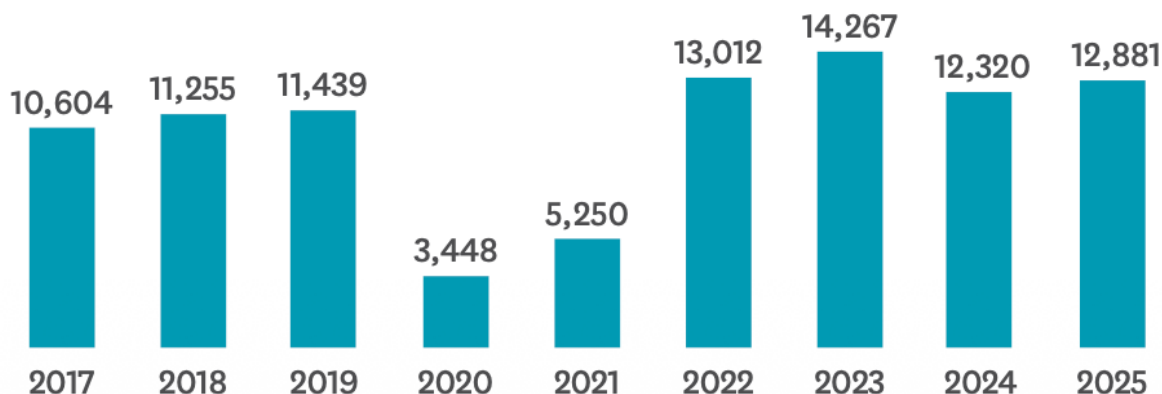
According to data analyzed by CCC, NYC students have experienced a significant increase in policing within schools since returning to in-person instruction following the pandemic. In 2025, over 80% of NYPD interventions came in response to students in emotional distress or to address minimal offenses that led to school mitigation.<sup>2</sup> Students in these scenarios would benefit from restorative justice practices or the supports of a mental health continuum model, rather than from NYPD interventions. By providing mental health services and professional support on school campuses, schools can reduce the number of child-in-crisis scenarios.

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<sup>1</sup> Darling-Hammond, S.(2023). Fostering Belonging, Transforming Schools: The Impact of Restorative Practices. Learning Policy Institute. Accessed: <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/impact-restorative-practices-report>

<sup>2</sup> Citizens' Committee for Children of New York. (2026). Keeping Track of New York City's Children: 2026. [cccnewyork.org/keeping-track-2026](http://cccnewyork.org/keeping-track-2026). *Upcoming in May 2026*

## Reported NYPD Interventions in Schools



## Reported NYPD Interventions in Schools by Type, 2025



We are concerned by the narrative that more school police results in greater safety for students. In fact, when school districts across California reduced reliance on school safety agents and invested in mental health supports, crisis response teams, and other non-criminalizing alternatives, they found teachers and students had better relationships and students had better connections to the school community.<sup>3</sup> To build school safety, we urge the City Council to collaborate with the Mamdani Administration to fully fund and baseline restorative justice and the mental health continuum.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

<sup>3</sup> Fronius, T., Lam, A., Baskerville, T. (2026). The Impact of School Police Reform on Student Safety and School Experiences: Final Summary Report. The U.S. Department of Justice. Accessed: <https://www.ojp.gov/library/publications/impact-school-police-reform-student-safety-and-school-experiences-final>

**TESTIMONY**

**NYC COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
CHAIR, ERIC DINOWITZ  
&  
NYC COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY  
CHAIR, OSWALD FELIZ**

*Oversight –  
Examining School Safety and Crossing Guard Operations at DOE Schools*

**Presented on  
Wednesday, April 29, 2026**



**The Council of School Supervisors and Administrators  
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Dale Kelly, Executive Vice President  
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School safety is among the most pressing challenges confronting our schools today. The Chancellor has appropriately identified safety as a central priority, and CSA fully supports that focus. A school cannot function effectively when students feel unsafe, when families lack confidence in the environment, or when educators are forced to spend significant time managing disruptions instead of focusing on instruction.

In recent years, school leaders have observed firsthand a clear rise in anxiety among both students and families. Students are entering schools carrying significant emotional and psychological stress. Families are seeking greater clarity and reassurance about safety measures. Parents are increasingly concerned about bullying, conflicts fueled by social media, mental health struggles, and incidents of violence both inside school buildings and in surrounding communities.

These concerns are reflected in citywide data, where safety and student well-being consistently rank among families' top priorities. Safety is one of the most urgent topics raised in school meetings and community conversations. Educators are devoting more time to addressing behavioral crises, managing peer conflicts, and supporting students in distress. School safety must be addressed in a comprehensive, coordinated, and immediate way.

### **Safety Staffing & Technology**

Recent data underscores the scope and complexity of the safety conditions schools are navigating. New York City schools are currently supported by approximately 3,500 school safety agents, a notable decline from nearly 5,000 agents prior to the pandemic. Compounding this challenge, the City has eliminated far too many vacant safety agent positions in recent budget cycles, further limiting staffing capacity across many school buildings.

Despite this reduced workforce, safety personnel continue to intercept thousands of dangerous items each year. Department of Education data indicates that during the 2023–2024 school year, nearly 6,000 weapons or dangerous instruments were confiscated in New York City schools, including 14 firearms. In just the first three months of the subsequent school year, an additional 10 firearms were recovered. These figures reflect numerous instances in which trained staff prevented potentially life-threatening situations from escalating.

School safety agents are essential to maintaining both security and a sense of stability within school communities. They are often the first adults students encounter at the start of the day and the last they see when leaving. Over time, many develop strong relationships with students and families, becoming familiar, trusted presences within their schools. They recognize changes in behavior, help de-escalate conflicts, assist during emergencies, and provide reassurance to both staff and families. For many students, these agents serve as consistent and dependable adults who contribute to a positive and secure school climate.

However, the continued decline in staffing has left many schools without adequate coverage. CSA has consistently raised concerns about these shortages and their impact on daily school operations. While recruitment challenges are frequently cited, there has yet to be a

comprehensive, systemwide plan to address retention, compensation, deployment, and working conditions for safety personnel.

Leadership capacity is equally critical. Assistant principals are often the first to respond to student crises, health emergencies, and safety incidents. They coordinate closely with safety agents, support instructional staff, communicate with families, and help maintain order during critical moments. Yet dozens of schools continue to operate without an assistant principal.

As class size initiatives bring additional teachers into the system, the lack of corresponding supervisory support creates a leadership gap that directly affects both safety and overall school climate. CSA continues to urge the City to ensure that every school has a dedicated assistant principal and that leadership staffing grows alongside instructional staffing.

Technology also plays a key role, and CSA recognizes the City's investments in cameras, access control systems, and scanning equipment. However, these tools are only effective when they are fully operational and properly maintained. At one point recently, the Department of Education's mobile scanning unit, responsible for conducting unannounced screenings at multiple schools each day, was unable to operate because none of its x-ray machines were functional. Equipment failures and overcrowded entry procedures introduce new vulnerabilities.

As we previously shared in our testimony on the Mayor's Preliminary Budget, these incidents reported across New York City over the past year illustrate the kinds of situations school leaders and safety personnel are managing every day:

In September 2025, a 16-year-old student in Queens was arrested after bringing a loaded handgun to school and allegedly posting threats on social media about carrying out a shooting.

In October 2025, police recovered a loaded 9-millimeter handgun from a student at a high school in Brooklyn, a building without permanent scanning equipment. That same month, a 16-year-old was shot after a dispute involving teenagers escalated near a school bus route in Queens, illustrating how quickly youth conflict can turn into gun violence affecting school communities.

In November 2025, a student in Brooklyn was arrested after bringing a loaded firearm to school, prompting an emergency response and highlighting the continued risk of weapons entering school buildings.

In December 2025, a student in New York City was found in possession of a weapon on school grounds, prompting police intervention and reinforcing the ongoing need for vigilance and screening measures in school buildings.

In January 2026, two separate students brought loaded guns into two different New York City schools on the same day, including incidents in Harlem and Queens. Within days of those incidents, three different students at three different schools were discovered carrying firearms, including cases in Harlem and Queens.

In February 2026, a school safety agent in Brooklyn was stabbed while attempting to break up a fight near a school during dismissal, demonstrating the risks safety personnel themselves face while protecting students.

In March 2026, an 11-year-old student stabbed another child inside a Bronx middle school, sending the victim to the hospital.

In April 2026, a 15-year-old student slashed another student in the face inside a Bronx high school, sending the victim to the hospital and underscoring the ongoing risk of serious in-school violence.

These incidents represent only a fraction of the events school leaders manage each year. Even when situations are contained quickly, they leave lasting impacts on students, staff, and families. Each incident requires investigation, counseling, communication with families, and often weeks of follow-up to stabilize the school community.

### **Mental Health & Restorative Justice**

Safety also extends beyond physical security. Student well-being is deeply connected to mental health supports, restorative practices, and access to caring adults who intervene early when problems arise. CSA continues to advocate for the restoration and expansion of restorative justice programs, school-based mental health supports, peer mediation, and guidance counseling services. These resources are not optional. When students have access to counseling, when conflicts are addressed through structured restorative practices, and when families are engaged as partners, schools become safer and more stable.

#### **Counselors and Social Work**

Nearly 40% of New York City high school students report feeling persistently sad or hopeless, the highest level in more than a decade. Principals report that many conflicts stem from untreated anxiety, housing instability, social media pressures, and unresolved trauma. At the same time, many schools do not meet recommended staffing ratios for social workers, counselors, or school psychologists. Without adequate counseling services, restorative programs, and mental health professionals, schools are often left to respond to crises rather than preventing them.

An often overlooked but essential component of school safety is the role of Supervisors of Social Work. As schools expand mental health services to respond to rising student needs, the system has not kept pace in providing the clinical supervision necessary to ensure those services are effective. Social workers are on the front lines supporting students experiencing trauma, homelessness, family instability, and emotional distress, factors that are directly connected to behavioral incidents and school safety concerns.

Yet in the vast majority of schools, social workers do not receive consistent supervision from appropriately licensed professionals, limiting the system's ability to ensure quality, consistency, and accountability in how services are delivered. Supervisors of Social Work provide critical oversight, guide staff through complex cases, support professional development, and help ensure

that interventions are effective. Without this supervisory infrastructure, the system risks investing in mental health services without the necessary foundation to translate those resources into meaningful improvements in student behavior, well-being, and overall school safety.

While schools are being asked to manage increasingly complex safety challenges, the current system remains largely reactive in its design. Incidents are addressed after they occur through suspensions, safety transfers, and enforcement measures, but far less attention is given to the conditions that lead to those incidents in the first place.

### *Preventative and Restorative Programs*

School leaders consistently report that by the time a situation reaches the level of a safety incident, the underlying issues have already been present for weeks and months, whether that's emotional distress, ongoing conflict, or chronic disengagement. If a student who has been struggling silently begins acting out, escalates into conflict, and is ultimately removed from the school, the root causes aren't always being addressed.

A comprehensive safety strategy must therefore move beyond incident response and invest more deeply in early intervention, relationship-building, and structured supports that prevent escalation before it occurs. While there is broad agreement that preventative and restorative programs are essential, school leaders report that the way these programs are currently implemented limits their effectiveness. In many cases, schools are provided with access to a wide range of external vendors and services, but without consistent quality control, clear guidance, or sufficient capacity to meet demand.

As a result, two schools may technically have access to the same type of program, yet experience vastly different outcomes depending on the provider, staffing, and level of support. Strong programs are sometimes expanded too quickly without the infrastructure to maintain quality, while other programs lack the expertise needed to effectively support high-need students. This inconsistency creates a system in which access to effective intervention is uneven across schools. School leaders are not asking simply for more programs in name, but for reliable, well-implemented supports that are consistently effective and aligned to the needs of their students.

### *Transfers*

School leaders also raised significant concerns about the current safety transfer process. While intended to provide students with a fresh start, in practice these transfers often shift challenges from one school to another without addressing the underlying causes.

A major contributing factor is the limited ability to share critical information between sending and receiving schools. Outside of formal documentation requirements, schools often receive little context about a student's prior experiences, behavioral history, or emotional needs. This creates situations in which receiving schools are asked to support students without a full understanding of the circumstances that led to the transfer.

In some cases, this lack of information has serious consequences. Principals described situations where schools were unaware of prior safety concerns, mental health risks, or conflicts between students, limiting their ability to proactively support those students and prevent further incidents. As currently structured, the safety transfer system can unintentionally relocate risk rather than reduce it. A more effective approach would ensure that receiving schools have the information and resources necessary to provide appropriate supports and maintain safe environments for all.

A related challenge involves transfers in general, regarding students who have become significantly disengaged from traditional school structures, particularly those who are over-age for their grade level. Principals report that when students fall far behind their peers academically, they often begin to disengage from school, leading to behavioral issues and increased vulnerability to negative influences.

In these cases, simply transferring students to another setting does not resolve the underlying issue. If a student who feels disconnected from school is placed into a program that does not meaningfully address their academic or developmental needs, they are unlikely to re-engage. Students who no longer see a realistic path forward in school are far more likely to act out. Addressing safety in these contexts requires the expansion of alternative pathways that provide accelerated learning, career-connected opportunities, and environments designed specifically for students who are struggling in traditional settings.

### *Safe Passage*

School leaders strongly support initiatives such as safe passage programs but emphasize that these efforts require sustained resources and structured implementation to be effective. In theory, safe passage programs are designed to ensure that students can travel safely to and from school.

In practice, however, many schools report that these programs are inconsistent or largely unavailable. Expectations that community members or local businesses can reliably staff these efforts on a volunteer basis do not reflect the realities of many neighborhoods, where individuals are managing their own work and safety concerns.

Effective safe passage requires trained personnel, coordination, and dedicated funding. Without these elements, schools are left managing safety risks beyond their buildings without the necessary support.

### **Conclusion**

As the administration and city council know, school safety cannot be addressed through isolated measures or short-term responses. The experiences of school leaders across New York City make clear that the current system is too often reactive, responding to incidents after they occur rather than preventing them through coordinated, proactive supports. Addressing safety effectively requires a comprehensive strategy that aligns staffing, student supports, program implementation, and system design.

First, the City must restore and strengthen baseline safety capacity by addressing the ongoing shortage of school safety agents and ensuring that every school has adequate supervisory leadership, including a dedicated assistant principal. Staffing levels must reflect the realities schools are facing, and a systemwide approach to recruitment, retention, and working conditions is essential.

Second, investments in technology must be matched by a commitment to maintenance, functionality, and usability. Safety equipment that is not operational or properly deployed does not enhance security and can create additional vulnerabilities.

Third, the City must shift from a primarily reactive model to one that prioritizes prevention. This includes expanding access to mental health services, restorative practices, and early intervention supports, while ensuring that these programs are implemented consistently and effectively across schools. School leaders need not just access to programs, but confidence that those programs will meet the needs of their students.

Fourth, the system must better align educational pathways to the needs of students who are disengaged or over-age. Without meaningful alternatives that provide accelerated learning, career-connected opportunities, and targeted supports, these students are more likely to disconnect from school entirely, creating greater safety challenges over time.

Fifth, reforms to the safety transfer process are necessary to ensure that schools have the information and resources needed to support students appropriately. A system that prioritizes placement without adequate context or support risks perpetuating the very challenges it is intended to resolve.

Finally, initiatives such as safe passage and programs like Project Pivot must be strengthened through sustained funding, clear structure, and consistent implementation. These efforts represent critical components of a preventative safety strategy but cannot succeed without the resources and coordination required to operate effectively.

Taken together, these actions represent a shift from managing safety incidents to building safer school environments. That shift is essential. Students must feel safe not only inside school buildings, but in the pathways that bring them there and in the systems designed to support them.

CSA stands ready to partner with the Administration and the City Council to advance this work. Our members are on the front lines of these challenges every day, and their insights make clear that meaningful progress will require sustained investment, coordinated policy action, and a shared commitment to prevention as the foundation of school safety.



**The New York City Council's Committee on Education and Committee on Public Safety  
Oversight hearing on School Safety  
Honorable Chair Dinowitz & Honorable Chair Feliz  
City Council Hearing on Education  
April 29th, 2026**

**Real School Safety is Impossible Through School Policing and Surveillance  
Testimony of the Dignity in Schools Campaign - NY**

Good afternoon, and thank you Chair Dinowitz, Chair Feliz, and members of the New York City Council Committees on Education and Public Safety. My name is Andrea Ortiz, and I am the Director of the Dignity in Schools Campaign–New York (DSC-NY), a coalition of 27 organizations working to create safe and supportive learning environments in NYC Public Schools. We organize with students, parents, educators, and advocates to expand restorative justice, increase mental health access, and strengthen protections for immigrant communities, while working to eliminate police, surveillance, and punitive discipline in schools.

Public schools should be places where young people feel safe, supported, and able to learn. Unfortunately, there is a growing call from City Council leadership to expand repressive school policing and surveillance, in the name of safety, despite the well documented fact that punitive discipline, policing, and surveillance create barriers to learning<sup>1</sup> and undermine the physical<sup>2</sup> and emotional<sup>3</sup> wellbeing of far too many Black, Brown, immigrant, transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) students and students with disabilities. Dr. Rachel Lissy at NYU Steinhart reports that “In New York City and nationally, Black students are suspended at 3-4 times the rate of their white peers and are more likely to experience disciplinary responses that involve the criminal justice system.<sup>4</sup>”

Therefore, DSC-NY calls on the City to freeze hiring for school police and cut all open vacancies, creating nearly \$90 million in savings that can be redirected away from policing into proven safety infrastructure. We recognize that the city is currently struggling with a budget deficit so we encourage the City Council and the Mayor to use that \$90 million dollars in savings to expand school-based restorative justice, mental health supports, and immigrant protections.

We urge the Council to:

<sup>1</sup><https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/intended-consequences-and-explicit-bias-roots-racialized-disproportionality-nyc>

<sup>2</sup><https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10929984/>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.publichealth.columbia.edu/news/policing-may-play-role-youth-mental-health-crises>

<sup>4</sup><https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/intended-consequences-and-explicit-bias-roots-racialized-disproportionality-nyc>



- Invest \$80 million to hire School Climate Coordinators in 500 priority middle and high schools,
- Baseline the remaining \$6 million in restorative justice funding set to expire, and increase funding by another \$5 million, bringing the total from \$17.6 million to \$22.6 million, including adding:
  - \$2 million for training and technical assistance, and
  - \$3 million to support paid student leadership opportunities in restorative justice.
- Hire at least one more behavioral specialist per district to provide culturally-competent and trauma-informed approaches to addressing student behavior.
- Baseline funding for the Mental Health Continuum (\$5M), set to expire at the end of June 2026 to ensure long-term implementation in 50 high-need schools.
- Protect immigrant students and families from President Trump’s mass detention and deportation plan, including:
  - Baselining funding for immigrant family communications and outreach (\$4M to expire June);
  - Strengthening immigration preparedness policies;
  - Offering comprehensive trainings for staff, students, and families;
  - Enhancing data privacy and security protections; and
  - Passing Intro 798 to eliminate the NYPD’s Gang database.
- Protect schools, families, and educators from police repression by supporting Mamdani’s veto to the Education Buffer Zone Bill, Int. 175-B.

Before leaving office, former Comptroller Lander put a spotlight on the seismic gap in access to school based mental health staff and centers in the midst of a mental health crisis, where nearly half of all NYC students are experiencing some level of depression and up to a quarter are suffering with anxiety<sup>5</sup>. These access and impact disparities are disproportional for Black, Brown, queer, and unhoused students and students with disabilities. We know that mental health crises can be internalized or externalized, so DSC-NY’s vision for safe supportive schools integrates holistically restorative justice, mental health access, and immigrant protections.

Additionally, it is important to note that suspensions have been steadily decreasing since COVID<sup>6</sup> and they were already on the decline in the runup to the pandemic despite the fact that we have lower than planned school police counts and are grappling with this mental health crisis. This is credited in large part to the advocacy our parents, students, and educators have done and that schools are increasingly using restorative practices, peer mediation, in-school counseling, and

<sup>5</sup> <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/new-york-city-faces-record-high-youth-mental-health-crisis-comptroller-landers-report/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2026/04/08/nyc-school-suspensions-drop-2025-restorative-justice/>



referrals to external mental health providers to respond to student needs, which is keeping students engaged in their learning while maintaining safe school communities.

For over a decade, our city has been moving away from overly punitive and ineffective discipline policies because they did nothing to improve student behavior and instead resulted in tens of thousands of students a year experiencing days, months, and up to a year of lost instruction time, among other harms to our students and school communities.<sup>7</sup> Evidence demonstrates that restorative justice reduces suspensions, improves school climate, and strengthens relationships between students, educators, and families. Restorative justice helps build and heal relationships, de-escalate conflicts by teaching students problem-solving skills, and hold students accountable for their actions.<sup>8</sup> In fact, from July to December 2025, schools handed out nearly 9,200 suspensions, 8% fewer than the same period in 2024. The decline included a nearly 22% drop in long-term superintendent suspensions, which run six days or more and are served at outside suspension sites. This progress was possible during hard austerity measures from Mayor Adams, so we are certain with this new administration we can do more to end school pushout.

A real commitment to safety requires a shift in how we invest. Restorative justice builds community, prevents harm, and creates meaningful responses when harm occurs, but it requires sustained funding, dedicated staff, and integration into school culture. Research shows that restorative practices work. In a study of the implementation of restorative practices in Chicago high schools, researchers found a 35% decline in student arrests in school, a 15% reduction in out-of-school arrests, an 18% decrease in out-of-school suspensions, and improved student-reported perceptions of school climate—increased feelings of belongingness and safety at school<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, this approach would also be cost effective, as it costs close to a million dollars a year to keep a young person locked up in New York State. In NYC school policing is widespread while restorative justice and other healing centered, preventative approaches are not. We can and must fix that.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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<sup>7</sup> See Trevor Fronius et al., *Restorative Justice in U.S. Schools: An Updated Research Review*, WestEd Just. & Prevention Rsch. Ctr., 1-3, 17 (Mar. 2019),

<https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/resource-restorative-justice-in-u-s-schools-an-updated-research-review.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> For examples of how restorative justice is being used in NYC Public Schools in *See* Alex Zimmerman, *NYC's push for restorative justice was put to the test this school year*, Chalkbeat New York (June 2022), <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2022/6/24/23182154/restorative-justice-covid-nyc-school/>. Also See U.S. Comm'n on Civ. Rts., *Beyond Suspensions: Examining School Discipline Policies and Connections to the School-to-Prison Pipeline for Students of Color with Disabilities*, Briefing Report (July 2019), <https://www.usccr.gov/pubs/2019/07-23-Beyond-Suspensions.pdf> (“U.S.C.C.R., *Beyond Suspensions*”).

<sup>9</sup><https://news.uchicago.edu/story/uchicago-education-lab-study-finds-decrease-arrests-suspensions-schools-use-restorative>



**Submitted by:**

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Director  
Dignity in Schools Campaign - NY

**Testimony of the New York Civil Liberties Union<sup>1</sup>**  
**Before the New York City Council Committees on Education & Public Safety**  
**Oversight - Examining School Safety & Crossing Guard Operations at DOE Schools**  
**April 29, 2026**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The NYCLU, the New York State affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with eight offices and more than 90,000 members and supporters across the state. The NYCLU’s mission is to defend and promote the fundamental principles, rights and values embodied in the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution and the Constitution of the State of New York.

Protecting and expanding students’ rights is a core component of our mission, and through our Education Policy Center, the NYCLU advocates for healthy school climate and equitable access to quality education for all students. As a founding member of the Student Safety Coalition, the NYCLU partnered with students, parents, and advocates across the City to enact the Student Safety Act—a first-of-its-kind reporting law on policing in schools. The Student Safety Act has given the public a view into the inner workings of schools and the NYPD, revealing a system of “school safety” that is both unsafe and harmful to many Black and Latinx students and students with disabilities.

The policing infrastructure many students encounter each day at school—surveillance cameras pointed at them, barred windows and security fencing, and large police vans parked outside school doors—all seem designed to intimidate. More than 100,000 New York City students must also pass through metal detectors, undergo searches, and face police scrutiny to get to class, teaching them education is a privilege, not a right.

As the Council exercises oversight over “School Safety” operations, we urge policymakers to consider removal, rather than only regulation, of NYC’s school-based police. It is imperative that our city explores effective ways to maintain safe schools without sacrificing any of our children to the carceral system. Not only should we not go back to a time when the NYPD’s School Safety Division was the fifth-largest police department in the nation, but we should reject the status quo and constantly strive for something better.

**II. NEW YORK CITY’S SCHOOL POLICING CONTEXT**

For generations, school communities have recognized that deploying police to schools could be a way to quiet civil rights organizing, gather intelligence, and reform the image of police.<sup>2</sup> When the NYC Board of Education (BOE) established its first



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<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Remnick, N. (2023). “The Police State in Franklin K. Lane”: Desegregation, Student Resistance, and the Carceral Turn at a New York City High School.” *Journal of Urban History*. 49(5), 1071 - 1087. Accessed from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144222114206>.

security force of 700 auxiliary police in 1968<sup>3</sup> community groups vocally opposed the plan, understanding that this was a political response to the demand New York fulfill its promise of desegregated education.<sup>4</sup>

Within a decade, NYC's school security force increased from 700 and a budget of \$1.5 million to 2,200 officers with a budget of \$43 million.<sup>5</sup> The Giuliani administration went further, establishing school security as employees of the NYPD and ensuring student conduct be viewed through a criminal legal system lens rather than a pedagogical one. Parents and community members again vigorously fought the plan. Two years after the transition, more than two thirds of principals surveyed by the city reported that despite the change there had been no improvement in the climate of safety in their schools.<sup>6</sup>

Breaking a promise to parents that the force would not grow with the NYPD takeover, school police personnel jumped almost 50% from 3,200<sup>7</sup> to 4,625 by 2005.<sup>8</sup> Historians argue this rise in school policing is likely attributable to non-safety factors; instead, the expansion of school policing has been a response to moments of young people and families demanding school reform.<sup>9</sup> We call on the Council to break from this tradition.

**a. *Linking school policing and improved safety is empirically unfounded.***

There is no evidence school policing programs prevent<sup>10</sup> or deter<sup>11</sup> violence. National surveys of students suggest that the presence of school police is unrelated to their own propensity to violate rules or engage in harm.<sup>12</sup> Instead, research has shown that police presence can significantly *decrease* a student's perception of safety at school.<sup>13</sup>

**b. *School policing criminalizes everyday youth behavior and disproportionately pushes students of color and students with disabilities into precincts, courts, jails, and prisons—commonly regarded as a “pipeline.”***

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<sup>3</sup> Buder, L. (1968, February 20). “Schools To Hire Security Helpers.” *New York Times*; Walsh & Mulligan. (1968, January 28). “O’Connor Oks Schools Guards.” *Daily News* (“It would be the first time in history,” noted the *Daily News*, “that guards have been placed inside city school buildings.”)

<sup>4</sup> Todd, G. (1968, January 27). “Parents, School Board Alarmed By Attacks: JHS 117 Incident Shakes Entire City.” *New York Amsterdam News*; Todd, G. (1968, February 3). “JHS 117 Discontented Want Principal Ousted.” *New York Amsterdam News*; Frasier, C.G. (1968, January 24). “Brooklyn Parents Threaten Violence if Guards Block Access to the Schools.” *New York Times*.

<sup>5</sup> Remnick, N. (2021). *Disruptive Children: Desegregation, Student Resistance, and the Carceral Turn in New York City Schools*. University of Oxford.

<sup>6</sup> Ince, A. (2001, June 12). “Preppin’ for Prison.” *The Village Voice*. Accessed from <https://www.villagevoice.com/preppin-for-prison/>.

<sup>7</sup> Hollaway, L. (1998, September 17). “Board Votes to Give Police Control of School Security,” *New York Times*, at B5.

<sup>8</sup> New York City Department of Education. (2006, April 13). “Mayor Bloomberg, Schools Chancellor Klein And Police Commissioner Kelly Announce A New School Safety Initiative Amid Significant Declines In Crime In City Impact Schools.”

<sup>9</sup> Fedders, B. (2021). “The End of School Policing.” *California Law Review*. Accessed from <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3923653>.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Stern, A. & Petrosino, A. (2018). “What do we know about the effects of school-based law enforcement on school safety?” Accessed from <https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/JPRC-Police-Schools-Brief.pdf>. (concluding that there has been no “rigorous evaluative research on the effects - in terms of school safety - of having a police presence in schools,” and asserting that the existing body of evidence “fails to support a school safety effect”).

<sup>11</sup> Javdani S. (2019) “Policing Education: An Empirical Review of the Challenges and Impact of the Work of School Police Officers.” *American Journal of Community Psychology*. 63(3-4):253-269. Accessed from <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12306>.

<sup>12</sup> Swartz K., Osborne D.L., Dawson-Edwards C., & Higgins G.E. (2016). “Policing schools: Examining the impact of place management activities on school violence.” *American Journal of Criminal Justice*. 41, 465–483; Theriot, M.T. (2016). “The impact of school resource officer interaction on students’ feelings about school and school police.” *Crime and Delinquency*. 62, 446–469.

<sup>13</sup> *Id*; Theriot, M.T., and Orme, J.G. (2016). “School Resource Officers and Students’ Feelings of Safety at School.” *Youth Violence & Juvenile Justice*. 4, 130-146.



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The presence and behavior of the NYPD in schools shifts the school social climate, increases the surveillance reach of the police, and increases the likelihood that behavior that *could* have been handled by school staff is instead referred to the criminal legal system. School police often intervene in common everyday behavior. In a process referred to as “preemptive criminalization,”<sup>14</sup> a student drawing on a desk becomes “vandalism,” a student hanging out in the bathroom becomes “loitering.” This is a deeply racialized process that leads to harsher punishments for students compared to schools without school-based police<sup>15</sup> and significant declines in graduation rates and enrollment in continuing education.<sup>16</sup>

Quarter after quarter, the Council’s Student Safety Act data reveals the disproportionate targeting of Black students in school-based police interventions. During the first half of the 2025-26 school year, the most recently available data, there were over 5,000 policing incidents reported through the Student Safety Act.<sup>17</sup> **While Black students represent 19% of all NYCPS enrollment, Black students represented 52% of all police interventions, and 56% of all students forced into metal handcuffs** (53% of all students forced into metal handcuffs during an arrest, and 56% during a juvenile report or “child in crisis” response).<sup>18</sup> This data shows a broken system, one that makes Black children less safe.

During this same period, metal handcuffs were used on children as young as 10, and children as young as 12 were forced into handcuffs during an arrest, for a juvenile report, and for “child in crisis” incidents.<sup>19</sup>

Research shows that school police report “calming students down” is the most frequent reason for placing children in handcuffs.<sup>20</sup> Notably, there were 35 reported incidents of police using metal handcuffs during “mitigations,” drawing into question the precarious definition of this growing policing category. We urge the Council to audit NYPD compliance with Local Law 17 of 2024, intended to regulate the NYPD’s response to children in emotional crisis and set limits on the use of metal handcuffs.

Compared to the 2016-2017 school year, when the NYPD first started reporting, police “mitigations” (where police intervene to then release students to school staff) have jumped by 130% from 1,461 to 3,345. There is limited research on the impacts of police “mitigations” on young people generally, but qualitative evidence suggests that most young people who experienced involuntary holds from police viewed the

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<sup>14</sup> Allen, T., and Noguera, P. (2023). “A web of punishment: Examining Black student interactions with school police in Los Angeles.” *Educational Researcher*. Accessed from <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X221095547>.

<sup>15</sup> Na, C., and Gottfredson, D.C. (2013). “Police officers in schools: Effects on school crime and the processing of offending behaviors.” *Justice Quarterly*. 30, 619–650; Swartz, K. et al. *supra* note 12; Sorensen, L.C., Avila-Acosta, M., Engberg, J. B., & Bushway, S. D. (2023). “The thin blue line in schools: New evidence on school-based policing across the U.S.” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. 42, 941–970. Accessed from <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.2249>; Sorensen, L.C., Shen, Y., & Bushway, S.D. (2021). “Making schools safer and/or escalating disciplinary response: A study of police officers in North Carolina schools.” *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. 43(3), 495–519. Accessed from <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737211006409>.

<sup>16</sup> Weisburst, E.K. (2019). “Patrolling Public Schools: The Impact of Funding for School Police on Student Discipline and Long-term Education Outcomes.” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. 38, 338-365. Accessed from <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22116>.

<sup>17</sup> Citing to “School Safety Data” 2025 Q3 & Q4. Accessed from <https://www.nyc.gov/site/nypd/stats/reports-analysis/school-safety.page>.

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*  
<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> Javdani, S. *supra* note 11 (Citing Wolf, K.C. [2014]. “Arrest decision making by school resource officers.” *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*. 12, 137–151.)

experience as “criminalizing,” and “dehumanizing.”<sup>21</sup> Studies outside of the schooling context found that young people stopped by police were more likely to report school disengagement, psychological and emotional distress, and post-traumatic stress symptoms,<sup>22</sup> with more adverse health responses manifesting if young people were stopped by police in school.<sup>23</sup> Simply witnessing a police stop has been found to be associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety among young people.<sup>24</sup>

For decades, the NYCLU has warned that the need to justify the growing presence of NYPD in schools has created a climate in which school staff call on police for classroom management.<sup>25</sup> Of the few studies to report on the discretion exercised by school police, one found that 100% reported using discretion when making arrest decisions,<sup>26</sup> and another found police frequently exercised high discretion in deciding to question students.<sup>27</sup> We urge the Council to critically examine demands placed on SSAs to be “useful” in the school context,<sup>28</sup> and how this ultimately negatively impacts student wellbeing.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

We call on the Council to champion school-community collaborations, address structural factors that lead to reliance on policing, and avoid leaning on a system-serving logic, wherein the City defers to the NYPD to justify their own workforce that had been growing unchecked for decades.<sup>29</sup> The peak headcount of 5,200+ school safety officers was an arbitrary number—school safety incidents have not increased as the headcount dropped.<sup>30</sup>

The Council should be looking for ways to reinvest school safety dollars in student supports and in the classroom, hiring certified counselors and bilingual educators, for example, and implementing evidence-based safety strategies.

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<sup>21</sup> Jones, N., Gius, B., Shields, M., Florence, A., Collings, S., Green, K., Watson, A., & Munson, M. (2022). “Youths’ and young adults’ experiences of police involvement during initiation of involuntary psychiatric holds and transport.” *Psychiatric Services*. 73(8), 910–917. Accessed from <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.202100263>

<sup>22</sup> Del Toro, J., Jackson, D. B., & Wang, M. T. (2022). “The policing paradox: Police stops predict youth’s school disengagement via elevated psychological distress.” *Developmental Psychology*. 58(7), 1402. Accessed from <https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0001361>; Jindal, M., Mistry, K.B., Trent, M., McRae, A., & Thornton, R. L. (2022). “Police exposures and the health and well-being of Black youth in the US: A systematic review.” *JAMA Pediatrics*. 176(1), 78–88. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2021.2929>.

<sup>23</sup> Devlin, D.N., Gottfredson, D.C. (2018). “The roles of police officers in schools: Effects on the recording and reporting of crime.” *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*. 16(2), 208–223. Accessed from <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204016680405>.

<sup>24</sup> Jackson, D.B., Testa, A., Semenza, D. C., & Fix R.L. (2022). “Youth mental well-being following witnessed police stops.” *Journal of Urban Health*. 99(5), 783–793. Accessed from <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-022-00667-x>.

<sup>25</sup> Mukherjee, E. et al. (2007). “Criminalizing the Classroom: The Over-Policing of New York City Schools.” New York Civil Liberties Union, American Civil Liberties Union. Accessed from [https://www.nyclu.org/uploads/2018/10/nyclu\\_pub\\_criminalizing\\_the\\_classroom.pdf](https://www.nyclu.org/uploads/2018/10/nyclu_pub_criminalizing_the_classroom.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> Wolf, K.C. (2014). “Arrest decision making by school resource officers.” *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*. 12, 137–151.

<sup>27</sup> Kupchik, A., & Bracy, N.L. (2010). “To protect, serve, and mentor? Police officers in public schools.” *School Under Surveillance: Cultures of Control in Public Education*, 21–37.

<sup>28</sup> On this, see, e.g., Hirschfield, P.J. (2018). “Schools and crime.” *Annual Review of Criminology*. 1, 149–169; See also, Barnes, L.M. (2016). “Keeping the peace and controlling crime: What school resource officers want school personnel to know.” *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*. 89, 197–201.

<sup>29</sup> A phenomenon discussed across research, see, e.g., id.; James, N. & McCallion, G. (2013). “School resource officers: Law enforcement officers in schools (Report No. 7–5700).” Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.

<sup>30</sup> Office of the Mayor. (2026, January 6). “Transcript: Mayor Mamdani and Commissioner Tisch Announces Safest Year Ever for Gun Violence with Fewest Shooting Incidents and Shooting Victims in Recorded History.” (“School-related enforcement is down 21 percent”). Accessed from <https://www.nyc.gov/mayors-office/news/2026/01/transcript--mayor-mamdani-and-commissioner-tisch-announces-safes>; Testimony of Jessica S. Tisch, Commissioner, New York City Police Department. Hearing before the New York City Council Committee on Public Safety. (2026, March 18). (“As of March 1, compared to the 2024-2025 school year, major crime in our city’s schools has fallen by more than 9%, and total crime complaints in our schools are down more than 15%. At the same time, enforcement in our schools is also down – with arrests declining nearly 0%, as of March 1<sup>st</sup>.”) Accessed from <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/View.ashx?M=F&ID=15387724&GUID=95B3BC4D-97AE-46A2-8BA3-13BA14D97BA0>.

**a. Reduce the School Safety Agent headcount.**

When then-Mayor Giuliani led a campaign to transfer responsibility for school policing from the BOE to the NYPD, the BOE was promised that the school police force would not be enlarged from roughly 3,200 officers.<sup>31</sup> Over mayoral administrations since, students, parents, and advocates have urged the City to spend less public money on school policing and to shrink the size of the force through attrition and reassignment. Yet the force ballooned under mayor Bloomberg to become larger than the police forces of all but five American cities.

In recent years, the school policing division of the NYPD has been operating hundreds below the authorized headcount; the Council should harness this opportunity to build restorative school safety infrastructure.

*Positions within the School Safety Division of the NYPD*

	12/2021 <sup>32</sup>	01/2023 <sup>33</sup>	01/2024 <sup>34</sup>	01/2025 <sup>35</sup>	01/2026 <sup>36</sup>
Active Positions	3,928	3,706	3,634	3,535	3,234
Authorized Headcount	5,290	4,730	4,448	4,126	4,126
Ghost Positions	1,362	1,024	814	591	892

A comparison of 60 schools from 6 California school districts that removed police during 2019-2021, with 120 matched comparison schools from 30 districts that retained police, found **that schools that removed police saw significant improvements in how students experienced their school environment, including stronger caring relationships with staff and more meaningful participation in school.**<sup>37</sup> Contrary to political concerns, removing police did not lead to increases in violence victimization, harassment or bullying, substance use.<sup>38</sup>

Interviews with district staff revealed that successful approaches, regardless of reform decisions, shared common elements including clear protocols, multi-layered support systems including restorative justice practices, partnerships with community-based organizations for violence intervention, and investment in positive school climate and staff-student relationships.<sup>39</sup> Findings suggest that school police are not the



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<sup>31</sup> Katz, N.L. (1998, September 16). “Board sees model in cop-principal alliance.” *Daily News*; Katz, N.L. (1998, September 17). “Bd. OKs cop-security takeover.” *Daily News*; Holloway, L. (1998, September 17). “Board Votes to Give Police Control of School Security.” *New York Times*.

<sup>32</sup> City of New York, Office of Management and Budget. (2022). Departmental Estimates. Accessed from <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/de2-22.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> City of New York, Office of Management and Budget. (2023). Departmental Estimates. Accessed from <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/de1-23.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> City of New York, Office of Management and Budget. (2024). Departmental Estimates. Accessed from <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/de1-24.pdf>.

<sup>35</sup> City of New York, Office of Management and Budget. (2025). Departmental Estimates. Accessed from <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/jan25/de1-25.pdf>.

<sup>36</sup> City of New York, Office of Management and Budget. (2026). Departmental Estimates. Accessed from <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/feb26/de2-26.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> Fronius, T., Lam, A.C., & Baskerville, T. (2025). “The Impact of School Police Reform on Student Safety and School Experiences.” *WestEd*. Accessed from <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/311090.pdf>.

<sup>38</sup> *Id.*

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

determining factor in school safety; rather, comprehensive support systems, metal health resources, and positive school climate are essential.

***b. Metal detectors should not be utilized as a long-term or permanent fixture in any NYC public school.***

Since 2016, the NYPD has been required to collect information on the use of metal detectors in schools and report that information to the City Council and the public.<sup>40</sup> In 2019, the NYCLU submitted a Freedom of Information Law request to the Council, asking for these reports; later that year, the Council responded saying it did not have the data. Without official reports, we rely on an analysis of public data that very likely undercounts the number of students impacted by scanners every day.

We estimate that full-time scanning currently happens in 15% of eligible school buildings,<sup>41</sup> impacting more than 100,000 mostly Black and Brown young people. A 2015 investigation by WNYC estimated that Black and Latinx students were nearly three times more likely to attend a scanning school than white high school students.<sup>42</sup>

When Mayor de Blasio's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline released its initial recommendations, they included implementing protocols to remove scanners.<sup>43</sup> At that time, there were no written guidelines accessible to the public that explained the process, and not one school had removed a permanent scanner over the decade prior.<sup>44</sup> An investigation by WNYC and ProPublica reported that since 1998, only two permanent metal detectors had ever been removed.<sup>45</sup> According to current protocol, principals submit a written request that is reviewed by NYCDOE and NYPD, with the final determination made by the NYPD; any appeal is reviewed by the Police Commissioner and the Chancellor, with any granted appeal only where both agree.<sup>46</sup> This process pits school principals against the Police Commissioner, an intimidating imbalance of power.

We have confirmed with high-level NYCPS and NYPD personnel that principals rarely if ever commence this removal process. We believe this is because they are under-supported by the City to do so. There is zero incentive for NYCPS or NYPD to assist principals in navigating this process or support them with alternative safety plans—none of our leaders has ever declared it a goal to improve a school's safety to the point where metal detectors are no longer needed. Instead, generation after

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<sup>40</sup> See Local Law 93 of 2015 (E. Use of permanent and temporary metal detectors. The department shall submit to the council on a quarterly basis a report including: [i] a list of school buildings with permanent metal detectors; [ii] a list of school buildings subjected to random scanning; [iii] a list of schools that have requested the removal of metal detectors; and [iv] a list of schools for which a requested removal of metal detectors has been honored.)

<sup>41</sup> Per NYCPS data reporting, schools are spread across little more than 1,200 buildings, where about 600 buildings currently house a middle or high school; Recent accounting discloses 79 full-time scanning school campuses: Bamberger, C. (2023, December 14). "NYC beefing up school security with new safety agents, high-tech scanners." *Daily News*. Accessed from <https://www.nydailynews.com/2023/12/14/nyc-beefing-up-school-security-with-new-safety-agents-high-tech-scanners/>.

<sup>42</sup> Aaron, K., & Ye, J. (2015, September 15). "More Than 900,000 New York City Students Are Searched Before School." *WNYC News*. Accessed from <https://www.wnyc.org/story/school-metal-detectors/>.

<sup>43</sup> Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline. (July 2015). "Safety with Dignity." Accessed from <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/sclt/downloads/pdf/Safety-with-Dignity-Executive-Summary.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

<sup>45</sup> Reyes, C. (2016, January 12). "100,000 NYC School Children Face Airport-Style Security Screening Every Day." *ProPublica*. Accessed from <https://www.propublica.org/article/nyc-school-children-face-airport-style-security-screening-every-day>.

<sup>46</sup> See, "Scanning in NYCDOE Schools: A Collaboration Between the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and the New York City Department of Education." (2016, July 21). Accessed from [https://pwsblobprd.schools.nyc/prd-pws/docs/default-source/default-document-library/scanning-protocols-in-nyc-doe-schools-english.pdf?sfvrsn=cfef48d6\\_12](https://pwsblobprd.schools.nyc/prd-pws/docs/default-source/default-document-library/scanning-protocols-in-nyc-doe-schools-english.pdf?sfvrsn=cfef48d6_12).

generation, we sink cash into the status quo: long scanning queues, invasive searches of mostly students of color, costly and fickle technology, and flashpoints of conflict between kids and cops. Metal detectors are *at best* a band-aid, and their necessity should be treated as a red flag—a signal that a school is in dire need of investment and support.

In 2024, the School Construction Authority directed \$4 million to the purchase of the market’s newest model of metal detector;<sup>47</sup> today, school staff and students report routine dysfunction with the equipment, and there has been no formal public engagement in assessing the new technology’s impact. Technological dysfunction is not a new phenomenon: when former Mayor Giuliani began a Commission to propose the transfer of school security to the NYPD, the report highlighted fundamental flaws with scanning that persist today.<sup>48</sup>

Researchers note that “security theater”—the enactment of tangible and highly visible measures that set an appearance of security—is one of the key social forces driving school policing.<sup>49</sup> One older study surveying principals about their reasons for hiring school police, for example, is telling: asked to explain why they wanted police in their schools, the most widely cited reason was “[n]ational media attention about school violence’ (24.5%).”<sup>50</sup> (Only 3.7% of respondents indicated that the actual level of violence in the school was the reason for establishing a school-policing program.)<sup>51</sup> Instead of perpetually experimenting with surveillance technology at the behest of the NYPD, the Council should take steps to reduce the need for metal detectors and invest in people-driven solutions.

### ***c. Discontinue the “Assistant School Safety Agent” Recruitment Strategy***

The NYCLU remains deeply concerned about the new “Assistant School Safety Agent” position within the NYPD. This position places recent high school graduates in quasi-policing roles in elementary schools, a particularly dangerous strategy.

SSAs and Assistant SSAs represent a workforce with high authority over children. The Council has collaborated with advocates for the last decade to reform the role of police in responding to children with NYPD-facilitated hospitalizations, for example. There were 464 instances of children under the age of 11 targeted for police interventions in the first half of this 2025-2026 school year, with nearly half restrained for these “Child in Crisis” incidents. Young adults are being hired at low wages to act in roles which compromise the safety of children—ultimately reinforcing the school-to-prison pipeline.

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<sup>47</sup> Capital Contracts to CEIA USA resulting from the announcement amounted to \$4,008,636.00, per information reported by [checkbook.nyc.gov](https://checkbook.nyc.gov/).

<sup>48</sup> Report of the Mayor’s Investigatory Commission on School Safety. (1996, January 4). Accessed from the Municipal Reference and Research Center. (“In one of these schools with more than \$80,000 worth of machinery, the power goes off every time the machines are switched on because of inadequate amperage”)(“A number of school-based police officers that were interviewed commented on the inefficiency of the walk-through airport-type weapons scanners. They explained that students were routinely able to evade weapons detection...”)

<sup>49</sup> See, e.g., Monahan, T., & Torres, R. D. (Eds.). (2010). *Schools Under Surveillance: Cultures of Control in Public Education*. Rutgers University Press.

<sup>50</sup> Travis, L.T., & Coon, J.K. (2005). The Role of Law Enforcement in Public School Safety: A National Survey. Final Report to the National Institute of Justice. Accessed from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/211676.pdf>.

<sup>51</sup> *Id.*



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Rather than investing in more police personnel to criminalize the behaviors of elementary school students, the City should invest in hiring staff trained in youth development and trauma-informed care. We urge the Council to reduce the political pressure for the NYPD to take on haphazard and patchwork initiatives to maintain the school police role.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

School safety arises from rich curriculum, opportunity to learn, well-trained and supported educators, and the creation of non-reactive and non-punitive responses to school-based behavior. Our City's overreliance on school police has harmed outcomes for countless Black and Brown children, and students with disabilities. We lack the incentive and the creativity to push for better, longer-lasting, more effective, child-centered solutions. Instead, we spend precious education dollars on maintenance strategies, neither designed nor required to solve underlying problems.

At the NYCLU, we hear from students year after year that their schools feel like jails. Enough is enough. Our schools must shift to a culture where school staff are supported to address conflict and create solutions, in a way that does not serve to further disconnect students from the schools they attend.



Testimony of the  
New York County Defender Services

Before the  
Committee on Public Safety and Committee on Education  
Int. 788-2026 (Dinowitz)

April 28, 2026

### **Background and Overview**

New York County Defender Services (“NYCDS”) is a public defense office that represents New Yorkers in thousands of cases in Manhattan’s Criminal Court, Supreme Court, and Family Courts every year. Our Youth Advocacy Unit represents children in felony “Raise the Age” cases in both Supreme Court and Family Court.

The bill before this body would require reporting on school safety agent retention, resignation, and termination. The stated purpose of this proposed legislation is to understand and respond to widespread attrition. There are approximately 3,600 police officials stationed in New York City schools, a figure that has fallen 28% over the last six years.<sup>1</sup> To backfill these positions, the Police Department has deployed 114 school safety aides as young as 18 into our schools.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Elsen-Rooney, Michael, and Alex Zimmerman. “NYC School Safety Force Drops by Almost a Third.” *THE CITY*, 11 Mar. 2025, <https://www.thecity.nyc/2025/03/11/school-safety-agents-nypd-principals/>

<sup>2</sup> Zimmerman, Alex. “NYC Hires Assistant School Safety Agents as Young as 18 to Help Fill NYPD Shortage.” *Chalkbeat New York*, 26 Mar. 2026, <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2026/03/26/nyc-school-assistant-school-safety-agent-help-fill-nypd-shortage/>

We urge this body to take a different view of the problem. These positions should not be filled. As we explain below, the evidence is clear: school safety agents do not make students safer, they cause particular harm to Black and Brown students, and the resources now devoted to school policing would do more good if they were redirected to counselors, clinicians, and restorative practices.

### **School Policing Is a Recent and Unproven Experiment**

The idea that police officers belong in schools is a recent development, not a longstanding feature of American education. In 1975, only 1% of public high schools had their own police officers.<sup>3</sup> The first major expansion came with the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which created the federal Community Oriented Policing Services office to oversee funds for hiring police in schools.<sup>4</sup> Numbers grew dramatically after the Columbine massacre of 1999.<sup>5</sup>

The driver has been fear of school violence, especially school shootings. But research shows that arming schools does little to stop this kind of violence.<sup>6</sup> School safety agents were not designed for, and do not effectively prevent, mass shootings. In practice, they spend their time on disciplinary infractions and mental health crises, which they route into the carceral system rather than letting schools handle thus feeding the school-to-prison pipeline. To the extent that people want school safety agents at school to promote safety, there is little evidence that school safety agents prevent student crime at all.<sup>7</sup>

### **School Safety Agents Disproportionately Harm Black and Brown Students**

The harms of school policing fall heavily on Black and Brown children. Black students are three times more likely to attend a school with more security staff than mental health personnel.<sup>8</sup> Once officers are present, Black and Brown students face more punishment, and more severe punishment, than their white peers.<sup>9</sup> Research has found that school safety agents perceive

<sup>3</sup> Behnken, Monic. “Why School Police Officers May Not Be the Most Effective Way to Prevent Violence.” *Iowa State University Research*, 19 Nov. 2024, <https://research.iastate.edu/2024/11/19/why-school-police-officers-may-not-be-the-most-effective-way-to-prevent-violence/>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> “Association of School-Based Police Presence With Student Discipline and Academic Outcomes.” *JAMA Network Open*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2021, <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2776515/>.

<sup>7</sup> Fisher, Benjamin W., et al. “Protecting the Flock or Policing the Sheep? Differences in School Resource Officers’ Perceptions of Threats by School Racial Composition.” *Social Problems*, vol. 69, no. 2, May 2022, pp. 316–334, <https://academic.oup.com/socpro/advance-article-abstract/doi/10.1093/socpro/spaa062/5939812>.

<sup>8</sup> Whittenberg, Tyler, and Maria Fernandez. “Ending Student Criminalization and the School-to-Prison Pipeline.” *NYU Steinhardt Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools*, Advancement Project, <https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/ejroc/ending-student-criminalization-and-school-prison-pipeline>.

<sup>9</sup> Thompson, Elena. “School Resource Officers Exacerbate the School-To-Prison Pipeline for Students of Color.” *ACLU of Ohio*, 18 Feb. 2021, <https://www.acluohio.org/news/school-resource-officers-exacerbate-school-prison-pipeline-students-color/>.

threats to be external in predominantly white schools and to come from the students themselves in majority-Black schools.<sup>10</sup> That perception shapes who is stopped, searched, disciplined, and arrested.

### **Officers Are Not Equipped to Respond to Mental Health Crises**

School safety officers are increasingly first responders to students in mental distress, a role they are not trained to fill. The consequences can be severe. Studies of combined police and school resource officer responses to what is termed "children in crisis" show that responders handcuff the child nearly one out of every ten times.<sup>11</sup>

The racial pattern is stark. In a 2021 brief by Advocates for Children, Black boys accounted for more than a quarter of these interventions in 2018 to 2019 and 2019 to 2020, despite making up 13% of enrollment.<sup>12</sup> Black girls represented 20% of interventions while making up 12% of enrollment.<sup>13</sup> In 92% of handcuffing cases, the student was Black or Latino.<sup>14</sup> All 33 handcuffed children between the ages of five and seven across the four-year study period were students of color.<sup>15</sup>

Children in psychological distress need trained clinicians, not handcuffs.

### **School Policing Changes the Culture of School**

An armed law enforcement presence transforms a school into a site of social control. Students of color in particular interact with metal detectors, school safety agents, handcuffs, sweeps, and drug-sniffing dogs as part of an ordinary school day.

NYCDS recently represented a young girl who was stopped by an officer on school grounds, shown a wanted picture of her boyfriend, and repeatedly asked "isn't this your man?" as a tactic to intimidate her. This is what school policing looks like in practice.

The presence of school safety agents on campus also drives measurable increases in out-of-school suspension and expulsion. Missed school days matter. They increase the likelihood

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<sup>10</sup> Thompson, Elena. "School Resource Officers Exacerbate the School-To-Prison Pipeline for Students of Color." *ACLU of Ohio*, 18 Feb. 2021, <https://www.acluohio.org/news/school-resource-officers-exacerbate-school-prison-pipeline-students-color/>.

<sup>11</sup> Advocates for Children of New York. *Police Response to Students in Emotional Crisis: A Call for Comprehensive Mental Health and Social-Emotional Support for Students in Police-Free Schools*. 3 June 2021, [https://advocatesforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/police\\_response\\_students\\_in\\_crisis.pdf](https://advocatesforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/police_response_students_in_crisis.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

that students will drop out, and failure to complete high school is associated with worse health, employment, and legal outcomes into adulthood.<sup>16</sup>

### **School Policing Feeds the School-to-Prison Pipeline**

School safety agents criminalize general misconduct that would ordinarily be handled by a principal, a dean, or a counselor. Officers can conduct searches without meeting the probable cause standard, enabling aggressive searches and seizures inside school buildings. The downstream punishments compound the harm. Students who are suspended or expelled are three times more likely to come into contact with the juvenile justice system within a year.<sup>17</sup> They are often left unsupervised and fall behind in coursework, which increases disengagement, dropout, and further justice system involvement.<sup>18</sup> School safety agents also arrest and summons students at high rates, often for ordinary juvenile behavior that an administrator could handle or that a restorative approach could de-escalate.<sup>19</sup> For many young people, their first contact with the criminal legal system happens not on the street but in a school hallway. That is the pipeline.

In New York City schools, Black and Latino students represent 90% of those arrested while making up only two thirds of the student body.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Alternative: Counselors, Clinicians, and Restorative Justice**

We know what works. Investment should be directed to meeting and exceeding the American School Counselor Association recommendation of a 250:1 student-to-counselor ratio.<sup>21</sup>

Counselors are trained in mental health, can de-escalate psychological distress, and build the ongoing relationships with students that lead to better outcomes.

For behavior that might otherwise be routed to law enforcement, schools should use restorative justice practices: peer mediation, conflict resolution, and other classroom-based models that repair harm rather than punish. These are not aspirational. Des Moines is an example of a jurisdiction that has removed sworn officers from its campuses and retained non-sworn staff

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<sup>16</sup> Policing Project, *School Safety Issue Brief. Safety Reimagined*, 2023, [https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/622ba34c0b752e795eb9334b/6464f4532233c33b531e702b\\_Issue%20Brief%20-%20School%20Safety%20.pdf](https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/622ba34c0b752e795eb9334b/6464f4532233c33b531e702b_Issue%20Brief%20-%20School%20Safety%20.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Lynch, Caitlin Grace. *School Resource Officers and the School-to-Prison Pipeline: A Mixed Methods Application of the Behavior of Law in Schools*. Old Dominion University, 2017, [https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=sociology\\_criminaljustice\\_etds](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=sociology_criminaljustice_etds)

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

<sup>19</sup> New York City Council Data Team. "Law Enforcement in NYC Public Schools." *New York City Council*, <https://council.nyc.gov/data/nypd-activity-in-public-schools/>.

<sup>20</sup> New York Civil Liberties Union. "New Data: Police Disproportionately Target Black and Latino Students in NYC Schools." *NYCLU*, 27 Apr. 2018, <https://www.nyclu.org/press-release/new-data-police-disproportionately-target-black-and-latino-students-nyc-schools>.

<sup>21</sup> "School Counselor Roles & Ratios." *American School Counselor Association*, <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/about-school-counseling/school-counselor-roles-ratios>.

trained in restorative practices. Arrests fell from 538 to 98 after one year of implementation. At one profiled high school, students reported significant increases in physical safety and in the quality of peer relationships.<sup>22</sup>

## **Conclusion**

A report on why school safety officers are leaving, being terminated, or resigning may produce useful information. But the underlying question this city should be asking is not how to retain or replace these officers. It is whether we should be staffing our schools with police at all. The evidence says we should not. We urge the Council to treat the current attrition as an opportunity to invest in the approaches that actually keep children safe and in school.

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<sup>22</sup> Policing Project, *School Safety Issue Brief. Safety Reimagined*, 2023, [https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/622ba34c0b752e795eb9334b/6464f4532233c33b531e702b\\_Issue%20Brief%20-%20School%20Safety%20.pdf](https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/622ba34c0b752e795eb9334b/6464f4532233c33b531e702b_Issue%20Brief%20-%20School%20Safety%20.pdf).

**New York City Council**  
**Committee on Education**  
**April 29, 2026**

**JOINT HEARING BETWEEN THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND THE  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Testimony of New York Immigration Coalition**

Good afternoon. Thank you, Chair Dinowitz, Chair Feliz, and members of the Education and Public Safety Committees, for convening this hearing. My name is Vlad Tlali, and I am the Senior Policy Strategist at the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC). The NYIC is a statewide network of more than 200 organizations supporting immigrants and refugees. We also convene the Education Collaborative, a coalition of more than 30 organizations working directly with English Language Learners (ELLs) and immigrant families.

Today, I want to highlight urgent safety issues for ELLs and immigrant students in New York City Public Schools (NYCPS). In the 2024–2025 school year, more than [1 in 6](#) students in NYCPS were identified as ELLs. These students are not only a significant part of our school system but also central to the future of New York City as the next generation of leaders and workers.

Yet this hearing comes at a time when many immigrant families are increasingly afraid to send their children to school. Schools are meant to be high-trust spaces, but fear of immigration enforcement is driving enrollment loss and absenteeism. Citywide enrollment has declined by about [2 percent](#), while schools serving the highest numbers of newly arrived students have seen losses of up to [11 percent](#), and in some cases much higher.

Families are keeping children home out of fear of encountering immigration enforcement on the way to school, during the school day, or in after-school activities. Even enforcement actions outside school grounds create a chilling effect across entire communities.

For ELLs, even short absences disrupt critical language and academic development. But these impacts also go beyond academics. Students are experiencing [anxiety, instability, and increased responsibilities](#) at home in the aftermath of raids. At the same time, schools and community partners report confusion about how to respond when immigration enforcement activity occurs near students.

This moment requires stronger protections from our City. We urge the Council to issue legislation requiring NYCPS to issue expanded guidance on interactions with non-local law enforcement. Current guidance focuses on inside school buildings but must also cover school perimeters, arrival and dismissal, transportation, off-campus activities and field trips, and clear shelter-in-place procedures.

The Council should also require comprehensive training so every adult in every school knows how to respond. This includes principals, staff, School Safety Officers, and contracted partners, with training conducted regularly and built into onboarding.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**Presented before the  
New York City Council  
Committees on Education and Public Safety  
Oversight - Examining School Safety and Crossing Guard Operations at DOE Schools  
April 29, 2026**

Thank you Chair Eric Dinowitz, Chair Oswald Feliz and members of the Education and Public Safety Committees for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding Examining School Safety and Crossing Guard Operations at DOE Schools.

Since 1908, Partnership with Children (PWC) has strengthened the emotional, social, and cognitive skills of children in New York City to succeed in school, society, and life. We place licensed clinical social workers, community school directors, family outreach coordinators and teaching artists in schools to provide young people growing up in poverty with trauma-informed mental health counseling, community-based programming, and healing-based arts education. Through this approach, our students build the skills necessary to break cycles of poverty and become advocates for their communities. **Last year, PWC's work impacted over 20,000 children and families across 44 NYC public schools** in neighborhoods such as Brownsville, East New York, the South Bronx, East Harlem, and Staten Island's North Shore.

We would like to thank Speaker Julie Menin and the members of the City Council for their continued support of our services to support New York City students.

### **Importance of Feeling Safe**

I first would like to acknowledge that we are all here today because we share the common belief that all students deserve to be safe in schools. We appreciate the Council and NYC Public Schools efforts in working to ensure school safety. We are encouraged by the NYC Public Schools 2025 survey that reported 81% of respondents felt safe while at school, and we understand that school safety agents have been [trained](#) in emotional crisis response for students in adherence to Local Law 17 of 2024. While promising, there are still students who continue to express that they do not *feel* safe and it is incumbent on our leaders to address this reality.

We know that our students are still facing the ripple [effects](#) of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as other mental health challenges. As [reported](#) by the Comptroller's office, in December, in 2025, nearly half, 48%, of New York City teens surveyed in 2023 reported experiencing at least mild depressive symptoms. Furthermore, persistent anxiety affected up to 25% of those surveyed. For teens aged 15–19 in the city, suicide is now the second leading cause of death. In addition, students who identify as Black or Latinx, as well as LGBTQIA+ youth and those experiencing food or housing instability, report increased instances of attempted suicide, barriers to care, and depressive symptoms.

Student challenges with mental health often lead to them engaging in actions and behavior that are not aligned with school expectations which makes it difficult for them and their peers to learn. In classrooms, "disruptive students" are often removed or sent to the principal's office when their teacher is not equipped to support their needs which leads to students losing valuable instructional time and falling behind



academically. It is challenging for students and families to focus on academics if they have unaddressed trauma. Unfortunately, many New York City schools do not have the resources to provide the necessary interventions to foster a safe environment.

### **Importance Supporting Student Mental Wellness**

As a lead community based organization in community schools across the city, we know first hand the positive impact community schools have on children and families. By addressing the social and emotional challenges that undermine achievement, community schools increase attendance, improve academic outcomes, improve student behavior and school climate, and more effective teaching. In short, community schools make schools safer and better places to learn so that all students have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Additionally, as a supportive pillar of PWC school-based programming, PWC uses arts to address the trauma that impacts students' lives, while simultaneously strengthening the ecosystem of relationships surrounding them in their school environments. PWC work supports students' abilities to analyze, share, and interpret their experiences, assuring they are active contributors in shaping their communities and futures. Our work serves as an example of how arts education can foster mental wellness and healing.

### **Recommendations for Increasing Student Safety**

We are encouraged by the DOE's efforts to prioritize mental wellness in schools including the [launch](#) of TeenSpace, its ongoing [effort](#) to combat hate, maintaining a commitment to ensure that every student has access to a social worker, and the [introduction](#) of 16 school-based mental health clinics as part of the mental health continuum. As DOE continues to strategize around school safety, we would like to offer the following recommendations:

- Continue to expand community schools: Community schools' holistic approach to student learning has been proven to increase the mental wellness of students and support student learning.
- Examine structural capacity to support social workers: We share the belief that every student should have access to a social worker, and we also believe that every social worker should have the capacity, training and resources to effectively support students. We would like to underscore that the quality of services is just as important as the quantity. We appreciate the administration's efforts to increase social workers in schools. Unfortunately, 71% of New York City schools fall [short](#) of the required minimum staffing ratio for social workers, which mandates one social worker for every 250 students. Many school social workers work across multiple sites which limits their impact and not all social workers receive clinical supervision and training. We encourage DOE to examine its capacity to support social workers and identify opportunities for solution, including opportunities to expand partnerships with community based organizations to provide a more meaningful impact.

Again, we appreciate the City's commitment to ensuring students are safe in school. We will continue to partner with children, families and the community to support students' feeling of safety.



Thank you again for your partnership and the opportunity to submit written testimony. Please contact Wesner Pierre at [wpierre@partnershipwithchildren.org](mailto:wpierre@partnershipwithchildren.org) with any questions regarding this testimony.



**Urban Youth Collaborative**



Good afternoon, my name is Yarezi. I'm 13 years old, and I'm a youth leader at Make the Road NY. I came today after a long day at school. Because this matters deeply to me. I care about my education, my peers' education, and our future, and I'm here to speak up for students whose voices need to be heard.

Right now, I don't always feel supported at school. Just the other day, I was involved in a situation that left me in tears. I felt overwhelmed, angry, and stuck. I didn't know how to make things better, and I didn't feel like there was space to work through what was happening. At that moment, I realized there should have been a better way, someone to help us talk things out and get to the root of the problem. That is why access to restorative justice is so important.

When I walk into my school, the first person I see at the front desk is a school cop. I feel uneasy when I see that. I sometimes imagine how different school would feel if that were someone's job to welcome us and make sure we feel safe and supported when we walk in. We only have two guidance counselors in my school. I know they're doing what they can, but it's still hard to get the support we need when we are struggling. Sometimes students don't feel heard, and I often feel frustrated, misunderstood, like what I have to say doesn't matter.

When it comes to safety, what I've seen doesn't always match what schools say. Some of the school cops I've seen come off as harsh, rude, and even brutal. There was a time I went to visit the school to support my cousin for her swimming practice, and three officers approached me with some of the worst attitudes I have ever experienced. I end up feeling like I am being treated like I don't belong, like they're watching my every move, waiting to call me out on something, instead of trying to provide support and ask me what help I need. But real safety is about trust, respect and being seen as a person, not a problem.

We also need better mental health support in schools. Therapy shouldn't be rare or hard to access, especially when students are dealing with stress, anxiety, or grief. I lost my grandmother during COVID, and I still carry that pain because I never had space to fully process it. Many students are going through similar feelings of loss and isolation, even if it doesn't always show.

That's why I'm here, calling for change. Police in our schools have never worked, so why don't we try something different? We need to focus on the needs of our students! Police in schools have never created the kind of safety students truly need. We need a hiring freeze on school

police in New York City. We need to end empty school cop positions and redirect all that money back into our schools toward more counselors, stronger mental health support, and staff who are actually there to support students. Every student deserves to feel safe, respected, and supported at school. We deserve schools that invest in us, not systems that make us feel left behind or out of place.

We demand that you listen to us. Invest in us. Do what's right. Thank you.

Good afternoon Chair and members of the Council,

My name is Marlene Rossi, and I am a parent leader and education advocate representing families in District 30.

I am here today because two children in East Elmhurst have lost their lives near school buildings. These tragedies are devastating—and they are preventable.

Right now, in our community, we have a grandparent who volunteers every single morning to help children cross the street safely.

Let me be clear—we are relying on volunteers to do work that should be a paid, trained city responsibility.

At the same time, we are constantly told there are not enough crossing guards because “people are not applying.”

But I did apply and I never received a call back. It was only after I sent a letter to Kathy Hochul that I was contacted by the 115th Precinct and offered a position. I applied to support the need in East Elmhurst and the position was not in my neighborhood—where the need actually exists.

So we have:

- Communities with urgent safety needs
- Residents willing to serve
- And a system that fails to connect the two

This is not a pipeline problem. This is a coordination and accountability problem.

We have done the work on our end. We have conducted neighborhood walkthroughs with:

- NYPD Community Affairs
- Elected officials
- Department of Transportation
- School principals
- And parents

Together, we assessed conditions, identified safety risks, and highlighted exactly where crossing guards are needed.

Yet despite all of that collaboration, the response continues to come back to one agency—the NYPD—with the same answer:

“No one is applying.” But that is not the full truth. Because I applied and others are willing yet still, positions remain unfilled where they are most needed. Beyond hiring, we also have a placement problem.

Crossing guard posts in neighborhoods like East Elmhurst have not kept up with how our communities have changed.

For example:

- A school that was once a Catholic school has been a public school for over 10 years. The main entrance is now on the opposite side—yet the crossing guard post remains where it was years ago.
- At another nearby school, where that grandparent volunteers, children are dropped off along Astoria Boulevard, a very busy roadway. Yet there is no crossing guard post on that side to protect students and families.

So even where crossing guards exist, they are not always placed where children actually are. This is a failure of planning, coordination, and reassessment.

We need:

- A transparent and responsive hiring process
- Priority placement for applicants within their own communities
- A regular re-evaluation of crossing guard post locations based on current school entrances, traffic patterns, and student routes
- And clear accountability when agencies are made aware of safety gaps

Because right now, the system is not just understaffed—it is outdated, misaligned, and unresponsive.

We cannot accept a system where:

- Volunteers fill safety gaps
- Applicants are ignored unless they escalate
- Multiple agencies identify problems—but no one takes responsibility to fix them

If a concerned parent has to write to the Governor just to get a call back, then the system is not working.

And when three children have already lost their lives, we do not have time to wait.

We owe our children better.

Thank you.

Marlene Rossi

[REDACTED]

East Elmhurst NY 11369

[REDACTED]

## **Accelerated Education and Associate Degree Access Act Testimony**

Good afternoon Chair and Members of the Council,

My name is Clivenson Jean-Baptiste, and I'm here to speak for students whose potential is being delayed every single day.

Right now, we ask young people to spend years in school, only to graduate unprepared and facing overwhelming costs. But they are capable of more—and they are ready sooner.

The Accelerated Education and Associate Degree Access Act changes that. It gives students the opportunity to graduate high school with an associate degree, real skills, and a real head start in life.

Imagine a 17-year-old entering the workforce or college already ahead—and debt-free. Imagine the relief for families who can't afford the rising cost of education. This isn't just education reform—this is economic opportunity.

This bill connects students to high-demand careers, strengthens our workforce, and gives millions a faster path to success.

We don't need to wait to invest in our future. Our students are ready now.

I urge you to act—because every year we delay is a year of lost opportunity.

Thank you.

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### **HERE'S THE GOOGLE DOCS LINK TO VIEW MY BILL:**

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KcCOiDFqPp304Lg1YrY1BLWoqhLEOg2mDd\\_5wzDh4kk/edit?usp=drivesdk](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KcCOiDFqPp304Lg1YrY1BLWoqhLEOg2mDd_5wzDh4kk/edit?usp=drivesdk)

### **SHORT URL VERSION:**

<https://shorturl.at/LSZCk>

YOUTH

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sii Kari Agbokou

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

I represent: NYCLU Teen Activist

Address: + Dignity in Schools

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

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Name: Michael Adinkah

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

I represent: NYCLU Teen Activist +

Address: Dignity in Schools

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Yelani Joseph

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

I represent: NYCLU Teen Activist

Address: + Dignity in Schools

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# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 4/29/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Schmaya Charles

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

I represent: The Circle Keepers

Address: Dignity in Schools - New York

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

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Isa Abraham

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

I represent: Malikah

Address: Dignity in Schools - NY

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

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Name: Eva Gray

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

I represent: Dignity in Schools - NY

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

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**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Imani Wilson

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

I represent: Abolition and Education Justice

Address: Coalition And Dignity in Schools

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 4/29/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Naphtali Moore

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

I represent: Advocates for children of New York

Address: 151 West 30<sup>th</sup> Street, 5<sup>th</sup> floor New York, NY 10001

DSC - NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Andrea Ortiz

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

I represent: Dignity in Schools - NY

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Charlotte Pope

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

I represent: New York Civil Liberties Union &

Address: Dignity and Schools

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 4/29/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: AMY wagner

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

I represent: ya-ya Network

Address: Dignity in Schools - New York

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 4/29/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Donald Nesbit

Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007

I represent: Executive Vice President, Local 372,

Address: DC 37

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

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 4/29/2026

Name: (PLEASE PRINT) Raul Soto Vika

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

I represent: Yaya Network

Address: Dignity in Schools - New York

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

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

Name: (PLEASE PRINT) Judy Nathan

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

I represent: NYCRS

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

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 4/29/26

Name: (PLEASE PRINT) Breg Floyd

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

I represent: President, Local 237

Address: School Safety Officers

**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: 4/29/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: HIWAN Kim

Address: I PP

I represent: NYPD

Address: I PP

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 4/29/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SEAN SEVERINO

Address: I PP

I represent: NYPD

Address: I PP

**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: 4/29/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gregory Floyd

Address: 216 West 14th St

I represent: Teamsters School Safety

Address: 216 W 14th St

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 0788-2026 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 4/29/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: BRIAN LAHTARNIK

Address: [REDACTED]

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

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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

in favor  in opposition

Date: 4/29/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Director DAVID POCINO

Address: 1 PP

I represent: NYPD

Address: 1 PP

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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

in favor  in opposition

Date: 4/29/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chief Thomas AIPS

Address: 1 PP

I represent: NYPD

Address: 1 PP

**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: 4/29/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chief Mark King

Address: IPP

I represent: NYPD

Address: IPP

**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: 4/29/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eileen Fitzgerald

Address: NYCPS

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

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: 4-29-2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MARK RAMPERSANT

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

I represent: NYCPS

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: LINDA HEARNS

Address: NYCPS

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

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: 4/29

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: David Barone

Address: NYCPS

I represent: NYCPS

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: 4-29-2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: KEVIN DANTZLER

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

I represent: NYCPS

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: 4/29/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Stamo Karalazarides

Address: 40 Rector Street

I represent: CSA Council of Supervisors +

Address: Administrators

**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: EMILIE MITTIG-A

Address: DOE

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

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: Andrea Lawrence

Address: NYCPS

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

Address: 52 Chamber Street

**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: 4/29/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Shonelle Holder Hall

Address: 52 Chambers Street

I represent: NYC PS

Address: 52 Chambers Street

**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: 4/29/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kevin Coenen

Address: [Redacted] Astoria NY

I represent: Kevin Coenen 11103

Address: Candidate AD 36 Astoria LLC

**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: Imani Wilson

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

I represent: Dignity in Schools - NY

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

Youth

**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: Yaretzi Valera

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

I represent: Make the Road New York

Address: Dignity in Schools - NY

Youth

**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: Ammy Heredia

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

I represent: Make the Road New York

Address: Dignity in Schools NY York

**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: 4/29/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Moubarak Oumaou

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

I represent: The Circle Keepers

Address: Dignity in Schools - New York

**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: 4/29/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tajh Sutton

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

I represent: The Circle Keepers

Address: Dignity in Schools - New York

(YOUTH)

**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: 4/29/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sadie Nair

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

I represent: The Circle Keepers

Address: Dignity in School - New York

(YOUTH)

**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: 4/29/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Cameron Glasgow-Love

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

I represent: The Circle Keepers

Address: Dignity in Schools - New York

YOUTH

# 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: 4/29/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Witchy Carrier

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

I represent: The Circle Keepers

Address: Dignity in Schools - New York

# 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: Kaliris Salas-Ramirez

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

I represent: New Yorkers for Quality

Address: Just Public Schools

Dignity in Schools NY

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

YOUTH

Appearance Card

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

in favor  in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Paulina Milewska

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

I represent: Circle Keepers +

Address: Dignity in Schools NY

YouTH

# 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: Molly Haegreth

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

I represent: Circle Keepers +

Address: Dignity in Schools

YouTH

# 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: Crystal Espinal

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

I represent: Circle Keepers +

Address: Dignity in Schools

YouTH

# 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: Brianna Lucero

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

I represent: Circle Keepers +

Address: Dignity in Schools

**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: Vladimir Tlaci  
Address: 131 W 23<sup>rd</sup> New York, NY 10001  
I represent: The New York Immigration Coalition  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

YOUTH

**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: Kiley Bernard  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
I represent: NYCLU Teen Activist  
Address: & Dignity in Schools

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