

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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October 30, 2017
Start: 10:25 a.m.
Recess: 4:20 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Daniel R. Dromm
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Vincent J. Gentile
Daniel R. Garodnick
Margaret S. Chin
Stephen T. Levin
Deborah L. Rose
Ben Kallos
Andy L. King
Inez D. Barron
Chaim M. Deutsch
Mark Levine
Alan N. Maisel
Antonio Reynoso
Ydanis Rodriguez
Helen K. Rosenthal
Mark Treyger
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.

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

Melissa Mark-Viverito
Speaker

Elizabeth Rose
Department of Education Deputy Chancellor

Lois Herrera
Department of Education Chief Executive Officer

Jeffrey Povalitis
UFT

Anthony Harmon
UFT

Donna Lieberman
NYCLU

Jenna Miller
Advocates for Children

Nancy Ginsburg
Legal Aid Society

Nelson Mar
Bronx Legal Services

Sanford Rubenstein
Attorney for parents of Matthew McCree

Jonathan Cohen
National School Climate Center

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

Kate Terenzi
Center for Popular Democracy

Isaiah Quinones
Urban Collaborative

Onyx Walker
Urban Collaborative

Jamel Burgess
Urban Collaborative

Maybeline Navarro [sp?]
Urban Collaborative

Julian Alexander
Urban Collaborative

Stephanie Vallera [sp?]
Urban Collaborative

Don Kao
Project Reach Director

Walter Logan
Project Reach

DeNora Getachew
Generation Citizen

Jaime Ryan Bryn [sp?]
Project Reach

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

Radiha Hock [sp?]
Generation Citizen

Rashira Lucas [sp?]
Generation Citizen

Brittany Brathwaite
Girls for Gender Equality

Rachel Morgan Peters
Peer Health Exchange

David Ludwig
Asphalt Green

Anna Jean Lewis [sp?]
Parent Action Committee

Sandra Hyatt [sp?]
New York Coalition for Educational Justice

Celia Green
Citywide Council on High Schools

Elizabeth Payne
Queering Education Research

Joseph Seck
Hetrick Martin

Rebecca Mui
GLSEN

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

Mustafa Sullivan
FIERCE New York

George Alvarado
Northwell Health

Everett Arthur
LGBT Community Center

Wendy Calderon Payne
Bronx Connect

Monica Bartley
CIDNY

Mitchel Wu
CACF

Alyssa Vu
CACF

Denis Yu
CACF

Debbie Almontaser
Muslim Community Network

Grant Cowles
CCC

Marilyn Mendoza
Make the Road New York

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

Miraya Solis [sp?]
Make the Road New York

Diana Feldman
ENACT

Charlotte Pope
Children's Defense Fund New York

Venecia Little [sp?]
High school student

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Good morning. My
3 name is Daniel Dromm and I'm the Chair of the
4 Education Committee. Today, the Education Committee
5 will vote on three proposals, Proposed Intro. 773B
6 sponsored by Council Member Kallos and Levin,
7 Proposed Intro. 1565A, which I sponsor with Council
8 Members Menchaca, Ferreras-Copeland, and the Speaker,
9 and Proposed Intro. 1638A sponsored by Council Member
10 Kallos and myself. In addition we'll be voting on
11 Proposed Resolution 1442A, which I sponsored with
12 Council Member Kallos. Proposed Intro. 773B would
13 require the Department of Education to submit to the
14 Council and post on the DOE's website an annual
15 report by October 1st of each year with information
16 on student participation in school meals programs
17 from the previous school year. The report required
18 by 773B would include information on the number and
19 types of meals served, including breakfast, lunch,
20 snacks, and after-school suppers, and the food items
21 offered at each meal. The report would also provide
22 information about initiatives and programs aimed at
23 increasing student participation in the meals and
24 would require future reports to include year-to-year
25 comparisons with the preceding year's report. The

1 information required to be reported would be
2 disaggregated by school, community school district
3 and borough. Proposed Intro. 1565A would require the
4 Department of Education to annually distribute
5 information related to students' and parents'
6 educational rights and the DOE's policies and
7 procedures related to interactions with non-local law
8 enforcement. Such information would include
9 information on available legal resources to help
10 students and parents understand their rights and
11 options regarding their educational rights, privacy
12 rights, circumstances under which students may have
13 the right to refuse to speak with non-local law
14 enforcement, immigration legal assistance, and DOE's
15 protocol and policies with regard to interactions
16 with non-local law enforcement including procedures
17 for when a students' parent has been detained or
18 otherwise separated from the family. The number of
19 staff trained on such policies and the method by
20 which parents may update a students' emergency
21 contact information. The bill would require the DOE
22 to notify any students whose directory information
23 may be released pursuant to the Family Educational
24 Rights and Privacy Act, what information may be
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1 released and to whom, and how students or their
2 parents may opt-out of such release of information.
3 The bill would also require the DOE to upon request
4 by non-local law enforcement for access to a student
5 or student's records, notify the student's parent of
6 such request unless notification is prohibited by law
7 and provide information to the students and student's
8 parent about available resources for seeking legal
9 assistance. Proposed Intro. 1638A would require the
10 DOE to submit to the Council and post on the DOE's
11 website by June 1st of each year an annual report
12 containing information for each middle and high
13 school on whether such school has a Gay/Straight
14 Alliance or Gender Sexuality Alliance known as a GSA,
15 the number of teachers and administrators who have
16 received training related to supporting lesbian, gay,
17 bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and
18 gender non-conforming students, and a narrative
19 description of the training offered by the Department
20 to lesbian and gay and gender non-conforming
21 students, including whether such training includes
22 training related to GSA's. Finally, Proposed
23 Resolution 1442A calls on the DOE to provide
24 curricular and other supports to protect lesbian,
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2 gay, bisexual, queer or questioning, and transgender
3 and gender non-conforming students and other
4 vulnerable students, and to ensure that
5 administrators, teachers and students in all grade--
6 in all middle and high schools are informed that
7 under the Equal Access Act, students have a right to
8 convene or participate in the Gender Sexuality
9 Alliance at school. I fully support all of these
10 pieces of legislation, and urge the committee members
11 to vote in favor of each of them. And with that, I'm
12 going to ask the Clerk to call the vote, and then
13 we're going to get started with the other part of the
14 meeting, and as members come in, we may interrupt
15 testimony so that members can vote on the
16 legislation. Clerk, would you please call the vote?

17 COMMITTEE CLERK: Committee Clerk Matthew
18 DeStefano [sp?], Committee on Education, roll call
19 vote on Proposed Intro. Number 773B, 1565A, and
20 1638A, as well as Resolution Number 1442A. Chair
21 Dromm?

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I vote aye on all.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK: Chin?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Aye on all, and can
25 you please add me 1638A, please?

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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1 COMMITTEE CLERK: Rose?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Aye on all, and
3 could you add me to each of these bills, please?

4 COMMITTEE CLERK: Deutsch?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: No on 1638A and
6 no on 1442A. Aye on the rest.

7 COMMITTEE CLERK: Kallos?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Permission to
9 explain my vote briefly? I want to just take a
10 moment to tank this speaker for her leadership on
11 school food and making a declaration in her State of
12 the City and making it happen as well as Chair Dromm
13 who has been fighting for this for years, and so we
14 were proud to announce earlier this year with our
15 Chancellor universal school lunch, and today we proud
16 to vote on the legislation that would pay attention
17 to breakfast, lunch, super, and snacks that our kids
18 are having as well as the goals and strategies that
19 we're using to try to increase the participation in
20 that. I also want to thank Chair Dromm for his
21 lifetime and career of leadership on LGBTQ issues and
22 for his partnership in passing this introduction and
23 this resolution today. That was led by students from
24 a middle school in my district that will hopefully
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2 see GSAs in every school as the kids work together,
3 feel supported, and can make sure that the health
4 education in every school is not normative for sis-
5 gender or heterosexual kids but for everyone. I vote
6 aye on all.

7 COMMITTEE CLERK: Levine?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I vote aye on all.

9 COMMITTEE CLERK: Maisel?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: [off mic] Yes.

11 COMMITTEE CLERK: Treyger?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Aye.

13 COMMITTEE CLERK: Salamanca?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Aye on all.

15 COMMITTEE CLERK: By a vote of 9 in the
16 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions,
17 the items have been adopted with the exception of
18 Intro. 1638A and Resolution 1442A which was adopted
19 by a vote of 8 in the affirmative, 1 in the negative
20 and no abstentions.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you, and
22 we will keep the vote open as the Council Members
23 come in to declare their vote on those topics as
24 well. Okay, so I think everybody has been announced
25 if I'm not mistaken by the Clerk, except for Council

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2 Member Rosie Mendez, who has also joined us and not a
3 member of the Education Committee, but has joined us
4 for this hearing today. So, thank you very much.

5 Good morning, and thank you all for coming to today's
6 Education Committee hearing on the DOE's response to
7 incidents of bullying, harassment, and discrimination
8 in New York City schools and the efforts to improve
9 school climate. I am very pleased that Speaker

10 Melissa Mark-Viverito is joining us. Thank you,

11 Madam Speaker, for being here. We will also hear

12 testimony on three bills today and we will be voting

13 on the other bills and a resolution. I'll talk more

14 about that legislation later. Actually, I've already

15 done that, so we will continue to move on. Today's

16 hearing was prompted in part by the tragic incident

17 that took place on September 27th at the Urban

18 Assembly School for Wildlife Conservation in the

19 Bronx in which one student lost his life, another was

20 seriously injured, and a third had his life forever

21 altered. According to media reports, the incident

22 may have resulted from repeated bullying episodes

23 that were not adequately addressed by the school

24 which has shown a serious decline in school climate

25 over the past year according to available data.

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2 Although the Department of Education may not be
3 willing to discuss the facts of what happened due to
4 its internal investigation, I do think the incident
5 raises serious concerns that impact the entire
6 system. Therefore, the focus of today's hearing is
7 how the Department of Education is ensuring that all
8 students can have what is promised in Chancellor's
9 Regulation 832, "A safe and supportive learning and
10 educational environment that is free from harassment,
11 intimidation and/or bullying." October is National
12 Bullying Prevention Month, so it is appropriate that
13 we are addressing this topic now. In fact, the
14 Committee had a hearing last October which addressed
15 bullying and harassment of vulnerable students.
16 Unfortunately, bullying remains a serious problem.
17 According to national data, one in five of all
18 students is bullied, but members of certain groups
19 are disproportionately victimized, particularly
20 students who have disabilities, are overweight, are
21 Muslim, or are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered,
22 queer, or questioning. LGBTQ students are at special
23 risks given the lack of community and family support
24 for many such students. One way to help prevent
25 bullying is to be sure the curriculum accurately

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2 reflects different communities. Most textbooks do
3 not mention LGBT contributions at all, offer no LGBT
4 role models and make LGBT people invisible. This must
5 end. I would like to add that anti-bullying
6 education is worth nothing unless the lesbian, gay,
7 bisexual, transgender, and queer words are used at
8 every grade level, because not to do so actually
9 contributes to the problem by sending the message
10 that being LGBTQ is so bad that it can only be
11 discussed at certain times. This is unacceptable,
12 but often times heard within the DOE. Just last week
13 I got a report that a superintendent is questioning
14 why we have to use those words. This attitude
15 contributes to homophobia and thereby bullying. When
16 anti-LGBT bullying occurs many misunderstand the
17 nature of it. The child being bullied often cannot
18 tell anyone especially if there is no visible
19 supportive LGBTQ person to tell it to. To fight it,
20 there must be out, visible LGBT role models, teachers
21 and other staff members in the school for them to
22 turn to for help. We know that bullying can have a
23 devastating impact on both victims and bullies,
24 affecting not only school performance, but overall
25 health and mental health. I can speak firsthand about

1 the impact of bullying as someone who was bullied
2 first as a youth and later as an adult when I came
3 out as an openly gay teacher and was targeted by
4 school administrators and school board members who
5 tried to have me removed from the classroom in the
6 early 1990's, and though we've made progress since
7 then in terms of gay rights and marriage equality it
8 hasn't really trickled down into schools and
9 classrooms. Schools will talk about bullying in
10 general or diversity in general, but teachers and
11 principals still fear actual discussion around LGBT
12 issues. We know that many students, particularly
13 those in vulnerable population do not report bullying
14 incidents when they occur. Even when students do
15 report incidents, those incidents may not be reported
16 by staff as highlighted in a 2016 report by the State
17 Attorney General. That report found that in the
18 2013/14 school year 70 percent of City schools
19 reported zero bullying or harassment incidents, and
20 in 98 percent of City schools reported 10 or fewer
21 incidents. While there has been a slight increase
22 in reporting of incidents since then, the level of
23 underreporting is still unacceptable, and when
24 Harvard researchers were working with my office to
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1 try to get more information on the problem, they were
2 met with resistance from the DOE. I want to probe
3 how well the DOE is in not advertising its anti-
4 bullying policy, but also facilitating the reporting
5 of incidents. I am interested in hearing how in 2017
6 the DOE's designing student-friendly complaint
7 mechanisms that take advantage of modern technology.
8 DOE's own data shows that problems with bullying and
9 school climate are still too common. DOE's 2017
10 teacher survey data revealed that more than 50
11 percent of teachers at over 400 schools indicated
12 that students at their school harass, bully or
13 intimidate other students some or most of the time.
14 In what other working and learning environment would
15 such a climate be acceptable? I am interested in
16 learning about how the results of these surveys drive
17 decision making at DOE. For example, around which
18 schools may need extra supports to address issues of
19 bullying. I'm also interested about hearing how the
20 DoE will implement Local Law 128 of 2016 which
21 requires the collection of data on sexual orientation
22 and gender identity of students over the age of 14
23 and then use the data to improve conditions. We know
24 that the DOE has regulations and programs in place
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1 such as respect for all, or RFA, to address bullying
2 and improve school climate, but clearly much more
3 needs to be done. In the wake of the incident in the
4 Bronx, many people call for the installation of more
5 metal detectors in schools, but metal detector don't
6 get the root cause or prevent conflicts and don't
7 teach students anything other than that they cannot
8 be trusted. The DOE has also begun to implement
9 restorative justice programs in a small number of
10 schools a more promising approach when it comes to
11 preventing conflicts and teaching students how to get
12 along with others. I was fortunate enough to visit a
13 restorative justice school just last week and
14 actually participated in a community building circle
15 with students and saw how powerful it is. Giving
16 students an opportunity to express their views and
17 perspectives on conflicts and issues that arise,
18 having their voices truly heard by adults and
19 students alike, and holding them responsible to
20 repair any harm their actions may have caused can be
21 truly transformative. We need to expand Restore
22 practices including mediation and conflict resolution
23 to all schools from pre-k through high school if
24 we're serious about preventing bullying and violent
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2 conflicts in the schools. Why do students at the
3 Earth School, Eastside School or La Guardia High
4 School in Manhattan deserve to learn in an
5 environment that is safe and affirming while their
6 peers in many schools throughout the City must endure
7 discrimination and violence on a wide scale. I look
8 forward to hearing how the DOE is implementing
9 mechanisms in every school to encourage teachers and
10 administrators to step up. Making especially
11 vulnerable students, including LGBTQ and younger
12 students, and those without parental support advocate
13 by themselves for their own safety is absurd. And
14 again, this hearing is, I hope, the beginning of the
15 end of this absurd situation. I want to briefly
16 mention the testimony we will hear today and then we
17 will turn to the Speaker for some remarks. Actually,
18 I have read that part, so I'm going to stop here, and
19 yep. And then we'll move on to the Speaker for her
20 remarks at this point. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

21 SPEAKER MARK-VIVERITO: Thank you, Chair
22 Dromm, and I'll be brief. But first of all, I
23 definitely do want to acknowledge your incredible
24 passion and advocacy on all educational issues and
25 making sure that we create inclusive accepting

1 environments where all of our children can succeed,
2 and so I commend you particularly on this issue for
3 that leadership over decades at this point. So, thank
4 you for your work and to all the colleagues that are
5 here, I want to thank you all for joining us today
6 and also thank Chancellor Farina and the DOE
7 advocates and parents of students who are here. As
8 Chair Dromm had laid out, we are here today to
9 discuss a topic that is very important to this
10 Council. Bullying, harassment and discrimination can
11 have long-lasting negative effects on students, but
12 the issue is particularly challenging for certain
13 populations such as the LGBTQ students, English
14 language learners, students with disabilities, and
15 others that Chair Dromm has mentioned. We cannot sit
16 here today at this hearing without acknowledging the
17 tragic incident that took place last month at the
18 Urban Assembly School of Wildlife Conservation in the
19 Bronx. A 15-year-old student, Matthew McCree, lost
20 his life. Another student, Ariane Laboy, 16 years
21 old, was seriously wounded, and Abel Cedeno, 18, has
22 been charged with murder. This incident has brought
23 the issue of bullying to the forefront once more and
24 has raised concerns about how this issue is handled
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2 in some of our City schools. As I laid out in my
3 State of the City Address this past February, as a
4 city it is our responsibility to make sure that our
5 students feel valued and supported in school so they
6 can thrive and reach their full potential. That is
7 why I have pushed for initiatives that will help to
8 ensure that our sexual health education instruction
9 affirms the perspectives of LGBTQ individuals that
10 our schools provide culturally responsive teaching
11 and that we foster dialogue about issues like cyber
12 bullying. The Council has oversight
13 responsibilities, and we're holding this hearing
14 today to do just that. Students, parents, and the
15 community must understand what the DOE is doing to
16 combat bullying in our schools and assure that the
17 City's students have a safe and supportive
18 environment in which to learn. In particular, we
19 want to know how the data that the DOE collects,
20 whether through student, parent and teacher surveys
21 or through reporting data required by state and local
22 laws is analyzed and used by the DOE to make
23 decisions. What efforts is the DOE making to create
24 respectful school environments? Are teachers and
25 other school staffed trained on how to respond to

1 incidents of bullying? Do students and families know
2 who to turn to for help? And importantly, how does
3 the DOE measure whether these efforts are successful?
4 So, I look forward to hearing more today about the
5 work being done to support our students. Again,
6 thank you to the Chancellor for all the work that you
7 do and for being here with us today, and I will turn
8 it back over to Chair Dromm.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Madam
11 Speaker, and before I introduce the first panel, I'd
12 like to ask Council Members who have joined us,
13 Council Member Dan Garodnick, Vincent Gentile, Inez
14 Barron, and Antonio Reynoso to vote on the items
15 before the committee today. Clerk, would you please
16 call the vote?

17 COMMITTEE CLERK: Committee on Education
18 continuation of roll call, Council Member Gentile?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Aye on all.

20 COMMITTEE CLERK: Garodnick?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GARODNICK: Thank you. I
22 vote aye.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK: Barron?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. I
25 vote aye.

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COMMITTEE CLERK: Reynoso?

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: I vote aye.

Thank you.

COMMITTEE CLERK: The vote now stands 13 in the affirmative, 0 negative, no abstentions with exceptions of 1638A and Resolution 1442A where the vote is 12 in the affirmative, 1 negative, and no abstentions.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you very much, and I would like to introduce our first panel. We are joined today by Chancellor Carmen Farina. Thank you for being with us. We're joined by Deputy Chancellor Elizabeth Rose and Lois Herrera who is with the Office of Safety and Youth Development. Thank you to all of you for joining us today, and may I swear you in? I need to just ask you to raise your right hand. Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth and to answer Council Member questions honestly?

UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

Chancellor?

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2 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Good morning. Good
3 morning, Speaker Mark-Viverito, Chairman Dromm, and
4 members of the Education Committee. Thank you for
5 the opportunity to discuss DOE's work to ensure that
6 all of our schools provide a safe, inclusive and
7 supportive learning environment for all our students,
8 and the proposed legislation under consideration
9 today. I would like to thank the Speaker and the
10 City Council for their leadership and long-standing
11 partnership on these issues. The safety and security
12 of students and staff is our top priority. We are
13 heartbroken by the tragedy that occurred in the
14 Bronx, and we mourn the loss of a young student's
15 life. Special Commissioner for Investigation is
16 conducting a thorough investigation, and we remain
17 dedicated to ensuring that this never happens again.
18 All parents must feel certain that their students are
19 safe in our schools. While we know we have more work
20 to do, we are pleased that last school year was the
21 safest on record and crimes in our schools is at an
22 all-time low. Providing students with safe,
23 nurturing learning environments is at the heart of
24 our Equity in Excellence agenda. The City has
25 launched initiatives such as Single Shepherd and

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2 Community Schools model to help students succeed
3 academically, socially and emotionally. As you may
4 now, this Administration has implemented important
5 school climate reforms across the City as it is
6 investing 47 million in school climate initiatives
7 and mental health supports to ensure the schools are
8 equipped with the critical resources to effectively
9 manage incidents and address underlying issues. We
10 work hand-in-hand with the NYPD School Safety
11 Division to provide right learning environments in
12 all our schools. Today I am announcing the launching
13 of new anti-bullying incidents to better serve
14 students and families and also ensures schools are
15 providing safe and inclusive learning environments in
16 every building. We also recognize that all members
17 of a school community have vital roles to play in
18 preventing bullying. We are seeing greater input
19 from parents and building robust accountability
20 systems. Last month, the Mayor and I hosted a
21 discussion with parent leaders on school safety, and
22 the feedback we received initiated some of our new
23 reforms. These reforms include Bullying Complaint
24 Portal. Family engagement is critical to strong
25 school communities and the Bullying Complaint Portal

1 will be an easy-to-use tool for families. To report
2 online any incident of student discrimination,
3 harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying. Families
4 who report incidents of bullying against their
5 children will receive an electronic acknowledgement
6 of receipt and will be informed of the outcome of the
7 investigation. Launching in 2019, the portal will
8 increase access for families and help the DOE
9 determine where additional resources that need it at
10 schools across the City. Two, mental health first
11 aid training and community workshops. Families,
12 community members, staff and students will also be
13 provided mental health first aid training and
14 workshops on bullying prevention and reduction. The
15 trainings will be offered in partnership with the
16 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Thrive
17 New York City and will cover five-step action plan
18 for assessing, identifying, and offering assistance
19 to students in crisis. Three, anti-bias and anti-
20 bullying training for staff. In January, DOE will
21 offer [inaudible] training, a web-based anti-biased
22 interactive training for all school-based employees.
23 In addition to anti-bias training that is conducted
24 by the Anti-defamation League, the school staff.
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2 Additionally, parent coordinators will receive
3 training on topics, including a creative, supportive
4 environment identifying bullying and supporting those
5 in bullying. We already started in the beginning of
6 this year in September with teaching manuals to be
7 used during the 80-minute teacher PD session, and
8 just this past Saturday I spoke to over 300 PTA
9 presidents about how they might incorporate some of
10 this training into their regular PTA meetings. I
11 certainly encourage any of you who want to do more
12 training in your own specific districts to let us
13 know, and we'll be happy to send people to address
14 this issue within your districts. Increased
15 protection from bullying for students: The DOE will
16 implement a new protocol that requires schools to
17 develop individual student action plans to address
18 instances when there are several substantiated claims
19 of bullying against the same student. Next, funding
20 for student-led clubs that promote diversity and
21 equity. The City is dedicating a million dollars to
22 support the establishment of student-led clubs,
23 middle schools and high schools including the GSAs
24 and Respect for All clubs. I believe that this is a
25 very important initiative because I want it to be

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2 student-led. We also ramped up the training citywide
3 in all our high schools to have really active student
4 councils where they do make decisions and they do
5 have a seat at the table with administration to
6 express the needs and what they want to do. So, this
7 is perfectly in alignment with what we're asking to
8 do. The more the students are passionate about
9 something, the more likely that this will be a deep
10 involvement rather than a mandate environment.
11 Targeted support for 300 schools: Schools with high
12 incidents of bullying will receive targeted
13 social/emotional support to train staff and support
14 students. Programs for these schools will focus on
15 self-awareness, self-management, social awareness,
16 relationship skills and responsible decision-making.
17 I believe this is part of what you said, Chairman
18 Dromm, about the most important thing in changing
19 people's behavior is not machines, but people
20 internally understanding what they do and why they
21 shouldn't do it and what they should do. These
22 initiatives will build upon ongoing work to ensure
23 that all schools have safe, supportive and inclusive
24 learning environments. In partnership with the City
25 Council we have significantly expanded training on

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2 restorative practices which helps schools create
3 positively inclusive climates. Research shows that
4 bullying is often an insidious, secret behavior, more
5 easily committed when the student who is the target
6 and the other student do not know each other well.
7 Restorative Justice helps students take-- build
8 relationships, take ownership of their own behavior,
9 repair any resulting harm, and stand up to bullying.
10 Bullying thrives when people are anonymous.
11 Restorative Circles break that anonymity. In
12 collaboration with our community-based partners we
13 have upped our training on student advisory
14 curriculum. Recently, I was part of Restorative
15 Justice Circle with Commissioner O'Neill, and what I
16 found most enlightening was that when you have to
17 pick a work to talk about and you talk about your own
18 personal experience, in his case it was about
19 empathy, and it came across very clearly to those
20 students in that class that however they may have
21 envisioned certain city civil servants, it was
22 different when he spoke personally about why empathy
23 is important to him and his own personal childhood,
24 and I think that's the way we really change behavior,
25 when we talk personally about our experiences and we

1 use those personal experience to change other
2 people's actions. In spring 2016 we introduced the
3 following restorative practice programs in schools
4 with a high number of incidents. The data informs
5 the work and that's exactly what we did. City
6 Council Restorative Justice multi-tiered program, 25
7 schools. Restorative practices for an entire
8 district in this case 35 schools in District 18 where
9 the suspensions were significantly high. Building
10 internal capacity of restorative practices trainers,
11 the DOE has trained 42 internal staff developers to
12 serve as trainers for districts that need this work.
13 Restorative training for warning card campuses to
14 support the 32 schools in the original five Bronx
15 campuses where the warning cards were piloted. And
16 safe and supportive opportunity program expanded
17 which offers social/emotional and progressive
18 discipline supports to 20 of our most challenging
19 schools. Thanks to these initiatives, the school
20 year 2016/2017, suspension decreased in these schools
21 by 23 percent compared to the prior year and 38
22 percent compared to two prior years. Citywide
23 suspensions decreased by 64 percent compared to prior
24 year. During the same period there was eight percent
25

1
2 decrease in school-related arrests and 11 percent
3 decrease in the number of summonses. As part of
4 today's announcement we will be expanding on
5 district-wide restorative justice pilot to three
6 additional districts also based on data. Unless
7 there be any misunderstanding, we do think suspension
8 doesn't mean that there aren't consequences for
9 students' actions, and it is very clear that there
10 are some actions that require suspensions. So, we
11 will continue to monitor them carefully, but we
12 believe the more you know, the better you will act.
13 We know that kids are not able to learn and thrive if
14 they are facing unaddressed mental health challenges.
15 So we have made unprecedented investments in mental
16 health resources and services, which for the first
17 time is available to every city school. In
18 partnership with ThriveNYC we've expanded our
19 offerings and have 285 school-based mental health
20 clinics, 272 school-based health clinics, and nearly
21 100 mental health consultants, and 120 more social
22 workers in high need districts. Other services
23 include mental health screenings for students,
24 expanded health training for nearly 7,000 teachers
25 for 500 schools, youth suicide training and

1 social/emotional learning for pre-k social workers.
2 In addition, we have hired additional guidance
3 counselors. This to me is very personal. Deputy
4 Chancellor Rose knows that every time a suicide is
5 reported, it is something that I personally get
6 involved in, because we are losing our biggest
7 resources, which are kids, for reasons that perhaps
8 we can intervene early on, but this requires a whole
9 family involvement. It's about understanding the
10 signs and mental health is something that for many
11 years in this country and around the world people did
12 not feel comfortable talking about. We've got to
13 break the stigma for what people are willing to have
14 conversations about. We expanded Therapeutic Crisis
15 Intervention, a four-day evidence-based training on
16 how to escalate situations and prevent incidences
17 from developing. Many of the initiatives I've
18 discussed were informed by recommendations from the
19 Mayor's leadership team on school discipline and
20 climate. Launched in 2015, the taskforce aims to
21 reduce the numbers students are subject to arrest,
22 summonses, and suspensions in a way that both leads
23 to safer schools and protects the dignity and future
24 of students. There is no one place that more brings
25

1
2 this to mind than visiting East River Academy on
3 Rikers. I have gone there several times and I always
4 leave better informed and more aware of how important
5 it is to have these initiatives in our schools as
6 young as possible. As you know, Chancellors Regs
7 A831 and A832 prohibit all forms of student-to-
8 student bullying and intimidation, sexual harassment
9 and bias-based behavior on the basis of actual
10 perceived race, color, religion, ethnicity, national
11 origin, immigration status, gender identity, gender
12 expression and sexual orientation, disability, or
13 weight. The policies and procedures of CRA832 which
14 conform to the New York State's Dignity for All,
15 DASA, extend to behavior that happens on school
16 grounds, school buses, at all school-sponsored
17 activities, programs and events, and on other-than-
18 school [sic] property when such behavior interferes
19 with educational process. Three criteria distinguish
20 bullying from other kinds of this behavior and
21 incidents, and I think this is the piece that I want
22 to make clear to all our parents and administrators
23 because bullying sometimes is a word that is thrown
24 around, but understanding clearly what it means. It
25 is aggressive behavior that is usually repeated over

1
2 time, involves an imbalance of power whether physical
3 or social, and is intended to cause some kind of
4 harm. Regardless of the form it takes, bullying,
5 including cyber-bullying, is prohibited by the
6 Discipline Code. All reports of bullying, harassment
7 or intimidating behavior are thoroughly investigated
8 whether reported by students, parents, staff, or
9 other individual. Any staff member who witnesses a
10 student-to-student incident of bullying, harassment,
11 intimidation, or discrimination or has knowledge of
12 information that a student has been a victim of such
13 behavior is required to promptly report the alleged
14 act. In the school year, 3,281 material incidents are
15 reported to the New York City Education Department as
16 required under DASA. Material incident is a
17 violation of CRA832 in which a student creates a
18 hostile school environment for another student by
19 conduct and by verbal-- or by verbal or written acts
20 including cyber bullying. This Discipline Code
21 outlines a disciplinary responses and/or supports the
22 interventions that may be imposed based on the
23 finding of the investigation. While a student or
24 parent can report an incident of bullying, harassment
25 or discrimination to any school-based staff, CRA832

1
2 also requires the principal to appoint at least one
3 full-time RFA liaison in each school so anyone can
4 report incidents of bullying. And you should know
5 that every week I get at least one person who has
6 been frustrated who reports it directly to me, and I
7 follow all the procedures that anyone else would have
8 to in any one of these situations. Concerns and
9 complaints could be sent directly to email
10 respectforall@schools.nyc.gov, which is monitored by
11 staff within the DOE's Office of Safety and Youth
12 Development. Upon receipt, OSYD investigates and
13 notifies the appropriate field support center to
14 follow up in support. As part of their annual youth
15 development consolidated plan, schools are required
16 to submit a Respect for All plan for preventing and
17 addressing harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying.
18 You should also know that in every single
19 professional development we've done for
20 superintendents and principals this year, which was
21 only started two months ago, there has been at least
22 one workshop on bullying. What it means? How to
23 notify and most importantly how to de-escalate in
24 your school through educational programs. Educators
25 play vital roles in school life and the key focus

1
2 continues to be professional development to build
3 awareness and sensitivity. For example, all RFA
4 liaisons are required to attend mandatory two-day
5 training that was developed in collaboration with the
6 Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network, GSLEN,
7 Operation Respect, and other organizations. In
8 addition, this month, OSYD developed and introduced
9 three modules that principals are required to turn-
10 key to staff. One of the benefits of the Monday 80-
11 minutes is that we have now designated how some of
12 those Monday 80-minutes must be used. We're also now
13 working PTAs, like I said from this last Saturday, to
14 see if we can start using the Tuesday 40 minutes for
15 parents to start having these conversations among
16 themselves and with teachers about how to have these
17 discussions in their own homes. Cultivating
18 emotionally intelligent school and district leaders
19 is critical to supporting inclusive and collaborative
20 environment for schools. We are partnering with
21 Doctor Mark Brackett [sp?] of Yale University to
22 train all of our superintendents and many principals
23 across the City around emotional intelligence.
24 They're also piloting a program to create lab sites
25 for this work around equity, excellent [sic] empathy

1 in 16 districts across all boroughs and grade levels.
2 We recognize there are potentially vulnerable student
3 populations who may face bullying, harassment and
4 discrimination, both within and outside of school
5 buildings, including students with disabilities and
6 LGBTQ students. Today, there is an inauguration of a
7 program called "Just Say Hi." We have picked one
8 school in every district in New York City where
9 District 75 and a special DOE school are being
10 partnered, and they will come across [sic] and will
11 receive some extra money to come across the very
12 specific ways that they will be working together,
13 including perhaps sharing the lunch room, using play
14 time together, after school programs. We piloted
15 last year, and it was very, very successful in
16 schools that we had it in. All the initiatives we
17 have discussed are inclusive of sexual orientation,
18 gender identity, special needs, and housing status.
19 Obviously, students in temporary housing and homeless
20 shelters face special challenges, and to that end,
21 one of the things that we have been trying to do and
22 may sound very simple, but it's actually quite a big
23 initiative, putting washing machine and dryers in our
24 schools of kids with large numbers, because many of
25

1
2 these kids come to school not maybe appropriately
3 dressed, and it's important to bring equity in all
4 matters. All this work is aligned with the existing
5 bullying work we have spoken about today and seeks to
6 expand specific supports of LGBT students, students
7 with disabilities, students in temporary housing. We
8 especially appreciate the speaker and Chairman
9 Dromm's support in this work and look forward to your
10 continued partnership. In addition to central
11 training, OSED works closely with FSCs to provide
12 direct support to schools on a daily basis. Each FSC,
13 for example, has a school climate and culture manager
14 who works with FSC supports to address climate and
15 culture. These superintendents and school climate
16 managers also monitor incident reports routinely and
17 review the school survey data to determine if schools
18 show trends or spikes in incidents related to
19 bullying or harassment. I have asked all the field
20 officers to start looking at the score report card by
21 category and start having professional developments
22 for school based on which [inaudible] in the
23 framework they seem to be needing the most support
24 in. The DOE's Division of Family and Community
25 Engagement has also worked with parents on this

1
2 topic. This weekend I spoke to over 300 PTA
3 presidents about addressing bullying in their
4 schools. I actually suggested some books that they
5 could be using to open the conversations, and I'm
6 encouraging principals to have teachers and parents a
7 roundtable talk about what does it look like from my
8 point of view, what does it look like form your point
9 of view, and particularly for many of our parents who
10 may come from countries where these topics are taboo,
11 it is important that we help them begin the
12 conversations with their own children. I will focus
13 on this topic in my next parent newsletter and
14 teacher newsletter. We continue to work with our
15 partners in NYPD school safety. This includes work
16 to establish safety protocols and procedures in
17 schools, develop school safety and emergency
18 preparedness and provide training for school safety
19 agents. This last year we introduced an additional
20 two weeks of training for schools safety agents,
21 mostly on positive behaviors and how to de-escalate
22 issues rather than just police events. I would now
23 like to turn to the proposed legislations. Intro.
24 Number 1538 requires the DOE to list on its website
25 the name and contact information of designated

1
2 Respectful for All liaison at each school we are in
3 support of this bill as it will provide students with
4 increased access to this critical information, making
5 it easier to report bullying or harassment. Pre-
6 considered intro number-- it doesn't have one--
7 requires the DOE to report information on student-to-
8 student bullying, harassment, intimidation, and
9 discrimination. Aligned with a new bullying
10 complaint portal, the proposed legislation will
11 provide greater transparency and accountability
12 around school listeners [sic] and will provide the
13 DOE with critical additional information regarding
14 where targeted resources and supports may be needed.
15 We look forward to working with the Council on this
16 legislation. Intro number 461 requires the DOE to
17 distribute information regarding summer meals. We
18 are in support of this bill and is consistent with
19 information already distributed to school communities
20 and advocacy groups regarding the availability of
21 summer meals. We welcome the council's support and
22 partnership, ensuring that all children have access
23 to nutritious meals over the summer. Last week, we
24 had as a guest speaker in Carmen's Classroom, Alice
25 Watters [sp?] who started the farm to table movement,

1
2 and she was so passionate and inspiring we're looking
3 to see how we move some of her work even broader
4 throughout the City. And Meatless Monday's is
5 another initiative going in that direction. While we
6 have made significant strides to build safe,
7 supportive and inclusive school communities for all
8 our students, we know there is more work to be done,
9 and we are deeply committed to that work. We look
10 forward to partner with the City Council, and I
11 really want to once again stress that is something
12 that I am willing to personally invest time and come
13 to your communities. Chairman Dromm, you and I when I
14 first gone on to this job, went to speak to your
15 community out in your neighborhood. I'm willing to
16 do it, but I think one of the most important partners
17 that we have in this work, and we need to really
18 bring them to the table, are our parents. I think
19 parents really having these conversations with us and
20 understanding how they may have these in their own
21 homes, they're crucial factors in this. So I really
22 recommend that. So, thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,
24 Chancellor for being here with us today and for
25 giving your testimony. I'm pleased to see that--

1
2 getting a little feedback here. I'm pleased to see
3 that you have announced some new initiatives or
4 reforms, I believe, including the Bullying Complaint
5 Portal, the mental health first-aid training, anti-
6 bias and anti-bullying training for staff, increase
7 protection from bullying for students, funding for
8 GSAs and Respect for All clubs, which is tremendous,
9 and targeted support for 300 schools. My question in
10 regard to that is, how will staff be notified of
11 these rule reforms? Can we get letter into teacher's
12 mail boxes that will also include the words, "LGBT,"
13 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender?

14 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, I send out
15 teacher newsletters, and I can include that in my
16 teacher newsletter which actually will be coming out
17 within the next six weeks. I'm putting it together
18 week, and that could be part of it. We have the same
19 way that the parent newsletter is also coming out the
20 same time, and I'll be happy to put it in there as
21 well.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, and if I could
23 just adjust the letter, because that for me was the
24 way that I paid attention to something was when I
25 actually got the letter in the mailbox because the

1 principal placed it there. So, and also just again
2 to encourage, in some way, also mentioning LGBT
3 because teachers and administrators, principals are
4 will to move forward with much of this work. They're
5 enthusiastic about doing it. They just need to have
6 the clear okay from the Administration.
7

8 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yeah, and it's
9 already been part of our summer training for new
10 teachers. This is about just reviewing what we may
11 have said, but not everybody heard.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, and chancellor,
13 in the anti-bias and anti-bullying training for
14 staff, how will you ensure that the training is
15 complete? That's an online course?

16 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yes, Cognito is an
17 online module which should be launching on or around
18 January.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Let me go to some
20 questions in general about data. How-- what is the
21 number percentage of bias--related disciplinary
22 incidents last year that were related to students,
23 and can you break it down for us by gender identity,
24 gender expression, sexual orientation, disability,
25 religion, ethnicity and race and color?

1
2 CHANCELLOR FARINA: So we have data for
3 the 2015/ 2016 school year broken out by race,
4 national origin, religion, disability, gender, sexual
5 orientation, weigh, and other. Race, the total
6 incidents reported through DASA were 3,281 there were
7 278 races, which is eight percent, 191 national
8 origin, which was six percent; 101 religion, three
9 percent; 62 disability, two percent; 445 gender which
10 is 14 percent; 270 sexual orientation, eight percent;
11 176 weight, five percent; and then other.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: What do you do with
13 this data? One of the questions that I had round he
14 incidents that happened in Urban Assembly was-- There
15 was some indications there that the levels of safety
16 were not where we would like to see them be, but in
17 general, I know you don't want to talk about that
18 case in particular, but in general what do you do
19 with this information? How do you target support for
20 schools drawn from these numbers?

21 CHANCELLOR FARINA: First and foremost we
22 have at the borough levels our school safety officer
23 and school climate who review all the quality reports
24 and in cases where the number seem to spike or be
25 different from others we actually send people to

1
2 visit the school and do walk-throughs, and make
3 recommendations. In some cases, it's to add any
4 extra school safety officer or to put in very
5 prescribed staff trainee, but it depends on a school-
6 by-school basis.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And how do you gather
8 that information? Is that in the school surveys?

9 CHANCELLOR FARINA: It's in the school
10 surveys. In fact, I just pulled all the school
11 surveys based on topics, which are the schools that
12 for example, the trust factor is very low, and I've
13 been visiting some of those myself just to get a
14 sense of. So, I think that it's really important to
15 look at the big picture, but as well as the granular
16 picture. I've asked every superintendent to review
17 all of their quality school surveys and then start
18 categorizing the support that the principals need
19 according to where they've listed the lowest. So, if
20 you're really good on something, but there's
21 something else you need help in rather than everybody
22 go to the same training, that you actually separate
23 training according to what you really need.

24

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, at what point
3 would you intervene in a school? What would be a
4 high number that you would want to intervene?

5 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I would say when it
6 goes higher than-- if it's a negative number, when it
7 goes higher than the district that they're in,
8 because in the school report card it says the
9 district average is, you know, 79, and if yours is
10 much higher, that's a safety issue, then you're--
11 then you have to be watched. So, it's a-- again,
12 it's within a district and it's within--

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: [interposing] In
14 addition, since the school survey data is once a
15 year, we provide superintendents with incident data
16 for their districts and their schools on a monthly
17 basis, and on the basis of that data, superintendents
18 can make decisions about additional supports and our
19 borough safety directors go and visit schools to
20 discuss specific issues with principals.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, in some
22 instances, from the research that we did in
23 preparation for this hearing, according to the DOE's
24 2017 school survey data, schools which had a high
25 percentage of students reported not feeling safe,

1
2 also had a high student-to-guidance counselor and
3 social worker ratio. For example, at PS-- or excuse
4 me, at IS119 in Glendale in District 24, 62 percent
5 of students indicated that students harass, bully or
6 intimidate other students some or most of the time in
7 the previous school year. The school had 1,190
8 students, but only one guidance counselor. What can
9 we do to rectify that type of a situation?

10 CHANCELLOR FARINA: In cases like that,
11 and this oen actually came up at a town hall meeting,
12 we would seriously consider putting in either an
13 additional guidance counselor or looking at the
14 principal's budget and see how they may have had
15 money to do this, but perhaps chose another way. Many
16 of our principals are working with CBOs and outside
17 organizations that work on some of the same issues.
18 So, you have PBIS. You have overcoming obstacles.
19 You have a lot of programs that are presently in our
20 schools that sometimes you serve the purpose, but
21 that sometimes is a school-by-school decision.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm going to give you
23 some other examples of stuff that we pulled out from
24 our research. At the Bronx Design and Constitution
25 Academy in Community School District Seven, 98

1
2 percent of teachers indicated that they disagreed or
3 strongly disagreed with Question 6E: At this school
4 order and discipline are maintained. Furthermore, 49
5 percent of students at this school indicated that
6 they strongly disagreed with Question 7C, which
7 reads: I feel safe in the hallways, bathrooms,
8 locker rooms, and cafeteria. Is the Bronx Design and
9 Construction one school that's on your list?

10 CHANCELLOR FARINA: The district is. If
11 you noticed, we put Single Shepherds into two
12 districts, district seven and 23. The reason for the
13 Single Shepherd, which is a guidance counselor and
14 social worker that starts in sixth grade and follows
15 a family, not a student but an entire family, right
16 through 12th grade, was done based on the data and
17 the statistics that we had seen of where there were
18 many issues, and one of the things in terms of
19 anecdotal surveys back, that for a lot of these
20 schools it was really important that there be access
21 to mental health for the whole family, not just for
22 the students. So, that's one thing. That's also a
23 school that when I look at those statistics I send
24 other people to visit. So, I happen to know that one
25

1
2 of my other Deputy Chancellor's just came back with
3 very specific recommendations for that school.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Let me give you just
5 another example. At the Eagle Academy for Young Men
6 Three in Community School District 29, 58 percent of
7 the teachers reported that they disagreed or strongly
8 disagreed with Question 6E. Additionally, at this
9 same school, 37 percent of students indicated that
10 they strongly disagreed with Question 7C which reads:
11 I feel safe in the school, in the hallways and the
12 locker rooms. Now, this is the Eagle Academy for
13 Young Men Three in District 29. Has that school been
14 looked into?

15 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Absolutely. You
16 know, I have what I call "to watch schools" for a
17 variety reasons, not just for safety. It is one of
18 them. This is a school that has had many different
19 principals sine the first very successful principal
20 actually joined our team. So, I really want to be
21 clear that once the numbers skew in any one
22 direction, we have at least one person who's looking
23 at them very closely. Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And Chancellor, one
25 number that really concerns me is that according to

1
2 the latest DASA reports, 765 DOE schools reported
3 zero incidents of bullying in 2015/16. How can that
4 be? It can' be that there are no incident of
5 bullying in schools. I mean, we'd like to get to
6 that, but I don't think we're there yet. What can we
7 do to have greater, accurate reporting in terms of
8 DASA requirements?

9 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, I'm going to
10 get Lois to answer, but I just want to state clearly.
11 One of the reasons that I think we need to get the
12 definition of bullying out there very clearly, like
13 in big letters. It's something everybody really is
14 talking the same talk when they use that word. So I
15 think we need to make sure that's clear. It'll be
16 part of my newsletter for both parents and teachers.
17 So, when we say bullying I means this. I doesn't
18 mean inappropriate behavior, but age-appropriate
19 behavior. So, I want to be clear that that is what
20 we're going to put out there. Lois?

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And just before we go
22 to Ms. Herrera. Chancellor, one of the concerns that
23 I have is that oftentimes principals don't want to
24 report because of a fear of punishment of negative
25 incidents in their schools. How do we get beyond

1
2 that? I think it's matter of really more
3 conversations I'll be part of my principal
4 newsletter. I'm actually speaking to principals next
5 week citywide, but the reality is as a principals and
6 having been one, your school climate means that you
7 admit what needs to be worked on, and you use to the
8 degree possible. Conversations and professional
9 development to make it hiding something is not going
10 to be the answer, but I really do believe that most
11 principals go into this job fully convinced to do
12 what's best for their kids, and we just have to give
13 them to tools to do it properly.

14 EXECUTIVE OFFICER HERRERA: So, the very
15 nature of bullying makes it a very difficult
16 reporting system from student even to school
17 officials. Something like nationally 40 percent of
18 bully incident do not get reported to school
19 officials. One because it's a humiliating thing to
20 share, and two, for fear of repercussion for
21 reporting, amongst other reasons. So, our first
22 obstacle is having students report the bullying, and
23 it's also something that happens in an insidious way,
24 usually out of the line of vision of school
25 officials. It happens and thrives where there aren't

1
2 adults present. So, the first obstacle is getting
3 students to report, and to that end, we're hopeful
4 that the new portal will make it easier for students
5 to report and for parents to report bullying to
6 school officials. The second thing is that the DASA
7 data that you're referring is a report of material
8 incidents. Those are incidents that reach a higher
9 bar. Those are incidents that interfere with the
10 students participating and benefitting from the
11 educational program or where the incident interferes
12 with the students' emotional, mental or physical
13 wellbeing, or reasonably causes a student to fear for
14 his or her safety. And the fourth criteria is
15 reasonably cause or expect to cause physical injury
16 or emotional harm. And so it's a subset of a larger
17 what we've been referring to as bullying, if it
18 reaches a higher criteria, and those are the
19 incidents that get reported under DASA.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, according to
21 current regulations, folks who are-- who feel that
22 they've been victims of bullying, whether it's a
23 student or a parent, should report that to the
24 Respect for All coordinator?

25

1
2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: So, you can
3 report bullying. Anyone can report bullying to any
4 adult in a school. We want to ensure that students
5 feel comfortable in going to the person that they
6 trust the most is the best way. In addition to any
7 adult in the school that could report to the Respect
8 for All Liaison, a parent could report through 311.
9 They could contact the Administration. There's also
10 a Respect for All email address which comes to us
11 centrally and we will ensure it gets followed up on,
12 and the Chancellor tends to get some of these and
13 forwards them to us as well.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That's good to know,
15 and I have worn my Out for Safe Schools badge,
16 because I think it's really important that students
17 see these and they know that that's a safe person
18 that they can talk to, because LGBT students when
19 you're asking them to report bullying, you're
20 actually asking them to do several things. One, to
21 come out to themselves or to other people, and then
22 to actually report an incident of bullying. So,
23 that's why I think having the physical signs in
24 schools as well as openly gay role models in the
25

1 schools is so really important to prevent bullying,
2 since so much of the bullying is around LGBT issues.

3 EXECUTIVE OFFICER HERRERA: Chair Dromm,
4 we really appreciate your support of the Out for Safe
5 Schools Program. We have at this point trained and
6 provided these badges to 20,000 staff members in
7 schools, and you can't just get the badge because you
8 want it, it actually has training that goes along
9 with it to enable staff to be visible to students and
10 able to support them.
11

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. I'm going
13 to come back for more questions, but the Speaker has
14 questions.

15 SPEAKER MARK-VIVERITO: I just have--
16 just following upon that issue of the badges and
17 understanding that there's training behind it, do--
18 can you, I guess, attest that the 20,000 teachers
19 that have them or staff are wearing them every day? I
20 mean, is that the expectation?

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: It is the
22 expectation. I've also seen staff members put signs
23 up outside of classroom doors to identify themselves
24 as allies and safe spaces for their students. I--
25 Chair Dromm has seen me wear mine around in support

1
2 of the program as well. So, we do believe that staff
3 who have gone through the training and have taken
4 these badges are out supporting students with them.

5 SPEAKER MARK-VIVERITO: And how long have
6 you had that in place?

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: I think this
8 program started in the fall of 2015, so about three
9 years. 2014?

10 CHANCELLOR FARINA: And it's a big step
11 when professionals can say this and wear them, and to
12 be honest, that everybody's who's seen it has
13 complimented. That's not necessarily true of a lot
14 of initiatives, because again, it's about how does
15 the whole community feel about this, but being able
16 to use this as a point of discussion I think is very,
17 very important.

18 SPEAKER MARK-VIVERITO: I know, I think
19 that it is very important. Have you thought about
20 also maybe extending that to parents?

21 CHANCELLOR FARINA: It's certainly to
22 think about.

23 UNIDENTIFIED: Something we can think
24 about.

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2 SPEAKER MARK-VIVERITO: And not just
3 parents that are--

4 CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] No, no.

5 SPEAKER MARK-VIVERITO: that have
6 children who are LGBTQ, but saying that--

7 CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] Melissa,
8 I said before and I alluded to it many ways. The one
9 area where we have not done as much as I think we--
10 and I want to do more, is working with parents. It
11 was very clear this past Saturday [sic] we could have
12 tripled the number of parents just for the bullying
13 workshop. So, I think parents to see their role and
14 again, you just said it's fabulous [sic], the same
15 thing. At one time if you were, you know, two males
16 or two females having children, that became a big
17 thing at some schools. I remember, you know, early
18 on as a principal when parents would come and
19 register and they were single-sex parents registering
20 a child. How do we inform the kids on how to talk
21 about that, but more importantly we found the kids
22 were fine how do we get other parents to understand
23 how to have these conversations? So, I think that's
24 a great suggestion. It's certainly something that I
25 will take up.

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2 SPEAKER MARK-VIVERITO: So, speaking
3 about, and you had mentioned that a lot, Chancellor,
4 and I know that you've worked really hard on the
5 whole parental involvement aspect, but you know, how-
6 - at what point are parents brought into a situation
7 or informed? Is there is a bullying incident, you
8 know, at what point do they get engaged? What
9 information is shared with them in general about
10 bullying? If you could speak a little bit do that.

11 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, I think it
12 varies. It varies if the child told the parent and
13 then the parent comes to school with the child to do
14 something about it. There are many cases where we
15 find a child hasn't told the parents, and they find
16 out another way, and there are times when the
17 teachers call the parents saying based on what
18 they're observing. So, there are many ways,
19 trajectories, and with this comes to the attention.

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: I'd just like to
21 add, specifically to LGBTQ students, we do not
22 require the principal to call the parents if the
23 child feels that that would put them in danger. The
24 child is not yet out to their family and doesn't wish

1
2 to share. For other instances of bullying, it is
3 part of the protocol that a parent be notified.

4 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I also want to say
5 that one of-- this started about two years ago, I
6 think, Elizabeth, started seeing even in elementary
7 school transgender students, and one of the things
8 that we decided to do is develop like a protocol.
9 So, as principals find out that they are getting a
10 student, that they have-- they have protocol, talking
11 points, how to talk to the parent bodies as a whole
12 and for the teachers for whom these students will be
13 in their class, and that came out as a direct result
14 of a principal calling us and saying, what can you do
15 to help us make this easier for the families. So, I
16 think there's just so many levels of this that have
17 to be considered, and I think also it's not just
18 teachers, but how do you talk to other people in the
19 building other members of the staff. So, it's a
20 very complicated issue, but one that we're really
21 tackling head-on.

22 SPEAKER MARK-VIVERITO: So, in terms of
23 the sharing of information or being proactive with
24 parents on bullying in general. What information is
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1
2 shared with parents about that, or any workshops
3 offered to parents, etcetera.

4 EXECUTIVE OFFICER HERRERA: One of the
5 really significant features of the new notification
6 portal that we're developing is that it will one,
7 acknowledge receipt of the parent's concern up front
8 and then follow up at the end whether the
9 investigation has been substantiated or
10 unsubstantiated in order to foster communication with
11 the parents when there has been a complaint of
12 bullying. So we're very proud and excited about this
13 new tool that's being developed.

14 CHANCELLOR FARINA: One of the modules
15 that we're putting together, and again, it was just
16 because it came up from parents, that too often we
17 think as educators that the solution to everything is
18 to create another workshop, and a workshop usually
19 means that you have a set of goals and someone's
20 going to stand up and just kind of preach at you.
21 What parents are saying, what we really want is an
22 opportunity to sit around the table with teachers and
23 say this is the situation in my home. How do I talk
24 to my child about this, and how are you going to
25 support me back in school? And teachers are also

1
2 putting on the table, if I have this issue in my
3 class and how do we bring it up to the attention of
4 parents? So, I have asked all the superintendents,
5 and I'm going to be meeting with them again next
6 week. How do you develop the real culture in your
7 districts of having honest conversations? Nothing to
8 go on public record necessarily, but how-- let's say
9 you know for a fact that a child is coming into your
10 schools is going to have severe disabilities. I'm
11 thinking about a child that I had as a principal who
12 had a loss of all their hair, and the parents were
13 very concerned that he was going to be the only one
14 that looked like himself, and we ended up having a
15 meeting with all the parents, all the teachers, how
16 do you deal with this. So I think more conversations
17 and less top-down this is what you have to do. But
18 keeping in mind that parents also have their own
19 agendas sometimes, and that having these
20 conversations are very difficult and very tough. We
21 have put out resource libraries for parents on
22 different topics that they may want to talk about. We
23 have the RFA, Respect for All, initiative that has a
24 lot of resources. And again, whatever the issue is,
25 and one school may be totally different than another

1 schools, so how do we tailor make these conversations
2 for the school communities? I think the most
3 important thing that we do as a whole from here is
4 make some of the stuff that seems so out there,
5 because you know we are New York City, and I think
6 that's the good news. The good news is that we are
7 an inclusive city. we expect everyone to be
8 inclusive, but there are times that-- there are so
9 many stress factor out there that how do you find the
10 one that's going to lessen the stress by any given
11 family.
12

13 SPEAKER MARK-VIVERITO: And the last--
14 thank you for that. And last question is-- because I
15 know that it's being discussed in other agencies, and
16 I believe even the NYPD is looking to implement it,
17 but there has been any thought in the DOE to do
18 implicit bias training with staff?

19 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Oh, yeah, we have--

20 SPEAKER MARK-VIVERITO: [interposing] Oh,
21 you do do that?

22 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Oh, no, we definitely
23 have that. You want to say specifically what it is?

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: Yes. We have
25 partnered with the Anti-defamation League and we have

1
2 been offering professional development around
3 understanding and unpacking bias. We have-- we are
4 in development now in a series of modules, three
5 modules that'll be online. This is through Cognito
6 [sic] which was referenced in the Chancellor's
7 testimony, all looking at areas of bias and are
8 intended for school staff.

9 SPEAKER MARK-VIVERITO: So, it's not in
10 place yet, but you are looking to put it in place.

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: We have in-
12 person training in place now.

13 SPEAKER MARK-VIVERITO: Okay.

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: But we're
15 developing online training as well that's very
16 interactive.

17 SPEAKER MARK-VIVERITO: And it's for all
18 levels?

19 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yes, and our hope is
20 also that it's not elective, that in other words this
21 is something we expect everyone to be part of. If
22 you also look at our new curriculums that we put in
23 place the last two years like Passport which is
24 social studies. It was very clear that that
25 curriculum was meant to be culturally responsive and

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2 that every topic in history should be seen from at
3 least four to five perspectives. How we train
4 teachers to have conversations in their classrooms
5 was also part of that. I take seriously what
6 Chairman Dromm said about seeing your models in your
7 books. So, making sure that we have school libraries
8 which we do now that run the gamut of family styles,
9 you know, cultures, and that's the list that I just
10 gave out to the PTA presidents on Saturday, and I'll
11 be happy to share them because it has the whole gamut
12 from refugees, from undocumented students and how to
13 have those conversations.

14 SPEAKER MARK-VIVERITO: Thank you for
15 that. I'll give it back to Chair Dromm.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, one of the ways I
17 think we can get the message out to parents as well
18 is through the Family Support Centers, is that what
19 they're called? In the-- in each of the boroughs. I
20 think the boroughs are divided in half, and Larry
21 Pendegast [sp?] if I'm not mistaken.

22 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yes. Larry's [sic] in
23 Queens.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right, in Queen, in
25 the north of Queens.

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CHANCELLOR FARINA: Right.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, I had spoken with him and talked with him about doing some LGBT outreach stuff with parents through his office. Is that something that we can do in the other areas around the city as well?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Actually, several of them have already starting doing that, but by all means I would love to see a model that other people can learn from. And again, I think all of you within your own individual constituencies can run an information evening for your constituents and say let's come and talk about what we mean by bullying, and then you're going to find that they're going to come up with a lot of other-- I mean, I don't-- in Staten Island you're going to have a very different, you know, in Staten Island you're going to give a very different approach to what we think that's bullying. So, it think if you were to do it in your respective district, again, we can send people to help have this discussion, and I think it makes it more meaningful when parents are part of the solution and we don't talk to them like, you know, well you didn't' do this rather than what can we do together.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, before I just turn
3 it over to Council Members that have additional
4 questions, let me just go back to Respect for All
5 coordinators. It seems like we're asking the Respect
6 for All coordinators to do a lot, and I'm
7 appreciative of what they do, but and we have
8 legislation that would post who they are and a
9 contact number for them as well. We're collecting
10 the names of those in the legislation. So their
11 duties, what-- can you define their duties for me?
12 What are they expected to do?

13 CHANCELLOR FARINA: First of all, in many
14 cases, they might even be an assistant principal or a
15 guidance counselor in the building. I think one of
16 the things that City Council might think about doing,
17 when we ask people to do more, it's always nice to
18 say thank you, and at some point in the middle of
19 this year, you might want to have a celebration for
20 the Respect for All coordinators citywide. Because
21 what I'm finding is that by celebrating what people
22 do well and above and beyond makes everybody want to
23 do more. So, just an idea of what we might take it
24 to another level.

25

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2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: So, Respect for
3 All liaisons are really the point-person for their
4 school, but they are not doing it themselves. What's
5 really critical about Respect for All is that things
6 that the Respect for All liaisons are trained to do,
7 and they then train the staff in their school and
8 that they disseminate information to other teachers
9 so that Respect for All is not just one person in a
10 school, it is the entire school. Very specific
11 responsibilities. They ensure that the posters are up,
12 and we now have LGBTQ posters for schools in addition
13 to the rainbow of races posters that we've had. They
14 ensure that the Respect for All brochures are
15 distributed to all parents at the very beginning of
16 the school year, and we have that in translation. I
17 think you've all been given copies, but we have some
18 of them here today. These are available to be
19 translated in our nine languages so that all parents
20 can understand what their rights are, how they can
21 approach the school, what they should do if their
22 child has an issue. But it is not person leads
23 everything in the school. The goal is for the entire
24 school to participate.

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2 CHANCELLOR FARINA: And let me give you
3 an example. I was in a school two weeks ago where
4 the Respect for All liaison is also the person who's
5 in charge or monitoring the translation services in
6 that building, and they have 120 languages there, and
7 one of her major thing that she said to me is to make
8 sure that, you know, regardless what the other
9 language is, that the parents get all the
10 information, particularly the ones that may isolate
11 their kids at any given time. So, I think it's about
12 not having a person who only does this but have a
13 compuluanace [sic] circle that make sense.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do they get any
15 preparation time for that?

16 CHANCELLOR FARINA: You mean extra preps?

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Any prep, yeah, extra
18 prep.

19 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Our love and thanks.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Maybe that's
21 something we should think about, yep, about how they--
22 - I did speak with a social worker recently who was
23 preparing for the three weeks I think that they were
24 supposed to be doing--

25 CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] Modules.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right, exactly. And
3 one of the questions was how did they get the time to
4 do all that. So--

5 CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] It's
6 actually built-in pretty much, because when you look
7 at the Monday 80 minutes, it is contractual. That's
8 partially what's expected. So, you know, but I'm
9 always open. We'll come back to you in January with
10 budget proposals.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, alright. And
12 let me just ask before I go to Council Member
13 Salamanca. When were the LGBT posters last
14 distributed? Because I've seen them in the schools,
15 but I think we probably should do another one.

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: They're
17 distributed annually. So every year--

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] At the
19 beginning of the year.

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: we hand out new
21 posters.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So they were done in
23 September, or they're coming? They're out? Okay.
24 Alright. Thank you. Council Member Salamanca

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2 followed by Council Member Levine, Kallos, Treyger,
3 Kallos, Torres, and Barron.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you.

5 Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning, Chancellor. As
6 you know, the Urban Assembly School for Wildlife
7 Conservation, it's in my district, and I like many in
8 my community and our city were heartbroken by what
9 has happened and have so many questions, so many
10 thoughts and so many emotions on what transpired.
11 With so much going on here in City Hall like in the
12 news and with just our daily lives, it's easy to
13 forget about how many of us, how tragic and
14 significant this even actually was. But for all of
15 those associated with the school, they're still
16 living this nightmare every day, and that is
17 especially true for two families in particular. For
18 the families of Matthew McCree, that the unthinkable
19 happened. They have lost a child. And the family of
20 Abel Cedeno, their son's future will undoubtedly be--
21 it will never be the same, and it will be incredibly
22 difficult, and that is why we need to act. So, back
23 in October 3rd, myself and my colleague, Council
24 Member Ritchie Torres, we sent a letter to the
25 Administration and to DOE and we have not received a

1 response yet. We did get an acknowledgement that you
2 received the letter, but we have not gotten a
3 response, and in that letter there were concerns that
4 we had with this particular school. As you know,
5 there's 576 students in this school; 36 percent of
6 them are Special Education. There's 16 Special
7 Education teachers, and they only have two guidance
8 counselors and one full-time social worker. There
9 was a survey that was done that we referred to here
10 in terms of selected responses for 2017 student
11 school survey results related to 2015, 2016 guidance
12 counselors and social workers. And on this survey,
13 of 20 schools three of them are in my district. Now,
14 this particular school, 74 percent of the students,
15 74 percent, that means 410 students that filled out
16 the survey responded, and they responded. Students
17 through a survey responded with some of the time,
18 most of the time at this school students harass,
19 bully or intimidated other students. Therefore, 410
20 of the 576 students have gone through some bullying,
21 have been harassed, and this is an ongoing problem in
22 the school. In your statement, you refer to some of
23 the initiatives that DOE will be incorporating in the
24 schools, and you spoke about the Therapeutic Crisis

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2 Intervention, and I have questions in terms of that.
3 And while it's currently being offered to educators,
4 there's a cost added to this training. Well, that's
5 what-- when I spoke to the principal at that school,
6 that's what she referred to. She says that it's 45
7 dollars an hour for an educator, and it's a 30-hour
8 course, and therefore it comes out to 1,350 dollars
9 per person, and it has to come out of the principal's
10 budget.

11 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I beg to differ. We
12 pay for that. We train 20 staff members, and it did
13 not come out of the principal's budget. I also want
14 to be clear. I went to visit that school four times.
15 I will be going back again within the next two weeks.
16 We have put a lot of extra personal in that building
17 right now. I think-- I'm happy to take anyone on the
18 tour with me when you go, and certainly one of the
19 things that I think was very important, especially
20 after I went to speak to teachers, they want a more
21 clear direction on some of the things that we can do
22 easily. As far as charging schools for the services,
23 that is not true, and I want to put that very clearly
24 on the table. All the teachers in that building were
25

1
2 trained under the Therapeutic Crisis, and they did
3 not pay for it.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: So, this TCI
5 program, it is a 30-hour course?

6 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yes.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: And there is
8 no cost attached to it.

9 CHANCELLOR FARINA: There's no-- there's
10 a cost to us.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Yes.

12 CHANCELLOR FARINA: But there's not a cost
13 to the school. We pick the schools very carefully
14 based on the incident reports. We pick the schools
15 the same way that we put Single Shepherds in schools
16 where they thought they had the greatest need or put
17 extra school safety officers in schools where we
18 thought they had special needs. It's very much a
19 school by school decision based on data.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Okay. In
21 terms of the school safety agents and safety
22 equipment, in speaking to the principal, again at the
23 Urban Assembly for Wildlife Conservation, she stated
24 that she made various requests to increase the amount
25 of school safety agents, and she also made a request

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2 for scannings in that school, and that request was
3 denied. Can you explain to me who is the decision-
4 maker in terms of increasing school safety agents and
5 also who is the decision-maker in terms of approving
6 or denying when a principal is asking for scanners in
7 their schools?

8 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Okay, well, in terms
9 of the school safety agent, it's usually the
10 principal who requests it and discusses it with their
11 SLT, and that's the discussion of the teachers and
12 the parents who sit in that building and the
13 requesting superintendent. That principal did get an
14 additional school safety agent.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: But she got
16 them after the incident occurred.

17 CHANCELLOR FARINA: No, she got them last
18 spring, okay? And we have the record so it's not a
19 matter of-- so--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: [interposing]
21 And again, this information that I'm giving you is
22 after-- when I spoke-- when I met with-- after the
23 incident I met with my colleague. She was very
24 adamant that these requests were denied. So, I'm
25 just hearing two sides.

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2 CHANCELLOR FARINA: The scanning is done
3 differently. I can't give you the exact answer for
4 that, but scanning is based on incident reports, and
5 generally when there is a request for that, and I
6 can't tell you whether we got it or not, but we'll
7 find out. Mark Rampasant [sp?] investigates, goes
8 and visits, and they decide if they want to do that.
9 But the additional school safety agent, she received
10 last spring.

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: Last spring. We
12 did additional safety agents after the incident as
13 well, but we did have an additional safety agent last
14 spring.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Alright, and
16 in terms of the scanner, why was it-- why was that
17 request denied?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: So, I'll have to
19 see what process went through for the request. When
20 we get a request from the school for any change in
21 scanning, whether it's an increase in scanning or a
22 decrease in scanning, we review the data with the
23 NYPD, and there is a recommendation made jointly by
24 the two agencies.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: And just for
3 clarity, who is-- who makes the final decision when a
4 principal requests these resources?

5 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, we look at the
6 information. Like I said, the school safety agent,
7 she did get that. The extra training for teachers,
8 she did get that, that she didn't pay for, and in
9 terms of the scanning, we'll get back to you because
10 that's something our Head of Security, Mark
11 Grampasant [sp?], working with the NYPD--

12 EXECUTIVE OFFICER HERRERA: We work with
13 the NYPD.

14 CHANCELLOR FARINA: We work with the NYPD
15 to make the final determination.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Alright. And
17 just my final question, just want to go back to the
18 TCI. Now that you've put it on the record that this
19 is a free service, how-- how do teachers sign up? Is
20 it the principal that needs to recommend that
21 teachers go for this training? How does that work?

22 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, it's basically
23 done on a school by school decision, because we want
24 as many people in the same school to have the
25 training. It's requested, but also it's part of the-

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2 - we have built in time to do PD in all our schools
3 now. So, it's either part of that, or it was done
4 over the summer. We pay teachers to go for the
5 training.

6 EXECUTIVE OFFICER HERRERA: And it's
7 offered both centrally and locally through the Field
8 Support Centers. We have trained TCIS trainers both
9 at the central level and the lower level.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Alright. And
11 am I going to get a commitment from you now on the
12 record that you're not going to decrease them among
13 of school safety officers that the school has on site
14 and that you're not going to remove the scanners that
15 you have on site?

16 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, the scanners
17 will be there through the end of the year and will be
18 evaluated at that time. If we need to keep them
19 there for next year, we'll do that as well, and the
20 school safety officers that are there will remain
21 there.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: And again, you
23 know, just to go back on some of this data, and I'm
24 just going to wrap up, Mr. Chairman, you know,
25 there's 576 students that are there, and 410 of them

1
2 do not feel safe. We as lawmakers and as decision
3 makers, we have responsibilities to these students.
4 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, also. And
6 Chancellor, before I turn it over to our next Council
7 Member, one issue that I wanted to address and didn't
8 get an opportunity yet to do so is the issue of gangs
9 and how gangs play into school safety issues. Can
10 you address that for me? I'm hearing reports that
11 there are gangs involved in the school in the Urban
12 Assembly for Wildlife Conservation, and this is
13 complicating the situation there. I don't know if
14 you've heard the same report.

15 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, I mean, this is
16 something we definitely work very closely with the
17 NYPD. They're very much aware of where the gang
18 actions are around the City. And there's a special
19 taskforce and there's also special training of
20 principals who seem to be in the areas where this
21 issue happens.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I know that New Town
23 High School, for example, when I was first elected to
24 the Council, we had an issue with gangs there as
25 well. We've never installed metal detectors in New

1
2 Town, so I would just urge if we could find out what
3 New Town was successful in doing without having to
4 bring in metal detectors into that school.

5 CHANCELLOR FARINA: And again, I think a
6 lot of this is also where we also put more SAPIS
7 [sic] workers, for example, although there is
8 primarily to help with drug issues they take on
9 sometimes because they're sometimes interrelated. And
10 the other thing we've put in place over the last few
11 years is safe corridors, which happens to deal with
12 where the school asks to have a space for dismissal
13 time primarily from their school to wherever the
14 hotspot is, that as long as the students are willing
15 to walk on that path-- they can deviate from the
16 path-- that we will put extra NYPD people on that. I
17 was just in a school that literally have a line that
18 goes from the school to the major avenue to ensure
19 that the kids can go home safe. And again, I can't
20 say enough about Restorative Justice and PBIS. The
21 more you change people's mindsets, the more likely
22 you're going to change their actions. You just can't
23 mandate actions without mindset change.

24

25

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you.

Council Member Treyger followed by Torres, Barron, Rose, and Levine.

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you, Chair Dromm. Thank you for this very important timely hearing and welcome Chancellor. It was great seeing you at PS186 in my district and when we talk about improving school climate, one of the best ways of doing that is to validate your student body and the families that support our schools, and we're supporting and celebrating increased language access in a very beautiful, diverse neighborhood in the school. So, thank you very much for your presence and for your support. Chancellor, just to be clear, one of the proposed bills that you talked about which has not yet been assigned a number, that was mine, and I appreciate your commitment to certainly increasing transparency on that front, and just to be clear, does the DOE support, you know, reporting the number of bullying cases at each school, is that correct?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you. Thank you, Chancellor. And just, I have a couple of

1
2 series of questions I'll try to go through quickly in
3 the interest of time, and I thank the chair so much
4 for really giving us the time on this. Overall
5 number of bullying cases citywide, is there any data
6 on that? Are we seeing an overall increase,
7 decrease? Is it holding steady? Any data would be
8 helpful.

9 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: So, the data
10 that we report is for DASA. In 2015/2016 there was a
11 decline compared to the prior year. The one type of
12 cases that we're showing an increase in that data was
13 bias-based bullying. So, a little bit of mixed.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Now, is the data
15 portal that's being used to report an incident, I
16 just want to kind of be clear on the process, is that
17 through the OORS, the Online Occurrence Reporting
18 System? Is that how it gets officially registered
19 with the DOE?

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: That's correct.
21 So, all of the data that we look at is through
22 incident reports through our central reporting
23 system, and then from there we report as required to
24 the state through DASA.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: So, an educator
3 who is a mandated reporter, is that correct? What
4 type of support do they receive, and in terms of
5 communication, once they have made their-- once
6 they've made that report, what feedback to they
7 receive? What support do they receive to make sure
8 that the case is being effectively followed up with
9 and they're kept in the loop as far as what's
10 happening?

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: So, a teachers
12 needs to report that incident to the principal or
13 their designee who will then initiate an
14 investigation. After the investigation is concluded,
15 the principal or the designee needs to update the
16 information and close out effectively the complaint.
17 So it's very much based within the school and the
18 staff working together within the school to
19 understand how to do things and what the outcomes
20 are.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: And where in the
22 process is the parents or the families notified once
23 a report is filed?

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: So, once an
25 incident is reported, as part of the investigation,

1
2 the school would involve the parent and let the
3 parents know that the incident occurred or that the
4 incident was reported and bring the parent in as part
5 of the investigation.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Is that within
7 like 24/48 hours, or what's the timeframe on that?

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: So, an
9 investigation needs to be within five days of the
10 report being--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: [interposing]
12 Within five days?

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: Within five days
14 of the report being received and the completion of
15 the follow-up within 10 days after the report has
16 been received.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: I just have one
18 quick last question, Chair, if you don't mind just
19 very quickly. Another piece of data that could be
20 helpful here is how many school safety transfers did
21 we see in the last school year when-- because the
22 concern we have is that it's bullying, but also
23 pattern bullying, the same kid being consistently
24 bullied over and over again, and are we seeing an
25 increase, a decrease in that? And lastly, last part

1
2 of that, if a student is transferred to a new school
3 because of a safety concern, after the October
4 register month, does support and resources travel
5 with that student, because you know, we just don't
6 want to close the case from there. The support has
7 to travel with the kid. So, if you can shed light on
8 that, I'd appreciate it.

9 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: Well, certainly
10 part of our package of reforms that we've announced
11 today include several things related to support for
12 those students. Any student that has been-- has
13 received multiple bullying incidents, we are going to
14 require the school to develop an individualized
15 action plan to support that student. If a student
16 seeks a transfer as a result of bullying, we work
17 with the family to identify alternative options once
18 that request has been made.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Is that in the
20 school where the bullying occurred or in the new
21 school that they're heading to if they wanted to have
22 a safety transfer?

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: We will work
24 through with the family what is the right thing to do
25 to support that student, and that could be in either.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Okay. I'd like
3 to follow up afterwards. Thank you so much for your
4 testimony today. Thank you, Chair.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Council
6 Member Torres?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Thank you, Mr.
8 Chairman. Urban Assembly is one block outside my
9 district. So, I represent many of the students who
10 attend the school, and I'm wondering as many how
11 could it be that a student was so tortured by his
12 peers that he felt he had no choice but to stab one
13 of them? I read in the New York Times, there was a
14 New York Times article by Elizabeth Harris that one
15 child felt so tortured, felt so tortured by his
16 fellow students that he felt he had-- his only escape
17 could be suicide. Do you acknowledge that these
18 might not be isolated incidents, but that there might
19 be a systemic problem of bullying at Urban Assembly?
20 Because I'm not clear that I've heard a clear
21 acknowledgement of that effect.

22 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I think there is an
23 epidemic citywide and nationally on this issue. I
24 think in this particular case there is an ongoing
25

1
2 investigation, and once I have all the results of the
3 investigation I'll be happy to answer your question.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: So, you're not
5 prepared to say that there is a systemic problem of
6 bullying at Wildlife Conservation?

7 CHANCELLOR FARINA: There is obviously a
8 problem. We're going to get to the bottom, but
9 systemic is a very big word, and I think right now
10 until the investigation is complete, I really want to
11 reserve judgement on this.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: So in a 2016/2017
13 school survey for Urban Assembly, 92 percent of the
14 teachers reported that students are bullied,
15 intimidated and harassed either most of the time or
16 some of the time. And so even though the DOE cannot
17 acknowledge that it might be a systemic problem, your
18 own teachers claim otherwise, but this survey which
19 is a document from DOE claims otherwise. A month
20 ago, I met with the principal, and the information
21 that you provided about TCI slightly contradicts what
22 Council Member Salamanca, the information that
23 Council Member Salamanca and I were given, and I was
24 told by the superintendent that there were no issues
25 with the principal, and then I find Friday that the

1 principal has been removed. And what I was told was
2 she was removed because a new leader is requires to
3 stabilize the school and ensure an inclusive learning
4 environment for all. So, first, I was told that
5 there were no issues with the principal, and now I'm
6 being told that a new leader is required to stabilize
7 the school. So what issues did you discover in the
8 school that led you to remove the principal?
9

10 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I think in terms of
11 looking over time of what needs to be done in that
12 school, having someone to come in fresh to do some of
13 the work that needs to be done there seemed
14 appropriate at this time.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: What were the
16 failures that you discovered in that school?

17 CHANCELLOR FARINA: At this point it's
18 still part of the investigation, and we think that
19 this will be a better thing for the students.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Yeah, I'm just-- I
21 just want to state that I'm concerned about the lack
22 of transparency from the DOE. You have paid a visit
23 to the school on four occasions.

24 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I certainly--
25

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: [interposing]

Never once did I know about that until now. I was never informed about any of your tours to the school even though it's one block outside my district, and even though this is the first stabbing in decades in one of the public schools, and it seems like most of what I find out about what is taking hold in the school is from the press and not from the Department of Education, and I find that to be deeply disturbing.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Just before we go to Council Member Barron, let me just ask a follow-up in terms of what Council Member Treyger was getting at is how many school safety transfers were there last year? And I think that part of the new policy is going to be that those who request it may have an easier time of it. Can you explain that to us, please?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: I don't believe I have the number of transfers with me. Safety transfers includes a much broader group of transfers than simply-- than those associated with bullying, and so it's not disaggregated. We are, as I said, initiating two things. One is ensuring that any

1
2 student who has been bullied multiple times will have
3 an individualized action plan at the school so that
4 we want to ensure that we are supporting the students
5 who have been bullied as well as provide appropriate
6 discipline and support for the students who are being
7 aggressors. And separately, we will work with
8 parents who request a safety transfer for their
9 students who have been bullied to identify
10 alternative options as soon as we receive that
11 request.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you.
13 Council Member Levine?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you, Chair
15 Dromm. Madam Chancellor, very good to see you. When
16 a child dies in custody or under supervision of ACS,
17 which has happened all too often, tragically, and
18 most recently Zymere Perkins, a child in my district,
19 the City treats it as a crisis. The City undertakes
20 an exhaustive, intense investigation that attempts to
21 ask many difficult questions about who knew about the
22 problems, who acted and who didn't. Often these
23 incidents, as tragic as they are, result in entire
24 reorganizations within the City bureaucracy. I see
25 the incident at Wildlife High School to be no less

1
2 serious and no less worthy of this kind of intense
3 top to bottom review with real accountability and
4 possibly changes in the organizational structure. And
5 I think it's critical that we not shy away from the
6 role that homophobia often plays in bullying,
7 anecdotally. Anecdotally we see it in schools in our
8 district. I saw it as a teacher. I've seen it my
9 kids' schools that there is a culture often that
10 treats homophobia as part of childhood banter where
11 kids call each other gay or more pejorative words,
12 and it's just seen as, "Well, that's kids being
13 kids." I've seen this in schools. I've seen this in
14 my kids' schools. I remember it in my days as a
15 teacher. The letter that you sent out after this
16 horrible incident in the Bronx did not make any
17 direct reference to LGBT issues, and as Chair Dromm
18 said very powerfully in his opening statement, if we
19 don't directly address the role of homophobia, then
20 we actually are sending a message that it's not a
21 topic we can talk about freely, and I would like to
22 hear from you about your plans on direct
23 communication to parents to teachers about the role
24 of bias in general and specifically homophobia and
25 the scourge of bullying.

1
2 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, I actually
3 addressed this before. I put out quarterly
4 newsletters to both teachers and parents, and I'm
5 about to get those ready this week, and that
6 particular issue will be handled in both of the
7 newsletters. I was at a meeting with PTA presidents
8 this past Saturday and we actually talked about some
9 of these issues. I think I offered the services to
10 all of you if you wanted to have some of these
11 discussions within your own communities. I'm happy
12 [sic] that I can personally be there at all of them,
13 but I will send someone from my staff to have these
14 conversations with parents. I think you're
15 absolutely right when it comes to the sense of
16 urgency that you alluded to with ACS, and I think one
17 of the things that we have done almost immediately is
18 to review who looks at the quality review and the
19 school snapshots to see where these numbers are in
20 all categories. We have six categories, and we now
21 have a really intense transparent evaluation by the
22 borough field office to see which schools have some
23 of these issues, but certainly over the last two
24 years, the extra supports that we've put in place
25 have been based on these surveys, the extra, like I

1
2 said, the Single Shepherd, the extra school safety
3 agents. I think we do reorganize in ways that
4 relates to a problem, but each problem is different
5 for some reasons, and I think that in this particular
6 case, we are trying very hard to do what's right for
7 the school, but as far as the letters that you are
8 talking about, I'm happy to mention it more
9 specifically in the newsletters that are going out.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: My time is up,
11 and I'll come back on second round, but that letter
12 didn't refer specifically to LGBT issues.

13 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Okay, I want--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: [interposing] I
15 don't know that there's been another letter since.

16 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Okay. I want to be
17 clear that at the time that letter went out and still
18 now, the investigation is not complete. So, a lot of
19 the issues in that school are still being
20 investigated into what appeared to be versus what
21 really is. The letter that's going out now is my
22 quarterly newsletter to teachers. It will be going
23 out within the next two weeks, and in that letter we
24 will be much more specific about what we mean by
25 bullying and what are some of the issues of bullying.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Okay. Thank you,
3 Mr. Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Council
5 Member Barron?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you, Mr.
7 Chair. Thank you to the panel for coming. I want to
8 of course express our condolences to the family that
9 lost a child as well as the families whose lives are
10 never going to be the same because of the incident.
11 I agree with my colleague that we have a systemic
12 problem. I think that it's something that is a
13 reflection of our society at large, and I think that
14 until we acknowledge it and put a plan in place to
15 correct it, it's going to continue to be a problem.
16 I have quite a few questions so I'll try to be very
17 succinct. You said that the timeline for a person
18 presenting an incident is five days to investigation
19 and then 10 days to a conclusion?

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: Yes. From the
21 time the incident is reported, the investigation is
22 supposed to be complete in five days and information
23 into updating form the investigation is supposed to
24 be completed within 10 days. So, 10 days total.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And what are some
3 of the results or actions that occur at the
4 conclusion that substantiates the incident?

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: There's a wide
6 variety of disciplinary--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing] Can
8 you share some of them?

9 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: Absolutely.
10 Lois actually will have these on her fingertips.

11 EXECUTIVE OFFICER HERRERA: It goes
12 according to the discipline code based on the
13 behaviors that were exhibited. Usually bullying and
14 intimidation at the middle and high school level fall
15 under infraction B39 and B40, and they allow for a
16 range of disciplinary responses as well as supports
17 and interventions. And so first and foremost in
18 terms of supports and interventions, we would want to
19 deal with the student who is the aggressor separately
20 from the student who has been targeted or has
21 received the negative behaviors, and so that's
22 probably the most important, but additionally there's
23 a range of disciplinary responses that can be enacted
24 based on a number of circumstances.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Can you share
3 them with us?

4 EXECUTIVE OFFICER HERRERA: So, it starts
5 clearly with parent outreach, intervention by
6 counseling staff, counseling conferences,
7 social/emotional learning individual. We also
8 believe in developing an individual behavior
9 contract, and short term behavioral progress reports,
10 perhaps a referral to the pupil personnel team. If
11 the parent is in agreement we often allow for
12 community service so that there's restoration of the
13 harm that may have been committed to the community.
14 Referral to a community-based organization--

15 CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] Mental
16 health counseling.

17 EXECUTIVE OFFICER HERRERA: Mental health
18 counseling. For students with IEPs we would
19 certainly look at doing functional behavior
20 assessment and generating a behavior intervention
21 plan. So, a number of supports and interventions
22 that can be in place.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And if a parent
24 requests a safety transfer, not only for the child
25 that was victimized, but for a younger sibling that

1
2 would be in that school if that child were
3 transferred, what is the criteria that's used? And
4 I'm asking the question because of a particular
5 incident in my district where the parent wants a
6 safety transfer, not just for the child, but for a
7 younger sibling.

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: So, I think that
9 would depend upon the age of both the child who's
10 transferring and on the younger sibling. There might
11 be different reasons to support or not support the
12 transfer--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]
14 Okay, so this particular child I believe is 10 and
15 the younger sibling obviously is at least a year or
16 perhaps two or three younger. So, how does that play
17 in determining if that younger sibling can also be
18 transferred to another school?

19 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Inez, I would say in
20 a case like that, probably the best thing to do is
21 for them to email you all the particulars, and then
22 you email me, and then we'll investigate, because
23 we've been doing-- I want to be clear that when
24 asking for a transfer it's much more-- it's not about
25 I want my child out of this school and I only want

1
2 him in this other school. It's about I need my child
3 out of this school, what is the most other
4 appropriate setting? So, we have to be very careful
5 how we do this so this doesn't become a process in
6 and of itself. But send me the email and we'll
7 follow up immediately.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I will. Thank
9 you. I have other questions. I'll wait for round
10 two.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright, Council
14 Member Rose followed by Council Member Rodriguez.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you, Chair
16 Dromm. Hi, Chancellor. You know, I'm concerned
17 about-- what triggers a persistently dangerous school
18 designation and how does bullying rank in that
19 designation?

20 EXECUTIVE OFFICER HERRERA: Well, I have
21 to preface that by saying the state is the process of
22 changing. So this year's data will be different than
23 the way we've designated in the past. It has to do
24 with different infractions that than carry point
25 values and are added up, violent incidents that get

1
2 added up and divided by the student enrollment for
3 that school, and if they have a weighted index that
4 crosses the designated threshold, the school-- for
5 one year-- the school can-- we keep our eye on that
6 school to provide supports, but if they have that
7 same data for two years, that's when they could be
8 designated as persistently dangerous.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And where does
10 bullying rank in those-- in that designation?

11 EXECUTIVE OFFICER HERRERA: So, in the
12 new designation system, DASA, the material incidents
13 are going to weigh in. It's just starting this
14 school year.

15 CHANCELLOR FARINA: But I want to be
16 clear. I just visited the only elementary school
17 that is left on our persistently dangerous school out
18 in the Rockaways, and I actually had several people
19 with me to walk the building so we could get a sense
20 of, and the reality is that sometimes data can be a
21 little confusing, because in this particular case,
22 there was no-- when you walk that building there was
23 no real feeling of danger in any way, shape or form.
24 However, this particular school is getting a very
25 large number of students from the domestic violence

1
2 shelter that's right nearby. So, most of the
3 reported cases in this school were the same two
4 children over and over again. So, there's a lot of
5 way that we look at data that we have to first
6 understand how it's put in there, interpreted, and
7 then react to it. But this particular principal
8 asked for some very specific supports which we're
9 giving them, and this year we only had two schools on
10 the persistently dangerous list, and I hope that at
11 least one of these will no longer be on the list by
12 next year.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, in my
14 persistently dangerous school what was the
15 percentages, I guess, what actually deemed this a
16 persistently dangerous school?

17 EXECUTIVE OFFICER HERRERA: I don't have
18 the specific on the incidents themselves, but we can
19 follow up with you later.

20 CHANCELLOR FARINA: But here again, you
21 and I walk the school. We know what's going on
22 there. This is a school that I think with the extra
23 support, they have extra guidance counselors, you
24 have the extra guidance counselor, he has now a new
25 family center. We've done a lot of work in that

1 school internally in terms of the-- well, it's
2 externally. But there are a lot of situations that
3 come from the community as a whole.
4

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And I just want to
6 ask you, how many transfers has resulted since this
7 designation, and have they been granted?

8 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I don't-- I think
9 there were very few requests for transfers.

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: I don't have the
11 data with us.

12 CHANCELLOR FARINA: We can find out.

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: We can find out.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay. Thank you.
15 I'm sorry, Chair.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Council
17 Member Rodriguez?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you,
19 Chair, and I'm sorry for being late, but I was at the
20 court on the individual that did a civil disobedience
21 reporting DACAs a few weeks ago. Being a former
22 teacher for 13 years, as my colleague also being a
23 teacher and being a co-founder to a school you know,
24 first of all we happy that we have you as a leader
25 for the Education Department, but reality that we

1 inherit, a system that is broken is a system that we
2 have built. It's a system that [inaudible] today in
3 2017 with the most segregated education system in the
4 whole nation. This is what we're dealing with. This
5 crisis didn't happen overnight. I'm happy that to
6 have Chancellor Farina as a leader, especially you
7 know, we had a Chancellor that didn't have experience
8 in education, and those chancellors also brought
9 people in their team, and the DOE say he has
10 structure, and I don't think that people has wake up
11 and realize that we lost two beautiful young people,
12 the one that committed the assassination, the victim
13 of bullying from one or many individuals, and the
14 person that will never be with his loved family, and
15 that's happening because the segregation that we have
16 in New York City. Schools and communities that
17 children have all the resources, they know what it is
18 to have mediation. They know what it is to have
19 guidance counselors. That's determined by their seat
20 code [sic] where the schools are created. If a
21 principal is running a school that they are-- all the
22 students level three and four, reality is that the
23 expectation will be completely different than either
24 the group of student that they're working with, they
25

1
2 are level one and level two. When a principal work--
3 and I can tell that the family of her [inaudible],
4 herself and the whole family, they've been a very
5 dedicated family to serve the City of New York in
6 many way, and I think that today she's only
7 [inaudible] as also unfortunately we lost those two
8 lives. Sometimes we have to find someone to blame.
9 It is so difficult to-- and again, I've been co-
10 founder of two schools, Gegorio [sic] Lou Perone High
11 School and Washington Heights Health [sic] Academy.
12 And I told some of my colleagues that they joined the
13 principal family. I say unfortunately now you are
14 CEO because that's what this city has built in the
15 last 30 years. Here in New York City, we have the
16 ratio of guidance counselor much higher per student
17 than the number that we have nationwide. We are
18 starting there. Second, there's no real quality
19 afterschool program happening in our schools compared
20 to those that we have in the Upper West Side, in the
21 Upper East Side in Riverdale [sic] in the worst of
22 community. I'm committed to build a New York City
23 for All. If we want to really come here and say we
24 are addressing bullying and discrimination, let's
25 start addressing services and programming that our

1
2 students have in New York City, which afterschool
3 program needs top quality chancellor for those
4 family, that they are middle-class and upper middle-
5 class. There's no real quality after school program
6 in poor neighborhoods at the Urban Assembly. There's
7 no program during the Saturday and Sunday in our
8 communities, and those are the services that a
9 student they need. Education doesn't happen only
10 8:00 to 3:00. It happens at 6:00 p.m. It happens at
11 7:00 p.m. It happens when I ask for and I got the
12 Speaker to put in money to build a pool at George
13 Washington High School. Still today that project
14 isn't moving, and there's no indoor pool in the whole
15 Community Board 12. So, let's address this
16 systematic program addressing the responsibility that
17 we have the most segregated education system in New
18 York City, and those schools in the poor neighborhood
19 know they don't have the same problem with services
20 than those schools with the PTA that can raise half a
21 million dollars to complement the program and the
22 services that the student needs to really go wake up
23 every day and knowing that they're going to learn.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you.
25 Thank you for that impassioned plea. We're going to

1
2 go now to Council Member Levine and Council Member
3 Barron for follow-ups.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you, Mr.
5 Chair. Madam Chancellor, in your remarks you said
6 there were 3,281 material incidents of bullying
7 reported last year. Do we have, I don't know, 1,800
8 schools approximately? So this is less than two
9 incidents per school per year which strikes me as an
10 extremely low number, and I can only assume reflects
11 widespread under-reporting. Is that your assessment
12 as well?

13 EXECUTIVE OFFICER HERRERA: Again, the
14 material incidents are higher threshold. So, it
15 isn't to say that there isn't behavior that we would
16 love to improve in other schools, but they didn't
17 reach the level of being a material incident, so they
18 weren't included in the report for under the state,
19 under DASA.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: But in a system of
21 1.1 million children and 1,800 schools, to think that
22 there were only 3,200 incidents over a course of a
23 year is a really strange credulity.

24 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I think, again, it
25 goes back to in some cases the stigma or the not

1 training people on what bullying is, and this is
2 something that we are going to be very clear exactly
3 what it is, and then also encouraging other people
4 who play a role, parent coordinators, PTA presidents;
5 it can't be just the principal. How do we create a
6 culture of people reporting issues, and you know,
7 just looking at the national media. There's a lot of
8 things that have gone unreported because people were
9 embarrassed, upset or whatever, and I think we want
10 to be clear that we put a message out there that this
11 is perfectly okay to report, but make sure we put
12 protocols out there that tell people this is how to
13 do it.

14
15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Right. So, one
16 strategy that does, I think, improve school culture
17 and brings staff together across different
18 professional lines is the positive learning
19 collaborative which you have rolled out in I think is
20 it maybe 25 schools? I'm not sure the exact number,
21 but do you see this as an effective strategy to
22 combat bullying by creating a more positive
23 environment?

24 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Absolutely, but we've
25 also put something in place called Learning Partners.

1
2 We have over 200 schools in the Learning Partners
3 initiative, and at least half of those Learning
4 Partners initiatives are models of social/emotional
5 learning climates, and we invite principals to go
6 visit schools that we have designated as having the
7 right school climate. School climate changes or--
8 the minute you walk in a building you kind of know
9 what's going to happen. School safety officer smiles
10 at you. You go to the main office it's pleasant. It
11 has plants. It has student artwork. There is
12 something that can be said for how climate is from
13 the minute you walk in the door. So I think
14 designating schools that we know that have already
15 gone above and beyond, and not having just the
16 principal and the assistant principal take you
17 around, but having the PTA president take you around.
18 A member of the SLT [inaudible] said in our school we
19 have this issue and we dealt with it this way is very
20 powerful for other schools to emulate.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: And I'm all for
22 designating those schools which are succeeding, but
23 can we not apply the positive learning collaborative
24 or similar model into those schools that are
25 struggling?

1
2 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, we are doing
3 that in terms of--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: [interposing] But
5 it's in 25 schools right now, right?

6 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yeah, but everything
7 that works, we expand. I think having it in some
8 buildings and making sure that it works, it's one of
9 many ways that we're doing and--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: [interposing]
11 Okay, well it seems like now is the time to expand it
12 very rapidly. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And just to be clear,
14 according to the DOE's implanting Respect for All, a
15 Guide to Promoting a Safe and Inclusive School
16 Environment for all, any incident that's in violation
17 of Chancellor's regulation A832 must be reported. Am
18 I right on that?

19 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yep.

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, if it's determined
22 to be in violation of that, then it should be
23 included.

24

25

1
2 EXECUTIVE OFFICER HERRERA: And material
3 incidents are in violation of 832. They're one in
4 the same.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Council
6 Member Barron? I'm sorry. We're going to have
7 Council Member Rodriguez vote on the measure. Clerk,
8 would you please call the vote?

9 COUNCIL CLERK: Committee on Education
10 continuation of roll call. Council Member Rodriguez?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Aye.

12 COUNCIL CLERK: Vote now stands at 14 in
13 the affirmative, 0 in the negative, no abstentions
14 with exception to Intro. 1638A and Resolution 1442A
15 where the vote is 13 in the affirmative, 1 in
16 negative, no abstentions. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Council
18 Member Barron?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you, Mr.
20 Chair. Chancellor, we know that as an educational
21 leaders, as you have said, when we walk in the
22 building we get a sense of the culture of the school,
23 and as I have visited schools where new principals
24 have been brought in, one of the main things that
25 they have addressed is a culture in the school where

1
2 there's not a respect of the students as individuals
3 of their ethnic backgrounds, of their cultural
4 differences on behalf of the faculty. As a part of
5 the appendix in our briefing papers, we have a form
6 which says, "Report of student to student
7 discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and/or
8 bullying." Is there are form for a report for staff
9 to student incidents? What has been that number, and
10 what has been the disposition in those cases?

11 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Okay. Yes.

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: So, yes, we do
13 collect data on staff onto student.

14 EXECUTIVE OFFICER HERRERA: And this is
15 handled by the Office of Equal Opportunity, OEO.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I'm sorry, say
17 again.

18 EXECUTIVE OFFICER HERRERA: This type of
19 complaint where it involves a staff member, whether a
20 staff to student goes through our Office of Equal
21 Opportunity, OEO.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And what's the
23 number, and what's been the disposition? So you
24 don't have any involvement in that or just a part of
25 that department that addresses that?

1
2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: Those complaints
3 are forwarded to the Office of Equal Opportunity and
4 they then investigate those complaints.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay.

6 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: So, staff on
7 student complaints in 2016 there were in fact zero.
8 I'm sorry. There were 44 that are-- had been
9 reported, and they are all still under investigation.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: What's the
11 timeline?

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: I-- that one
13 does not have a specific timeline. The Office of
14 Equal Employment investigates each of these.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Mr. Chair, I
16 would offer some legislation that we establish a
17 timeline so that it does not go into perpetuity or
18 into people retiring and not having had a decision in
19 that regard, and in-- as regards the ratio of
20 guidance counselors, what is the formula that's used?
21 Are there schools that do not have guidance
22 counselors? Is there a number that requires a school
23 to have a guidance counselor, and or is it per
24 building? Is it the number of students in a school?
25 Guidance counselors I know are shared. When I was in

1
2 a principal's position the first year I did not have
3 a guidance counselor, and I was told it was not a
4 requirement that I have one. I think the student
5 population the first year was about 900 students.

6 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: New York State
7 Law requires any school serving students in grades 6-
8 12 to have the services of a certified counselor,
9 and--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing] On-
11 site? One per building? That's generic, that's
12 general. I mean, if a person is coming in once a
13 week they're getting services, but it may not address
14 the needs of that particular student, those schools.

15 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yeah. Let me-- this
16 is the one area since I've become Chancellor that
17 we've increased substantially. I believe in guidance
18 counselors. I also know that when principals make
19 staffing decisions, to a large degree, it matters how
20 many guidance counselors support the children. We
21 also, two years ago, the guidance counselor hiring
22 was frozen in New York City. We lifted the freeze so
23 principals could do more guidance counselors. For
24 community schools, they not only have the guidance
25 counselor for the school, but they have the one that

1
2 comes with a CBO. So, we have seen an increase in
3 guidance counselors. There's a difference between
4 the mandated guidance counselors and the non-
5 mandated, and I think this is a really important
6 support for most of our schools.

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: I'd also like to
8 add, Council Member, that we do post a report
9 annually on guidance counselors and social workers in
10 our school. It's posted annually in February. Our
11 schools with high school grades have a ratio of one
12 counselor or social worker to each 167 students,
13 which is actually better than the recommended norm of
14 one to 250, and all schools, the ratio is one to 241.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And Mr. Chair, if
16 you would indulge me one final question. We're
17 talking about bullying and we're talking about
18 victims of bullying. Someone referred earlier to
19 those students who at such a point of being so
20 bullied and feeling so helpless that they consider
21 suicide. Before your tenure, there was a student in
22 fifth grade in elementary school who was bullied to
23 the point that she felt there was nothing else that
24 she could do to get relief, and this 10-year-old
25 young girl committed suicide. Do we have any records

1
2 addressing those number of students who at some point
3 felt that they were bullied and did in fact commit
4 suicide because I know of this one particular
5 incident? Are there others that we know that are
6 results of children having felt bullied to the point
7 in schools.

8 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Suicide ideation is
9 something we really care deeply about.

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: It is always a
11 horrible tragedy when any child feels that extremely
12 and does take their life. What we have found in last
13 school year there were only four, and that's four too
14 many.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Don't-- please
16 don't say only, please.

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: Four too many.

18 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I know, four too
19 many.

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: What we found is
21 that those students had not in fact expressed their
22 feelings to someone in their school. So, for
23 whatever reason, this is where we are always trying
24 to do a better job. We want to ensure that all
25 students have a trusted adult in a school who they

1 can feel comfortable confiding in and speaking to.

2 That's--

3
4 CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] And this
5 is one of the topics that we're putting together on
6 module to discuss with parents. One of the signs,
7 one of the things that you as a parent should be able
8 to do at home, and the other thing, particularly in
9 middle school and high school kids, that we need to
10 create a different culture on peer-to-peer reporting.
11 We have to get away from the significance of "I can't
12 tell on my best friend" or it's snitching or it's
13 tattling. If we're going to be a true community, if
14 you know that someone that you care about is even
15 considering this, you have a need to report. And
16 this to me is a very personal thing. I've been
17 really following this since I became chancellor, and
18 if you read the New York Times a few weeks ago about
19 the level of stress that our kids are going through,
20 because interestingly enough, many of the students
21 committing suicide, at least the ones I personally
22 knew over the last few years is because of too much
23 pressure, too much either academic pressure. So we
24 really need as a society to really ask ourselves what
25 are we asking of kids and what are we putting the

1 kids through. So, this is personal to me. I really
2 want to see how we do a better job, not just of
3 training teachers, but parents, because a lot of this
4 happens in the home and we don't always know until
5 it's too late.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. Thank
8 you, Mr. Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you very
10 much, and I'm going to wrap it up with just one last
11 question. In terms of the new reforms that you're
12 going to implement, was there a dollar cost in that?
13 Was there an estimate of what type of commitment in
14 terms of funding the DOE is going to make? I know
15 you--

16 CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: said a million
18 dollars for the GSAs.

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: So, the annual
20 cost for these initiatives would be about eight
21 million dollars, and then some of the initiatives
22 also require additional up-front costs to get them
23 established.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And where is that
25 money coming from?

1
2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROSE: So, we will be
3 coming to City Council with proposals in January to
4 help fund these initiatives.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Alright,
6 we're going to end it here for this portion of the
7 hearing. I thank you for coming in and for providing
8 testimony, and I look forward to continuing to work
9 with you on this really important issue. Thank you.

10 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Our next panel will
12 be Jeff Povalitis, Safety Director from the UFT, and
13 Anthony Harmon, Assistant to the President and BRAVE
14 Director for the UFT. And I need to just remind
15 everyone that we are restricting testimony to three
16 minutes because we have about 35-40 people who do
17 want to give testimony. Okay, thank you. I want to
18 first swear you in. So, would you raise your right
19 hand, please? Do you solemnly swear or affirm to
20 tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the
21 truth and to answer Council Member questions
22 honestly?

23 UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

24 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, who'd like to
3 start?

4 ANTHONY HARMON: I'll start.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

6 ANTHONY HARMON: So, I'd like to start by
7 saying good afternoon to everyone. My name is
8 Anthony Harmon, and I'm Assistant to the President at
9 the United Federation of Teachers, and as part of
10 that I serve as the Director for our BRAVE program,
11 our BRAVE Anti-Bullying Department. I'm joined here
12 today with a colleague, Jeff Povalitis, who is the
13 Director of the UFT's Health and Safety Department,
14 and let me start by saying on behalf of our
15 President, Michael Mulgrew, and the members, I want
16 to thank Council Member Danny Dromm and the members
17 of the City Council's Education Committee for once
18 again putting a spotlight on this very important
19 issue of bullying in our public schools. One of the
20 UFT's mission since its onset is to provide safe,
21 nurturing environments for our members and our
22 students where everyone can strive. Focusing on
23 bullying is a big part of that, and creating a
24 positive learning climate is essential. We know many
25 of our schools are clamoring for additional support.

1
2 While some schools have implemented comprehensive and
3 effective bullying-wide initiatives to combat
4 bullying, others are still struggling with too few
5 resources or training to make meaningful change. We
6 know that the Department of Education has gathered a
7 lot of data about school climate, but we're deeply
8 concerned that the DOE is doing very little with that
9 information to help the schools begging for
10 assistance. I agree, Council Member Barron, that
11 schools are a reflection of what's going on in
12 society, and if we believe that then we have to do
13 what we can to make the world a better place. We
14 know that in recent times school places have become
15 meaner, some uglier, some religious intolerance, and
16 we see on the news every day, every night, and you
17 can see the tension as it rubs off on our kids. We
18 can't insulate students from the outside world, but
19 we can try to do is to ensure that schools create a
20 safe space, a nurturing space. The UFT has a robust
21 health and safety program, and we have also made
22 significant investments in several anti-bullying
23 programs including BRAVE and the Positive Learning
24 Collaborative. These two programs complement each
25 other beautifully. BRAVE focuses on combatting

1 student bullying, while the Positive Learning
2 Collaborative helps schools implement school-wide
3 approaches in creating a safe, calm, nurturing
4 environments where kids can really learn. We
5 launched BRAVE a few years ago, BRAVE which stands
6 for Building Respect, Acceptance and Voice through
7 Education. We launched it six years ago to fight the
8 bullying situation in our schools. This year, our
9 phones have been ringing off the hook with requests
10 for anti-bullying training. In fact, just a couple of
11 days ago, we trained a group of teachers and parent
12 liaisons from the UFT to conduct workshops and to go
13 into schools and to help students and teachers
14 recognize bullying and the characteristics and the
15 long term effects. Through the Positive Learning
16 Collaborative, a whole school approach is looked at,
17 and what can the entire school do about bullying.
18 The principal, the custodian, the secretary, everyone
19 needs to be involved and recognize that bullying is
20 an issue and seriously ask ourselves what can we do
21 about it. The Positive Learning Schools, train
22 school staff based on the Cornell University's 26-
23 hour course in Therapeutic Crisis Interventions. To
24 date, 1,800 educators have completed this intense
25

1
2 training session. I will now turn the time over to
3 Jeff Povalitis who is our Director of Safety, Health
4 Safety at the UFT.

5 JEFFREY POVALITIS: So good afternoon,
6 everybody. As we move forward, we hope that the City
7 and the Department of Education will continue to
8 expand and enhance its Respect for All initiative. It
9 is a well-meaning program that promotes tolerance and
10 understanding within schools, and the UFT has
11 wholeheartedly supported the idea since its
12 inception. Now, however, the DOE needs to take it to
13 the next level. As we mentioned earlier, schools are
14 clamoring for strong anti-bullying programs. The DOE
15 needs to redefine and expand the goals of Respect for
16 All and put money, appropriate curriculum and
17 resources behind that goal. We also believe that
18 it's time to rethink, and maybe eliminate, the so-
19 called Respect for All liaison position, which is
20 essentially an unfunded, untrained and undefined
21 role. In reality, the liaisons are most likely
22 putting together some student activities for the
23 Respect for All Week such as creating posters for the
24 school, but otherwise, most don't have much in the
25 way of authority or dedicated time to work on anti-

1
2 bullying programs. As an alternative, we recommend
3 the DOE put in place a trained team at the school
4 headed up by the principal and other administrators.
5 These teams must include staff members with whom kids
6 feel comfortable speaking, regardless of whether
7 those staff members are a counselor, a safety agent
8 or even a sports coach. This team should be given
9 extensive training and must be given dedicated and
10 specific time to spend with children, and lots of it.
11 Working with children in crisis means listening to
12 them, and that takes time and expertise. Because in
13 the end, it's not about putting a name on a chart or
14 hanging inspirational posters around the school.
15 Those types of activities may certainly help
16 reinforce important lessons, but they don't prevent
17 bullying. They certainly are no hope when a child is
18 in crisis or a problem is rapidly developing in a
19 hallway or classroom. But working together, trained
20 personnel can make a difference in ameliorating the
21 conditions that encourage bullying, and trained
22 personnel can defuse a situation as well. The
23 Department of Education has a wealth of data at its
24 disposal, thanks to the school environmental surveys.
25 That data shows that some of our schools are clearly

1
2 trying out-- are actually crying out for
3 intervention. I'm talking about places where the
4 numbers show morale and respect are down. Places
5 where students and teachers are reporting that
6 bullying incidents are prevalent inside the building.
7 The question is, once the DOE has the data, what does
8 it actually do in response? In other words,
9 transparency and reporting are good, but only if the
10 information leads somewhere. What can schools that
11 need help expect to receive in terms of support and
12 guidance? Our students and staff are honest in these
13 surveys, but to what end? They clearly say they want
14 to tackle bullying. They want to prevent tragedies.
15 But they're drowning and looking for a lifeguard.
16 The DOE needs to take action in these schools. We
17 need assurances that the DOE will be responsive to
18 the needs in the school in a different way, including
19 appropriate funding, personnel and programs including
20 counselors, behavior intervention services and anti-
21 bullying training. We are also recommending a change
22 in the way the information is gathered and
23 communicated, so parents have a better understanding
24 of what's happening inside of schools and can dive
25 into issues related to bullying. As they exist now,

1 the survey's questions and the data gathered are
2 designed to mesh with the categories found in the
3 DOE's Framework for Great Schools. While that may
4 help us understand schools on the macro level, we
5 believe the category of "supportive environment" is
6 too broad because it combines safety data with a host
7 of topics including strength of pedagogy and help
8 with college applications. All of these things do
9 contribute to a supportive environment, but a bad
10 score could mean one of several things. Kids might
11 not feel safe, but a low score could also mean
12 students question the quality of the college advice
13 they're receiving or they're not learning how to
14 think critically. We recommend that categories such
15 as safety and bullying be broken out and reported
16 separately. We also need to add key personnel. Some
17 students come to school angry, frustrated and
18 depressed. Counselors are the key to not only
19 responding when crisis occur but also preventing
20 situations from escalating. We work hard to get
21 students the support that they need, but we are
22 greatly concerned about the shortage of the mental
23 health professionals at the schools. We have made
24 strides in the area under Mayor de Blasio with the
25

1 hiring of hundreds of guidance counselors in the last
2 few years, but the caseloads for these professionals
3 are still way too high. Our schools need more
4 counselors, and what's more, they need more mental
5 health professionals including psychologists and
6 social workers. The only way for these professionals
7 to effectively do their jobs is to make sure
8 caseloads are reasonable. It's also worth noting
9 that many educators believe that there's not enough
10 time in the day to address all the mental health
11 issues we observe. Some of those services along with
12 other programs, our scheduled recess where kids can
13 blow off steam, have been to longer pedagogical. We
14 may want to take another hard look at school
15 programming and try to incorporate additional time
16 for students to take advantage of mental health
17 programs and time for kids to just be kids. Every
18 child comes to school with a story. While extreme
19 poverty, homelessness, and mental health issues play
20 a role in creating enormous stress on our students,
21 we also know that bullying is just as prevalent in
22 some schools with less poverty where students may not
23 have obvious challenges. This is why, even though we
24 know some of these situations can be addressed on a
25

1 case-by-case basis, the UFT emphasizes improving the
2 overall school climate. The biggest barrier in
3 reducing bullying in our schools is the lack of
4 resources and support at the school level. We are
5 calling on the Council to help us advocate for these
6 tools and funding. The DOE and school administrators
7 are understandably juggling an increasingly long list
8 of competing priorities when it comes to budgeting,
9 but we strongly believe that the only way to achieve
10 our goal is to make improving school culture a
11 priority. More training, more resources and more
12 personnel, those are the investments we need to make.
13 Working together, we can make this happen.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you very
15 much, and that's what the purpose of this hearing is
16 about, is advocating for additional resources to
17 prevent this type-- these types of incidents from
18 occurring again in our school system. For Mr.
19 Harmon, I know that you mentioned the BRAVE program
20 which I'm aware of also and very supportive of. How
21 many phone calls a year does the BRAVE program get?
22

23 ANTHONY HARMON: So, there was-- and
24 thank you for the question, because-- let me just
25 start by also mentioning thank you for the support

1
2 that you've given to not only BRAVE and this Council
3 has given not only to BRAVE but also to the Positive
4 Learning Collaborative as well. So, the BRAVE
5 hotline just re-established, and when the process of
6 gathering that data as we speak, what we are doing is
7 training teachers and training people like the parent
8 liaisons, which we have one of each in the five
9 boroughs, retraining school safety personnel from the
10 UFT, to train teachers and parents on getting to
11 recognize what bullying looks like in a particular
12 school and the characteristics, and then those long-
13 term effects from bullying. We're in the process of
14 gathering that data as we speak. I also want to just
15 highlight that included in the testimony, the written
16 testimony, is some testimonials from three of the
17 schools that are participating in the Positive
18 Learning Collaborative.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, can you tell me a
20 little bit about the PLC, because that seems to be
21 different than some of the programs that the DOE is
22 doing. How is that different?

23 ANTHONY HARMON: So, it looks at the--
24 making a difference in terms of the entire school and
25 not putting the onus in terms of changing the school

1
2 environment on one person, but everyone being
3 involved, everyone, the principal, the guidance
4 counselor, the school secretary, the custodian; any
5 adult in the building, a survey is conducted, and you
6 know, the staff is asked what do they think is needed
7 at the school. The students are an integral part of
8 the process, and they develop a plan, and each one
9 will be unique. It will be different based on the
10 needs of the particular school. Each of those
11 persons that, you know, of the schools that are
12 involved, and I think there's 17 schools if I'm
13 correct that are participating in the Positive
14 Learning Collaborative go through a program, the
15 Cornell University 26-hour course. It's a
16 therapeutic crisis intervention, and as I said in the
17 testimony, about 1,800 educators have completed the
18 training.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, that requires a
20 total school buy-in. you know, I will say this,
21 because when I was a teacher I tried to do some
22 restorative practices in my classroom including
23 circle, but what my dilemma was is that when I would
24 take the kids down to lunch, they were then with the
25 school aids and then they'd be out in the yard, and

1 that's where I'd see a lot of problems, and then I'd
2 come back to the office after lunch, and there'd be
3 the whole line-up of all the kids who had misbehaved
4 during lunchtime, you know, in the office, and then
5 I'd have to take them all upstairs, and I had to deal
6 with the issues that the kids brought to me. So, I
7 think that's why I wanted you to highlight the fact
8 that everybody is trained in that as well.

10 ANTHONY HARMON: The entire school, the
11 school aids, and I'm glad that you mentioned that,
12 the school aids, the secretary, everyone, every adult
13 in the building takes some onus and some
14 responsibility in creating this safe and nurturing
15 environment when school climate and culture is looked
16 at.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, I am-- have some
18 mixed feelings about eliminating the Respect for All,
19 although I know that you're advocating for creating a
20 Respect for All team. Do you have any idea what the
21 cost of that might be at this point? And then I also
22 noticed in your testimony that you said that the
23 posters don't work. I mean, I don't think posters
24 alone work, but how would you advo-- how would you
25 get the word out to students about who are the

1
2 responsible people in this school to whom bullying
3 should be reported?

4 JEFFREY POVALITIS: So, in speaking with
5 the whole school, a team environment, I believe that
6 if you start off by saying that this is our new
7 approach, your teacher or whomever, you can report to
8 anyone. A lot of the times it just-- a lot of the
9 students don't even know who the Respect for All
10 Liaison is in the school. So, I believe that if you
11 train a whole school, have everyone speaking the same
12 language at the same time, working with the same
13 common goal, I believe that in time students will be
14 more open to communicate to anyone. They should feel
15 comfortable in speaking to-- or going to a sports
16 coach. As a teacher, and I'm also a coach, I used to
17 have these discussion with my athletes and most of my
18 students, and then, you know, I would have to bring
19 it to somebody else, but I just think that student
20 should feel comfortable speaking to anyone inside the
21 school. It shouldn't just be the Respect for All
22 liaison as the term.

23 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: And let me just
24 quickly go to the improved transparency in the
25

1 schools. Do they collect demographic data in the
2 school climate surveys? Would you know?

3 JEFFREY POVALITIS: I don't know off-
4 hand.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, because that's
6 one area where I thought we could put demographic
7 data as it relates specifically to LGBT students as
8 well.

9 ANTHONY HARMON: And if I could just add,
10 in terms of the BRAVE initiative that we're looking
11 at and based on previous conversations that we've had
12 with the Council Members, we also are looking at
13 developing something with BRAVE for LGBT and to look
14 at those particular issues when the process of
15 reaching out to some organizations that have
16 expertise in dealing with LGBT issues and developing
17 programs, lesson plans and things of that sort that
18 people could use. I just want to go back to the
19 issue of the Respect for All coordinators or
20 liaisons, or is it the UFT position is not to do away
21 with the Respect for All, I'm not speaking against
22 that. Making on person solely responsible I think is
23 the crux of our issue when ultimately we believe that
24 the principal in the building is the person who is
25

1
2 ultimately responsible, but what happens, you know,
3 in the building. What we're saying is that let's
4 create a team of people in the building so if we're
5 putting up flyers or posters throughout the building,
6 it's not one person that's solely responsible, but
7 it's a team of people that's responsible that
8 students can go to should they feel a need to.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Sounds interesting.
10 Let's talk more about that offline, and let me ask
11 you just, though, in general because I left teaching
12 about eight years ago, a little over eight years ago,
13 but my impression in those days was that teachers
14 wanted to do this work but were nervous about whether
15 or not the Administration either in their school or
16 at a higher level, you know, down at Tweed [sic]
17 would have their back on this stuff. How do teachers
18 feel now about this?

19 JEFFREY POVALITIS: I think they still
20 feel the same way. When I go visit schools and I
21 speak to staff--

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] When you
23 say the same way, what do you mean? They're nervous
24 about dealing with bullying issues?

25 JEFFREY POVALITIS: Correct.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Are they nervous
3 about LGBT issues?

4 JEFFREY POVALITIS: I think that more
5 education needs to be put out to the schools so staff
6 members feel more comfortable in actually addressing
7 that for the students.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: They don't know how
9 sometimes to address it.

10 JEFFREY POVALITIS: Correct.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: They've not received
12 training in it.

13 JEFFREY POVALITIS: Well, I wouldn't say
14 they haven't received training but a lot of the times
15 the training is an email.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is what?

17 JEFFREY POVALITIS: Is like an email sent
18 out, and I believe in modeling more than just
19 reading. I'm more of a visual learner. I think the
20 sentiment is the same now, and I think that the
21 caseloads are becoming more and more also. You know,
22 there's a lot of anger out there and the kids are
23 coming into the schools and, you know, with teachers
24 saying we're dealing with a lot more and we wish we
25 had more and more time to actually spend on this.

1
2 ANTHONY HARMON: And I think training is
3 a key factor in that whole issue. I will tell you
4 that since 2013 with the Dignity for All Students
5 Act, the UFT has trained over 20,000 teachers and
6 para-professionals, and you know, the Dignity for All
7 Students Act as well, and LGBT issues are, you know,
8 included. But we are in the process of conducting
9 training sessions, not only for teachers, but for
10 parents as well. Through the BRAVE initiative, the
11 hotline is established through a partnership with the
12 Mental Health Association for New York. Kids can
13 call that hotline Monday through Thursday from 2:30
14 to 9:30 in the evening to get assistance, and you
15 know, the phones are manned by mental health
16 professionals that can offer resources and things of
17 that sort not only to the student but to the parent
18 as well. So, we're in the process of advocating
19 greatly that, you know, schools use that as a
20 resource.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, and I just
22 want to end by saying I do agree. I think that
23 teachers still feel that if they were to address
24 particularly LGBT issues that the Administration
25 might not be there for them, and I think that's

1 something that we must overcome as well, which is why
2 I've been insistent upon the use of those words and
3 getting a letter into the mailboxes of teachers. I
4 think that would have a great impact on their
5 ability. I think they're willing and wanting to do
6 it, but they're need to know that somebody's got
7 their backs besides the UFT.
8

9 ANTHONY HARMON: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

11 JEFFREY POVALITIS: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, and we're
13 going to call our next panel. OH, sorry, Council
14 Member Barron. I apologize.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. Just
16 one quick question. So, in your testimony you refer
17 to the Positive Learning Collaborative. Is that the
18 same as the program that was indicated, the Crisis
19 Intervention Program that the DOE uses?

20 ANTHONY HARMON: It's not the same
21 program. That's what I'm being-- it's not the same.
22 I'm not familiar with what the DOE does with the--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing] The
24 Therapeutic Crisis Intervention. Because I see it
25 says it was designed by Cornell.

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ANTHONY HARMON: Cornell.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: That's why I'm asking is it the same program. It says 26-hours of Therapeutic Crisis Intervention.

ANTHONY HARMON: It's similar, but it's not the same program. As far as my knowledge of the positive learning community, the school has to agree to enter into this-- enter this work, the entire school.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: The entire school.

ANTHONY HARMON: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And I was going to ask a question about the distinction between BRAVE and the Positive Learning Collaborative Program, and I think you alluded to it. It's available on-- people can phone in, and they have a crisis. They want to get some assistance, they have a phone. How is that made? How is that publicized to schools or the students that that exists?

ANTHONY HARMON: So, we created posters that we distributed to I want to say about 800 schools so far. We've provided pamphlets, resources for teachers that was distributed at our monthly

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2 chapter leading meeting so that the chapter leader
3 could take the information--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing] The
5 chapter leaders are the persons that you're using to
6 get the information?

7 ANTHONY HARMON: As a conduit, exactly,
8 as opposed to sending the information blanket to a
9 school with no name attached. So we would send the
10 information to the chapter and get the information to
11 them. we also reached out to parent coordinators,
12 those who we know are in certain schools, that we put
13 up posters throughout the building with the hotline
14 and the telephone number that people can call, and
15 additionally have what's called parent workshops that
16 we do with parents throughout the five boroughs, and
17 we have parent liaisons from the UFT, a UFT employee,
18 that conducts workshops for parents and the
19 information is given there so the PTA person or the
20 PA person can get the flyers and take it back to the
21 school to put it on their PA boards.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. Thank
23 you, Mr. Chair.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you,
3 Council Member Barron, and thank you to this panel.
4 I really appreciate you coming in.

5 JEFFREY POVALITIS: Thank you for your
6 time.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thanks. Our next
8 panel: Donna Lieberman from New York Civil Liberties
9 Union, Jenna Miller from Advocates for Children,
10 Nancy Ginsburg, the Legal Aid Society, Nelson Mar
11 from the Bronx Legal Services, and Sanford Rubenstein
12 representing the family of Matthew McCree. Is
13 Johnathan Cohen [sp?] here? Okay, good. So would
14 you join this panel as well? Alright, I'm going to
15 ask this panel to raise your right hand so you can be
16 sworn in. Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell
17 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
18 and to answer Council Member questions honestly?

19 UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

20 UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, who would like
22 to start? I shouldn't ask a group of lawyers that,
23 right? Let's start down here.

24 JENNA MILLER: Alright, good afternoon.
25 My name is Jenna Miller. I'm a staff attorney and an

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2 Equal Justice Works Fellow in the School Justice
3 Project at Advocates for Children. I represent
4 students who are bullied and accused of bullying with
5 a special focus on LGBTQ students and students with
6 disabilities. I also provide know-your-rights
7 trainings on bullying to parents, students, and
8 professionals. This testimony offers several
9 recommendations to the City Council, the
10 Administration, and the DOE to prevent and address
11 bullying, harassment, and discrimination in New York
12 City schools by expanding whole-school trainings that
13 improve school climate, better utilizing existing
14 resources, increasing public awareness of anti-
15 bullying resources, and improving reporting. First,
16 we call on the City Council to urge the Mayor and the
17 DOE to expand the City investment in and effectively
18 implementing whole-school trainings in Collaborative
19 Problem Solving and Restorative Practices. Expanding
20 these trainings will improve positive school climate
21 and it will also prevent and appropriately address
22 bullying. These are research-based programs, and
23 very importantly as several City Council Members
24 discussed and even the Chancellor mentioned, these
25 trainings provide opportunities to practice difficult

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2 conversations and give professionals an opportunity
3 to really build skills so that they can help students
4 build skills in these social/emotional competencies.
5 While the DOE has piloted some of these approaches on
6 an ad hoc basis, the City and the DOE have yet to
7 invest in a long-term strategic plan with funding to
8 build capacity to develop and expand these whole-
9 school trainings. The City and DOE should do so with
10 deliberate speed and with deadlines. Second, the
11 City Council should recommend that the DOE better
12 utilize anti-bullying training resources to ensure
13 that whole-school Respect for All trainings are
14 conducted every year and it's done so effectively.
15 RFA Liaisons are trained, but it's our experience
16 that at many schools the RFA liaison does not turn-
17 key the training. So far this year, we've gotten an
18 increased number of requests from schools to conduct
19 training for students, particularly for entire school
20 grades, and this indicates to us that some schools
21 don't have the resources to provide necessary
22 trainings or they don't know where to get them. The
23 DOE needs to better monitor the completion and
24 efficacy of RFA liaison turn-key trainings and make
25 sure that they're monitoring the quality of the

1 materials provided to students and staff. Third,
2 City Council should recommend that the DOE better
3 utilize the Field Support Center School Climate
4 Managers and other staff to track and use data and
5 resources to prevent and address bullying in schools.
6 City Council should recommend that the DOE clarify
7 which information these school climate managers
8 review, how frequently they review it, and which
9 metrics trigger actions. We also support
10 Introduction Number 1538 requiring the DOE to post
11 the name and contact information of each school's RFA
12 liaison on the homepage of every school's website,
13 and we also recommend that City Council urge the DOE
14 and superintendents to use quantitative and
15 qualitative school climate measures in evaluating
16 principals' performance in a way that incents [sic]
17 accurate, and the key is accurate, bullying incident
18 and complaint reporting. Thank you for the
19 opportunity to testify today. I'm happy to answer any
20 questions.
21

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
23 Next please?

24 DONNA LIEBERMAN: I want to second my
25 colleague's testimony so I don't have to repeat it.

1 I want to thank you, Council Member, for your
2 efforts, and I'm sure the rest of your committee that
3 couldn't make it today are deeply concerned about
4 these issues as well. The City's obligation in our
5 schools is to provide a safe and nurturing
6 environment that is essential to the safety and
7 wellbeing of all kids and makes it possible for kids
8 to learn. The tragedy at Urban Assembly is an awful
9 reminder of how important this work is and how
10 devastating a school's failure can be. The legal
11 framework for the school's obligation to prevent and
12 respond to bullying is outlined in DASA and Respect
13 for All, and it reflects the ideological commitment,
14 the philosophical commitment to provide a safe
15 environment, but it relies on the schools to really
16 figure out what to do. One thing that's supposed to
17 happen is the provision of a dignity coordinator in
18 every school and both statewide, and in the City it
19 turns out that that is really not happening. The
20 dignity coordinators in a state survey indicated that
21 they're not prepared. They don't-- they themselves
22 don't feel prepared to handle the responsibilities.
23 Well, that's broken. And in New York City, the New
24 York Civil Liberties Union's activist project
25

1 surveyed 300 children in 12 schools about whether
2 they-- simple question, do you know who your school's
3 Respect for All coordinator is? And the good news is
4 that 20 percent of the kids did. The horrific news
5 is that 80 percent did not. And so, you know, laws
6 are important. Requirements, mandates are important,
7 but how they're implemented is the key, and this is a
8 commitment that is honored, I think, in the breach.
9 What we need is both training and reporting
10 requirements, but reporting requirements can be
11 counter-productive. When they are not coupled with
12 support and accountability. You know, there's no
13 place in here that I see provision for an audit of
14 school practices to school compliance as well as the
15 incidents. Why not? That's-- it feels like a no-
16 brainer. It's time for independent audit of what's
17 going on with regard to training and supports as well
18 as the actuality of bullying. You know, we find that
19 I think 50 percent of our schools report that they
20 haven't had any material incidents. Really? Fifty
21 percent of the schools don't have any bullying that's
22 reportable going on? I think nobody in their right
23 mind would believe that, and when we act as if it's
24 not happening, the consequences are, you know, are

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2 probably not nearly as devastating as what happened
3 at Urban Assembly, but it's an invitation for that.
4 So, I think the most important bill is-- that needs
5 to be passed right now is your bill, which provides,
6 puts a little bit of teeth into the coordinator, and
7 I think the reporting bill is one that we have to
8 look at with caution. You know the ACLU is all about
9 transparency, but we also know that when there's an
10 invitation and a lack of accountability,-- there's a
11 lack of accountability for reporting and a lack of
12 support so that schools that accurately report are
13 not punished but supported; it's an invitation for
14 inaccurate at best.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you.
16 Next, please?

17 NELSON MAR: Good afternoon. Good
18 afternoon. My name is Nelson Mar. I'm an attorney at
19 Bronx Legal Services. Our office is the federally
20 funded legal services office that provides free civil
21 legal services to low-income residents of the Bronx.
22 I work in the Education Law Unit representing
23 students with disabilities and students who are
24 involved in the student discipline process. And I've
25 been working in the Bronx for 18 years, but I must

1 say I've been fighting bullying all my life. As one
2 of the individuals who helped integrate the community
3 of Whitestone out in Queens, New York, I can tell you
4 the severe impacts of bullying and discrimination.
5 Everything that my colleague have said so far are
6 spot-on, and these are issues that continue to
7 persist largely because of a lack of resources that
8 the schools have. We see a lot of clients in our
9 office, especially clients who are involved in the
10 discipline process. We've been accused of violating
11 school discipline codes, and often times we hear from
12 our clients that they were just merely responding
13 after enduring multiple incidents of bullying, and
14 when they've gone to teachers, when they've gone to
15 administrators nothing happened. Worst yet, there
16 was no incident report of those complaints, and I
17 think that that goes towards a lot that has been
18 stated already about how schools seem to under-report
19 these incidents. My client, Cathleen Dennin [sp?],
20 had a case where there was serious incidents
21 involving bullying of that student, and when the
22 parent went to the school to ask, you know, where's
23 the documentation about this, the school said we
24 don't have any. And this is a serious problem. Even
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2 at Urban Assembly as, you know, Council Member Torres
3 pointed out, in 2015/2016 in their DASA reporting,
4 there were only seven incidents of bullying at that
5 school when 90-- more than 90 percent of the school
6 staff said there's pervasive bullying going on in
7 that school. So, resources, what do we mean by that?
8 Well, first of all, we're talking about having more
9 personnel in the schools. I think you cannot do more
10 with simply what you currently have, and what the New
11 Settlement Apartment's Parent Action Committee just
12 held a town hall meeting this past week talking about
13 hiring more social workers in our schools, and I
14 think that that is key and that is important, not
15 only because I have a masters in social work as well.
16 But it is really important that there needs to be
17 additional personnel in the schools that can actually
18 be able to address this. We can't, you know, carve
19 out more roles for the guidance counselor. We can't
20 carve out more roles for the dean. But at the same
21 time, the current staff also needs more training.
22 What hasn't been discussed enough so far is adverse
23 childhood experiences and trauma? I work mainly in
24 the low-income communities. I can tell you a lot of
25 the behaviors here are driven by exposure to adverse

1 childhood experiences. Staff ends to be trained on
2 this, needs to be trauma informed so that they can
3 better address these issues before they get to the
4 crisis point, and that's only going to happen if we
5 have an investment in that type of training.
6
7 Additionally, I think one of the keys that Chancellor
8 Farina mentioned was really creating an environment
9 where students can feel empowered to step forward. I
10 tried to do that as a fifth grader, you know, and I
11 know how it is that students actually know what's
12 going on. They're the key to all this. They see
13 what's going on in the classroom, but oftentimes when
14 they come forward nothing happens, or when they come
15 forward they get shot down, and this is sort of
16 parallel to what we're seeing in the greater society
17 about sexual harassment. You know, if you don't have
18 institutions where there is type of accountability
19 people will not come forward. so that's why I think
20 it's important that, you know, the Respect for All
21 has to be expanded to where there is some separate
22 hotline for parents to call to reach out to so that
23 we get beyond just the school sort of being the
24 gatekeeper for this type of data. There's a few other
25 suggestions, but I've run well over time.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just want to say
3 something in terms of adverse-- what'd you call it?

4 NELSON MAR: Childhood experience.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right, so for my--
6 not even childhood. Let me tell you, as a teacher in
7 the New York City public school system, I came out as
8 an openly gay teacher in 1992 and suffered for 17
9 years in that school district, School District 24,
10 with people who went after me, who came to my
11 classroom, who observed me, who removed books from
12 the shelf on all different subjects, not only LGBT
13 issues, but-- and that experience alone has stayed
14 with me throughout my adult life, and so I very much
15 am aware of what it is that you're talking about as
16 well, and why this has been such an important topic
17 throughout my tenure as Chair of the Education
18 Committee. This is the fourth hearing that we've
19 held on bullying and/or LGBT-related issues because
20 of what happened in many ways to me and my
21 experiences in the New York City Department of
22 Education that I know about firsthand. So, we want to
23 end what's going on and that's still happening in our
24 schools, and I know in conservative areas like
25 Whitestone and other areas of the City as well, this

1
2 is where stuff is needed. This is where this work is
3 needed, especially on the LGBT stuff.

4 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Ms. Ginsburg, thank
6 you.

7 NANCY GINSBURG: Good afternoon. My name
8 is Nancy Ginsburg. I'm Director of the Adolescent
9 Intervention and Diversion Project in the Criminal
10 Practice of Legal Aid. I deliver my testimony on
11 behalf of the juvenile rights civil and criminal
12 practices of the Legal Aid Society. We thank Chair
13 Dromm and the Education Committee for holding this
14 hearing today. Legal Aid shares the distress of the
15 New York City community concerning the recent tragedy
16 in the Bronx. Regrettably, such an incident is far
17 from surprising for those of us who have worked with
18 New York City's young people for many years. We have
19 repeatedly seen that young people who do not feel
20 safe and supported in schools, their neighborhoods or
21 their homes are more likely to resort to desperate
22 measures to protect themselves. We are failing our
23 children and what should be their right to live in
24 safe and supportive environments. We are failing
25 because we have been slow to recognize and to take

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2 into account the stressors associated with prolonged
3 exposure to poverty, violence and substance abuse.

4 While we are willing to commit resources to law
5 enforcement, we need to do the same for quality
6 health and mental healthcare. Moreover, we are quick
7 to blame parents or failures in child rearing without
8 providing adequate supports to help struggling
9 families. The only meaningful response to honor the
10 lives of the many children who have died, who have
11 been injured, or who are incarcerated due to the
12 public health crisis facing our City's children is to
13 address that crisis head-on with funded integrated
14 services that will address the underlying causes. We
15 must acknowledge that the response has to reach the
16 most impacted children and families in order to make
17 a real difference. The saying that "hurt people hurt
18 people" carries more than a drop of truth. If we
19 don't address the pain and the trauma that children
20 and the families who populate our schools, nothing
21 will change. The measures proposed today by the DOE
22 just scratch the surface. Akin to offering a flu
23 shot in response to a cancer diagnosis. Children who
24 are involved in both sides of bullying episodes are
25 often in need of mental health and behavioral

1 supports. At most schools the standard response to a
2 bullying incident is to suspend the child who engaged
3 in bullying behavior, but a suspension does nothing
4 to address the underlying behavior. They do not
5 teach children pro-social skills. They do not help
6 children develop positive relationships, and do
7 nothing to prevent similar incident from occurring
8 again. Typically, the child returns to school at the
9 end of a suspension having learned no new behavioral
10 strategies. Children who engage in bullying and
11 children who are victims of bullying both require
12 intensive interventions to address trauma and
13 modified behavioral patterns. The Department of
14 Education has access to a significant amount of data
15 and needs to use that data to provide targeted mental
16 health and behavioral treatment to the children most
17 at-risk for bullying and being bullied. Reporting is
18 important, but creating an environment where
19 students, families and school personnel feel safe to
20 report, and implementing a meaningful response system
21 are equally if not more important. Students,
22 families and school personnel must feel they can
23 report in an environment that is safe. They will not
24 report incidents of intimidation and violence if they
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2 fear a punitive response or facing ridicule or
3 indifference. In order to fully encourage reporting,
4 people must have an expectation that their complaint
5 will be heard and acted upon. Schools must create a
6 schoolwide system that recognize finding a solution
7 to intimidation and violence is a collective
8 responsibility of everyone in the school. Both
9 schoolwide interventions to address the culture of
10 the whole school as well as targeted intervention
11 programs have focused on the individual behaviors of
12 young people who are targets of or engage in
13 aggressive behaviors are necessary. The Chancellor
14 mentioned the positive behavioral intervention and
15 support system. That system looks at a three-tier
16 system. Students who present with the most
17 challenging behaviors fall into Tier III which makes
18 up only one to five percent of the school population,
19 but this group is often the most destabilizing to the
20 school and is least likely to receive effective
21 interventions. Students with the most challenging
22 behaviors are suspended and arrested with little or
23 no effort expended to help them overcome the
24 obstacles that prevent school success. We have seen
25 over and over when these students do receive targeted

1 services their behaviors improve dramatically.
2 Mental health supports, skill-building methods,
3 intensive family counseling have led to successful
4 outcomes in reintegration into school settings. The
5 school system has traditionally focused, and once
6 again today emphasize their focus on preventive
7 schoolwide systems that discourage certain conduct,
8 but failed and seemingly continues to fail to provide
9 interventions that aid individual students in
10 building the skills they need to alter the
11 challenging behaviors. In 2015, Mayor de Blasio
12 convened the Mayor's Leadership Team on School
13 Climate and Discipline which made a series of
14 recommendations to support mental health in the
15 schools. The City under DOE has failed to implement
16 any of those recommendations. Interestingly, these
17 recommendations are aligned with a recent set of
18 recommendations made by the United States Department
19 of Health and Human Services. That report
20 recommended a broad range of services coordinated
21 across agencies to address the mental health needs of
22 students and families, healthcare systems, child
23 protective, family services systems in schools. I
24 reference this report in my written testimony and I
25

1
2 encourage the Council to review it. It is almost
3 entirely aligned with the Mayor's Leadership Team's
4 recommendations. One of those recommendations, which
5 the New York Police Department has implemented, and
6 curiously Chancellor Farina took credit for today,
7 was the roll out of Collaborative Problem-Solving
8 Training for school safety agents. Since that has
9 rolled out, we have seen a remarkable decline in
10 conflict situations between school safety agents and
11 students, and we strongly believe that if that
12 training was rolled out to whole school training,
13 that we would see a similar remarkable improvement in
14 relationships between students, teachers and school
15 administrators that would likely lead to a remarkable
16 decline in bullying. Thank you very much for your
17 time.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Mr.
19 Rubenstein?

20 SANFORD RUBENSTEIN: Sanford Rubenstein
21 [sp?], attorney for the-- Sanford Rubenstein,
22 attorney for the family of Matthew McCree. Luna
23 Dennis [sp?], his mother, wants to thank this
24 committee for holding this hearing in the hope that
25 as a result of this hearing what happened to her

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2 family and the death of Matthew will not happen to
3 any other family.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And let me express my
5 condolences to that family. It's just terrible what
6 happened. It's a terrible tragedy that in my opinion
7 probably could have been prevented.

8 SANFORD RUBENSTEIN: Mr. Chairman, you
9 open this hearing with a statement, and part of that
10 statement indicated machines don't change behavior,
11 and that's certainly true about education when it
12 comes to bullying and counseling when it comes to
13 bullying which must be stopped, but the truth of the
14 matter is, machines can save lives. If there was a
15 metal detector at Urban Assembly, Matthew McCree
16 would be alive today. In fact, for the first time we
17 learned at this hearing that the principal of Urban
18 Assembly requested scanners, metal detectors, so that
19 the children in her school will be safe. That
20 request was denied. The Chancellor hedged and horned
21 [sic] as to who was responsibility it is once a
22 principal requests a medical-- a metal detector or
23 scanners, who's responsibility it is to grant that
24 request? Well, I think the Chancellor owes a public
25 response to the people of the City of New York to

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2 explain why when one of her principals requested
3 scanners and metal detectors, they were not installed
4 at Urban Assembly. Secondly, the Dignity for All
5 Students Act, a statute passed by the State
6 Legislature and signed by the Governor to stop
7 bullying in its tracks simply is not be enforced by
8 the Department of Education in this city. we see
9 that from the fact that so few numbers of bullying
10 complaints have been registered while it's required
11 by the statute, and secondly by press reports that
12 Abel Ceden, who is indicted for the murder of
13 Matthew McCree, had complained to a guidance
14 counselor about bullying, not by Matthew McCree or
15 the other young boy stabbed, prior to the incident.
16 What happened to that complaint? Why was nothing
17 done? The Dignity for All Students Act must be
18 enforced in order to be implemented to protect the
19 students in this City and it is not, and I put that
20 at the Chancellor's door.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Mr.
22 Rubenstein. I appreciate your testimony. I
23 respectfully disagree with you on the metal detector
24 issue. I don't know that metal detectors save lives,
25 per say, and in fact I probably feel that they make

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2 situations more dangerous because they create an
3 environment-- let's hold off, yeah. Because they
4 create an environment which really only feeds the
5 school to prison pipeline to say to students who are
6 mostly students of color that this is the only way
7 that they can be policed. And so I think we need to
8 continue to fund restorative projects and programs
9 like we've seen that have been very successful that
10 we-- I think we've heard some testimony here today
11 from Ms. Ginsburg who's sitting next to you, and I
12 think that really is how ultimately we go about
13 saving more lives.

14 SANFORD RUBENSTEIN: I would suggest to
15 you that while I've heard that argument, young kids
16 they go to concerts and have to go through metal
17 detectors, they go to Barclays, they go to Madison
18 Square Garden and they willingly go through metal
19 detectors. So, I think to save lives, sometimes you
20 have to do something that's necessary, and that is
21 scanners and metal detectors, especially when a
22 principal requests that for her school.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, I think schools
24 are sacrosanct, and I think that they're different
25 than other places, and I think that schools need to

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2 foster trust, and I think that ultimately the school
3 climate surveys are basically about the trust or the
4 lack of trust that exists in schools, and I would
5 disagree as an educator with you about what metal
6 detectors mean in a school building. We can argue
7 that at some other point I'm sure. Thank you. Next,
8 please.

9 JONATHAN COHEN: Good afternoon. My name
10 is Jonathan Cohen. I'm the Senior Scholar and
11 President Emeritus at the National School Climate
12 Center, also an adjunct professor in psychology and
13 education in Teacher's College, Columbia University.
14 Co-editor of the International Journal on School
15 Climate and Violence Prevention, and a practicing
16 clinical psychologist. I learn and work with schools
17 in districts in State Departments of Education across
18 America who want to improve school climate and reduce
19 bullying and other forms of violence. I want to
20 underscore one major research finding that my
21 colleagues already importantly touched on and then
22 describe in a bit more detail seven concrete steps
23 that can help us to foster a more positive school
24 climate and reduce bullying and other forms of mean
25 behavior. The most effective way to support school

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2 climate and social/emotional learning-informed
3 improvement efforts as well as to dealing with
4 bullying and other forms of school violence build on
5 a whole school approach that is data driven and
6 intentionally engages students as well as parents and
7 guardians and full school personnel to be co-leaders,
8 co-learners and co-leaders in identifying problems,
9 identifying our positive goals, being very clear and
10 transparent about the strategies and metrics that
11 we're going to use, and to be ongoing learners. Here
12 are seven important steps that I invite the Council
13 and our education leaders to consider. One, we make
14 sure that we're aligning district-level educational
15 policy with current research. For example, current
16 disciplinary policy that focuses so much on reporting
17 who is the bully and punishing the bully is a process
18 of criminalization that we know from over 15 years of
19 empirical research does not help. We are not even
20 clear about how to define bullying, and people are
21 definite-- school leaders are definitely anxious as
22 you articulated earlier, to report bullying because
23 they're afraid they're going to be blamed. In fact,
24 there is a spectrum of behaviors from normal
25 misunderstandings to instances of a person or a group

1 intentionally hurting another person or group to even
2 more extreme forms of disrespect, importantly
3 including sexual harassment, date rape and rape that
4 are virtually as prevalent in our middle schools and
5 high schools as they are on college campuses, yet
6 there's a deafening silence about this behavior in
7 our K through 12 schools. Two, we need to more
8 actively work to coordinate and integrate academic
9 teaching and learning and social and emotional
10 teaching and learning instructionally as well as our
11 school climate, risk prevention and health promotion
12 efforts. Too often these efforts are fragmented.
13 Three, we need to support educators being involved
14 with vital professional learning communities where
15 they're learning from each other about successes and
16 failures. Four, I would suggest that we need to
17 support much more intentional not only educator
18 leadership development about school climate and bully
19 prevention, but student leadership development. One
20 of the single-most powerful interventions that I seen
21 across the country is when educators empower students
22 to be meaningful partners in intergenerational school
23 climate improvement and bully prevention efforts.
24 Five, we importantly need to ignite the intrinsic
25

1 motivation of everybody in the school community to be
2 explicit about what does it mean to be a witness.
3 Too often there is an implicit social norm that says
4 it's okay for kids and educators and other school
5 personnel to be bystanders when they see someone
6 hurting or being hurt, rather than to be upstanders,
7 or people who struggle in the best sense of the word
8 to think, "What's the right thing to do if I see
9 someone hurting or being hurt?" That is literally a
10 transformational intervention that's not a program.
11 Six, we need-- we certainly need to ensure that
12 educators understand mental health first aid or how
13 to recognize risk factors and warning signs for
14 mental health and addiction concerns as well as
15 concrete strategies for how to help and where to turn
16 for further help. Finally, educators need to know
17 much more about existing research-based school
18 climate and bully prevention roadmaps, measurement
19 systems and guidelines. We're not using those
20 systems. Some of these recommendations are a part of
21 the NYC DOE framework for great schools, and my sense
22 is that leadership in the DOE really does want to
23 make our schools safer, more supportive and engaging
24 places where kids learn to be successful, not just in
25

1 school but in life. However, restorative practice is
2 not school climate improvement. Restorative practice
3 is one element of a comprehensive, effective school
4 climate improvement process. PBIS is a helpful
5 effort particularly for kids who are out of control.
6 PBIS tends to be literally a top-down carrots and
7 sticks model that does not foster students and
8 parents being co-learners and co-leaders with
9 educators to identify goals and work on them
10 together. That is the foundation of effective school
11 improvement efforts. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, minus data on
14 implementation of the projects or the programs you're
15 talking about, how do we hold the DOE accountable?

16 JONATHAN COHEN: Well, there is data.
17 There's extraordinary data that underscore everything
18 I've just said, and in my written testimony I have
19 various research citations. When it peaks, though,
20 and the DOE needs the help from politicians, is an
21 appreciation that educators like parents are always
22 being social and emotional teachers, whether we know
23 it or not, whether it's helpful or not. What we need
24 is the federal, is the new Federal Every Student Act
25 is underscoring. We need to recognize and focus on

1
2 the social and emotional and civic as well as the
3 academic. The DOE is like-- and this is true not
4 just in New York, but across the country. They're
5 responding to the mandate to increased reading, math
6 and science scores this year. That's not fair.
7 That's not going to support an effective school
8 climate and bullying prevention effort.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I couldn't agree with
10 you more on the reading and the focus on test scores.
11 I agree with you 100 percent. I am trying to find a
12 way through these hearings that I've held to hold
13 them accountable, because to me it seems like a Band-
14 Aid here, a Band-Aid there, a little piece of this
15 there, a little bit of funding there, and we never
16 really be able to seem to get to something system
17 wide.

18 JONATHAN COHEN: I appreciate that, and I
19 think one of the things that you can do is to
20 concretely support accountability systems moving
21 beyond annual assessment. Although I don't know
22 about the UFT whole school program. From what I was
23 hearing I'm impressed and I'm appreciative. That
24 sounds as though it's aligned with my understanding
25

1
2 of what the research says. But to be fair, and the
3 DOE--

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] To be
5 honest with you, that's a program that the Council
6 has funded and the UFT. Okay-- wait a minute, who's
7 missing in that equation? Thank you. Okay. So,
8 this is what I'm trying to get at, is to force them
9 to do these things.

10 JONATHAN COHEN: I'm supportive of that.
11 I'm supportive also of you considering explicitly a
12 three-year system where school climate data counts as
13 much as academic data. One of the challenges is many
14 teachers don't trust that if they honestly complete
15 the New York City DOE school climate survey, that
16 it's going to be okay. There's a lack of trust so
17 that even the data that we're getting I believe is
18 questionable.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And by that you mean
20 that it's going to come back to haunt them.

21 JONATHAN COHEN: Correct.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, that's
23 prevalent throughout the whole system. That's--

24 JONATHAN COHEN: [interposing] I think it
25 is, and we all know that if there's a lack of trust

1
2 among educators, any and all school improvement
3 effort is going to be extraordinarily problematic.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, I've heard
5 stories of principals-- I guess it's done online now,
6 but when it was done on paper, having the teachers do
7 them at a faculty conference when the principal is in
8 the room. Of course, hopefully we've moved away from
9 some of that, but I hear what you're saying on the
10 whole issue as well. Thank you to everybody. We have
11 such a large panel I won't make any further comments,
12 but look forward to working will all of you. Thank
13 you. Our next panel is Kate Terenzi, Center for
14 Popular Democracy, Isaiah Quinones, Urban Youth
15 Collaborative, Onysn [sic]-- Onyx Walker, I'm sorry,
16 I was with him this morning, Urban Youth
17 Collaborative; Jamel Burgess, Urban Youth
18 Collaborative; Maybeline [sp?] Navarro, Urban Youth
19 Collaborative, Julian Alexander, Urban Youth
20 Collaborative. Are they here? Yeah, okay, good.
21 Come on up. Stephanie Vallera [sp?], Urban Youth
22 Collaborative, and Kat-- I said Kate-- okay. Okay,
23 I'd like to swear you all in. So, would your raise
24 your right hand, please? Do you solemnly swear or
25 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing

1
2 but the truth and to answer Council Member questions
3 honestly? Yes, good. Who should we start with?
4 Let's start down here.

5 ISAIAH QUINONES: Hello, everyone. My
6 name is Isaiah and my pronouns are "they" and "them."
7 I'm 18 years old, and I am a member of Make the Road
8 New York and the Urban Youth Collaborative. I am
9 here today to share not only my personal story with
10 criminalization in schools, but also insight into the
11 ways in which our schools should respond to support
12 and not ultimately push out students of color and
13 LGBTQ students. I know what it feels like to both be
14 bullied because of who I am and be criminalized by
15 the system that's supposed to be supporting me
16 because of who I am. As a young person who
17 identifies as gender non-conforming and queer, I have
18 felt bullied by my peers because of how I've
19 identified. When I think of what I needed when I was
20 harmed, I think about the priorities we outlined in
21 the report in Urban Youth Collaborative. We need
22 support to find safe spaces, guidance counselors,
23 social workers, mental health networks, and
24 restorative justice. We find healing for being
25 harmed in suspensions, criminal summons and being

1
2 arrested. I know because last year I was given a
3 summons for disorderly conduct for peaceful
4 protesting against unfair policies. Ninety-two
5 percent of all students who receive a summons are
6 black and Latin-x [sic]. I was suspended and served
7 my summons and then months later had to attend court
8 to answer to the summons. Students that have to go
9 to court when they should be in school are four times
10 more likely to drop out. How can I feel safe and
11 supported when I'm being criminalized because of the
12 color of my skin. How can I look for a safe space in
13 my school when it's sending me into the criminal
14 justice system? My experience isn't unique. It
15 isn't an anomaly. It is a daily occurrence for black
16 and Latin-x students and for LGBTQ students.
17 Research shows LGBTQ youth are more likely to be
18 punished harshly. The most vulnerable youth are
19 often harmed the most by the police that criminalize
20 schools. I was fortunate to have a Gender and
21 Sexuality Alliance. However, most schools in New
22 York City still don't. If LGBTQ students do not have
23 access to spaces they can express themselves or do
24 not have school environments that teach inclusion and
25 acceptance, then we won't seek support at schools.

1
2 So here in like the problem. If my criminalization
3 did nothing to benefit me, to remedy the issues
4 within my school's community, what does the
5 criminalization of hundreds, thousands of black and
6 brown and queer students in schools mean for our
7 great city's community. We will only have safe,
8 supportive, inclusive schools when we embrace the
9 solutions young people are calling for and eliminate
10 ineffective and racial discriminatory and queer
11 discriminatory school discipline policies. Thank
12 you.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,
14 please.

15 ONYX WALKER: Good afternoon. My name is
16 Onyx Walker. I'm a member of Future of Tomorrow and
17 the Urban Youth Collaborative. I'd like to begin by
18 thanking the City Council Education Committee for
19 holding this important hearing today. This morning
20 we released our vision for safe, supportive and
21 inclusive schools. I'd like to share some of the
22 words that I shared this morning. For many years,
23 young people at the Urban Youth Collaborative have
24 organized to transform the City's approach to school
25 discipline. We run restorative circle at our

1 schools. We have helped bring peer mediation
2 programs to schools, advocated for Gay/Straight
3 Alliance Clubs, and advocated to end the school to
4 prison pipeline. We believe and research shows that
5 punitive and harsh discipline and school policing
6 policies are barriers to creating learning
7 environments where students feel safe, supported and
8 welcomed. Young people, especially students of
9 color, are in a unique position to help NYC develop
10 school climate solutions that work because we have to
11 face bullying and conflict, but also unnecessarily
12 harsh and even de-humanizing discipline policies.
13 Being harsh or coming down hard, as it sometimes is
14 called, doesn't have a positive effect on school
15 climate. In fact, research shows it negatively
16 effects the most vulnerable students and does nothing
17 to reduce bullying or incidents of fighting. Today,
18 we're calling for the City to go in a different
19 direction. Often times, policy makers overlook those
20 most impacted by policies when searching for the
21 solutions. But, it's because we're the ones that are
22 most impacted that puts us in the best position to
23 offer solutions. Our solutions are grounded in what
24 we need, and breaking away from what we don't. We
25

1 don't need black and Latin-x students to continue to
2 be pushed into the criminal justice system because of
3 bias school discipline and policing policies. We
4 need to end arrests and summons in schools for non-
5 criminal violations and misdemeanors. We don't need
6 to double the number of school safety personnel and
7 guidance counselors in schools. We need a one to 100
8 ratio of guidance counselors to students in
9 underserved schools. We don't need to suspend
10 students for minor infractions. We need restorative
11 justice to help create safe and supportive
12 communities. We don't need to handcuff students, 90
13 percent of them being black and Latin-x during mental
14 health crisis. We need a mental health network that
15 sends mental health professionals to support us
16 during a time of need. If we want to provide young
17 people with the supports and resources that they
18 need, we have to reimagine safety and divest from
19 policies that push us closer to systems that harm us.
20 After years of research, there is no evidence police
21 and metal detectors and harsh punishments are making
22 schools any safer. There's evidence that guidance
23 counselors, social workers, restorative justice, and
24 mental health supports make us safer and reduce
25

1
2 issues of bullying and conflict. We're asking the
3 City to divest from school policing and reinvest in
4 positive school climate policies. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,
6 please?

7 MAYBELINE NAVARRO: Good morning,
8 everyone. My name is Maybeline [sp?]. My pronouns
9 are "they/them," and I'm a senior in high school, a
10 youth leader at Make the Road New York and the Urban
11 Youth Collaborative. As students we experience times
12 of stress, frustration, and we have questions about
13 our futures and our purpose and identity. I ask, who
14 is available to support us? Too often I've seen a
15 lack of proper support for students. The small
16 number of guidance counselors and social workers for
17 one million students means that they're often
18 unavailable when we need them. On average, there is
19 one guidance counselor for every 407 students, but
20 one student for every 207 school safety personnel.
21 This data demonstrates years of misguided staffing
22 priorities. Who do we turn to first when we feel
23 like we're being harmed and when conflict is rising
24 with another students? The lack of guidance
25 counselors and social workers means that students

1
2 have to turn to their peers first, and going to our
3 guidance counselors is never a first plan of action
4 to heal ourselves. Students who feel bullied feel
5 like they can't turn to their counselor, and the
6 counselor at times doesn't seem them being harmed,
7 often too busy to check on them, and it leads us to
8 question, "Who cares about me?" The very people who
9 are trained for years to help students with our
10 social and emotional situations has to be available.
11 In addition to helping with our social and emotional
12 needs, more counselors would help us academically.
13 Many students don't know whether we have the right
14 credits, and when we try to schedule a meeting
15 because we finally feel like it, they're not there,
16 we are discouraged. With credits and class
17 scheduling, having multiple guidance counselors will
18 allow for that conversation to happen earlier than it
19 would have when we have to share with one counselor
20 with the hundreds of other students in the school.
21 By having one guidance counselor for every 100
22 students, a counselor's workload not only lessens,
23 but the depth of the relationships they have with
24 students will expand. With time, we are capable of
25 creating lasting relationships, and to that,--

1
2 creating lasting relationships, and to that, our
3 support system has to be available for us first.
4 Responding to bullying with more policing and harsher
5 punishments will only push more students further away
6 from the support they need to succeed. Every one is
7 saying that we need to reduce bullying and make our
8 schools more tolerant, but no one is asking us--
9 sorry, and everyone is saying that we need to reduce
10 bullying and make our schools more tolerant, but no
11 one is asking us what measure it takes to actually
12 reach our goal. I thank you for listening to us
13 today, and I hope you read our report and continue to
14 ask us what our school needs. No one knows better
15 than us. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,
17 please.

18 JULIAN ALEXANDER: Good afternoon. My
19 name is Julian Alexander. I'm a Core Leader at Make
20 the Road New York and Urban Youth Collaborative, as
21 well as a high school senior. This morning, we
22 released our Vision for Safe, Supportive, and
23 Inclusive Schools, and the four priorities for making
24 it a reality. I want to talk about the need for
25 schools being more culturally responsive. Being a

1 students in high school for four years, I can testify
2 that the curriculums being taught and the learning
3 environments are not culturally responsive. By that
4 I mean when I open my text books, I do not see anyone
5 who looks like me or my people, and the staffs aren't
6 trained to create culturally responsive environments
7 where all students including LGBTQ and gender non-
8 conforming students feel welcomed. What is the
9 problem? Because we are taught that our people's
10 history starts at the beginning of the slave trade,
11 but I know that we have contributed so much more than
12 what is in our textbooks. Once this becomes a part
13 of the curriculum, we will develop a greater sense of
14 self and inclusivity. It is also just as important
15 to teach how white supremacy exists beyond Jim Crow
16 and continues to impact us today. Our schools and
17 curriculum remain separate and unequal, and this is
18 unfair. Why can't we move forward as a city that
19 prioritizes schools where we value creating school
20 culture and climate that is culturally responsive?
21 We believe it is a long way to solving one of the
22 many problems that we have within the Education
23 system. I'm here today because I believe that we
24 should have teachers who are trained to teach and
25

1 support students of color who come from various
2 economic and racial backgrounds and identify as
3 LGBTQ, gender non-conforming and have disabilities.
4 This would create an atmosphere in schools where
5 everyone feels safe, supported and understood.
6 Having a culturally responsive education would help
7 everyone feel valued and represented. This past
8 month I've had an altercation with a white teacher
9 who made a distasteful and inappropriate racial joke.
10 I was sitting with some of my classmates when she
11 stated that she would use her white privilege to
12 force me to do my work. Afterwards she tried to
13 justify herself by saying that she is also oppressed
14 and that I must understand that it was simply a joke.
15 But this is not funny. It is not a joke, and it felt
16 like a form of violence when looking at my people's
17 history. I shouldn't have to experience that kind of
18 violence and neither should anyone else. Having
19 culturally responsive education and safe inclusive
20 spaces at our schools would greatly reduce or even
21 eliminate these type of interactions. This is why we
22 need inclusivity. This is why we need to make sure
23 that no one is pushed out or left alone. With this,
24 we can move forward in the educational system as a
25

1 whole. School climate is one of the Chancellor's
2 five principles for turning around schools, but it
3 doesn't feel like it is being prioritized. We have
4 developed a blueprint for prioritizing school climate
5 in New York City. We hope to work with the Council
6 and the Department of Education to advance this
7 vision. Thank you.

8
9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,
10 please.

11 STEPHANIE VALLERA: My name is Stephanie,
12 and I'm a youth leader at Make the Road New York and
13 the Urban Youth Collaborative. I would like to thank
14 Education Committee and City Council for the
15 opportunity to speak for young people across New York
16 City, but especially for low income black and Latino-
17 x youth attending underserved schools. Where there
18 is a harm, there is a need for healing. Restorative
19 Justice gives young people the space to heal and
20 build a positive school climate. Restorative justice
21 is an effective way of bringing back peace and
22 harmony after harm has been done and creating a more
23 supportive school environment for all young people.
24 This is why RJ is one of the core priorities in our
25 vision for creating safe, supportive and inclusive

1 schools. As a young person who has been part of
2 restorative justice circles, I am able to say that
3 I've seen it work and it creates an alternative
4 system for young people to address the underlying and
5 root causes of harm in a way that heals individuals
6 and begins to transform our ideas around discipline,
7 which is why along with a higher push for restorative
8 justice, we're also demanding an increase in the
9 number of trained guidance counselors and social
10 workers, mental health network serving schools, and
11 culturally responsive education to help create safe,
12 inclusive learning environments. If we are going to
13 reduce bullying conflict, you have to listen to us
14 when we tell you that what we need to help get to the
15 root of the problem and what we don't need. Guidance
16 counselors and social workers are proven to creating
17 safe, supportive school environments. Police and
18 metal detectors are proven to make students feel
19 unwelcomed and often feel less safe. With
20 restorative justice and the support of guidance
21 counselors, all students would be closer to
22 succeeding in a system that in so many ways has set
23 them up for failure. Last year, students lost
24 316,104 days of school to suspension, the equivalent
25

1
2 of 1,756 school years, and most of these students
3 were black and Latin-x. We can't rely on pushing
4 more students away. If we are going to make a
5 difference we need real systemic changes. We should
6 start by making sure every school does all it can to
7 keep us in school before pushing us out. We have a
8 vision for schools that are welcoming for all young
9 people, schools where LGBTQ, gender non-conforming
10 students with disabilities, Muslim youth, immigrant
11 youth, Latin-x youth, and black youth all feel
12 supported and valued, but funding for systems that
13 harms us by policing us and pushing out of school is
14 a barrier we must knock down. We're asking the City
15 to divest and reallocate from the 400 million dollars
16 a year policies that create the school to prison
17 pipeline and reinvest that funding to significantly
18 expand restorative justice, increase guidance
19 counselors and social workers, put in place a mental
20 health network serving schools, and invest in
21 culturally responsive education. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

23 KATE TERENZI: Good afternoon,
24 Chairperson Dromm and members of the Education
25 Committee. Thank you for providing us with the

1
2 opportunity to submit testimony today. My name is
3 Kate Terenzi, and I'm here from the Center for
4 Popular Democracy. CPD's Education Justice Campaign
5 works in collaboration and solidarity with our
6 partners, including the Urban Youth Collaborative to
7 dismantled the school to prison pipeline and ensure
8 that all young people have access to strong public
9 schools. As you know, today the Urban Youth
10 Collaborative and the Center for Popular Democracy
11 released the brief that the young people have spoken
12 about, the young people's vision for safe, supportive
13 and inclusive schools. As you have heard, the report
14 recommendations were developed by youth leaders who
15 have spent years organizing to transform their
16 schools and their communities. The recommendations
17 provided there include dramatically increasing the
18 number of guidance counselors, providing
19 comprehensive mental health supports, and infusing
20 all schools with restorative practice. Absent from
21 this list are metal detectors and police. Each of
22 these solutions is supported by the experiences of
23 young people and also extensive academic research.
24 For example, study after study shows that low student
25 to guidance counselor ratios reduced disciplinary

1 incidents in schools, including ones involving
2 weapons. Students and teachers also report feeling
3 safe. The current ratio of students to fulltime
4 guidance counselors is 400-- one to 407, while the
5 recommended ratio in high need schools is one to 100.
6 As a point of comparison, the ratio of students to
7 NYPD school safety personnel is one to 207. Our
8 schools will be safer and bullying will be reduced if
9 New York City drastically increases the number of
10 guidance counselors in schools. Another
11 recommendation from the young people is to infuse
12 restorative practices in all high need schools. We
13 know this process works. As just one example in
14 Denver, within two years of implementing restorative
15 practices in schools, incidents of fighting fell by
16 80 percent. To reap the benefits of restorative
17 practices, they must be implemented in a robust way,
18 providing funding for restorative justice
19 coordinators and involving students in the community
20 in its implementation. Finally, young people want
21 mental healthcare. New York City must implement a
22 comprehensive mental health service continuum to
23 connect school-based services with community and
24 hospital-based services. In New York City,
25

1
2 antiquated and misguided responses to mental health
3 issues continue to utilize NYPD as first responders
4 to mental health crisis in schools. In just one
5 year, the NYPD reported intervening while a child was
6 experiencing a mental health crisis 2,700 times.

7 Mental health workers need to handle mental health
8 emergencies and they need the resources to do so.

9 Several studies show that access to mental healthcare
10 improves mental health of young people, reduces
11 disciplinary incidents including fighting and other
12 interpersonal conflict. Police and metal detectors
13 are not in the list of programs to reduce bullying
14 and make safer schools. Proponents of school
15 policing and punitive disciplinary action often cite
16 student safety as their primary justification. Yet,
17 research has found that there is no substantial
18 evidentiary support for the proposition that police
19 presence in schools create safer learning
20 environments. To the contrary, several studies have
21 shown that young people are no safer after years of
22 punitive practices. Research illustrates that
23 policing in schools does not reduce incidents of
24 bullying or fighting and metal detectors also do not
25 reduce/decrease violence in schools. Young people

1
2 have long known the types of support they need to
3 learn and thrive in their schools. The research
4 proves that their solutions will work. The City must
5 head the calls and implement these practices in a
6 transformational citywide way. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

8 JAMEL BURGESS: Good afternoon. My name
9 is Jamel Burgess. I'm with the Urban Youth
10 Collaborative and the Future of Tomorrow, and I'm
11 just uplifting the young people's voices on what they
12 said today, and here if any questions are needed.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,
14 and I have some, just some observations really, and
15 I'm having a little issue. I need to run across the
16 street to vote on a very important immigration issue.
17 So, I'm going to leave for five minutes and have
18 another Council Member take over, but please, anybody
19 in the room, don't take it as meaning that it's not
20 an important issue to me. I just have another very
21 important issue over there. I just got a tweet also
22 that a Federal Court has blocked President Trump from
23 barring transgender people to serve in the military,
24 which I think is good news at least for me.

25 [applause]

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, we hope that
3 Federal Court will set the tone for the day. I
4 wanted to ask these young people, though, any of you
5 have school-- are you in schools where there are
6 metal detectors?

7 UNIDENTIFIED: Yeah, I am.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

9 STEPHANIE VALLERA: Oh, yeah, me, May and
10 Julian all attend the same campus where we are--

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] What
12 campus is that?

13 STEPHANIE VALLERA: Bushwick campus.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How does it make you
15 feel to have to go through metal detectors every day?

16 STEPHANIE VALLERA: Personally, for me,
17 I'm a senior, so it was a really traumatic transition
18 from going to middle school where-- I went to a
19 middle school also in the same area but there were no
20 metal detectors. No one gave me a warning telling me
21 that I was going to go into high school where there
22 was. So, I remember the first day of school I
23 entered my book bag and everything, trying to figure
24 out what I needed to put into the machine, and
25 immediately an officer, like, starting checking my

1
2 book bag and removed a sharpener and said that I
3 couldn't bring a sharpener into my school, so he
4 collected it. Since then I've never brought a
5 sharpener. So, it think things like that that I
6 remember only prove to me that I kind of got the
7 message clear that entering a school, my
8 criminalization was prioritized before my education.
9 So, the first people that I encounter every single
10 day that I go to school are police and are these
11 metal detectors, and they're not like counselors and
12 they're not teachers or anything that are telling me
13 good morning. And also, apparently, I have one
14 guidance counselor for my entire grade, and it's
15 really difficult when I have to go to her when I have
16 to talk about scholarships or like college or any
17 kind of access like that, any kind of support, but
18 it's easier to run into an SSA officer in the
19 hallway. So, that's me--

20 JULIAN ALEXANDER: So, I went to school
21 in the neighborhood. I went to a middle school in the
22 neighborhood, and I would always hear the rumors
23 like, "Oh, there's scanners in Bushwick campus." And
24 I'm like, this can't be real. You know what I'm
25 saying? Like, if I-- it can't be. You know, it's

1
2 probably just one of the rumors about high school
3 that just can't be true, you know? So, on my first
4 day entering high school I was like-- like, I was
5 just so shocked. I was like, "Wow, they really have
6 scanners here." And it's like police officers really
7 like basically like strip me of all my metal, and I
8 wear a lot of metal, like my rings, my glasses, my
9 hearing aid, and I'm like-- I still remember my first
10 day like it was yesterday. Upon entering the school
11 building, they were like, "Oh, take off your belt"
12 with this very nasty authoritative tone, and I think
13 I was only like 13 at the time. Like, I was just
14 traumatized. Like, I felt-- in all honesty, I felt
15 like crying, because it was kind of like, wow, you
16 guys can't be serious. You're really not, like,
17 doing this to me right now. Like, I'm like-- you
18 just can't. And I just found like a loss of words. I
19 just couldn't like-- I couldn't describe how I felt
20 at the moment. I was like, I feel like a criminal.
21 You know what I'm saying? I feel like I did something
22 wrong, like, and I didn't know-- and I feel like
23 every time I go to the school still to this day,
24 like, it doesn't change, and I'm 16 and it still
25 doesn't change. I still feel the same way, and it's

1
2 like reliving that trauma every time I enter the
3 school building. Every time I go through those
4 scanners I feel like part-- like, every time I take
5 off my belt, every time I take off my chain, like
6 part of my humanity is going in that scanner, and
7 it's every time and it's traumatizing, and it's just
8 something that needs to change. It really does need
9 to change.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Anybody else?

11 ONYX WALKER: I'll speak to that. So, I
12 recently graduated high school, but I do remember my
13 first time experiencing what metal detectors were,
14 right? You see it, and you see the metal detectors,
15 you see the police officers like they said, and you
16 automatically think am I in trouble, right? The
17 first time seeing it, 13, 14, and it doesn't help the
18 rest of your day go so well, you know? And if you're
19 one of those people who wears, for example, hijabs,
20 right? You wear that, you have to keep things in
21 your hair to keep it in place. They ask you take out
22 those things, all jewelry, anything that's metal you
23 have to take it off. That includes boots as well.
24 So, that first 15 minutes, and yes, scanning does
25 take 15 minutes, that first 15 minutes it's an

1
2 extensive process. You're stripped of all the effort
3 that you put in to get to school on time and to look
4 presentable, and then all this happens, and then
5 you're late for class, and then it just leads into
6 the whole not enough supportive systems in schools
7 and things like that, and it all connects. It all
8 connects, and it starts with the metal detectors. I
9 feel like once that's gone it's a step in the right
10 direction, but there are other things that need to be
11 taken care of.

12 STEPHANIE VALLERA: Yeah, I think the
13 only thing I'm going to add to that is like you just
14 brought up the whole like boot situation.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just pull the mic a
16 little closer.

17 STEPHANIE VALLERA: I think the only
18 thing I'm going to add to that is he just brought up
19 a memory, not really a memory, but like up until like
20 a few months ago they stopped doing this, but you--
21 if it was like raining or it was snowy we would have
22 to like literally take our boots off, walk barefoot,
23 and like the carpets are all wet, and there's like
24 snow everywhere, and we would like be cold, and you
25 have to put your boots through the scanning or like

1
2 take off your jacket because your jacket has too many
3 like, I don't know, like metal accessories, and so
4 you're freezing, or we'll get to-- like, you can show
5 up at 8:00 and class will start at 8:15, and you
6 won't get there 'til like 8:30 because there's a
7 whole bunch of students outside waiting in the cold,
8 too, also getting to class. So, like, that is also
9 something that brought up being late to class and
10 constantly being stripped down.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Which process is
12 worse, coming into City Hall and going through the
13 metal detector or going into school?

14 JULIAN ALEXANDER: In all honesty, so,
15 like we have two scanners because it's a large-- a
16 pretty large campus I would say. So, sometimes not
17 both scanners are working, so on those days it could
18 be like the blistering cold and like there will be a
19 line from like one block down of like students just
20 standing in line and waiting, and so we're just
21 standing out there and it's like freezing. I
22 remember like last winter, and so one of the scanners
23 was broken, so everybody had to fit through this one
24 door. They have to like swipe their cards. They have
25 to like strip everything off, and you know, in winter

1
2 you have like layers and whatnot, so you have to take
3 off all of your layers, all of your boots, your belt,
4 any metal you have on you, basically. This process
5 takes even longer, especially if you only have one
6 scanner. So, we're just sitting out there and it's
7 freezing cold, and then so the lines go like so slow,
8 and then if you have like a glass bottle, they won't
9 let you bring that in either. So, then you have to
10 like exit this-- like, re-exit scanning, and then
11 drink it outside in the blistering cold or throw it
12 away, which is a waste of money, and so it's just
13 like little minor things. And also, I remember this
14 one time, it happened, like, this year actually,
15 like, last-- like the first day of school, like, the
16 second day, I had my hearing aid in, right? And I
17 didn't know that it rings [sic], and so upon like
18 entering the scanner, I'm like, what do I have on me.
19 So she's wandng [sic] me and what not, and then she
20 passes it through my ear, and she's like, "What's
21 that in your ear?" I'm like, "It's my hearing aid."
22 She's like, "Oh, you don't wear a hearing aid." I'm
23 like, "I don't wear a hearing aid, excuse me?" So,
24 she's like, "Take that off," and I'm like, "Okay,
25 like, I'll take it off." So I took it off, and she

1
2 was like, "Can y'all send this deaf boy back through
3 scanning?" And I'm like, okay, so it's just like
4 those little things, and it's not only that. Like,
5 when you take off your boots, if you have dirty socks
6 on, the SSA's will make like nasty little comments
7 and whatnot, and I'm like, "This is not what I need
8 to start off my day. This is definitely not what I
9 need to start off my day to just like get education.
10 That's all I'm coming to school for. I'm not coming
11 to school to get encriminalized [sic]. I'm just
12 coming here to get my education, you know, like be
13 something in life rather-- like, opposed to this like
14 criminal that you're trying to like image, like,
15 associate me with, and it's just like dehumanizing.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. You know,
17 I just want to say a little observation, too. So,
18 you know, all the New York City buildings, a lot of
19 the New York City buildings have what they call DCAS
20 police officers, right, that they scan you or that
21 you have to go into a City of New York building, and
22 it changes by building to building, you know, what
23 you have to take off or what you have to take out of
24 your pocket. Some buildings you have to take off your
25 belt. Some buildings you have to take the change out

1 of your pocket or whatever it may be, right? So, in
2 Queens Borough Hall they made you do everything, take
3 off your belt, take off your-- you know, put any
4 money you might have, put your eyeglasses or whatever
5 might ring or whatever, but so many Council Members
6 got annoyed that we got a letter off to the Borough
7 President and we asked them to, you know, end those
8 restrictions because it's such a discouragement to
9 going into the building, that we didn't even want to
10 go to Borough Hall anymore to vote because we as
11 adults felt bad, so I can't imagine what you as young
12 people feel when you have to go through that as well.
13 Let me just move to another question, because then I
14 have to vote. Do all of you know who to report
15 bullying to in your schools? Do you know who the
16 Respect for All liaison is?

18 UNIDENTIFIED: No.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Be honest.

20 UNIDENTIFIED: Not really, no.

21 UNIDENTIFIED: No.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: No. Nobody knows.

23 Okay, so there you go. What can I say? And I just
24 want to wrap up before I go to vote to say the idea
25 of history, I think somebody said it, that nobody

1 looks like me, right, when you go into the textbooks
2 or the teachers or whatever it may be. Do any of you
3 who Bayard Ruston is?
4

5 UNIDENTIFIED: [off mic]

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You do. Anybody
7 else?

8 UNIDENTIFIED: Nah.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Interesting. Bayard
10 Ruston was the brains behind the 1963 march on
11 Washington, and he was gay, African-American man who
12 was almost excluded from the march on Washington
13 because he was gay, but he's a African-American LGBT
14 hero, and it's interesting that many of our students
15 have not yet heard about who he is, but he was a
16 tremendous person who had a tremendous impact on our
17 society. So, I think that there's also an
18 intersection of LGBT and making sure that people that
19 we learn about also look like the students who are in
20 the classroom as well. So, I want to thank all of
21 you very, very much for coming in. Of course, I was
22 out there with you this morning. I look forward to
23 continuing to work with each and every one of you.
24 Thank you.

25 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

[applause]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, and we're going to call up Don Kao [sp?], Project Reach, Walter Logan, Project Reach, DeShawn Lucas [sp?], Project Reach, Jaime Ryan Bryn [sp?], Project Reach, DeNora Gretchen [sic], Generation Citizen, and Raheeda Hock or Haik [sp?], and Council Member Debbie Rose has been so generous to continue this hearing and take over while I go to vote, and I will be back shortly. Thank you, Council Member Debbie Rose.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you. Thank you, and do you-- each of you raise your right hand. And do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this committee and to respond honestly to Council Member's questions? Okay, thank you, and before you testify, would you please state your name and your title before you begin, and we'll start from this end. Thank you. Okay, so we'll start at that end. Please make sure you put your microphone on and speak into the mic.

WALTER LOGAN: Hi, good afternoon. My name is Walter Logan. I am a Youth Staff Member at Project Reach, and my pronouns are "he, him, his,

1
2 they, them, their." So, today, I wanted to talk a
3 little bit about Project Reach, but mainly about
4 bullying and school safety in general. So, Project
5 Reach is a youth and adult-run organization, and we
6 do this by making sure just as the Federal Government
7 has their checks and balances, we have the same. So,
8 for example, Don wanted to bring a banner to show
9 what we think about anti-bullying or bullying in
10 general, and I said, "Don, nobody wants to take that
11 banner with us. It's huge." So, in general that's
12 our way, but it's important to think how can we have
13 that in schools as well? So, earlier, I heard a lot
14 of people talking about having safe spaces such as
15 Gender and Sexuality Alliances or knowing their RFA
16 agents. One, I don't know who my RFA agent is, and so
17 that would be helpful, but I don't think that having
18 a club that meets once a week is the only safe space
19 when in my school there are 4,000 students. So, I
20 believe that through training that is the way to get
21 the entire school to be a safe space. At this point
22 in time, I do not feel safe talking to my school
23 safety officers as I have been repeatedly harassed.
24 For example, when I was sitting on the floor in shock
25 after my mother called me to say that my grandfather

1 had just had a heart attack, I was told, before
2 anybody asked me what was wrong, I was told to get up
3 and go back into the classroom. I do not feel safe
4 with my teachers because my teachers have-- I've had
5 teachers who while I was still questioning my gender
6 identity have said that they/them pronouns are
7 grammatically incorrect and shouldn't be used, and
8 then those same teachers decided that it was okay to
9 let students who were very open about their white
10 supremacy and their transphobia continue to make
11 inappropriate statements in class. I have had
12 teachers who didn't feel like it was their place,
13 mainly white teachers and white straight teachers,
14 who didn't think it was their place to tell students
15 to stop saying the word "faggot," and I've had
16 students, white students, who thought it was okay to
17 call their black friend the "N" word in the middle of
18 a class. I don't feel safe talking to those
19 teachers. I also feel that teachers are already so
20 over-worked and overwhelmed, but it isn't their
21 responsibility overall to be the only ones educating
22 themselves. If teachers already are supposed to be
23 certified and licensed when it comes to understanding
24 sex education as well as how to teach the subjects
25

1
2 that they are teaching, I think it is also on the
3 city government to make sure that they provide these
4 trainings through organizations like Project Reach
5 where we give trainings on homophobia, sexism,
6 specifically sexism where we explain why gender roles
7 and the fact that we don't talk about sexual
8 harassment in schools leads to sexual assaults, the
9 cover-up of sexual assault, and then rape culture in
10 total. Overall, it is important that people really
11 understand what the issues are at school and then
12 make it a priority to train people about that. Thank
13 you.

14 JAMIE RYAN BRENT: Hi, my name is Jaime
15 Ryan Brent [sp?]. I'm also a Youth Leadership
16 Representative from Project Reach. I am also from
17 the school, the Urban Assembly School for Emergency
18 Management. I'm a senior there, and I've spent four
19 years now in my high school, and I'm here to talk a
20 bit about bullying and the disconnect between the
21 solutions toward bullying that are being proposed
22 today in some other arguments and the actual
23 solution. Because ultimately, bullying is a symptom.
24 It's the result of certain roots that keep slipping
25 by our school doors and gates every single day, and

1
2 those roots being everything from racism, sexism,
3 homophobia, and misogyny from every single person
4 [sic] that I can imagine being it students or
5 teachers or faculty members. It's ridiculous. I go
6 throughout my day and I see all of these horrid acts
7 being done where I do see people, honest, general
8 people become these monsters where they just don't
9 understand what they're doing when they say the word
10 "faggot," when they say the word, the "N" word
11 towards students, and it happens every single day,
12 and I hear solutions. I hear ideas that are being
13 proposed like metal detectors, metal detectors to
14 make our children safer. You see, metal detectors
15 stop weapons, but nowadays we live in a reality where
16 a weapon is no longer just a physical object you can
17 hold. It's your ideals, it's your biases, it's your
18 pre-existing mindset that you've had since you were a
19 child, and honestly that's something that we need to
20 change. Metal detector stop weapons, but weapons are
21 not the only thing we have to worry about nowadays,
22 because we have these ideals that are instilled into
23 our students, that are instilled into our teachers
24 from the past that should be broken. We need
25 training for these ideals that still exist today, and

1
2 it's ridiculous to think that misogyny, that sexism,
3 that racism, that all these mindsets that people can
4 have still exist. It's honestly absurd. I'm a
5 student now. I've been a student for all my life, and
6 this is the last year of my high school career, and I
7 still experience all of these experiences throughout
8 my day, and I find it horrid. It's something that
9 needs to change, and it's something that needs to
10 change with training. It's not just protecting us
11 from weapons. It's protecting us from each other and
12 the weapons that we can create with our mind. Thank
13 you.

14 RASHIRA LUCAS: Hello. My name is
15 Rashira Lucas [sp?]. I'm a training Youth Staff
16 Member in Project Reach, and I'm also a part of
17 Brotherhood/Sister Sol. Let's start with a little
18 funny story. Today's my 16th birthday and my mom
19 didn't want me to come because she wanted to do
20 something special today, but once I explained to her
21 what it was going to be about she went into this
22 whole 15-minute rant about how wrong bullying is and
23 how it affects somebody, and I was just amazed. I
24 never heard her so passionate about anything like
25 that before. That aside, let's take-- let's think

1 about this idea. The body is a physical vessel of a
2 person. It is simply the physical form, yet inside of
3 the physical form is the actual being, the person
4 themselves. So, like Jaime said, while metal
5 detectors and stuff stop the physical weapon from
6 coming in, it's-- we have to worry about the mental
7 weapons. Words are-- there are so many phrases that
8 say words are weapons as well, and the phrasing
9 "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will
10 never hurt me," that's the biggest amount of bullshit
11 I've ever heard. But we protect the physical body
12 from weapons, but what about the being. We don't
13 protect them from it. Schools focus-- we're here
14 today because of all the physical violence that's
15 been happening against children, but what about the
16 mental violence. Schools focus on the big things,
17 but we never focus on the small things, like the
18 little insults here and there. If anybody's ever
19 familiar, in my college-- in one of my college
20 classes, they're talking-- we read something by Madam
21 Maxwell, Gladwell, called "The Power of Context," and
22 he brought up something called the Broken Window
23 Theory, how it doesn't-- it's not exactly the same,
24 but I think it applies to something like too where
25

1
2 somebody-- people see bad things in their environment
3 and then they think it's acceptable to follow that
4 bad and do more bad. That's the basic gist of it. I
5 highly recommend it so you guys can understand more.
6 But children in my school every day I hear people,
7 excuse my explicit [sic], they call each other
8 bitch, faggot, slut, whore, this, this, and that, and
9 it's just common. Everybody does it. It's
10 normalized. The teachers hear it. The teachers hear
11 it, but again, it's normalized so they're used to
12 hearing it. Everybody's used to hearing it, and
13 nobody knows that that's not right. If you don't-- I
14 was thinking, like, if you're allowing yourself to be
15 called all those things and you don't realize that
16 it's not right, then that means you don't have--
17 you're not understanding that certain level of self-
18 respect, and if you don't have that certain level of
19 self-respect, how are you supposed to be-- like,
20 expected to have respect for other people when you
21 can't even muster up the will to respect yourself, or
22 you don't understand self-respect? But then, also
23 with the language thing, it's so common and
24 normalized that you don't understand what's bullying
25 and what's not bullying. Like, again, people think

1
2 that that's how they talk to their friend, so when
3 teachers hear that and they try to report it or say
4 that it's wrong,-- story-- one of my ACT Prep
5 teacher, she last year, nobody liked her. Nobody
6 liked her, but she was also-- because she was kind of
7 strict. Every time somebody would say something bad,
8 like, she was very enforcive [sic] about somebody
9 saying the "N" word, because again, that's something
10 that's commonly thrown around. Every time somebody
11 would say something, she would say something to them
12 about saying that or whatever, and everybody would
13 just be upset and annoyed at her because she's so
14 strict when she's teaching them the right thing.
15 Maybe what she-- maybe she's not going about it--
16 maybe she should be like explain it more, but again,
17 people-- they're kids, they just think she's just
18 trying to tell them what to do. This is where side
19 programs like Project Reach and for me
20 Brotherhood/Sister Sol comes in. Again, I was one of
21 those kids who just thought it was an everyday thing,
22 and I understand that it was just it wasn't right
23 until I entered Brotherhood/Sister Sol. In the
24 Sister Sol program we're organized in chapters and
25 groups, and we're supposed to form bonds, like

1
2 sisterly bonds together and be close-knit and have
3 be, have like a support system for each other. There
4 we learn about issues in the world, social justice
5 issues, female sexual harassment and all that, and
6 there I learned the true meaning behind the "N" word
7 and the "F" bomb, not that one. There I learned what
8 was right and what was wrong. I learned the
9 historical background behind those words, and it
10 helped me understand and norm-- and de-normalize what
11 the school system has allowed to be normalized, which
12 is why I think programs like this are helpful for
13 students. We need more of them, especially that
14 provide students with that support system that they
15 probably don't get at home all the time. And that
16 will be all because I'm pulling up blanks. Thank you
17 for listening.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you. You've
19 been very comprehensive. Thank you.

20 DON KAO: My name is Don Kao. I'm
21 Director of Project Reach, and DeShira [sp?], I told
22 her she was so nervous this weekend, and I said why
23 don't you just come and sit and listen and experience
24 it, and if you want to say something then say
25 something. So, she said something. Thank you,

1 DeShira. I'm very proud of all of you. I am-- I
2 will try to take a little less time since we've gone
3 over time. I am 66 this year. I've been doing this
4 work for about 40 years, and I've been at Project
5 Reach for 35 of those years, and all I want to share
6 is just a few things. An eight-year-old boy hung
7 himself in Ohio. You probably heard about it in the
8 news, and a high school student in the Bronx killed
9 two of his classmates. I think what disturbs me is
10 that most of the time we spend asking what did we not
11 do for those students that caused them to do what
12 they did, and I think what we have to stop doing is
13 we have to stop not looking at the real problem.
14 What I want to know is what did we not do in both of
15 those schools that allowed the school culture to
16 create the person who killed and the person who
17 killed themselves. This is a challenge I think we
18 have for our education system. what disturbs me as
19 I've been-- as I've said I taught in the school
20 system for one year, and then I ran because I
21 couldn't do what I needed to do, and I went to
22 Project Reach, and now at Project Reach we have young
23 people who come there and say, "Wow, we can actually
24 talk about racism and sexism and homophobia and class
25

1
2 and gender? They don't allow us to talk about those
3 things in school." And I remember Jesse Jackson
4 saying one thing, that education is supposed to be
5 about life, and I don't think our schools are about
6 life. I think our schools are about gates, the fourth
7 grade gate, the eighth grade gate. It's about
8 Regent's Exams. It's about reading, writing,
9 arithmetic, you know, and those are the three R's,
10 but it really ought to be about the fourth R, racism,
11 and the S, and the H, and all those other things.
12 And so all I want to say is that I did ask all three
13 of the students here from Project Reach do they have
14 core values. Is there something that gives somebody
15 an idea when they walk into a school what the core
16 values of the school are, and most schools, if you
17 walk in their front door, they have another R, and
18 that's called respect, but we can't legislate
19 respect? We can't even legislate Respect for All
20 because people don't even know who their RFA person.
21 I just want to end by saying at Project Reach we
22 teach the young people and we also do training in all
23 five boroughs. Last year we trained over 500 social
24 workers and guidance counselors through the
25 Chancellor's Office. So I have to say the

1
2 Chancellor's Office is doing something, and we are
3 now possibly going to be working with the United
4 Federation of Teachers, but it's not enough. And I
5 think that what we want is we want people to come
6 create a culture that is anti-racist, anti-sexist,
7 anti-homophobic that talks about all these issues and
8 make that non-negotiable as part of what children's
9 education should be. And as people have said before,
10 there's a whole lot of history that's not being told,
11 and that history has to be brought to the forefront,
12 and it has to be the history about our people in this
13 country, not just the people with the money and so on
14 and so forth. Thank you.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you.

16 DENORA GETACHEW: Good afternoon,
17 everyone. My name is DeNora Getachew, and I'm the
18 Executive Director of Generation Citizen New York
19 City, and I'm joined here today with one of our
20 program participants, Radiha Hock [sp?], who you'll
21 hear from in a little bit. First want to thank
22 Council Member Dromm and Council Member Rose for your
23 leadership in supporting Generation Citizen, but also
24 giving young people a powerful vehicle through which
25 to address some of the systemic issues they're facing

1
2 in our public school system like bullying. By way of
3 brief background, Generation Citizen is a seven-year-
4 old nonprofit that is national in scope, but I lead
5 our New York City Office. It's really focused on
6 getting civics education back into schools and a new
7 and engaging pedagogy that we call Action Civics.
8 So, really teaching people the fundamentals about how
9 government and democracy works by getting them to
10 directly engage with that work. Radiha is a student-
11 - or was a student at IS230 in Council Member Dromm's
12 district and is now a freshman at Bronx High School
13 of Science, and she'll talk a little bit more about
14 her class' Action Civics Project that they worked on
15 to address bullying in their school. But really
16 wanting to offer testimony today because we do see
17 Action Civics having the potential to empower the
18 next generation to be actively engaged in our
19 democracy, to demystify politics and to make sure
20 that young people understand that it's not a dirty
21 word. So, it was so inspiring and impressive to see
22 the young people today talk about the work that
23 they're doing and their advocacy in the school
24 buildings to address bullying and other concerns they
25 have in their schools. Just by way of overview of

1 the work that we do is really partnering with schools
2 to get Action Civics into our classrooms twice a week
3 during the school day, usually embedded into history,
4 "Participation in Government" which is a state-
5 mandated civics course and other aligned courses. We
6 do this work because we know that underserved
7 students in particular are less likely to study how
8 laws are made or to have political discussions around
9 their dinner table, but if we can't get those young
10 people to be politically engaged, we know that for
11 the long term our democracy is going to suffer. And
12 so we don't just go into classrooms, and I like to
13 say use the analogy of teaching "Schoolhouse Rock."
14 So, we all know that "I'm just a bill on Capitol
15 Hill." It's more than that, right? Our students in
16 the classroom are really being taught the
17 fundamentals of not only the knowledge of how does
18 government work, but the skills. If I have a
19 concrete problem in my community, what am I going to
20 do? What am I empowered to do as a young person to
21 address that, most importantly by directly engaging
22 with government. And so over the course of the
23 semester students are grappling with issues like we
24 are as adults, police/community relations, domestic
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2 violence, discrimination, and they're working as a
3 class to decide on one issue that they can address
4 collectively by researching the issue, engaging
5 directly by calling elected officials who are
6 decision-makers on that issue and advocating for
7 proposed solutions. I just want to give some insight
8 into the work that we're doing and our students have
9 been active on these issues. So, last year, during
10 the 2016/17 school year, about 10 percent of our 131
11 classrooms focused on the issue of bullying, really
12 figuring out how they could address that issue both
13 in their school building as well as in their larger
14 community through legislation and other systemic
15 goals. And so far, in our fall 2017 semester, we've
16 seen about 15 percent of our student classes are
17 really focusing on this issue. We believe that
18 Action Civics really provides a vehicle for young
19 people to address these issues, and not only complain
20 about them, but propose concrete solutions for
21 change. I want to make sure that as we think about
22 solutions going forward, it is about empowering the
23 next generation to do this work, and that it's not
24 just about rote memorization of government facts.
25 With that, I thank you for the opportunity to

1
2 testify. I appreciate and value the Council support
3 and investment in our work, and I will turn it to
4 Radiha to talk more about the student perspective.

5 RADIHA HOCK: Good afternoon. Thank you
6 for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing.
7 My name is Radiha Hock. I'm a ninth grade students at
8 the Bronx High School of Science and I participated
9 in Generation Citizen's Action Civics program this
10 past spring when I was an eighth grader at IS230 in
11 Council Member Daniel Dromm's District and Generation
12 Citizen's Committee Change Fellowship during the
13 summer of 2017 before beginning ninth grade this
14 year. As DeNora mentioned in her testimony, GC
15 partners with schools to offer twice weekly Action
16 Civics class to educate middle and high school
17 students about how to confront and take effective
18 action to adjust community issues by engaging with
19 politics. Students start by debating what they would
20 change if they were decision-makers in their school,
21 their city, or their state. Then, students build
22 consensus to choose one issue impacting their
23 community to focus on adjusting collectively. The
24 students analyze the underlying root causes of the
25 agreed upon issue and then collaborate to develop and

1
2 execute an action plan, which may involve lobbying
3 elected officials to advance legislative and/or
4 policy solutions or building a coalition. The
5 program culminates with Civics Day, the end of
6 semester student finale where students present their
7 Action Civics projects at a science fair-style
8 exhibition event. Fortunately, my eighth grade class
9 at IS230 participated in the program and we focused
10 on breaking down the issues of racism, such a broad
11 idea bullying raises so many emotions and yet so
12 different emotions. Racism is one of them. You say
13 the world bullying, and each person you say it to
14 would give a different response in terms of emotion,
15 tone perspective and personal attitude. Bullying
16 hurts someone physically and mentally. I overcame
17 bullying and my goal is to help people take control
18 of their bullying situation, too. A campaign is a
19 great way like many other organizations have done.
20 My Class Action project dealt with racism, deepening
21 the topic. Our focus was hate crimes against Muslims
22 and ways to report them. The Main goal of the
23 project was to help the victims of bullying based on
24 religion resolve their encounters of harassment and
25 prevent Muslims from fearing bullying. One of our

1 tactics included setting up school-based workshops to
2 educate students about the importance of dialing 911,
3 or what a hate crime is and how to come to terms with
4 who you are. Given the importance of the topic, the
5 school principal at IS230, Ronald Zyrn [sp?], helped
6 us set up the workshop, and Council Member Daniel
7 Dromm supported our efforts. As this project
8 proceeded, I replayed my life during the school year
9 and thought about what bullying I experienced, and to
10 leave it like it is, rumors spread and the idea of
11 giving up on what was so important to me took a toll
12 on me to the extreme. Girls I didn't even know sent
13 me glares [sic] from someone who had stooped so low
14 to the point where I felt frustrated. I tried to rid
15 myself of these bullies because I didn't speak to
16 them, but I realized as much as I hated to say it and
17 think it, these girls were once considered friends,
18 and to this day remain friends with some of the
19 people I considered were the only friends I had.
20 They, my friends, taught me what I know now, the
21 harsh words of being called a "radish" because I wore
22 purple. Radish was my name. I embraced the idea of
23 my purple sweater to my purple shoes to a radish. I
24 tried to understand the pain they wanted to put me
25

1 through, but with each daunting question of, "Why do
2 you do it?" I don't want to be clueless [sic] in
3 your reasons to bully. Then always came the reply
4 of, "Let her be clueless." After Civics Day ended, I
5 remembered my Civics teacher showed my class a
6 documentary titled, "The Bully." It centered on kids
7 across the country of different ages and the bullying
8 they face in school that led some to committing
9 suicide. Many people feel so beaten down by bullying
10 that they consider ending their own life. The
11 children from the documentary won't get their life
12 back, and the victim's families wills suffer.
13 Through the documentary inspired the Bully Project, a
14 movement to end bullying as the aftermath was shown
15 the documentary. Fast-forward to this past summer, I
16 hid away [sic] being that [sic] participating in GC's
17 Community Change Fellowship Program would help me
18 find my voice to stop reasoning with injustice and
19 speak to the helpless. During the CCF program I was
20 given the opportunity to intern at the Civilian
21 Complaint Review Board, CCRB, a city agency that
22 mediates, investigates, and prosecutes allegations of
23 police misconduct. This experience reinforced
24 importance of educating people to know how to report
25

1
2 misconduct or harassment regarding their race,
3 religion, gender and sexuality, which I focused on in
4 my Class Action Project. Rethinking what I learned
5 at the Civics program, I grew so passionate to help
6 eliminate bullying and racial discrimination. The
7 bully documentary, my bullying experience, the
8 project I worked on with Generation Citizen, my
9 internship at CCRB, and the CCF program, the
10 Community Change Fellowship program, empowered me to
11 keep breaking down these issues and all the aspects
12 of bullying I've witnessed. If I met my tormentors
13 again, I'd probably be able to look them in the eye
14 this time and ask them the questions myself, the
15 questions those girls would answer when confronted.
16 Now, I stand to strive as a better, stronger, citizen
17 of this great city. Thank you for all this
18 incredible opportunity to voice my concerns about a
19 problem dear to my heart. A special thank you to
20 Generation Citizens for allowing me to expand on my
21 ideas to benefit others who are not able to. Thank
22 you so much to the Council Members and the Committee
23 for listening to me. It takes a city to turn
24 compassionate to powerhouse.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you. Here in
3 chambers, we're not allowed to applaud, but I want--
4 and we do this. And so I want to do this to the
5 panelists. Thank you for your testimony and your
6 courage, and I want to thank your mom for relenting
7 and understanding that this was important for you to
8 do, and I want to thank you for your testimony. I
9 heard you say that, you know, once a week you only
10 have GSA, and so you feel that you only have a safe
11 space once a week in school?

12 WALTER LOGAN: So, that's correct. I had
13 to-- for a really long time, actually, we didn't have
14 someone who agreed to supervise a GSA club, and it
15 wasn't until last year that we actually got one that
16 was going that people were comfortable enough to go
17 to, and so even though a lot of my teachers at least
18 are tolerant. So, I have the privilege of actually
19 using my chosen name and my pronouns in my classes, I
20 don't feel safe because the majority of the students
21 in those classrooms were not told that they had to
22 use my proper pronouns, and the majority of the
23 students also don't know which name they should be
24 using for me, because teachers weren't-- the didn't

25

1
2 act properly when introducing me in the beginning of
3 the year.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay. Thank you.
5 And I think you all made a very poignant statement
6 pretty much when you said metal detectors stop
7 weapons, but they don't really stop words, and that
8 you feel that-- do you feel that the methods that
9 have been proposed here are adequate to stop the
10 bullying that you've experienced?

11 DON KAO: There were a lot of testimonies
12 given throughout today, and I do feel like there are
13 some that speak to the solutions for bullying.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I was referring to
15 what the Administration had proposed. I'm sorry.

16 : So, for example, things like having
17 the RFA person on the school's website I think is
18 very important as well as more mental health
19 specialists in schools are very important, because I
20 go-- so Midwood High School is where I go to, and so
21 we have 4,000 kids, and we have two college
22 counselors and only about 30 guidance counselors.
23 So, the majority of the time that people get in to go
24 to these guidance counselors, there's a line. And so
25 if I want to go in-- if I was a kid who wanted to

1
2 tell you that I was being bullied and I wanted to
3 kill myself, I'd have to wait for 10 other people to
4 talk first.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Wow, okay. Thank
6 you. I didn't mean to cut you off. I was just
7 clarifying that-- because you're absolutely right. We
8 heard a lot of proposed methods, and I think the ones
9 we heard from the advocate's and programs like Reach
10 and Generation Citizen were very effective in
11 addressing the issue. I just wanted to know if you
12 felt that what the Administration had proposed was
13 adequate. I want to thank you--

14 DON KAO: [interposing] Could I just make
15 two suggestions. I think that if we could have metal
16 detectors that could detect racism and sexism and
17 homophobia and those things, that might help. I'm
18 not sure that Apple or those other technology places
19 can do that yet. The other suggestion is that
20 instead of suspending the student, wouldn't it be
21 wonderful if we could suspend the school? Because
22 then we could talk about what would it take to
23 unsuspend the school so that the person suspended
24 wouldn't turn out the way they are. So, anyway, just
25 a suggestion.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you.

3 WALTER LOGAN: Can I add something? I
4 think-- we're talking about all of those. I think
5 this stuff should start, definitely start like in
6 elementary school, because again, some of these
7 morals, some of these ideologies are being either
8 brought up in home or from the environment around.
9 If it started at the beginning while the minds are
10 still malleable, and they're not like set in stone,
11 then we'll see a lot of change. Because at the
12 moment, I'm not going to lie, every-- like, whenever
13 we-- whenever I try to talk to somebody about this in
14 my school, most-- I always get brushed aside, and I'm
15 a classmate. I always get brushed aside and I'm a
16 classmate. Imagine how they feel if an adult is
17 saying it. Like, this stuff needs to be taught.
18 Like, everybody always thinks it's just whatever,
19 they're being over-- they're being too sensitive,
20 they're being overdramatic. You have to, like, to
21 erase that idea, you have to start with all of this
22 in elementary school, somewhere at the beginning.
23 You can't start later in life where children already--
24 - they've already experienced the abuse and they
25 already decided that adults aren't going to do

1
2 anything, and they're just going to try and fend for
3 themselves. You have to start when children still
4 feel-- still have a certain level of trust.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I totally agree with
6 you, and your point about the fact that this hate
7 language, inappropriate language and insensitive
8 language has been normalized, and people use it very
9 commonly. You're absolutely right. We have to
10 address that early on, and it's not okay, and it's
11 not acceptable. even in a social environment where
12 people are speaking to friends and family members,
13 that type of language is not, you know, appropriate
14 and nor should it be normalized.

15 WALTER LOGAN: Yeah, because I mean, when
16 what, my sister was seven years old when she came
17 home telling my mom that-- crying because her
18 classmate called her a bitch, and when she was seven
19 years old, and I think she was only-- again, she was--
20 - I think she was maybe in first grade. Being called
21 all of these names at such a young age, that's--
22 that's ridiculous. That's-- they're mainly exposed
23 to all this when they're so young. Again, remember
24 they're malleable, so being-- having all this put and
25

1
2 all this negativity put in, then they're going to
3 grow up negative.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, thank you. I
5 thank you all for your testimony, and Chair Dromm,
6 I'm now turning it back over to you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. I do want
8 to say just a couple of things that I did hear some
9 of the testimony. Thank you, Don, for being here.
10 Of course, the Project Citizen as well. But yeah,
11 the frequency and the use of words and bullying in
12 school has become so common place I think that often
13 times it is hard to distinguish what is bullying,
14 right? So, I've been in middle schools mostly where
15 every other word out of a kid's mouth is "that's so
16 gay," or you know, "f-a-g-g-o-t," and you, "da-da-da
17 [sic]," or whatever it may be, and nobody challenges
18 it, nobody. There's adults there. They hear it.
19 They don't do anything about it. They know it.
20 Sometimes when I say, you know, how could you let a
21 kid do that, you know,-- "Oh, they don't really mean
22 that. They don't know what it means." You know what
23 I mean? Well, I had an incident where I used to be
24 in charge of the AAA Club, you know, the monitors,
25 and these kids weren't really supposed to do this,

1 but at lunch time one time they brought up a little
2 second grader to me and the second grader was crying
3 and crying. I said, "What's going on?" And the boy
4 said, "Ugh. We can't tell you." I said, "Why did you
5 bring this boy to me?" Ugh. I said, "Why did you--
6 if you're not supposed to do this, why did you bring
7 this boy to me?" So, finally, one of them whispered
8 to me, "He said you're gay to me." Alright? I said,
9 "Well, that's not news to me." Right? I said, "And
10 what's so wrong with that?" You know? And the kid
11 who was crying said, "Yeah, what's so bad about
12 that?" So, I was like, release him then. Take him
13 back to the school yard and let him go. But that was
14 all that second grader needed, but that second grader
15 knew by the time of second grade was that there was
16 something wrong with being called gay, right? So, it
17 goes to the point that you were saying as well, and I
18 have a million other things I could say about my
19 experiences in school. But just to wrap it up with
20 IS230. In IS230 and what happened with Generation
21 Citizen in that school is a model for all the
22 schools. I went to observe the classes. I've been
23 involved with both of the programs here, but when I
24 went to IS230 Generation Citizen was there. The
25

1
2 teacher divided the class up. Each group took an -
3 ism, homophobia, anti-Latino sentiment, anti-African-
4 American sentiment, anti-children-with-disabilities
5 or whatever. Each group had to research it, come
6 back, and then they spoke about each, what they had
7 found. Teacher asked what was the thread there. It
8 was all the discrimination, the prejudice, etcetera.
9 Out of that came two young girls, one from Tibet, one
10 from Nepal who came out of the closet as a result of
11 those lessons to their class, and as a result of that
12 the Principal asked Jared Fox to come into the school
13 and to form a GSA in the school. Jared worked with
14 the parents in the school. They formed a GSA. I
15 believe it still exists there today, and last year,
16 for the very first time ever in its 25-year history,
17 IS230 marched in the Queens Lesbian and Gay Pride
18 Parade. The marching band came. All students, not
19 just the lesbian and gay students, but that started
20 as a simple lesson that started in your school and
21 then grew. So, these things are contagious, and
22 they're good, good contagious, and they can make a
23 real change in people's lives. So I want to thank
24 you for that. Thank you, and thank you to the panel,
25 also. We still have five panels, so I need to move

1
2 this along, and I have been warned that we have to
3 get out of this room soon. So, I'm going to be
4 strict about implementing the three-minute policy.
5 With that-- thank you, Council Member Debbie Rose,
6 for taking over. Brittany Brathwaite, Girls for
7 Gender Equality; Sandra W., the Coalition for
8 Educational Justice; Celia Green, CCHS District 75
9 President's Council; David Ludwig, Asphalt Green
10 [sp?]; Anna-Jean, I believe, Lewis, Parent Action
11 Committee in the Bronx; Rachel Peters from the Peer
12 Health Exchange. You just give it right here to the--
13 -

14 UNIDENTIFIED: [interposing] We have four
15 more panels.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, the paper? We
17 still have four panels, four panels. Thank you.
18 Okay, appreciate it. Okay, can you raise your right
19 hand and I'll swear you in and get you started?
20 Thank you all for coming in. Do you solemnly swear
21 or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and
22 nothing but the truth and to answer Council Member
23 questions honestly? Alright, where should we start?
24 Down here? Okay.

25

1
2 BRITTANY BRATHWAITE: Good afternoon, New
3 York City Council Members. My name is Brittany
4 Brathwaite, and I'm a Senior Organizer at Girls for
5 Gender Equity. Girls for Gender Equity is an
6 intergenerational organization committed to the
7 physical, psychological, social, and economic
8 development of girls and women. GGE encourages
9 communities to remove barriers and create
10 opportunities for girls and young women to live self-
11 determined lives. We are also active members of the
12 Dignity in Schools Campaign. Thank you for convening
13 this hearing on bullying, harassment and
14 discrimination in New York City schools. Girls for
15 Gender Equity has been at the forefront of community-
16 led initiatives working alongside young people to
17 highlight racial and gender barriers and improving
18 school climate. We have learned that harassment and
19 discrimination is impacting not only LGBTQ students
20 but also students of color, girls of color, immigrant
21 students, and students with disabilities. Our
22 participatory action research performed in 2016
23 revealed that one in three young people had
24 experienced sexual harassment in their schools.
25 Furthermore, students reported experiencing

1 Islamophobia, Xenophobia, and anti-black racism from
2 their peers, teachers and school Administration.
3
4 Sadly, not only was this omnipresent in many young
5 people's experience in school, but because of harsh
6 discipline policies and the absence of any
7 preventative or restorative justice practices, these
8 young people were often punished and blamed for their
9 own victimization. Every day, a young person who
10 identifies as LGBTQ must decide between going to
11 school and being harassed and made invisible by a
12 school curriculum that does not acknowledge the
13 contributions of LGBTQ folks or people of color, or
14 skipping school and being met with punitive
15 discipline measures for absence, or even worse,
16 truancy charges. Hostile school environments have
17 profound impact on the mental, physical, emotional
18 health of young people and have demonstrated clear
19 pathways into the juvenile justice system. A major
20 shift needs to occur, and I encourage City Council
21 and the Department of Education to take action by
22 investing the resources needed to support, but not
23 simply using Band-Aid punitive measures that are not
24 effective. In New York City, we have Respect for All
25 and the Dignity Act, and they're great intersectional

1 policies on paper. However, without the commitment,
2 the prioritization, the proper funding or resources
3 attached to them, they cannot affect the change they
4 seek to. We propose that the City Council and the
5 Department of Education do the following: invest in
6 holistic culturally responsive intersectional
7 curriculum that uplifts and acknowledges experiences
8 and identities of all young people; continue
9 investments in restorative justice practices; create
10 safe and supportive learning environments for all
11 students by allocating resources and funding for the
12 existing policies that support the mental, emotional,
13 physical health of all young people, and to
14 decriminalize learning environments by eliminating
15 zero tolerance policies, removing police from
16 schools, removing metal detectors and other
17 instruments of surveillance, reducing school-based
18 discipline referrals, and eliminating vague and
19 subjective dress-code policies which
20 disproportionately target girls of color and TGNC
21 youth. Together, we can create the schools that all
22 young people need, want and deserve. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Do you
25 know that the DOE has a Gender Equity Specialist?

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BRITTANY BRATHWAITE: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, good. Thank you. That's what I wanted to hear. Next, please.

RACHAEL MORGAN PETERS: Good afternoon. My name is Rachael Morgan Peters. I'm the New York City Executive Director at Peer Health Exchange and a public school parent. Thank you to the Education Committee Chair, Danny Dromm, for convening this hearing and for your laser focus on issues related to all young people's health, especially to LGBTQ young people's health and education, and thank you for the pen you gave my sons after the sex ed bill signing. Thank you to the entire committee for your continued support on comprehensive health education, your dedication to LGBTQ-inclusive health education, commitment to reducing bullying and vision for improving school climate. These are important issues which can and should fit under the umbrella of a safe and healthy school for all students. Health curricula and all curricula should be supportive and inclusive of LGBTQ and gender non-conforming students, inclusive but not limited to Gender Sexuality Alliances. The recent stabbing at Urban Assembly School for Wildlife Conservation is a

1
2 tragedy beyond words. One student died, and an 18-
3 year-old is indicted on manslaughter charges. As
4 partners that work in New York City public schools
5 and former partners of Urban Assembly School for
6 Wildlife Conservation, Peer Health Exchange is deeply
7 saddened by this news. The violence committed is
8 appalling. We know that Abel endured repeated racist
9 and homophobic bullying at the school, even if not
10 from the victim. Based on research from the NIH,
11 both bullies and people who are bullied are more
12 likely to engage in serious violent behavior. We
13 also remember notorious examples like the Columbine
14 and Sandy Hook which were committed by reported
15 bullying victims. Youth violence is a significant
16 public health issue that cross boundaries of economic
17 status, race, sexual orientation, and gender. In New
18 York City, one in five public school students are
19 bullied with higher incidence rates among students
20 that identify as LGBTQ. Bullying of LGBTQ students
21 often stems from ignorance and fear about
22 transgressing [sic] our societal norms around gender
23 and sexuality. Effective health education can play a
24 strong role in dispelling myths about sexual
25 orientation and gender identity and can build safe

1 spaces for learning and respect, critical pieces to
2 combat bullying. A recent report by Comptroller
3 Scott Stringer shows that the DOE is not providing
4 comprehensive health education as required by state
5 law to all middle school and high school students,
6 and is not prioritizing sex ed as part of a larger
7 health curriculum. I believe that this tragedy is in
8 part a failure of lack of effective health education
9 in kindergarten through 12th grade. We praise that
10 this council has created a sex ed taskforce, and I am
11 eager for their progressive and bold recommendations
12 for us. At Peer Health Exchange we empower young
13 people with the knowledge, skills and resources they
14 need to make healthy decisions. We're proud to
15 partner with 49 high schools across New York City in
16 all five boroughs to teach our skills-based
17 curriculum to 5,700 young people this week. We
18 provide young people the communication and decision-
19 making skills they need to build healthy
20 relationships with their peers. In addition, we lead
21 a LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum to build better
22 understanding and promote inclusion of queer and
23 trans people in aspects of social life beyond just
24 LGBTQ 101 training. In addition, we promote peers
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1
2 advocating for each other if they're concerned about
3 the mental health of a peer, directly discussing the
4 issue of snitching the Chancellor referenced earlier.
5 We call on all New York City schools to respond [sic]
6 with anti-violence measures that truly work to build
7 a safe inclusive environment for all students. While
8 the DOE policy promotes this kind of environment, the
9 work is under-resourced. We so appreciate the
10 essential work of Thrive and New York City Unity
11 Project focus on mental health and LGBTQ youth
12 respectively, and applaud the work of Jared Fox, the
13 DOE's first LGBTQ liaison. That said, as a team of
14 one there is an urgent need for more such resources,
15 and these initiatives must work together inside
16 schools. I also appreciate the new and ongoing work
17 the DOE is doing around bullying, but I have not
18 heard how young people are informing these
19 recommendations. I hope the DOE considers a Youth
20 Leadership Council, which New York Service is helping
21 to organize. Despite the media attention around
22 them, installing metal detectors in our public
23 schools will not guarantee more safety in schools.
24 Installing these machines and the uniformed personnel
25 that attend them in schools dehumanizes and

1
2 demoralizes the black and brown young people that
3 attend these schools. Engaging with uniformed
4 personnel and metal detectors is stressful and
5 demoralizing for all students as we heard today,
6 especially those who identify as LGBTQ given the
7 higher rates of negative experiences and reactions
8 that these young people have with uniformed officers.
9 It is not a comprehensive approach to this complex
10 issue, rather a quick fix, that part of an
11 unacceptable broader pattern of race-based social
12 stress that leads to disparities in educational
13 achievement for black and brown students. What we
14 need is prevention and real resources dedicated to
15 LGBTQ-inclusive education and supports for all
16 students. So, while we support a bill to track
17 bullying we urge the Council to push further. I'll
18 stop.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. I want to
20 try to hold everyone to that three minutes. So,
21 thank you.

22 DAVID LUDWIG: Hello, my name is David
23 Ludwig. I am the Community Programs Director at
24 Asphalt Green which is a nonprofit organization that
25 aims to bring the benefits of sports and fitness to

1 all New Yorkers, and I'm also a public school parent.
2 Thank you, Council Members, and everyone else here
3 for caring about bullying. Since 2001, Asphalt Green
4 has run the Recess Enhancement Program, or REP, in
5 which we work with public elementary schools to make
6 recess more active and more inclusive. By my rough
7 estimations which I did over the weekend, the program
8 has run at over half a million recess periods since
9 2001, the large majority of which have taken place in
10 under-served communities with support from City
11 Council. So, thank you. Our REP coaches look out
12 for bullying on the playground and often actually
13 recruit bullies as helpers, which is an effective way
14 to turn around their behavior. They also add a
15 little bit of structure to what is happening where on
16 the playground. We have found this cuts down on
17 arguing and fighting and reduces opportunities for
18 the type of habitual and focused teasing and taunting
19 that constitutes or turns into bullying. While there
20 is obviously much work to be done at the elementary
21 level, bullying has gone from being largely unspoken
22 about to something that is actively discouraged in a
23 visible way. Asphalt Green helps to work more
24 closely with the Department of Education on this
25

1
2 continued effort to ensure all children feel safe and
3 are safe at school. Creating an inclusive atmosphere
4 at recess helps to lay the foundation for our younger
5 students to treat each other with the respect they
6 deserve, and we are currently hoping to work with the
7 Department of Education to provide training to school
8 aid staff and have also requested data from OSYD on
9 the impact that our programs have had in schools, and
10 we know from talking to principals that have our
11 program that it's such a relief and that incidences
12 do drop. So we hope to do more in the future. Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, and I
15 agree with you on the aspect of athletics. Thank
16 you. Next, please.

17 ANNA JEAN LEWIS: Okay, good afternoon.
18 My name is Anna Jean Lewis [sp?]. I am a member of
19 PAC, Parent Action Committee, a member of CEJ,
20 Coalition for Educational Justice, and I'm also a
21 member of my PTA, which is my Parent/Teacher's
22 Association. I am very involved. Thank you for
23 allowing me to express my thoughts. As a parent of a
24 seventh grader in District Nine in the Bronx, I want
25 my child and all children to feel safe and supported

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2 in their home away from home which is school. If you
3 see bullying stand up and say something is what we
4 tell our kids to do, but what is the Department of
5 Education doing to ensure that safety and protection
6 of the kids who has the courage to stand up say
7 something? How are we going to educate our teachers
8 and school staff to be proactive? With every action
9 comes an equal and opposite reaction. When we no
10 longer turn away from the signs, there are warning
11 signs that comes before physical contact. We should
12 hold our students to a higher standard to know that
13 bullying is just not kids playing around. We make
14 plans in this room and hear promises from our
15 government official, but some things get lost in
16 implementing these programs in our schools. Culture
17 responsive education does play a very important part.
18 I'm sorry. Culturally responsive education does play
19 a very important role in making our school safer.
20 This will give the educators and staff a better
21 understanding of how the challenges our students face
22 in our community in which they serve. Some things as
23 important as social/emotional support should not
24 depend on the school funding. This should be a right
25 and not a privilege. The day after the stabbing

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2 metal detectors were installed in the school, but no
3 parents were involved in the decision-making. Metal
4 detectors are only part of the solution. No one
5 should have to suffer in silence. Let's work
6 together. Let's model the behavior of stamping out
7 bullying in our schools. It is easier to prevent a
8 fire than it is to put it out. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And
10 District Nine is a district where you have that model
11 program with CEJ, right?

12 ANNA JEAN LEWIS: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

14 ANNA JEAN LEWIS: You're welcome.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, please?

16 SANDRA HYATT: Good afternoon. Thank you
17 to City Council and Education Committee Chair, Mr.
18 Dromm, for allowing me to testify today. My name is
19 Sandra Hyatt [sp?]. I'm the mother of a student at
20 Lower Man [sic] and Arts Academy and parent leader
21 with New York Coalition for Educational Justice. I
22 want to talk today about culturally responsive
23 education, how it can help address the problem of
24 bullying in our schools. Bullying is an issue that
25 strikes fear in the heart of parents. We want our

1 children to be accepted among their peers, including
2 at school. No parent wants their child to be singled
3 out, teased, harassed, or targeted, especially based
4 on race, ethnicity, culture, religion, or gender. A
5 lot of times the solution schools take to bullying
6 are reactive and not proactive. But how are we
7 ensuring that our schools are supported places for
8 students on a daily basis? How are teachers and
9 school staff trained to understand race, culture or
10 gender in order to properly respond to the issues
11 that they see or hear among students? How are school
12 staff addressing their own implicit biases? Over
13 the past year parents of New York Coalition for
14 Education Justice have been championing culturally
15 responsive education. CRE, our Culturally Responsive
16 Education is a way to create safe, supported school
17 culture and provide teachers and school staff with
18 training regarding diverse identities of students in
19 their school. CRE can help students build pride in
20 who they are and learn to accept peers who are
21 different from them. Culturally responsive education
22 is a preventative measure to ensure that identity-
23 based bullying does not occur. CRE is how we begin
24 to cut bullying off at the knees. No child should
25

1
2 have to endure bullying. If we are-- if we as a city
3 are truly serious about eliminating this behavior, we
4 as adults must do the hard work to become aware of
5 and undo our own biases, learn how to create safe
6 learning spaces, and learn how to disrupt identity-
7 based bullying when it comes from students or other
8 adults. Earlier today Chancellor talked about the--
9 talked about implementing in-school culturally
10 responsive education. We heard from some seniors
11 today that it's not in their classroom. My child is
12 in 11th grade, a junior in high school. I eagerly
13 await the roll out of what DOE is planning. Thank
14 you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Absolutely. Thank
16 you.

17 CELIA GREEN: Good afternoon, Council
18 Member Dromm, and the Council Members from the
19 Education Committee. My name is Celia Green and I am
20 the current President for the Citywide Council on
21 High Schools. I am also the current President for
22 District 75 President's Council as well as being a
23 mother of six young men, four of whom are on the
24 spectrum, and when I say spectrum I mean four of whom
25 have autism spectrum disorder, and three of whom are

1 still currently-- or currently attend District 75
2 programming in New York City public schools, one in a
3 12 to one, one, and two in inclusion. People fear
4 that which they do not understand. I believe that
5 culturally responsive education is crucial to better
6 outcomes for our students, for better outcomes to our
7 students who have IEPs, those who are in special
8 education programs as well as those who have special
9 needs. CRE, or Culturally Responsive Education,
10 helps to promote self-esteem and self-respect, and
11 when students see themselves reflected in the
12 curriculum it encourages them to respect themselves
13 and to have that self-esteem. It also encourages
14 inclusiveness and tolerance in their school
15 communities and with the students, teachers and
16 administrators. Students with IEPs tend to be
17 exposed to bullying and cultural biases at a greater
18 rate than that of their typically developing peers.
19 Those among us that do not fit in with what is
20 considered societal norms are often a target-- are
21 targeted by aggressors. It is somewhat surprising
22 that in 2017 in a city as vastly diverse as the one
23 we live in where there are neighborhoods within the
24 five boroughs that speak more than 200 languages,

1
2 that the curriculum in schools does not reflect and
3 does not incorporate Culturally Responsive Education.
4 People who live with disabilities, whether they are
5 physical or cognitive are often living in a sort of
6 exile in their own communities. We can never change
7 the minds of people unless we change the practices.
8 If you love yourself, you will have no need to
9 degrade others in order to make yourself feel better,
10 and I truly believe this because I think a lot of
11 things that have happened recently, especially when
12 we got the news as the Citywide Council for High
13 Schools about the stabbing in the school in the
14 Bronx, as moms, as humans, you know, we felt it
15 deeply, and we also would like for it not to be every
16 time something happens for us to react, but for us to
17 be proactive, because this is another set of
18 hearings. And I remember around the time that Avante
19 Kindo [sp?] went missing there was a lot to be said
20 there and there's still a lot to be done there, and
21 I'm hoping that by introducing culturally responsive
22 education it helps to-- it may not end everything.
23 It may not end sexism. It may not end gender bias.
24 It may not end, you know, all the -isms that there
25 are, but at least it's a start, and it is something

1 that we can do proactively rather than reactively.

2 Thank you.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And it's also what
5 students like to talk about and to be a part of.
6 When they see themselves reflected in curriculum it
7 encourages them to come to school, and I have to
8 compliment you. Did you say you were the mother of
9 six boys?

10 CELIA GREEN: Yes, I am.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: God bless you.

12 CELIA GREEN: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And to all the
14 panelists also, because I do believe very much in
15 parents, and parents have a special way of talking
16 about this issue, because you know you want the best
17 for your children, and so you do fear, and somebody
18 mentioned the fear that a parent had that their child
19 might be bullied in the classroom, and I heard that
20 come very clearly through this panel here today. So,
21 thank you all for waiting and thank you for being a
22 part of the discussion. Thank you.

23 CELIA GREEN: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, our next group:
25 Becky Mui from GLSEN, Becca? Mustafa Sullivan from

1
2 FIERCE [sp?]; Joseph Seck from Hetrick Martin, Harvey
3 Milk high school; Everett Author, the LGBT Community
4 Center; Julian Weiss-- is Julian still here? I
5 thought she left. Okay, and Doctor Elizabeth Payne,
6 Queering Education Research Institute. And George
7 Alvarado from Northwell Health in Glen Oaks. Okay,
8 could I ask you all to please raise your right hand?
9 Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth,
10 the whole truth and nothing but the truth and to
11 answer Council Member questions honestly? Okay,
12 would you like to start?

13 REBECCA MUI: Thank you for having me
14 speak here today, and especially Chairman Dromm for
15 sponsoring this bill. Good afternoon at this point.
16 I'm Becca Mui. I'm the Education Manager at GLSEN,
17 the nation's leading organization focused on ensuring
18 safe and inclusive schools for all students
19 regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity,
20 and/or gender expression. Yep. GLSEN has been doing
21 this work since 1990-- is that better-- since 1990,
22 and all of our policies, programming and expertise is
23 based in evidence-based research. Thank you for
24 letting me submit comments in favor of the proposed
25 amendment to add Chapter 11 Section 21975 to the

1
2 Administrative Code ensuring the name and contact
3 information of every Respect for All liaison to be
4 published on the New York City's Department of
5 Education website. This amendment takes a crucial
6 step forward in ensuring that established
7 requirements for RFA liaisons are implemented in the
8 most efficient and accessible way possible. I'm here
9 representing GLSEN as an expert in my field as their
10 Education Manager and also as a former elementary
11 school teacher who taught for nearly 10 years right
12 here in New York City. I've also served as an Equity
13 Inclusion Coordinator, and I know firsthand how
14 valuable it can be to a school community to have a
15 person that's designated to support positive school
16 climate and to spearhead diversity initiatives. Last
17 year I also worked closely with representatives from
18 the DOE and partner organizations to update the
19 existing professional development training for
20 Respect for All liaisons in the City, and I've seen
21 firsthand the need for the existence of RFA liaisons
22 with the Council's good faith efforts to include
23 their information publicly. I urge you to pass this
24 updated code so that there is zero confusion for
25 students, families or community members about who can

1 help students facing discrimination, bullying and
2 harassment. In GLSEN's 2015 National School Climate
3 Survey which focuses on the school experiences of
4 LGBTQ youth, we found that nearly nine in ten of
5 LGBTQ students were harassed or assaulted at school.
6 Of the LGBTQ students surveyed here in New York, 65
7 percent had faced harassment on the basis of sexual
8 orientation, and 50 percent on the basis of gender
9 expression. Of the victimized students, most never
10 reported the incident to school staff, and of
11 students who did report, only 33 percent, that it
12 resulted in effective staff intervention. It's the
13 responsibility of adults in schools to protect our
14 students and to make sure that we are providing a
15 safe and affirming learning environment for all.
16 These statistics are staggering and demonstrate the
17 need to keep making changes to improve school climate
18 for all students across the state and here in New
19 York City. Respect for All liaisons receive the
20 training and the skills to address bullying and
21 harassment in schools, and it's critical that their
22 information be easily accessible to anyone needing
23 their support. Thank you for your time.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
3 Next, please?

4 EVERETT ARTHUR: Thank you for the
5 opportunity to provide testimony today on Council
6 Member Dromm's bill, Intro. 1538. My name is Everett
7 Arthur, and I'm the Government Relations Associate at
8 the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community
9 Center, commonly known as "The Center." Founded in
10 1983 the Center has been a home and resource hub for
11 the LGBT community by offering a wide spectrum of
12 programs to ensure that all LGBT community members
13 have the tools they need to lead happy, healthy
14 lives. At the center we believe that you should
15 celebrate who you are, what makes you unique, and why
16 you matter. However, for members of our lesbian,
17 gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth
18 community, this can be particularly challenging while
19 attending schools. As Becca said, according to
20 GLSEN's 2015 National School Climate Survey, more
21 than 85 percent of LGBTQ students experience verbal
22 harassment at school based on a personal
23 characteristic most commonly related to their real or
24 perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.
25 For center youth specifically, the above statistics

1
2 correspond with their experiences. Center youth
3 frequently state that they do not want to go to
4 school because they know they will encounter
5 bullying. Again, GLSEN's national school climate
6 survey speaks to this point with the following
7 statistic: almost 50 percent of survey respondents
8 indicated that they were considering dropping out
9 because of the bullying and harassment they faced at
10 school. New York City must do more to protect LGBTQ
11 youth from bullying, and Intro 1538 is a necessary
12 step in the right direction listing the name and
13 contact information of a school's designated Respect
14 for All liaison on its website allows for increased
15 transparency of information that can result in lives
16 being saved and relentless bullying, harassment and
17 tormenting coming to a halt. The center commends
18 Council Member Dromm for this important piece of
19 legislation and recommends the passage of Intro 153.
20 Although making this information accessible is
21 important, we must not and cannot stop there. All
22 New York City teachers must play an active role in
23 deterring anti-LGBTQ bias and bullying in schools.
24 Like Abel, Center youth frequently experience
25 bullying and harassment in front of teachers without

1 intervention, and nationwide more than 57 percent of
2 LGBTQ students who experience harassment do not
3 report the incident to school staff because they
4 doubted the effective intervention would occur or
5 fear that harassment experience would be magnified if
6 reported. The onus is on all of us to make LGBTQ
7 youth safer where they learn, live, and in their
8 communities. Intro 1538 builds upon citywide efforts
9 to protect LGBTQ youth, and the center supports its
10 enactment. The center would be honored to continue
11 to provide guidance as New York City continues
12 developing legislation and processes that protect all
13 youth from bullying and harassment.
14

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

16 Next please?

17 MUSTAFA SULLIVAN: Hi, my name is Mustafa
18 Sullivan. I'm the Executive Director of FIERCE, which
19 is a group that's based in the Bronx. We've worked
20 with LGBTQ young people of color for the past 17
21 years. I personally have been organizing and working
22 with New York City young people and young people
23 across the country for the exact same time, 17 years.
24 I just want to be really clear that we need to really
25 deal with what's happening in the Bronx and what's

1
2 happening at the Urban Assembly School right now. The
3 violence, the violence that actually caused this
4 incident continues. We don't see any type of grief
5 counseling or emotional support coming from the
6 Department of Ed. We don't see that even they're
7 willing to actually have teachers and faculty in the
8 school actually speak honestly about the bullying
9 that Abel Cedeno was facing or the violence that
10 continues in the community. When we went to court
11 two weeks ago, folks who were in support and
12 justifiably mourning for Matthew McCree were
13 violently using homophobic slurs and transphobic
14 slurs against our community while this entire
15 conversation was happening on some other level.
16 Right now these young people are afraid to actually
17 talk about the violence that Abel Cedeno was facing
18 because of the continual bullying that's not just
19 coming from young people, but also coming from adults
20 who support this culture of violence, and that's what
21 we actually have to change, this culture of violence,
22 this culture of a conversation that's about what the
23 DOE has put in terms of a website or has emailed to
24 people as opposed to having direct conversations with
25 the school about how to address the violence that

1 continues at this moment. We lost young people, and
2 we continue to lose more and more young people the
3 less action that we take to actually hold the
4 Department of Education accountable for the violence
5 that again as I said right now continues. People are
6 getting harassed on social media. Young people
7 actually know what happened and know the different
8 young people are afraid to speak because they're
9 afraid they're going to be attacked, and we're
10 talking about whether or not the DOE sent emails to
11 people or whether they actually-- you know, let's be
12 real. The reality is that teachers are not being
13 trained how to deal with incidences. They don't have
14 the requirement, and the UFT is not willing to put
15 pressure on them to actually take any action actually
16 to address violence, because as a person who works
17 with young people I know that if there's a fight
18 happening around me I can stop it without a metal
19 detector. A metal detector is not going to solve the
20 violent culture. It takes young people. It takes a
21 whole community of people to work together, and we
22 need actual face-to-face meetings with folks, not
23 training online, not pointing to some resources, not
24 pointing to statistics of things that-- look, if
25

1
2 you're being bullied you're not going to report.
3 You're not going to fill out a form. You're going to
4 suffer. You're going to keep it to yourself, and in
5 some instances you might have to do unfortunately
6 what Abel did which was enter into a really violent
7 situation, and we don't know how he's going to get
8 out of it, because the Department of Education is
9 refusing to take any responsibility over the
10 situation, refusing to offer any type of social and
11 emotional support, and more importantly, not really
12 listening to the young people in the Bronx who are
13 actually facing this issue and continue to face this
14 issue. So I urge us not to just pass the City
15 Council resolutions. I think the resolutions are
16 fine, but we have to re-center this conversation on
17 what's actually happening in Abel's community right
18 now and what's actually happening in the Bronx school
19 that started this incident in the first place. Thank
20 you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,
22 and I saw you up at the courthouse a couple of weeks
23 ago as well when I went up there, and I can fully
24 empathize with your anger. I understand exactly what
25 Abel may have gone through because I went through it

1
2 myself, and ultimately, our goals are the same and
3 how we get there, I think we will work together on.
4 So, thank you. Thank you for being there as well.
5 Appreciate it.

6 ELIZABETHE PAYNE: I want to thank
7 Council Member Dromm for his consistent attention--

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] If you
9 just hit your mic, that'd be helpful.

10 ELIZABETHE PAYNE: That probably would be
11 helpful. I wanted to thank the Council Member for
12 his consistent attention to issues of school bullying
13 and for convening this hearing and to the Council
14 Members who earlier today demonstrated understanding
15 of the role of discrimination and stigma and the
16 perpetuation of bullying behaviors and the creation
17 of hostile school culture. I'm Doctor Elizabeth
18 Payne. I'm faculty at Hunter College and Director of
19 the Queering Education Research Institute. I have
20 been researching LGBTQ bullying as a sociologist
21 since 1999, and I've presented the sociological data
22 to policy makers not only in New York State, but
23 ranging from the Federal Department of Education
24 under Obama to the Prince and Princess of Sweden this
25 past summer, and my message has been the same to all.

1
2 We must begin to include diversity work, anti-racist,
3 anti-homophobic, anti-transphobic, anti-sexist
4 diversity work in anti-bullying work. We cannot
5 continue to focus solely on individual bullies and
6 victims without addressing the cultural context in
7 which bullying happens and the role that bullying
8 plays in reproducing social hierarchies that mark out
9 who is valued in that school and who is not, and we
10 cannot continue to see diversity work in schools as
11 secondary or as fluff, as less worthy of time,
12 attention, and resources. Mainstream educational
13 conversations on bullying are dominated by risk
14 management and tolerance discourses, not discussions
15 of diversity and not discussions of pure targeting
16 patterns. This creates a highly inaccurate picture
17 of bullying that implies that number one, youth who
18 target peers, LGBT or otherwise, do so as a result of
19 deficiencies in their own psychosocial development.
20 Two, the totality of the problem is verbal and
21 physical harassment and that risk is the result of
22 that harassment. Three, that the problem is brought
23 into the school from the outside, and four, that the
24 problem can be isolated to individual badly behaving
25 students. This is just not true. Questions about

1
2 how schools are providing conditions in which
3 bullying can flourish are not explored, and school
4 culture has escaped examination. We must recognize
5 that bullying targets difference. Additionally,
6 there is no attention paid to the persistent patterns
7 of peer targeting over time. This is particularly
8 important point in considering the September 27th
9 tragedy at Urban Assembly. Students whose gender and
10 sexualities do not align with cultural expectation
11 for their biological sex are the most consistent
12 targets of bullying and harassment in schools. The
13 further you fall from idealized forms of hetero
14 masculinities and femininities, the more vulnerable
15 they are to bullying. We must move away from solely
16 focusing on this bullying victim binary and look at a
17 sociological framing of bullying that allows us to
18 see violence not as the product of pathological
19 individuals who are ill-adjusted socially to the--
20 but to the interactional reproduction of larger
21 structural inequities. This reframing is significant
22 because it attends to the social context in which
23 bullying occurs, and it asks questions about meetings
24 produced by such interactions, and understands these
25 interactions are not solely the province of young

1
2 people. I also want to add that my research
3 institute has conducted three statewide studies on
4 the implementation of the Dignity for All Students
5 Act, one which was completed in 2015, and two which
6 are currently underway. Overall, that research
7 indicates that New York schools have focused most of
8 their attention on systems of reporting and
9 harassment, and our findings do not indicate that
10 there's been any meaningful engagement with proactive
11 efforts towards develop positive, inclusive school
12 cultures or addressing patterns of targeting. If
13 you'd like any more information on these research
14 studies on the Dignity Act, I would be happy to
15 provide that information.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
17 Next, please.

18 GEORGE ALVARADO: Good afternoon and
19 thank you for the opportunity to present, and my name
20 is George Alvarado. I'm a child Psychiatrist, and
21 I've actually worked in the number of roles in the
22 mental health system, including emergency rooms,
23 clinics, and sort of I wanted to present really from
24 that perspective, and just in ways that that system
25 can better support all the things that we're talking

1 about today. I think very much of what we're
2 discussing is very importantly related to culture and
3 related to what's going on in the schools, but I
4 think there are certainly times where there's a
5 crisis that needs assistance or expertise from folks
6 who are outside of the school, particularly if the
7 students is threatening to harm themselves or others
8 or is in some other way in danger. So, really
9 talking about crisis and linkages in times of crisis.
10 So, I'm really, again, defining it here as an
11 intermediate safety concern to self or others, or
12 really any symptoms that severely limit a students'
13 ability to function in their school setting. And for
14 child and adolescent psychiatry clinics would
15 conceivably be the first line of linkage, these are
16 often ill-equipped to meet these needs in a timely
17 fashion. There are long wait lists, and there's also
18 frankly a lot of times a lack of expertise to deal
19 with some of these issues, and while a number of
20 clinics may have open access, it's often a long time
21 before you could actually see a child mental health
22 specialist or psychiatrist or someone that could
23 actually make a recommendation in terms of safety
24 clearance or things that schools need. So, as a
25

1
2 result, emergency rooms continue to function as the
3 defacto for behavioral health crisis, and this is
4 evident by continually rising rates of emergency
5 mental health referrals. Unfortunately, ER is a
6 really very poor location to get this type of help.
7 If we're talking about patterns of stigmatization
8 that continues in the emergency room where a lot of
9 times the extent of the evaluation purely focuses on,
10 you know, are you suicidal at this moment, are you
11 homicidal at this moment, and if not, you're sent
12 home. You don't necessarily get an appointment. You
13 don't get follow-up. You're sent back to your school
14 who sent you there in the first place trying to get
15 help to deal with this issue. Often times they're
16 not even able to talk to school staff and they're
17 sent right back. Also, stigmatizing for the student,
18 stigmatizing for their families, and if this
19 sometimes-- often times the first time a family is
20 coming in contact with the mental health system, this
21 type of encounter is pretty likely to turn them off
22 and not want to come back. So, entering into the
23 space that we developed in urgent evaluation model,
24 we first piloted this in Mamdi's [sic] Hospital in
25 Brooklyn, really just opening up access the same day.

1
2 In the clinic the students could be referred. They
3 could be seen, get an evaluation, but really the key
4 link is making sure that the school staff and the
5 mental health staff talk. They talk that day.
6 They're able to talk afterwards. They're able to
7 make sure that there's linkages and there's
8 consistent follow-up. Similar models we're currently
9 piloting in Queens in the Northwell Health System,
10 but again, just this idea of creating a consistent
11 linkage so that kids have the right level of care in
12 the right place when they need it. Sometimes they
13 may need the emergency room. Very often they don't.
14 They certainly also don't need 911 calls, but really
15 having an accessible system that could be responsive
16 to their needs. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, and it
18 reminds me of my own situation. You know, I'm 26
19 years clean and sober, and I had a difficult time
20 getting sober because I was being referred to therapy
21 groups actually that were not culturally sensitive to
22 me being an openly gay male. And I had to sit there
23 with people who are openly hostile about me being
24 gay, and that's not how you get help. When you're
25 dealing with mental health -type issues. So, you

1
2 know, I just think one of the-- we are working on
3 which HHC on data collection stuff as well, because
4 you know, all of the statistics even that have been
5 mentioned here today from the Center or from GLSEN
6 are basically based on an estimate of what we think
7 the LGBT population is because we don't really have
8 hard data or demographic information about the
9 community as well, and so that's some of the things
10 that I'm hearing and I got from the panel as well.
11 Of course, Doctor, you've been working on that with
12 Queering for a long time as well. We've been on
13 panels together. Well, let me just go to Mustafa
14 also, because one of the issues that I've heard and
15 that I haven't addressed fully in this hearing is the
16 issue of gang violence at that school. You seem to be
17 more on the ground there. Can you tell me a little
18 bit more about what's going on about students? I'm
19 hearing reports that some students don't want to
20 testify because they're afraid of what that might
21 mean if they were to testify in court?

22 MUSTAFA SULLIVAN: Well, I think it has
23 to do with defining bullying as like-- I think a lot
24 of people think bullying is one set of people, and
25 it's much larger than that, right? It's a culture of

1
2 people not accepting an LGBTQ person. It's a culture
3 of people, right? In terms of gang violence, I
4 think the real issue actually is that no one as
5 actually mediated when this incident happened, right?
6 So, what may have been, you know, like oh, some
7 students may have seen a fight, or whatever. If this
8 was a fight, everyone goes off to their corner. Now,
9 because there's been a death and there's been no
10 conversation and there's metal detectors coming in,
11 it's put all of the students at odds with each other
12 and created more violence amongst all the students,
13 not necessarily that a gang is mediating or pushing
14 any particular thing. It's like, "well, I'm friends
15 with Matthew and my friend died, so I don't care what
16 your friend said." You know, my friend Matthew
17 likes-- you know, for example, we don't know if
18 Matthew McCree might have known someone who was LGBTQ
19 or not, but we do know that right now no one is
20 getting anybody in the school to actually have a
21 meaningful dialogue because I think part of it is the
22 principal doesn't want to admit that they knew that
23 Abel was being bullied, you know, and so what does
24 that leave? That leaves a whole bunch of young

1
2 people who are mourning and grieving fighting amongst
3 each other.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, the principal is
5 gone and hopefully they'll be able to begin to work
6 on some of that, and to be honest with you, some of
7 the feedback that we were getting was some of the
8 feedback that I was also giving to the DOE. And so
9 when I met you in front of the courthouse you were
10 with another young man who described his experiences
11 in the same school. Do you know who I'm talking
12 about?

13 MUSTAFA SULLIVAN: Yep.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can you just describe
15 for us a little bit what his experiences were like?

16 MUSTAFA SULLIVAN: I mean, the reality is
17 they've been calling it, the school, the "Bronx Zoo
18 School" for years and years and years, and so it
19 just-- it goes back to what you were saying about
20 reporting incidents of bullying. You're not going to
21 report of incident of bullying if all you know that
22 adults are going to say, "Oh, okay," and then
23 everyone's going to basically in the school know that
24 you're now a target, right? So, I think that that's
25 what, you know, I know from students who've

1
2 experienced in the school is that the minute you say
3 anything you're going to get targeted by a whole
4 bunch of other students who for whatever reason are
5 going through whatever they're going through because,
6 you know, like when we look at bullying we know that
7 a lot of times there's some type of violent incident
8 that the young person who's bullying or involved in
9 this activity is actually going through that no one
10 actually addresses. They just, as you know, just
11 suspend them. You're accused of bullying, you're
12 guilty. We're going to suspend you. we're going to
13 blame you, and we're not actually going not actually
14 going to talk about how you're going to address any
15 of the issues of diversity of anything like that.
16 So, that school has been going through a progressive
17 decline in terms of just violence amongst kids
18 fighting, and the only way you actually heal violence
19 is you actually have to like talk about love,
20 collaboration, community. All of these things could
21 be done right now with this school, but because the
22 DOE doesn't want to be implicated in the incident no
23 one's talking about it, which as you know with issues
24 of violence it only gets worse the more silence
25 that's applied.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, also I hear you
3 saying if a school doesn't respond to students who
4 report bullying and then the risks are that they're
5 going to be ostracized by other students for
6 reporting the bullying, it makes no sense at all for
7 that child to even think about reporting the
8 bullying.

9 MUSTAFA SULLIVAN: Uh-hm, yeah,
10 absolutely, because you're just going to isolate.
11 You normally--

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] You're
13 going to isolate yourself.

14 MUSTAFA SULLIVAN: They normally isolate
15 themselves.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Which makes the
17 situation worse to begin with.

18 MUSTAFA SULLIVAN: Uh-hm.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You're further
20 isolated.

21 MUSTAFA SULLIVAN: Yeah, absolutely.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright, thank you to
23 this panel. I really appreciate all of you coming in.
24 Thank you. We have three more panels. So, now we're
25 going to ask for Abigail Vidi [sp?] from YAFID [sic].

1
2 Is Abigail here? Okay. And we do appreciate YAFID's
3 support of this hearing as well. Reverend Wendy
4 Calderon Payne, okay, parent of two children. Monica
5 Bartley from CIDNY, Alyssa Vu from CACF, Mitchel Wu,
6 CACF, Dennis Yoo [sp?], and Debbie Almontaser. I
7 have to swear you all in, so I'd ask if you please
8 raise your right hand? Do you solemnly swear or
9 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing
10 but the truth and to answer Council Member questions
11 honestly? Ms. Almontaser, would you like to start?

12 DEBBIE ALMONTASER: Thanks. Good
13 afternoon, everyone. Sadomiday [sic] come peace and
14 greetings. I want to first start by saying how deeply
15 disappointed that I am that the New York City
16 Department of Education is not here to hear the
17 incredible young people that went before us sharing--

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Jared's
19 here still, so he is here.

20 DEBBIE ALMONTASER: Oh, okay. Well, I am
21 so glad that at least one is here, because it's
22 really crucial and critical that this feedback is
23 taken. I want to start by thanking Council Members
24 Dromm, Richards and Menchaca for your leadership and
25 advocacy on behalf of families in your districts and

1
2 across the City. It's really incredible that just
3 this time last year we were having this very same
4 conversation. What does that tell us as a city? We
5 have so much work to do. Why do we keep repeating
6 ourselves on the very issues that are so important
7 for us to address? The Local Law to amend the
8 Administrative Code of the City of New York in
9 relation to requiring the Department of Education to
10 list on its website the name and contact information
11 of the designated Respect for All liaisons at each
12 school is a service that will give families across
13 the city the added comfort for them and their
14 children. This contact information would help
15 students and their families report bullying
16 incidents, violence and any problems that may arise
17 with a student or another students who is a witness
18 of bullying. There has been an increase in bullying
19 and discrimination incidents these past few years to
20 Arab, Muslim and South Asian youth. Students do not
21 feel inclined to go to school a staff member because
22 they do not know who to turn to, nor do they feel
23 comfortable reporting to staff member after being
24 victimized. In addition to having the contact
25 information on school websites, we humbly offer the

1 following recommendations to add-- to address the
2 needs of families we serve, and that is Arab, Muslim,
3 and South Asian families that the Muslim Community
4 Network serves. The first recommendation is make
5 this information accessible to parents by mailing
6 letters in multi-languages for families who do not
7 have access to a computer or internet. Second, it is
8 imperative that the liaison's information is
9 advertised in every school using multi-lingual
10 posters for English language learners. The location
11 of posters should be in high-trafficked areas of the
12 school such as school building halls, cafeterias,
13 gyms, locker rooms, in front of classroom doors,
14 etcetera. These posters should also include the room
15 number, the names, and I'm not talking about one
16 liaison, but there should be multiple. What if that
17 one liaison is absent that day or is out on medical
18 leave? Who do the children have to turn to? And the
19 amount of liaisons in this school building should be
20 also known. Three, urge schools to hold quarterly
21 assemblies for students where liaisons do brief
22 presentations on bullying, harassment, and to discuss
23 the process of reporting an incident, and making
24 themselves available. This should also be done for
25

1
2 parents in the beginning of the school year at
3 Curriculum Night, as well as parent/teacher
4 conferences. And lastly, four, we urge the Mayor's
5 Office to release the funds for the 10-school CRE
6 pilot program. As we know, the City Council
7 designated money for this. Some of it has been
8 released for teacher training, but it is about time
9 that Culturally Responsive Education is given a
10 chance in 10 pilot schools, and we must make it a
11 necessity. We look forward to working with the
12 Department of Education and the New York City Council
13 to serve New York City students and their families.
14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
16 Next, please.

17 WENDY CALDERON PAYNE: Greetings,
18 Chairman Dromm. Thank you so much for having this
19 hearing. My name is Reverend Wendy Calderon Payne.
20 I'm the Executive Director over Bronx Connect, and
21 you may have heard me testify before as an advocate
22 of children caught in the juvenile justice system.
23 Well, today, I testify to you as a parent of two
24 children who were physically assaulted and bullied at
25 their school. I'm going to tell you my story and

1
2 give you some recommendations. I live in Mariner's
3 Harbor. I'm in Debbie Rose's district. I know her
4 through the district. I've lived there for 14 years.
5 I really love my community. My husband is black. I'm
6 Hispanic. I love that it's mixed race and that my
7 kids aren't called "spic" like I was in my Sheepshead
8 Bay neighborhood. Unfortunately, my two younger
9 children were horrendously harassed in their school.
10 My oldest-- my middle child was beat up by boys in
11 staircases regularly. I served on the SLT. I knew
12 everybody by name, and I could not protect that
13 child. I removed him from that school in April of
14 2016. Last year, my youngest was in second grade,
15 and I thought he would be fine-- no, I'm sorry, first
16 grade. He was in a regular class, not a special ed
17 class with one teacher. He had four children who
18 presented daily, which included picking up scissors
19 and threatening, throwing heavy objects across the
20 room. The class became so accepted of violence that
21 they would know upon the signal of the teacher to
22 file into the classroom, sit down as though there was
23 a bomb in Beirut. That's how they reacted to
24 violence. I was very upset about this. I became very
25 involved. I reached out to Debbie Rose. She was--

1
2 for the record, she was on medical leave, but was
3 very active on the phone and had her office help me.
4 Unfortunately, there was really nothing we could do.
5 The DOE, the save room is a joke, and unfortunately
6 in this situation the parent refused special ed
7 evaluation and thus could not get a para to sit with
8 him, and so the school's classes would be disrupted
9 every time he had a meltdown, and in fact, the last
10 day my kid came back from school he brought me his
11 workbooks. Out of two major workbooks, four pages
12 were filled, which means my child did no classes last
13 year because these children would disrupt. So, these
14 are my recommendations. Last year, the year before,
15 my school was approaching dangerous, and then last
16 year all the reports went down to misdemeanors.
17 Like, not misdemeanors, horseplay. I felt that
18 Administration was faking the reports. Every time I
19 asked for a copy of my report I couldn't get it. I
20 feel really strongly that this thing that they're
21 talking about, people submitting the reports
22 themselves, the principal needs to get that report on
23 a daily basis, because we realized in the SLT that
24 the majority of the incidents were happening with
25 seven kids. But if the seven kids' parents were

1
2 refusing services, my kid was not getting educated,
3 and I used to say this kid in 10 years is going to be
4 my Bronx Connect kid, but right now he's not getting
5 educated, and the 26 other kids in the classroom who
6 desperately want to get educated are also not getting
7 educated. So, we need to really force the hand. The
8 other issue is teachers and parents are afraid of
9 expressing anything because they're afraid that the
10 next year their kid will be put in a crazy class;
11 i.e. when the last incident happened on the very last
12 day when my child had his hair pulled and he was
13 kicked and he came home with a bruise, assistant
14 principal called me up. She didn't know that I had
15 already removed him out of the school and gotten him
16 a seat in a small school, and she said, "Well, don't
17 worry, because next year we've put him in this
18 class." And I said, "Oh, so it took me calling
19 Debbie Rose and Chanc-- and coun-- Farina." Because
20 I emailed everybody, but the problem is this, the
21 majority of my parents don't know everybody, and
22 they're poor, and in reality they couldn't be here
23 waiting six hours to testify. So, something has to
24 be done, and I love Farina, I really do, but the

1
2 schools are just teeming with violence and it's not
3 working whatever they're doing. That's it.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. I mean, I
5 don't even know how to respond, except to say that
6 that was-- this is what today is about, and I know
7 that what you say to be the truth. Thank you. Yes.
8 Mr. Wu?

9 MITCHEL WU: Good afternoon. Good
10 afternoon. My name is Mitchel Wu. I am the Director
11 of Programs for Coalition for Asian-American Children
12 and Families, CACF. We would like to first thank the
13 Committee's Chair Dromm and the rest of the members
14 of the Education Committee for holding this important
15 hearing. Now, since 1986 CACF is the nation's only
16 Pan-Asian children's advocacy organization, and CACF
17 is here to support Intro. 1538, Intro. 1565, Intro.
18 1638, and Resolution 1442 which will all provide
19 information, resources, and support for all children
20 and families pertaining to LGBTQ, immigration, and
21 diversity issues that will improve school culture and
22 climate. There is a long history of our youth being
23 bullied and harassed in schools. CACF had been
24 working on addressing these issues for over 20 years.
25 We are working a coalition with many of our member

1 organizations who have faced bias-based harassment,
2 including our South Asian and Arab communities pre-
3 and post-9/11. In 2015, CACF along with our high
4 school youth program and members of our youth
5 leadership program, Asian-American Student Advocacy
6 Project, presented recommendations to the White House
7 Initiative for Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders
8 as well as organized a listening session for the
9 Asian-American/Pacific Islander Anti-Bullying
10 Taskforce. Earlier this year CACF worked with
11 community partners and the New York City Human Rights
12 Commission to help develop their survey entitled,
13 "Help Us Combat Violence and Discrimination in New
14 York City," in which a whole section was devoted and
15 dedicated to bullying in New York City public
16 schools. Now, in 2012, 50 percent of APA students
17 surveyed by the Asian-American Legal Defense and
18 Education Fund reported that 50 percent experience
19 bias-based bullying in all forms within all the
20 diverse groups within the APA student population.
21 The Coalition for Asian-American Children and
22 Families has several recommendations that would like-
23 - I'll just quickly highlight. One is implementation
24 of cultural competency trainings for school staff and
25

1 students. Ethnic studies and LGBTQ studies is
2 incorporated in that, and I heard several mentions of
3 CRE, Culturally Responsive Education, and we support
4 that as well. Having more robust guidance
5 interventions is another one. Building greater
6 infrastructure to support implementation of
7 restorative justice, and also the segregation of data
8 collection. I would want to commend City Council
9 last year for passing Intro. 251, 551, and 552 to
10 collect a different disaggregated of data for the
11 different ethnic groups, languages spoken, inclusive
12 gender markers, and also multi-race categories, but
13 we want to see that implemented as well to full
14 fruition. Fortunately, we have members of our youth
15 who have experienced these issues, ongoing issues
16 that are unable to come and testify today, but we do
17 have their testimonies which my colleagues will share
18 today for the hearing. Thank you again for this
19 time.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, and thank
22 you for mentioning the demographic data collection
23 staff. We're still having a hard time getting that
24 implemented, so we have to have that done, because
25 that's where it all starts. Thank you.

1
2 DENIS YU: Hi, everyone. My name is Denis
3 Yu. I'm a program associate at the Coalition for
4 Asian-American Children and Families. I'm here to
5 testify on behalf of one of our youth leaders, Lui
6 Yao O [sp?], and we want to thank the Chairman for
7 giving us this opportunity to testify. "Hello,
8 everyone. My name is Lui Yao O. I was born in
9 China, and I came to America one year ago. I am a
10 sophomore in the High School of Language and
11 Innovation in the Bronx. I am also a youth leader of
12 Asian-American Student Advocacy Project under the
13 Coalition for Asian-American Children and Families.
14 Thank you for holding this hearing so that I have
15 this precious opportunity to share my testimony. As
16 an Asian-American and one of three Chinese in the
17 school I was constantly bullied by students. They
18 said Chinese is a silly language. They even said
19 something that is not true to make fun of me. They
20 asked me, 'Do Chinese really eat dogs?' I said no,
21 but they kept asking, and it's really annoying. When
22 bullying happened to me I didn't tell teachers
23 immediately. At first, I thought as long as I
24 ignored them they would stop, but it was still
25 happening. Once during class my classmate had a

1
2 conflict with me. He said my family and I are
3 monkeys. That was disrespectful to me. He hurt me a
4 lot. Every time these things happens I will endure
5 them at first, but when I couldn't take it anymore I
6 would tell my counselor or teachers. They helped me
7 and the bullying didn't happen again, but I lost a
8 lot of friends, and I want to have friends at school.
9 I don't want to be alone, but I don't want to be
10 bullied anymore. Teachers, counselors and school
11 staff should take preventative measures to address
12 this ongoing issue before students become isolated
13 from their peers and friends. I think the reason why
14 I was bullied by my classmates is because they don't
15 respect our Asian-American cultures and histories.
16 They thought we are different ethnicities. We have
17 different skin colors, and our first languages are
18 different, but we are equal in this world and
19 society. No one is superior to others. I believe in
20 school when we study new curriculum teachers should
21 use more cultural and inclusive lessons to teach.
22 United States is a diverse country. It's essential
23 for everyone to know about our communities. We need
24 harmony. So, I call everyone to learn more about our
25 cultures, which will result in less bullying, racism,

1
2 sexism, and homophobia. Every child and every
3 student deserves a good environment to study.
4 Everyone deserves a wonderful childhood and a
5 beautiful school life. Thank you again for holding
6 this hearing."

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do you know Fred
8 Koramatsu [sp?]?

9 DENIS YU: Yes, we do.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright, well, we
11 passed that. We didn't pass-- did we pass it?
12 We're voting on it. No, oh, that's right, that's my
13 other committee, but we're going to work on that,
14 too, yeah, so that that's reflected in the curriculum
15 also.

16 DENIS YU: She testified actually last
17 week.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm sorry?

19 DENIS YU: At the hearing. Lui Yao [sp?]
20 testified at the Fred Koramatsu hearing as well.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, okay, so you were
22 here, okay. That's okay, good.

23 UNIDENTIFIED: [off miscellaneous]

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm sorry? I know.
25 This is the third hearing this committee has held in

1
2 this month, and I want to commend my staff for that
3 as well because that's a lot of work. So, and you
4 have another big one coming up at the end of the
5 month and then December as well. So, go ahead. I'm
6 sorry.

7 ALYSSA VU: No, that's okay. Good
8 afternoon. My name is Alyssa Vu. I am also a
9 Programs Associate at CACF. I will be sharing this
10 testimony on behalf of Susanna Liang [sp?] who is a
11 junior at Stuyvesant High School. I also apologize.
12 I'm feeling a little under the weather, so if my
13 voice cracks up in the middle, it's not her, it's me.
14 Okay. "Good afternoon. My name is Susana Liang. I
15 am a junior at Stuyvesant High School, and I am a
16 member of the Asian-American Student Advocacy
17 Project, ASAP. I would like to thank the committee
18 for holding this hearing on bullying. Throughout the
19 school years, I never felt like I belonged with the
20 rest of my classmates, because I was always treated
21 as a foreigner. I was born and raised in America,
22 but I look so different so I was treated differently.
23 Ever since elementary school I realized that people
24 of the same race stuck together. Since I am Asian-
25 American, I was naturally a part of the Asian group.

1
2 even though I tried to join the popular white people
3 group and tried to get along with them, they were
4 always weary of me and intentionally left me out of
5 the group, not because I wasn't cool enough, like
6 they always passed it off as, but because I didn't
7 belong there, because I didn't fit their criteria for
8 being part of the group, and because I wasn't white.
9 I was excluded from their conversations, and I felt
10 invisible. It made me really embarrassed to be the
11 third wheel in the group, and for the first time made
12 me really aware of social bullying. It hurt to
13 understand since I was very little that I was an
14 outsider to my friends, but I couldn't tell this to
15 my teacher. I didn't feel a strong connection to her
16 and thought that she would consider me as a foreigner
17 as well since she was also white. I doubted she
18 would help me even if she knew I was being bullied.
19 I believe that enforcing the mandate for teachers to
20 report bullying when they see it or hear it is
21 important. This would alleviate the fear and
22 insecurities that teachers would ignore all forms of
23 bullying of any group since they required to report
24 any of the bullying in school. I also believed that
25 teachers and students should be educated to know what

1
2 bullying is when they see it or experience it and
3 when to report it. Teachers and school staff should
4 also be educated on the culture and experiences of
5 the students that they are working with, whether it
6 is with immigrants, communities of color, or LGBTQ
7 youth and families. I wish I had a teacher who I
8 trusted enough to overcome my fears to tell her about
9 my personal problems. It would have given me the
10 confidence to believe that I deserved better
11 treatment in school. Thank you for allowing me and
12 my colleagues to share our ASAP members' testimony."

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you.
14 Next, please.

15 MONICA BARTLEY: Good afternoon. I'd
16 like to thank Chair Dromm and City Council members
17 for giving me this opportunity to testify. The sent-
18 - my name is Monica Bartley, and I'm the Community
19 Outreach Organizer with the Center for Independence
20 of the Disabled New York, otherwise CIDNY. CIDNY is
21 a leading advocate for New Yorkers with disabilities
22 and fights to ensure full integration, independence
23 and equal opportunity for all people with
24 disabilities. CIDNY supports Intro. Number 1538 with
25 some caveats. Requiring that the contact information

1
2 of a liaison is available is very important to ensure
3 that students and staff can report discriminatory
4 behavior, harassment, intimidation, and bullying.
5 However, CIDNY believes that the liaison be given
6 greater duties beyond collected complaints. The
7 Commissioner for the New York State Department of
8 Education has passed regulations that lay out various
9 mandates to protect and ensure the safety of students
10 under the Dignity of all Students Act. Section 100.2
11 C, Instructional Requirements, this section requires
12 that all public school students be instructed in the
13 effects of bullying and cyber bullying. It also
14 requires for all public schools and charter schools,
15 when conducting the instruction, to have an emphasis
16 on discouraging acts of harassment, bullying, and
17 discrimination. CIDNY believes that the liaison
18 should have oversight and train students on said
19 instructions. Section 100.2, paragraph two,
20 subdivision 61, this paragraph further states that
21 there be procedures by which violators are reported,
22 determined, discipline measures imposed, and
23 discipline measures carried out. CIDNY believes that
24 liaison be part of the team that creates such
25 procedures so that-- so as to be better able to

1
2 educate staff. Section 100.21 and 119.6, Code of
3 Conduct, the liaison should be a key participant in
4 educating staff in both public and charter schools
5 about the code of conduct. Section 100.2, KK [sic]
6 Reporting, this entire section is important. CIDNY
7 would like to bring special attention for the second
8 bullet of the regulation that states the principal,
9 superintendent, or principals or superintendent's
10 designee shall lead or supervise a thorough
11 investigation of all reports of harassment, bullying
12 and/or discrimination, and ensure that such
13 investigation is completed promptly after receipt of
14 any written report. CIDNY believes that the liaison
15 should be the designee or play a key role in the
16 investigation of reports of harassment, bullying,
17 and/or discrimination. In closing, although CIDNY
18 supports Intro. Number 1538, we believe that the
19 liaison serving only as a conduit of gathering
20 information is insufficient. It is too narrowly
21 tailored. The liaison needs to be fully immersed in
22 the development of procedures, implementation, and
23 investigation of harassment, bullying, and/or
24 discrimination.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you very
3 much. I think some of the responsibilities you talk
4 about may already be included, but we're going to go
5 back and look at that. Some good suggestions there
6 as well, and stuff that we're very interested in.
7 And I just want to say thank you to all of you for
8 waiting so long, and deeply appreciate you coming in
9 today and providing us with testimony. Thank you.

10 MONICA BARTLEY: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, and I think
12 this is our last panel: Miraya Solis [sp?] from Make
13 the Road, Grant Cowles, Committee for Children, Diana
14 Feldman from ENACT, Rishi Sing [sp?] from DRUM.
15 Charlotte Pope, is she here? Okay. Children's
16 Defense Fund. Venecia Little [sp?]? Is Nisha Doss
17 [sp?] here? Nisha Doss? Okay. And Amanda Melpolar
18 [sp?], is she here? Amanda? Okay. Okay, could I
19 ask you all to raise your right hand? Do you
20 solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole
21 truth and nothing but the truth and to answer Council
22 Member questions honestly? Very good. Would you
23 like to start?

24 GRANT COWLES: Good afternoon. My name
25 is Grant Cowles and I'm a Senior Policy and Advocacy

1 Associate for Youth Justice at Citizens' Committee
2 for Children. CCC is a 74-year-old, independent,
3 multi-issue, child advocacy organization dedicated to
4 ensuring every New York child is healthy, housed,
5 educated, and safe. Thank you for holding today's
6 hearing. Every New York City students deserves an
7 educational environment where they can focus on their
8 work and experience positive relationships, and as we
9 recently saw, failure to address bullying can lead to
10 tragedy for all the youth involved. While it is
11 essential that schools be free from bullying, it is
12 important to remember that harsh, punitive responses
13 to all misbehavior, including bullying, leads to less
14 safe environments and inflicts more total harm than
15 good. CCC commends Administration and the Council
16 for all the efforts that have been undertaken to
17 address bullying and create a positive school climate
18 in New York City public schools. CCC recognizes that
19 addressing bullying is a challenge, but that is
20 nonetheless imperative. Our written testimony
21 provides a fuller explanation of commentary and
22 recommendations, but for the sake of time I'll very
23 briefly list our three priority emphases and also our
24 five recommendations. First emphases, that support
25

1 for bullied students is vital and necessary, and that
2 every student being bullied supports the full and
3 adequate protection from New York City schools. Our
4 second emphases, that efforts to prevent bullying,
5 harassment, discrimination must not be overly
6 punitive. All students, even students who perpetuate
7 bullying need to be supported in school. No school
8 can punish its way out of bullying or harassment, and
9 most importantly, the research demonstrates that
10 overly punitive and zero tolerance policies are
11 ineffective at stopping misbehavior and bullying, and
12 instead cause more harm. And finally, the
13 utilization of a multipronged approach that applies
14 restorative and preventative practices. Single
15 tactic strategies are less effective than policies
16 that address the entire environment and influences of
17 students. So, with that being said, we have five
18 concrete recommendations that we will provide right
19 now. First, ensure all students receive and
20 understand the Code of Conduct, including the
21 Discipline Code and the Students' Bill of Rights.
22 Second, pass City Council legislation aimed at
23 strengthening accountability information and supports
24 to prevent bullying, harassment and discrimination,
25

1
2 and better support students. CCC supports all the
3 Intros and Resolutions that were introduced, that
4 were provided today. Third, better track incidents
5 of bullying, and that includes the accuracy of
6 bullying data. Fourth, baseline and increase funding
7 for restorative practices. CCC thanks the City
8 Council for its leadership in seeding that money.
9 And fifth, continue implementing the Mayor's
10 Leadership Team on school climate and discipline
11 recommendations. In conclusion, CCC is grateful that
12 the City Council for its commitment to addressing
13 school climate and reducing bullying in New York
14 Schools, and we look forward to working with you to
15 support our schools and create safer, more supportive
16 learning environments in the future.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And you're supporting
18 the meals legislation, also.

19 GRANT COWLES: Yes, we are.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

21 GRANT COWLES: And I know that wasn't
22 brought up, but it's in our testimony.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Alright, good.
24 Thank you. Next, please.

1
2 MARILYN MENDOZA: Hi, my name is Marilyn
3 Mendoza and I'm from Make the Road New York, and I'll
4 be translating for Miraya [sp?].

5 MIRAYA SOLIS: Buenos tardes. [speaking
6 Spanish]

7 MARILYN MENDOZA: [translating] Hi, good
8 afternoon. My name is Miraya Solis, and I'm a member
9 of Make the Road New York. I am the parent of a
10 four-year-old. When I send my child to school I want
11 him to learn in a safe space, especially because of
12 what is going on currently. I don't want my child to
13 be bullied because of his skin color or told to go
14 back to their country. I want my child to feel like
15 they belong and are a part of the community. My
16 child should and all children in school should have a
17 supportive network of teachers, counselors, and
18 adults they can trust. A police officer won't offer
19 emotional support to a child that needs to be heard
20 and guided. I ask today that funds be redirected
21 toward systems that help social, emotional, and
22 mental needs of children, not towards policing and
23 punitive practices. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
25 Next, please.

1
2 DIANA FELDMAN: Hello, I'm Diana Feldman.
3 I'm the Founder of ENACT. I want to thank Council
4 Member Dromm for the amazing dedication that you've
5 had to these issues of bullying in the schools.
6 ENACT is a pioneer in trauma-informed work using both
7 the creative arts therapies and counseling to help
8 students overcome obstacles in public schools. We've
9 worked with over 200,000 youth over the past 30
10 years. The day of the horrible incident at the Urban
11 Assembly, ENACT got a telephone call because we were
12 supposed to be there that day. We have partnered
13 with the Urban Assembly School, and of course, you
14 know, the meeting was cancelled, and I had been on
15 the phone with the person that had been running the
16 program, and the whole school was in obviously chaos.
17 It reminded me when ENACT was-- ENACT is now called
18 in on the frontlines many times, working in the Green
19 School where you may have heard there was an incident
20 in the park where there was a school stabbing, and 30
21 kids witnessed this and did nothing. Why was ENACT
22 called in? Because the students did not want to
23 speak to traditional counselors. They were frozen.
24 Nobody knew what to do. There was a shut down in the
25 school, and I wondered what we were going to do.

1 Well, what we found out I thought was interesting and
2 worth sharing. We found out that-- we worked in that
3 school for eight weeks and with a group of students
4 who had been affected by this trauma. What we found
5 out was that there was gang violence in the
6 neighborhood, that the reason students were not
7 acting as upstanders [sic] was because they were
8 afraid they were going to be told they were snitches.
9 They were scared for their lives. They were hiding
10 behind trees and bushes. So, it was also a zero
11 tolerance school. So, no, the incident didn't take
12 place in the school, but it took place in the park.
13 Based on what we've learned and more and more of
14 being called in on the frontlines of teaching and
15 working with students, trauma is going unrecognized.
16 What looks like bad behavior is unrecognized trauma
17 that paralyzes students from even coming to school.
18 So, while I completely vote for the 1530 passage,
19 1538 passage, I think more needs to be done. Number
20 one, I think this person, this reporter needs to be
21 trained in trauma-informed work, needs to be able to
22 spot what's not being recognized. I think that this
23 liaison needs to also be working with peers and
24 running special groups, and I think this liaison
25

1 needs to not just be one liaison, but I think we need
2 them outside of the school. I think we need them on
3 the streets. I think we need them on the parks. I
4 think that it's a step, but there needs to be a lot
5 more done. I thank you for beginning the step.

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7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, also.

8 Next, please.

9 CHARLOTTE POPE: My name is Charlotte
10 Pope. I'm the Youth Justice Policy Associate with the
11 Children's Defense Fund New York. In our work
12 advocating for school climate and safety reforms, we
13 recognize that hostile school environments in
14 combination with differential school discipline and a
15 lack of support create additional pathways towards
16 pushing LGBTQ and gender non-conforming youth, in
17 particular, out of school. We support Intro. 1538
18 requiring the reporting of Respect for All liaisons
19 on the DOE website, and we believe this legislation
20 can strengthen the impact of Resolution 1442 and
21 expand the availability of GSAs in schools by better
22 sharing the names of supportive school staff.
23 National research shows that LGBTQ youth of color
24 face persistent and frequent harassment and bias-
25 based bullying from peers and school staff as well as

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2 increased surveillance and policing, relatively
3 greater incidents of harsh school discipline and
4 consistent blame for their own experiences. The full
5 scope of punishment cannot be captured through
6 suspension numbers alone, as forms of discipline that
7 might be less obvious still have lasting effects such
8 as being silenced or discouraged from meaningfully
9 participating in class or being regularly sent out of
10 class for self-expression. Through our work with
11 student organizers and the Dignity in Schools
12 Campaign, we have heard patterns where LGBTQ students
13 were prevented from wearing clothing deemed
14 inappropriate based on their perceived gender,
15 prevented from choosing to discuss or write about
16 LGBTQ topics in class assignments, harassed when
17 using the bathroom, and denied the use of their
18 actual names or pronouns. These stories are all
19 supported by GLSEN's national level findings. While
20 the Discipline Code includes anti-bullying policies
21 intended to prevent bullying by sanctioning people
22 said to engage in bullying, these policies may
23 carelessly lead to the sanctioning of students who
24 defend themselves against ongoing harassment. In
25 this way, anti-bullying policies end up punishing the

1
2 very students they aim to protect. Policies that
3 mandate or encourage direct police or criminal
4 justice action like the use of Criminal Court
5 summonses for instances of disorderly conduct
6 directly push students out of school and offer no
7 real solutions. What we have been advocating for
8 graduated approaches to discipline and the use of
9 guidance interventions as a first response, often the
10 mere presence of police in school leads to the
11 escalation of conflict and referrals to the justice
12 system. Restorative models, instead, seek to repair
13 the damage done to the person or people most directly
14 experiencing harm as well as the school or classroom
15 community through accountability and reparative
16 action. Restorative practices and school social
17 workers and counselors can best uncover the root of
18 whatever is contributing to harm and conflict in
19 school, and we encourage a strategic, real and
20 ongoing investment in these alternative supports.
21 However, just receiving a training does not make a
22 school a restorative justice school, and we are
23 asking for strong and sustainable programs going
24 forward. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

Next, please.

VENECIA LITTLE: Good afternoon. My name is Venecia Little [sic] and I'm a current high school student at Brooklyn Theater Arts in South Shore Campus and an Advocacy Intern with the Children's Defense Fund New York. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My comments will focus on a different kind of bullying and restorative ways to improve school's climate. As a high school student and an advocate for restorative practices, I know that seeing school safety in the morning as soon as you walk into a school building can change the mood of students or create a climate where students feel watched, already guilty for something. It creates room for discomfort where students feel uneasy, anxious or embarrassed for no reason. If a student feels like this, they are bound to leave school and not return the next day. More than once I have seen my peers come to school and notice a police officer standing with a school agent by the side of scanning and decide to leave because of the fear of being arrested or harassed. School should be a place where students feel safe and comfortable and ready to

1
2 learn, not scared of police officers and school
3 safety. As a current student, I once found myself
4 about to run back out of school because I had a
5 little container of mace with me that I carry to feel
6 safe on my way to and from school. When it was found
7 by school safety I was threatened by a school safety
8 agent and told that the police will be called and
9 I'll be suspended. My Dean came over and asked me
10 why I brought it to school and was able to help me
11 out of the situation without police contact or
12 suspension. My Dean was very supportive and I was
13 able to talk to him about why I carry mace to feel
14 safe. I know that not every student has that kind of
15 support in school or even someone who is willing to
16 listen to them. I was allowed the opportunity to
17 build the relationship and feel safer in my school
18 environment knowing that I have someone who cares
19 about my education. I understand the reality that
20 some students also have difficulties with bullying,
21 harassment, and discrimination in schools. With more
22 attention paid to funding restorative practices,
23 guidance counselors and social workers and supporting
24 family and community meetings about bullying
25 situations and focus less on police officers, we have

1
2 the opportunity to make all students feel safe and
3 thrive. If we invest in opportunities to sit down
4 with people impacted by bullying, we can express and
5 resolve our issues without pushing our students out
6 of schools. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
8 And let me ask you, do you have metal detectors in
9 your school?

10 VENECIA LITTLE: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And what does that
12 feel like when you have to go in every day?

13 VENECIA LITTLE: It feels annoying.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Lonely?

15 VENECIA LITTLE: Yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And anything else
17 about that?

18 VENECIA LITTLE: It makes me feel
19 uncomfortable, like I have something that I'm not
20 supposed to.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So you don't like the
22 metal detectors, obviously?

23 VENECIA LITTLE: No.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You believe more in
25 the restorative practices?

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VENECIA LITTLE: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do you have a restorative justice program in your school?

VENECIA LITTLE: No.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: No?

VENECIA LITTLE: No.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, there's no circles that teachers work in and say, "What are the issues that are bothering you?" or anything like that?

VENECIA LITTLE: No.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Nothing like that. So how is an issue if you-- somebody's bullied or if your friend is bothered by another student, do you know who to turn to in your school?

VENECIA LITTLE: No.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You don't know the Respect for All Coordinator?

VENECIA LITTLE: No.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Did you ever see a sign in your school that said "LGBT" on it?

VENECIA LITTLE: No.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Never?

VENECIA LITTLE: No.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Did you ever see the
3 Respect for All poster?

4 VENECIA LITTLE: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, that you've
6 seen. At the bottom of the Respect for All there's a
7 place for the name of the person who's the
8 coordinator. That's supposed to be filled in in
9 every school, by the way. But it's interesting. So,
10 hopefully Jared Fox will get your school some LGBT
11 posters and get them up and around. He's right
12 behind you there and I'm going to ask him to make
13 sure that your school gets those posters so that we
14 can help prevent the bullying there. And I'm going
15 to use a little Spanish practice. [speaking Spanish]

16 MIRAYA SOLIS: No. [speaking Spanish]

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [speaking Spanish]
18 Por favor.

19 MIRAYA SOLIS: [speaking Spanish]

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [speaking Spanish]

21 MIRAYA SOLIS: Si.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [speaking Spanish]

23 MIRAYA SOLIS: [speaking Spanish]

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [speaking Spanish]

25 Okay.

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MIRAYA SOLIS: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [speaking Spanish]

MIRAYA SOLIS: [speaking Spanish]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [speaking Spanish]

MIRAYA SOLIS: [speaking Spanish]

MARILYN MENDOZA: So, Miraya was saying that she doesn't agree with metal detectors. She believes that children are not criminals, and she had an experience of bullying a year ago where her son was being bullied by some classmates, and he's on the spectrum, so he's in a special class with eight other students, and when she reported the incident to the teacher and to the principal, she was told that because it was such a small class that they didn't believe bullying was occurring within that classroom.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [speaking Spanish]

MIRAYA SOLIS: [speaking Spanish]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I asked if she-- I asked her if she knew if there was a Respect for All Coordinator in the school.

MARILYN MENDOZA: Miraya said that she does not know if there's a coordinator, but that she did speak to someone and they only offered to translate for her, and they also said that they

1
2 didn't believe there was any issues of bullying in
3 the classroom.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. So we hear this
5 story. [speaking Spanish] So I hear this story a
6 lot when I was a teacher, too, that this is the case
7 over and over again, that parents get told that this
8 isn't really a case of bullying. So, I want to thank
9 you. [speaking Spanish] Is there something else you
10 want to say?

11 MIRAYA SOLIS: [speaking Spanish]

12 MARILYN MENDOZA: This past weekend we
13 were at a CEJ retreat, which is Coalition for
14 Educational Justice, and my child brought back
15 another report of bullying, and it was with the same
16 students from the previous year.

17 MIRAYA SOLIS: [speaking Spanish]

18 MARILYN MENDOZA: So, since I had left my
19 child during the weekend, when I came back my child
20 asked that I go to the store and buy him specific
21 shoes from specific brand and in a specific color,
22 and then on a Tuesday we went to a trip, and I
23 noticed the child who bullies my child was wearing
24 the same shoes that my child had requested.

25 MIRAYA SOLIS: [speaking Spanish]

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [speaking Spanish] Go
3 ahead. You want to translate?

4 MARILYN MENDOZA: So, when what I heard
5 was my child tells the other child, "Look, you can't
6 bother me anymore because we're wearing the same
7 shoes." And that bothered me a lot.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, you know,
9 actually I had a ENACT come into a school a few years
10 ago to deal with the bullying around clothing,
11 because that's a very big issue. [speaking Spanish]

12 DIANA FELDMAN: Very common.

13 MIRAYA SOLIS: [speaking Spanish]

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Her son is being
15 bullied for the weight as well. That's an issue
16 there also. Okay, thank you. [speaking Spanish].
17 Thank you very much for coming everybody. We really
18 appreciate all the testimony that you've provided.
19 Thank you.

20 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, so I think
22 that's it. Is there anybody else who wanted to
23 testify? Seeing none, hearing none. Thank you very
24 much. This meeting is adjourned at 4:20 in the
25 afternoon. [gavel]

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date November 30, 2017