

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY
WITH THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND
COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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May 15, 2024
Start: 9:44 a.m.
Recess: 8:45 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Justin Brannan,
Chairperson for the Committee on
Finance

Rita Joseph,
Chairperson for the Committee on
Education

Eric Dinowitz,
Chairperson for the Committee on
Higher Education

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Speaker Adrienne Adams
Alexa Avilés
Erik D. Bottcher
Gale A. Brewer
Oswald Feliz
Christopher Marte

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

David Banks
NYC PS

Dan Weisberg
NYC PS

Emma Vadehra
NYC PS

Seritta Scott

Kara Ahmed
NYC PS

Kenita Lloyd
NYC PS

Trevonda Kelly
NYC PS

Hewette Moore
NYC PS

Chris Tricarico
NYC PS

Delia Veve
NYC PS

Christina Foti
NYC PS

Mark Rampersant
NYC PS

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

Flavia Puello-Perdomo
NYC PS

Mirza Sanchez Medina
NYC PS

Danika Rux
NYC PS

Felix V Matos Rodriguez
Chancellor of the City University of New York

Hector Batista
Operating Office

Sherif Soliman
CFO CUNY

Wendy Hensel
Provost CUNY

Mike Sill
United Federation of Teachers

Shirley Aldebol
Executive Vice President of SCIU 32BJ

Ren Chavez Pena

Lexi Greenberg
Dignity in Schools New York

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

Martin Urbach

Dignity in Schools New York

Kalliope Muery

Dignity in Schools New York

Jolene Kim

Boerum Hill for International Studies

Shael Fiessel Guirand

Dignity of Schools campaign New York

Stella Snyder

Restorative Justice

Melanie Fanith

Gabriella Llogas

Liberation Diploma Plus High School

Fadi Nadaf

Liberation Diploma Plus High School

Imani Delvallo

Liberation

Adanis Favorite

Liberation Diploma Plus High School

Saed Ali Ahmed

Liberation Diploma Plus High School

Lisa De Castillo

JCCA

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

Daniella Gallardo
Liberation

Jayden Worthy
Liberation Diploma Plus High School

Donald Nesbit
Executive Vice President for Local 372

Mike Sill
United Federation of Teachers

Rosemarie Sinclair
CSA Council of School Supervisor and
Administration

Andrea Ortiz
Dignity in Schools New York

Tina Zeng
Dignity in Schools New York

Narelin Bueno
Dignity in Schools New York

Caitlin Zhou
Dignity in Schools New York

Emily Flores
Dignity in Schools New York

Ava Baranowski

Brianna Abad
Queens Borough Organizer at Treeage

Shir Soin

Franchelly Yones
student from Fannie Lou Hammer Freedom Hammer
High School

Elliot Ismail
Organizing Director of Treeage

Divad Durant

Salimatou Doumbouya
Chair of the CUNY University

Marah Birnbaum
Student at the CUNY School of Law

Miya

Gabrielle Learner
Empire State University

Alyson Bardsley

Bryan Fotino
City College of New York

Noam Gibbord

Maureen Silverman
Silverman School of Social Work

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

Dulce Olavaria
Make the Road New York

Anderson Guaman

Yorwis Romero
Freshman in a Queens High School

Alexandra Lucero
Leader with Make the Road New York

Estafania Lanchimba
Make the Road New York

Chauncey Young
New Settlement Parent Action Committee

Sandra Mitchell
New Settlement Parent Action Committee

Kulsoom Tapel
Coalition for Asian American Children and
Families

Jakoub Chen
Curtis High School

Julie Wu
Millenium High School

Kyle Lin
James Madison High School

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

Aqida Rama

Senior at Brooklyn Technical High School

Calvin Zhou

Sophomore at Brooklyn Technical High School

Arturo Enamorado

PSA CUNY

Michael Cohen

Eastern Director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center

Esther Lelievre

Co-Founders of Cultivated Community Foundation

Jessie Daniels

Nuha Hotter

Bushwick Campus

Pamela Vasquez

Make the Road New York

Nellis Tavel

Global Learning Collaborative

Sury Gitte

Generation Citizen

Xavier Alcantra

Generation Citizen

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

Martin Glaster
Generation Citizen

Christina Karahiarstelartis
Generation Citizen

Sidngma Alam
Generation Citizen

Solomon Blocker
Student

Samuel Rodriguez
Make the Road New York

Isabel Ariza
Student

Esther Nunez
Make the Road New York

Ava Harris

Rayn Jenkins
Sisters and Brothers United

Alin Frias
Future of Tomorrow

Helen Joan Brady

Catherine Jeosia (SP?)

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

Crystal Alcock
Bronx High Schools of Science and a Youth Food
Advocate

Aarmeen Khan

Umida Ibagimova

Safowana Islam

Simrin Begun

Faith Jones
Brooklyn Technical High School

Liz Aceles
Executive Director of Community Food Advocates

Randy Levine
Advocates for Children of New York

Maggie Moroff
Coordinator of the ARISE Coalition

Jackie Okin Barney

Lori Podvesker
Include NYC

Maggie Sanchez

Mark Gonzales

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

Susie Gomes
City Affairs Committee at the League of Women
Voters

Kasi Gordon
NYIC

Michah Dicker
CIANA

Natasha Quiroga
New School Center for New York Affairs

Amin Elkherly

Razan Al-Abed-Allat

Khedam Al-Asmar

Annie Minguez Garcia
Good Shepherd Services

Nakisha Francis
Emergency Coalition to Save Education

Jenny Valez
Citizens Committee for Children of New York

Paula Inargu
United Neighborhood Houses

Eric Poindexter

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

Kimberly Olsen
NYC Arts in Education Roundtable

Marlene Delgado
Kingsbridge Heights Community Center

Derwin Greene
Bronx Afterschool Program Director at the
Kingsbridge Heights Community Center

Eleanor Geagan
Kingsbridge Heights Community Center

Sean Miller

Faiza Azam

Ben Dorman

Debra Freeman

Jennifer Choi
NYC Parents of Teens with Disabilities

Abimbola Ajani

Andrea Artula

Marie Alsis
Good Shepherd Foster Care

Suba Habiv
Transit Tech Career

Tanisha Grant
PSCNY

Lupe Hernandez
Public School Parent

Debra Freeman
Four Freedoms Democratic Club

Tensen Tispell
Junior at Bard

Anwin Paul
Bard High School Early College Queens

Allison Maquire
Member of Treeage

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2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Executive Budget on Finance,
3 Education and Higher Education. At this time we ask
4 that you silence all cell phone and electronic
5 devices to minimize disruptions throughout the
6 hearing. If you have testimony you wish to submit
7 for the record, you may do so via email at
8 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again, that is
9 testimony@council.nyc.gov. At any time throughout
10 the hearing, do not approach the dais. We thank you
11 for your kind cooperation. Chairs, we are ready to
12 begin.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Sergeant. Okay,
14 good morning and welcome to Day 8 of FY25 Executive
15 Budget hearings. I'm Council Member Justin Brannan,
16 I Chair the Committee on Finance. Today's hearing
17 will begin with the Department of Education followed
18 by the City University of New York. I'm pleased to
19 be joined this morning by Council Member Rita Joseph,
20 Chair of the Committee on Education and Speaker Adams
21 is on her way. We've been joined this morning by
22 Council Members Hanks, Dinowitz, Lee, Avilés,
23 Schulman and Moya on Zoom.

24 I want to welcome Chancellor Banks and your team.
25 Thank you for joining us today to answer our

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1 questions. Just to set the table, in April, April
2 24, 2024, the Administration released the Executive
3 Financial Plan for FY24-28 with a proposed FY25
4 Budget of \$111.6 billion. DOE's Proposed FY25 Budget
5 of \$32.2 billion represents 28.9 percent of the
6 Administrations proposed FY25 budget. This is an
7 increase of \$745 million or 2.4 percent from the
8 originally budgeted \$31.5 billion in the Preliminary
9 Plan.
10

11 This increase results from several actions,
12 mostly replacement of expiring federal stimulus funds
13 for 3K operating costs and community schools.
14 Charter school leases, facilities, and tuition,
15 maintenance of funding for the arts and various
16 programs, as well as labor adjustments under the
17 Collective Bargaining Agreement.

18 As of March 2024, the DOE had 8,096 pedagogical
19 vacancies relative to their FY25 budgeted headcount.
20 In the Council's Preliminary Response – the Council's
21 response to the Preliminary Budget, we called on the
22 Mayor to add \$776.9 million to the DOE's budget
23 across a range of programs. While it's a good sign
24 to see what was added, a great deal was not. In
25 particular, the \$170 million we called to restore

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1 Early Childhood Education funding and \$45 million for
2 full day, full year seat expansion. And we didn't
3 arrive at these numbers lightly. The Council's
4 economists identified \$6.15 billion in resources
5 unaccounted for in the Mayor's Preliminary Budget
6 that can both safeguard against economic troubles
7 while making exactly these kinds of criminal
8 investments in New Yorkers quality of life.

9
10 My questions today will largely focus on overall
11 changes to DOE's Executive Budget. The impact on
12 those expiring federal COVID stimulus funds to DOE
13 programs, as well as the school food budget and I
14 want to turn to my Co-Chair for this hearing, Council
15 Member Rita Joseph for her opening statement.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Chair Brannan.
17 Good morning and welcome to the Fiscal 2025 Executive
18 Budget hearing for the Committee on Education jointly
19 with the Committee on Finance. My name is Rita
20 Joseph and I'm the Chair of the Education Committee.
21 I want to thank the Speaker as well as my Co-Chair
22 for this hearing Justin Brannan and the Finance
23 Committee for joining us for this important hearing.

24 This morning, we will be discussing the
25 Department of Education \$32.2 billion Fiscal 2025

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Budget as presented in the Executive Financial Plan.

Thank you to everyone present here and to those who

are testifying remotely. Fiscal 2025 Executive

Budget for the Department of Education is \$745

million more than the Fiscal 2025 Preliminary Budget.

This increase is partly due to a number of important

programs that are currently funded with expiring

federal stimulus funding that expires at the end of

this fiscal year.

A number of these programs are now being funded

in the Fiscal 2025 in some case beyond with city and

state dollars. Critical programs like community

schools and pre-schools, special education that face

severe service reductions without additional funding

are not funded and baselined. Other programs like

shelter-based coordinators and literacy and dyslexia

services, which were not funded passed the current

Fiscal Year were saved entirely baselined. I applaud

the Administration on these additions to the budget

and acknowledge the difficult decisions that were

necessary. To make certain that these services and

programs that schools, students and their family rely

on depend on continue.

25

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1 Unfortunately, it is not all good news. Programs
2 such as Learning to Work, Art Education, and
3 Universal 3K that were previously funded with
4 expiring federal dollars were only provided city
5 funds for one year. I'm relieved that extremely
6 important programs are funded in Fiscal 2025. But
7 the one-year funding merely kicks the can down the
8 road. Without providing baselined funding for these
9 programs, we will face the same situation of having
10 to secure funding for these programs at this time
11 next year.

12
13 In addition, there are many important programs
14 that were not restored in the Executive Plan for the
15 Fiscal 2025. Expiring federal funding for
16 restorative justice, valuable tools for students,
17 educators, was not replaced in the Executive Plan.
18 Just last year, New York City Public School stated to
19 this Committee that schools or restorative
20 programming has seen a greater decrease in high level
21 infractions and suspensions than schools without
22 restorative justice.

23 Similarly, \$65 million in expiring federal
24 dollars for roughly 400 school-based nurses has not
25 been replaced as of these nurses are not funded in

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1 Fiscal 2025. Perhaps the best example of the strides
2 made as the Administration has worked with the
3 Council on education issues is in the provision of
4 early childhood education serves.
5

6 The Executive Plan includes some good first steps
7 in providing appropriate early childhood to all
8 families that need it, yet it remains clear that we
9 still have some business to go to provide a program
10 that works for all New York families.

11 Heeding the Council's call, the Administration
12 provided additional funding for preschool special
13 education, 3K and early education outreach funding in
14 the Executive Plan. These additional fundings will
15 have undeniably positive impact on New York City
16 public schools early childhood education services for
17 the next year. However, the Administration has
18 provided scant details on how it plans to implement
19 its outreach strategy. Additionally, the
20 Administration has not restored any of the \$170
21 million that was taking as savings in November and
22 Preliminary Plans fund that would sustainably expand
23 early childhood education. There is no doubt that
24 New York City public schools are in a better place
25 for Fiscal 2025 than they were before the release of

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1 the Executive Plan. However, there are still looming
2 challenges, short term ones like providing funding
3 for the programs in budgeted positions that are
4 currently funded with expiring federal stimulus funds
5 but not allocated funding for next year and long-term
6 ones, like the impending needs for additional funding
7 to allow the city to be in compliance with the state
8 class size law.
9

10 The Committee looks forward to covering these and
11 many other issues today as we seek to continue to
12 work of improving our education system for all New
13 Yorkers. I'd like to thank my staff as well as the
14 staff of the Education Committee for the help of this
15 hearing. I would like to [00:07:53]- [00:08:03] -
16 So, now I'd like to turn to Public Advocate Jumaane
17 Williams to make his opening statement.

18 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE WILLIAMS: Thank you so
19 much Madam Chair, Mr. Chair. First of all, I have to
20 say let's go Knicks. I just got to get that out
21 there.

22 As mentioned, my name is Jumaane Williams and I'm
23 the Public Advocate for the City of New York. I want
24 to thank Chairs Joseph and Brannan and the members of
25 the Committee on Education and Finance for holding

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1 this hearing. Thank you Chancellor and team for
2 being here.
3

4 Firstly, I want to acknowledge that the federal
5 relief funding given to schools during the pandemic,
6 elementary and secondary schools emergency relief
7 will expire this summer. This funding has been
8 crucial for a number of school programs including
9 summer and after school, early childhood education,
10 restorative justice and mental and social emotional
11 health support programs. This presents a major
12 funding challenge for New York City, which makes
13 state and federal support more important than ever.
14 Particularly with thousands of migrant students
15 enrolling in our schools many of whom require special
16 support. It is everyone's not just New York City's
17 responsibility to welcome and support newest New
18 Yorkers and I hope our state and federal partners
19 understand that.

20 In January, the Administration announced that it
21 would cut \$100 million in funding for our schools in
22 the next fiscal year on top of the \$600 million cuts
23 announced in November 2023. Cuts to the school
24 budget have been irroborating lasting impacts on
25 students and communities and our most vulnerable

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1 students will feel the effects, including students
2 with disabilities whose service will be delayed.

3 Students in temporary housing who need bus routes and
4 migrant students who will have to wait in all their
5 for-school placements.
6

7 Today, I was informed that the Administration was
8 creating a new NYPD position assistance school cop
9 and the city has authorized the NYPD to hire 1,000
10 18-year-olds as future school cops, which was not
11 discussed in last week's public safety hearing. I
12 firmly believe that the funding for these assistant
13 school cops would be better spent on YECP programs
14 that will give students work experience as well as
15 the other opportunity to earn income. We can't make
16 our schools safer by fully funding restorative
17 justice and mental health programs when not creating
18 a parallel to each state in our public schools. We
19 want to make sure the city restores the funding and
20 staff of loss due to prior cuts and to the extent, we
21 continue to find funds for new programs, make sure
22 that critical programs in agencies like the
23 Department of Education are not cut at all. This
24 includes early childhood education programming's
25 well. There should not be any cuts to 3K and a

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1
2 recommitment to universal 3K. The Administrations
3 new cuts to education funding include \$50 million
4 taken from the city's Pre-K and 3K programs on top of
5 \$120 million cut announced in November 2023 for
6 universal 3K and Pre-K to be successful, the city
7 must also fulfill salary parity for the early
8 childhood education workforce.

9 In August of last year, children found that only
10 31.1 percent of New York City schools are fully
11 accessible for people with disabilities. The
12 American with Disabilities Act requires that
13 governments ensure people with disabilities have
14 equal access to public programs and services
15 including education.

16 However, many students with disabilities are
17 barred from attending their neighborhood schools
18 because of an accessible infrastructure. The city
19 must allocate \$1.25 billion for improving school
20 accessibility to bring another 150 to 200 school
21 buildings to full accessibility by 2029. God Bless
22 You.

23 At the beginning of the school year, about 20,000
24 migrant students enrolled in New York City public
25 schools, many of whom do not speak English or have

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1 limited English proficiency. ELL, English Language
2 Learners have historically been left behind in our
3 city's schools and have the highest high school
4 dropout rate of any student group. So, we must be
5 intentional on support for these students. The city
6 should invest \$11 million to expand bilingual
7 programs to improve outcomes for ELL's and \$7 million
8 should be allocated to the DOE's Office of Language
9 Access.
10

11 Lastly, one in nine students in New York City
12 experience homelessness. Students living in
13 temporary housing are significantly more likely to be
14 chronically absent from school compared to their
15 securely housed peers. Now with the arrival of
16 migrant students, even more New York City students
17 are living in shelters. Every school has school-
18 based students in temporary housing liaison but the
19 city should also invest \$9 million in shelter-based
20 coordinators to ensure that students are able to
21 travel to and from school. I look forward to working
22 with Department of Education, the Mayor's Office and
23 the City Council to ensure our city students have the
24 supports and services they need to learn and be
25 successful.

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1 I also want to say a few years ago, a lot of fire
2 storm as I mentioned that we need to move away from
3 the policing infrastructure that we've had for
4 decades. It has not kept our students safe to a more
5 just transition. That was misconstrued as the need
6 trying to fire 3,000 primary Black and Brown women,
7 SSA agents, which is something I never said and would
8 never support but I do want to point out this last
9 week in particular, it has been a pretty rough week
10 for our students across the country. We've seen an
11 increase in youth crime.
12

13 New York City unfortunately hasn't been
14 different, which says to me that the infrastructure
15 that's in there is not the only thing that can
16 provide the safety as needed. Some of them also have
17 SSA agents who many of whom are trying to do the best
18 they can with what they have but I do think the
19 programs like restorative justice, like the mental
20 health continuum, like the things that have shown
21 promise should be expanded, not shortened and we
22 shouldn't put additional police infrastructure and in
23 if we do, we should have a plan of how to immediately
24 remove it. How over reliance on decades and decades
25 is not providing the safety that we want to see and

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1
2 it's providing probably more harm. So, parents who
3 went to schools with policing infrastructure
4 shouldn't have children who went to school with
5 policing infrastructure. I think we all agree on
6 that and I'm hoping we can work on agreeing that just
7 transition and funding it effectively. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Public Advocate.
9 We've also been joined this morning by Council
10 Members Louis, Restler, Ossè, Ayala, Hanif, Brooks-
11 Powers and Carr. Before we get started, I also want
12 to take a quick moment to thank the entire Council
13 Finance Division for all their hard work behind the
14 scenes during Executive Budget season, especially
15 today Aliya Ali and Andrew Lane Lawless for today's
16 hearing, my Committee Counsel Mike Toomey and
17 everyone, all the analysts and support staff that
18 make the magic happen.

19 As a reminder, for this year's Executive Budget
20 joint hearings, we're taking public testimony on the
21 day of the agencies Executive Budget testimony. So,
22 after DOE and CUNY have testified today, we'll be
23 taking testimony from the public. If you wish to
24 speak on the DOE or the CUNY FY25 Budgets, please
25 fill out a witness slip with the Sergeant at Arms.

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1
2 And now, we're going to pause for a sec so we can
3 hear from our Speaker. If there are any students
4 that are testifying today, if you can, when you fill
5 out your witness slip just write student on it so we
6 know that you're a student. That would be helpful
7 and if people are watching on Zoom, you can testify
8 as well. Just make sure you register. [00:14:46]-
9 [00:15:08]

10 Okay, our Committee Counsel Mike Toomey is going
11 to swear in our witnesses and we can start.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning. Raise your
13 right hands please. Do you affirm to tell the truth,
14 the whole truth and nothing but the truth before this
15 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member
16 question? David Banks?

17 DAVID BANKS: I do.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Dan Weisberg?

19 DAN WEISBERG: I do.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Emma Vadehra?

21 EMMA VADEHRA: I do.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Seritta Scott?

23 SERITTA SCOTT: I do.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may begin.
25

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2 DAVID BANKS: Good morning Speaker Adams. Good
3 to see you. Chair Brannan, Chair Joseph, and members
4 of the Council Committees on Finance and Education.
5 Thank you for inviting me to testify today on the
6 Mayor's Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget. I am
7 joined by members of the leadership team.

8 But before discussion our FY25 budget, I'd like
9 to touch on last Wednesday's Congressional hearing on
10 antisemitism. This was an important moment for New
11 York City Public Schools, our students, families,
12 educators, and community leaders. That's who I was
13 there to represent to ensure that we were clear and
14 honest about the very real challenges that have faced
15 our school system, but also to ensure that there was
16 no DC politician who was going to smear our city or
17 our schools as being a hot bed of hate. I testified
18 about what we're doing to meet the moment with the
19 three priorities that we have set forth: safety,
20 engagement, and education. There will be progressive
21 discipline for students and staff who engage in
22 antisemitism, Islamophobia, transphobia, or any other
23 forms of hate, but we know that the real solution to
24 eliminating hate is to teach. To raise the
25

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1 consciousness of our young people and ensure that
2 they don't treat any group of people as the other.
3

4 And as you know, we already have a Hidden Voices
5 curricula on the AAPI and the LGBTQIA+ communities
6 and on the Global African Diaspora. Now, we're
7 excited to begin the process of creating two new
8 Hidden Voices curricula, highlighting individuals
9 from both the Muslim and Jewish communities who have
10 left an impact on our city, our country and the
11 world.

12 And based on the reactions that I received, the
13 vision I laid out before Congress resonated with
14 people in Washington and all over the country. While
15 we still have a lot of work to do, I'm proud to be
16 leading the New York City Public Schools and I look
17 forward to continuing to partner with you on this
18 important topic.

19 Now, turning to our budget. Our Fiscal Year 2025
20 Executive Budget totals approximately \$39.5 billion,
21 which includes \$32.2 billion in operating resources
22 and another \$7.3 billion for education related
23 pension and debt service funds.

24 The Mayor continues to make significant and
25 historic investments in education, which reflects

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1 this Administration's deeply held belief that
2 children are the top priority. I can't overemphasize
3 what this means to our students, educators and
4 families. Under the Mayor's leadership and with your
5 partnership, we are maintaining key programs,
6 including funding for signature initiatives under our
7 Bright Starts, Bold Futures agenda, including
8 literacy work, career pathways programs, wellness
9 resources, and critical initiatives in early
10 childhood education.
11

12 So, funding in the budget will enable us to
13 continue our transformative literary initiative NYC
14 Reads. Grounded in the science of reading, NYC Reads
15 ensures that our educators use high-quality curricula
16 based in the science of reading with robust
17 professional development and coaching on the
18 curriculum that they're using.

19 This coming school year, we will begin Phase 2 of
20 NYC Reads. This second phase will expand to all
21 remaining early childhood and K-5 classrooms and will
22 extend our work in 9th grade algebra across the city.
23 We will build on gains that we made in Phase 1 and
24 position our students for success in school, work,
25 and life.

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1 Our Pathways work. We are also committed to
2
3 ensuring that each of our students graduates, not
4 just with a diploma, but with a real plan for a
5 rewarding career and economic security, based by paid
6 career-connected learning experiences, early college
7 credit, financial literacy, and career guidance.

8 Next year, over 100 Future Ready high schools will

9 offer all these components in career pathways in

10 health care, technology, business, and education,

11 with more industry focus areas on the way. We also

12 recently announced the opening of nine new schools

13 for this fall, including Bard High School early

14 college which will open in East New York Brooklyn.

15 Offering students in Central Brookly the opportunity

16 to earn an associate's degree for free while in high

17 school without having to travel far from home. This

18 bills on the successful opening of the Bard High

19 School Early College in the Bronx, which was received

20 tremendously well by the community. We will also be

21 opening a Bronx STEAM Center in 2025.

22 Additionally, in partnership with Northwell

23 Health and Bloomberg Philanthropies, and Bloomberg by

24 the way donated \$25 million to this initiative, we're

25 creating a first of its kind health care focused high

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1 school in Queens, which will open in the fall of
2 2025. And finally, as Council Member Carr recently
3 shared, we're preparing to open a dedicated K-8
4 gifted and talented school on Staten Island in the
5 coming years. Thank you Councilman Carr.

7 Our Administration on Early Childhood, our
8 administration is committed to ensuring that our
9 youngest learners have access to a high quality,
10 early childhood education that is academically
11 rigorous and also socially engaging, preparing
12 children for success as they enter elementary school
13 and beyond. Now funded directly by tax levy dollars,
14 due to the \$92 million that was included in the
15 Executive Budget that addressed the federal stimulus
16 cliff, our budget reflects for the first time a
17 sustainable fiscal model for 3K.

18 As part of the Executive Budget, we will also
19 launch a \$5 million outreach effort to increase
20 awareness of 3K and Pre-K seats for families and help
21 them enroll in those seats. And I'd particularly
22 like to thank this Council for continuing to advocate
23 for our youngest learners and for being partners in
24 this work.

25

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We're also making investments in Pre-K special education. Investing in addition \$25 million in special education classes and funding for related services, bringing the total to nearly \$950 million.

As with districts around the country, New York City has been facing a substantial federal stimulus cliff for next year. I'm proud to say that with the Mayor's Executive Budget, many of these cliffs have been avoided. Specifically, the Executive Budget provides funding for over \$500 million in several critical programs that were reliant on disappearing federal funds, including 500 social workers and psychologists, community schools, arts programming, programming for at-risk adults and older youth. PSAL, students in temporary housing coordinators, translation and interpretation services and bilingual education.

So, thanks to a newly allocated city tax levy and state aid dollars, we can ensure access to these quality programs and supports next school year. City tax levy money is our largest source of revenue. For Fiscal Year '25 it is projected to be at 58 percent, a percentage that has increased over the past 20 years and again next year.

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1 To that end, I want to recognize the Council's
2 critical role in advocating at the city, state, and
3 federal levels on behalf of our schools. Thank you
4 so much for that. We welcome your continued advocacy
5 for additional resources.
6

7 So, in conclusion, I'd like to end with some
8 exciting news. Last week, we announced that our
9 enrollment projections for the 2024-2025 school year
10 and I'm eager to share that enrollment is trending
11 upward. A departure from the steady decline in
12 enrollment that began before 2016.

13 We should also be proud of our students and
14 educators that our math and ELA proficiency rates are
15 at or above the rest of the state and improving.
16 Though far more of our students come from families
17 from low-income backgrounds.

18 In closing the investments in the Mayors
19 Executive Budget reflect the commitment of a thriving
20 education in this administration. I'm excited to
21 continue our work together. Improving the outcomes
22 for the students of New York City public schools,
23 giving our children the rigorous education that they
24 deserve.
25

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1
2 So, I want to say thank you. I look forward to
3 answering your questions and just like the Public
4 Advocate said, let's go Knicks.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Chancellor for
6 your testimony. We've also been joined by Council
7 Member Krishnan and I'm going to turn it over to
8 Speaker Adams.

9 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you Chair Brannan. Thank
10 you Chair Joseph. Thank you Chancellor and your team
11 for being here with us this morning. So, good
12 morning to all.

13 We will examine today the Mayor's Fiscal Year
14 2025 Executive Budget for the Department of
15 Education. Education and our schools are the
16 foundations of healthy communities. Our city has a
17 responsibility to ensure we provide all students with
18 access to a high-quality education. That starts with
19 early childhood education to help our city's youngest
20 and their families succeed. The Council has been
21 consistent in calling for the administration to
22 prioritize investments and solutions that protect and
23 strengthen our early childhood education system.

24 It's how we support our city's working families
25 and set our children up for future success. It

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1 requires funding a commitment to fixing the
2 inefficiencies in the Department of Education's
3 system. We have observed open seats in some
4 neighborhoods and intense competition for seats in
5 other areas. This does not represent a system that
6 is equitably or efficiently serving children and
7 families despite the immense citywide demand that
8 exists for these services. The Administration has
9 repeatedly promised that every child who wants a seat
10 will get one. Yet the only way to achieve that is by
11 fixing our system and adequately investing in it.
12

13 We must have a plan that helps us begin to
14 realize the goal of universal access. The Executive
15 Budgets continued \$170 million cut to 3K and Pre-K
16 would eliminate thousands of seats. There also
17 remains a funding shortfall for preschool special
18 education. The Council's Preliminary Budget response
19 laid out how we can save these programs, turn the
20 system around and expand access to full year and full
21 day seats that families need.

22 For working families, access to early childhood
23 education is a deciding factor of whether they can
24 remain in New York City or must leave to raise their
25 children elsewhere. We must fulfill our duty to New

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1
2 Yorkers and ensure that they can build their legacy
3 right here in our great city. Our public-school
4 students also need support in the budget for programs
5 that help to address the historic levels of learning
6 loss and mental health challenges that arose during
7 the pandemic and that they continue to face. These
8 challenges have disproportionately impacted students
9 living in low-income communities and temporary
10 housing and those who need special education
11 services, English Language support, among others.

12 Without sustained investments to support our
13 young people, these gaps in their growth in learning
14 will only widen. Vital initiatives like community
15 schools, District 75 programs, school-based nurses,
16 restorative justice, immigrant family engagement,
17 mental health continuum and other programs have
18 helped bridge these gaps over the years. But the
19 loss of federal stimulus funds has placed our
20 students at risk of losing the support they need.
21 That's why in the Council's Preliminary Budget
22 response, we called for continued funding and a
23 restoration of these crucial programs. While some of
24 these received partial funding that needs to be
25 expanded. Others remain without any funding

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1 commitments in the Executive Budget. We must do
2 right by our children and make the necessary
3 investments to support their successful educational
4 journeys. We know that investments in education can
5 open pathways for economic mobility. Though CUNY
6 will be part of our later hearing today, it is
7 imperative that the city budget prioritize our public
8 university system that is an engine of opportunity
9 and critical to the city and states economy. In just
10 two years, we've seen what programs like CUNY
11 Reconnect can do if we simply provide the support in
12 our budget and I must give CUNY Reconnect; that's my
13 baby, a big round of applause.
14

15 The program has reenrolled more than 33,000
16 working aged students continuing to soar past
17 reenrollment targets to help New Yorkers advance.
18 The overwhelming success of CUNY Reconnect is
19 evidence of what can flourish when we choose to
20 invest in programs like this. CUNY ASAP and others
21 that support New Yorkers pursuit of higher education.

22 To ensure that students now and in the future can
23 benefit from the economic and social mobility that
24 CUNY enables, we need to protect and increase our
25 investments, not pull them back. We cannot afford to

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1 shortchange our students and our city. Chancellor,
2 we look forward to hearing from you and your team
3 today on your budget, your plans to address the
4 outstanding needs of our scholars and I thank you
5 very much once again for being here. I turn it back
6 over to Chair Brannan and Chair Joseph.
7

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Speaker Adams. I
9 want to just dive right into changes to the DOE and
10 Executive Budget overall. So, uhm, the FY24 budget
11 includes a large number of programs funded with
12 federal stimulus dollars and the biggest challenge
13 and the Council has been steady on this, that our
14 biggest challenge has not been the cost related to
15 the migrant influx but to grappling with the
16 expiration of temporary dollars that were used to
17 prop up permanent programs. In the executive plan,
18 some of the programs were baselined with state
19 funding, others were funded with one year, one shot
20 city funds. So, could you tell us what
21 considerations were made for deciding which programs
22 were baselined and which would be funded for just one
23 year?

24 EMMA VADEHRA: Yes, thanks for the question. So,
25 we are very glad that a large portion of the stimulus

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1 cliffs were addressed between the various city budget
2 cycles, including most recently over \$500 million in
3 both state and city funds that were added for a
4 number of those programs. Some were funded with
5 state funds, those ones were baselined for the
6 outyears. Some were funded with city tax levy for
7 the one year.
8

9 In terms of the specifics, it's really a question
10 for OMB but we believe those one-year funds should
11 also be baselined while we continue advocating for
12 that.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Right but how did you
14 decide which ones? How did you triage?

15 EMMA VADEHRA: Have to discuss with OMB. Those
16 weren't decisions we made but we're continuing to
17 advocate for ongoing funding for all of them.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: But did you make
19 suggestions to them for which programs should be
20 baselined and saved so to speak and what should be
21 fight for another day?

22 EMMA VADEHRA: As we've testified before, our
23 advocacy has been for all of our stimulus programs to
24 be baselined and sustained for the long term. There
25 have been some programs that were short term stimulus

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1 investments. I think back to things like PPE or
2 initial devices or facilities upgrades. Those are
3 things that have been phased out over time but in
4 terms of the direct programming for students, we've
5 been advocating for those to be baselined for the
6 long term.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, foundation aid is
9 currently being reviewed for possible changes by the
10 Rockefeller Institute. If foundation aid were to
11 decrease due to these changes or further decreases in
12 enrollment even with the good news that the
13 Chancellor just shared, would these programs be in
14 danger of being cut?

15 EMMA VADEHRA: Really glad you raised that in
16 terms of foundation aid because I hope it's something
17 that's on everyone's radar. While we're very glad
18 the state continued to fully fund foundation aid for
19 this school year, the reality is that they changed
20 how inflation is calculated, which for next year,
21 already resulted in a reduction of \$126 million in
22 state foundation aid compared to what we expected for
23 next year. We still saw an increase and our
24 enrollment so far is going up, so that's all-good
25 news but as we look ahead, how that formula is

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1 changed will have a dramatic impact on our schools.

2
3 And we are hoping to work with Albany to ensure
4 change is in a good direction for us as opposed to
5 the changes that were made this year, which were
6 negative for New York City Public Schools.

7 With that being said, these programs are
8 baselined and we expect them to be for the outyears
9 as well and that's where we see the foundation aid
10 investments that were made but our costs do continue
11 to grow each year, which is why it's important to the
12 states contribution, which is a lesser proportion of
13 our budget now than it was 20 years ago, continues to
14 increase.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, I noted in the
16 Chancellor's testimony as well that FY25 were
17 projected to be at almost 60 percent, 58 percent of
18 city money. So, do you have concerns about the
19 funding structure for DOE's budget moving forward now
20 that stimulus funds are expiring and how do you feel
21 about that balance between state and city funding
22 now?

23 EMMA VADEHRA: So, in terms of the stimulus funds
24 expiring, very glad, I mean we're seeing districts
25 across the country do things like look at school

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1 closures and layoff centrally and at the school
2 level. We're not just not looking at that, we're
3 actually maintaining programs that were created with
4 these dollars. So, compared to others facing the
5 stimulus cliff across the country feel like we are in
6 comparatively good shape while there continues to be
7 more work to do.

9 We are glad to have those city and state funds in
10 the budget. I will say to the larger question you
11 asked, I think it is concerning for us as a city and
12 to all of us, it should be concerning but when you
13 look roughly 20 years ago, the city and the state or
14 basically equal contributors to our budget 4545 with
15 the feds coming in for the rest. If you look at that
16 now, it's closer to 58 percent is on the city's books
17 going into next year and closer to 37 percent is
18 coming from the state and that's as we look towards
19 not just the stimulus cliff but of course the class
20 size law, which applies only to New York City public
21 schools. We're working on implementing that but it
22 will have additional cost to hire teachers.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, I want to turn it
24 over to Speaker Adams for her questions and then I'll
25 continue. Thank you so much.

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2 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you Chair Brannan. Today,
3 we'd like to hear about the current status of New
4 York City's Early Childhood Education System. The
5 Council is concerned about the management and
6 operation of the city's early childhood education
7 system and especially with the issues that have
8 plagued the DOE in recent years, such as providers
9 not receiving payments on time. A lack of outreach
10 to connect families to empty seats and a lack of
11 marketing to inform families that the program exists
12 leading to issues with misallocated seats. These
13 issues have destabilized the early childhood
14 education system. We have providers who have had to
15 close down due to late payments from the DOE. Some
16 neighborhoods are without seats, while in other
17 neighborhoods there were widespread vacancies because
18 families don't know the program even exists.

19 The Council can't stand by and watch as the
20 systems are derailed and progress is derailed in the
21 city. In spite of the creation of a robust early
22 childhood program, we fought hard to restore funding
23 and to get new funding added and the Council is
24 grateful for the funding that was added in the
25 budget, the Executive Budget for 3K, Preschool,

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1 Special Education and Early Childhood outreach. We
2 are your partners in this work and we have to work
3 together to help stabilize and strengthen the state
4 of early childhood education in the city.
5

6 How would the DOE characterize the stated status
7 of early childhood education in the city at this
8 time?

9 DAVID BANKS: Madam Speaker, first of all, I
10 would say, I can't over emphasize enough the state
11 the challenge, state that we assumed when we came
12 into office as it relates to early childhood and I
13 think since we have been here, we have worked very
14 hard and we have worked very closely with many of the
15 members of the Council as well to work to improve the
16 overall status of that division. Our Deputy
17 Chancellor Kara Ahmed will answer any specific
18 questions but I think since we've gotten here, we
19 have seen a marked improvement even as it relates to
20 providers who were complaining that they had not
21 gotten paid. We're not all the way there yet but we
22 have made very, very significant progress given what
23 we inherited when we got here but I would like Deputy
24 Chancellor, if you would like to lean in and have
25 anything very specific -

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Deputy Chancellor, we just
3 have to swear you in.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the
5 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
6 before this Committee and to respond honestly to
7 Council Member questions?

8 KARA AHMED: I do.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

10 KARA AHMED: Thank you. Thank you Speaker Adams
11 and I appreciate your – not just your interest but
12 your advocacy and support for Early Childhood
13 Education. I couldn't agree more it is the
14 foundation for our children to set them for success
15 for the rest of their lives. Educationally,
16 professionally and personally.

17 The Chancellor is correct when we assumed our
18 positions here in this administration. We did walk
19 into a number of outstanding challenges. One
20 includes – so I just want to go through some of the
21 challenges you named, an incredible and enormous
22 amount of back invoices that a, had never been
23 submitted or never had been paid. We worked
24 vigorously to catch up on a previously fiscal year
25 that we weren't even present for to be able to

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1 support providers so that they could become fiscally
2 stable. By December of 2022, we had thousands of
3 invoices and millions of dollars paid out to
4 providers and at the same time in parallel, we had to
5 create an infrastructure that did not exist.
6 Training and support for staff who were processing
7 invoices. Training and support for our providers so
8 that they can feel empowered to support their own
9 fiscal operations. Those things just weren't in
10 place. I am thrilled and proud to say that we are in
11 a space that providers can submit invoices and they
12 are paid in less than two weeks on average across our
13 program and across the five boroughs.

14 Just some data points here. Vendor invoice
15 submission from July to December, from last fiscal
16 year to this fiscal year, increased by 130 percent.
17 That's extraordinary. Vendor invoice payment from
18 July to December from last fiscal year to this year,
19 244 percent during that same time period. So, we're
20 seeing that we are supporting providers and getting
21 submissions in much quicker and much more timely and
22 that payments are going right out the door. That is
23 going to support our providers to serve children and
24 to serve their families. Another area that you bring
25

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1
2 up is around seats and there absolutely being a
3 misalignment. There's an excessive of seats in
4 certain areas of the city. There are not enough
5 seats in other areas of the city.

6 In less than a year and a half, our team has
7 worked incredibly hard to shift seats and to convert
8 seats for age groups that really match the needs of
9 families. Over 7,000 seats we have done this for.
10 So, we've reduced over saturation by 34,000 empty
11 seats. We're down to 23,000 empty seats. We've
12 converted a number of seats to hundreds of infant
13 toddler seats. You know children are six months
14 before they're three years old and so to be able to
15 support families and New Yorkers so that they can go
16 to work or go to school is critical. Those infant
17 toddler seats are extended day and extended year
18 seats. And I know that that's something very
19 important to you and something we feel very strongly
20 about so that we can support families who don't stop
21 working at 2:30 at the end of the day and don't stop
22 working on June 30th, right? So, all of those
23 hundreds of seats are now extended day. We've also
24 converted seats to additional 3K and Pre-K extended
25 day across our center-based program. Thousands upon

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1 thousands of seats that were converted from Pre-K to
2 3K and 3K to Pre-K to support articulations that
3 families don't need to transition because the system
4 was not set up that way, right. So, this is the work
5 and this work will continue. What that does though,
6 I just want to make a circle and a loop back to
7 provider payments. When you get seats in the right
8 place, children enroll. When children enroll,
9 vendors can submit for that enrollment so that they
10 can be paid and that's supports them as a business.
11 So, it's all connected and it's all aligned. Those
12 two things have to continue to happen in parallel.

14 SPEAKER ADAMS: I appreciate your testimony very
15 much. Just looping back, I'm going to give a shout
16 out to Mark Treyger who did an outstanding job. I
17 can personally attest for the work that he did within
18 my own district. He happened to literally save a day
19 care center that I was very, very close to because of
20 several issues that were none of their fault at all
21 and they were on the brink of closure and it was
22 excruciating to watch and to deal with that. And
23 shout out to you Mark if you're watching, outstanding
24 job.

25

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2 DAVID BANKS: We miss Treyger and if he were here
3 he would echo what the Deputy Chancellor just said.
4 Tremendous challenges that we inherited but we've
5 been working like heck to fix this and to get it
6 right and we are absolutely on the right track.

7 SPEAKER ADAMS: Glad to hear that. Let's talk
8 about some numbers. According to new Early Childhood
9 Education enrollment data received by the Council,
10 the combined vacancy rate for Pre-K, 3K and Head
11 Start was 19 percent as of February. This is still
12 high but is a marked improvement on the 30 percent
13 vacancy rate DOE was citing back at the fall. What's
14 the current vacancy rate for Pre-K, 3K and Head
15 Start?

16 KARA AHMED: So, the current vacancy rate for 3K
17 and Pre-K which is inclusive of Head Start, our
18 school day, school year seats, our extended day to
19 extended year seats is roughly 23,000.

20 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. What are the top five
21 neighborhoods or districts with the highest vacancy
22 rates currently for both 3K and Pre-K and what are
23 those rates?

24 KARA AHMED: I think it's something that we can
25 certainly get back to you. I don't know if we have

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1 those rates right now and because we're in the middle
2 of offer letters going out and children still
3 enrolling, it's influx. So, we can absolutely
4 provide that information, the top five.
5

6 SPEAKER ADAMS: Do we know the top two?

7 KARA AHMED: I don't have the top two. Do you
8 have the top two?

9 SPEAKER ADAMS: At least.

10 KARA AHMED: We don't have -

11 SPEAKER ADAMS: Not yet okay.

12 KARA AHMED: But we can certainly provide that
13 and I would say that we're at 23,000 and to your
14 point, that is a drop from 34,000 where we were in
15 June. So again, that work is paying off of where
16 those shifts are happening and a 38 percent increase
17 in infant toddler enrollment alone. That is
18 something when I heard you speak about Speaker on the
19 goals for Early Childhood and ensuring that it's for
20 all children and I'm sure we'll talk about children
21 with special needs and disabilities but infant
22 toddlers were not included in the outreach and the
23 supports and really in thinking through what the
24 early childhood system looks like in New York City,
25 and that is a huge piece of this work. So, to see a

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1
2 38 percent increase in enrollment because again,
3 providing that birth to five continuum in areas,
4 communities and zip codes is really supportive
5 families.

6 SPEAKER ADAMS: Do we know what districts are at
7 capacity?

8 KARA AHMED: We can get you a full list of and I
9 want to make sure it's updated. I know we provided
10 that to the Council I think back in February. So, we
11 can certainly get a new updated list to you as well
12 by district.

13 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. Going back to the Early
14 Childhood Education vendors, do we have a figure on
15 how many Early Childhood Education vendors currently
16 have outstanding payments owed to them?

17 KARA AHMED: There aren't outstanding payments
18 owed to any of our vendors. Vendors are submitting
19 invoices on a daily basis. They're expected to
20 submit invoices by the 5th of each month. That is an
21 ongoing process and right now, there's an average
22 review and payment time of roughly 11 days, which is
23 a dramatic, dramatic decrease from where we started
24 at the onset of this Administration.

25

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2 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, that's really good news.

3 We're aware that the DOE has taken steps to right
4 size contracts with Early Childhood providers. Can
5 you walk us through the process and what the goal
6 was?

7 KARA AHMED: Right size contracts. I'm not sure
8 specifically if we've been rightsizing contracts.
9 We've certainly been rightsizing seats. That will
10 affect our impact to providers contract. That's also
11 a restraint on right-sized seats. Providers have
12 certain contracts with certain seats, seat types,
13 ages, based on an RFP that they applied to many years
14 ago, predating this Administration and that's sets
15 their contract but it also limits what we're able to
16 do. But whatever we've been able to do within the
17 contractual terms to support them and their community
18 and support families in the immediate, we've
19 absolutely done. That would then change or shift to
20 their contract respectively.

21 SPEAKER ADAMS: Do we know if any seats were
22 moved?

23 KARA AHMED: Thousands. Over 7,000 seats were
24 moved.

25

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2 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. Were seats moved to other
3 neighborhoods?

4 KARA AHMED: Seats were moved and shifted to
5 other neighborhoods. Seats were moved and shifted to
6 other neighborhoods where there were needs. Seats
7 stayed in the same neighborhood and the same zip code
8 but were converted. In the Bronx for example, let me
9 just say, provider had empty 3K and Pre-K seats
10 repeatedly said, there's an elementary school down
11 the street and children are choosing to go there.
12 Families are choosing to go there but I know that
13 there's an infant toddler need here. We converted
14 her seats that otherwise would have just stayed
15 empty. She now has a waiting list for toddlers in
16 that neighborhood, so.

17 SPEAKER ADAMS: I think we were hearing a lot of
18 those stories as well, yeah. Were contract values
19 reduced for providers as a result of rightsizing?

20 KARA AHMED: Contract values were not reduced
21 overall and again; the shifts may change. It's not a
22 one-to-one swap. The cost per child, the cost per
23 seat all vary.

24 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. The Council was happy to
25 see \$5 billion added in the Executive Budget. \$1.5

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1 million in the current year and \$3.5 million in
2 Fiscal Year 2025 for early childhood education
3 outreach. Although it does fall short of the \$10
4 million we ask for in our preliminary budget
5 response, the Council wants to be partners in the
6 city's efforts to advertise seats and reach the
7 families that can utilize them.
8

9 We're confident that there is demand for these
10 seats as we've said and the Council wants to work
11 with the Administration to ensure that the city
12 conducts productive outreach to providers in the
13 communities that can most benefit. Please detail the
14 types of outreach and advertising, this new Early
15 Childhood Education outreach funding will cover and
16 how you plan to utilize the funds now and this summer
17 in order to maximize enrollment next year?

18 KARA AHMED: First, we want to thank you for your
19 advocacy and support and it means so much around
20 outreach. If we enroll one more family, that's one
21 more family than yesterday and that's what matters.
22 We are actually working in partnership with Council
23 Member Stevens and Chair Joseph in having discussions
24 of how best the money for this fiscal year can be
25 used and should be used and so, we look forward to

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1 that continued conversation. I think as recent or as
2 soon as this week again, we're circling back and
3 thinking about ways that we can partner with local
4 community-based organizations, leveraging city
5 resources and engagement teams, which may have no
6 monetary cost to it, which is even better so we can
7 maximize the dollars. But let me say this, in
8 addition to the money that you have advocated and
9 supported us with going into this fiscal year, ending
10 this fiscal year and going into next fiscal year, we
11 are already spending over \$1 million just in the
12 early childhood division on all sorts of marketing
13 and outreach and that's a variation of bus campaigns
14 and subway ads and a number of different things that
15 are happening out and throughout the community and
16 retail windows and digital and social media.
17

18 In addition to that, we have invested direct
19 funding to our providers in Head Start in particular
20 as part of a national enrollment initiative to
21 support our Head Start providers with what we're
22 going to call PR kits. So, that they don't need to
23 use their budget, their funding to have all the kind
24 of stuff that you'd support at a tabling event or to
25 give out to families to recruit and do outreach.

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2 It's going to equip and empower our providers so that
3 they can feel independent in that work and support
4 their own program. So, that's one piece.

5 We've also have got outreach and marketing
6 happening across New York City public schools in our
7 other division that my colleague can speak to, Deputy
8 Chancellor Lloyd because this is in addition to the
9 over \$1 million in early childhood. It will be added
10 to the \$1.5 million for this fiscal year and there's
11 more.

12 DAVID BANKS: I would also say, we welcome any
13 input and partnership with any City Council member
14 here who seeks to engage with us in this outreach
15 effort. You know your communities best and you can
16 help us in this process. So, we're just letting you
17 know that we are open. I know that Deputy Chancellor
18 works very closely, very closely with Chair Joseph
19 and as well as other members on the Council and any
20 Council Member who is looking to work with to help us
21 with this outreach, we are here for it.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: DC Lloyd, we just have to
23 swear you in.

24 KENITA LLOYD: Sure.
25

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the
3 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
4 before this Committee and to respond honestly to
5 Council Member questions?

6 KENITA LLOYD: I do.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

8 KENITA LLOYD: I'm only going to add two finer
9 points onto what Deputy Chancellor Ahmed said. As
10 part of the paid advertising we are doing, we target
11 that specifically to areas that have low engagement
12 with the Early Childhood program as well as those
13 with low enrollment. Those advertisements appear in
14 the nine languages and are specifically targeted to
15 those communities. When we are not using paid
16 advertising we always leverage and activate our
17 principle tool kits. Many of which we've shared with
18 many of you. Those are able to be used by providers
19 and are also available in the nine languages
20 distributed at our family welcome centers, community-
21 based organizations and in addition to that, we also
22 do paid digital ads that are also targeted by fifth
23 code to key communities.

24 KARA AHMED: We also do have another colleague
25 that would also want to add to that, just again to

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2 emphasize the additional outreach that's already in
3 process.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Hello, let's just swear you
5 in.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Can you say your name please?

7 TREVONDA KELLY: Trevonda Kelly.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, do you affirm to tell
9 the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
10 before this Committee and to respond honestly to
11 Council Member questions?

12 TREVONDA KELLY: I do.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

14 TREVONDA KELLY: I'll just add, excuse me, I'll
15 just add that outreach is ongoing. My office will be
16 focused on the admission process and during the
17 admissions process, we are constantly reaching out to
18 families. We reach out to nearly over 200,000
19 families through email, robo calls, text messaging,
20 reminding them of milestones. Just letting you know
21 that we need you to apply, trying to see exactly what
22 help they need from us. If they need help with my
23 schools. If they need help with the application
24 system itself. We invite them to info sessions just
25

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2 to make sure that we can address their concerns and
3 we remind them of the deadline as it approaches.

4 What we have seen is that there has been an
5 increase in the number of applicants for 3K as a
6 result of this outreach but this is ongoing work that
7 we will continue to do. We want to make sure that
8 we're continuing to figure out ways to reach out to
9 these communities and to families, so ensure that
10 they are fully aware of how to apply for 3K. Some of
11 that is working also with programs to make sure that
12 they are recruiting families and they are constantly
13 putting open house invitations and information in my
14 schools, so that families know that they can visit
15 these programs and learn more about them. And in
16 addition to that, we plan to work ongoing after the
17 application process, the families who are interested
18 in seats that are available now and that they are
19 eligible for and in my schools, we have a may have
20 seat filter where they can actually go into the
21 system and see what programs are available, what
22 seats are available and they can go directly to the
23 program to apply.

24 So, that's ongoing outreach that we have and
25 we'll continue to do and we'll continue to get better

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1 at that. We also – we want to make sure that we're
2 working with everyone to see ways that we can
3 continue to expand and make sure that other
4 communities are able to help us get the message out.
5 We had some families who reached out to us who wanted
6 to help some families learn how to use my schools and
7 so we did a train to train a model and we're
8 continuing to do that to scale as many families as we
9 possibly can to make sure that they continue to help
10 families learn the system and learn more about Pre-K
11 and 3K.
12

13 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you. Thank you very much.
14 Thank you all for that. Is the DOE utilizing onsite
15 enrollment for Early Childhood Education centers?

16 TREVONDA KELLY: Onsite enrollment well, for
17 family welcome centers in particular, families can go
18 directly to a family welcome center to apply for Pre-
19 K or 3K programs that exist and they'll learn more
20 about the programs and then we can direct them to
21 those programs that have seats. And that's also
22 where that may have seats filter has been helpful
23 internally as well.

24 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, thank you.

25

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1 KARA AHMED: If I may? I wanted to get back to
2 you. I said I would. I'm ready to get back to you.

3 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay.

4 KARA AHMED: That quickly. Highest five
5 districts right? District 26 at 91.28 percent
6 utilization, District 20, 89.89 percent. District
7 31, 89.77, District 30, 89 percent and District 24 at
8 88 percent. And then the lowest five, I'm happy to
9 give this to you as well following this hearing.
10 District 23 at 55 percent, District 16 at 66 percent,
11 District 9, 69 percent, District 1 at 70, District 19
12 at 72. With that variation we should note though
13 that in the current moment, we are probably at the
14 highest level of enrollment that we've seen across
15 the Early Childhood system. Over an 83, 82 percent
16 utilization rate across all the different grade uh
17 the different age levels, all the different seat
18 types. And again, I will emphasize 38 percent
19 increase in infant toddler enrollment from last year
20 to this year. That is huge, especially when we
21 walked into this work with thousands of empty seats
22 around infants and toddlers.
23
24
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2 SPEAKER ADAMS: Yeah, thank you for getting those
3 numbers to us. I'm sure my colleagues were very
4 interested to hear those numbers and act accordingly.

5 KARA AHMED: Yeah and we will continue to use
6 this in our conversations with Chair Joseph and
7 Council Member Stevens as we think about the outreach
8 plan to be very targeted and very intentional.

9 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, thank you. Perfect, thank
10 you very much. The Council added \$15 million at
11 adoption last year to provide 1,000 extended day and
12 year Early Childhood Education seats. Working
13 families need the flexibility of having these types
14 of options available to them. It is our goal to
15 continue to offer these seats and expand the number
16 of extended day and year seats. Can you provide an
17 update on the pilot? How many seats have been filled
18 in the current year and if you can provide the
19 breakdown by location including Council District as
20 well.

21 KARA AHMED: Absolutely and thank you again for
22 that advocacy. We've talked about this a lot. I
23 know ourselves and Chair Joseph, Council Member
24 Gutiérrez around what extended day actually means for
25 families and to be able to support working families

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1 and those that are going to school and to be able to
2 do it in a way that there are no restrictions through
3 an application process right? And so, our current
4 extended day, extended year seats are all income
5 eligible seats but they are tied to different
6 restrictions, citizenship status for one and you know
7 just an application process.
8

9 What this pilot has done is its actually been
10 able to provide an opportunity for families who we
11 are seeing that really could benefit from this
12 service the most across a number of different zip
13 codes to be able to easily accessibly access those
14 seats in a way that's really supporting them and we
15 have absolutely anecdotes from families already to
16 talk about what it's meant to them.

17 As we know the pilot to place in collaboration
18 with the City Council's feedback, the pilot it taking
19 place over 31 different programs across 11 different
20 zip codes which were deemed the areas with the
21 highest economic need index and did not already have
22 extended day, extended year seats or Head Start seats
23 available to families in those areas were eligible to
24 participate in this pilot.
25

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2 In the current moment, we have about 17 out of
3 those 31 programs that are participating and they're
4 serving roughly 440 children but we should put that
5 in perspective to think about that's about over 800
6 nearly 900 individuals because when you think about
7 it, we're serving the child and we're benefiting that
8 family member. In some cases two parents, one parent
9 that can continue to go to work. This is the
10 difference of taking on a job where they don't have
11 to pay attentional funding for an extended day, early
12 morning drop off or a late afternoon or go to school.
13 So, the impact is truly profound. So, it's going
14 really well. We have gotten so much feedback from
15 our providers who have been using this funding in
16 ways to really support families directly and just
17 free of any burdensome. So, it's just, thank you.

18 SPEAKER ADAMS: I'm sure the DOE would support
19 expanding the pilot to support even more extended
20 day, extended year seats as well. That's a given.

21 I appreciate in talking about the federal
22 stimulus cliff, I appreciate the Administration's
23 efforts to replace expiring federal stimulus funding
24 in the executive plan. \$514 million was added in the
25 Executive Plan to support an array of vitally

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1 important programs, including preschool, special
2 education, funding for operational costs for 3K,
3 community schools and shelter-based community
4 coordinators. However, funding for a number of
5 important programs for Fiscal Year 2025 is still
6 uncertain and the city has not yet fully scaled the
7 fiscal cliff. What is the total gap that remains in
8 Fiscal 2025 for programs that were funded in Fiscal
9 2024 by federal stimulus funds and that have not yet
10 been replaced and supplanted with state or city
11 funding?
12

13 EMMA VADEHRA: The total gap is a bit over \$200
14 million.

15 SPEAKER ADAMS: That's significant. Does the DOE
16 plan to add funding to cover the full amount of this
17 gap at adoption?

18 EMMA VADEHRA: So, we don't set our own budget,
19 so we look forward - we know the process is very live
20 right now and we look forward to working within the
21 budget we're given, understand those conversations
22 are very much ongoing between you all at City Hall
23 and OMB.

24 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, that's a good answer. My
25 final line of questioning has to do with uhm

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1 something that I'm very proud of as well and that's
2 the Education Equity Action Plan Initiative in Black
3 Studies Curriculum. One of the Council's priorities
4 this year was the funding of the Education Equity
5 Action Plan. The funding would help in the creation,
6 development and implementation of a Black studies
7 curriculum in New York City public schools. I
8 understand that the Columbia's Teachers College,
9 Black Education Research Center has commenced a pilot
10 curriculum and has engaged in training, outreach and
11 events and is currently revising the curriculum based
12 on the results and feedback from the pilot. Does the
13 DOE have an update for us on the pilot and the
14 response to the new proposed curriculum?
15

16 DAVID BANKS: We're joined also from Hewette
17 Moore, from our team, if they would swear her in.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning, state your name
19 please.

20 HEWETTE MOORE: Hewette Moore.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Do you affirm to
22 tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the
23 truth before this Committee and to respond honestly
24 to Council Member questions?

25 HEWETTE MOORE: I do.

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

HEWETTE MOORE: Hello, good morning everyone.

Yes, this has been such a proud moment for New York City Public Schools. We've been able to work in a great partnership with EAPC and right now, we actually just finished the Phase II pilot which ran between December 1, 2023 through March 15th. We are excited to share that in that pilot we actually had 18 participating districts, 205 teachers, and 65 approximately 100 New York City Public Students that were impacted by this work and I can give you details as to the 18 districts that were a part of this Phase II pilot.

SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, thank you. What is the timeline for the DOE to adopt the curriculum in schools once the revised curriculum is complete?

HEWETTE MOORE: Well, I'm happy to say that schools are already adopting it. They were really excited. The teachers were really excited.

SPEAKER ADAMS: I wanted everybody to hear that.

HEWETTE MOORE: Yeah but just to add to that, uhm New York City Public Schools and the EAPC members particularly teachers. We've been working together to revise the curriculum to ensure that it is

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1 structured in a way that can be available on our We
2 Teach Platform so that every single district and
3 school has access to it freely on our website. And
4 right now, we had an approximate timeline of that to
5 be completed by June 30th and so we're working on
6 that right now with EAPC members but we have a goal
7 of ensuring that that is accessible by the first day
8 of the 2024 school year.
9

10 DAVID BANKS: Madam Speaker if I could, I just
11 want to take a moment to thank you for your
12 longstanding leadership on this and I know in this
13 Council but I know personally how much this meant to
14 you. Former Councilman Daneek Miller, also your
15 colleague, former colleague South East Queens, really
16 drove this effort and got us to where we are today
17 and I think you will see over time, every student
18 across New York City will benefit by the development
19 of this curriculum, the exposure to the contributions
20 that African Americans have made, to not only the
21 city but to the nation and the world and the more
22 that we learn about the history of everyone who has
23 contributed, this is what we mean when we talk about
24 raising the consciousness of everyone. This is how
25 you get rid of the isms of all sorts by exposure and

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1 education. I want to personally thank you so much
2 for driving this and making it happen.
3

4 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you very much Chancellor.
5 You know I was really happy to celebrate in my
6 district at a District 75 school this past weekend
7 and it was amazing to me to walk through and just see
8 the materials learned and to you know read aloud to
9 the students and just to see the value of all of this
10 and it really is not you know just African American
11 history. It is the level setting for the entire
12 diaspora and showing the connection that we all have.
13 So, it is an interconnective curriculum really that
14 brings all of us together and it really does show the
15 true connection of all of us and really to me, it was
16 just such a DNA enhancing experience. And that is my
17 hope for every child in this city to have that same
18 experience while some parts of this country are
19 taking away and pulling back on educating our
20 children, and really, really being honest with them
21 about who they are and to be proud of who they are no
22 matter what continent, country they come from to show
23 that connectivity that we all share as human beings
24 is an amazing thing and we are just very proud to
25 bring that to every single student to know who they

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1 all are and the connectivity that we all share as one
2 human being.
3

4 So, thank you for letting me expand on that. I'm
5 going to turn it back over to the Chairs.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Speaker Adams.
7 We've been joined as well by Council Member Salaam,
8 Narcisse, Williams, Hudson, Steven and Gutiérrez. I
9 want to stay on Early Childhood questions. Can the
10 DOE, can you detail how the \$92 million that was
11 added in the Executive Budget to cover some of the
12 expiring COVID funding will be utilized? Because our
13 understanding is that this funding is to maintain
14 operational costs but it doesn't align directly with
15 any seats or personnel.

16 EMMA VADEHRA: It is to replace the stimulus
17 dollars that are expiring that were used - DC Ahmed
18 should jump in if it's wrong but that were used for
19 operational costs but also to provide seats across
20 the system.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, it is connected to
22 seats?

23 EMMA VADEHRA: Yes, it's supporting our existing
24 programming.
25

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay is the current federal
3 funding for this fiscal year that's expiring in June
4 \$96 million?

5 EMMA VADEHRA: So, the current federal funding
6 that's expiring is close to \$456 million but the city
7 had already put in some of those dollars prior to
8 this budget cycle. The left-over cliff that was
9 expiring this spring was \$92 million and that's what
10 was added in the budget.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: 92 okay. Okay, uhm, I want
12 to stay on the - you mentioned there was about \$200
13 million even with state funding and city funds that
14 are filling the gaps. There are still a number of
15 areas where expiring stimulus funds have not been
16 replaced in the DOE budget. So, we understand that
17 there is \$65 million in expiring federal funding for
18 400 in-school nurses. Is that correct?

19 EMMA VADEHRA: That is correct, yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And how many schools would
21 be without a full-time nurse if that funding is not
22 maintained?

23 EMMA VADEHRA: So, that funding is currently
24 funding 400 nurses and we have a nurse in every
25 building, so it could be up to 400 schools impacted.

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2 Some of our schools do have more than one nurse, so I
3 can double check the precise part.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, and can you confirm
5 that there is a \$12 million shortfall in funding for
6 restorative justice in FY25?

7 EMMA VADEHRA: I think the number we have is \$8
8 million in terms of the current funding that is
9 federal funding that is expiring for next year.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And there's a \$3.3 million
11 shortfall in the Funding for Student Success Centers?

12 EMMA VADEHRA: There is a shortfall in funding
13 for Student Success Centers. We believe it is \$3.3
14 million. We are working with our program teams to
15 sort that as they are actually also making some
16 programmatic changes they are working on, so we can
17 get back to you.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, there are 3,255
19 budgeted positions currently funded with federal
20 stimulus funding that's that includes about 2,700
21 teacher positions and 547 civilian positions. We
22 know that some of this headcount is accounted for in
23 the programs that were newly funded in the Executive
24 Plan but how many of the 3,255 positions do not have
25 funding attached to them?

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2 HEWETTE MOORE: So, we're actively working with
3 OMB to align our headcount to match the funding that
4 was actually put up in the Executive Budget.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And could you tell us how
6 many of those positions have been filled?

7 HEWETTE MOORE: How many of the total positions
8 uh we can get back to you on that.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, the school food
10 budget, \$25 million in the federal funds for school
11 food was added in the Executive Plan for FY24 only.
12 OMB has stated that this additional funding is to
13 cover recent increase in meal participation, the
14 number of students who are seeking school food. What
15 was the reason for this uptick in meal participation?

16 EMMA VADEHRA: We have delicious food. Uhm, our
17 meal participation has been up this year. To be
18 fair, our enrollment has grown this year as well and
19 we know we have a particular influx of students in
20 temporary housing but our meal participation is up
21 beyond that. We do think and hope it is in part
22 because of the investments we've been making in
23 school food. Our cafeteria enhancement experience
24 where we tend to see participation tick up. After
25 that, when we redo our cafeterias for the student

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2 experience but we are continuing to see an increase
3 this year over last.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, so here's the trick
5 question, if the chicken nuggets are so delicious
6 then why was there no funding added in FY25?

7 EMMA VADEHRA: So, as you know, we have put most
8 of those items back on the menu starting, so starting
9 in March, we started to put all those items; chicken
10 nuggets, French toast sticks, uhm back on our menu.
11 As we are - I mean, I think what I would say is we
12 are monitoring this very closely. We are very
13 invested in making sure all of these food options
14 stay on the menu for students next year. We also
15 know that for food, the city's revenue does depend on
16 meal participation and we don't know our meal
17 participation for next year. We expect if
18 participation goes up, the city will continue to see
19 increases in federal revenue and we would work with
20 OMB to make sure those are realized in our budget as
21 we go into next year but we're not there yet.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, what effected the \$60
23 million PEG of city funds in the November Plan have
24 on the DOE's school food program?

25

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2 EMMA VADEHRA: So, we had a series of rising
3 costs in our school food program over the course of
4 this year. Some of that is because of increased meal
5 participation as we discussed and took some time for
6 the federal revenue, which is lagged a bit to
7 actually catch up with that. Some of that is due to
8 increases in a third meal for Summer Rising
9 programming, which is a new item the city is taking
10 on. Some is due to increased collective bargaining
11 costs. So, we had a series of new costs and over the
12 course of ensuring we are staying within our budget
13 after the November Plan, we did need to make some
14 reductions, which hit in February but as of now
15 looking ahead, been put back on our menu.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Because I think this was
17 originally pitched as a funding swap, right? And the
18 funding swap was not supposed to have any impact on
19 school food services?

20 EMMA VADEHRA: It was a funding swap in that uhm
21 the revenue was replaced, the dollars were replaced
22 but as our cost increased and our meal participation
23 rates went up, our costs were going up.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. So, given that
25 budget for school food is about \$50 million lower in

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2 FY25 than '24, and that's partly due to the expiring
3 federal funds that you mentioned. Can DOE maintain
4 the current menu items and have enough food for all
5 students if they want it next year? Are there other
6 service or staffing or purchase changes or any
7 programmatic reductions that were going to be
8 reversed?

9 EMMA VADEHRA: So, just to be clear, we are
10 always providing enough food for all of our students
11 as well as multiple options for all of our students
12 every day right? The question is how many options
13 we're providing in some of those particular items
14 that were on the menu. Our menu changes a bit every
15 month. Our Director Chris Tricarico can walk us
16 through that in more detail. So, we don't know
17 precisely what will be on the menu this fall but yes
18 our expectation is that all those items will be back
19 on the menu and we'll continue that. And we'll work
20 with OMB over the course of the year to ensure we
21 have additional revenue as needed, as our
22 participation hopefully stays up.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, let's leave the
24 cafeteria now. Can you give us an assessment of the
25

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1 funding for DOE overall in the states enacted budget?

2 What areas did we gain, the DOE gain funding?

3
4 EMMA VADEHRA: Yeah, so as discussed the large,
5 the biggest pot of money we get from the state is
6 state foundation aid, which is used as one of our
7 major core supports for our schools. We did see an
8 increase in state foundation aid for this year. That
9 increase all in will come to roughly \$460 million.
10 As I said earlier, because I'm not going to let it
11 drop, that was still \$120 million less than we would
12 have expected had the state just left the formula
13 alone but we did see that increase in our budget from
14 the state.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And what do we - I forgot
16 the number you said for the gap. So, the DOE state
17 funding budget in the executive plan we say is about
18 \$230 million below what the city should have
19 received. Do you agree with that number?

20 EMMA VADEHRA: Some of the state funding is not
21 yet in the Executive Plan because of the timing of
22 the budget cycle. What we expect to see if the \$460
23 in total once the cycle is over. Which is, the gap I
24 mentioned that you might be talking about, is we
25 would have expected to see \$126 million over that

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1 \$460 had the state not changed how the formula works
2 for next year.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, does DOE believe that
5 enough state funding is coming to help enact the
6 class size law?

7 DAVID BANKS: No Chair, we do not yet have
8 sufficient state funding to cover all of the costs of
9 the fully phased in class size law.

10 EMMA VADEHRA: Oh, can I add one thing?

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah.

12 EMMA VADEHRA: With that being said, some of the
13 increase that we are seeing for this year, we are
14 proposing to put into implementation of the class
15 size law specifically for next year.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Right, so can any of that,
17 can any of that overall funding in the state funding
18 be used to go towards that mission?

19 EMMA VADEHRA: Yes, so would say two things. I
20 think you know first of all, most of our state
21 funding flows into school budgets. Most of the
22 school budgets go to hire teachers. Hiring teachers
23 is the core expense of the class size law of course
24 on the expense side.
25

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1 So, we'll just say to some degree, a large amount
2
3 of that state foundation aid is already going to
4 again where we are in terms of compliance with the
5 law. In terms of increases, we put our - we do an
6 annual class size plan under the law that we work on
7 with our union partners with UFT and CSA. We put out
8 our first draft of that plan last week. That
9 includes an increase of roughly \$180 million to go
10 into school budgets. \$45 million of that is
11 consistent with the states requirements around
12 contracts for excellence, which means schools can use
13 it for class size along with other things, like
14 supporting multilingual learners. The rest of that
15 money, \$135 million we are proposing go only into
16 class size. So, that is an additional investment
17 solely in class size we're proposing for next year.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, is there a calculation
19 for how much funding the city would have received in
20 foundation aid based on the enhanced state budget if
21 the state had not made revisions to the inflation
22 rate?

23 EMMA VADEHRA: We would have received roughly
24 \$126 million more.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay and going back just a
3 follow up on the school food. So, if the fed revenue
4 depends on participation, wouldn't that make it
5 uncertain and then therefore restoring city funds
6 more of a stable option?

7 EMMA VADEHRA: So, we do have city funding in our
8 budget for school food and always have but like all
9 districts we do rely a lot on federal funding for our
10 school food. We're committing to working with OMB to
11 ensure we can provide those options to students as we
12 have and continue to realize additional federal
13 revenue as it comes. That's what the federal revenue
14 is for right? To help localities feed their
15 students.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, just a couple more.
17 I want to talk about D75 transparency. At the
18 Preliminary Budget hearing, DOE testified that they
19 were working on improving D75 transparency with the
20 hope of rolling out the new transparency measures
21 soon. So, could you provide us with an update on how
22 that's going?

23 EMMA VADEHRA: Yes, you mean the budget
24 transparency measures. Yes, I can. So, based on the
25 recommendations of the Fair Student Funding Working

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1 Group, one of the things we've been looking at is
2 improving transparency across the board in terms of
3 our budget. So, there's more information on our
4 website in terms of our central budget now than there
5 used to be and then we also committed to improving
6 transparency around school budgets. We said in that
7 previous hearing, we were starting with Districts 1
8 through 32 and then moving to D75. We're planning on
9 rolling out the new form of format for D1 through 32
10 in the next couple of weeks and we can make sure you
11 all get an update after that and D75 should be soon
12 after this summer.
13

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Could you tell us how DOE
15 was able to take a PEG of \$3 million in less than
16 anticipated spending for D75 in the November Plan?

17 HEWETTE MOORE: Sure, so that's just PS accruals,
18 so basically, if a staff member isn't onboarded.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, PS okay.

20 HEWETTE MOORE: Yeah.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: That's all it was?

22 HEWETTE MOORE: Yes. Oh and then also to get
23 back to you on your headcount question, over 3,000
24 are staffed.

25 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Say it again?

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1 HEWETTE MOORE: Over 3,000 are staffed.

2
3 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, okay something that's
4 important to this Council and personally important to
5 me as well as the Speaker is arts education and
6 instruction. So, can you confirm that funding
7 included in the Executive Plan will keep arts
8 education programming at the same level in FY24 as it
9 is in FY20— sorry, in FY25 as it is in FY24?

10 EMMA VADEHRA: Yes, that funding supported both
11 the central programming as well as the new funding
12 stream for school budgets to support arts education
13 at schools and all of that was put in in the
14 Executive Budget.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: At the Preliminary Hearing,
16 DOE testified at the time, there were 307 schools
17 without a certified arts teacher. Has that number
18 changed? I'll have to make you street legal first.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: State your name please.

20 DELIA VEVE: Sure, Delia Veve.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thanks. Do you affirm to
22 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
23 truth before this Committee and to respond honestly
24 to Council Member questions?

25 DELIA VEVE: I do.

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1 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

3 DELIA VEVE: So, that number remains the same.

4 We depend on the annual arts survey to provide us
5 with the numbers for the certified art teachers that
6 are in schools, that goes out to schools next month.
7 In mid-July we'll have the numbers that are updated.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, you'll have an updated
9 number in July?

10 DELIA VEVE: Correct.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Okay final couple
12 from me. We're looking to get a better sense of the
13 status of our public teacher workforce. As this
14 information is frankly just not easily discernable
15 from the budget. So, could you tell us what the
16 current vacancy rate and total vacancies among
17 teaching positions at DOE is for general instruction
18 positions?

19 DAVID BANKS: Chair, the vacancy rate is one
20 percent. Right now and I want to give you the caveat,
21 this number change even day to day so this is the
22 recent number we have as of the last few days. We
23 have a total of 704 vacancies. That's on a base of
24 over 76,000 teaching positions.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Do you have the same
3 percentage for special ed teachers?

4 DAVID BANKS: It's a little higher. It's about
5 1.2 percent and that is about 319 vacancies.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay and are there any
7 budgeted positions that are being cut for FY25?

8 DAVID BANKS: Certainly not centrally. I mean
9 obviously schools will make decisions about teaching
10 positions but there's no centrally imposed cuts of
11 teaching positions.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, last for me is pupil
13 transportation. The Executive Plan reflects a \$61
14 million decrease in state funding for special
15 education transportation. Do we know why that was?
16 Why that is?

17 SERITTA SCOTT: Sure, so our transportation aid
18 is reimbursed on a one-year lag, so for the 2024
19 state aid is based on 2023 action rule expenses. So,
20 the 61.3, was just an adjustment that it counts for
21 less than expected transportation aid reimbursement
22 from the state, at which the city actually backfilled
23 \$50 million of it.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, is that how we make
25 sure it doesn't actually have any impact on busing?

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SERITTA SCOTT: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Has there been a decrease in the number of special ed students using transportation?

SERITTA SCOTT: There's been an increase in the number of special ed students using transportation between last year and this year as well.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Increase?

SERITTA SCOTT: There's been an increase. There's been an increase in the number students in temporary housing using busing between last year and this year as well. And those, the numbers are roughly 5,700 to 6,200 for 57,000 to 62,000 for students in special education. I'll pull up the students in temporary housing number in a minute but it's a roughly two thirds increase in the number of students in temporary housing who are riding our buses this year.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay and how are we doing on the bus driver shortage?

SERITTA SCOTT: Uhm, we continue to have a bit of a shortage but I would say you know, the bus driver shortage is a national problem and as far as we can tell New York City is quite far ahead of other

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1 districts as we tackle it. We've seen districts do
2 things like cancel general education busing over the
3 course of the last year as they've struggled to find
4 bus drivers and frankly struggle with the stimulus
5 cliff.
6

7 It continues to be an issue we work with our
8 vendors on every day. Uhm, we think it is helpful
9 that our vendors and their union reached agreements
10 last year that provide an increase in our drivers
11 salaries and our attendant salaries so that's been
12 good but certainly more work to continue to do.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Got it. Okay, thank you
14 very much. I'm going to hand it over to Chair
15 Joseph.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Chair Brannan. I
17 want to go back to the \$170 million PEG in early
18 childhood in the November Plan. We noticed that it
19 was not restored in the Executive Budget right but
20 now we're seeing there's more. The amount of vacancy
21 seats have also lowered. What is the plan to restore
22 that? The last time you were here, you said we would
23 restore it. What's the plan for that? And uhm have
24 you put in a new need with OMB around the 170 PEG?
25

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2 EMMA VADEHRA: So, in terms of our work with OMB,
3 we are in endless ongoing conversations on all of our
4 budget needs, which as you know we continue to
5 advocate for both stimulus programs, our PEGs, for
6 additional funding for class size and all of that in
7 terms of the plan.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, uhm, in the most recent
9 data, the additional funding on the Executive Plan
10 for the outreach, advertising for Early Childhood
11 right, would help bolster enrollment. Does the
12 assumption and the condition that led to this cut, is
13 it still true?

14 Dan never hears me, let me start over. Let me
15 start over, Dan never hears me.

16 DAN WEISBERG: I apologize Chair. My hearing is
17 going.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: It's going okay, we need to
19 do something about that. No, I said in the data that
20 we're given, right? Data drives our inform right,
21 we're informed by using data right. So, will that
22 help bolter because the seats were up that led to
23 this cut. Not that we have cut the seats because we
24 were saying that oh, we didn't have enough seats.
25 Now that those numbers went down, what is the plan

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1 along with the advertisement to make sure that
2 enrollment is up and how do we get those students
3 into those seats?
4

5 KARA AHMED: That's the continued work. It's the
6 continued work of shifting seats, converting seats,
7 getting seats to where they're needed to meet
8 immediate family access, which is what we've done and
9 what we will continue to do to really move seats to
10 communities at areas and even within programs in
11 schools, based on what the actual need is and
12 changing those seats so that families benefit. That
13 will be coupled with all the support that you're
14 providing and Council is providing around outreach as
15 well of the marketing and outreach that we continue
16 to do.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Will this impact any CBO's?
18 Will programs be cut? Would any CBO's have to close
19 because of these reductions?

20 KARA AHMED: So, the goal here for us is not to
21 close any seats that are actually filled and that are
22 actually serving families. And that will continue to
23 be the goal that we have and that's is why it's
24 important for us to continue to reduce over
25

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1 saturation of seats and to really support families
2 with gaining immediate access.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many students do we
5 currently have attending these programs?

6 KARA AHMED: So, currently we have a utilization
7 rate of roughly 83 percent across all seat types,
8 across all age groups. Current enrollment is roughly
9 114,000 plus. Highest it's been.

10 KARA AHMED: That's the continued work. It's the
11 continued work of shifting seats, converting seats,
12 getting seats to where they're needed to meet
13 immediate family access, which is what we've done and
14 what we will continue to do to really move seats to
15 communities that at codes areas and even within
16 programs in schools based on what the actual need is
17 and changing into those seats so that families
18 benefit. That will be coupled with all the support
19 that you're providing; the Council is providing
20 around outreach as well of the marketing and outreach
21 that we continue to do.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Will this impact any CBO's?
23 Will programs be cut? Would any CBO's have to close
24 because of these reductions?

25

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2 KARA AHMED: So, the goal here for us is not to
3 close any seats that are actually filled and that are
4 actually serving families and that will continue to
5 be the goal that we have. And that is why it is
6 important for us to continue to reduce over-
7 saturation of seats and to really support families
8 with gaining immediate access.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many students we
10 currently have attending these programs?

11 KARA AHMED: So, currently, we have a utilization
12 rate of roughly 83 percent. Across all seat types,
13 across all age groups, current enrollment is roughly
14 114,000 plus, highest it's been.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So something is working.
16 So, how many applications did you receive for Pre-K
17 for next school year?

18 DAVID BANKS: We just put offers out Chair and
19 Trevonda Kelly, our Chief Enrollment Officer may have
20 those figures hot off the press.

21 TREVONDA KELLY: I'm sorry, what the numbers that
22 you're asking for?

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many applications have
24 you received for Pre-K for next school year?

25

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2 TREVONDA KELLY: I'm sorry, I'm pulling it up
3 right now. So, for Pre-K total applications, total
4 applicants was 52,423 so far.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many offers have you
6 made?

7 TREVONDA KELLY: Total offers right now is 59,000
8 approximately.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Are the numbers higher than
10 last year or the same or are we seeing a trend?

11 TREVONDA KELLY: So, numbers are higher than 2022
12 but as far as compared to last year, it's slightly
13 lower.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you have the data to
15 share with the release of the offers for tomorrow?

16 TREVONDA KELLY: I can provide some data as far
17 as 3K is concerned.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Will you be able to allow
19 providers to register on site? That's been one of
20 the biggest things we hear from providers. Having
21 them register on site at the time. I know it's a
22 little difficult. It has to be friendly too because
23 we try to do it ourselves, my colleagues and I and
24 it's not friendly so we have to make it friendly for
25

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2 parents to be able to navigate the system in order
3 for them to try to enroll their children.

4 TREVONDA KELLY: So, programs can't enroll kids.
5 We actually encourage and hope that they are helping
6 families enroll and we actually send families to the
7 programs.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: If I do a survey right with
9 my colleagues all of them will say none of their
10 parents know they can enroll.

11 TREVONDA KELLY: And we have work to do just to
12 make that that happens but programs can enroll kids.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how many seats do you
14 have for Pre-K special education seats?

15 EMMA VADEHRA: We can get you a total number but
16 we know that that number is expanding as well.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how many parents are not
18 - families are not getting seats and what's the
19 waitlist look like?

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We have to swear you in.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the
22 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
23 before this Committee and to respond honestly to
24 Council Member questions.

25 CHRISTINA FOTI: I do.

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Say your name please.

CHRISTINA FOTI: Christina Foti.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

CHRISTINA FOTI: So, Chair we have a over 700 students waiting for special education seats but I want to be clear about something. So, Chancellor started his testimony talking about post-testimony some of the things that we've inherited. When pre-K for all was developed, the funding infrastructure for special education was never systemically developed. We are always playing catch up on the special education side to make up for what was not developed as a funding infrastructure for pre-K for all as it relates to special education.

Now, we are making the most of what we have and I'm going to clear, we can't ask our folks to work harder than they are currently working. You heard from DC Ahmed how with our current resources we are improving so much. People are getting paid faster. That is also true in terms of our provision of service. So, post pandemic, we had a surge as you all know and expected of pre-K students in need of services. Even with that surge through working smarter, our compliance rates are staying steady.

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1 And I know you're going to ask me next about the
2 compliance rates and I will share them with you but
3 to be clear; in order to fix pre-K special education,
4 we need all levels of government working to make sure
5 that the funding is slowing in a way that we have an
6 infrastructure that serves Pre-K for truly all. That
7 includes special education students.
8

9 We talked about a lot of priorities today. We've
10 talked about busing, we've talked about arts, we've
11 talked about chicken nuggets and French toast.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: They're very popular.

13 CHRISTINA FOTI: There's nobody who loves the
14 chicken nuggets more than my son so I hear about this
15 and I thank Emma for getting those back.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Emma.

17 CHRISTINA FOTI: But there are a lot of
18 priorities and a finite amount of money. Every
19 hearing we talk about Pre-K special education and if
20 we want to fix Pre-K special education the collective
21 is going to have to prioritize Pre-K special
22 education. I can't say it clearer than that right?
23 We are making the most of what we have.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what about the plan to
25 also bring more aimed seats into the school

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1 districts? Which would also be a game changer where
2 students don't really have to travel and they can
3 stay in their communities in the aimed seats.
4

5 CHRISTINA FOTI: Game changer Chair and we are,
6 as you know, we're piloting an increase of autism
7 programs, Districts 5, 12, 14. I am following that
8 data incredibly closely. We've already seen a
9 decrease in District 75 referrals by 50 percent in
10 those districts and we are ensuring that those kids
11 are a mile from home at most.

12 So, we are working with our districts
13 superintendents to place every child who wants a
14 specialized program in a specialized program
15 including the aims programs in those districts. We
16 are delighted with how the process is going in terms
17 of support for families thus far and are over the
18 moon at the prospect of keeping our kids closer to
19 home.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, here's another question,
21 so is the \$25 million added for the additional seats
22 enough to cover 700 students or do they go on a
23 waitlist?

24 CHRISTINA FOTI: We are projecting that this
25 coverage will be 400 students. 300 to 400 students

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1 covered by this \$25 million. However, I know that DC
2 Ahmed and team are working diligently and
3 continuously as she described to look at existing
4 seat need and what could potentially be converted to
5 special education seats where allowable and where
6 that makes sense without compromising needs on either
7 end.
8

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And that includes related
10 services for those students as well?

11 CHRISTINA FOTI: So, all of our – yes, all of our
12 seats that were opening with this \$25 million come
13 for funding for related services. So, the child,
14 every child that I just mentioned in that 300-400
15 bucket will receive not only their full seat offer
16 but their full related service mandate.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So how much more money are
18 we going to need for the 300 students that were left
19 out? We're only covering 400, so I'm still going to
20 have 300 students that we do not want to turn into
21 carter cases transfer.

22 CHRISTINA FOTI: Yeah, so if we split it in the
23 middle right and say that we're going to double it,
24 that would get us to the full need next year.

25 However, I know that DC Ahmed and team put in a much

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1 larger need and request that would take into account
2 any projections we have for outyears as well as the
3 full related service needs.
4

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Some of these classrooms are
6 integrated. Are any of them ICT settings?

7 CHRISTINA FOTI: Yes, they are.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many ICT settings are
9 you thinking?

10 CHRISTINA FOTI: We have, give me one second
11 Chair. Let me get back on the ICT numbers but we do
12 have integrated and very successful skids. We call
13 them skids which are two teachers in one classroom in
14 our preschools.

15 KARA AHMED: I would just add to that, Christina
16 you're absolutely right and as we think about that
17 expansion, we're working very closely with
18 Christina's team as well to think about where we can
19 maximize that \$25 million so that we support the most
20 amount of kids as possible and with the least amount
21 of travel. So, as we talk about busing and we talk
22 about moving across boroughs and districts, we're
23 trained to minimize that to the greatest extent
24 possible so that children really benefit.
25

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1 I also think it's important to note though for
2 the first time under the leadership of our
3 Chancellor, we have actually instituted the preschool
4 contract enhancement, which was able to provide an
5 additional - we set out to do 800 seats. We actually
6 provided an additional 900 seats in stabilized, over
7 6,500 that otherwise may not have been able to be
8 open and increased teacher pay. And we are thrilled
9 and excited that that money is being baselined moving
10 forward and so, we won't be relying on stimulus
11 funding to support those providers and those vendors
12 so that they can continue to serve children.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: 4410 was very important to
15 this Council and along with the Speaker to make sure
16 that pay parity for educators so we can retain them.

17 KARA AHMED: That's right.

18 CHRISTINA FOTI: Chair, may I just add that we're
19 going to add 100 to 200 integrated co-teaching
20 classrooms via the additional funding.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: For the preschool?

22 CHRISTINA FOTI: 100 to 200 additional seats.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, thank you. It makes
24 sense and we're going to talk about something we love
25 to talk about, essential report. Uhm, the

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1 preliminary March hearing, you informed the Committee
2 that the DOE will be receiving the essential report
3 on early childhood in April. This long-awaited
4 report will help provide clarity on the need for
5 early childhood seats and the details on misallocated
6 seats which would help New York City Public plan and
7 allocate ECE seats. Have you received a report?
8

9 KARA AHMED: We have not received the report yet.
10 We continue to work in close collaboration with our –
11 and staying in close communication with our City Hall
12 partners while that analysis is under way. So, we
13 have not, but as I said, you know irrespective of the
14 report, our team is going to continue working
15 diligently using the data that we do have to support
16 families in the immediate.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, what's the delay in the
18 release of the report?

19 KARA AHMED: That is just work that's happening.
20 They are also conducting a comprehensive analysis for
21 New York City Public Schools in other parts of the
22 city. And so, as soon as we have that information,
23 we're going to use that to couple it with the
24 information that we currently draw on to support
25 families.

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1 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is there a timeline?

2
3 KARA AHMED: We are hoping that there will be
4 something maybe by the end of this month or at least
5 by the end of this Fiscal Year, so that it can
6 support the work that goes into next -

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We can't live on hope.

8 KARA AHMED: Yeah, I hear ya, I hear ya.

9 DAVID BANKS: We thought we were going to have
10 sooner than this.

11 KARA AHMED: Yeah, that was the hope and you know
12 that was absolutely what our goal was. But again, as
13 I said, we have not waited for over a year for anyone
14 else's report. We've used in particular the data
15 that we gather from our school and program leaders
16 because they have boots on the ground. They are
17 working with families and communities directly. And
18 so, we are drawing on their feedback and their
19 insight to know best what their communities need and
20 to support them so that families benefit in the
21 moment.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: But the Chancellor can
23 relate to this as educators data drive by
24 instruction, right? So, data also drives our policy,
25 so we need the data to make decisions but here we are

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1 again the \$170 million in early child seats cut with
2 no data. So, that's just like going into the room
3 blindly making decisions for New York City youngest
4 learners without having the data to drive that
5 decision.
6

7 DAVID BANKS: You're right, it is a challenge and
8 what we're doing is trying to do the best we can with
9 what we've got. So, we had all of that data, it
10 would inform what we're trying to do with more
11 clarity right now but we're not sitting around on our
12 hands till it shows up. We're doing the best we can
13 with other forms of data that we're working with.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Chair Brannan.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I just have one follow up
16 on the early childhood, the special ed seats. Wasn't
17 there a promise made in earlier in this
18 Administration that by June 2023 every Pre-K, every
19 Pre-K special ed kid would have a seat?

20 CHRISTINA FOTI: So, the contract enhancement has
21 certainly helped us but I want to remind everybody
22 that you all asked us many times about what we were
23 going to do about the surge in special education
24 needs post COVID. The contract enhancement was
25 intended to help us mitigate that surge. That surge,

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1 however, continues and we've seen an explosion in
2 terms of needs. So, the contracts have been, were
3 intended to keep up with the need that was present in
4 that moment, however that need continues, which is
5 also why in the special education world we are
6 continuing all of our, so many - we're continuing so
7 many of our investments and seeking additional
8 funding, which we've successfully gotten from the
9 state to continue our recovery initiatives. And you
10 know our sensory gyms are one of those, an example of
11 those recovery initiatives that we're continuing
12 recognizing the increase in need.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Okay, Speaker
15 Adams.

16 SPEAKER ADAMS: Yeah, just a couple more before
17 we hand it over to our colleagues. How did the
18 preliminary 2024, 2025 school year budgets compared
19 to the 2023-2024 school year budget? Does it look
20 like more schools will be gaining or losing funding
21 based on enrollment figures?

22 EMMA VADEHRA: So, it's too early to know for
23 sure at the school level. We're in the process of
24 working on putting together our school budgets now.
25 What we know is that all the funds across the system

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1 that floods the schools last year, including
2 additional dollars for the Fair Student Funding wait,
3 including additional contracts for excellence money.
4 Those will continue to flow for next year and in
5 addition we're putting in this \$180 million for class
6 size and contracts for excellence as well but how
7 that - and overall as the Chancellor mentioned, we
8 are seeing a slight increase across the system but
9 how that plays out at the individual school level
10 will depend on what we put all things together which
11 will be near the end of this month and we'll provide
12 it.
13

14 SPEAKER ADAMS: Maybe I should have posed it a
15 different way, do you feel more hopeful this go
16 around than last go around?

17 EMMA VADEHRA: So, going into this school year we
18 actually were able to not just put in those increases
19 but hold all schools harmless at the initial
20 allocation for the 2023-2024 school year. That was
21 because we had a federal stimulus dollars. Those
22 hold harmless dollars are gone. We're putting in
23 more money than that through our new contracts for
24 excellence and class size so that's good overall
25 across the system but in terms of how that plays out

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1 at the school level is TBD but we are investing the
2 money we have in school budgets and continuing to
3 increase that as a piece of our –

4 DAVID BANKS: As Chair Joseph said, we can't live
5 on hope but nonetheless, we do try to remain hopeful
6 and I do think that the notion that our numbers are
7 trending in the right direction will continue to give
8 us hope. We have lots of needs across the schools.
9 One of the earlier questions were Chair Brannan about
10 our just overarching priorities. It is very
11 challenging as Chancellor to have a list given to you
12 of all these wonderful and amazing programs and to be
13 told you know, which ones do you prioritize? How do
14 you prioritize arts over community schools, right?
15 I mean it's like asking you which one is your
16 favorite child.

17 These are all like wonderfully amazing programs.
18 We don't want to lose any of them. Uhm, and we know
19 that you all are still very much engaged in a
20 negotiation process with your partners at City Hall
21 and so, what we are working with today will not be
22 the final product. There are other things that may
23 not be part of what we're discussing today that
24 you're going to continue to fight for and you will
25

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1 ultimately drive and make some additional things
2 happen that may not be on our program here today.
3 So, we know that this is a process that we are in but
4 we do remain hopeful that we are getting more
5 students who are coming back to our schools and I
6 think that portends positive experiences for us
7 across the board.
8

9 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you very much. Chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, now we have
11 questions. We've been joined by Council Member Nurse
12 and now we have questions from Hanks followed by
13 Carr.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you Chairs. Thank
15 you Madam Speaker. Uhm, thank you so much for your
16 testimony today. I just have one question. The
17 Public Advocate when you read his testimony included
18 information on a new NYPD position that seeks to hire
19 1,000 18-year-olds. Do you have any further
20 information on this? I had not heard that.

21 MARK RAMPERSANT: Good morning.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Say your name please.

23 MARK RAMPERSANT: Mark Rampersant.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Do you affirm to
25 tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the

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1 truth before this Committee and to respond honestly
2 to Council Member questions?

3
4 MARK RAMPERSANT: Yes. How are you? So yes, we
5 know a little bit about this initiative that's being
6 introduced by the NYPD, in particular the School
7 Safety Division. It is an attempt to sort of fill a
8 shortfall of school safety agents by identifying
9 assistant school safety agents if you will. These
10 are not necessarily peace officers. They can't make
11 an arrest. They're looking to 18 to 21 year olds who
12 have not meet, sort of eligible to become school
13 safety agents yet until they're 21 and take the civil
14 service exam. It's sort of like a trainee program if
15 you will. So, they're assisting school safety agents
16 and the focus is really to identify elementary
17 schools where we have a single school safety agent
18 currently. This is sort of the backup of that fill.

19 As it relates to funding source and training, all
20 of that stuff is still sort of ongoing. We've been
21 in some preliminary conversations with them around
22 how this is going to look. I don't think that
23 they're at a place where they're ready to fully
24 initiate this particular program as it relates to the
25 training and again, the pay, the pay for a full-time

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1 agent versus a part-time assistant agent. So, it's
2 still in the early stages of implementation. Nothing
3 solidified fully with New York City public schools.
4

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you so much. I
6 appreciate that and have we given thought in how this
7 is going to dovetail with the current Cure Violence,
8 the CMS programming? Is there any idea how these
9 initiatives will be symbiotic at all?

10 MARK RAMPERSANT: So, one of the things we want
11 to be sure of is that there is continued
12 collaboration as it relates to ensuring safety and
13 security in our schools. So, these assistant school
14 safety agents, just like the current school safety
15 agents work in collaboration with the communities to
16 ensure safety. We continue to talk about the overall
17 village and the responsibility of the village. This
18 is just one more portion of the village to help keep
19 our kids safe.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you so much. Thank
21 you Chairs.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have questions
23 from Council Member Carr followed by Brooks-Powers
24 and just a reminder, please silence your cellphones.
25

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1 I hear someone keeps getting text messages out there,
2 just silence it please. Thank you.

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Thank you Chair.

5 Chancellor, it's always great to see you and I just
6 want to start off by thanking you so much for your
7 commitment to G&T aid at the Villa Campus. Your
8 partnership with my office and with my colleagues has
9 been incredibly responsive, transparent and
10 collaborative in a way that I think is completely
11 unprecedented. In all of the years that I'm familiar
12 with from talking to my predecessors, we've always
13 had great partnerships at the district and school
14 levels but the partnership that we've had with you
15 personally and with your team has been transformative
16 I think and we're only in year three. So, I look
17 forward to that continuing.

18 Of course, and so uhm, I wanted to talk a little
19 bit about just three things and I'll put the
20 questions out there and then I look forward to the
21 answers. The first is I had the opportunity to visit
22 a school-based health center at New Dorp High School,
23 which is serviced by Northwell as well as Port
24 Richmond High Schools Health Center and I know
25 collectively the health centers are asking for an

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1 additional \$25 million in the budget, \$100,000 per
2 health center on average. When the New Dorp Center
3 started its budget covered 45 percent of the costs in
4 1990. Now it's substantially less and so, these
5 health centers are critical for maintaining a quality
6 learning environment for students. Many of whom you
7 know don't necessarily have health insurance that
8 covers all the things we'd like them to have in terms
9 of health services.
10

11 Second, so I'd like to know where we are with
12 that. Secondly, I want to talk a little bit about
13 what's been going on with respect to some of the
14 demonstrations that have been happening on our
15 campuses. I know you alluded to this in your
16 testimony. Some of the students are engaging in
17 rhetoric, which is perceived by other students the
18 building is threatening and I know that these
19 international debates are difficult and I think it
20 being teenagers of vulnerable time at any given point
21 in current events but I think that there needs to be
22 more education done to make people understand there's
23 a way to project your point without making others
24 feel vulnerable.
25

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1 So, I'll just start with those two and I
2 appreciate your answers.
3

4 EMMA VADEHRA: Yes, so we're really proud of the
5 hundreds of school-based health centers and school
6 based mental health clinics that we have in our
7 schools. We welcome more funding for them of course.
8 In the meantime we do work really closely with the
9 state to make sure using state funds, we are opening
10 as many of those as possible and we'll continue to do
11 that going forward. We work with H+H of course and
12 our local partners as well and we'll continue to do
13 that.

14 DAN WEISBERG: It is very important to work with
15 these school-based health centers. And so, we're
16 absolutely going to make sure we're leaning in there.
17 As it relates to the demonstrations, we've been
18 fortunate. Most of these demonstrations that we've
19 seen play out on college campuses in very visceral
20 kinds of ways, what we've had are some student walk
21 outs and you know we've had some difficult moments
22 with our kids and sometimes including our staff in
23 our schools. This is a learning opportunity for all
24 of us and it is a real challenge and it is a place
25 that we could use your help as well. As elected

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1 leaders and elected officials and community leaders.

2 This, what has happened in the middle east is and

3 what is playing out every single day is so deeply

4 emotionally charged and we are finding students who

5 are fraught with emotion, who are showing up at

6 school and don't know how to unpack this stuff. And

7 we also have adults in our schools. Many of whom are

8 afraid to address these issues and ought to be

9 accused of being antisemitic or Islamophobic by

10 saying one wrong word.

11 So, I hear it from all of them. We've engaged a

12 number of partners to try to help us in this space

13 and it's interesting even as I've engaged the

14 partners, I hear from different folks who say "well,

15 that's the wrong partner." We don't approve of this

16 partner. We don't approve of that partner. These

17 divisions are so deep and then they're turning and

18 saying, "well, what are you going to do Chancellor?"

19 I don't have all the answers but we are trying to

20 lean in and train our teachers, our principals to try

21 to get them as ready as possible. We invite all of

22 you and we mean this earnestly to work with us in

23 your districts to help us meet this moment. We

24 cannot do this alone. This is very serious stuff and

25

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1 we've laid out a number of things that we are trying
2 to do but we could use all the help that we could get
3 and we would welcome every one of you participating.
4 That was part of the reason why I responded in the
5 way that I did when I went to Washington. It was a
6 very different tone tenner than here at the City
7 Council. To me that was all about gotcha and playing
8 for a viral moment and yes and no questions. These
9 are not yes or no issues that we're dealing with.
10 These are gray areas that have to be addressed by
11 serious leaders and we look at all of you as serious
12 leaders. And we open ourselves up to saying please
13 work with us because we're also struggling to figure
14 it out. But to the degree that we can work together
15 on this and it may be messy but we think that we can
16 ultimately help all of our young people get where
17 they need to get. We got to help our adults as well.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Thank you Chancellor. I'm
20 out of time, so just want to say, I would love to
21 continue to talk to you and your team offline about
22 this and about the athletic trainer conversation.
23 We've been having fruitful conversations with you and
24 Mark about in the past. Thank you Chair.

25 DAN WEISBERG: Thank you.

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1
2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We have questions from
3 Council Member Brooks-Powers followed by Ayala.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Hi Chancellor,
5 it's good to see you and the team. Thank you for
6 your testimony today. Just a few quick questions.
7 One I wanted to touch on school food. We'd like to
8 follow up on some of the school budget questions that
9 were asked earlier in terms of what is the current
10 number of vacancies and vacancy rate for school food
11 staff? How many budgeted positions are there
12 currently in school food? How does this compare to
13 the number in 2019? And if you could give us like a
14 breakdown between both years by title.

15 And when menu items were cut in February, was the
16 average cost per meal reduced as well? If so, by how
17 much? And over the summer last year I had an
18 opportunity to visit one of the Summer Rising
19 programs with Council Member Stevens and I stayed
20 behind and was looking at like the cafeteria I
21 visited, talked to the staff and the students and I
22 was learning about some of the food waste that
23 happens because I think of some of the regulations
24 with the feds and things like that. I wonder if the
25 Department of Education has explored working with our

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1 partners on different levels of government to
2 minimize how we're wasting food because my
3 understanding is I think bleach has to go into food
4 at the end of the night but we have you know a lot of
5 hungry people obviously in New York City. It would
6 be really good to see how we could repurpose that
7 food as opposed to discarding good food in the day or
8 even forcing kids to take a full tray knowing they
9 don't necessarily want the full tray, so they take
10 it, take the one thing. I was unfortunately one of
11 those students. I liked the fries but I didn't want
12 anything else. And you know just not wanting to have
13 to be wasteful for it to count on the little ticker.
14

15 And then, my last question is regarding the pay
16 disparity between like daycare and certified
17 teachers. I know that Chair Joseph spoke to it
18 earlier but it was focused on the special ed dynamic
19 but I wanted to know in the case of a day care in the
20 school with certified teachers, what explains the
21 budget salary discrepancies in teachers pay between
22 DOE elementary schools and day care centers? Because
23 they are you know fundamentally doing great work with
24 our kids. We trust them. We leave them with them
25 but some of the wages that I'm hearing that they're

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1 receiving is really unfair and so, uhm I just wanted
2 to have a better understanding and also to understand
3 like is there something that DOE is doing to look to
4 see greater parity in those wages?
5

6 DAVID BANKS: I appreciate it. Yup and think
7 we've got another member of our team if we could
8 swear in and we'll start in the cafeteria and then
9 we'll come back out.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Could you state your name
11 please?

12 CHRISTOPHER TRICARICO: Christopher Tricarico.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the
14 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
15 before this Committee and to respond honestly to
16 Council Member questions?

17 CHRISTOPHER TRICARICO: I do.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

19 CHRISTOPHER TRICARICO: I'm going to try to
20 remember all of the questions. I'm going to start
21 with the vacancies that you mentioned. Currently, we
22 have 550 school food kitchen vacancies. We have 100
23 manager vacancies. Going back to 2019, we had about
24 9,000 employees in the office. Today, we have about
25 8,000 employees in the office. I do want to mention

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1 that our staffing levels are based on enrollment and
2 meals served. So, we did serve more meals in 2019
3 then we are currently serving now and served last
4 Fiscal Year.
5

6 I'm going to skip to the donations and the food
7 waste because I know that is a great topic. This
8 year, we have created a program called a share table
9 and we have created a donation program. So, we're
10 working with all schools that are interested to make
11 sure that they set up a share table for children who
12 do not want all of the options that you mentioned.
13 They can put those options aside. We can store those
14 options in our refrigerators and we can donate some
15 of those food options to students or to local
16 pantries. We have an official policy for folks that
17 did not see it. It was in Chalk Week this week.
18 It's a good read. It's an excellent opportunity for
19 our students to be able to engage in the donation
20 process but also understand the regulations about the
21 National School Lunch program.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: That's great, I
23 would love to learn more about it. Thank you for
24 that.
25

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1 KARA AHMED: Hi, good morning Council Member

2 Brooks-Powers. Yes, compensation equity is something
3 that we absolutely value and prioritize. In New York
4 City public schools, we recognize that all of our
5 teachers, all of our educators, all of our leaders,
6 are serving all of our children. Irrespective of the
7 setting in which they are in. But those decisions
8 are made between the employer and the union groups in
9 a collective bargaining process that's outside of New
10 York City public schools and so, while there is
11 inequities that exist and it goes back to again the
12 infrastructure in which this work was built on many
13 years ago and that we assumed into these roles, that
14 is the work that is happening at the collective
15 bargaining process.
16

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: And I'm sorry
18 Chair if I can, I did inadvertently leave off two
19 questions in school food. One was, is there a
20 shortage of food service workers in New York City
21 schools and the other one is what was the average
22 cost per meal in September? But really quickly,
23 going back to the statement you made in terms of the
24 disparity in the wages. Has DOE engaged in
25

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1 conversations to your point with the unions in terms
2 of how we can rectify the discrepancy in the pay?
3

4 KARA AHMED: So again, these are not city
5 employers and so, our employees and so, the
6 collective bargaining process does happen between the
7 employment groups and the union groups and any way
8 that we can help to facilitate those conversations,
9 provide information, support with data, we absolutely
10 do but again that does happen at the collective
11 bargaining process that we are not – we are not
12 leading and we are not part of and again, this is two
13 this system was built with a two-tiered process.

14 CHRISTOPHER TRICARICO: Circling back to the
15 vacancy question. So, currently we have 550 school
16 food vacancies in all of our schools across the city.
17 We most recently had a hiring haul on May 17th. I
18 believe we had 17 hiring hauls this year and will
19 continue to do so. The school food meal rate,
20 particularly for lunch in September was \$1.74.
21 That's cost for food only.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

23 DAVID BANKS: Those are vacancies, those are jobs
24 that are still there to be filled.
25

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1 CHRISTOPHER TRICARICO: Yes sir and we continue
2 to have hiring hauls.
3

4 DAVID BANKS: So, any Council Members if you got
5 folks in your district that are looking for
6 positions, we got them.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, Council Member Ayala
8 followed by Schulman.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Thank you uhm, I just
10 wanted to ask one final question that Council Member
11 Brooks-Powers I think asked initially. When the menu
12 items were cut in February, was the average cost per
13 meal also reduced and if so, by how much?

14 CHRISTOPHER TRICARICO: I'm sorry, I was in
15 transition. Can you say that again?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: When the menu items were
17 cut in February, was the average cost per meal
18 reduced as well and if so, by how much?

19 CHRISTOPHER TRICARICO: Yeah, so as mentioned,
20 the original cost in September of 2023 cost per meal
21 just for food was \$1.74. When the PEG was initiated,
22 we reduced the cost to \$1.20 for food cost.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Jesus, I don't know what
24 you could buy with that. Has the — and you know
25 what? This is a — you know I've seen this in

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1 government a lot. When we implement like the
2 different options and food choices in schools that
3 were you know that are choices than in previous years
4 and it was such a successful model but it was
5 expensive. It's expensive to eat well in New York
6 City and I think that you know we have to figure out
7 how to prioritize those choices in the budget because
8 we want to make sure that our children are eating the
9 healthiest meal options available and uhm, we cannot
10 allow cost to continue to get in the way. There's a
11 lot of waste in every agency city budget and I'm sure
12 that we could identify the funds to help you know
13 offset the cost.
14

15 I have two questions. Has the DOE funded the
16 Collective Bargaining Agreement for food workers and
17 what are the OFNS cuts based on?

18 SERITTA SCOTT: Uhm, I will get right back to you
19 on the collective bargaining for the school food
20 workers.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: You don't have an answer
22 for that today?

23 SERITTA SCOTT: I need to check -
24
25

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1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Oh, okay. What about the
3 other question? What are the Office of School for
4 Food and Nutrition Services cuts based off of?

5 EMMA VADEHRA: What are the cuts based off of?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Uh, huh.

7 EMMA VADEHRA: So, do you mean the changes that
8 were made to our meal options?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Yeah.

10 EMMA VADEHRA: Yes, so uhm as I noted a bit
11 before, our costs have been going up. As you said,
12 some of that is the cost of food. Some of that is
13 the cost of increased meal participation. Some of
14 that is the cost of our collective bargaining
15 agreements with our school food workers. Some of
16 that is the cost of offering an additional third meal
17 for summer rising. Some of that has to do with
18 cafeteria enhancements and there's a series of things
19 we've done to enhance the food experience for our
20 students over the course of the past few years.
21 Those drove costs up so in February, when the swap
22 took place, we needed to make sure we stayed within
23 the budget we were given and that's when the
24 reductions happened. Since February, we did receive
25 an additional \$25 million in federal revenue and so

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1 that has allowed us to generally put those options
2 back on the menu. Chris has reminded me to share with
3 you all we do not do chicken nuggets. We do better
4 things like chicken popcorn but also French toast
5 sticks and so, we've worked to put those thing
6 largely back on the menu over the course of the past
7 few months and expect to stay in that for next year
8 as well.

9
10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And the chicken dumplings
11 right?

12 EMMA VADEHRA: And the chicken dumplings, thank
13 you.

14 CHRISTOPHER TRICARICO: Multiple versions.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: My favorite, the fish that
16 had a little cheese slice in the inside.

17 CHRISTOPHER TRICARICO: We brought that back on
18 the menu, yes.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: But you know so, in your
20 response, uhm you mentioned the collective bargaining
21 agreement being a part of you know the decisions to
22 make the cut. So, has the collective bargaining
23 agreement been funded?

24 EMMA VADEHRA: So, Seritta is just checking on
25 that. At that point, it had been partially funded

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1 but not fully funded in terms of funding for the
2 city.

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Is it fully funded now?

5 SERITTA SCOTT: No, we continue to engage with
6 OMB.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Do you anticipate that it
8 will be fully funded for the new fiscal year?

9 SERITTA SCOTT: That will come out when we have
10 our own conversations with OMB.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Okay, thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: One thing that I picked up
13 on. So, for the school food budget. The PEG was
14 basically, I think before you said it was basically a
15 funding swap. So, how did the PEG impact the cost
16 per meal if the budget didn't go down?

17 EMMA VADEHRA: Because a series of our costs were
18 increasing including meal participation, which is
19 additional cost for our schools but gets funded on a
20 lag like federal revenue and some of these other
21 costs I just talked through.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, alright, Council
23 Member Schulman followed by Restler.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you. Good
25 morning Chancellor and I want to thank your team for

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1 being responsive to my staff in general and you've
2 been very accessible to me, so I appreciate that. I
3 had a whole number of questions to ask but a lot of
4 them were answered so I have a few now. One is, you
5 had mentioned in your testimony that there is \$5
6 million for marketing to increase enrollment for Pre-
7 K and 3K. My understanding is that split up for \$1.5
8 million in FY2024 and the rest of it in FY2025. So,
9 since FY2024 is coming to a close soon, what's the
10 timeline for spending that marketing budget?
11

12 KARA AHMED: Hi, good morning.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Good morning.

14 KARA AHMED: That money does need to be spent.
15 You're absolutely correct for FY24, so that is by the
16 end of the Fiscal Year, by June 30th. We are in a
17 very – we just received the funding and we are in a
18 very big-time crunch but we are going to be working
19 very closely with the City Council in determining how
20 best to use –

21 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: I'd be more than happy
22 to help with that.

23 KARA AHMED: Yes, yes, and we want your ideas, we
24 want the strategies, putting our heads together,
25 knowing what your constituents need, knowing what's

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1 best for your districts and for families in
2 particular and what can help this city.

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: I appreciate that and
5 I'm and I also and you've heard me say this at every
6 hearing. Kids only get one change at a good
7 education so it's so important for us to do all of
8 this and to do it right. Chancellor, you mentioned
9 in your testimony that you have more students coming
10 into the public schools, is that correct?

11 Okay, so DOE's Charter School's spending last
12 year was almost double what it was in Fiscal 2016 and
13 new needs added in the preliminary plan increased
14 Charter School funding by another \$729 million by
15 Fiscal Year 2028. In the Executive Plan, another \$85
16 million has been added for Fiscal Year 2024. Why has
17 the city's cost for Charter Schools increased so
18 drastically in recent years?

19 SERITTA SCOTT: So, as you may know our
20 obligation to Charter Schools is dictated by the
21 state and so as one of - not to get too technical but
22 as our expenses are growing so is tuition for Charter
23 Schools and so, our contribution for payments to
24 Charter Schools continue to grow year over year. The
25 payments, excuse me, the allocations that you see in

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1 the budget is to help basically close the gap to
2 ensure that we have enough funding to make payments
3 for Charter schools.
4

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you. I have one
6 last question, which is what are we doing with the
7 Charter cases? We always bring this up because it is
8 so important for our kids to get the education they
9 need. I know that our schools have programs that we
10 could replicate so that we don't have to spend all
11 that money on sending them to schools outside the
12 system. So, do you have a plan?

13 DAN WEISBERG: Yeah, Council Member couldn't
14 agree more and the cost and the cases have
15 skyrocketed as you know. We are implemented a number
16 of measures to try to bend that curve and we're
17 seeing some positive results to that without going
18 into too much detail.

19 One thing I want to emphasize is the explosion is
20 not coming from what we typically refer to as Carter
21 cases, right? Carter cases being students who can't
22 get the fair, appropriate education in our schools
23 and getting tuition paid for an independent school.
24 This is coming from kids who are not seeking tuition
25 or families that are not seeking tuition. It's, uh

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1 they're seeking services and specifically set special
2 education teacher services. And so, that type of
3 case has really exploded. We have done a couple of
4 things to address that. One is, which has been a
5 game changer, is to move these cases from independent
6 hearing officers who frankly just weren't accountable
7 for any timelines, so these cases would drag on and
8 on to oath, which is our full-time city arbitrators.
9 That's allowing us to close these cases much more
10 quickly, which is a good thing. We also have put
11 some measures in place to make sure these cases
12 frankly are legit. So, to make sure for example that
13 the parents truly are aware and have signed off on it
14 and that is also having some positive impact but the
15 number of cases just to be clear, just in the last
16 few years has gone up from 5,000 to this year we have
17 23,000 cases pending. We're closing them more
18 quickly but the numbers are staggering.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: No, I appreciate that,
21 thank you very much. Thank you Chair.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Council Member
23 Schulman. Now, we have questions from Council Member
24 Restler followed by Louis. We've also been joined by
25 Council Member Sanchez.

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1 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I just want to firstly
2 thank the Speaker and Chairs Brannan, Joseph and
3 everyone in the Council who fought so hard to see
4 that over \$500 million of the expiring federal funds
5 were restored in the Executive Budget. In fact the
6 Administration for their partnership on that.
7 Chancellor, I thought you did well in Congress, so
8 I'm glad that I was able to help. But I do want to
9 you know come back. I'm glad we could laugh on that.
10

11 I do want to come back to some of the statements
12 you made when you last before us in March at our
13 Preliminary Budget hearing in reference to the 3K
14 cuts, you said, "they are extremely hurtful to the
15 entire enterprise of early childhood education."

16 This is a major priority for us. I have
17 personally been in deep conversation with the Mayor
18 and the Mayor's Office around early childhood. I am
19 fighting like heck to make sure these cuts are
20 restored and I break confidence that in the coming
21 weeks we will have really good news around early
22 childhood. You went on to say the parents of New
23 York City are waiting to see if these cuts are going
24 to be restored. I'm fighting to make that happen and
25 I believe that it is exactly what is going to happen

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1 in the coming weeks but of course, it didn't happen.

2
3 The Mayor did not restore \$170 million of cuts to our
4 early childhood education, just that he made this
5 year. In addition over \$1 billion of cuts that he
6 had made previously.

7 So, we appreciate having you stand with the
8 Council in this fight but we got a lot of work to do
9 to actually restore funding for early childhood
10 education. I'm going to ask the Deputy Chancellor
11 Ahmed a few questions in rapid fire because I don't
12 have too much time to go. What's the current
13 capacity of the 3K system? Capacity and enrolled?

14 KARA AHMED: Current capacity for 3K is roughly
15 53,000 seats. Current enrollment is about 44,000.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Did you claim the
17 savings of the reduction from 55 to 53?

18 KARA AHMED: Did I what?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Did DOE claim the
20 savings? Because previously you had said that there
21 were 55,000 seats in capacity and the systems
22 capacity was 55,000, now you're saying 53,000. Last
23 time you pulled the capacity down from 61,000 to
24 55,000 they claimed \$283 million in annual savings.

25

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1 Was there savings claimed on the reduction from
2 55,000 to 53,000?
3

4 KARA AHMED: I'm not sure what you're referencing
5 around the 65,000 but I will say -

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: 61,000 to 55,000.

7 KARA AHMED: But I will say for 61,000 to 55,000,
8 55,000 to 53,000 are changes in seats. Seats that
9 never even fully existed that were being counted
10 towards this 3K capacity and seats that are being
11 converted based on the needs of communities.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Well, I do want to be
13 clear, OMB and Department of Education claimed close
14 to \$300 million in annual cuts when you reduce the
15 capacity of the system from 61,000 to 55,000. I
16 would like for you to get back to us in writing
17 unless your budget folks want to confirm that today
18 if additional savings were claimed when you further
19 reduce the capacity of the system. Would you like to
20 get back to us or is there an answer you can provide
21 now?

22 DAN WEISBERG: Happy to get back to you in detail
23 Council Member but to say the \$300 million that I
24 believe you're referring to -

25 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: \$283.

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1 DAN WEISBERG: Yeah, if we're on the same page.

2 That was expansion. That was money that was
3 ticketed. That was federal stimulus money that was
4 ticketed for additional seats that we clearly don't
5 need.
6

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Chose not to expand and
8 just as the \$170 million would be for additional
9 seats in the 3K system next year that were cut. So,
10 could you just tell us, what's the plan capacity next
11 year, for school year 2024-2025 for 3K?

12 KARA AHMED: I think capacity is still the same
13 in this moment. We are still at uhm 50,000 roughly
14 53,000.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: What would it be if the
16 City Council was successful with the Chancellor's
17 help at restoring the \$170 million in cuts that the
18 Mayor has made to the 3K system?

19 KARA AHMED: Our understanding is that the \$170
20 is not additional money, right? So, that is not
21 looking to expand additional seats, it's to maintain
22 the current seats.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So, what will be the
24 capacity of the system if these \$170 million cuts are
25 actually implemented?

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1 KARA AHMED: Right.

2
3 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: You're not reducing the
4 capacity of the system?

5 KARA AHMED: As I shared before, we are not
6 looking to reduce the capacity.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: If you lose \$170 million
8 of funding, there's not going to be a reduction in
9 funding - in seats?

10 KARA AHMED: We're not looking to reduce capacity
11 of any filled seats whatsoever. So, if these seats
12 are filled, we're not looking to reduce that
13 capacity.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But you got to work with
15 me. You're telling me today that planned capacity
16 went from \$61,000 to \$55,000. Now you're down to
17 \$53,000 planned capacity. If you take \$170 million
18 of funding away next year as the Mayor has said he
19 wants to do after multiple rounds of cuts to early
20 childhood education, what would be the new capacity
21 of the system?

22 KARA AHMED: That is not - we don't have a
23 planned number for that. That is something that we
24 have to continue.

25

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1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: We're at the Executive
3 Budget hearing. You can't testify under oath to your
4 budget? These are the cuts that the Mayor has
5 proposed that he wants to implement to your agency.
6 What would be the impact of them? How many fewer
7 seats would you have? This is like the most plain,
8 simple, obvious question that we were going to get
9 all day. I'm a little disappointed that we're not
10 getting a straight answer.

11 DAN WEISBERG: Yeah, we don't have a specific
12 plan. Seats are not all alike, they have different
13 costs associated with them but as we are implementing
14 the PEG and doing plans, obviously we're looking at
15 different seats that are not utilized.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So, are you going to get
17 back to us with a number? If the Mayor's cuts were
18 implemented, shouldn't we understand what the impact
19 of them would be? The Chancellor said he's fighting
20 to restore these cuts. What would happen to our
21 system? I just want to say, a majority of school
22 districts in New York City had more applicants for 3K
23 this past year than actually seats that were filled.
24 We had more demand in a majority of school districts
25 in New York City than the DOE was able to meet. With

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1 an additional \$170 million in cuts, that means
2 basically every school district in New York City
3 isn't going to be able to meet demand for 3K. That
4 is a disaster. It is an absolute disaster and I'm
5 really disappointed that your all not providing us
6 with direct, simple, straightforward answers to the
7 questions that we're asking of what the impacts would
8 be of your Administrations proposed cuts.
9

10 DAVID BANKS: I got it. I don't want you to be
11 overly disappointed. We will get you a response.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay, I appreciate that
13 and the last question because I've already gone over
14 and I don't want Ms. Joseph to yell at me. Oh, good,
15 she's not here. Justin doesn't yell at me. You know
16 Ms. Joseph spent enough time in the classroom, she
17 always keeps me in line. The center report executive
18 summary was released, I think June 1st of 2023. Are
19 we ever going to see a full report? \$760,000 was
20 spent on the report. Can we get any timeframe for
21 when we're going to be able to review it?

22 KARA AHMED: \$760,000 was not spent on the
23 report.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: How much was spent?
25

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1 KARA AHMED: I think that was \$350,000 or
2 \$150,000. We can get the exact number and get back
3 to you. That was back in June. As we had shared
4 earlier in this hearing, we are working in close
5 communication with our City Hall partners and are
6 awaiting that full analysis. We continue to do the
7 work that we've discussed previously around shifting
8 seats to get them to where families need them.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So, no timeline for when
10 we're going to see this infamous report?

11 KARA AHMED: We are awaiting it and as soon as we
12 have it, we'll be able to couple it with -

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Will it inform the
14 decisions we make in this budget?

15 KARA AHMED: Will it inform the decisions that we
16 make in this budget? It will inform the seats that
17 we decide that we need to keep moving to support
18 family's needs and access.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: We passed the budget.
20 We have a role to play in determining how much
21 funding is allocated for early childhood education
22 and the seat need that exists. We hear from our
23 constituents every day who can't get 3K seats. Who
24 can't actually meet the demand because we're not
25

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1 meeting the demand for early childhood education but
2 this report, you gave us an executive summary almost
3 12 months ago to the day in 10 days but we haven't
4 seen the report and you're saying that this is
5 determining all of your big decisions and all the big
6 analysis but it's not being shared with us and then
7 we're expected to pass a budget without the
8 information, so I think on both of these areas, I
9 really do hope that we can get clear, straight
10 answers. I appreciate the responses today. Thank
11 you.
12

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have questions
14 from Council Member Louis followed by Hanif.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you Chair and good
16 morning Chancellor to you and your dream team.
17 Always good to see you all. I have three quick
18 questions. Based on recent violence at many of our
19 high school and middle schools citywide and having
20 had to manage cases where students and families in
21 high schools in my district have felt endangered by
22 bullying or harassment from another student in their
23 school. I wanted to have a quick discussion on the
24 progress on mental health support in our schools.
25 How many therapists or providers are our schools

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1 currently receiving and are the resources being
2 distributed equitably across all schools in all
3 boroughs? And I wanted to quickly ask, the
4 Administration recently announced that \$3.6 million
5 of mental health continuum funding is being used to
6 open 16 school based mental health clinics at schools
7 in the Bronx and Brooklyn over the next six months.
8 Can you confirm the 16 schools? In addition to that,
9 can you also confirm that this announcement is
10 related to the fiscal 2024 funding for mental health
11 continuum and are the cost of these clinics including
12 staff currently under the Fiscal Year 2025?

14 EMMA VADEHRA: Yes, I will start with the first
15 couple of quest- the first question about mental
16 health. So, we have a series of different ways we're
17 providing mental health services in our schools. We
18 have social workers and guidance counselors. We have
19 school based mental health clinics. We have school-
20 based clinics that provide some mental health
21 services and then we have CBO providers who provide
22 mental health services directly to our students as
23 well. All of our students in all of our schools have
24 access to at least one of those and in many cases,
25 they of course have access to more than one of those

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1 as well. Thanks to the executive budget, we came
2 here previously and said about 500 of those positions
3 were at risk. 440 social workers included in there.
4 The executive budget did fund those positions, so
5 those positions have been protected but as we look
6 across the system, every student in every school has
7 access to at one and often more of those social
8 workers, guidance counselors, clinics, CBO providers
9 or health clinics.
10

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: That covers all schools
12 citywide?

13 EMMA VADEHRA: All schools citywide, the kids
14 have access to at least one of those yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: So, why isn't Midwood High
16 School that has a continuing bullying issue within
17 the school that now involves gangs and weapons.
18 There wasn't one social worker or guidance counselor
19 or provider able to support particular students that
20 were engaged in particular activities at the school
21 that caused a major issue. And then if you could
22 please answer the question on the \$3.6 million mental
23 health continuum.

24 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: I need to be sworn in
25 Flavia Puello-Perdomo.

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1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Do you affirm to
3 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
4 truth before this Committee and to respond honestly
5 to Council Member questions.

6 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: I do.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

8 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: So, I will speak
9 specifically about the mental health continuum
10 Council Member Louis. So, I think you asked about
11 the total number of schools and what the 16 schools
12 are. So, the 16 clinics are not necessarily clinics
13 within a school. They're clinics within the
14 community. So, the mental continued actually
15 supports 50 schools and I'm happy to share the full
16 lease with you and they're mostly concentrated in
17 areas of Central Brooklyn, Brownsville and the South
18 Bronx as well. So, we can share at least all 50 of
19 them and when you ask about the 16 clinics and where
20 they budgeted for this current physical year, that is
21 correct. The mental health continuum for the last
22 two years has been fully funded by City Council.
23 This is really an initiative that came through City
24 Council and advocates that DOE New York City Public
25 Schools has been very happy to partner.

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1 I think it's important to know as well that the
2 budget is divided in three buckets. So, New York
3 City actually gets a smaller portion of the budget
4 and the clinics, which you're specifically asking is
5 the total of \$3,638,000 that are funded through
6 Health and Hospital. So, that funding doesn't touch
7 DOE. And there's also an addition \$472 million that
8 are funded through the Department of Health and
9 Mental Service and Hygiene so that support hotline
10 and support some of the training and supports and
11 then the remaining of that funding which is actually
12 around 889,000 is actually the only funding that
13 comes to DOE and the major is provided directly to
14 schools specially for problem solving collaborative
15 training, which was the recommended training by the
16 advocates, which is focused on de-escalations and
17 supports. So, let me know if you have other
18 questions.
19

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: That \$800,000 is given to
21 vendors and contractors to come into the schools.

22 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: Correct, so we keep a
23 very small amount centrally just for some of the like
24 program support across the schools. So, for example,
25 right now, in the month of June, we're about to do a

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1 program with children. We're funding, we pattern
2 that funding centrally but the vast majority of the
3 \$800,000 goes directly into school budgets via a Sam
4 memorandum allocation and what we do is that we
5 coordinate the training. So, we work with providers
6 that vetted to provide this training that was
7 recommended by the advocate and we create sessions
8 but the schools select their days and do the payment.
9

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Alright, you mentioned 16
11 clinics and then 50. Can you send that to the folks,
12 the Council Members who represent those areas in
13 central Brooklyn and in the Bronx?

14 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: Absolutely, I can send
15 you both of those right, but like an example of that
16 in like the South Bronx area, we partner with a
17 clinic, with the local clinics the same way but we
18 can send both lists to you with the details with
19 Health and Hospital about their clinics as well as
20 the 50 schools that are part of the continuum.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you and if you guys
22 can please follow up with my staff or myself about
23 the bullying happening at Midwood High School. There
24 has not been any representation from DOE to support
25 us.

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1
2 MARK RAMPERSANT: Yeah, it is definitely
3 concerning and I appreciate you enlightening that for
4 us first and foremost. Oh, I was sworn in yes.
5 Brannan wants me to get sworn in again.

6 Yeah, so thank you for bringing that to our
7 attention. This is definitely, definitely not on our
8 radar as an area of concern. As this school has a
9 plethora of social emotional supports. We believe
10 the number is 17 guidance counselors and 3 social
11 workers currently at that school. A respect for all
12 liaison and they have a leader in safety and climate
13 and culture who is sort of a no nonsense. So, it's
14 surprising to hear that from you. Nevertheless,
15 we're going to follow up on this school immediately.
16 As I'm talking, there are people trying to make
17 connections.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: I like the typing. I
19 think that's great. I think the issue is the parents
20 that are involved in this have reached out to the
21 DOE. It appears even leaders at the school are fear
22 of this gang in the school. So, it doesn't matter if
23 you have representatives. You mentioned 17 guidance
24 counselors and emotional support leaders. If adults
25 are scared of a gang in a school that's a problem.

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1 working on the case but I haven't heard back from
2 anyone. Thank you. Thank you Chair.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have Council
5 Member Hanif followed by -

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Can I do a follow up real
7 quick? What's the wait to see a guidance counselor
8 and the social workers at these schools? What's the
9 rate and what's the ratio?

10 EMMA VADEHRA: I don't have the wait; I have
11 ratio if you just give me one second to pull it up.
12 Guidance Counselor and one of the experts should feel
13 free to answer the follow up questions but the
14 guidance counselor ratio at our schools is about 1 to
15 180 in high schools, 1 to 260 in all schools,
16 guidance counselor and social worker ratio, so if you
17 think of both of them as sources of support, 1 to 160
18 across all schools and down to 1 to 125 at the high
19 school level.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Council Member
21 Hanif.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you so much Chairs.
23 I'm going to dig a little about asylum seeker
24 students. Early March, approximately 5,700 students
25 were evicted from shelter due to the Mayor's 60-day

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1 policy. This resulted in 302 students needing to
2 transfer to another school and over 1,000 students
3 leaving the public school system entirely. So, I'd
4 like to get some updated data on the metrics. How
5 many students have been evicted from shelter as of
6 today?
7

8 EMMA VADEHRA: So, what we can speak to is the
9 number — what we can speak to from where we sit as
10 the ones who are not operating the shelters but who
11 are working as closely as we can with our city
12 partners is how many students we believe have
13 received 60-day eviction notices and how many uhm,
14 over the past month, the number we have — again,
15 these are our estimates.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: When do you get those
17 numbers? Is it like a daily or a weekly update?

18 EMMA VADEHRA: So, for these numbers — so we are
19 working on a system that allows us to get daily and
20 weekly updates with NYSIM. Part of that is we've
21 been working on that system but there's frankly a lot
22 of data cleaning that needs to happen for us to feel
23 confident that we're actually picking up all the
24 students we need to. So, what we're doing now is
25 looking at students who 60 days ago were in a HERC

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1 and assuming those students would have gotten a 60-
2 day notice and then looking at that as the group of
3 students. So, we're continuing to work to get the
4 actual -
5

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: What's the data that you
7 have?

8 EMMA VADEHRA: 6,700 is over the last month is
9 what we're looking at. So, they were in a shelter on
10 February 14th and we're about two months from when we
11 last pulled the data.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And then how many - of
13 these students, how many have been transferred to
14 another school?

15 EMMA VADEHRA: Yes, so if you look at that set of
16 students overall, again -

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: This is the 6,700?

18 EMMA VADEHRA: Yes, exactly. Yes. When you look
19 overall at those, about 40 percent are still in the
20 same school and in the same housing location as we
21 have it.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Hmm, hmm.

23 EMMA VADEHRA: Uhm, about actually about -

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: What do you mean in the
25 same housing location?

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1 EMMA VADEHRA: So, this is what I'm saying.

2
3 These is what I'm saying, these are students who we
4 predict would have received the notice but we don't
5 know that they did.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it but could you also
7 describe the relationship that DOE leadership and
8 NYSIM has in terms of making sure that this is a
9 coordinated situation where harm is mitigated and
10 reduced?

11 EMMA VADEHRA: Yes, so we working really closely
12 with NYSIM and DHS to make sure we are supporting our
13 students as well as possible, which is what we see as
14 our role here, is to support these students as well
15 as we can. In terms of the data, we're working with
16 them to make sure we get that data. In terms of
17 serving our students, what we are doing is making
18 sure all of our students and families are aware of
19 their rights. Their right to stay in their current
20 school for that to be their source of stability if
21 that's what they want as well as the right to
22 transfer to a different school if that's what they
23 want with their housing location. So, we've trained
24 all of our schools, family facing staff on that
25 across the system. We have a letter that all

1 families are given translated that explains to them
2 what their rights are to stay or to move and then of
3 course we work with our school communities and our
4 transportation team to make sure we're providing the
5 supports that are needed. Just to return to the data
6 itself, another 40 percent have moved housing but are
7 still in the same school. Roughly 4 percent have
8 moved housing and schools, so I think -

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: 4 percent?

10 EMMA VADEHRA: 4 percent. I think that's the
11 direct answer to your question.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So, they left the school
13 and they left and they have different housing.

14 EMMA VADEHRA: Uhm, and then roughly one percent
15 have moved schools but not housing, and then roughly
16 10 percent have left the system, New York City Public
17 Schools all together and that could be for a variety
18 of different reasons.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: What was that last set?

20 EMMA VADEHRA: Roughly 10 percent.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: 10 percent have left the
22 city entirely? Uhm, and then, you said that 4
23 percent of the 6,700 have left the public school
24 system entirely or?
25

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1
2 EMMA VADEHRA: 10 percent have left the system; 4
3 percent have moved housing in schools of that 6,700.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And then of the students
5 who left the public school system, is there any
6 coordination to make sure that these students are not
7 falling through the cracks? And for those who leave
8 our city, is there communication with the school
9 systems of the municipalities they're moving to? And
10 additionally, for those who find permanent housing or
11 informal living arrangements, is there any work that
12 happens to ensure they are enrolling in school?

13 EMMA VADEHRA: Yes, so ensuring all - on the last
14 one, ensuring all of our students regardless are
15 enrolled in school is a priority across the system
16 and what I'd say for these students that are moving
17 from a shelter to permanent housing or whatever it
18 may be, it goes back into the category of making sure
19 they understand their rights to stay at their school
20 if that's what they and their family want, to move to
21 another school if that's what they prefer and work
22 through our enrollment system to do that.

23 In terms of students leaving the system, we have
24 less insight and support into where all of them are
25 going. We track based on discharge codes and are

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1 happy to share that data. What our schools know
2 about who they are and why they report they are
3 leaving but once they leave our system -

4
5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Chairs, I just have a few
6 follow up.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, go ahead.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you.

9 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: Council Member Hanif if I
10 may add to your inquiry. We also have been working
11 with Health and Hospitals around the coordination
12 that you're describing to ensure that school leaders
13 actually get access to data. So, in our recent P-
14 Digest due to the new data that we started to get
15 through NYSIM, schools are now going to have access
16 through our automated student assistance to who are
17 the students who are going to be impacted by the 60-
18 day rule. So, not only is that data going to be
19 leaving centrally for us to like observe and keep
20 track but it's also going to be accessible at the
21 school level starting next week. So, schools were
22 notified about this in the recent P-digest. They
23 should be able to begin to see that data. This has
24 been ongoing work with our partners as our Deputy
25 Chancellor described.

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1 I also want to add to your question regarding, do
2 we know, do we have any contact with the schools
3 where these young people and children are going that
4 the way that we have to conduct even student
5 discharges in our system, that protocols that we'll
6 have to follow. So, even to discharge a student to
7 go to another school district, we need to have
8 confirmation that that student is actually enrolled
9 in that district. And there's different layers for
10 how we keep track of families and where they're
11 going. So, this is where we leverage our attendance
12 teachers who are underground connected to school.
13 This is how we leverage shelter-based coordinators to
14 really like be able to get information about what's
15 happening with these families and ultimately continue
16 to emphasize for those that remain here. That even
17 if they have to change a shelter location, but they
18 have the right to remain in their home school that
19 they are currently enrolled in.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Sure, I just want to wrap
22 up my set of questions and while I understand that
23 the law is in place to allow families to keep their
24 kid at the school that they began in and have the
25 right to finish their school year in that same

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1 school, this has become untenable because the
2 relocations are much farther away from their school.
3 I just experienced two school in my district and
4 School District 15, 118 and 124 experience and they
5 weren't even a part of, it wasn't even a part of the
6 60-day rule. It was just simply DHS giving
7 directives to big families and the provider worked
8 with DHS to reduce the number of evictions. But
9 still 6 weeks, 8 weeks before a school ends, how is
10 this, how is this a good way to look after our young
11 students and our newest students?
12

13 I want to understand if the exist of students is
14 impacting funding or what the implications of funding
15 is? And then my final question is the \$4 million in
16 funding for the immigrant family communication and
17 outreach initiative is expiring. Could you describe
18 the work that this initiative has done over the past
19 years and how the Admin plans to ensure immigrant
20 families aren't left out in the cold. That no
21 funding is included in the Executive Budget.

22 EMMA VADEHRA: So, on the 1st, if students are
23 transferring out of their schools at this point in
24 the year, the school is not losing any funding due to
25 that student leaving. We do our, we look at our

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1 high-water mark usually in October. Finalize that
2 through a year adjustment and schools get increases
3 or decreases at that time but where schools are
4 seeing substantial influxes right, one of the things
5 we know about welcoming our newest New Yorkers is its
6 changed our enrollment patterns. Having schools
7 continuing to see high numbers of students over the
8 course of the year in some cases. So, over the
9 course of the spring, we've continued to work with
10 some of those schools for example, when Hall Street
11 was set up to ensure those schools got additional
12 funding in their budgets with those large influxes of
13 students but where those students are leaving now
14 that's not impacting the school budget at this point.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: I would also before you
17 share your response, I want to urge the DOE to do
18 what it can as one of the coordinating partners to
19 really push back against the 60 days rule. This is
20 impacting families. It's impacting our youth in ways
21 that are adding onto the trauma and the chaos of
22 moving, constant moving around. It's also impacting
23 young people who are not understanding why their
24 peers, their newest friends are needing to leave the
25 school are experiencing this turmoil.

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1
2 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: Council Member Hanif you
3 can be assured that we do know that school stability,
4 pretty much the more important and consistent factor
5 that we can have for the students and families.
6 Also, I know you spoke about 15K 124. I'm very
7 familiar with the situation that's happening there
8 would be working with the superintendent. That's one
9 of the shelters that expected to close and is a DHS
10 shelter, not an emergency shelter but I'm happy to
11 further discuss the matter with you if you need
12 additional information and in some instances, we have
13 also been able to work with the emergency shelters to
14 ensure that students who are going through initial
15 IEP process will have other circumstances can
16 actually remain in their current shelter. They have
17 a processing place where you can pretty much appeal,
18 so we understand. We agree and then I know that
19 there's limitations of housing that are a little bit
20 of the -

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: I just don't think they're
22 going to get pulled out of their school just days
23 before they're graduating or days before school ends.

24 EMMA VADEHRA: Council Member, yes, we continue
25 to benefit from the \$4 million investment through

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1 increased language access initiative. Our language,
2 Office of Language Access, which we refer to as OLA,
3 proactively continues to translate all critical
4 communications in the nine languages. We provide
5 interpretation services in over 200 languages. Any
6 parent can request interpretation services at their
7 school. We have seen an increase in the request for
8 service provisions, particularly in over-the-phone
9 interpretations and we continue to meet that at that
10 demand.
11

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: But is that a part of this
13 immigrant family communication outreach initiative,
14 which is expiring?

15 EMMA VADEHRA: This funding was part of what was
16 restored in the announcement several weeks ago.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay, well I have more
18 questions but I will pass it back to my Chairs.
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Avilés.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you Chair. I was
22 like, wow, I hit the lotto. Good afternoon DOE team.
23 I guess first I'd like to commend the Commissioner
24 for how he managed the congressional theater that was
25 occurring. You did us proud and several of my

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1 constituents were actually texting me around how you
2 held firm and particularly noted how we actually take
3 antisemitism and hate very seriously in this city and
4 it's not theater for us so I just want to thank you
5 particularly for that.
6

7 And also, you mentioned uhm, that in fact you
8 look to some of us for how we could have some of
9 those courageous conversations that I would redirect
10 that to principal Capetanakis of PS69. She has the
11 leadership around how to have these real
12 conversations, courageous conversations when you last
13 in PS69. She is an amazing leader and in fact, I was
14 like, you need to come to the Council to talk to us
15 about how you do this work. But on a serious note, I
16 want to talk about two things in particular. I want
17 to talk about our ELL students. The drop out rates,
18 the graduation rates. I was truly alarmed to find
19 out that the ELL drop out rate is at 17 percent
20 compared to 5.4 percent for general and has increased
21 2 percent over the last two years and on the flip
22 side, that the graduation rate is at 62 percent
23 compared to 86 percent on the general on a 5 percent
24 decrease over the last couple of years. This is
25 deeply, deeply alarming. The Administration has

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1 supported a transfer school expansion, which we
2 clearly need to serve immigrant students but was only
3 expanded and given one time funding of 300,000K. All
4 that we know. All the increased needs that we have
5 and the fact that we are failing these students so
6 deeply has me deeply concerned and I want to know the
7 Administration is going to meet this need. Advocates
8 have been calling for a mere 800,000 to expand these
9 programs and also to offer the pedagogy and expertise
10 that they've offered, that they've developed over the
11 years and dealing with transfer students and families
12 to expand it to ten high schools. This is a teeny
13 tiny bit in this larger pile, in this larger pool of
14 need. So, I'd love to hear more about how you're
15 addressing this real failure and what are your
16 commitments for increased funding to meet this need?
17

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Could you state your name
19 please?

20 MIRZA SANCHEZ MEDINA: Sure, Mirza Sanchez
21 Medina.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Do you affirm to
23 tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the
24 truth before this Committee and to respond honestly
25 to Council Member questions?

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1 MIRZA SANCHEZ MEDINA: I do.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

4 MIRZA SANCHEZ MEDINA: Council Avilés, thank you
5 very much for that question. We have been increasing
6 graduation rate for multilingual learners since 2019
7 when it was at 34 percent and increased 62 percent
8 and has slightly decreased this year, this past year.
9 Also, we have been decreasing a drop out rate from a
10 27 percent to a 15 percent and we continue to work
11 with those numbers because we definitely want to
12 ensure that multilingual learners are at the center.
13 Part of the work that we have been doing especially
14 with this Administration in 2022, assigned specific
15 funding to open more – what we call revitalized
16 bilingual education. We're looking at how can we
17 support the existing bilingual programs? How can we
18 increase or expand bilingual programs where we need
19 it and in addition, in partnership with the New York
20 City Immigration Coalition, they brought to our
21 attention the need to expand English Language focus
22 programs within the transfer schools.

23 So, we were able to identify. We kind of mapped
24 the city and see where we can ensure that we can
25 provide more access of transfer school programs to

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1 students and we worked with Superintendents of
2 transfer schools and they identified places where we
3 can expand these programs. So, we did this with six
4 schools. We provided funding to provide professional
5 learning. We provide funding to look at their
6 program and also, we worked with the international
7 networks of public schools to ensure that they since
8 they have this model they can support these schools
9 and we also partnered with Stanford University to
10 provide professional learning to these students.

11
12 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you. I just want
13 to say I appreciate the advances that have been made
14 you know claiming the 2014 numbers, either 17 of 15
15 percent is deeply alarming and giving the increasing
16 need, what I want to hear is a commitment to expand
17 the needed funding so that we can address this head
18 on in a model that works and in a model that you have
19 been expanding. In a very modest call and a very
20 modest call quite frankly. Less than \$1 million to
21 make sure that we can equip schools who don't have
22 this expertise with the expertise of how to better
23 engage these students but also expanding the current
24 transfer schools because they are deeply, deeply
25 needed.

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1 So, what I'd like to hear is we are committed to
2 baseline funding and we're committed to - we can
3 expand the over the years but certainly a slightly
4 expanded amount.
5

6 DAN WEISBERG: We hear you and we will get back
7 to you. I mean we were focused on finding the
8 funding, which we were very happy we were able to do
9 for bilingual programs that Mirza was talking about.
10 When we talk about transfer schools, one of the big
11 things I know you you know Council Member was a
12 learning to work program, which serves a lot of our
13 newcomer students and we're very pleased that we're
14 able to find tax levy funding.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Those are great.

16 DAN WEISBERG: But I hear you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: You hear me.

18 DAN WEISBERG: I'm not saying those are in place
19 of but just to say we have been focused on the
20 population of young people. We will get back to you
21 on that.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Yeah, 17 percent is
23 unacceptable. So, I want to pivot quickly to the
24 capital. I guess I have a cognitive desinence with
25 some of claim that there are no cuts to teacher lines

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1 because in the city's financial plan, projects the
2 number of full-time pedagogues to be, excuse me hold
3 on. It projects a loss of nearly 1,000 teachers
4 alone in the next two years. I understand we're
5 saying there's vacancies. We're saying these are
6 unfilled. However, I sit with that in the face of
7 the small class size work that we should be doing. I
8 don't understand how we are claiming to not cut but
9 cut and also address the mandates of class size.
10 They seem in direct contradiction. I'm having a real
11 hard time understanding the rationale.

12
13 MIRZA SANCHEZ MEDINA: So, the drop that you see
14 is indicative of the federal stimulus headcount that
15 we talked about earlier and that's what we're working
16 with OMB to align.

17 EMMA VADEHRA: And I would just add as we
18 actually look toward next year, right and what is in
19 school budgets, which is what will drive how many
20 teachers we actually have next year. What we know is
21 that we are investing in additional hundred – and
22 those positions, those actual teachers don't show up
23 in our headcount right but yeah, but we are investing
24 in additional \$180 million in school budgets. Around
25 135 of which is explicitly for class size. That

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1 should be enough to hire between 1,200 and close to
2 2,000 teachers, assuming those teachers can be found.
3 That's what those dollars would support and those are
4 additional dollars we're putting into school budgets
5 for next year.
6

7 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: And in terms of the \$2
8 billion uhm, that was allocated by the state in terms
9 of I guess raising the limit. That should be
10 allocated also to address our class size among other
11 things. We don't see them recognized in the Capital
12 Plan. Why is that?

13 EMMA VADEHRA: So, you said this but just so
14 we're all clear. The additional dollars from the
15 state are for capital. The additional dollars that
16 will be realized are for capital in particular. The
17 state has dedicated no dollars explicitly to
18 implementation of the class size law.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Right but that's for the
20 capital, for the school capital budget, right.

21 EMMA VADEHRA: Yeah.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Right it needs to expand
23 in order to meet this mandate and given the states
24 allocation of \$2 billion in capital dollars, well,
25 what I am asking directly is, is that \$2 billion

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1 currently reflected in the capital plan moving
2 forward?

3
4 EMMA VADEHRA: The \$2 billion will be reflected
5 in the School Construction Authorities capital plan
6 as required by the state. It's not yet because of
7 the timing issue of the state law and when the
8 executive budget came through but the state has
9 required that.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Right, so we'll be
11 hawking that capital budget. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, questions from
13 Council Member Krishnan followed by Nurse.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you so much
15 Chairs Brannan and Joseph. Good to see you all.
16 Thank you Chancellor and I echo Council Member
17 Avilés's comments too and you did a very good job at
18 the hearing at Capital Hill in your testimony, I
19 watched it.

20 I just had a few follow up questions. I mean
21 most of the topics have been covered but just wanted
22 to hit a couple of them. So, one is going back to
23 school foods. My two spies in the DOE system report
24 that bean burritos are also back and they are very
25 happy about that too. So, we'll talk about meat here

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1 but there's good vegetarian food here too. But I
2 just wanted to you know uhm, I just understand at a
3 more simpler level. What exactly is the status, so
4 there's a \$60 million PEG that was restored. \$25
5 million I think if I understood it correctly from
6 federal government. So, does that fully restore
7 school funding? Are there any other programmatic
8 cuts to school funding? I mean, what I'm asking, is
9 there going to be any change or cuts to the school
10 lunch menu or has everything been restored at this
11 point?
12

13 EMMA VADEHRA: So, that \$25 million that we
14 received for this year has basically put burritos,
15 all the chicken and the French toast sticks back on
16 the menu, so that's what our children are being
17 served right now. As we look towards next year,
18 we're still closing out our budget for this year and
19 we know as we look towards next year, over the course
20 of the year, we will get additional federal revenue
21 just like we did this year.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Hmm, hmm.

23 EMMA VADEHRA: And so, we can't say for certain
24 where our budget will end up at the end of next year.
25 What we can say now is we'll be starting the year

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1 making sure those options are on the menu for
2 students.
3

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Right, going through
5 the start of the year then everything is fully
6 restored, right? Because if it seems that \$60
7 million PEG plus the \$25 is \$85 total is more than
8 what the original cut or cost was right? Doesn't
9 that make you all fully whole or a bit more than
10 whole?

11 EMMA VADEHRA: The \$25 million is the additional
12 revenue that we received yes.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Right, okay. Thank you
14 so we'll keep an eye on it but my children and all of
15 our children are the ones that are holding us all
16 accountable on this cell. We'll hear from them
17 first. I mean literally, I hear from them on the way
18 home from school what they ate from lunch.

19 EMMA VADEHRA: We heard from quite a lot of them
20 as well.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: They are the loudest.
22 Uhm, my next question was about and you also touched
23 on this a bit too but I'm glad to hear that
24 enrollment has gone up. It's correct me if I'm wrong
25 but the federal stimulus funding that has dried up,

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1 there is a new funding stream coming in that has
2 replaced it, so as you all are figuring out school
3 budgets for the schools that have seen a decline in
4 enrollment, have there been conversations internally
5 about how to address that? Where are you all on
6 that? Understanding that there is more to come.

8 EMMA VADEHRA: Yes, so as you noted and as we
9 previewed for multiple years in advance, the federal
10 stimulus dollars that we're doing that hold harmless
11 specifically for school budgets, have expired and
12 that money is not money that's being replaced
13 directly. What we are doing is and again, just to
14 run through it because I think it's important. There
15 are a series of other ways we have increased school
16 budgets that have been sustainable. We've added a
17 new wait for students in temporary housing in our
18 highest need school, \$100 million extra dollars this
19 year. We added an additional \$200 million, \$215 in
20 state funding this year that went to schools as well
21 and both of those will be sustained and frankly the
22 one for students in temporary housing is growing as
23 we continue to welcome more of our newest students.

24 In addition for next year while the hold harmless
25 is gone, that was \$160 million, we are putting in

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1 \$180 million for next year to support school budgets.

2 What I will say it is different from the hold

3 harmless because we are making a decision to use it

4 explicitly most of it for our class size and so, that

5 will be different. Schools will experience into that

6 differently. That's how they'll need to use those

7 dollars. We are also looking as we distribute it.

8 We are not looking at is a hold harmless. We're

9 looking at our highest need schools that have space

10 to hire additional teachers to comply with the law.

11 So, still working on that precisely but that's how

12 we're pushing those additional dollars out given the

13 need to continue to comply with the Class Size Law.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Got it. Thank you and

15 we look forward to seeing more on the issue too as

16 budgets, individual school budgets come out. And my

17 final question is just you know and Council Member

18 Avilés touched upon it a bit as well but I've always

19 you know spoken about the importance of bilingual

20 education. You know one of the schools I went to

21 recently in my district was hosting a program with

22 CUNY on it. Now, it's even more urgent given the

23 influx of asylum seekers so for high schools in

24 particular that are seeing and really all the schools

25

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1 that are seeing a large influx of asylum seekers,
2 what are we doing to increase training, you know
3 bilingual resources and funding for programs like
4 Project Soaring and others?
5

6 MIRZA SANCHEZ MEDINA: Thank you Councilman and I
7 know you're an advocate, a great advocate for this
8 work. Like we have testified in this Council, we
9 have been working for the past two years on
10 strengthening bilingual education programs, expanding
11 opening new programs but at the same time, ensuring
12 that the same way other students are receiving high
13 quality education, multilingual learners are also,
14 especially with the connection with New York City
15 Read. So, we're very happy about that and our
16 students are at the center of that work.

17 When it comes to the high school level, we are
18 continuing to work with superintendents in schools.
19 We have a number of new bilingual programs opening in
20 the middle and high school. We're very happy about
21 that and we're also looking to ensure that not only
22 ENL teachers, English as a new language teachers or
23 bilingual education teachers know how to work with
24 multilingual learners but that all teachers, because
25 all teachers are teachers of ELL's, right? So,

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1 that's the work that we're doing and we're ensuring
2 that we are working with now superintendents in
3 districts to increase their capacity to work with
4 multilingual learners. We will continue - we're very
5 happy that the funding will continue and we will
6 continue to do this work, expand the work. We are
7 set to open in the past two years 100 new bilingual
8 programs and we are working to expand but not only
9 open but at the same time, ensuring that there's a
10 strong structure and continuity within the
11 elementary, middle and high schools.
12

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Great, thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Real quick question on the
15 transfer schools. When transfer schools are over
16 enrolled, what recommendation does New York City
17 Public Schools make for older students that are
18 transitioning into transfer schools.

19 MIRZA SANCHEZ MEDINA: So, we also have District
20 79 that offers a plethora of opportunities for
21 students. Lately they are increasing the number -
22 the instruction of ENL for those students who are
23 older and want to take the equivalency exam and we're
24 working with that district as well and other
25 opportunity.

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1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How do you support that
3 district in terms of is there a waitlist program? How
4 do you support D79 in meeting the needs of older
5 adults? We uhm, I know there's a need for new
6 transfer schools. We don't have enough. You don't
7 have enough staffing for it so talk - walk us through
8 this process for me please.

9 MIRZA SANCHEZ MEDINA: So, I am another one who
10 works directly with District 79 but we have met
11 numerous times with Superintendent as parents and
12 working and developing. She has an amazing plan and
13 a great passion to do this work and we have worked
14 with her in terms of what curricula she can use to
15 support older students and the programs that she has.
16 She also works with Superintendent Sullivan who leads
17 the transfer schools, most of the transfer schools
18 and they are working in partnership to ensure that
19 they can talk to each other and even have programs
20 within the same building.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Are you encouraging transfer
22 students to go to D79 versus going to regular New
23 York City Public Schools to get the high school
24 diploma?
25

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1
2 MIRZA SANCHEZ MEDINA: So, we offer opportunities
3 for students, right, choice and they get to make that
4 choice. I think my colleague will answer more on
5 that.

6 DANIKA RUX: I need to be sworn in.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: She volunteered; I like
9 that.

10 DANIKA RUX: Danika Rux.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the
12 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
13 before this Committee and to respond honestly to
14 Council Member questions?

15 DANIKA RUX: I do.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

17 DANIKA RUX: So, I just want to add, thank you
18 Mirza for starting off the response but I just want
19 to add that all of our students have counseling
20 sessions and during those counseling sessions with
21 their guidance counselor or enrollment officers, they
22 get an opportunity to talk about what their strengths
23 are, what their needs are and what are the best
24 placements for our students.

25

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1 So, it's individualized and it's personalized to
2 meet the students needs. So, there isn't one cookie
3 cutter program or school community for students but
4 through those conversations, we are able to make the
5 right match for them and their needs.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you and the cuts on
8 the educators, the pedagogy, what titles are being
9 cut? And you can get back to me on that. Thank you.
10 Council Member Nurse.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you Chairs. Good
12 afternoon. I had just three questions. One, earlier
13 this year, we had a childhood education, early
14 childhood education center close and through that
15 process, one you all were excellent in responding to
16 us and trying to help us understand what happened.
17 But we didn't really have any early warnings that
18 were communicated to us about how we could support
19 and it turned out that a lot of it was related to
20 underutilization and under enrollment and we found
21 out we have about 300 underutilized early childhood
22 education seats in some of the zip codes around
23 Bushwick, the Bushwick, Williamsburg area. And so, I
24 was wondering since then, what are some of the
25 strategies that have gone into place to fill those

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1 seats because you know our team has done the best we
2 can in our four-person district team. You know, we
3 have flyers, I mean we're doing everything we can to
4 let people know about it but obviously we need help
5 to fill these seats and I know this is a broader
6 Council ask but that was a particular moment that we
7 didn't have that information and we wanted to know
8 what was done in the interim between that place
9 closing, the recognition of that many seats being
10 available and how we're filling them.

12 DANIKA RUX: Hi Council Member Nurse. I know you
13 and I have been in contact about this site in
14 particular and their reason for closure was not due
15 to lack of enrollment right? That was a voluntary
16 choice that they made to withdraw their contract from
17 New York City Public Schools and as you know it was
18 very abrupt.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: But the broader issue -

20 DANIKA RUX: Yeah, sure. So each case would be
21 different. In that case, we do everything that we
22 possibly can to make sure that we shift those seats
23 and get them to where families need them, right? So,
24 we've reallocated those and we supported families
25 that absolutely need it.

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1 Just on the broader end, you know wherever there
2 is any under enrollment or underutilization, we
3 obviously look to see what actually is the need? Is
4 it the right seat? Is it the right seat type? Is it
5 the right age group? Where can we make changes or
6 conversions? And then to all of the discussions that
7 we've had around outreach and marketing, it that
8 continues to be a need, that will be the support
9 that's provided to -

11 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: I'm asking specifically
12 the recognition of that many seats open was very eye
13 shocking. It was very shocking to me to hear that
14 that many seats and we were told about 300. I don't
15 know if that's fully accurate. That's what we were
16 told. So, what since then has transpired to try to
17 fill those seats. Like, is there any on the ground
18 work? I mean, what have you all done to try to fill
19 those seats specifically?

20 KARA AHMED: I'm sorry Council Member Nurse, can
21 you just clarify? Are you talking about in a
22 specific site how many seats -

23 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: No, not that site. That's
24 who we began the conversation.

25 KARA AHMED: Got it.

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1 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: But through that
2 conversation you said "hey, this site closing is not
3 actually a big problem because we have so much under
4 utilization."
5

6 KARA AHMED: That's right.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: So, with that problem
8 being identified, what has happened since then to try
9 to change those numbers?

10 KARA AHMED: Thank you for clarifying. That
11 speaks to the larger issue right? So, that there is
12 an access of seats even in the district where we've
13 discussed you know about that under utilization and
14 where there actually is need. And so, the question
15 really becomes and that's the analysis that we have
16 done to determine whether or not those seats are
17 actually needed there or could be used in other areas
18 or if they're the right age group. So, I know that
19 there have been some conversions in that district in
20 particular. I think we shared those data pieces.
21 I'm happy to review them again and we can pull that
22 back up. I don't have the specifics.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: We never got any full
24 follow up from that conversation about what the plan
25 was or what that assessment yielded.

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1
2 KARA AHMED: Yeah, we can certainly follow up. I
3 know there's been lots of different discussions and
4 along with some of our City Hall partners. So, we
5 can certainly provide that data and between both
6 agencies, we can follow up.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: That would be great. My
8 next question was around the cafeteria enhancement
9 experience. I'm sorry if this was asked earlier but
10 some of our schools have had it and a lot more of our
11 schools want it. I'm just wondering what the budget
12 line is for that and how many schools will be covered
13 this upcoming fiscal year.

14 CHRIS TRICARICO: Thank you very much for that
15 question. We now have had two successful years of
16 implementation last year and in addition to this
17 year. This year we're installing over 80 sites. In
18 the next capital plan, there is money designated for
19 an additional number of sites. I believe the number
20 is about \$125 million over 5 years. We're very
21 excited about that. We still are in planning stages
22 but we know we'll be able to achieve putting
23 cafeteria enhancement experience in all middle and
24 high schools that can get the renovations and we will
25

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1 begin to start to talk about what elementary
2 renovations can be done inside of cafeterias.

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, so do you know how
5 many schools you'll cover next fiscal year?

6 CHRIS TRICARICO: Uhm, not yet but I can get back
7 to you. Due to rising costs and the change of
8 equipment and the change of strategy, I'd like to get
9 back to you on a more accurate number.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We've been joined by
12 Council Member -

13 EMMA VADEHRA: If I can just say quickly, I will
14 say this was one of the few things that actually saw
15 an increase as we look towards our next capital plan,
16 which is smaller overall but given the success of the
17 program, eager to move through all of the schools.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we've been joined by
19 Council Members Marte and Powers. Now we have
20 questions from Council Member Narcisse followed by
21 Dinowitz.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Good afternoon and
23 thank you Chairs. Thank you for being here
24 Chancellors, always happy to see you. Coming to the
25 vendors, I hear that some of them are getting paid on

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1 time two weeks. How we doing with the one that
2 providing nurses services to our children in our
3 schools? That's one and before I get to all my
4 questions, I want to say I am having a great
5 experience with experience because Glenda been
6 awesome for District 79 and she's been providing like
7 miracles for me in my district which I have a lot of
8 asylum seekers and then the teachers that she put
9 there are awesome. They kind of are performing
10 miracles. I went to the room full of auditorium and
11 I went to a different classroom for the experience
12 and so far I'll tell you, we're dealing with a
13 problem and I thank you for your support on that.

14 Uhm, the vendors, keep that in mind. I want to
15 know they're getting paid because I have some vendors
16 that called me. They were about to drop their
17 contract. They cannot provide the nurses. I have to
18 beg. Believe me, I beg on behalf of all of us in New
19 York City because I don't want no parents who goes on
20 the street saying their kids not getting the
21 treatment. As a nurse in the school building, I said
22 no, you cannot do that. So, we need to work on that
23 to get them paid because they're paying the nurses up
24 front.
25

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1 Uhm, now, coming to bilingual, I know we talk
2 about bilingual. I'm going to ask a question, please
3 write it down because I have to use my time wisely.
4 The Council was pleased that there was a baselined
5 addition of \$10 million for bilingual education and
6 \$6 million for translation services in the Executive
7 Plan. With this funding, bilingual education
8 programming at the same level in Fiscal 2025, it is
9 currently in Fiscal 2024. If not, you can tell me
10 why. Will this funding keep translation services,
11 programming at the same level in Fiscal 2025 as it is
12 currently in Fiscal 2024? If not, keep that for me,
13 you let me know.
14

15 What specific measures are being taken to assess
16 the impact of potentially reduced nursing coverage on
17 students with chronic conditions like asthma,
18 diabetes who rely on daily nursing support? In the
19 light of expiring federal funds. What alternative
20 funding strategies are being considered to ensure
21 that no school is left without a nurse? Are there
22 partnerships or other funding sources being explored?
23 What long term strategies are being developed to
24 ensure sustainable funding for school nurses beyond
25 this Fiscal Year?

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1 And earlier, about preschool special education, I
2 don't recall how much was requested, so if you can
3 highlight this for me to tell me how much you had
4 requested for that? And I'm going to stay on that.
5

6 DAVID BANKS: So, we'll try to go through these
7 as quickly.

8 KENITA LLOYD: I'll go very quickly, Council
9 Member Narcisse, yes to your question about
10 maintaining the same levels of service for our Office
11 of Language Access for Translation and
12 Interpretation.

13 MIRZA SANCHEZ MEDINA: And for bilingual
14 education, we will continue working with schools and
15 districts to open and strengthen bilingual programs.

16 EMMA VADEHRA: On school nursing, as I said
17 earlier, this is not the end of the budget process.
18 We are hopeful to receive additional dollars for
19 that. Those stimulus dollars are supporting roughly
20 400 nurses and we are committed to continuing to
21 provide a nurse in all our school buildings and where
22 students have specific needs, we've obviously, we've
23 increased in our staffing line for students with
24 disabilities in particular, diabetes in particular
25

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1 and are committed to continuing to work with OMB to
2 ensure we can keep a nurse in every building.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, now we have -

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Sorry, preschool
6 special education, how much of that you requested
7 that you did not get? Did you get less? I didn't
8 get the number.

9 KARA AHMED: The Council Member is referring to
10 the new needs, right? So there was a new needs that
11 was requested for a little over \$125 million.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: In terms of contracts,
13 are we looking to improve because the vendors, I'm
14 coming back to the contract for the nurses because
15 that was scary when I got - as a matter of fact, two
16 different vendors that they're going to stop the
17 services like in the three days period. So, how are
18 we doing with that? How long it takes for them to
19 get paid?

20 KARA AHMED: We are working on improving that.
21 Some of those escalations came to me as well and
22 those are obviously always start with staff nurses.
23 Those contract nurses are critical to ensure we're
24 serving all our schools. So, we'll continue to work
25

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1 to improve and when you have escalations, please just
2 let me know directly and we'll go through it quickly.

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Last one Chair. On the
5 mental health continuum. The \$5 million that we were
6 expecting to get back on. If we don't have that \$5
7 million back on our budget, would that make any
8 difference in the services of mental health in our
9 school building?

10 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: That is correct. That
11 will particularly impact just those 50 schools. I
12 think it's still important to know that in addition
13 to work like the mental health continuum, we have
14 school counselors, social workers, and also mental
15 health clinics in many of our DOE schools.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you and then for
17 the Sheepshead Bay area, the school that I have that
18 we had an issue with, is that being addressed fully?
19 Origin, are we making progress with that?

20 DAN WEISBERG: Council Member, are you talking
21 about origins on the Sheepshead Bay and the issues
22 that have occurred there?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Hmm, hmm.

24 DAN WEISBERG: That's an ongoing situation that
25 the superintendent and doctor Rux's team are pushing

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1 in quite a bit to make sure that principal is
2 supported. We haven't had recent incidents but it's
3 something we're watching very carefully. It's an
4 ongoing situation.
5

6 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you. I
7 appreciate that. I appreciate that Chairs.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Can I ask something, a
9 follow up question. We know that very well that
10 mental health continuum provides a unique services to
11 these city's 50 schools. So, my question will be,
12 will we see a baseline in the budget at \$5 million?
13 We know it's a three-agency prong that provides
14 unique services. It's not the same at the school-
15 based clinics, let's make that clear on the record,
16 right? So, the question is, is that something that
17 should be in the adopted budget baselined? So, next
18 year, we're not here having the same dance around
19 mental health continuum and we can have another dance
20 on something else, right? So, anyone from the Admin
21 want to answer?

22 EMMA VADEHRA: I mean, I think I'd say for a
23 number of these programs of course from our
24 perspective, it's helpful to have things baselined
25

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1 going forward and that's true for some of the
2 stimulus programs we talked through earlier.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, we have to distinguish
5 well, uhm the \$65 million with federal dollars for
6 400 nurses. Is that also going to look to be
7 baselined? We know we need nurses in every single
8 school.

9 EMMA VADEHRA: I can't speak to what will be in
10 the adopted budget, obviously those are ongoing
11 conversations. We do need additional dollars to
12 ensure that those nurses are in every school next
13 year, which we are committed to continuing that
14 policy.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And earlier, we spoke about
16 early childhood. How many, we covered on how many we
17 need for seats. How much is the funding for the
18 students in the seats? That's - I believe that's
19 what my colleague was asking. Ms. Foti, I'm waiting.
20 Thank you. How many seats will be created and how
21 much more money do you need to serve every preschool
22 with disability and how much money did you request?

23 CHRISTINA FOTI: So, what DC Ahmed quoted in
24 terms of the new need for \$125 million, that would
25 cover the seats that are needed as well as related

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1 service providers. So, it would cover the need of
2 the 800 students that we spoke about earlier as well
3 as the projected need that we're seeing in light of
4 the growth.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: In the new needs, was that
7 made clear to OMB that you'll need this amount of
8 money to cover these students?

9 CHRISTINA FOTI: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have questions
12 from Council Member Dinowitz followed by Gutiérrez.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you Chairs.
14 Hello Chancellor's, Deputy Chancellor's and uh you
15 know half the DOE. It's good to see all of you. I
16 got a question about two titles and some reading.
17 I'm not going to ask about lunch per se but we - you
18 know it's very special that we in New York City have
19 free lunch for everyone but as a result, a lot of
20 students aren't filling out their lunch forms and I
21 have had concerns from some of my schools uhm, that
22 as it relates to students filling out those forms,
23 they're losing out on some Title I funding. So, I
24 just want you to talk a little bit about that. I
25 have a few questions. One is, if you could just

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1 share the threshold for the number of students who
2 qualify for free lunch, a school needs in order for
3 them to get Title I funding. What mechanisms are in
4 place if they are just below that threshold as is the
5 case in a number of my schools? And what efforts DOE
6 centrally is making to ensure not only that the forms
7 are filled out, as a matter of how it functions but
8 also do students and families feel comfortable giving
9 that information over to a government agency and I'm
10 talking about support beyond providing reports to the
11 school.
12

13 SERITTA SCOTT: Sure, so the threshold is 60
14 percent and in terms for a school that may fall below
15 that threshold, we have sort of a grandfathering
16 process, so they will be held harmless for the next
17 year in hopes to get the number back up and then
18 after that, we re evaluate and then if the school is
19 eligible for Title I, then they will continue to be -

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So, they need 60
21 percent of their students to qualify, for their
22 school to qualify?

23 So, year after year because of a number of
24 reasons, students don't fill out the forms or they
25 fill them out and leave them blank because they're

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1 concerned about sharing data with government, which I
2 think is reasonable in a lot of cases. They're at 58
3 percent, right? And as we know poverty is increasing
4 so it may very well be the case that those schools
5 should qualify for funding, so that's one part but
6 even so, if they're just underneath and they hadn't
7 qualified in the previous years, they have a lot of
8 students who need funding and that school isn't
9 getting funding. So, what mechanisms are in place to
10 help the schools build trust essentially? To build
11 trust, culturally responsive outreach? To help them
12 with the man power to get those forms and if they're
13 just under any financial help you are giving to those
14 schools.

16 SERITTA SCOTT: Yup, so I will actually get back
17 to you on the details in terms of what we're doing
18 with the process of helping fill out forms.

19 DAVID BANKS: Principals know that they always
20 have to have an all-out effort to drive those numbers
21 because they know getting those forms back has always
22 been, Deputy Chancellor if you want to lean in on
23 that. You know I was a principal for 11 years; we
24 know too much about funding. It's driven by making
25 sure that you get those forms in, so it involves

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1 parent coordinators, getting messaging out, getting
2 your whole school community involved. Principals in
3 schools do it through a wide range of ways.

4 SERITTA SCOTT: Competitions, class competitions,
5 how many students bring it in and you get a pizza
6 party. That they go all out to try to figure out
7 ways to encourage them but there's also parent
8 training that the parent coordinators do on what does
9 it mean with you complete the form? What information
10 do we get from it and how that information benefits
11 children in the school community? So, there are
12 multiple pathways that we have to ensure that those
13 forms get completed.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I've spoken to a
15 handful of principals and a lot of them say the same
16 number. They have like 90 to 95 completion rate and
17 they also don't know how many parents leave the form
18 blank. So, that is something essentially that you
19 are perhaps able to help with it. If a family does
20 leave it blank doing additional average because those
21 handful of students within a school can in many cases
22 make the difference between them getting funding, of
23 Title I funding and then just not getting any of it
24 at all and that is, can be really impactful to the
25

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1 schools and the 58 percent of students who need that
2 funding to succeed.

3
4 EMMA VADEHRA: Can I just add one thing? And the
5 point is very well taken but I do just want to flag
6 because I think it's something really worth noting
7 about how we fund our schools. Title I is actually a
8 very small proportion of what schools get. Most of
9 our funding flows through Fair Student Funding. Our
10 school funding formula where every student is
11 recognized for their needs. And so, a school with 58
12 percent high need students and with way more nuance I
13 would just note than actually just poverty alone.
14 Students in temporary housing academic wait. So to
15 your point, as three dimensions, they'll get
16 grandfathered in for a year but in other ways, that
17 school will be getting through a larger pot of money
18 additional funds for those 58 percent of kids as well
19 as many other students with disabilities. English
20 Learners, students in temporary housing. It doesn't
21 change the Title I piece but it is one of the ways we
22 ensure our funds are frankly a little more directed
23 to actual every students needs in a school in our far
24 larger pot of money.

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I hear that but when
3 you're a principal dealing with every single dollar,
4 those Title I funds do matter and I think not at this
5 hearing but it is worth digging into, what schools
6 are incentivized do for our students with IEPs and
7 that types of programs they're incentivized
8 financially to provide given the way the fair student
9 funding formula works for students in ICT in self-
10 contained classes in sets. But just with the
11 funding, the reading program. You know I think
12 phonics-based literacy is incredible. The focus on
13 literacy is critical. There is some confusion or
14 some concerns with schools. I have schools telling
15 me that they are getting some of the curriculum but
16 if the want more of the curriculum, more resources
17 went in the curriculum. It has to come out of the
18 school budget. If they want to provide PD for the
19 new curriculum, it comes out of the school budget,
20 all while losing their hardware and software lines.
21 So, there is concern about you know where the money
22 is going in their school budgets and that they are
23 being sort of forced, which again I want to be clear,
24 and the phonics is critical, but it's only fair that

25

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1 schools get the funding they need in order to
2 implement it.

3
4 DANIKA RUX: So, New York City Reads uhm, the
5 funding does not come from the schools budget. It is
6 all centrally funded.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: The PD centrally
8 funded?

9 DANIKA RUX: Yes, it is.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay.

11 DANIKA RUX: Special development is all centrally
12 funded.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Is the entire
14 curriculum and in all resources related to the
15 curriculum centrally funded or does anything come out
16 of an individual schools budget related to the
17 curriculum?

18 DANIKA RUX: So, core curriculum is what they're
19 probably referring to. Schools have to exhaust their
20 core curriculum. Their mistle funding and then we
21 supplement mistle funding centrally so that they get
22 core curriculum. Now that is a list of curriculum
23 that is in core curriculum that they can buy into.
24 If they want supplemental materials, that would come
25 from their budget.

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1 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So, supplemental
2 related to the curriculum that they are required to
3 use.

4 DANIKA RUX: Not that they are required to use,
5 supplemental, solely supplemental.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: You mean the curriculum
7 is a requirement and that's you know a policy
8 agreement or disagreement but the materials or
9 supplemental materials related to it that they're
10 providing to the teachers and students is at a cost.

11 DAN WEISBERG: Yes.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I just, okay thank you.

13 DAN WEISBERG: We supplied a core curriculum.

14 DANIKA RUX: A core curriculum.

15 DAN WEISBERG: There are additional pieces that
16 you can choose to avail yourself of and that's up to
17 the schools.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Right and they are or
19 are not losing their hardware and software lines in
20 their budgets?

21 DANIKA RUX: No, they're not.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: They're not, okay so I
23 do want to at another time get back to you on that
24 because that's different than what I'm hearing. Uhm,
25

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1 and lastly as has been mentioned, uhm, you know I
2 thought your testimony at the hearing in Washington
3 DC was excellent. I think you represented our city
4 very well. Recognizing that there's been work done
5 and that there is significantly more work to do. Has
6 the DOE formerly updated its Chancellor's regulations
7 and its trainings to reflect the Biden
8 Administrations updates to Title 6 guidelines? There
9 were updates made in September and there was recently
10 updates. I think it was May 7th they released
11 something.
12

13 DAVID BANKS: No, not yet. There are a number of
14 things that we are still in deep conversation around
15 but no, we've not updated the Chancellor's regs on it
16 yet.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: You said yes, which is
18 every educators favorite word. Does that mean you
19 plan to update the regulations?

20 DAVID BANKS: Which we may, we may be so we're
21 still looking at all this and seeing where updates
22 may be necessary.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: During your testimony,
24 you shared data related to acts of bias in our public
25 school system. Those are internal. Those are not

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1 posted online. Will they be posted online or are
2 they currently posted online or when will they be
3 posted online?
4

5 DAN WEISBERG: So, those are an internal,
6 actually this is a live issue Council Member and
7 would love to talk to you about it. So, we actually
8 did some of our own additional analysis to get to
9 those numbers because that's uhm, we don't categorize
10 for example, just to give you a quick example, when
11 we have an incident of religious bias, we don't ask
12 principals to code that by was it antisemitism, was
13 it anti-Muslim, was it anti- so we went through and
14 actually did some manual analysis to make sure the
15 Chancellor was armed with that data. That's
16 something we're looking at to see whether this level
17 of granular data would be helpful to continue to put
18 out there but at this point, that was internal.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Right, I'll say in
20 general the bias incident data is also not online, is
21 that correct? Just general, not categorized but acts
22 of bias.

23 DAN WEISBERG: I'll have to look at that. I
24 thought that actually was online but we'll check on
25 that and get right back to you.

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1 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Please do. The New
2 York State publishes your I think DASA. Uhm, yeah, I
3 think the most recent updated was 2021-2022. Open
4 data, everything appears redacted as it disaggregates
5 student suspensions and discipline. And I'll end by
6 saying the New York City Council in our Preliminary
7 Budget response, called for the implementation of a
8 Title 6 coordinator. To deal with all of these issue
9 of updating the Chancellor's regulations of
10 coordinating and providing updated and responsive
11 trainings and to coordinate all the wonderful work
12 that you're doing. You mentioned in your opening
13 statement AAPI, LGBTQIA+, School of African Diaspora
14 curricula and the Forthcoming Muslim and Jewish
15 Voices curricula and a Title 6 coordinator can help
16 coordinate, manage and be the point person for all
17 these critical issues that we see are bubbling up and
18 we see really need to be addressed with a single
19 point person.
20

21 DAVID BANKS: Yeah -

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Chancellor, set your mic.

23 DAVID BANKS: Yeah, I'm sorry, we're looking at
24 that as well. Whether or not that results in a
25 brand-new body in every school versus those

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1 responsibilities being taken up by someone else,
2 perhaps our respect for all coordinator is kind of
3 what we're exploring as well.
4

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Oh but the call wasn't
6 for a Title 6 coordinator in every school? It was
7 you know essentially people to deal with all of this
8 work and there's a lot of work you're doing in a lot
9 of areas as I mentioned, the Title I, the reading
10 curriculum, Title 6 and the Title 6 coordinator could
11 take care of all of the work related to dignity
12 inclusion, all the different curricula and that is
13 among other things the regulations update, and that's
14 is something that we in this Council have called for
15 in the upcoming budget.

16 DAN WEISBERG: Yeah just to, now thanks for
17 clarifying that Council Member. We do have a central
18 Title 6 Coordinator, that's Laura Brantley who is our
19 EEO office head. So, she is the Title 6 Coordinator.

20 DAVID BANKS: But I think you're talking more
21 about being at a district level, if not at every
22 school level but certainly across the districts,
23 which we -

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Yeah, there's a lot of
25 work and it's there to be done and Chairs, I thank

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1 you, thank you. Chancellor and everyone from the
2 Department of Education.
3

4 DAVID BANKS: Thank you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: For all your hard work
6 for our students here in New York City.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We have questions from
8 Council Member Gutiérrez followed by Williams.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you Chairs.

10 Good to see everybody again. Chancellor, good to see
11 you. I will be concise as possible, so if there's
12 any follow-ups, do feel free to send them back.

13 First, I want to give your flowers. I want to say

14 NYC Reads, I'm hearing really, really positive

15 feedback. So, I'm really lucky that my districts

16 were included in the pilot phase. Looking forward to

17 seeing it expanded but hearing good things from both

18 families and educators and seeing the transformation

19 in as young as like 3K classrooms, where principals

20 are preparing from you know the age of 3 to really

21 integrate literacy. So, really meaningful and so -

22 DAVID BANKS: Appreciate, thank you.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: I wanted to ask on -

24 very quickly, on the 3K. I'm looking forward to my

25 response on 3K. My daughter is applying for the - we

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1 applied for the first time. As are all New York City
2 3K families. Do you all have a sense of the
3 percentage of families that applied or will you have
4 that information? How many of them will be placed in
5 their top three or top five priorities? I don't know
6 if you have that now obviously but like will you have
7 that and can you share that with us?
8

9 TREVONDA KELLY: Thank you for your question.
10 Yes, we do 64 percent of families or applicants will
11 get that top choice. 78 percent -

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: And I'm so sorry,
13 that's for this application cycle? For 2024-2025?

14 TREVONDA KELLY: Yes, right. That is correct.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay.

16 TREVONDA KELLY: 78 percent top three choices and
17 then families who receive any choice on the
18 application would be 84 percent and then lastly, all
19 families who receive an offer will be 94 percent.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: 94 okay.

21 DEN WEISBERG: Just one thing if I could build on
22 Trevonda's data Council Member. So, we got the most
23 applicants I believe 3K so over 43,000, that's
24 basically twice what it was prepandemic but we're
25 really happy and I think this is something for all of

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1 us to celebrate, uhm, those numbers that Trevonda
2 just gave are much higher than they were prepandemic.
3 So, in other words, we are able to receive more
4 applications but for example, prepandemic, only 46
5 percent of applicants got the top choice. Only 59
6 percent got one of their top three choices. Those
7 numbers are now 64 and 78. So, we'd like it to be
8 100 but we're moving in the right direction and I
9 just think that's through a lot of hard work, a lot
10 of people. So, that's the thing. The other thing I
11 just want to because you can be helpful to us in
12 getting this information out there. When you don't
13 get your top choice, what happens? We hope you do
14 get your top choice but if you don't get your top
15 choice, let's say you get your number three choice,
16 you are automatically put on a waitlist for your
17 number one and number two. So, there's a lot of
18 people on a wait list who actually may say number
19 three is great, I'm happy but I'm still on a
20 waitlist, so that's just good to know. You don't
21 need to do anything in order to be put on a waitlist
22 and even for those as Trevonda said, 94 percent got
23 an offer, the other 6 percent, they're automatically
24 put on a waitlist for all of the locations that they
25

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1 put down and they can if they choose look to see as
2 Trevonda was talking about earlier, where is there a
3 seat and just sign up for that location. Maybe it's
4 a little farther than they wanted to go, so we're
5 really hopeful that over the next few weeks,
6 everybody, every family that's looking for a seat
7 will get one.
8

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you.

10 TREVONDA KELLY: I'm sorry. Just one more thing
11 to add. You know the results come out tomorrow, I
12 just want to make sure that this is preliminary data
13 that we're providing, so.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: No, no, no, that's
15 totally fine. On the same 3K piece and just to kind
16 of share the space with the class size piece. I know
17 at the last hearing, there was remarks from the
18 Administration that you know the future of achieving
19 reduced class size could have an impact on 3K in our
20 school building which is obviously a concern for me
21 and so many of my colleagues. That was maybe a
22 couple of months ago, I know a lot of things were in
23 the air. Is there any more clarity on that and where
24 is the DOE on maintaining their commitment to yes,
25

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1 wanting to ensure that 3K is available outside of DOE
2 buildings but just as important in our DOE buildings.

3
4 EMMA VADEHRA: Yes, so when we were here a couple
5 months ago on that, we flagged that one of the – the
6 Chancellor put together a class size working group
7 that had some folks in this room as well as many,
8 many others educators, advocates, researchers,
9 parents to make recommendations about how the city
10 should implement the law. One of the recommendations
11 that came from that working group was to – one of the
12 things for the law, we need additional teachers and
13 we need additional space, right? Those are the two
14 things we need to have more classes and smaller class
15 sizes.

16 One of the recommendations the Working Group put
17 out was to move 3K and pre-K out of our school
18 buildings to free up space for the class size law.
19 That is not something we are currently looking at
20 doing. That is not something we need to do to be in
21 compliance with the law for next year. What we do
22 know is that after next year, starting next year but
23 after next year, we are going to need to find
24 additional space both in our buildings and beyond our
25 buildings to comply with the law. That's not just

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1 about 3K and Pre-K. There's other things in our
2 buildings as well that are not classroom space,
3 whether it's an art studio, whether it's a community-
4 based provider that has a space in the building. One
5 of the things we are doing right at this moment is
6 we've surveyed all of our principals about the spaces
7 they have and we're going school by school to make
8 sure we understand their needs and can work those
9 into the future. So, for now, that is not happening.
10 It's certainly not something we are eager to do at
11 all. We agree with you, we want these programs in
12 our schools as well but in the outyears of the law,
13 we do need a lot of space.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. I just
15 have two more quick questions. Okay, uhm, my next
16 question is regarding our fav community schools. We
17 know they work. We know they're so effective. I saw
18 in the executive plan that there's been some state
19 funding that has allowed for the baseline. I know
20 it's not for the total amount that was budgeted.
21 Uhm, I, in my district, my Council District, I still
22 don't have a single community school in the Queens
23 side of my district, which I am very, very, emphatic
24 about trying to get. All my schools are really eager
25

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1 and I guess with this baseline, which I think is just
2 a stating, existing programs. What is the future of
3 the expansion for community schools for the city?
4 And you know, be brief if you can. I have one more
5 question.
6

7 FLAVIA PUELLO-PERDOMO: I'll jump in very quickly
8 but you rightfully Council Member Gutiérrez answered
9 the question. So, the funding that we received was
10 the restoration of the \$8 million and also getting
11 back the money that supported 113 community schools,
12 supported with arts. So, right now, really the focus
13 is on sustaining the 421 community schools but we're
14 doing a lot of work under the leadership of our
15 Chancellor to look at best practice of community
16 schools that can also be taught and leveraged across
17 the system. So, I look forward to partnering with
18 you and other Council Members around possibility of
19 expansions.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah and we, we're
21 happy to help. I think what works about the
22 community school model is the entire model. The
23 comprehensiveness of it, the outreach, the social
24 service provider, the attention to engagement and
25 community level engagement is really crucial,

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1 especially in communities that are still very much
2 hurting from the pandemic.
3

4 Uhm, and then my last question is related to the
5 NEST program. So, I was, I attended CC24, which I
6 represent along with some colleagues and was informed
7 that there was either no expansion of NEST in Queens
8 or a very, very minimal expansion and I think, you
9 know the CC President even brought up the example of
10 her own son who would be a really good candidate in
11 his own district for a NEST program but now will have
12 to be bused to School District 25 and currently, he
13 is in District 24, lives in Jackson Heights but is
14 bused to Glendale, which is not ideal but still in
15 that school district, so uhm and just hearing really
16 good feedback from families who you know really feel
17 like this could have larger impacts on their kids who
18 you know are now destabilized, are no longer in the
19 school or the school district where they were
20 receiving services, so would love to hear there's a
21 plan to expand in Queens at all and if you can share
22 those districts with us.

23 EMMA VADEHRA: Sure, sure we're in touch and I
24 know that topic very well in District 24. We are
25 looking at the request and are going to do everything

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1 we can to support the need there. In terms of where
2 we are citywide in terms of NEST expansion, you know
3 NEST is the program that we, the specialized program
4 that we do have the most of and people love the
5 program because kids perform, they have a 95 percent
6 graduation rate and are outperforming kids without
7 IEP's. The district pilot that I described earlier
8 in Districts 5, 12, and 14 is something that we hope
9 will give us proof of content that this is a viable
10 model, so that expansion can go further. But right
11 now, I am working on District 24 and we're going to
12 do whatever we can to support that request.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. I'd love
15 to stay in contact with you about that. Thank you,
16 thank you Chairs.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Williams.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Hello, good afternoon.
19 Thank you so much for being here. I have a few
20 questions from -from you actually. She had questions
21 around Learn to Work program, so basically DOE is
22 going to extend the existing RFP contract since it's
23 already May 15th and a new one has not been announced
24 and if so, what does that mean for new CBO's in

25

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1 Charter high schools. So this is for the Learn to
2 Work program.
3

4 EMMA VADEHRA: So, this is one of the programs
5 where additional funding was added to cover the
6 stimulus cliff yes for next year. My understanding
7 is the current contracts will be extended given where
8 we are in the year. Ditto for community schools and
9 some of those other programs.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, uhm, it goes on
11 to say the Learn to Work program has been in the
12 budget since 2004, but yet the program is working off
13 a PEG. The program was funded for \$33 million but
14 now it is operating at a \$2 million loss. Why hasn't
15 this funding been prioritized to be baselined and do
16 we have to keep fighting annually to ensure the
17 funding is not cut from the program?

18 EMMA VADEHRA: So, in terms of the small
19 difference, we are going to continue to work with OMB
20 to ensure the current contracts and programs are
21 supported for next year. We will continue to look at
22 spend over the course of the year and that's what
23 that is about.

24 In terms of the larger question, yes, this is one
25 of the programs that was cut and replaced with

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1 stimulus dollars under the old administration. The
2 city has now funded it with tax levy dollars for next
3 year but beyond that, that decision has not yet been
4 made.
5

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: And do you have plans
7 to create a new RFP or will you just continue to
8 extend the existing ones?

9 DAN WEISBERG: Yeah, until the - with one year of
10 funding, we're not really in a position to put out
11 another RFP but we'll continue to advocate for longer
12 term funding which will allow us to open up the
13 program, which we would love to do.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, so there's no
15 real way for new CBO's in transfer Charter Schools to
16 participate in the program in lieu of the contract?

17 DAN WEISBERG: Not currently, not currently. It
18 was a big victory from our perspective that we at
19 least got funding for next year because that was at
20 risk and obviously this is crucial programming as you
21 know for some of our most vulnerable students but the
22 next step would be to get sustainable funding that
23 would allow us to open up the program, issue a new
24 RFP.
25

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1
2 DAVID BANKS: And that goes for a lot of these
3 programs. You know, a lot of this stuff was, we
4 weren't sure where we were going to be and really the
5 advocacy of this body together in negotiating with
6 the Mayor got us to where we are today. To even be
7 able to stabilize some of these programs, we were
8 hearing from folks from the arts community, the
9 community schools, learn the work. So, we do
10 consider it a huge victory. The hundreds of millions
11 of dollars that went in to keep everybody where they
12 are. Now, you start talking about we want more
13 expansion. That's a whole other story, it's going to
14 require more dollars.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, thank you so
16 much. Thank you Chancellor for your leadership and I
17 look forward to working with you all on the stinks
18 and turn clean. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I just have two questions
20 and then I'm going to hand it back to Chair Joseph.
21 Just going back to the arts education, the Council in
22 our budget response called for every school to have
23 an art teacher. Earlier, we talked about how there's
24 307 schools currently without a certified art
25 teacher. Does DOE have a projected cost of what it

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1 would take to make sure that every school had an art
2 teacher?
3

4 EMMA VADEHRA: I don't think we have that cost in
5 front of us. We could certainly come up with it. I
6 would say a few things and [INAUDIBLE 03:38:59] but
7 uhm just as a reminder, some of the this is about the
8 decisions schools make at their level with their
9 flexible budgets right? Most of the dollars we give
10 to schools, principals have some flexibility over how
11 they are using that. We do have a dedicated funding
12 stream for art that we have created that goes out on
13 top of that that was created with stimulus dollars
14 that is now being sustained for next year but a lot
15 of the decisions that individuals schools within
16 their budgets are made by principals and making
17 different tradeoffs on where they are.

18 DAVID BANKS: Right, you've got a number of
19 principals that I have spoken with who have not hired
20 an art teacher but they have art partnerships with
21 community based organizations who do a wide range of
22 programming within their schools and some of them are
23 even more experienced than if you just have one art
24 teacher teaching you know a set group of - so it
25 might look like a deficit, you don't have an art

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1 teacher but what we could do is look and see which
2 groups that we had in our programs that didn't have a
3 teacher at all.

4
5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, that would be
6 helpful.

7 DAVID BANKS: That's in our system we can do.
8 We're looking to doing that.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And then I have another
10 question here from a member who had to leave with
11 regard to fair student funding. In the past,
12 collective bargaining changes have not been reflected
13 in the FSF, which mean that the amount of FSF and
14 changes to it at mid-year has been different from
15 what the simple math should indicate. So, is there a
16 plan to - with the new labor contracts, how much will
17 collective bargaining be on top of the FSF formula?
18 Is there a plan to fold those changes into it?

19 EMMA VADEHRA: Yes, that's an excellent question.
20 So -

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: It wasn't mine.

22 EMMA VADEHRA: You asked it very well. Uhm, so
23 those additional dollars do flow into school budgets
24 and already have flown into school budgets this year,
25 so I just want to say that from a starting

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1 perspective, when we reach new agreements with UFT,
2 we are funded for those additional dollars and those
3 dollars basically tracked the teachers into their
4 schools and showed up in school budgets this year and
5 will continue to show up next year and that's is the
6 big pot of money we call fair student funding.
7

8 It's not reflected in the student per capita
9 because it sort of goes on top of that. That's in
10 part because it's the least disruptive way to put
11 that money out to schools and make sure there aren't
12 big gainers or losers based on that and make sure
13 they can keep their current teachers and staff in the
14 building. So, it is something we have looked at but
15 for this time, it's in FSF but it is flowing out on
16 top of the formula again.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, okay, Chair Joseph.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Chair Brannan. I
19 just want to circle back real quick. The
20 Administration claimed there was an additional \$27
21 million that was moving in this plan to supplement
22 that funding. This is around special education. Can
23 you provide the unit of appropriation in the budget
24 code that the money moved and from where, where is it
25 now located?

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1 SERITTA SCOTT: Sure, the money resides in U of A
2 470 and it will continue to resident in U of A 470.
3 OMB created a new budget code to track the dollars
4 and so, I will get you the budget the code.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, so this shift is a net
7 zero transfer right?

8 SERITTA SCOTT: Correct.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, thank you. Wasn't
10 this funding already earmarked for preschool special
11 education?

12 SERITTA SCOTT: It's in the budget but it's
13 surplus funding.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what was the \$27 million
15 previously used for?

16 SERITTA SCOTT: So, the funding in that U of A
17 supports the special education contracts, enhancement
18 contracts and it will continue to.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, uhm and the DOE has a
20 \$32 million contract with Health + Hospital providing
21 200 nurses per day plus an additional 100 on call
22 nurses. How are these nurses deployed at the
23 schools?

24 CHRISTINA FOTI: So, I'd have to check on that
25 particular set but as you know, we have both staff

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1 nurses at DOE and DOHMH and those are our priority
2 and we have some vacancies that we're looking to fill
3 and then we send out contract nurses on top of those
4 to ensure every school has a nurse and if a nurse
5 calls in sick as well.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Are these instances where
8 students were in need of a nurse would have to wait
9 for one to be sent to their school?

10 EMMA VADEHRA: No, when we have a nurse call out
11 or we have a vacancy on the staff positions, we work
12 with our contractors to send another nurse in.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Have you made a decision to
14 prioritize contract nurse over full-time nurse hired
15 directly by schools?

16 EMMA VADEHRA: No, we actually really prioritize
17 our staff nurse, both in New York City public schools
18 and DOHMH we have staff nurses and that is our
19 preference to ensure as many of our schools as
20 possible are filled by those nurses, are staffed and
21 supported by those nurses. We do have vacancies
22 there that we continue to try and fill but they are
23 not filled and so we use contract nurses for those
24 and for the others.
25

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1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many vacancies do you
3 have?

4 EMMA VADEHRA: Give me one second, I have that
5 number here. Currently, it looks like we have about
6 500 vacancies between us and DOHMH.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Why is that do you know?

8 EMMA VADEHRA: I'd think I say a few things. I
9 mean I think there is nursing shortages as we know.
10 Some other government agencies that employ a lot of
11 nurses like the state have increased nurse salaries
12 quite a bit, which has exacerbated our own shortages.
13 There's some discrepancies between our nurses and
14 DOHMH nurses that makes when we have a position, the
15 person just usually comes right over from DOHMH so we
16 create a position over there. We are doing new work.
17 We're doing some social media and some campaigns to
18 try and do everything we can to recruit, it's an
19 ongoing issue though.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: But that's the same issue we
21 have with our CBO providers because they say you guys
22 are constantly recruiting the educators because
23 there's no pay parity, so we get it. So, now we're
24 going to talk about class size right, reaching
25 compliance with the state class size law. When will

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1 New York City public school need to add additional
2 budgeted teacher positions in order to remain
3 compliant with the state law?
4

5 EMMA VADEHRA: So, to be, we're compliant with
6 the law for this year. The law required that 20
7 percent of our classrooms be under the cap for this
8 year. We have roughly 40 percent of our classrooms
9 under the cap. Going into next year, the law
10 requires that 40 percent of our classrooms be under
11 the cap, so we believe we are very, very close to
12 compliance for next year as well. With that being
13 said, we want to be certain and we don't want to just
14 make the bar, so there's a few different things we
15 are proposing in our class size plan for next year.

16 One of those things is asking every district
17 superintendent across the city to look at ways they
18 can make progress in class size. They can work with
19 their principals. We're not mandating exactly how
20 they do it centrally but looking at space, looking at
21 staffing, looking at distribution of students between
22 classes and we're asking every district to make
23 progress. But the other thing we're doing which gets
24 to your question, as I said earlier, putting out an
25 additional \$180 million into school budgets. Some of

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1 that will be for contracts for excellence, which
2 under state law can be used for class size but also
3 supporting multilingual learners, pre-K. Some of
4 that will be class size in particular. Whether we
5 will need all of those dollars next year, we don't
6 know but we are putting those into school budgets and
7 requiring some of them be used to hire teachers.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, that's the funding you
10 will add in 2025 or that's the following year?

11 EMMA VADEHRA: That's funding we are proposing
12 adding for next year. It's in our class size plan we
13 just released.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how many educators will
15 you need to remain in compliance when you – by
16 filling and can be added by filling the existent
17 vacancies?

18 EMMA VADEHRA: So, those existing vacancies as
19 our CFO mentioned before are not budgeted positions
20 for us and so, what we need is the budget to hire the
21 additional teachers or for schools to repurpose their
22 existing budget. So, we're putting in the \$180
23 million to make progress next year. We do expect to
24 need additional dollars after that.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you know how many
3 teachers, educators, you'll need to meet the need?

4 EMMA VADEHRA: So, we project to get to full
5 compliance, we need 10,000 to 12,000 new teachers
6 across the system. For next year, we're relatively
7 close, we predict 180 million could hire upwards of
8 1,000 educators.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: 1,000. UFT recently
10 identified 856 Title I schools with space,
11 implemented class size based on the analysis of
12 number of seats needed for compliance, the number of
13 open seats in the school. Has New York City public
14 school had a change to review this assessment?

15 EMMA VADEHRA: We have taken a look at that yes.
16 So, the UFT put forth a couple of things. One is,
17 they proposed \$180 million going to school budgets
18 for next year. That's consistent with what we
19 proposed last week as well. In terms of where those
20 dollars flow and what they can support, I would say a
21 few different things. We are proposing that those
22 dollars flow based on need and space as UFT is doing.
23 There's different ways of looking at need and space
24 but our class size plan prioritizes need and space
25 frankly as the law requires as well. In terms of how

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1 many teachers those dollars can hire, we have some
2
3 dispute over the numbers they've put out. As I said,
4 we think it's over 1,000 but not the 3,000 that they
5 are saying.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Have you done your own
7 assessments?

8 EMMA VADEHRA: Yeah, so we've looked at I mean,
9 yes, very much so. So, we've looked at space across
10 all our schools. We've surveyed every school leader
11 about their space and we've looked at need in terms
12 of our assessments of dollars, you know the math is
13 that \$180 million we believe hires well over 1,000 or
14 is enough to support well over 1,000 but not up to
15 3,000.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Earlier you testified that
17 over 3,000 positions that are currently funded by
18 stimulus dollars, how many of these positions have a
19 secure funding source for Fiscal 2025?

20 SERITTA SCOTT: I'll get back to you on that.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, so my young people
22 have sent me a text. They say, at the time when
23 mental health challenges for students are
24 overwhelming and suspensions are rising to
25 prepandemic levels, why are we prioritizing Project

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1 Pivot and hiring teenagers to become school cops
2 while divesting in restorative justice?
3

4 MARK RAMPERSANT: The notion of the Project Pivot
5 initiative is not a one versus the other.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Hmm, hmm.

7 MARK RAMPERSANT: Project Pivot is just one of
8 the many initiatives that we have in schools to meet
9 our young peoples needs overall. Our schools have a
10 plethora of supports, right? As we mentioned, social
11 workers, guidance counselors, school-based health
12 clinics. Our CBO partnerships, the Project Pivot
13 initiative is just one aspect of how we support our
14 students in schools. On the work around the
15 assistant school safety agent is a position
16 identified by the NYPD School Safety Division. It's
17 not one that we, New York City Public Schools has
18 endorsed. We don't know enough about the project.
19 We are learning more about the project.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, it's a big surprise to
21 you?

22 MARK RAMPERSANT: Not necessarily a surprise.
23 We've been a part of preliminary conversation as they
24 talked about the creation of the position. It's
25 still, there's no funding coming from New York City

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1 Public Schools for this initiative and as it relates
2 to the implementation of, they're still in the
3 premature stages of the program.
4

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And so, around restorative
6 justice, are we still on the same level of funding or
7 are we cutting the funding?

8 EMMA VADEHRA: So, as of the executive budget,
9 the stimulus cliff in restorative justice has not
10 been restored.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, it's not baselined, it's
12 not restored but we always talk about how restorative
13 justice and we look at the data and it works, so why
14 is it not in the Executive? I know the Chancellor is
15 going to say we have a list of stuff that everybody
16 wants but some of these things are and I'll say this
17 again and I've always said this. These are the
18 things that make young people come to school, right?
19 We can have the greatest reading programs on the
20 planet but if we don't have programs to get them
21 engaged to keep them in the school buildings, we'll
22 be teaching reading to no one in the building.

23 DAVID BANKS: We used to have them where - we
24 have programs where they would come in the school and
25 we weren't teaching them to read and I think that's

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1 even worse to be quite honest with you. I don't
2 think its of this or the other. You all are still
3 engaged in the process. Uhm, you can certainly, as
4 you are engaged in this conversation and negotiations
5 push to make sure that RJ gets restored. That's I'm
6 sure at the top of the list. You can make it happen,
7 so -

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, in the Fiscal 2025,
10 restorative justice has zero dollars, correct?

11 EMMA VADEHRA: No, there is tax levy funding.
12 There is still the tax levy funding from this year.
13 It's continued into next year, it's th stimulus.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how much is that?

15 EMMA VADEHRA: Oh, \$5.6 million.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How much?

17 EMMA VADEHRA: \$5.6 million.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: \$5.6 million and how much
19 did you uhm, put in for Project Pivot?

20 MARK RAMPERSANT: 15.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: According to the reporting
22 provided to the Council that's part of the terms and
23 condition of budgeted adopted 920 schools, over
24 500,000 students participated in restorative justice
25 programming during the 2022 and 2023 school year.

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1
2 What's the plan for these schools and the students if
3 restorative justice is not funded in the 2025 Fiscal
4 Year?

5 MARK RAMPERSANT: All those, the schools that
6 we've identified have a plethora of supports. We
7 have not yet you know sort of ventured around what
8 that would mean if restorative is not a part of those
9 school communities. There are other programs that
10 exist in those schools that will continue to exist.
11 That will continue to support students in the same
12 manner. As my colleague just shared, we're not at
13 the place yet where we're saying that's completed.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Oh, because I was beginning
15 to think that Project Pivot was a successor of RJ.

16 DAVID BANKS: I don't think we should, I
17 certainly don't want to be a part of creating this -
18 you know have them competing. You know there's a lot
19 of question about you know Project Pivot is though
20 you know Project Pivot involves about 257 community-
21 based organizations. Mostly people of color from
22 around the city and I stand up for those
23 organizations very, very strongly. And so, I don't
24 think it should be about one versus the other, we
25 could absolutely be talking about how do we lift up

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1 Project Pivot as well as lifting up RJ and as I said,
2 we are still in the middle of a negotiation season
3 and we should still continue to advocate for all of
4 it, absolutely. So, I think they both have great
5 merit.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Chancellor.

8 DAVID BANKS: You got it.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Bottcher.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Good afternoon. First,
11 Chancellor, I want to thank you for your testimony
12 and in Washington and making New York City proud with
13 how you represented us in Washington during those
14 hearings. Thank you very much. I want to follow up
15 about an issue of social workers in the schools. A
16 2022 audit by Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli found that
17 80 percent of New York City schools failed to meet
18 the recommended ratio of one social worker to 250
19 students. Could you explain just clearly why are we
20 failing to meet that ratio? Is it an issue of not
21 being funded for one social worker for 250 students?
22 Is it an issue of difficulty recruiting those social
23 workers? What are the factors involved in that
24 failure?
25

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DAN WEISBERG: Good afternoon Council Member.

Thanks for the question. One piece of context on this. You know listen, let's all stipulate. We would love to have even more support for our kids in the form of social workers by the way and guidance counselors and nurses and so forth. But the context I want to provide is in the last ten years while our, the Chancellor has talked a lot about this. Our enrollment over the last ten years probably dropped by about 150,000 students. The number of social workers has gone up by about 1,000. So, we are making headway even if we're not at the recommended ratio in a lot of places and we want to continue to do that. Some of this is as the Chancellor has said, is also and we think this is really important. You know principals are closest to their students. They do have some real discretion over how their budget dollars are spent, particularly as Deputy Chancellor Vadehra is talking about for Fair Student Funding, which is the bulk of school money. It is fairly flexible.

And so, you know some principals decide to invest more heavily in mental health support. Some principals may decide to put that money elsewhere.

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1 We don't want to totally take away that discretion
2 because again, the principals and the teachers and
3 the educators and staff members know their kids best
4 but just want to say, we are making progress in that
5 area and Mark, I don't know if you want to add on to
6 that.
7

8 MARK RAMPERSANT: Yeah, I just wanted to add on
9 just as a point of clarity, I know it was shared
10 earlier. Social worker, I'm sorry, the social
11 worker, guidance counselor ratio for all schools is 1
12 to 162 and for high schools is 1 to 125. One of the
13 other things that I really wanted to uplift is the
14 relationship that we have in New York City Public
15 Schools with 20 higher education institutions where
16 we're working to get social work interns in some of
17 our most high priority schools. Currently, those
18 relationships has yielded almost 200 social work
19 interns for our schools.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Are there any unfilled
21 social work positions at the Department of Education?

22 DAN WEISBERG: I don't have that number Council
23 Member. We'll get it for you. I'm sure there are
24 some. It's not a huge number but I'm sure we have
25 some vacancies as we sit here.

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1 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Thank you.

2
3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much. This is
4 a continued partnership. I'm never out to get you,
5 just for the record. I'm never out to get you. Just
6 that the Charter requires that I do oversight, so I
7 have to get the questions on the record. Never out
8 to get you. Some of the folks I may be out to get.

9 DAVID BANKS: But let me also just say before you
10 wrap up. When I was coming from the testimony in DC,
11 I got actually before the - after the testimony, I
12 got lots of text from people including many members
13 of this body and I got just the best heartfelt text
14 from Chair Joseph who then followed that up with a
15 phone call that I want to tell you I greatly, greatly
16 appreciate. I was looking at it in my car ride back
17 from DC and we got hundreds of texts but the message
18 that you sent was deeply profound for me and I want
19 to say thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You're very welcome. We are
21 routing for you and you did well. You did well,
22 thank you.

23 DAVID BANKS: Thank you.

24
25

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1
2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Chancellor and your team,
3 thank you very much. We appreciate your time. Thank
4 you.

5 DAVID BANKS: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Alright we'll take a ten-
7 minute break and then we're going to hear from the
8 leadership of CUNY.

9 [03:58:56]- [04:15:21]

10 [GAVEL} Okay, good afternoon. Welcome to the
11 final Executive Budget hearing of the day focusing on
12 CUNY, the City University of New York. I'm Council
13 Member Justin Brannan and I Chair the Committee on
14 Finance. I'm pleased to be joined by my good friend
15 and colleague Council Member Eric Dinowitz, who is
16 Chair of the Committee on Higher Education.

17 We've been joined this afternoon by Council
18 Members Restler, Brewer, and Marte thus far. Welcome
19 Chancellor Rodriguez and your team. Thank you for
20 joining us today to answer our questions. Just as a
21 reminder, this is a government proceeding and decorum
22 must be observed at all times. As such, members of
23 the public shall remain silent at all time. We'll be
24 taking public testimony on CUNY today after CUNY's
25 testimony after the witnesses have finished instead

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1 of holding one long day at the end. If you wish to
2 speak on the CUNY or the DOE FY25 Executive Budgets,
3 make sure you fill out one of those witness slips.
4 It's on the table in the back of the room with the
5 Sergeant at Arms.
6

7 Okay, just to set the table again, April 24,
8 2024, the Administration released the Executive
9 Financial Plan for FY24 to 2028, with a proposed FY25
10 budget of \$111.6 billion. CUNY's FY25 proposed
11 budget of \$1.29 billion represents 1.16 percent of
12 the Administrations proposed budget in the executive
13 plan. This is an increase of \$20.9 million or 1.64
14 percent from the \$1.27 billion that was originally
15 budgeted in the Mayor's Preliminary Plan. This
16 increase results from several actions, mostly \$11.9
17 million for the building performance lab and as of
18 March 2024, CUNY had 309 vacancies relative to its
19 FY24 budgeted headcount.

20 In the Council's preliminary budget response, we
21 called on the Mayor to add \$124 million to CUNY's
22 budget for various programs. Of this, exactly \$1
23 million was added and everything else ignored. Above
24 all, the Council's call for \$50.5 million for a new
25 employment initiative to create a pathway for CUNY

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1 students and the jobs and careers in city government.

2 In the seven days of budget hearings so far, agencies
3 have described difficulty filling certain roles and
4 individuals have told how their or their parents job
5 with the city has provided a stable entry into the
6 middle class. As I mentioned in my remarks earlier
7 today, we have the resources to make investments like
8 this and also to protect ourselves against economic
9 uncertainty and then the Council therefore will
10 continue to push for a final budget that supports New
11 Yorkers success.
12

13 My questions today will largely focus on the
14 tuition adjustment, CUNY's headcount and vacancies
15 and CUNY Reconnect. It's a priority of Speaker
16 Adams. Now, I want to my Chair for this hearing, my
17 Co-Chair for this hearing, Council Member Dinowitz
18 for his opening statement.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Chair Brannan
20 and welcome to today's hearing on the Fiscal 2025
21 Executive Budget. On the City University of New York
22 jointly with the Committee on Finance, I am Council
23 Member Eric Dinowitz, Chair of the Committee on
24 Higher Education and proud CUNY alum. I'd like to
25 thank the Finance Chair Justin Brannan for holding

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1 this joint hearing today. CUNY's Fiscal 2025
2 Executive Budget totals nearly \$1.3 billion, which
3 includes close to \$900 million in personal services
4 funding to support 6,024 full time positions and \$391
5 million in Other than Personal Services. The Fiscal
6 2025 Executive Budget is \$167.7 million less than the
7 Fiscal 2024 Adopted Budget of \$1.4 billion. The
8 difference in funding is largely driven by the
9 expiration of \$112.4 million in federal stimulus
10 funding in Fiscal 2025.
11

12 While CUNY's budget does not include any program
13 to eliminate the gap in the Executive Plan, the
14 institution is still bearing the brunt of previously
15 implemented PEGs. However the plan adds funding
16 restoration of a whopping \$1 million in Fiscal 2024
17 only for CUNY science, technology, engineering and
18 mathematics or STEM.

19 In the Council's budget response in the Fiscal
20 2025 preliminary budget, we urged to the
21 Administration to restore and baseline funding for
22 several critical programs including ACE, ASAP and
23 CUNY Reconnect among others. Unfortunately, the
24 Executive Plan only includes a partial restoration of
25 \$1 million for ACE. I want to emphasize again; CUNY

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1 plays a major role as an engine of economic mobility
2 and is an important contributor to New York City's
3 economic growth.
4

5 Today, we will examine CUNY's Executive Budget to
6 ensure that the institution and the students its
7 serves receive adequate funding and resources to
8 continue to thrive. I would like to thank everyone
9 who has joined us today and thank our Committee staff
10 for their work including Carolina Gil, Florentine
11 Kabore, Regina Paul, Sahara Rosomie(SP?) for their
12 work and Adam Star Poley(SP?), my Budget Legislation
13 Director. And I will now turn it back to Chair
14 Brannan.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Chair Dinowitz.
16 I'm now going to turn it over to Committee Counsel
17 Mike Toomey to swear in the witnesses for their
18 testimony.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good afternoon. Raise your
20 right hands please. Do you affirm to tell the truth,
21 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth before
22 this Committee and to respond honestly to Council
23 Member questions, Chancellor Rodriguez?

24 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: I do.
25

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Executive Vice Chancellor

3 Batista?

4 HECTOR BATISTA: I do.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Executive Vice Chancellor

6 Hensel?

7 WENDY HENSEL: I do.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Senior Vice Chancellor

9 Soliman?

10 SHERIF SOLIMAN: I do.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may begin.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Chancellor, just make sure
13 your mic is on.

14 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Okay, good afternoon

15 Chair Brannan, Chair Dinowitz and other members of
16 the New York City Council Committees on Finance and
17 Higher Education, staff and guests. I am Felix Matos
18 Rodriguez, Chancellor of the City University of New
19 York and I am joined this afternoon by the CUNY Dream
20 Team University Provost Wendy Hensel, our Chief
21 Operating Office Hector Batista and back by popular
22 demand to this group our CFO Sherif Soliman.

23 I want to thank Speaker Adrienne Adams and the
24 entire City Council for your steadfast commitment to
25 CUNY, our mission, our programs and most of all, our

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1 students. Five years ago this month, I had the great
2 honor of becoming Chancellor. Although this past
3 five years have been presented with many challenges,
4 we have also accomplished many things working
5 together as a community and we are partners like you.
6

7 I want to start by thanking speaker Adams and the
8 City Council for envisioning and funding CUNY
9 Reconnect, a program designed to engage New Yorkers
10 who earned college credits but stopped short of
11 getting a degree. I am thrilled to announce today
12 that this academic year, CUNY Reconnect re-
13 enrolled 16,319 students. Over the last two and a
14 half years, more than 33,000 New Yorkers have
15 returned to college through CUNY Reconnect and the
16 program has greatly exceeded its enrollment goals.
17 Last June, we unveiled our strategic road map, called
18 "CUNY Lifting New York," a detailed plan for
19 bolstering the already profound impact our university
20 makes on the city, the region, and the state.

21 We have many recent successes that are already
22 advancing our CUNY Lifting New York strategy and I'd
23 like to tell you about a few of them. We are
24 advancing our commitment to student success by
25 preparing our students for careers and creating

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1 direct and sustainable pipelines to employers. Since
2 I stepped into this role five years ago, CUNY has
3 connected over 17,000 students to paid internship
4 opportunities through new and expanded university
5 wide initiatives. We've done this with over \$34
6 million in support from the city, state, and private
7 partners.
8

9 Additionally, the CUNY Inclusive Economy Network
10 has equipped over 3,100 students with preparations
11 within the Department needed to secure paid
12 internships and full-time roles. To support this,
13 we've also engaged over 1,000 employers in offering
14 unique opportunities directly to our students and on
15 them Center bridge Partners, Bloomberg, Goldman
16 Sachs, Mount Sinai and Con Edison.

17 We are fixing long term flaws in our transfer
18 system by ensuring that students who go from a CUNY
19 community college to one of our senior colleges
20 receive full credit for the first two years of
21 classes they've taken within their major. This saves
22 them significant time toward graduation and an
23 average of about \$1,220 in tuition. And that's money
24 they can use for food, housing, child care and other
25 living expenses.

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1 We continue to draw increasing support for our
2 mission from the philanthropic community. This year
3 alone, CUNY received its two largest gifts ever. In
4 January, a \$75 million gift from the Simons
5 Foundation to establish CUNY as a hub for
6 computational science and to support our
7 participation in the state's Empire AI project.
8

9 And in March, the Steven & Alexandra Cohen
10 Foundation awarded \$160 million to create a workforce
11 training center at LaGuardia Community College, the
12 largest award ever to a CUNY school and to any
13 community college in the United States.

14 Both of those gifts align with a wide range of
15 new capital projects that modernizing CUNY's campuses
16 and helping to advance CUNY's core educational
17 mission. For example, in February, we unveiled a
18 state of the art \$95 million Nursing Education,
19 Research, and Practice Center at Lehman College.
20 Lehman's center is the latest example of state and
21 city sponsored and CUNY led investments in New York's
22 public education and public health infrastructure.

23 CUNY graduates an average of 1,800 nurses
24 annually, representing about half of the nurses
25 entering New York City's workforce each year.

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1
2 And we have been taking action to confront hate
3 and be proactive in creating campus communities built
4 on trust, understanding and inclusion. Over the past
5 two years, we've taken many steps to combat all forms
6 of religious, racial and ethnic bigotry including
7 antisemitism and islamophobia. Among this, CUNY
8 partnered with Hillel International and initiated a
9 campaign to promote that students and employees have
10 a right to request religious accommodations for any
11 schedule academic or employment activities that might
12 conflict with their religious of services. I could
13 expand on our recent successes and efforts but it's
14 important that I turn now to the challenges that
15 jeopardize our continued progress in lifting New
16 York.

17 The effects of several rounds of baseline PEGs
18 have had a harmful impact on our community colleges
19 for students, our programs, and college operations.
20 It was welcome news to hear of the cancellation of
21 PEGs in the Executive Budget, but the baselined PEGs
22 for —

23 [PERSON DISRUPTING IN COURTROOM]
24
25

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1
2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Chancellor, Chancellor hang
3 on. Please have him removed. Please have him
4 removed. Thank you.

5 [PERSON DISRUPTING THE COURTROOM]

6 Okay, go ahead Chancellor. Thank you.

7 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Thank you. It was
8 welcome news to hear of the cancellation of
9 additional PEGs in the Executive Budget but the
10 baseline PEGs for Fiscal Year 2024 that now total
11 \$94.1 million and the estimated \$94.5 million in
12 Fiscal Year 2025 will continue to impede CUNY's
13 progress.

14 To put this in perspective, the cumulative PEG of
15 \$94.1 million is 15 percent of the entire city
16 contribution to our operating budget. We have been
17 relentless in our efforts to mitigate the harm from
18 these cuts and preserve our academic mission and
19 reputation as the nations leading urban public
20 university. Still the negative effects of the PEGs
21 are now widespread and unavoidable. We appreciate
22 that the Council prioritize in it's budgets response
23 a PEG restoration of \$40 million and we look forward
24 to working closely with you and the Administration
25 with whom lines of communication remain open to

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1 achieve the restoration goal in the adopted budget.

2 CUNY is an organization of people, so naturally most
3 of our operating budget, about 85 percent of it is
4 dedicated to personal cost.
5

6 As a consequence of PEGs, our community colleges
7 are down over 400 positions or about 7 percent since
8 Fiscal Year 2021. Personal reductions of this
9 magnitude have impacted and continue to impact campus
10 operations and student supports. Here are a few
11 examples. At the Borough of Manhattan Community
12 College, 73 positions are vacant. They include
13 faculty, academic and student support services staff,
14 buildings and grounds professionals, and instruction
15 and administrative support.

16 At Hostos Community College, 77 positions have
17 been cut. There are unfilled faculty lines and
18 vacancies in students support areas, financial aid,
19 admissions and advisement that remain unfilled.
20 Departments ranging from IT to Custodial Services are
21 operating with reduced or minimal staff. As these
22 representative examples reflect, the reductions
23 imposed by the PEGs have long term consequences for
24 students and by extension, the city. These PEGs are
25 magnified by the fact that many students are now

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1 enrolling with significant learning delays and
2
3 intense needs because of the pandemic. They require
4 more support than ever before.

5 You are also aware that we have been facing a
6 structural deficit and we have taken steps to address
7 it. Since the pandemic, we have applied across the
8 board saving targets and hiring freezes. Beginning
9 with this current fiscal year, we are adopting a
10 targeted approach working closely with colleges
11 exhibiting fiscal distress by reducing expenses and
12 seeking opportunities to generate revenue. Our
13 actions, combined with additional state aid have led
14 to the structural deficit being reduced by more than
15 half of what it was two years ago, from \$234 million
16 in Fiscal Year 2022 to a projected \$107 million at
17 the end of Fiscal Year 2024 according to our latest
18 mid-year projections. We anticipate that the
19 projected year end deficit will be even lower.

20 We are also implementing various systemwide share
21 service strategies to achieve additional savings and
22 streamline our operations. Our efforts are not
23 limited to expense reductions. We are also focused
24 on revenue strategies that can help our goal of
25 fiscal stability. We continue to implement

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1 enrollment and retention strategies to ensure that
2 students succeed on their educational journeys and
3 those efforts have led to an uptick in enrollment
4 that helps increase revenues to the university.
5

6 Let me now turn to our facility needs. Ask Chair
7 Dinowitz and members of the Higher Education
8 Committee heard at a recent hearing, the upkeep and
9 enhancement of CUNY's extensive facilities portfolio
10 is critical to CUNY's overall success. A PEG
11 restoration in this budget could help ensure
12 sufficient levels of facility staff to perform
13 critical maintenance while additional capital funding
14 will allow us to preserve the universities
15 infrastructure and achieve a state of good repair.

16 We appreciate your efforts in allocating
17 discretionary funding for many important projects and
18 look forward to working with you to achieve our
19 collective goals in modernizing CUNY's
20 infrastructure.

21 In conclusion, we respectfully request that you
22 restore the PEGs to enable CUNY to regain what was
23 lost by personal reductions in our community colleges
24 and invest in the program such as ACE and CUNY
25 Reconnect.

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[PERSON DISRUPTING COURTROOM]

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Please have
here removed. Please have her removed. Chancellor,
hang on. Have her removed, thank you.

[PERSON DISRUPTING COURTROOM]

Go ahead, conclude.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Thank you. Less
investment in CUNY leads to a communitive negative
impact on the city's economy. Fewer college
graduates, a lesser credential workforce, lesser
ability to attract businesses to the city, lower
personal income and business tax bases, longer term
potential for more individuals requiring city
services. Real investment in CUNY will do just the
opposite. We know that there's a broader goal that
we collectively share and we look forward to working
together with you to deliver a better future for CUNY
and for New York. Thank you again for the
opportunity to testify and we look forward to your
questions.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Chancellor. Just
a reminder, we have public testimony after CUNY is
done testifying. If you want to make your voice
heard, the way to do it is to sign up to testify. If

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1 you jump up and [PERSON DISRUPTING COURTROOM] Okay,
2
3 be removed, thank you. [GAVEL] Bye, bye now. Thank
4 you.

5 This is a City Council hearing, it's not a
6 Yankee's game, so if you want to testify, you have to
7 sign up to testify. If you jump up and scream,
8 you'll be removed, I don't care what you're saying.

9 Okay, let's start. Chancellor, I want to talk
10 about headcount and vacancies. You mentioned a
11 little bit about it in your testimony. Can you
12 provide the total number of non-reappointments for
13 the spring 2024 semester?

14 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, let me, Sherif, if
15 you want to answer those more technical questions.

16 SHERIF SOLIMAN: Well, I think uhm, what we've
17 been saying is over the course of the past few years,
18 Community College headcount is down about 419
19 positions or 17 percent and that's largely the result
20 of reductions that needed to be taken because of the
21 PEGs. Now that classified staff, faculty, it's a
22 mixture of both.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Have you identified
24 colleges that are in greater need of additional
25

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1 personnel or is it pretty equitable across the board?

2 Are the vacancies spread across or?

3
4 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: I think it's mostly I
5 mean, there's some of the schools that have been also
6 effected by larger enrollment losses. I think of
7 Borough of Manhattan Community College for example
8 right, so in a revenue model, it's money that comes
9 from the city and the state in addition to the money
10 coming from enrollment. With enrollment being done,
11 we've also lost support there, so some of the schools
12 that have had more enrollment lost might be effected
13 a bit more in terms of staffing positions.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And in that 419 number, do
15 you have a breakdown of the vacancies for pedagogical
16 versus non-pedagogical?

17 SHERIF SOLIMAN: We can get you a breakdown but I
18 think as the Chancellor said, it really runs the
19 gamut in terms of the areas that have been impacted
20 from counseling services to financial aid counselors,
21 the academic advisors to facilities and maintenance
22 staff that are so important to our campus operation.
23 So, we can certainly get you the breakdown of
24 pedagogical and non-pedagogical but it really runs
25 the gamut.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Do the current vacancies
3 impact in class offerings?

4 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: I mean certainly they do
5 in terms of having less faculty available to teach
6 the classes. I mean, the current enrollment also
7 means there are less sessions that are needed but
8 certainly the faculty limits our flexibility to
9 provide the courses that the students need.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Talk about tuition
11 adjustment. The FY25 executive plan includes a
12 reduction of \$128.3 million in FY24 only from tuition
13 adjustment related to student enrollment. So, what
14 was CUNY's projected student enrollment versus actual
15 enrollments in FY23 and FY24? Can you tell me?

16 SHERIF SOLIMAN: Yeah, so both of those numbers
17 you see the expense budget and the revenue budget
18 coming down to a count for if you will a rightsizing
19 of where our enrollment levels are. You know
20 essentially since the pandemic; we have being carried
21 in the budget the baseline of what our enrollment was
22 at that particular point and time. So, what that
23 reflects is a year-by-year adjustment based on
24 enrollment levels and where they are now.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And what is the anticipated
3 impact of this decrease in tuition to operations?

4 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Well, I mean we mentioned
5 some of the things in the testimony right in terms of
6 it ranges from having, being able to hire less
7 faculty, being able to hire less advisors, being able
8 to have less hours for some of the basic services,
9 tutoring, library hours, cuts also in the operational
10 side, less staff on the maintenance team for example,
11 which has an effect on the infrastructure of our
12 facility so it runs the gamut and we have work with
13 each college for them to do differently how they want
14 to manage the different cuts that they're faced.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Could you give us an idea
16 of which colleges are projected to see a decrease in
17 enrollment in the upcoming school year?

18 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: I mean that is a
19 challenging proposition to be very frank with you and
20 I'm sure that in the previous hearing, you've already
21 heard a thing or two about the fiasco with FAFSA and
22 the potential effect that that might have on
23 enrollment. Actually, in the community college
24 sector last year, enrollment was up about 2 percent,
25 right if memory serves me right and some of the

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1 programs that we put together with public schools
2 were actually, there was a lot of hope that
3 enrollment numbers were going to be far better. We
4 had a really, really great robust September and a
5 number of applicants and FAFSA has to run a monkey
6 wrench in terms of really how many of those students
7 are going to be able to you know get their finances
8 on time and use that to make a decision to come to
9 CUNY. So, to be candid, we are knocking on every
10 door. We are making every effort to get the students
11 to fill out the FAFSA. Partnerships with nonprofits,
12 we got additional funding from P2 to do that but the
13 FAFSA really creates an issue in terms of any
14 accurate forecasting of where we're going to be with
15 enrollment next fall.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, that's helpful. Do
18 you have a projected revenue impact related to the
19 states new program that will automatically enroll the
20 top ten percent of high school graduates? Make sure
21 your mics on.

22 WENDY HENSEL: Sorry. We're still working on
23 that. It's still the format of that program is still
24 under discussion with the state and with New York

25

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1 public schools and so, we can get back to you on that
2 answer.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay.

5 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Okay and FAFSA's also
6 impacting the decision whether this is the right time
7 to move forward with that program.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Uhm, talking about
9 the expiration of the federal stimulus funds. What
10 are the specific programs or services that are
11 covered with federal stimulus funds? Do you have
12 anything that's 100 percent covered with that?

13 SHERIF SOLIMAN: So, uhm, the federal stimulus
14 funds as you know -

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I don't think your mic is
16 on Sherif.

17 SHERIF SOLIMAN: Is it on? The lights on.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Good.

19 SHERIF SOLIMAN: Okay, so like New York City,
20 like New York State, like the MTA for example, CUNY
21 received federal stimulus dollars in the amount of
22 \$1.6 billion. That went to cover a number of things.
23 It went to cover some institutional costs including
24 some pandemic related expenses. It also included
25 lost revenue and it included student emergency

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1 financial aid. So, with respect to the lost revenue
2 piece, that is where you really have the stimulus
3 funds buying us time because as the Chancellor
4 mentioned, we have a structural deficit based on the
5 enrollment losses. So, the stimulus funds allowed
6 us, allowed the community colleges to be able to
7 continue operations, to be able to continue to invest
8 in faculty, to invest in all of the aspects both on
9 the faculty side and both on the operational side of
10 what it takes to essentially run an institution. So,
11 it really does you know again we say run the gamut
12 across. That that stimulus fund was to be able to be
13 used for loss of revenue, especially from the loss of
14 enrollment that accelerated with the pandemic.
15

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Is CUNY as an institution
17 struggling just like every other agency with figuring
18 out how to maintain or sustain continue, temporary
19 programs that were funded primarily with permanent
20 programs that were funded with temporary dollars? Is
21 that a challenge?

22 WENDY HENSEL: One of the biggest challenges that
23 we have is with the ACE program, which I think you
24 mentioned before.

25 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Right, yup.

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2 WENDY HENSEL: ASAP is baselined and it allows us
3 to hire advisors and staff that are permanent. With
4 ACE, every year, we don't know how many students can
5 come in because we first have to adjust for how many
6 are already in the program and never knowing how much
7 additional funding we will have, so it makes it very
8 difficult to staff the program.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, I have a couple more.
10 Uhm, the OTPS spending, Other Than Personal Services
11 funding for community colleges totals \$391 million in
12 FY25, which represents a reduction of \$140.8 million
13 compared to the FY24 Adopted Budget of \$531.7
14 million. So, it's our understanding that this
15 decrease is mainly driven by less than anticipated
16 spending on materials and supplies. What are the
17 major programs and services that are paid with OTPS
18 funds?

19 SHERIF SOLIMAN: So Chair, it really is due to
20 stimulus in programs. So, the stimulus funds, since
21 we are planning to exhaust all of them in this fiscal
22 year, will not continue to fiscal 2025, right? So,
23 that's the lion share of that 140 and then the
24 programs as you know, you know a number of programs
25 were not included in exec and so, the remainder is

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1 essentially what those programs are that were not
2 included in exec.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How much stimulus funding
5 remains?

6 SHERIF SOLIMAN: So, we as a course of being able
7 to deposit monies with the city and with the state to
8 basically cover operations, we've been making
9 deposits. There's roughly \$50 million to \$60 million
10 left that will be used to cover expenses for the
11 remainder of the fiscal year. The number that we
12 just spoke about in terms of the OTPS reduction is
13 the \$112 million that had been carried from last year
14 to this year.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, uh, the executive
16 plan includes \$1 million restoration in the FY24 only
17 for CUNY science, tech, engineering, and math. I
18 believe Chair Dinowitz brought this up. Can you
19 provide a brief description of this program and why
20 is the funding included in FY24 only?

21 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: We'll have to get back to
22 you with that information.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Alright, I have a
24 couple of things on that, so I'll just send you
25 everything.

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2 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Okay.

3 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: CUNY Reconnect, it's a big
4 priority for the Council and personally for the
5 speaker. For those that don't know CUNY Reconnect
6 was created to focus on supporting adults returning
7 to higher ed to complete their degrees. CUNY
8 Reconnect has been touted as a great success, helping
9 over 17,000 students return to higher ed since its
10 inception.

11 Knowing that this program is so beneficial to
12 CUNY and New Yorkers, why have funds for this program
13 not been included in the FY24 Executive Plan?

14 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: It's also a surprise to
15 us because like you said, it's been an incredible,
16 successful program. It has brought down. I mean I
17 share the numbers with you in the testimony. Also, I
18 want to point out it has the additional value that we
19 have learned a lot about how to engage the learners
20 that have left and it will help us to incorporate
21 better practices that are advising all across our
22 campuses, so it is not just the total number of
23 students who have come in which has been impressive
24 and superseded all the goals that we had initially
25 but also it's been a great internal educational tool

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1 about how to do a much better job at a, getting to
2 the barriers that led to some of the students for
3 them to leave, right? So we don't have that
4 situation happening again and it helps our retention
5 but also the kind of flexibility and the things that
6 we need to do to be able to attract many more New
7 Yorkers, which we know there are thousands that have
8 some college but they're not complete.
9

10 So, again, we think that every dollar spent in
11 Reconnect has incredible value and coincide with the
12 Council and the need to even expand the funding.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: If the money was there, is
14 there plans to expand Reconnect.

15 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Does everyone that
17 qualifies and applies for CUNY Reconnect get a spot
18 in the program?

19 WENDY HENSEL: Yes, yeah, it is personalized
20 service. What's great about it is there are
21 individual folks who speak directly to the applicants
22 about what their needs are. Where they are in their
23 own journey and are able to identify which school is
24 the best fit for that student. So, it's a very
25

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1 individualized program and anyone who comes is
2 eligible.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And I know a very important
5 piece of this is the child care. Has the child care
6 access been impacted by the cuts from the
7 Administration?

8 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, and last for me, does
10 CUNY collect data with regard to the CUNY Reconnect
11 program on why the returning students previously left
12 CUNY?

13 WENDY HENSEL: We do and at the moment, we
14 actually have a full study plan for the next fiscal
15 year but our initial data tells us three things are
16 the primary concerns. Not surprisingly, number one
17 is financial strain. Students run out of money or
18 they have to prioritize immediate needs with their
19 families. The second is more specially work and
20 family obligations, juggling those things become
21 unmanageable without the lack of good advisement or
22 help identifying where they should be. And finally,
23 the third, is academic difficulties. That there was
24 a difficult start. They've been out of the classroom
25 for a while and part of what we identify is what

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1 supports and services they need in order to
2 successfully rematriculate.

3
4 HECTOR BATISTA: And if I might add, another
5 component that now that there was increased funding
6 and flexibility with part time job, a large number of
7 the students are coming through Reconnect because of
8 some of the life balances that they have to navigate
9 are coming part time. The fact that now job a lot
10 more generous with part-time students has also
11 allowed us to increment the impact of the funding
12 from Reconnect.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: That's great, okay. Thank
14 you very much. I'm going to turn it over to Chair
15 Dinowitz just, we've also been joined by Council
16 Member Bottcher and Avilés. Chair Dinowitz.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, thank you Chair
18 Brannan. Staying on the Reconnect ACE, ASAP,
19 bandwagon here. Just one follow up on the childcare.
20 To what degree is child care going to be cut? How
21 many children are currently taking care of with child
22 care and by how many would that have to be cut given
23 these cuts?

24

25

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2 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: I think we can give you
3 precise numbers per college based on that. It would
4 be the best way to address your question.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, thank you. Do you
6 know the – what are the current number of students
7 enrolled in the ASAP and ACE programs respectively?

8 WENDY HENSEL: So, in the ACE program currently
9 there are 3,015 students, which is both first time
10 freshman and transfer students across seven colleges
11 at CUNY and ASAP is more than that.

12 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Much more than that.

13 WENDY HENSEL: I'll have to find that number for
14 you here in a minute.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, greater than 3,015?

16 WENDY HENSEL: 15,385 to be precise.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You should have said
18 significantly greater. Okay 15,000 – what was it?

19 WENDY HENSEL: 15,385.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: 385 and you had said in
21 your testimony that ASAP is baselined?

22 WENDY HENSEL: Correct.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay because we are seeing
24 cuts I know do the ASAP program on our end. Is that

25

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1
2 - uhm, can we talk more about the cuts that are being
3 felt by the ASAP program?

4 SHERIF SOLIMAN: Sure, I think the \$5 million
5 that the Council added in last years budget is not
6 continued in exec but the lion share of the program,
7 funds for the program is baselined.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you and ACE. ACE is
9 being significantly cut? Do you have a waitlist of
10 students to enroll in these programs due to the
11 limited funding or reductions in funding?

12 WENDY HENSEL: We're extremely careful as we
13 admit students in because once we admit them, we
14 commit to providing those services whether the
15 funding is continued or not. We'll find a way to
16 continue it but it certainly keeps us from accepting
17 new students and recruiting new students, yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, is there a waitlist or
19 is -

20 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: I think no because we are
21 very cautious. I think that if you remember the
22 comment that the Provo's made about that the
23 inserting of the funding makes us be very cautious
24 about how many new students we take. So, normally if
25 you knew how many students you could serve, you'd be

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1 out there trying to get a sense of that. So, we're
2 very cautious not to overly advertise in case the
3 funding doesn't materialize.
4

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, there's never a
6 situation where more students say, hey, I really want
7 to enroll in the - or partake in the ASAP or ACE
8 program and they're turned away?

9 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Oh, I mean with ACE we
10 have no doubt that if we have more capacity, more
11 students will be willing to take it. I'm just saying
12 that we're very cautious in recruitment because that
13 funding stream has been uncertain.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I guess that answers my
15 question. All students who are in ACE are
16 specifically recruited. They get a phone call and
17 email saying we want you in this program. There's no
18 one going to you and saying, "I'd really like to
19 partake in this program and you're not turning anyone
20 away because no one comes to you?"

21 WENDY HENSEL: They certainly come directly to us
22 at times but we are very careful in managing those
23 numbers across the colleges that are participating.
24 So, there's a sense from the beginning of what
25 numbers can be supported with the funding that we

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1 have and as all student programs, often we have to go
2 to them to make sure that they're aware of the
3 programs and get them enrolled. So, I'm not aware of
4 people saying I want to be in this program and they
5 can't be admitted. We just very carefully control
6 how we admit students into the program.
7

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And are there students - I
9 mean do you believe that these ASAP, the ACE and ASAP
10 programs attract perspective students and help retain
11 the existing students?

12 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Absolutely.

13 WENDY HENSEL: There's absolutely no question.
14 It is almost more than double the graduation rates,
15 which speaks for itself as to the retention rates and
16 as you know, we've talked about this before. The
17 return on investment is very significant. For ACE,
18 for every dollar that we invest, \$21 comes back with
19 16 going to the program graduate in terms of future
20 earnings and 5 going to taxpayers in the form of
21 additional tax revenue. So, it is a huge win, win
22 for everybody.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, it just sounds like
24 a good financial investment, not to mention an
25 investment in future students and the students and

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1 their future. According to the Mayor's Office of
2 Community Mental Health, one in five New Yorkers
3 experience mental health illness each year and
4 hundreds of thousands of these New Yorkers are not
5 connected to care. Can you speak to the mental
6 health services available for CUNY students?
7

8 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Well, so I mean all our
9 campuses have mental health support for our students.
10 Clearly the demand for those services is higher than
11 what we can provide. Uhm, we've used for example,
12 stimulus dollars at one point to put additional
13 support for students in the campuses and we've got
14 additional state aid to do that but I mean that's an
15 area where really additional investment is really,
16 really needed. We have piloted and you're familiar
17 with it because of your district. CUNY Cares, which
18 is a pilot in the three CUNY Bronx schools, Lehman,
19 Hostos and Bronx Community, which is a way to
20 leverage how we can get more mental health support to
21 the students and we're hoping that what we learn
22 there, we can use all across the system.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Speaking of CUNY Cares,
24 what is the total budget allocated for CUNY Cares?
25

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FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: We can get that to you.

I don't know, that is a blend of philanthropic support and state dollars and it's the intent of CUNY Cares is for example to leverage many of our students who will qualify for SNAP benefits and they, you know they don't want to navigate the paperwork or they think they're not going to be eligible. So, we're really trying to maximize resources that the federal government or the city and the state already provide for our students which we know will have an impact on their food insecurity, on their housing insecurity and in this case, going back to mental health but we can give you a breakdown of the CUNY Cares budget.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Please.

WENDY HENSEL: I was just going to give you one area where we really have felt the lack of stimulus funds as the Chancellor mentioned is mental health and just to give you a sense of that, the recommended ratio of clinicians to students is 1 to 1,500 and as a result of the loss of stimulus funds, we're up to 1 to 2,390. So, we are still serving 100,000, giving 100,000 services to about 30,000 students in the last three years but it is difficult and our clinicians

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1 are absolutely maxed out because of the loss of those
2 funds.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, that's what we're
5 hearing across all areas all over the country. A
6 2022 survey by Healthy CUNY and the CUNY Office of
7 Applied Research Evaluation and Analytics found that
8 nearly 111,000 CUNY students experienced food
9 insecurity. That is 2 out of every 5 CUNY students
10 from 1 in 5 in a 2018 survey. Students found that
11 the lack of convenient access to meals can contribute
12 to food insecurity, a major inhibitor to college
13 success.

14 So, this is in line with the CUNY Cares program.
15 It's how many students are currently enrolled in this
16 CUNY Cares program.

17 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Well, you know the
18 number?

19 WENDY HENSEL: First of all, I'll answer your
20 other question about the funding to date. We've
21 raised almost \$2.5 million, 41 percent of about what
22 we need to continue the program. About 49 percent
23 has been committed or promised by the Mayor's Office
24 of Economic Opportunity and Public Engagement, 40
25 percent has come internally from CUNY, our own

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1 allocation from the Chancellor's Office and 11
2 percent from private foundations. So, that's where
3 we are at the moment and to give you some context, we
4 estimate that about 20 to 25 percent of our students
5 are in fact eligible for SNAP and yet most of them
6 have not applied for SNAP.
7

8 So, through this new program, we have increased
9 the applications by 18.5 percent. It's a small
10 number to begin with so that percentage is a little
11 misleading there but gives you some sense of the
12 increase. We had 483 requests for assistance in the
13 fall because we're just beginning this program and uh
14 we know that more than 42,000 students have
15 downloaded the form for SNAP.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: How many?

17 WENDY HENSEL: 42,000 in 2023 calendar year. So,
18 it is a significant issue for our students but
19 thankfully with this program, the numbers are
20 trending in the right direction as we're connecting
21 students into the welfare -

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm sorry, 42,000 across
23 the system?

24 WENDY HENSEL: Across the campuses.

25 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: The three campuses.

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WENDY HENSEL: All campuses. 42,000 -

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: No, I think that's a
system number right?

WENDY HENSEL: The system.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah 42,000.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Not for the Bronx ones,
for the city.

WENDY HENSEL: Oh no, I'm sorry.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, no okay, I was like
42,000 sounds like a lot for three colleges.

WENDY HENSEL: Yeah, but it gives you some sense
of the need.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: And can I also thank the
Council because the Council has been extremely
supportive of the food insecurity initiative. That
has made a difference in many of our community
colleges. I want to publicly thank the Speaker and
the Council for that support because it addresses the
issue that you identified of food insecurity.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, thank you
Chancellor. The \$2.5 million, is that over a certain
number of years. Is that per year? What is that
related to?

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2 WENDY HENSEL: I think that was the start up to
3 get it -

4 SHERIF SOLIMAN: Uhm, part of it is through one-
5 time funds that we received from the state, which in
6 this enacted budget were reappropriated. So, for
7 Fiscal Year 2025, we have those funds. I think the
8 40 percent that Provost Hensel spoke to.

9 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: And we can get you a
10 breakdown of the budget for the - it's a three-year
11 pilot, we could give you a sense of that. We can
12 give you a sense of some of the partners of
13 philanthropic that have contributed to it. We can do
14 an entire informational package for you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you and I think
16 similar to the ACE and ASAP programs, these programs
17 are critical to our students wellbeing not to mention
18 their academics. So, funding it over a number of
19 years, if not baselining it I think it is really
20 critical to the success of the program and then and
21 therefore the success of our students.

22 I have a number of other questions but I do want
23 to give my colleagues a change and opportunity to ask
24 their questions as well.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have questions
3 from Council Member Restler followed by Brewer.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Great, good to see you
5 all. I just would like to ask, since Mayor Adams
6 came into office, could you break down the reduction
7 in operational funding and expense funding to
8 community colleges?

9 SHERIF SOLIMAN: Sure, so uhm, I think as the
10 Chancellor testified as well, the total baseline PEG
11 number for this particular fiscal year, for Fiscal
12 Year 2024 is \$94.1 million. For Fiscal 2025, the
13 exec calls for \$95.4 million in baseline funds.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And so, \$95.4 out of a
15 total of? That's a \$95 million PEG out of how much
16 money?

17 SHERIF SOLIMAN: Out of about \$550 million.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Wow. So, I'm not
19 terrific at math but that's 17, 18 percent? Okay, so
20 since the Mayor has come into office, we've cut 17 or
21 18 percent of the funding to our community colleges.
22 Do we have 18 percent fewer students at our community
23 colleges?

24
25

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2 SHERIF SOLIMAN: There have been significant
3 enrollment declines that occurred prior to the
4 pandemic that accelerated with the pandemic.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But since the Mayor came
6 into office -

7 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: And actually the
8 enrollment losses in the community college have been
9 around 30 percent. I mean they did quite dramatic
10 for us.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And considering we've
12 seen such a significant decline in funding at the
13 community colleges and historically city
14 administrations have always taken responsibility
15 through operating expenses at community colleges.
16 Are you concerned about our ability to continue to
17 provide kind of the economic opportunity that New
18 Yorkers have depended on over generations with such
19 an extreme level of budget cuts at the community
20 colleges?

21 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: As I mentioned in the
22 testimony, the concern gets compounded. I mean the
23 PEGs are difficult enough by themselves but remember
24 that in our case, part of the way that we're funding
25 is through the revenue that you generate for tuition.

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1 So, we get the PEG as we were a city agency but the
2 loss of revenue also because of the enrollment loss
3 adds to the issues that we face. So, that is why the
4 support of the community colleges is so important.
5

6 WENDY HENSEL: It's also worth mentioning we get
7 a double cut when our programs are cut by our
8 partners who have received PEGs on their own. So,
9 what you're hearing is the straight cut but it
10 doesn't take into account the additional cut in
11 funding in programs that we do jointly with other
12 city agencies.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Understood. You know
14 I'm always impressed whenever we look at the lists of
15 the higher educational institutions that are able to
16 transform people's lives, move people out of poverty.
17 Nobody is successful as the CUNY system and I really
18 worry that we are going to end that cycle of
19 transformation, all of the opportunity that CUNY
20 creates if we fail to continue to invest in higher,
21 public higher education in New York City. And the
22 community colleges in particular, that's the tipping
23 point is securing that community college degree is
24 the tipping point between somebody being able to have
25 a job that supports a family to live a comfortable

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1 life in our ever more and more expensive city or not.

2 And I am greatly appreciative of the Speakers

3 leadership to invest in CUNY and this has to be the

4 budget where we restore all of the multiple rounds of

5 budget cuts that the mayor has imposed on our public

6 higher educational system and we'll do everything I

7 can to be helpful. So, thank you.

8
9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have questions
10 from Council Member Brewer followed by Avilés.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. I
12 think that Ken Adams has been very successful, not
13 just with the Cohen allocation but trying to figure
14 out how to have the individuals who you know need
15 plumbing, electrical, tech, in order to get into
16 their job and at the same time, as I understand and
17 getting six credits for hopefully in the future. So,
18 since I think he walks on water, I'll be honest with
19 you. Is it working? Are there more students
20 enrolling? Is that a role that colleges can,
21 community colleges can perform? Why is that not more
22 prevalent in some of the other community colleges if
23 it's working?

24 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Well, I think that you
25 will find many of our community colleges also being a

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1 lot more proactive in that sphere of different kinds
2 of skills trades and also, giving credit for them so
3 that not only do you get what you learn from the
4 plumbing and the skill but it's a way also to connect
5 you to more higher education should you need it and
6 want it. Other things that we're doing Council woman
7 is uh, through our continued education programs that
8 have always been to be sort of separate from the
9 academic programs, bringing a lot more students there
10 and then getting the courses they take there to get
11 credit so they can come and accelerate their take as
12 a pipeline for the colleges.
13

14 So, I think that you will find that I mean and
15 Ken Adams does a great job but we have a great, great
16 group of community college presidents who are trying
17 to be as creative as he has in terms of -

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: None of us can be as
19 creative as Ken Adams.

20 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Okay but -

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: We can all try. We can
22 all try. Next question though is the topic of you
23 know what are you going to do to figure out how to
24 have more faculty? Now, other places in the country
25 as I understand it and you know better than I because

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2 you go to the conferences. The community colleges
3 are not as low in enrollment and are trying to do
4 what I described. Do you have some sense around the
5 country? Is it the same problem? Are the Mayor's
6 and the Governor's cutting like we find our Mayor?
7 What's going on around the country? Because I mean
8 we have a first lady who you know I don't know how
9 much money she's actually given to you but she talks
10 about community colleges and then in general, other
11 states perhaps have done a job where they really,
12 really focus on community colleges. Is that true
13 that those are success stories?

14 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, the community college
15 enrollment with the pandemic nationally went down,
16 right? There might be a pocket here and there of a
17 college or two where the enrollment numbers went up
18 but that has been a national issue and the number is
19 actually for SUNY partner upstate for the community
20 colleges that tend to be smaller and therefore more
21 economically vulnerable, are more complicated. But
22 to your point, one of the things in CUNY, we have
23 done a very good job and we want to keep doing it of
24 having the community colleges be the pipeline to
25 transfers. We don't want to touch that but that

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1 whole arena that you described on workforce is
2 something that we could do a lot more and learn more
3 from other community colleges in the country and you
4 will find that Ken Adams and the rest of the many
5 other great community college presidents -

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But why aren't we doing
7 more? Why isn't the business community - I know you
8 reach out to them all the time, to Kathy Wild and
9 everybody else but if they want a workforce, they
10 have to work with the community colleges in the City
11 of New York if they want a workforce. So, do we have
12 a dollar figure as to what in addition to the Cohen
13 and the other grants that the business community in
14 the City of New York has given to the community
15 colleges, for the kinds of programs I just described?
16

17 That to me would be, if I was in charge, I would
18 make that my center and I would be pounding the
19 streets and the city to say business community, you
20 owe it to us.

21 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, we've been pounding
22 and what I'd love to do is be able to send you a list
23 of those programs by community colleges so we could
24 get a sense of what they're doing and obviously,
25

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1 always happy to take your feedback on how to do
2 better.

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But it's not helping in
5 terms of hiring the faculty, which is - in other
6 words, if you want to develop more community college
7 programs, you want people to come to the community
8 college, you've got to have the faculty.

9 So, I'm trying to figure out the chicken and egg
10 that seems to not be working.

11 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: But that would also be a
12 different kind of faculty for those programs too, so.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know but they would
14 help. In other words, you need them.

15 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: You need them in order to
16 be able to do instruction, yes.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, because it seems to
18 me that you're not going to have the community
19 colleges, that 417 whatever is the number cut. It's
20 a big cut and it seems to me that that could also be
21 something that the business community participates
22 in. They could do both. I would like to see that
23 list but I don't hear a lot of talk about it right?
24 I'm just, I don't hear you screaming through the
25

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1 rafters, business community Kathy Wild, we need to be
2 more aggressive. I don't hear that.
3

4 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Well, so I'll give you we
5 have over 1,000 business that have come.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I mean Amazon came
7 through. I saw Amazon in there. They gave you a
8 room or something.

9 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: And they've partnered, so
10 I can give you a list of some of them. We've been
11 using the CEO Jobs Council. So, we've been expanding
12 that to be able to do that. There's been a number of
13 these programs.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Has it helped enrollment
15 at all? Has it helped enrollment?

16 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Slowly yes, and we have a
17 number of programs also with an industry that bring
18 apprenticeships that have to be done with them so we
19 have more applied learning. So, we've been pounding.
20 Sometimes it takes a little bit of time to do that
21 but it hasn't been because of lack of trying.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you Mr. Chair.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Avilés.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you. Thank you
25 Chair. Thank you Chancellor. I am one of many

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1 products of CUNY and very proud of it and I stand
2 with the Council's demands for a full restoration on
3 all the line items and then some.
4

5 But what I want to really talk about is how
6 horrified I was to see and witness, like many New
7 Yorkers the harm and the violence that was inflicted
8 upon CUNY students when CUNY decided to call NYPD and
9 specifically, it's notoriously violent strategic
10 response group onto students.

11 Can you tell me how many students were arrested
12 using the resources and collusion with the NYPD? How
13 many students were injured? Can you delineate for us
14 the resources that CUNY utilized? And can you tell
15 us, will CUNY take any actions to demand that the
16 charges be dropped against these students who should
17 be completing their education instead of fighting
18 prosecution for doing something which CUNY trains and
19 should be very proud of, which is expressing dissent
20 and dismay at something truly abominable that is
21 occurring? And can you clarify whether CUNY has
22 approved the \$4 million contract with the strategic
23 security services? If so, can you confirm what led
24 to the approval of this contract while CUNY continues
25 to need funding for so many programs?

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2 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, let me answer because
3 there are many questions there in your comment. Let
4 me begin with the contract, right? Because the
5 contract first is a contract to get security service
6 up to \$4 million right? So, we're not hoping to
7 spend \$4 million. We felt that we need additional
8 support for our public safety officers on the
9 campuses. So, we went to look for this, for these
10 services so it is not that we have spent \$4 million
11 right? It is that if we end up needing the services,
12 we can go make the hires and we have up to \$4 million
13 to spend. We hope that we don't have to spend a
14 penny of that but given the current campus climate
15 conditions, given some of the events that we have
16 coming up on our campuses, we thought that it would
17 be a responsible thing. Our responsibilities to the
18 safety of our students, our faculty staff, the
19 communities that we serve and we wanted to be able to
20 have that in case we needed that. Let me begin by
21 one of the most difficult things that I had to do as
22 Chancellor. Part of my responsibility is the
23 protection of everybody on the campus. And when you
24 have a situation when you have people taking over
25 buildings and people vandalizing buildings and people

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2 vandalizing financial aid records that provide the
3 aid that our students need. And people coming in and
4 spray painting, they need cameras, so they could hide
5 what they were doing. That is not what in a location
6 from a city university does right? And that is the
7 reason why we felt the need to call the police. We
8 have navigated many, many protests since October 7th
9 peacefully with the support of our peace officers,
10 with our team, and we will continue to do that
11 difficult balance of protecting free speech that
12 individuals have but it has to be done within the
13 context of safety and not endangering other people in
14 the community. And I'll be more than happy, the many
15 questions that you have that are more specific to get
16 answers for that.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: I will continue to ask
18 those questions. I'm happy to engage. I guess, I
19 don't understand if you are saying what you saw was
20 violence, responding with violence with an SRG, which
21 is notoriously violent. If you saw the students
22 being slammed, teeth being broken. Do you know how
23 many injuries students experienced on those arrests?

24
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2 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: I mean again, we haven't
3 received any communication of student injuries
4 formerly on the campus.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: That's unfortunate. Did
6 you engage in conversation with students like other
7 universities did as their first de-escalation
8 technique?

9 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: We have been in
10 conversation with students that were in city college
11 in the encampment and a combination of folks because
12 it was not just students. We have been actively
13 engaging our student government, which is actually
14 the representative of students in our governor
15 structure. So, we've been doing all of those things.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: I would encourage you to
17 go wider.

18 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: No one was hoping for the
19 escalation that occurred.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: When you call NYPD just
21 for the record, it always escalates. NYPD is not
22 known for de-escalation. It is not what they do, so
23 now that we've learned that lesson, can I ask you -
24 the students have made a variety of demands from
25

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1 CUNY. Will you be disclosing full financial
2 transparency around CUNY's investments?
3

4 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, let me allow our CFO
5 to talk a little bit of the investment policy. Let
6 me begin by saying, the lines of communication are
7 always open. In an interesting way also, uhm, we
8 have direct engagement our student government and our
9 faculty governance have representation on the Board
10 of Trustees investment communities, which makes all
11 of those decisions. So, in terms of governance, has
12 ways for these kinds of suggestions or claims or
13 demands, whatever you want to call it to be done
14 through those appropriate channels. But I do want to
15 have the CFO if you want, something on the divestment
16 side.

17 SHERIF SOLIMAN: Sure, so thank you Council
18 Member. In terms of our investments, just how it
19 operates, uhm, we have an investment pool. It's made
20 up largely of donations endowed funds, private funds.
21 Those funds are invested pursuant to an investment
22 policy that's adopted by the board. There is an
23 outsource chief investment officer, an MWBE firm that
24 then goes and hires fund managers to be able to
25

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1 invest that. 75 percent of what we can spend every
2 year goes to student financial aid.
3

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: So, I appreciate the
5 process. I guess the fundamental question is, will
6 it be made publicly available in a discernable,
7 accessible way? I have seen many university trustee
8 statements and much of them are discernable but will
9 you meet the students demand for full disclosure is
10 the question fundamentally?

11 SHERIFF SOLIMAN: So, we disclose in our
12 consolidated financial statements. The assets that
13 we have by asset category, you can see how much in
14 equities in fixed income etc.. As the Chancellor
15 noted, there is constant dialogue that goes on at the
16 Committees and uhm we'll continue to hear from our
17 student government and others.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: I appreciate that and I'm
19 sure that the students are persistent and will
20 continue to demand and consolidated statements don't
21 say much of anything. So, I think I heard my answer
22 but honing in really quickly, thank you Chair. From
23 Brooklyn, my beloved campuses, our Brooklyn College
24 and Kingsborough College. We know there have been
25 enormous amount of destabilization in Kings Borough

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1 Community Colleges leadership. I'd like to know your
2
3 commitment to making sure that both of these
4 colleges, in particular Kings Borough, is supported
5 in all their leadership transitions and making sure
6 that they have the resources they need to be healthy.

7 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, I don't exactly what
8 you mean that they're being destabilized. I mean we
9 had a phenomenal president there in President Shrader
10 for many years at Kingsborough, who is not at York.
11 The interim president Elsorie Dash(SP?) is a long
12 time like you, CUNY graduate of several campuses and
13 a member of the central office and we're delighted
14 with interim leadership. There will be a search for
15 that process, so I feel that that college is in very,
16 very good hands and community group and college under
17 the leadership of President Anderson. It is another
18 of our presidents.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Fantastic and what I mean
20 is, we have an interim - excuse me, we have an
21 interim president, an interim VP. De we have a
22 Provost?

23 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Okay, so we have a
25 Provost, excuse me.

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1
2 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: And the interim VP for
3 Administration went to work with President Shrader at
4 York.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Right but he's not - so,
6 what you hearing me saying is while we have interims,
7 we want to land the plane and make sure there's
8 stable leadership to make sure that this beloved
9 institution is getting the support and guidance that
10 it needs. So, thank you so much.

11 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: We're on the same page,
12 thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Chair Dinowitz.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Speaking of
15 the security. I just want to clarify, you said there
16 was authorized of \$4 million contracts for extra
17 security and how much was spent of that?

18 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Let me let our CEO answer
19 that who has been working with us.

20 HECTOR BATISTA: Yeah, as of now Council Member,
21 we've probably spent about \$400,000 and counting but
22 you know yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay and can you just talk
24 a little bit more about some of the incidents, things
25 that were going on in campus that you noticed that

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1 required this contract and required you know some of
2 the property damage you were talking about? Before
3 you said cameras spray painted. What were some of
4 the other things?
5

6 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Well I think he can
7 provide a sense of some of the cost of the take over
8 the Administration building at City College. The one
9 thing that I like to put in context here to is that
10 our campuses are not built to have 300 additional
11 people in a quad right, so that requires for the
12 protection of the people there and other people,
13 additional support. So, these contracts are there
14 precisely so should we need additional support to be
15 able to have it. But the CEO can mention some of the
16 cost of the encampment and some of the other
17 incidents.

18 HECTOR BATISTA: So, some of those incidents they
19 led up to the decision that was made. One of the
20 incidents that happen was a flare was shot up to our
21 roof and that caused an addition of about \$350,000
22 worth of damage to our roof. We had gotten capital
23 funding from the City Council and the state to be
24 able to put a new roof on that facility.
25

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1 We also experienced an additional, almost a
2 quarter of a million dollars damage to the
3 Administration building and broken windows, chairs,
4 devices, cabinets, all kinds of things and then
5 including like the Chancellor said, we also had all
6 the cameras were damaged.
7

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And you have a cost
9 estimate for the cameras?

10 HECTOR BATISTA: In total, I think a little bit
11 right now and counting we're about \$600,000 worth of
12 damage.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: \$600,000 total for the
14 roof and the uhm -

15 HECTOR BATISTA: That's an estimate.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: On damage to the building,
17 plus the \$400,000 needed to spend on those not
18 calling the cops and just safety agents to manage the
19 crowd. So, it sounds like at least \$1 million spent
20 just on the City College Campus. Is that accurate?

21 HECTOR BATISTA: Well, there's a little bit more
22 than that. In order for us to be able to secure the
23 campus because we had to get additional fencing and
24 additional so that in total I would say right now,
25 we're up to about \$3 million we're spending.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, because I just want
3 to make sure. So, between the cost of the buildings,
4 the cost for things like fencing and the security,
5 you're at roughly \$3 million spent by CUNY.

6 HECTOR BATISTA: That's right.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Uhm, that's actually
8 really you know as we're sitting here talking about
9 \$1 million for STEM, the few million dollars for
10 child care, for ASAP, that's something that we're
11 actually losing out on those. Not only because of a
12 Mayor who has proposed drastic cuts but because of
13 damage to your, to the property and the requirement
14 to hire more security. That's you know a real shame.
15 I think flies in the face of what CUNY is about and
16 the purpose of CUNY, which is to uplift people, not
17 tear institutions down that have been an economic
18 engine for so many, including myself and including my
19 father.

20 Had there been conversations between CUNY and the
21 NYPD regarding enforcing campus safe. Do we know
22 Columbia has NYPD on site? I think they said through
23 graduation. Are there similar conversations
24 happening with CUNY?
25

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1
2 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Well, I mean we have an
3 agreement with NYPD and as you know, they come to the
4 campus only when we request their presence. There's
5 a good relationship normally between the campus and
6 the local precinct in terms of the different events
7 that occur and we share a lot of communication in
8 that perspective.

9 In the particular case of City College, there has
10 been a number of officers that have stayed since the
11 campus opened. A minimal presence is my
12 understanding right now and so, that's so far what we
13 have worked up with them and I don't know if you want
14 to add a couple things.

15 HECTOR BATISTA: So, I just want to add one
16 thing. Since all this happened, we've had 175
17 peaceful demonstrations since October 7th. We only
18 had one time where we had to call the police. So,
19 the Chancellor has really charged the public safety
20 with allowing peaceful demonstration, which is what
21 we believe in. Freedom of speech, freedom of
22 expression, all those things. In 178 we had 1
23 incident so; it just goes to show how much attention
24 we play to ensure that people do demonstration in a
25 peaceful manner. In this particular case, we had to

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1
2 make certain decisions because of what was happening
3 at that moment and time.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, it is uhm a real
5 shame that I not only came to that to a dangerous
6 situation but also as we're at a budget hearing to
7 point out that it's costing over \$3 million of money
8 that really should be going to our academic
9 institution and uplifting our students. Just on the
10 - not the emergency contract, the Fiscal 2025
11 Executive Budget for security services is \$466,000
12 less than the Fiscal 2024 adopted. Is there a reason
13 for the change in spending?

14 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: We'll have to get back
15 you on that. I think.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: According to what was sent
17 to us, there's no funding for Bronx Community
18 College. Are we reading it wrong?

19 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: No funding for?

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Bronx Community College.
21 The security contract.

22 HECTOR BATISTA: Well, these contracts are only
23 used if they need them, so I assume that there's been
24 no spending at Bronx Community College because they
25 haven't needed the use of that contract.

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1 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Alright that was the
2 numbers that were sent to us and I would -

3 HECTOR BATISTA: Yeah, we would be happy to get -

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, please.

5 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: We'll give you clarity,
6 yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Uhm, I'm just going over
8 the capital for a second as you know uhm, the
9 Executive Capital Commitment Plan for Fiscal 2024
10 through 2028 includes \$823.2 million of which \$174.3
11 million is in Fiscal 2025 for various CUNY capital
12 projects. Were there any new capital projects added?
13 If so, can you provide a listing of the new projects?

14 SHERIF SOLIMAN: We can get you a list but yes,
15 about \$8.5 million in projects on behalf of the
16 borough president.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, and how much of the
18 \$174.3 million in Fiscal 2025 is for improving
19 structural deficiencies in CUNY campuses? I think at
20 the last hearing you were doing an analysis, an
21 assessment of the facilities at CUNY.

22 HECTOR BATISTA: Yeah, so a couple of things.
23 Uhm, you asked about the assessment, so let me first,
24 we'll get back to you on the capital allocation. In
25

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1 terms of the — we are in the process of completing
2 the condition assessment. As I mentioned to you as a
3 tool that when completed, it will give us data — all
4 the information that we got as we're doing that
5 evaluation is put into an algorithm and that gives us
6 a real sense of what systems are in critical
7 condition at that point and what does that mean?
8 That's a system that at any given time could go and
9 just to give it a perspective, there's 319 of those
10 systems that have been identified as in critical
11 conditions. They're still working. That would
12 translate into about \$700 million worth of funding in
13 order for us to get that system to a state of good
14 repair. So, the condition assessment tool is a tool
15 that's used by internal professionals that are going
16 to be able to use that so we could better target
17 capital dollars to make sure that the things that
18 happen; I used as an example, I hate to use Bronx.
19 They happened at Bronx Community College that we are
20 able to sort of get ahead of it and be able to
21 address so we don't have the kind of concerns that we
22 have and that's the way that tool is going to get
23 done but that tool, we are completing that assessment
24
25

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1 and we'll be able to have some of that information
2 you asked at an earlier testimony.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Hmm, hmm, do you have the
5 timeline on the completion of that assessment?

6 HECTOR BATISTA: I think roughly over the next
7 few months we'll be able to complete it and then
8 we're going to -- as you requested, we are going to be
9 putting something public facing.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Excellent.

11 HECTOR BATISTA: That's going to be able to give
12 the public information about that particular tool.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That's very important
14 thank you. And so, I mean I have other questions
15 related to specifics, including how much is budgeted
16 for cafeteria upgrades but that, I guess, is that
17 part of the assessment and you're unable to provide
18 that at this time?

19 HECTOR BATISTA: No, I mean I think well --

20 SHERIF SOLIMAN: \$21 million.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: \$21 million, okay. Uhm,
22 how do we ensure that our colleges are complying with
23 the American with Disabilities Law? Will the \$11
24 million in CUNY's health safety and ADA requests
25 fully fund any deficiencies?

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1 HECTOR BATISTA: Are you asking for facilities?

2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Facilities.

3 HECTOR BATISTA: Oh, yeah, I mean the answer to
4 that is yes. We are, our iShares for facility
5 management has been working on making sure that all
6 our facilities are accessible and address that
7 particular law, and I'd be happy to give you some
8 information on that.
9

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes, I would be thrilled
11 to have that information. Thank you very much. Uhm,
12 unless the CUNY's Executive Plan includes intracity
13 funding, which I think you started to speak about
14 earlier of \$66.9 million in Fiscal 2025. The
15 intracity funding provides for services purchased and
16 sold among city agencies. Can you provide details on
17 programs and services that would be funded with
18 intracity funding in 2025?

19 SHERIF SOLIMAN: We can provide you with a list
20 but it's really, a lot of the programs that you have
21 mentioned in terms of whether there was a cut here of
22 \$1 million. In some cases, there were additions but
23 it's you know everything from STEM as you noted to
24 the BPL program, which is an energy program that we
25

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1
2 have with DCAS to other programs with other agencies
3 including DOE and cultural affairs etc.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And that's the city? I
5 mean, just lay it out. The city is paying you for a
6 service?

7 SHERIF SOLIMAN: There are funding - there is
8 funding that flows through many city agencies that
9 then we partner with through an MOU to provide a
10 particular program at CUNY. I think the number that
11 we have of total in terms of programs I think was
12 around \$90 million. And so, a lot of it we see
13 typically comes together at adopted where a lot of
14 those programs are funded but certainly as Provost
15 Hansel had mentioned before, which is that you know
16 the PEGs are one thing but then certainly the you
17 know the intracity funding which provides important
18 services and programs also has an impact to the
19 extent that those were part of agency PEGs right? We
20 would say though you know overall I think lines of
21 communication with OMB are always open and continue
22 to be open and we're hoping that you know together at
23 adopted, we can be able to see those programs get in
24 the adopted.

25

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CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Chair Dinowitz.

Yeah, I think this is – look this is part of why the Council fights so hard and supports CUNY the way that we do because every dollar that's invested into CUNY gives back \$15 I think the stat was to the city economy and the same is true in reverse. If the cuts to CUNY then have a radial negative impact and this is why you know it's obviously very disappointing in our ask that we saw, asked about \$130 million and saw only \$1 million of that come back.

So, we've got a long way to go for CUNY to be able to serve more students at a lower cost. It can only happen with greater government investment, so I think the Council believes that now is the time to double down on our public higher education system, not to zero it out. So, Chair Dinowitz.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Uhm, yeah it is very clear that CUNY is the economic and social engine of our city. It's true for me. It's true for my family and so many others here in New York City, that have a history of New York City. Uhm, you're facing budget crisis that the Council is fighting hard against to make sure that we are investing in our students and the future of the city while all the while you are

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1 managing I think a lot of crisis on your campuses
2 dealing with, as you mentioned, protests related to
3 that are causing a lot of funding challenges for you
4 and you were managing that all the while dealing with
5 issues that existed before October 7th. That we have
6 pushed back and forth on for a few years now.
7

8 And so, all the challenges remain. They are
9 being compounded and taking money away at this
10 critical point only serves to exacerbate all of the
11 problems that we're seeing on our CUNY campuses. So,
12 we are going to continue to fight for funding for our
13 CUNY system and to make sure that CUNY is doing the
14 right thing and doing right by our students here in
15 New York City. Thank you, yeah.

16 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, thank you to the Co-
17 Chairs Brannan and Dinowitz. I would be remiss if I
18 didn't thank on behalf of the 1,101 CUNY students who
19 are in Council woman Brewer's District. The 4,922
20 that are in your district Council Member Brannan and
21 the 3,882 who are in your district Councilman
22 Dinowitz. On behalf of them and us, thank you for
23 your support.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Chancellor.
25 Thank you all very much.

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1 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we're going to take a
3 ten-minute break and then we'll start up public
4 testimony. [05:34:58]- [05:45:54]

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Can I have your attention
6 please? Can I have your attention please? Excuse
7 me, ladies and gentlemen at this time, please find
8 your seats. Ensure that all cell phones and
9 electronic devices are placed to silent. Once again,
10 please find your seats. Ensure that all cell phones
11 and electronic devices are placed to silent. We
12 thank you for your kind cooperation. We shall resume
13 momentarily. Thank you.

14 [05:46:15]- [05:46:29]

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: [GAVEL] Okay we're now
16 going to open up for public testimony. Just a
17 reminder, this is government proceeding and that the
18 quorum shall be observed at all times. As such
19 members of the public shall remain silent unless they
20 are at the dais testifying so that everyone's voices
21 can be heard. The witness table is reserved only for
22 those people who have signed up to testify. No video
23 recording or photography is allowed from the witness
24 table. Members of the public may not present audio
25

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1 or video recordings as testimony but may submit
2 transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant at
3 Arms for inclusion in the official record.
4

5 If you wish to speak at today's hearing and
6 you're here today in the Chamber, got to make sure
7 you sign one of these little slips in order to
8 testify. You got to be signed up. When recognized,
9 you'll have two minutes to speak on today's hearing
10 topics only. DOE and CUNY Fy25 Executive Budgets.

11 If you have a written statement or additional
12 written testimony you wish to submit for the record,
13 please provide a copy of that testimony to the
14 Sergeant at Arms. You may also email written
15 testimony within 72 hours of this hearing. You can
16 email it to testimony@council.nyc.gov. Audio and
17 video recordings will not be accepted to that email
18 address but we will accept written testimony. I am
19 now going to call the first panel. Forgive me if I
20 mispronounce your name. Micheal Sill, Shirley
21 Aldebol. [05:48:12] Stand by [05:48:12]- [05:48:22].

22 Okay, sorry. Ren Chavez Pena, Lexi Greenberg,
23 Martin Urbach, Kalliope Muery, Jolene Kim, Shael
24 Fiessel-Guirand, Stella Snyder, and Melanie Fanith.
25 [05:48:55]- [05:49:07] Okay, so it's Melanie Fanith,

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1 Stella Snyder, Shael Fiessel-Guirand, I'm sorry if I
2 said it wrong, Jolene Kim, Kalliope Muery, Martin
3 Urbach, Lexi Greenberg, and Ren Chavez Pena.

4 [05:49:25]- [05:49:39]. Okay, lets start from my
5 right. You have a microphone down there guys? So
6 before you start, just say your name and then you'll
7 have two minutes to give your testimony alright? Say
8 what school you're from or whatever you want to say.
9 Alright, go ahead.

10
11 SHAEL FIESSEL-GUIRAND: First, I would like to
12 say good afternoon and thank you for having me here.
13 My name is Shael Fiessel-Guirand. I am a student and
14 a peer mediator and a member of the Dignity of
15 Schools campaign New York, a coalition of over 20 New
16 York City based organizations consisting of students,
17 parents, educators, and advocates. I would just
18 start if off by saying by replacing a restorative,
19 healthy, and open process with a punitive,
20 systematically oppressive one is not making a
21 positive change.

22 The majority of the time, when the parties and
23 the peer mediations see me, they see a peer, someone
24 who can relate to them. A person who doesn't speak
25 down to them but takes the time to listen to them and

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1 speak to them as a person. That is what peer
2 mediation is and that is what restorative justice is.
3 It is taking the time to sit and not only point out
4 the problems in issues but focus on the why and how.
5 Why it's wrong, why it needs to be changed, why we do
6 things we do and how it can be fixed.
7

8 By placing cops in schools you are placing and
9 forcing an unsafe systematically oppressive
10 environment where students are supposed to feel safe
11 to grow and grow as people. We want the city to
12 fully fund meaningful restorative justice and divest
13 from school police and policing infrastructure. A
14 commitment to a restorative justice requires a
15 meaningful culture shift that makes it possible to
16 build community, safety, and respond to when it
17 occurs. We are calling on the NYC Council to move
18 money away from policing, the hiring and training of
19 school police and stopping the funding for
20 surveillance technology. NYC could save up to \$90
21 million in one fiscal year by using this suggestion.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

23 JOLENE KIM: Good afternoon Chair Rita Joseph for
24 the opportunity to speak. My name is Jolene and I
25 was born in Brooklyn and I'm a student at Boerum Hill

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1
2 for International Studies for four years and a member
3 of peer mediators in schools. An organization where
4 students like myself get together to help mediate
5 conflicts in our school and make school a better
6 place for students. I also work for the Mayor's
7 Youth Council and Chancellor's Advisory Committee
8 where we're committed to restorative justice and a
9 place to share our perspectives. We want to make
10 sure there's a way for students to safely share their
11 opinions and get help if needed.

12 This program helps students who are in conflict
13 to share their views and a peer mediator who is also
14 a student can give the student directions on how we
15 can overcome the conflict. Peer mediation and other
16 restorative justice programs are vital in schools so
17 students can feel heard and accepted. School is a
18 place where students can freely express themselves
19 but excessive discipline can harm students emotional
20 and social wellbeing. We believe that New York City
21 can highly benefit by helping young people be their
22 own leaders instead of disciplinary policies that
23 don't truly make students feel safe and heard. We
24 want the city to invest in restorative justice
25 programs to make schools a better place for students

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1 to learn and thrive and instead divest from policiary
2 disciplines placed on them. Committing to
3 restorative justice will help students build
4 community with one another and help them productively
5 acknowledge and respond to conflict such harm between
6 students. We're calling the New York City Council to
7 expand school based restorative justice and social,
8 emotional supports including \$75 million in hiring
9 school based restorative justice coordinators and 500
10 schools. Protect critical programs currently funded
11 with \$1 billion in federal COVID relief dollars
12 including protecting and baselining the \$21 million
13 for restorative justice, \$5 million for mental health
14 continuum and \$77 million for counselors, social
15 workers and mental health professionals.
16

17 Move money away from school policy, include
18 seizing all NYPD recruitment, hiring and training of
19 school place and stop funding for surveillance
20 technology. Simply by not hiring any more school
21 police, NYC would save up to \$90 million in one
22 fiscal year.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.
24
25

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1
2 STELLA SNYDER: Good afternoon honorable members
3 of the City Council and Chair Joseph. My name is
4 Stella Snyder.

5 KALLIOPE MUERY: My name is Kalliope Muery.

6 STELLA SNYDER: And I am a student and a member
7 of the Restorative Justice and Peer Mediation Team at
8 Boerum Hill School for International Studies. There
9 we strive to find peace in our school and community
10 and to teach people about restorative justice. We do
11 a lot of community work and we build trust in our
12 school through engaging townhalls and meaningful
13 mediations. I am here today because we would like
14 the city to fund restorative justice programs instead
15 of funding policing in schools and implement
16 restorative justice as a peaceful conflict
17 resolution. I have seen first-hand the benefits of
18 resolving conflicts through restorative justice.
19 Children are met with support and kindness and
20 usually rationally and reflect on their actions from
21 a place of learning. Students approach the mediation
22 process without fear but when the police are
23 involved, their fears are heightened. My classmate
24 expressed her discomfort around the police officers

25

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1
2 in our school but the restorative justice system puts
3 her at ease.

4 One girl that I know personally came up to me
5 after a particularly difficult mediation and told me
6 how grateful she was for our guidance. Police
7 officers respond to conflict whereas restorative
8 justice holds people accountable for their actions
9 and rebuilds communities. When a child is faced with
10 a punitive punishment, they don't have the time to
11 reflect on their actions and it usually makes the
12 situation worse.

13 KALLIOPE MUERY: A movement towards restorative
14 justice could cause harmless conflict resolutions and
15 a strong sense of community in school. We are
16 calling for the city to preserve funding for
17 restorative justice and to increase funding to extend
18 these programs in all schools. We're asking for \$21
19 million for restorative justice programs, \$5 million
20 for mental health continuum, \$77 million for
21 counselors and social workers and mental health
22 professionals and an additional \$75 million to invest
23 in school based restorative justice programs.

24 All funds should go directly to the schools to
25 expand the restorative justice program. All schools

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1 should be able to hire kind staff members and
2 coordinators to implement these programs.
3

4 STELLA SNYDER: We would like full funding for
5 mental health educators and counselors and
6 restorative justice programs and to suspend policing
7 in schools. We are calling for the protection of our
8 students and peers to help our classmates with their
9 best interest in mind. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Just hit the
11 button on the bottom.

12 SHIRLEY ALDEBOL: Sorry, there we go. Good
13 afternoon Chair Brannan, Chair Joseph and members of
14 the Finance and Education Committees. My name is
15 Shirley Aldebol and I am an Executive Vice President
16 of SCIU 32BJ. As most of you are aware, 32 BJ is the
17 nation's largest property services union representing
18 commercial and residential cleaners, property
19 maintenance workers, door persons, security officers,
20 building engineers, school airport food service
21 workers across the east coast with approximately
22 92,000 members in New York City.

23 I am speaking to you today on behalf of the over
24 5,000 cleaners and handypersons who are employed by
25 New York City School Support Services and represented

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1
2 by Local 32 BJ to once again call on the City Council
3 to maintain full funding for our city's schools,
4 including funding for schools cleaning and
5 maintenance.

6 As this Committee knows, these hard-working men
7 and women employed by NYCSSS work under a contract
8 with the Department of Education to provide school
9 facility cleaning and maintenance services. Today,
10 it bears repeating that during COVID, these essential
11 workers put themselves, who were on the frontlines,
12 put themselves at risk when schools were closed for
13 students and teachers and became resource centers for
14 children or first responders. They became food
15 distribution hubs, COVID testing sites and more. The
16 school facility staff made sure that schools
17 buildings could remain healthy and safe places for
18 the community at large.

19 When schools reopened to students, teachers and
20 staff, workloads for our members increased,
21 maintenance staff had to work overtime to deal with
22 staffing shortages as well as enhanced cleaning and
23 disinfection protocols. The work that they do is
24 very, very important. I'm pleased to hear this year
25 that for the first time NYCSSS is fully funded due to

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1 the city's foresight and allocating additional funds
2 to schools cleaning. We appreciate the
3 administration for recognizing the essential role of
4 our schools cleaners and handy persons. NYCSSS has
5 been structurally underfunded year after year, so
6 today I'm here to thank the Council as well as to
7 stress how important it is to keep the custodial
8 staff fully funded moving forward.
9

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

11 SHIRLEY ALDEBOL: We cannot afford to reduce
12 maintenance cleaning or cleaning in New York City
13 Schools. We cannot allow our children's learning
14 environment to suffer. This investment in NYCSSS is
15 an investment in the trained cleaning and maintenance
16 workforce we need to ensure the safety of more than
17 one million public school students. I appreciate
18 your time.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much.

20 LEXI GREENBERG: Hi, my name is Lexi Greenberg
21 and I am here representing the Dignity in School
22 campaign and I am a founding member of my public high
23 schools restorative justice action team, and I am
24 here to demand that New York City invest \$75 million
25

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1
2 to expand restorative justice in schools and sorry if
3 this story is a bit repetitive for some of you here.

4 I started high school in 2020, so it was close to
5 impossible for me to make friends and one day, my
6 advisor was having a lesson on the history of the
7 Black Lives Matter Movement. And at the time, I was
8 the only Black student in my advisory. During the
9 lesson, two boys in the class made many jokes and
10 comments I was extremely uncomfortable with and I
11 left the lesson feeling very angry and attacked.
12 Having experienced many racial microaggressions in
13 the past, I felt I had to do something this time
14 around. So, I reported those boys to my guidance
15 counselor asking for suspension on the count of
16 racist behavior in the class room but the guidance
17 counselor asked me to have a meeting with them
18 instead.

19 I felt the authority figures at my school were
20 downplaying my experience and refusing to protect me,
21 even with the vital part of my identity was under
22 attack. I felt unseen and heard and silenced so I
23 went to my principal so that he can execute full
24 disciplinary action but he also encouraged me to have
25 a meeting with those boys with members of the

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1 guidance staff present. I reluctantly agreed but in
2 that meeting, I realized that these boys didn't mean
3 any real harm and they just spoke from a place of
4 ignorance. Those guys went to mostly White middle
5 schools that never broach the topic of BLM and never
6 talked about it in their home lives. They were
7 confused and they didn't understand how and why their
8 actions hurt me.
9

10 Once they understood, they were extremely
11 apologetic and regretful, so I left that meeting with
12 two sincere apologies and didn't seek disciplinary
13 action. Those two boys became my first friends in
14 high school and they helped me find my people. I
15 made the choice to listen and see the people on the
16 other side of the problem and that opened me up to a
17 whole universe of joy and acceptance. This is why
18 restorative justice matters.

19 Traditional disciplinary actions just create
20 educational spaces of alienation but restorative
21 justice teaches forgiveness, acknowledgement and
22 acceptance. After establishing my schools
23 restorative justice action team, there has been a
24 huge decrease in school incidents and people getting
25 along much better, especially with programs like peer

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1 mediation training. Therefore, we call on the city
2 to expand restorative justice by \$75 million and
3 protect and baseline the mental health continuum, and
4 other critical educational programs currently under
5 threat of being cut. Thank you for your time.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much Lexi.

8 MARTIN URBACH: Good afternoon. Thank you Chair
9 Joseph. Thank you Chair Brannan. My name is Martin
10 Urbach, I am a Restorative Justice Coordinator, a
11 music educator at Boerum Hill School for
12 International Studies so are my students. I'm also
13 the founder of the Circle Keepers, an organization
14 that trains young people to do school based
15 restorative justice. I am here to call on the City
16 Council to please call for the expansion of school
17 based restorative justice programming in schools by
18 funding it at \$75 million for 500 schools.

19 I have first hand seen the - I don't even want to
20 say magic but the realities, the paradigm shift that
21 restorative practices can bring in schools and I
22 would like to share two stories. I came to the work
23 of restorative justice, a young woman in my class in
24 2017, in my music class said, "hey Martin, would you
25 come to me to a mediation? I need a buddy; I need

1 somebody that understands me." And I went with her.
2
3 And through that, I began developing a relationship
4 with this young person. This young person just
5 graduated yesterday from Morris College with a degree
6 in social work and she's been - she and I started a
7 youth-led peer mediation program that over the last
8 seven years grew to hundreds of children. We were
9 able to interrupt the suspension rates at 95 percent
10 of the school that I used to be at.

11 So, that's one story, right. The story of actual
12 school policy transformation. Specifically when we
13 are thinking about the history of school discipline
14 codes in this country, the history of the uh the
15 racialized history of school discipline codes in this
16 country and who gets access to suspensions and who
17 gets access to maybe turning a blind eye, right?

18 Another quick story. Through restorative justice
19 programs, I have sat with young people in the room
20 who have started saying, "I don't apologize. That is
21 not a thing that I do. That is not a thing that I
22 know how to do. That's not a thing I'm interested in
23 doing. And through the process of relationship
24 building and through a process of love and also
25 making sure that we are staying in what we call,

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1 loving engaging right? Lexi brought up the Black
2 Lives Matter movement that staying in loving
3 engagement, we've been able to teach young people to
4 say you know what, I am sorry. I was out of pocket
5 for doing that. Restorative justice in schools
6 allows us to actually live the true meaning of
7 discipline, which comes from the word disciple, which
8 means to have a teacher. To actually use the work of
9 restorative justice to teach young people through the
10 harm that they commit that they can also experience
11 and actually live the work of living and teaching and
12 learning through relationship building rather than
13 criminalizing behavior even if it's bad. Because as
14 restorative justice practitioner Maisha Win calls on
15 us, we need to make sure that no children feel like
16 they're throwaways. That's why we're calling for the
17 expansion of restorative justice in our city and
18 really should be everywhere children go to school
19 because children deserve to go to school where they
20 feel loved, cared, safe and where they feel like they
21 can go to school to learn from their mistakes, as
22 well as from the things that they do well, and have
23 the opportunity to make things right. And the same
24
25

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1 thing for adults because restorative justice is not
2 only for children.
3

4 We adults, we teachers are harm doers as well.
5 Restorative justice is for everybody. It must be for
6 everybody. Thank you so much.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much.
8 Thank you all very much for your testimony.

9 [06:05:56] - [06:06:23] Stand by we're going to call
10 the next panel. [06:06:25] - [06:06:50]

11 Okay, next panel, apologies if I mispronounce the
12 name Gabriella Llogas or Vargus, I'm sorry, Fadi
13 Nadaf, Imani Delvallo, Adanis Favorite, Saed Ali
14 Ahmed, Lisa De Castillo, Daniella Gallardo.

15 [06:07:21] - [06:08:03] and a Jayden Worthy or Wordy.
16 [06:08:05] - [06:08:24]

17 Alright liberation, you guys ready? Who is going
18 to start? Go ahead.

19 LISA DE CASTILLO: Good afternoon Chair Joseph
20 and Chair Brannan and members of the Educational
21 Committee. My name is Lisa De Castillo, Director of
22 Secondary and Post Secondary Initiatives at JCCA.

23 First, I want to thank you on behalf of JCCA,
24 Liberation Diploma Plus High School and most
25 important, all of my students for providing funding

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1 for the Learning to Work program in the city's budget
2 for next year. We are deeply appreciative of your
3 advocacy and hard work to baseline the funding and
4 keep the LTW programs running citywide. However, the
5 funding is not enough and I would like to expand the
6 ways we support the students and ask for a greater
7 investment of the city's educational and vocational
8 programs to our young people.
9

10 JCCA'S LTW program has dedicated staff that work
11 every day to build relationships with students who
12 need the most support. Our advocate counselors,
13 assistance crisis mediation, coaching and counseling.
14 Many come visit their advocate counselors every
15 morning before going to class knowing that supportive
16 conversation can put them in the right mindset to
17 take on the day. Students have expressed that
18 without the work of their advocate counselors and
19 other support staff, they may not have continued in
20 high school.

21 The work of the LTW staff is woven throughout the
22 liberation community. The students that we serve are
23 in tremendous need of support whether it's
24 educationally, emotionally, financially, and is very
25 difficult for the building to maintain these systems

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1 of support without the LTW staff edition. JCCA has
2 been instrumental in expanding the services that
3 liberation provides. We have worked hard to increase
4 the resources for the food pantry. We've help funded
5 the washer and dryer to be fixed to allow students to
6 come to school with clean clothes. We have opened a
7 mental health clinic in the school. We have been
8 able to bring more post-secondary options including
9 paying for security and OSHA credentials. We've
10 assisted students with moving into college campuses
11 and we have also been able to offer up to 40,000 over
12 a five-year period towards college, vocational living
13 expenses to any liberation student that is accepted
14 into the JCCA scholarship program.
15

16 All of these services have been brought to
17 liberation through outside funding resources. This
18 is just some of the needs that the LTW budget does
19 not account for. While intern staff and salaries are
20 very valuable, it is the wrap around services that
21 provide concrete resources and options that allow our
22 students to be more successful in adulthood.

23 Over the past year and a half, many of the
24 resources have been limited to some circumstances
25 beyond our control as the national economy has

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1 suffered, donations and funding streams have
2 lessened. It is imperative now more than ever that
3 our students remain hopeful and engaged in their
4 secondary planning. The LTW program and transfer
5 schools are a beacon of hope and light for what many
6 students may have considered a last chance at
7 graduating high school. We cannot stop now. We must
8 increase funding for this program to show our youth
9 that we believe in their possibilities.
10

11 Now, I would like to allow for some of my
12 students to speak for themselves. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Lisa. Just say
14 your name and then you can begin.

15 GABRIELLA LLOGAS: Alright, good afternoon, my
16 name is Gabriella Llogas. I go to Liberation Diploma
17 Plus but before that, I went to my old high school
18 New Utrecht. In New Utrecht, I feel like exiting, I
19 accomplished a lot. I felt like an outsider and you
20 could see in these hallways and these classes, people
21 passing with ease but when it came to me, I didn't
22 feel like that. I felt ignored by my teachers. I
23 didn't feel accepted and it was at that point where I
24 felt like I wanted to drop out and just get it over
25 with because I did not feel like I accomplished

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1
2 enough to go on. But when my counselor finally
3 talked to me about it, she saw I was feeling and I
4 could transfer to an alternate school to get my
5 credits faster and I said yeah.

6 When I first got to Liberation, I was expecting a
7 normal school with the same feeling but the first
8 week there, I already felt like I belonged. The
9 staff made me feel welcome. They did not
10 discriminate you. They cared about you. When you go
11 to the JCCA office you could talk about your problem
12 with anyone. Whether it's school related or
13 personal. They are there for you and they also
14 reason with you. Not other schools are like this.
15 Other schools, they will listen to you and then send
16 you on your way but with the JCCA, they get personal
17 with you. They don't let you feel alone.

18 After a few months at Liberation, they told me
19 about the internship program that helps you get a job
20 and learn more about adulthood. So, thanks to them I
21 have a job and get paid to basically come to school
22 and work, when they showed me I could actually
23 accomplish it. When they found a job for me, I was a
24 little nervous but when I went there, I really liked
25

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1
2 it. It fit to my hobbies because I want to go to a
3 culinary program or baking and pastry.

4 My internship is at Edible Arrangements, so I am
5 more experienced in working with food and it works
6 with my schedule so I can work and go to the other
7 internship meetings. These meetings show me more
8 about responsibilities. We have done resumes and
9 learned about other new skills to help me move
10 forward. Thanks to Liberation and JCCA, I realized
11 that I do want to go to college and pursue baking and
12 pastry to later on open my bakery. But I want to
13 thank them because I would never had done this in my
14 old school or even thought about going to college.
15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much. Can
17 we get quiet in here please? The only person that
18 should be speaking is the person testifying. Thank
19 you. Go ahead, just say your name and you could
20 start. Just hit the little button. There you go.

21 FADI NADAF: Hello, my name is Fadi Nadaf. I'm a
22 student at Liberation Diploma Plus High School.
23 Liberation Diploma Plus places a strong emphasis on
24 personalized education. This approach ensures that
25 each student receives the attention and support they

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1 need, which is particularly beneficial for those who
2 have struggled in traditional school settings. By
3 focusing on individual learning styles and needs,
4 Liberation Diploma Plus students to thrive
5 academically and personally. The school fosters a
6 supportive and nurturing environment that encourages
7 students to engage and participate actively into
8 education. This supportive atmosphere helps build
9 students confidence and motivates them to achieve
10 their goals. The staff at Liberation Diploma Plus
11 are typically highly dedicated and committed to their
12 student success. They often go above and beyond to
13 ensure that students receive the guidance and support
14 they need, both academically and personally.

16 Liberation Diploma Plus has a strong focus on
17 helping students not only to graduate but also to
18 prepare for life after high school. This can include
19 college preparation, career counseling and other
20 support services that ensure students are ready for
21 the next step in their journey. Many students at
22 this school achieve positive outcomes including
23 higher graduation rates and successful transitions to
24 college or careers. These outcomes are a testament
25 to the schools affective approach to education.

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1 Overall, Liberation Diploma Plus stands out because
2 of its comprehensive student-centered approach that
3 addresses the diverse needs of its student preparing
4 them not just academically but for all aspects of
5 life.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

8 IMANI DELVALLO: Good afternoon. My name is
9 Imani and I go to Liberation. So, the student you
10 are all sat in front of today isn't the same student
11 you would have met if we were doing this six months
12 ago.

13 I genuinely thought I was bad at high school
14 until I started going to Liberation. I have met so
15 many different people with all the same goal that
16 makes students feel accounted for a feel important.
17 Sooner or later -

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, if you have a cell
19 phone, you got to turn it off please.

20 IMANI DELVALLO: Sooner or later, I really
21 started to like this school although at first I was a
22 little upset about leaving my old school. I
23 eventually realized this change was so that I could
24 grow.
25

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1
2 My other school didn't provide programs or have
3 staff be there for us like when we need them to be
4 like Liberation does and going to school where they
5 don't care about the quality of the work made me not
6 want to do my best.

7 Joining internship helped me a lot, not only
8 support myself but my mom and gave me a head start
9 into career development. I think there should be
10 more schools that offer the same things that help
11 teens be more accomplished and reach where they want
12 to be. Lastly, I just want to thank Ms. Leon and Ms.
13 Lisa and all of you for this opportunity.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Thank you for
15 your testimony. Just make sure your mics on. You
16 ready?

17 ADANIS FAVORITE: Yeah.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay.

19 ADANIS FAVORITE: Good evening everybody. I'm
20 Adanis Favorite and I come from Liberation Diploma
21 Plus High School. I remember when I didn't have the
22 motivation to do anything school related anymore. I
23 kept messing up, not choosing the choices I made
24 wisely. Just not having the drive to do anything
25 productive anymore. One day, I was just tired of the

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1 way I was living. Every day went past I was doing
2 nothing at all. I moved to Coney Island right across
3 the street was Liberation Diploma Plus High School.
4 Walking into the school every day after being
5 registered, it felt like home. The work is not as
6 hard as you make it if you call for assistance, you
7 know guidance, whatever you need.
8

9 Any situation that I'm in, personal or school-
10 wise I know that I'm in good care when I'm with
11 Liberation. The Liberation staff has taken its time
12 to get to know me and I feel well respected. This
13 has helped me mature to be able to go on with life
14 and not let certain things get the best of me. My
15 LTW advocate counselor Mr. Chris was very impactful
16 when I first came to Liberation. He motivated me
17 every day to get all of the credits that I missed in
18 my other school.

19 I started off last year with zero credits and I'm
20 half way through with graduation now. The other
21 counselors, Mr. Manny and Mr. Mike are also role
22 models for me and I handle my feelings differently
23 when it comes to certain situations now.

24 The LTW internship has played a huge part in my
25 consistency in coming to school every day and help me

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1 professionally for when I leave high school. I've
2 never seen a school that can do what Liberation has
3 done. Liberation is known as a place for students to
4 gain another chance, especially when other schools
5 wouldn't. We have potential and Ms. Leon seen
6 something in us that we haven't seen in ourselves and
7 with more of your support and the staff doing what
8 they have to for us, we can be better than before.

9
10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much.

11 SAED ALI AHMED: Hi, good evening everyone. My
12 name is Saed Ali and I am a senior at Liberation
13 Diploma Plus High School. I'll be graduating in June
14 and I will explain all of the things that our school
15 has helped me and they have given me. When I came
16 from my country Pakistan a year ago, I was really
17 nervous that what I would do there. The school
18 really helped me. I went to go get my first job, the
19 school helped me to get my first job and my parents
20 were very happy to see that I started working.

21 And now, I'll be able to apply for college and
22 I'll be going Kingsborough in fall for Information
23 Technology. I'm also hoping to get a scholarship
24 from JCCA with Liberation Diploma Plus. There are
25 many ways that they have helped me. They have also

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1 helped me see different things by going on trips. My
2 favorite one was when we went to University of
3 Maryland Eastern Shore. They had a carnival for the
4 students and visitors. We stayed at a hotel and had
5 different activities like bowling, which was my
6 favorite one.
7

8 The staff is very nice to all of us. They speak
9 to all of us nicely and appreciate us. Our school is
10 not a very huge school like other schools. Every
11 student is treated equally and they appreciate us
12 all. I am very happy that I came to this school and
13 I'm excited to continue my goals. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

15 DANIELLA GALLARDO: Good afternoon. My name is
16 Daniella Gallardo. Liberation is my second home and
17 my safe place. Liberation has been one of the best
18 things that's happened to me recently. With all of
19 the things that I struggle with on a daily basis,
20 school has never been a priority to me. Of course
21 when you don't feel that something is a priority, you
22 don't want to make it a priority. So, that led to me
23 not succeeding in my old school and being at risk for
24 getting held back again.
25

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1 That entire situation led me here and now that I
2 have been in Liberation for a couple months, I see
3 how much the environment at the school has impacted
4 my learning as well as my mental health.
5

6 JCCA even has a therapist that comes every
7 Tuesday. At Liberation, they have a family dynamic
8 so every day when you walk in the school and every
9 day when you leave, you're always reminded that
10 you're loved. If by nobody else you're loved by
11 Liberation. One of the best parts of being at
12 Liberation is the focus on mental health over many
13 other things. Academic education and learning are
14 super important but those cannot be achieved if
15 someone is not in the right head space to receive the
16 information that's given to them. Principal Leon and
17 the LTW staff understand this and have been
18 determined for years with dealing things like this.

19 Everyone who ends up at Liberation has had their
20 fair share of obstacles they've had to face on their
21 own that led us here. Me personally, I was bullied a
22 lot so I had so much anxiety walking into my old
23 school building and refused to go almost all of the
24 time. Now at Liberation, I see smiling faces and get
25 told good morning and asked how I am. They even

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1 noticed something as simple as a haircut, which
2 changed my entire day.
3

4 There's no plan C for us. This is our plan B and
5 the last thing we have to lead a good, successful
6 adult life. This is the height of our adolescents
7 and if we don't learn things now, we might never
8 learn them in the future. It's so important that
9 you've taken the time to listen to us because we're
10 the people that are effected by the cuts and you guys
11 are the ones that make the decisions. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

13 JAYDEN WORTHY: Good afternoon. I'm Jayden, I am
14 a senior that attends Liberation Diploma Plus High
15 School. Liberation helped me by helping me get back
16 on the right track and change my character for the
17 better. While attending, I met good staff - I met
18 great staff who have helped me with personal and
19 academic situations. Lots of times, we need someone
20 to talk to. Being in a supportive environment puts
21 us in a better place. This comfort is so important
22 because when kids are not in the right state of mind,
23 they can make bad decisions that can end them in bad
24 places. When I was going through issues, I knew
25

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1 coming to school would be a safe environment instead
2 of hiding in my own feelings.
3

4 There is a constant reassurance of love and most
5 kids our age need opportunities to put themselves in
6 better positions. The staff spoils in ways that they
7 can. They communicate with respect not only to us
8 but to our parents as well. They see the potential
9 that students don't see in themselves. The LTW
10 program at Liberation are more than staff, we are all
11 a family.

12 Also, while attending Liberation, they have
13 provided me with the opportunities to get back on
14 track with school but also put me in an internship to
15 earn money. I feel that this is important for the
16 program because it gives kids something to do and not
17 make bad decisions at this expected teenage age.
18 Being in the internship, we have something to look
19 forward to so we know we can't mess up. I think it's
20 a good opportunity for kids to try to learn something
21 about themselves and try to expand their
22 capabilities. Liberation is a place to put kids back
23 on the right track. Without the funding there will
24 be more drop outs or kids that give up or even worse.

25

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1 All to say, we need places like this to help the
2 youth find better throughout their situations.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much. Chair
5 Joseph.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much. I'm
7 always in awe when young people show up for
8 themselves and make sure that their voices are heard
9 as we shake this budget. Thank you for being here.
10 Thank you for making your voices heard. We hear you.
11 I have one quick question. Can you elaborate on the
12 types of programming that you do that is not
13 currently covered under the LTW program?

14 LISA DE CASTILLO: Yes, thank you. Uhm, well our
15 specific CBO, JCCA typically deals in foster care
16 however, we have expanded with a new program called
17 LEAP, which is Leadership, Education and Achievement
18 Pathways. We have really taken time to start to look
19 at funders that want to develop students now the
20 special agents that we have now so we've been able to
21 expand upon the food pantry. We've started a mental
22 health clinic there that has a site specifically for
23 Liberation students every Tuesday. We brought our
24 scholarship program, within the scholarship program
25 each student can receive up to \$8,000 for five years

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1 giving them \$40,000 to go towards educational costs
2 as well as other surrounding costs, such as living
3 expenses, clothing, transportation, technology,
4 everything they need to be able to graduate. We also
5 have a scholarship coordinator that speaks to
6 students about how to navigate through the
7 educational system. Through previous funding, we've
8 been able to assist students in getting OSHA
9 licensing, security licensing, moving into their
10 school settings, interview clothing, transportation,
11 emergency funding for food. We noticed that a lot of
12 our students are dealing with adult issues although
13 they're not at the adult age. So, we've been able to
14 assist them in being able to keep going to school and
15 keep going to their vocational options instead of
16 skipping all of that and going right into the job
17 field where they might not be able to go as far.

18 We have emergency funding like I said for
19 students as well as families. During COVID, we were
20 very, very instrumental in making sure that students
21 receive not only one on one counseling but also
22 services for their home. Home goods, things that
23 normally people would not have been able to get
24 during that time because it was just too dangerous to
25

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1
2 go outside. The LTW staff along with Ms. Leon and
3 her guidance, made sure that our students and our
4 families were taken care of. I think that's the
5 biggest part of what LTW does and how Liberation and
6 other transfer schools have designed themselves. Our
7 students know that they're important and they know
8 that they have a chance. Without these things, it's
9 easy to give up on yourself, especially at this age.
10 So, we really been able to help them believe again in
11 themselves what sometimes they don't see.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Well, thank you for that
13 work. I appreciate that. Chair.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all so much.
15 Really, really proud of you guys. Appreciate you
16 coming down here and making your voices heard. Thank
17 you. [06:27:41]- [06:27:46]

18 So, in the Council we have a thing where we don't
19 clap. We do this jazz hand thing. So, that's what
20 we got to do. That's means clapping in sign
21 language.

22 Okay, we've also been joined by Council Members
23 Feliz and Schulman. Just a note that we have a
24 Spanish interpreter here in chambers. Just notify
25

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1 one of the Sergeant at Arms if you need translation
2 assistance.

3
4 I'm going to call the next panel. Donald Nesbit,
5 Mike Sill, Rosemarie Sinclair. [06:28:28]-
6 [06:29:10]

7 DONALD NESBIT: Good afternoon Chair Josphe.
8 Good afternoon Chair Brannan and distinguished
9 members of the City Council. I am Donald Nesbit,
10 Executive Vice President for Local 372, New York City
11 Board of Education Employees, DC 37. We represent
12 24,000 members in the school lunch program and that
13 includes 80,000 school lunch workers under the
14 leadership of Shaun D. Francois I.

15 Local 372 is respectfully requesting \$10 million
16 for the hiring of an additional 1,000 School Lunch
17 Workers, \$7 million for the cuts in implementing the
18 collective bargaining increases for school lunch and
19 breakfast, \$3 million for the establishment of the
20 School Food Nutrition Committee program, and for the
21 DOE, SCA to do an evaluation of the school system's
22 outstanding kitchen ventilation system throughout all
23 five boroughs.

24 We also respectfully request the additional
25 funding necessary for a remediation plan pursuant to

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1 that evaluation. Local 372 School Lunch Workers
2 perform essential work in feeding almost one million
3 school lunch children in New York City. We'd like to
4 thank the Council for, the city for and the Council
5 for the restoration of \$25 million for the school
6 food program, and a restoration of the popular school
7 food items that were put back on the menu.
8

9 Local 372 respectfully requests that the city
10 hire an additional 1,000 Workers to establish the
11 School Food Committees as well. These hires would
12 bring the total to 9,000 school lunch employees.
13 This will help reduce the strain on the current
14 workforce while still continuing to fulfill the needs
15 of the breakfast and lunch initiatives that are set
16 forth by the New York City Department of Education.

17 During the pandemic as we all know, the school
18 lunch workers were praised as heroes when they served
19 millions of meals to students, to their families and
20 members of the community in need risking their lives
21 and health.

22 According to the Mayor's Executive Director on
23 Food Policy, school feeding has increased by 66,000
24 meals a day at a rate of 9 percent. School lunch
25 workers must also accommodate for dietary

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1 restrictions, medical religious restrictions with
2 several enhanced school lunch feeding programs and
3 they also accommodate for these restrictions but they
4 must follow several guidelines in making sure that
5 school children are eating safely.
6

7 In the past, there was a federal program that
8 coincided with New York City schools which helped
9 create the school lunch nutrition program. The
10 committees provided nutrition-based education to
11 school food staff, students, parents and the school
12 administration. It also provided a safe space where
13 students were able to voice their opinions on the
14 food they were consuming and provide recommendations
15 on menu items to be added.

16 Local 372 requests for full restoration of this
17 program. Another struggle faced by school lunch
18 employees is inadequate air conditioning and
19 ventilation. Most of the buildings that are in
20 existence are anywhere from 80 to 100 years old and
21 may lack the necessary electrical capabilities to
22 install cool units in kitchen spaces. There was a
23 report in 2017, too hot to learn that detailed the
24 significant lack of air conditioning in schools. We
25 want to thank the Council Members at the time,

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1
2 Treger, Kallos, and some current members for pushing
3 this. Local 372 requests for an evaluation of these
4 ventilation programs in school kitchens and a
5 remedial plan.

6 In closing, Local 372 extends its gratitude to
7 the City Council for the support of our members. We
8 hope your support will extend and make for the
9 request of \$20 million to support school food staff
10 and revamping the school nutrition program and
11 additional other resources and thank you all for your
12 time.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Donald. Go
14 ahead.

15 MICHAEL SILL: Good afternoon. My name is
16 Michael Sill and I am the Assistant Secretary of
17 United Federation of Teachers. On behalf of our
18 president Michael Mulgrew and the unions more than
19 190,000 members, I'd like to thank Finance Committee
20 Chair Brannan, Education Committee Chair Joseph, and
21 all the members of the City Council for holding
22 today's public hearing on the New York City Executive
23 Budget Fiscal Year 2025. I'd also like to take a
24 moment to applaud the two student panels that
25 proceeded us. It's not hard to imagine them coming

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1 back to this Chamber but sitting in a different seat
2 one day.

3
4 So, I'd like to thank you for your advocacy on
5 behalf of the city students, educators, and for your
6 determination to fund our public schools and protect
7 them from any unnecessary and disruptive budget cuts.
8 The Executive Budget obviously needs a lot of work.

9 We've delved into all of that in our full
10 testimony. I don't have the time to go into that
11 here today and we know the work continues after
12 today, right? And we're here to say that you can
13 count on the UFT as always to be partners to make
14 sure that we have an education budget that supports
15 our students and school communities. We have the
16 money and we think that we helped get the Council
17 through the state budget process to help make the
18 necessary changes. So, what do we need to do? This
19 isn't a bridge list obviously. We need to fully fund
20 the class size law.

21 We estimate that there are over 800 schools,
22 Title I schools right now that have the space and we
23 can start there. We estimate it would take 3,000
24 teachers to bring these schools into 100 percent
25 compliance next year. Uhm, with salaries and

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1 benefits the cost for that would be around \$300
2 million but we also need to ensure that schools
3 currently have high levels of compliance are made
4 whole for the sacrifices that they have made by
5 prioritizing class size reduction before the
6 Administration decided to spend a penny on that
7 initiative.
8

9 We need to restore the \$2 billion in the DOE
10 capital budget to build new classroom seats where
11 needed to meet class size laws for school that
12 currently lack the space and by the way, we need to
13 return to the type of transparency that we think is
14 necessary in the capital planning process.

15 We need to restore the cuts that despite all the
16 city of all press releases are still in place.
17 Particularly 3K, Pre-K, community schools, social
18 emotional services and special education supports.
19 Before there was COVID funding, the city paid for
20 those programs so we don't accept that once COVID
21 funds are gone, the programs need to be cut. Our UFC
22 programs which you support and are very familiar
23 with, teacher center pros and so on, those get
24 services straight to students, straight in the
25 classrooms and that's not something that all programs

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1 can say. And just real quick on the new tools, the
2 state budget, which is now signed into law carries
3 specific language requiring New York City to provide
4 city funds in the budget sufficient to ensure
5 individual schools can meet the class size compliance
6 targets.
7

8 The city's obligation to fund class size
9 reduction is not contingent on the availability of a,
10 from other sources and the Administrations choice to
11 not fund the class size project for two years, should
12 not become a loophole to evade other obligations to
13 our students in school communities. The same budget
14 in law requires New York City, the same budget law
15 excuse me requires New York City to restore capital
16 funds \$2 billion for new seat construction to meet
17 the class size law for schools and neighbors that
18 don't have the space. We need to have that planning
19 started yesterday.

20 And finally, we have a ton of work to do. The
21 Executive Budget needs major work to be fair to our
22 students, our educators and our communities. I'm
23 here to say that we are here to partner with you on
24 that. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Go ahead.

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ROSEMARIE SINCLAIR: Good afternoon Chair

Brannan, Chair Joseph and the distinguished members of the City Council. I am Rosemarie Sinclair, the Executive Vice President of CSA. On behalf of our 17,000 members, we appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget.

We thank Mayor Adams for securing \$500 million to help sustain vital student services and programs, a result of the city's persistent efforts. We appreciate the Council advocacy for \$77 million for community school and \$3 million for district 75 special education program. Time does not permit us to give you our heartfelt thanks for all that you do and we continually need your assistance.

It is imperative that the DOE secure adequate funds to effectively support schools during the budget appeal process. The city's continued funding for purchase and repair of student devices is essential. Our reliance on these tools escalated during the pandemic and now includes their use for testing and more. We urge the Council to ensure that the \$35.9 billion in school aid funding from state budget goes directly to school budgets. The fair student well, formula needs revision as we all know

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1 to align with the new class size limits. Otherwise
2 too many schools may have an inability to provide
3 quality programming. The current formula assumed
4 class size of 30 students. Not 23, not 20, not 25.
5 Full investment in early childhood education program
6 including pay parity for CBO EC Directors, is
7 crucial. The CBO directors have been without a
8 contract from 2020 and their DOE counterparts
9 salaries twice theirs. Our executive leadership
10 institute has not received an increase in funding
11 from the city for five years, so we humbly request an
12 increase to expand professional development in
13 subjects like science, reading, mental health, AI
14 technology, restorative practices, chronic
15 absenteeism, to name a few.
16

17 Lastly, the Council's support is needed to ensure
18 that all school safety agent positions are filled and
19 no higher reduction occur. Additionally, we must
20 consider better protection for our CBO ECC centers by
21 providing them with school safety officers. Thank
22 you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Chair Joseph.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Chair Brannan.

25 For Local 372, the \$2 million for the additional

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1 workers, is this a make up for the decrease from
2 9,000 to 8,000 school food workers that DOE testified
3 to earlier.
4

5 DONALD NESBIT: Yes, that's correct.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, thank you. Can you
7 elaborate on the partial funding for your collective
8 bargain? This was a cut. What have your
9 conversations been with New York City Public Schools?

10 DONALD NESBIT: Those negotiations have been
11 going on both for the Local and DC37 and so I believe
12 instead of money coming from the actual labor
13 reserves, it came from the agencies budget, which is
14 not a normal process, and so that's where the push
15 for collective bargaining raises and also, some of
16 the workers hours were cut due to some programs being
17 cut with the PEGs and so as they receive the raise,
18 they also receive some of their hours being cut.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Are they still going to have
20 the summer food program as well?

21 DONALD NESBIT: Summer feeding program I believe
22 is going to be as regularly scheduled, yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, thank you. UFT, have
24 you had a response from the New York City Public
25

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1 Schools around your recently released base assessment
2 that you did?

3
4 MIKE SILL: So, we have not. We meet with them
5 weekly and uh, we're having another meeting with them
6 in the coming days. We expect to talk about that.
7 We know that in their plan, which is not in the
8 budget yet but in their class size plan that was
9 released last week, there's the \$137 million and
10 there have been no decisions made as I understand it
11 and they haven't spoken to us about - we'd have to
12 sign off on it about which schools that money would
13 go to. It is our position that that money should go
14 to schools that have the space and have high levels
15 of economic need and you know, how many schools that
16 means in this round, uhm, I know they testified
17 earlier about the fact that they're at 39.6 percent
18 compliance with the class size law right now and the
19 law only requires 40 percent compliance for next
20 year. Obviously every student in system could
21 benefit from smaller class sizes even if the law had
22 a slower implementation. But certainly, we think
23 that setting aside the difficulties that exist in
24 neighborhoods that don't have space or schools don't

25

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1 have space, we could make great strides to a greater
2 compliance with the law right now.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. What do you
5 think is the most pressing concern for implementing
6 and needing the class size mandate? The question is
7 for CSA and UFT.

8 MIKE SILL: I think it's the will of the
9 Administration to provide the necessary funding,
10 right? We have heard since the beginning, since the
11 law was passed, even before the law was passed, a lot
12 from the DOE's Administration about how funding the
13 class size law would require tradeoffs in the school
14 building.

15 And so they've always assumed we're making those
16 comments that we're talking about a zero-sum game
17 right? And what happened with the state budget where
18 the city contribution now has to be sufficient to
19 ensure that each school can meet the class size
20 targets. That means they can't claim the zero-sum
21 game anymore. They need to put the money into the
22 schools to make this law a reality. And it's that
23 will that we have to overcome. Obviously there are
24 other challenges that's the most pressing one I would
25 say right now.

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CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Make sure your mic is on.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Turn on your mic.

ROSEMARIE SINCLAIR: Thank you. For CSA, we're looking at various situations.

One, yes, you're right we do need funding. Two, space. As we notice that there are many schools that are now like campuses, it is very hard for a school – say for instance you have a third-grade class and one class is 30 students. With the law, you would have to have 20 students. That means two classes right. Therefore, you may not have the space to accommodate all these children, so therefore you will have a reduction in enrollment, therefore displacing children. And if, as you know, parents move to certain areas to be at certain school have their children go to certain schools. Who is going to tell these parents that you cannot come to this particular school? There's so many things to think about when you think about class size. It is an unfunded mandate.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: By whom? Unfunded mandate by who?

ROSEMARIE SINCLAIR: You know who.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Oh, thank you both.

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CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

ROSEMARIE SINCLAIR: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, our next panel Andrea Ortiz, Tina Zeng, Narelin Bueno, Caitlin Zhou, Emily Flores, Ava Baranowski, Brianna Abad, Shiv Soin, Franchelly Yones. [06:45:59]- [06:46:56] Okay, you can start from the right.

SHIV SOIN: It's on? Okay. Thank you Council Member Brannan, Council Member Joseph, and members of the Education and Finance Committee. My name is Shiv Soin and I serve as the Co-Executive Director of Triage. We're a New York City based student led organization focused on climate justice with over 1,000 members of high school and college students across the five borough in New York City. We're here and we're proud to stand in support with students, teachers and school administrators for green healthy schools for green healthy schools. Thank you for providing this opportunity to provide comment on the Fiscal Year 2025 budget and what we can do to make sure that our students have a more resilient future.

Each and every day over one million New York City school students attend one of New York City's DOE's

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1 1,800 schools and 1,300 school buildings. Rather
2 than a day full of learning and development, many
3 also face a far more sinister situation. Harmful air
4 quality and health conditions. From elevated air
5 pollutants to lack of classroom ventilation, our
6 students are being set up to fail. The climate
7 crisis has exacerbated these issues bringing heat
8 waves, flooding and emergency conditions into our
9 neighborhoods. Schools serve as community centers
10 and shelters and when they're underfunded they let
11 down not only just our students but our entire
12 communities.
13

14 This unacceptable situation demands better and we
15 urge the Committee on Education, the Committee on
16 Finance and the City Council to allocate at least
17 \$600 million in additional funding to electrify and
18 upgrade 500 New York City schools by 2030. Under
19 Mayor Adam's current plan, only five percent of New
20 York City schools will be green by his standards by
21 2030 and all New York City schools will not be
22 upgrade until 2175. We're seeing real issues that
23 are happening at the moment and once again, we want
24 to reiterate our ask for \$600 million in funding
25 allocated towards electrifying 500 schools.

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1
2 Earlier this January, we launched the Hashtag
3 Mayor School Challenge where we heard from students
4 across the city where were some real issues going on
5 inside of their schools and as the Treeage have
6 identified five schools that we believe should
7 prioritized for repair. Just on this panel, we have
8 students from three schools represented across three
9 boroughs and we have ID'd five schools that we want
10 to prioritize. Those are Fannie Lou Hammer High
11 School in the Bronx, Curtis High School in Staten
12 Island, Beacon High School in Manhattan, Bard High
13 School in Queens and Transit Tech Career Technical
14 Education School in Brooklyn.

15 Thank you so much for your consideration. I'm
16 going to let our students actually explain and we
17 have 15 students who will be testifying from all five
18 schools over the course of here and virtually but
19 I'll let them share their experiences and thank you
20 for giving us the time and the opportunity to share.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

22 AVA BARANOWSKI: Good afternoon everyone. My
23 name is Ava Baranowski and I wanted to start by
24 thanking all of you for the opportunity to testify
25 this afternoon. I am a 16-year-old student at Beacon

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1 High School in Hell's Kitchen and I live in Brooklyn.

2 I've been volunteering at the Teen Climate Justice

3 program at 6th Street and I've gotten so many amazing

4 opportunities to connect with organizations like

5 Treeage but I'm here today because I'm enraged by the

6 dangerous conditions in which students are

7 experiencing every day.

8 I'm only a sophomore at Beacon and already I've

9 inhaled toxic chemicals and junk from lead filled

10 water almost every day. Our school shares a vent

11 with the taxi auto repair shop, so the fumes and

12 toxic chemicals produced there end up in our schools

13 basement, which is an incredible space where students

14 can gather to play music, attend classes and perform.

15 It is one of the spaces in Beacon where I value so

16 much because it gives me an opportunity to socialize

17 and play piano and one of the many we have access to.

18 This issue has become so dire that the basement

19 has had to be evacuated at least 18 times last year,

20 disrupting classes and putting students health at

21 risk. What is so incredibly shocking is that our

22 sensors picked up a chemical that was present in the

23 air and it was 50 times the legal safety limit. We

24 cannot let our students and teachers suffer in place

25

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1 of learning. I am asking the city to fund \$600
2 million in the city's capital budget to electrify and
3 upgrade Beacon as well as prioritize Curtis in Staten
4 Island, Transit Tech in Brooklyn, Bard in Queens and
5 Fannie Lou in the Bronx. My hope is that before I
6 graduate Beacon, students can freely exist in their
7 own schools without being afraid for their health and
8 safety. Climate change is becoming an ever more
9 pressing issue for our generation, especially the
10 slow rate that we are improving. So, we need our
11 schools to foster the learning of healthy activists
12 to continue to fight for a planet that is green, not
13 ablaze. So, support the Green Healthy Schools
14 Campaign and the future of our planet. Thank you.

16 EMILY FLORES: Good afternoon. My name is Emily
17 Flores and I am a Senior from Beacon High School as
18 well as an organizer at Teens Take Charge. We are a
19 youth led organization working toward a more
20 equitable and welcoming community in NYC Schools for
21 all students of color. I'm here today to advocate
22 for the city to fully fund meaningful student success
23 programs to further advance the progress of inclusion
24 and diversity in all schools, rather than focusing on
25 the improvement of police infrastructure.

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1 This not only creates an intimidating environment
2 for students of color but also diverts resources from
3 school wellness and counselors, which are required to
4 provide a supportive environment. In particular for
5 First Gen seniors during the college application
6 process.

7
8 School is a place where students of color should
9 feel supported by the teachers and counselors.

10 Imposter syndrome is a prominent issue seen in many
11 first gen students of color when applying to at
12 league colleges, where they feel not capable enough
13 to even apply and most importantly to fit in and be
14 accepted. To add on, this issue of not being able to
15 afford or understand the college process is one many
16 students like me were presented with during senior
17 year. That's not to say that my parents do not
18 support me but with the language and educational
19 barrier, they could not offer me the help I needed
20 when filling out CSS or FAFSA profiles on my own. I
21 should not have felt like I was alone.

22 I did not receive the support I needed, not
23 because I did not reach out but because there was not
24 an option offered at my school, which has a
25 graduating class size of 380 students with only three

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1 college counselors on staff. Fortunately, because of
2 students success centers like Option Center, I was
3 able to access a free counselor outside of school to
4 advise me on my path to success. Programs like these
5 need the funding from the Mayor to continue the
6 support offered to low income first gen students.
7

8 We are just expected to know how to navigate the
9 process on our own but why is it that we have to feel
10 alone during this process?

11 We should have the support freely offered to us
12 without any cost. If a student does not feel
13 supported by their high school, how will they be able
14 to prosper as well as their other peers who are not
15 first gen and get the support from paid outside
16 tutors and counselors? This is where racial
17 disparities rise. When some students have resources
18 while others don't.

19 Perhaps funds will not be able to stop the issue
20 of racial disparities, however it will lead towards a
21 positive change in many students lives including
22 students like me who at that time needed the extra
23 support to even understand what I was doing. My
24 Mexican immigrant parents were not able to help me
25 due to the language and educational barrier and I

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1 just wish that I had the information available to me
2 by my school. We need this funding from Mayor Adams
3 to hire more staff of color including social workers,
4 counselors and teachers. A commitment to this means
5 a shift in the college process for incoming first-
6 generation students who need the support. Simply by
7 not hiring any more school police, the NYC could save
8 up to \$90 million in one fiscal year that could be
9 used to provide resources for first gen students
10 going through the application process.
11

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much. Thank
13 you.

14 BRIANNA ABAD: Good afternoon and thank you for
15 the opportunity to testify. My name is Brianna Abad
16 and I am the Queens Borough Organizer at Treeage.
17 Treeage is a student-led climate organization with
18 over 1,000 high school students across all five
19 boroughs fighting for a greener future in New York
20 City and state. As an 11th grade student at Bard
21 High School Early College Queens, I have seen climate
22 changes growing impact on my daily life. Our school
23 building serves three different high schools,
24 including Academy of Finance and Enterprise, High
25

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1 School Applied Communication and my school, Bard High
2 School Early College Queens.

3
4 At the beginning of the school year, my
5 classmates and I were forced to walk into school with
6 soaking wet shoes due to the heavy flooding one day.
7 Last year, classes, no, yes. Last year classes were
8 interrupted by water leaking on the A floor roof and
9 we have witnessed wildfire smoke exacerbating, asthma
10 and health problems for New Yorker across the city.

11 With summer approaching, I am even more concerned
12 that the rising temperatures and harmful air quality
13 will increasingly effect students learning ability,
14 especially in a growing industrial area. I am asking
15 the city to fund \$600 million in the city's capital
16 budget to electrify and upgrade Bard High School
17 Early College Queens and prioritize the other schools
18 Treeage has identified for Fiscal Year 2025.

19 Specifically Transit Tech High School in Brooklyn,
20 Beacon High School in Manhattan, Curtis High School
21 in Staten Island and Fannie Lou High School in the
22 Bronx.

23 We are living in a time of a youth mental health
24 crisis and a wave of newly arrived undocumented
25 students among other changes. They need our support

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1 and now more than ever, it is important that we
2 envision a stronger, sustainable future for all New
3 Yorkers including students, no matter their zip code.
4

5 I have faith for green healthy schools to become
6 a reality because we all deserve a better future.

7 Thank you for your time.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

9 FRANCHELLY YONES: Good afternoon. My name is
10 Franchelly. I am a student from Fannie Lou Hammer
11 Freedom Hammer High School. I am a 16-year-old girl
12 living in the Bronx. I have experienced problems
13 making – going to school because of flooding and
14 having to take different routes to school and
15 sometimes the buses are not even available for me to
16 make it to school and I'm not going to be able to
17 walk 30 minutes to my school. I also experience
18 heavy breathing because of asthma because my school
19 is right in front of the Cross Bronx Expressway.
20 Leaving students to miss school because of having to
21 go through asthma attacks at least eight times a
22 year.

23 Fannie Lou Hammer High School is also a much
24 older structure. It might need remodeling. When it
25 rains a lot around the school, it seems to get

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1 flooded. Powerful wind storms leaving the school
2 with water inside. The conditions that are exposed
3 to it because of underfunding that happens to the
4 school in these areas. I am asking the city to fund
5 \$600 million to upgrade our school and environment
6 that we are exposed to. We should also prioritize
7 school like Transit Tech High School in Brooklyn,
8 Bard High School in Queens, Curtis High School in
9 Staten Island and Fannie Lou Hammer High School in
10 the Bronx because identifying for Fiscal Year 2025.

11
12 I still have a couple more years but I think that
13 we should still try to improve the situations of the
14 school. These problems shouldn't be solved in 100
15 years. They should be worked on now. School like
16 ours are raising the new generation. So, we need to
17 make the city better for them. Thank you for your
18 time.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I'm just going to make a
20 quick announcement that we're going to cut off the
21 sign ups for public testimony at five o'clock, so if
22 you want to testify and you're here, make sure you're
23 signed up at five o'clock.

24 TINA ZENG: Hi Council Member. My name is Tina
25 Zeng and I'm a high school student from the Dignities

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1 in Schools Coalition and YA-YA Network. You've heard
2 from me a couple of times at these hearings, so I'll
3 keep my testimony brief but so important to give my
4 public comments I believe. I just want to uplift the
5 concerns around the recent suspensions of students as
6 they respond to the Israel Palestine conflict.

7 According to Chancellor Banks, in suspending students
8 doesn't help but instead inflames the situations.

9 These conversations and feelings are complex in
10 nuance and students need the space to process what's
11 going on the world. If they are just punished by
12 suspensions for acting on their convictions when they
13 see the injustices in the world, it shuts down any
14 room for having productive discussion and diplomacy.

15 Antisemitism and Islamophobia and any isms where
16 phobias are harmful and it should be taken seriously
17 for the impacts it has on other students sense of
18 safety and belonging. But suspension as an easy
19 response misses the opportunity to educate and what
20 is the purpose of schools if not educating as well as
21 raising the next generation of conscious and engage
22 people just as the previous speaker was saying and
23 because people are not inherently hateful. We should
24 be treated with the expectation to grow from a
25

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1 current perspective if it's flawed and that's why
2 restorative justice, which has been excluded from the
3 Mayor's Executive Budget is so crucial to be dealing
4 with detentions within our schools. Having open
5 conversations and mediations that is accountable and
6 responsible, while being sensitive to students
7 backgrounds is the only way we can continue our
8 democracy. Restorative justice and its principle of
9 loving engagement as Martin, the previous panelist
10 said, must be the natural response to the crisis of
11 our time within the school, the city and the world.
12 Council Members keep doing the work, fighting for the
13 people and by championing restorative justice.
14 Invest in \$75 million for restorative justice in
15 schools and I see and recognize Councilwoman Rita
16 Joseph for keeping up the fight.

18 Thank you and because I still have this platform,
19 I just want to make a PS, I'm not here to represent
20 the CEC or the Civic Engagement Commission but I just
21 want to make the plug for the people's money, which
22 is a citywide participatory budgeting initiative from
23 the civic engagement commission. You can vote as a
24 NYC resident age 11 and up at on.nyc.gov/pb. It's
25 not just about uhm coming to these like hearings and

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1 getting our representatives to fight for our budget
2 but we should have direct democracy in how we
3 determine public money. And come see me if you want
4 to submit a paper ballot. Again, it's online. It's
5 on.nyc.gov/pb. Thank you.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

8 ANDREA ORTIZ: Good afternoon and thank you. I'm
9 the Director of the Dignity in Schools Campaign, a
10 New York City Coalition of over 20 community-based
11 organizations of students, parents, educators and
12 advocates working to advance restorative justice and
13 mental health supports in public schools and to
14 foster a preventative culture of safety based on
15 care, mutual respect and problem solving. I'm also
16 here representing the Emergency Coalition to Save
17 Education Programs.

18 The Dignity in Schools Campaign calls the New
19 York City to expand restorative justice by \$75
20 million and to protect and baseline the mental health
21 continuum at \$5 million, restorative justice at \$22
22 million and other critical education programs under
23 the threat of being cut. This is possible by
24 reallocating \$90 million saved by freezing, hiring on
25 school policing positions, not allowing the city to

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1
2 fill for attrition and cutting funding for vacant
3 school cop positions.

4 New York City elected officials must reject the
5 mayor's plan to drastically cut funding or
6 restorative justice and school based mental health
7 supports and other critical programs currently funded
8 with expanding federal dollars and one time city
9 dollars. Our elected leaders must help us restore
10 and expand the type of developmental and social
11 economic, social emotional supports our youth need.

12 Students, parents, educators and community
13 organizers understand that the Mayor's Executive
14 Budget includes critical education programs financed
15 with expiring federal relief dollars because
16 communities have fought against the mayor's
17 austerity. The collective power our communities and
18 City Council are bringing to these negotiations save
19 hundreds of social workers in colleges and more than
20 100 community schools, bilingual supports, 3K and
21 more but Mayor Adams proposed cuts are unnecessary.

22 An engineered crisis demonstrated by the
23 Council's forecast which includes \$6 billion in new
24 revenues in underspending and allows for the full
25 restoration of all critical education programs.

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1
2 While our insisting in restoring and even expanding
3 these programs has forced the mayor's hand. We can't
4 back down now if we're going to prevent the loss of
5 other critical supports that students and families
6 need. We're calling Council Members to negotiate a
7 budget that moves money away from policing young
8 people and towards the resources that makes school
9 safer for all students. We can have just and safe
10 schools but only if City Council members use their
11 power to shift funding and power to school
12 communities and not the NYPD. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Chair Joseph,
14 give me one sec. We also want to call up another
15 member of your group from Treeage Elliot Ismail.
16 Yeah, come on up. Go ahead Chair.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Quick question for Treeage.
18 In regards to the lead paint and chemicals, what has
19 your school communicated to you? And have they
20 mentioned work being done? How are they addressing
21 that situation?

22 AVA BARANOWSKI: As for Beacon, our school hasn't
23 really done anything significant towards the lead
24 problems in the water as far as students know but.

25

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1
2 SHIR SOIN: So, this was raised, we got quite a
3 bit of press coverage on this earlier in the year and
4 the DOE did respond into two different press
5 inquiries and they basically said, we're aware that
6 this is a situation and that there wasn't an active
7 situation for this calendar year, meaning September
8 through December but as our students noted, there was
9 an issue in the basement 18 times just the prior
10 school year, so essentially we were told, "yeah we
11 know." But that's it and the students clearly also
12 have not gotten any additional information as well.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Dignity in
14 Schools, what types of restorative justice program do
15 you have in your school currently now?

16 ANDREA ORTIZ: Is the question like what types of
17 programs are currently available for students? So,
18 one of the things that the Dignity in Schools would
19 like to do is shift more funding to the school based
20 restorative justice programs. Right now, a lot of
21 the funding goes directly to the central offices,
22 which again, we want to fight to protect and baseline
23 that funding but we want to expand \$75 million
24 because we believe that if schools get the funding
25 directly to hire full time -

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[INTERRUPTION IN TESTIMONY [07:05:37]- [07:05:54]

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Stand by. [07:05:54]-

[07:06:03] Tanisha? [07:06:07]- [07:06:10] Tanisha,
you got to mute your Zoom.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Tanisha, please mute yourself.
Thank you.

ANDREA ORTIZ: So, as I was saying, unfortunately
out of the funding that the City Council and the
Mayor appropriated for restorative justice last year,
less than \$3 million went directly to schools. And
so, that means that very few schools have a full-time
restorative justice coordinator that can help ensure
that everybody has full access to the kinds of
programs and trainings that they need. And so, what
we want is to make sure that more funding goes
directly to the schools so that they can pay for
young people like Tina and like others to be able to
be part of restorative justice circle so that they
can get full training and that they can have a full-
time unionized person that can lead the charge.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Got it thank you.

ELLIOT ISMAIL: Hello, my name is Elliot Ismail.
I'm the Organizing Director of Treeage, a student led
climate justice organization as you all have heard.

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1 I'm also a senior at Grover Cleveland High School in
2 Ridgewood Queens. I had four years of things that
3 you could not even begin thinking about being a high
4 schooler. I'm trans, homeless and a low-income New
5 Yorker trying to juggle not only school but housing
6 and the college application process. I have been
7 awarded the McCulley Honor Scholarship at Baruch
8 College but was not able to accept it because they
9 didn't have resource to guarantee me housing for the
10 next four years.
11

12 I saw the skies turn orange when I was 17. I
13 want to school as the streets flooded while I was in
14 kindergarten and I'm asking the city to fund \$600
15 million in the city's capital budget to electrify and
16 upgrade Beacon High School and prioritize other
17 schools Treeage identified in the Fiscal Year 2024,
18 specifically Transit Tech High School in Brooklyn,
19 Bard Queens High School in Queens, Curtis High School
20 in Staten Island and Fannie Lou High School in the
21 Bronx. I'm fighting for green healthy schools
22 because I want students to have the resources they
23 need to succeed know. Not in 50 years, not in 100
24 years. I don't want another kid to go through what I
25 have went through. Housing, food and education is

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1 security. We deserve safe schools. We deserve
2 healthy schools. We deserve an education that our
3 schools can serve as an example for what a better
4 future our city could be and I expect you to also
5 want to make this a reality. I follow half of you
6 all on Twitter. You probably remember me in 2021 and
7 I've been in this hall since I was 14 years old. I
8 am not supposed to be here, right? I am supposed to
9 be school. We aren't supposed to be here and I want
10 you all to remember that and also, respectfully,
11 remember who elects you into office. I'm able to
12 vote. These people are about to be able to vote, so
13 please remember that. Thank you for your time.

14
15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We want you here because you
16 are the next generation of leaders. I don't shape
17 this budget without young peoples voice at the table
18 and I constantly say, keep showing up for yourself
19 and we will be here and I'll be here.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much.
21 Okay, next panel. Divad Durant, Salimatou
22 Doumbouya (SP), Marah Birnbaum, Miya, Gabrielle
23 Learner, Alyson Bardsley, Bryan Fotino, Noam
24 Gibbord (SP?). [07:09:26] - [07:10:09] Okay, you
25

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1 want to start from my left. Just say your name and
2
3 begin.

4 ALYSON BARDSLEY: Hello, my name is Alyson
5 Bardsley. I'm an Associate Professor of English at
6 the College of Staten Island and a member of the
7 Professional Staff Congress of CUNY. I'm also a
8 resident of the great Stapleton neighborhood in the
9 Borough of Staten Island. The college of Staten
10 Island as you know is a comprehensive school that we
11 serve both as a community college and as a school.

12 So, I didn't expect this afternoon to be as
13 inspiring as it is. I loved hearing from all the
14 high school students that you've just been hearing
15 but before that, I heard you talking to the CUNY
16 Chancellor about your understanding that investing in
17 CUNY is not an expense, it's a promise for the future
18 and we're deeply grateful that you take that attitude
19 and we're counting on you to help us because we're in
20 a really, really, really bad way.

21 I don't have numbers for you. I just have
22 anecdotes. You have the numbers before you but every
23 day that I go to school, the stairwell that I walk up
24 has gaping holes in the ceiling and in the wall and
25 the safety mats are gone from the cement floor but at

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1 least I can take the stairs. The elevator is
2 unreliable so the students, tutors in the writing
3 center if they have a student 2T who uses a
4 wheelchair, come down stairs and tutor them in the
5 hallway unless they get stranded.
6

7 And this is not – and this is one building but I
8 spoke to the director of Accessibility Services this
9 morning and he says all of our elevators are
10 unreliable. This is unacceptable. I don't like to
11 charm human capital but our human capital at CUNY is
12 being dilapidated too. That is our professional
13 staff. That is not the faculty but the people who
14 are staffed the bursar and the resistor and
15 everything behind the scenes are spread so thin,
16 we're experiencing a brain drain. People are leaving
17 if they can because the work load and the atmosphere
18 physical and psychological is unbearable.

19 When does neglect become sabotage? That's how
20 we're feeling now. So, and we're counting on you to
21 rescue us honestly, so thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

23 [UNIDENTIFIED]: Chair Brannan, Chair Joseph,
24 Chair Dinowitz, thank you for having me today. The
25 Jewish Community Relations Council of New York

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1 appreciates the City Council's and CUNY Chancellors
2 sustained commitment to ensuring CUNY campuses are
3 safe, inclusive environments for all students. As
4 antisemitic incidents have risen locally and
5 nationally, we urge the Council to prioritize
6 measures that will increase transparency around hate
7 and bias occurrences at CUNY and all other local
8 colleges. There is currently a lack of comprehensive
9 data on noncriminal bias incidents such as
10 harassment, discrimination and implementation of
11 hostile environments for different groups of
12 students.
13

14 Without robust data that captures the full
15 spectrum of bias and hate incidents, it's challenging
16 to grasp their prevalence, identify areas of concern
17 and develop tailored measure for prevention and
18 response. The City Council is uniquely positioned
19 through its budgetary authority to assist CUNY's
20 adoption of rigorous standardized practices to
21 document and publicly report hate and bias incidents
22 experienced by students of all backgrounds.
23 Specifically, the Council can link CUNY funding
24 allocations through the terms and conditions
25

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1 provision to meet benchmarks for bias data
2 transparency.

3
4 Anti-Jewish harassment and discrimination of any
5 kind must not be allowed to fester unchecked. We
6 urge the Council to partner with CUNY in establishing
7 clear expectations, accountability measures and
8 guidance to create a climate of belonging for Jewish
9 students in all CUNY communities. Transparent
10 comprehensive bias data is vital to drive meaningful
11 proactive responses to this pressing issue.

12 Additionally, last paragraph, we support the
13 continued allocation of \$500,000 from the Council to
14 support initiatives at CUNY campuses that combat
15 antisemitism and all forms of hate against different
16 vulnerable minority groups.

17 We look forward to seeing the positive impact of
18 these initiatives and encourage that they be
19 sustained. We also believe that restoring the
20 significant PEGs that CUNY has received will improve
21 the universities ability to fulfill its critical
22 mission, ultimately ensuring that all members of its
23 community are learning and growing in a safe and
24 inclusive environment. Thank you.

25

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1
2 SALIMATOU DOUMOUYA: Chair Dinowitz, Chair Joseph
3 and Chair Brannan, thank you for having me here
4 today. My name is Salimatou Doumouya and I am the
5 Chair of the CUNY University student senate
6 representing all 225,000 students at CUNY. I sit on
7 the CUNY Board of Trustees as a voting member and I
8 am also the students government president at the New
9 York City College of Technology.

10 The CUNY University Student Senate Advocates for
11 investing in programs and services to reduce the
12 barriers CUNY students face while pursuing higher
13 education. Students are stressed by experiencing
14 food insecurity, housing insecurity, high
15 transportation costs like of child care, academic
16 advisement and mental health counseling. The
17 stresses outside the classroom impact academic
18 performance by improving the students experience in
19 enrollment retention and graduation rates cant
20 increase. The main thing the University Student
21 Senate has been advocating for this year are free
22 metro cards for CUNY students. I'm happy that CUNY
23 has included that in the city budget ask in forms of
24 \$1.6 million for child care services for metro cards
25 for our students and parents. But USS is going way

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1 further. We are proposing a grant pilot program that
2 CUNY would use funding to give free metro cards to
3 students. The student populations we are proposing
4 for this grant program to start our students with
5 disabilities, our student parents, our students who
6 were in the foster care systems, the students in
7 college discovery, and more. We are recommending a
8 system to make that happen, which is that to be
9 eligible for the commuter non committing status,
10 students may be determined eligible are not based on
11 their commuting distance and that may be entered into
12 the CUNY First system.
13

14 We are proposing that the university established
15 a CUNY office of Transportation Services where they
16 could track eligibility criteria and that would be
17 managed from the CUNY Central Office of Student
18 Affairs and the grand funding may be established
19 specifically for students transportation needs. USS
20 thinks that it is important to cover these costs in
21 order for students to be alleviated for the
22 challenges they face on a daily basis.

23 On campus climate, I do support any initiative
24 for antibias for our Jewish students but also for our
25 Muslim students. Being a very often Muslim Hijab I

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1 do see that some interactions are different now and
2 we can imagine why that is happening with certain
3 people. I am against all forms of violence. I don't
4 think that it is necessary to fight violence with
5 violence, especially for the fact that we are a
6 higher education institution. So, any effort in that
7 direction will be useful for us now but also for the
8 future. Our students are brilliant and I would like
9 to condemn any outside institutions or organizations
10 that are using the burning fashion of our students
11 and their honest interest of what's happening around
12 the world no matter what their view is to push
13 agendas that have nothing to do with the cause at
14 hand.. That for students, is something that is
15 passionate. And again, no matter what their views
16 are because it is good for students to express their
17 views but I am not for manipulating their views and
18 I'm not exploiting their passion. That is honest and
19 that comes from a good place. Thank you.
20

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Go ahead.

22 BRYAN FOTINO: Hi, my name is Bryan Fotino and
23 I'm a visiting fellow at the City College of New
24 York. I'd like to begin with a moment of silence for
25 the over 35,000 Palestinians murdered by Israel since

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1
2 October 7th and the millions more Palestinians
3 murdered, injured and displaced since 1917.

4 I am disgusted by Chancellor Matos and the NYPD's
5 response to nonviolent protests against genocide.
6 Numerous injuries including chemical burns, broken
7 bones, concussions, bruises and swelling have been
8 reported by protestors and individuals clearly
9 identified as Press. Close to 200 people were
10 arrested with several held for over 36 hours in
11 violation of the law requiring detainees to be
12 arraigned within 24 hours of arrest.

13 Those arrested were subject to inhumane
14 conditions at the jail. They waited in long lines
15 for several hours in the cold and rain while in zip
16 ties. Were denied water, chairs, and warm clothes as
17 well as access to bathrooms. There was at least one
18 incident in jail where a Muslim woman's Hijab was
19 taken off in this outrage and protest from fellow
20 detainees. Despite past cases that were settled by
21 the NYPD for removal of woman's hijab's, at least one
22 detained protestor was denied medical attention and
23 passed out on the floor.

24 Some of those arrested are facing trumped up
25 felony charges of burglary based on the lie that CUNY

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1
2 community members entering a CUNY administrative
3 building constitutes a break in. No amount of
4 property damage justifies this violence against our
5 community members. The City Council, which funds
6 CUNY must push CUNY to support the five demands of
7 the protest: Divest, cultural boycott, solidarity,
8 demilitarized CUNY in Harlem and free CUNY. Put
9 simply, the City of New York and CUNY must fund our
10 communities, genocide and the police. In addition, I
11 am disgusted that several members of the City Council
12 have not publicly called for a seize fire, which is
13 the bare minimum. Shame on you.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

15 MARAH BIRNBAUM: Hello Council Members. Thanks
16 for having us here today. My name is Marah Birnbaum
17 and I'm a student at the CUNY School of Law as well
18 as a member of the Jewish Law Student Association. I
19 call on the City Council to use your power to
20 pressure CUNY Administration on the following: First
21 and foremost to divest from Israeli companies that
22 profit from the genocide and a partied subjugation of
23 Palestinians. To drop the charges against students
24 violently arrested for their participation in the
25 GASA solidarity encampment and to help this

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1 disturbing up to \$4 million contract for private
2 security forces on CUNY campuses. Strategic Security
3 Corp, the proposed contractor with CUNY staff scared
4 that ICE detention jails throughout the United States
5 provides privately contracted border security
6 officers and specializes in disrupting labor, civil
7 unrest. That is their main specialty when it comes
8 to security from their website.
9

10 Instead of spending much needed funds on building
11 repairs, administrative staff and student support in
12 counseling, the Board of Trustees and Chancellor
13 Matos use our money to outsource their repression via
14 this private security force to terrorize, spy on and
15 endanger CUNY students and faculty.

16 I want to bring you attention further to how
17 Strategic Security Corps advertises their invasive
18 oppression of labor organizers. SSC "can assist by
19 providing intelligent services as to what direction
20 the movement is headed and who is driving it.

21 Government and law enforcement relations, quick
22 reaction teams, emergency response and armed and
23 unarmed security guards, intelligence monitors on
24 organizers, organizations and their activists,
25 removal of negative Twitter postings and procurement

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1 of or permit inquiries. These monitoring tactics
2 include intimidation, repression of free speech,
3 stalking, harassment, infiltration and violation of
4 peoples privacy. This will be applied to CUNY Labor
5 and Palestine organizers alike, which are two groups
6 that overlap final coincidence. The CEO of strategic
7 security Corp, an NYPD veteran of the SRG unit, the
8 same force that brutalized our CUNY community.
9

10 We call on you to use your leverage to power –
11 call on you to leverage your power for charges
12 against all students to be dropped. A halt to this
13 dangerous contract and CUNY's divestment from death.

14 MAUREEN SILVERMAN: Before I start my official
15 testimony, I cannot help but point out that while
16 every year the City Council acknowledges Holocaust
17 Remembrance Day. Today, we must acknowledge that
18 this is the 76th Anniversary of not the day and there
19 is an ongoing Nafka(SP?) and since October 7th, there
20 has been a second Nafka and a hold every level of
21 government responsible for perpetuating the Nafka in
22 light of that my name is Maureen Silverman, I am a
23 CUNY alum from the Silverman School of Social Work.
24 I'm here today on behalf of New York City for Seize
25 Fire.

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1
2 A coalition which means that this Council take
3 action in support of free balance time once and for
4 all. Most immediately, we call on the Council to
5 finally pass a Resolution calling for an immediate
6 permanent cease fire in Gaza and an end to the US
7 supply of arms to Israel. This is long overdue.
8 This hearing examines the CUNY budget. We cannot
9 speak about the budget without speaking about how
10 CUNY dollars and resources have been used to suppress
11 and criminalize students. We stand with CUNY
12 students, staff, faculty and alumni in expressing our
13 outrage that Chancellor Rodriguez and President
14 Bedro(SP?) invited the NYPD to inflict violence and
15 harm onto students in the Gaza solidarity encampment.
16 As with others here today, we endorse the five
17 demands of the encampment and we demand the charges
18 we dropped against the students now defended
19 themselves from prosecution. For months, we pulled
20 in Speaker Adams and this Council to take action.

21 In February, we held a 24 hour vigil at City Hall
22 for demanding a Resolution, a cease fire Resolution
23 and last month we sent a letter from over 50 local
24 organizations calling on the Council to act.

25

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1
2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Thank you. Go
3 ahead.

4 MAUREEN SILVERMAN: We call upon the Council -

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

6 MAUREEN SILVERMAN: To finally pass our
7 Resolution -

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, thank you very much.

9 MAUREEN SILVERMAN: Seize fire now.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, thank you. Go ahead.

11 GABRIELLE LEARNER: Good afternoon members of the
12 New York City Council Committees on Finance,
13 Education and Higher Education. My name is Gabrielle
14 Learner, I'm a graduate student and student
15 government president at Empire State University.
16 Today, I am here representing myself and Young
17 Invincibles, a national nonprofit dedicated to
18 amplifying the voices of young adults.

19 Thank you for the opportunity to share my
20 thoughts with you today on the critical priorities
21 New York City should focus on for the betterment of
22 its young adult population. Today, living in New
23 York City is not just a challenge, it's an ongoing
24 battle against an economy that seems almost
25 adversarial to our financial wellbeing.

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1 As a single parent navigating in the academic
2 world with a four-year-old by my side, the reality of
3 our city's cost of living is close home. Without the
4 support of my family, pursuing higher education in
5 the city would be an insurmountable task, yet the
6 unfortunate truth is that many young adults and
7 families do not have such support and are left
8 grappling with the harsh economic landscape of our
9 city. While offering unparalleled opportunities, New
10 York City also presents a daunting barrier to entry
11 due to its exorbitant living costs. The requirement
12 of broker fees, which can range from 8 to 15 percent
13 of the annual rent exacerbates this issue
14 significantly. These fees demanded upfront and in
15 addition to security deposits and the first months
16 rent can see renters needing to pay upwards of four
17 times the monthly rent before even moving in. For
18 instance, securing a studio apartment which now costs
19 \$3,550 per month on average often requires an upfront
20 payment of approximately 13,500 dollars. This
21 scenario is not just daunting. It's prohibitive,
22 making living on our own in New York City or staying
23 here impossible for so many students and young
24 adults.
25

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1 The current system which allows landlords to pass
2
3 these costs onto tenants is inherently flawed and
4 calls for immediate reform. Almost done. By
5 requiring landlords to pay for their own brokers, as
6 nearly all other city's do, we would not only
7 alleviate an unfair financial burden on tenants but
8 also foster a more affordable rental market and
9 improve our local economy. That's why I support
10 passing the Fairness and Apartment Rental Expenses
11 Fair Act. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Thank you all
13 very much for your testimony. [07:28:32] -
14 [07:28:37]

15 Okay, next we have Dulce Olavaria and Anderson
16 Guaman. [07:28:44] - [07:29:02] Dulce Olavaria,
17 Anderson Guaman. You guys here? Okay. [07:29:11] -
18 [07:29:32] [DISRUPTION IN THE COURTROOM] Okay,
19 thank you. Have a great night. [07:29:34] -
20 [07:30:46] Okay, so we have Dulce and Anderson.
21 Dulce Olavaria and Anderson Guaman. Those are the
22 only two people who should be at the dais right now
23 and the translators. [07:30:59] - [07:31:25] Welcome
24 everyone from the upper deck. Please find a seat.
25 [07:31:28] - [07:31:35]

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1 Hello, do you have a translator? Okay. Just
2
3 give us a sec so people could sit down. [07:31:42] -
4 [07:31:56] Okay, okay ready to begin whenever you
5 are.

6 ANDERSON GUAMAN: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
7 [07:32:04] - [07:32:33].

8 INTERPRETER: My name is Anderson Guaman and I am
9 a member of Make the Road New York and Urban Youth
10 collaborative. Council Member Moya represents where
11 I live in Corona and Council Member Krishnan
12 represents the area where I go to school. I
13 appreciate all the Council for listening to my
14 testimony today. As a young person who immigrated to
15 New York City in 2021 from Ecuador, my only goal was
16 to have a quality education where I had the necessary
17 resources to thrive.

18 ANDERSON GUAMAN: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
19 [07:33:04] - [07:33:24].

20 INTERPRETER: I was initially surprised when I
21 arrived at my community school because it had such
22 high quality classes, resources and mental health
23 support. My school offered different clubs,
24 internships and academic support too and this was a
25

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1 huge difference for me and my peers whom the majority
2 have not had mental health care in their life.

3
4 ANDERSON GUAMAN: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
5 [07:33:44] - [07:33:56]

6 INTERPRETER: The most surprising thing was the
7 way in which this school has encouraged us to look at
8 our future. My school took us to visit university so
9 we can learn more about them and know what kind of
10 benefits they have to support our study.

11 ANDERSON GUAMAN: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
12 [07:34:09] - [07:34:40]

13 INTERPRETER: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
14 [07:34:41] - [07:34:45] However, this experience was
15 short lived and only lasted my 9th grade year. The
16 Education Budget was cut by hundreds of millions this
17 year, which forced teachers and programs to be
18 reduced while students like me suffered the
19 consequences. It is extremely unfair that every
20 single year young people like me have to fight so
21 that the city budget stops funding school police and
22 instead reinvest the money to our education.

23 ANDERSON GUAMAN: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
24 [07:35:07] - [07:35:21]

25

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1 INTERPRETER: New York City has the largest
2 school police force in the country with a budget of
3 over \$400 million, however, the successive police
4 presence does not make us feel safer but instead
5 creates an environment of fear and mistrust in our
6 schools.
7

8 ANDERSON GUAMAN: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
9 [07:35:34] - [07:35:45].

10 INTERPRETER: School police harshly punish us
11 Black and Latino students for minor conflicts but the
12 same conflicts in mostly White schools go without -
13 that don't have school police are treated as lessons
14 to be learned.

15 ANDERSON GUAMAN: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
16 [07:35:59] - [07:36:14]

17 INTERPRETER: School is a place where all young
18 people should be free to learn, grow from mistakes,
19 explore new interests and be safe. There is no proof
20 that school police actually prevents conflict in our
21 schools.

22 ANDERSON GUAMAN: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
23 [07:36:26] - [07:36:32].

24 INTERPRETER: School police mostly escalates any
25 conflict that does happen making things worse.

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1
2 ANDERSON GUAMAN: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

3 [07:36:36] - [07:36:45]

4 INTERPRETER: Is it really fair to limit the
5 resources and educational opportunities for students
6 just to fund school cops who do not serve a useful
7 purpose?

8 ANDERSON GUAMAN: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

9 [07:36:54] - [07:37:11]

10 INTERPRETER: New York City should immediately
11 stop recruiting and hiring school cop positions and
12 they should also stop funding the vacant school cop
13 positions. This alone would open up over \$90 million
14 that could be invested into the academic resources
15 and opportunity such as college trips, internships
16 and club events.

17 ANDERSON GUAMAN: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

18 [07:37:30] - [07:37:43]

19 INTERPRETER: The city must fully fund community
20 schools like mine so we can quality mental health
21 support by adding more counselors, social workers
22 like colleges and restorative justice coordinators.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, please conclude.

24 ANDERSON GUAMAN: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

25 [07:37:55] - [07:38:05]

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We go to school so we can
3 have a better future. I hope you can support our
4 fight to stop funding school cops and instead invest
5 that money in our education. Thank you for your
6 time.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

8 DULCE OLAVARIA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
9 [07:38:21] - [07:38:50]

10 INTERPRETER: My name is Dulce, good afternoon.
11 I'm in the 11th grade and a leader with Make the Road
12 New York. My Council Member is Francisco Moya and
13 Council Member Krishnan who represent my school
14 neighborhood. Thank you to Council Member Joseph and
15 all the Council Members for listening to us today as
16 we all share concerns about the fight to save
17 important services and programs that are being funded
18 through the federal COVID-19 relief money that ends
19 in June.

20 DULCE OLAVARIA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
21 [07:39:13] - [07:39:32].

22 INTERPRETER: I attend a small community school
23 community school Elmhurst and every school year; I
24 see the number of school cops increase. My school is
25 one block away from the 110th Precinct and with every

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1 single school cop present, I know that any small
2 infraction has a potential to escalate very quickly.

3
4 DULCE OLAVARIA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
5 [07:39:48] - [07:40:03]

6 INTERPRETER: I honestly feel very uncomfortable
7 and alienated with all the school police around us.
8 The school cops who are placed inside my school make
9 it a point to stop suspicious looking students, which
10 honestly translates to Black and Brown students.

11 DULCE OLAVARIA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
12 [07:40:17] - [07:40:32]

13 INTERPRETER: School policing data consistently
14 shows that nearly 90 percent of all school policing
15 incidents in New York City target Black and Latinx
16 students. Despite this being only 66 percent of the
17 population.

18 DULCE OLAVARIA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
19 [07:40:44] - [07:40:53].

20 INTERPRETER: So, instead of resolving conflict
21 through restorative justice or counseling, any
22 interactions with the school police could lead to
23 legal consequences.

24 DULCE OLAVARIA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
25 [07:41:00] - [07:41:09].

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1 INTERPRETER: This not only increases the
2 connection between the school to prison and school to
3 deportation pipeline but also destroys trust between
4 young people and adults in school.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Please conclude.

7 DULCE OLAVARIA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
8 [07:41:20] - [07:41:36].

9 INTERPRETER: We only have two counselors and two
10 social workers for 450 students at our school.
11 However, we have multiple school cops assigned to the
12 four different schools on campus and we also have
13 additional police officers present off campus.

14 DULCE OLAVARIA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
15 [07:41:50] - [07:41:54].

16 INTERPRETER: It's a shame we have more school
17 police officers than counselors or social workers.

18 DULCE OLAVARIA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
19 [07:41:59] - [07:42:11].

20 INTERPRETER: Mayor Adams instead of focusing on
21 building relationships and promoting a sense of
22 community, focuses on surveillance and control, which
23 does little to address the underlying causes of
24 violence or behavioral problems.
25

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1
2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, thank you for your
3 testimony. Now, we have Yorwis Romero, Alexandra
4 Lucero, and Estafania Lanchimba, and I believe those
5 three folks need a translator as well. Estafania,
6 Alexandra and Yorwis. [07:42:47] - [07:43:14].
7 Whoever wants to begin. I'm going to give everyone
8 four minutes since you have a translator but we have
9 to keep it tight, we have a very long night ahead.
10 Okay, who is going to begin?

11 INTERPRETER: Okay.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Just make sure your mics
13 on.

14 YORWIS ROMERO: Sorry. [SPEAKING IN OTHER
15 LANGUAGE [07:43:40] - [07:43:48].

16 INTERPRETER: Good afternoon, my name is Yorwis.
17 I am a freshman in a Queens High School and I am a
18 Youth Leader at Make the Road New York and the Urban
19 Youth Collaborative.

20 YORWIS ROMERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
21 [07:43:55] - [07:44:10].

22 INTERPRETER: Two weeks ago, I spent my last day
23 of spring break talking to Council Members about how
24 frustrating it is that the city spends billions of
25 dollars on school police instead of funding the

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1 restorative justice and mental health supports we
2 need.

3
4 YORWIS ROMERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
5 [07:44:23] - [07:44:41]].

6 INTERPRETER: In the months before that, my
7 friends and I spoke at the Queens Townhall in front
8 of Council Member Joseph, Krishnan and Gutiérrez
9 about police free schools. We are frustrated that
10 adults in power are not listening to us when we say
11 we do not need cops in our schools. What we need is
12 care.

13 YORWIS ROMERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
14 [07:44:59] - [07:45:22]].

15 INTERPRETER: I moved from Ecuador almost a year
16 ago and when I walked into my school, I initially
17 felt so weird and different because it was a
18 completely new atmosphere and language. It was
19 really hard to be a new student in a new place. When
20 I saw police in my school for the first time, I felt
21 really unsafe.

22 I saw how school police discriminated against
23 students of color and immigrant students. I do not
24 trust them or go to them when I need help, I go to a
25 teacher or a counselor.

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1
2 YORWIS ROMERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

3 [07:45:48] - [07:46:12].

4 INTERPRETER: We had to fight all year against
5 cuts to our education or what the city continues to
6 spend over \$400 million on school police. Mayor
7 Adams and the NYPD also further militarized our
8 schools this year by wasting \$3 million on bullet
9 proof vests for all school police and hundreds of
10 millions on video surveillance, door locks and new
11 metal detectors.

12 YORWIS ROMERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

13 [07:46:34] - [07:46:40].

14 INTERPRETER: We have more school cops than
15 social workers, counselors and restorative justice
16 coordinators all combined.

17 YORWIS ROMERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

18 [07:46:46] - [07:47:03].

19 INTERPRETER: It does not make sense to me how we
20 can continue to spend all that money for school
21 police and in the same breath, say we don't have
22 enough money for the real safety supports we need
23 like I mentioned. The safest schools have the most
24 resources, not the most school cops.

25

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1 YORWIS ROMERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

2 [07:47:18] - [07:47:38].

3 INTERPRETER: I appreciate the City Council
4 included so many mental health support programs in
5 their response to the budget. Young people
6 definitely need more school psychologists and social
7 workers in schools. It is not enough to have one
8 social worker for every 600 students.

9 YORWIS ROMERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

10 [07:47:52] - [07:48:18].

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much.

12 INTERPRETER: It is not enough to have one social
13 worker for every 600 students and I'm here to call
14 on or to ask you to take it a step forward because
15 young people in New York City need you to remove cops
16 in the schools. Stop recruiting, stop hiring, and
17 training school cops. If New York City did this, we
18 would have over \$90 million that could be invested
19 into resources we need to actually help us. Sorry.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much. We're
21 going to move on. Okay, just pass her the mic
22 please.

23 ALEXANDRA LUCERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

24 [07:48:50] - [07:49:06]. Good afternoon. My name is
25

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1 Alexandra. I'm in my last year of a high school and
2 I'm a Leader with Make the Road New York and the
3 Urban Youth Collaborative. Council Member Moya
4 represents where I live in Corona and Council Member
5 Julie Won represents the area where I go to school.

7 ALEXANDRA LUCERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
8 [07:49:19] - [07:49:30].

9 INTERPRETER: I also want to thank Council Member
10 Krishnan for signing it to have less police in our
11 schools.

12 ALEXANDRA LUCERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
13 [07:49:38] - [07:49:46].

14 INTERPRETER: When I [INAUDIBLE 07:49:48] in
15 2021, I was really excited to be a new student and my
16 guidance counselors were very helpful in getting me
17 oriented in my new school.

18 ALEXANDRA LUCERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
19 [07:49:56] - [07:50:06].

20 INTERPRETER: Unfortunately, things have changed
21 since then and in my junior and senior years, I
22 haven't been able to see my guidance counselor as
23 often as I need.

24 ALEXANDRA LUCERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
25 [07:50:14] - [07:50:22].

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2 INTERPRETER: We used to be able to just talk to
3 counselors any time and now we have to make an
4 appointment and we only have three counselors and we
5 have more and more students coming every year.

6 ALEXANDRA LUCERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
7 [07:50:33] - [07:50:42]].

8 INTERPRETER: My class size went from 23 students
9 to more than 30 students in a class. So, we don't
10 have enough guidance counselors to meet the needs of
11 young people and their families.

12 ALEXANDRA LUCERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
13 [07:50:51] - [07:51:06]].

14 INTERPRETER: My mom came to my school to try and
15 speak with a counselor and they turned her away and
16 said that she needed to make an appointment. My mom
17 feels so frustrated and unwelcome that now she avoids
18 going to my school because she doesn't feel like they
19 can support us in the way that we need.

20 ALEXANDRA LUCERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
21 [07:51:19] - [07:51:32]].

22 INTERPRETER: In a year, where I'm focusing on
23 the future and my next steps, it is stressful to see
24 more school cops than counselors. From each corner,
25 the hallways are crowded with students and the school

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1
2 cops have a whistle that they use to make us walk
3 faster.

4 ALEXANDRA LUCERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
5 [07:51:45] - [07:51:50].

6 INTERPRETER: The sound is so loud and aggressive
7 that it hurts my ears and leaves them ringing for
8 several minutes after that.

9 ALEXANDRA LUCERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
10 [07:51:56] - [07:52:04].

11 INTERPRETER: I hate feeling that we're just like
12 a bunch of sheep to be moved and just this week, I
13 saw my school put up a ton of new cameras in the
14 hallways and in the staircases.

15 ALEXANDRA LUCERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
16 [07:52:14] - [07:52:19].

17 INTERPRETER: It makes me really uncomfortable to
18 see that they're paying attention to every
19 conversation I have or every step I take.

20 ALEXANDRA LUCERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
21 [07:52:25] - [07:52:29].

22 INTERPRETER: And I heard the Dean say that they
23 will install more cameras around schools.

24 ALEXANDRA LUCERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
25 [07:52:33] - [07:52:44].

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1 INTERPRETER: My participation with Make the Road
2 New York, I have been able to meet a lot of students
3 from different schools across the city and many have
4 shared that they have had similar or worse
5 experiences with the school police.
6

7 ALEXANDRA LUCERO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
8 [07:52:55] - [07:53:02].

9 INTERPRETER: We want investments in our
10 education instead of over \$400 million in school
11 police.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much. Thank
13 you. Go ahead. Just hit the button. Thank you.

14 ESTAFANIA LANCHIMBA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
15 [07:53:19] - [07:53:38].

16 INTERPRETER: My name is Estafania, I am
17 graduating high school in a month and I'm headed to
18 John Jay College. I'm a Leader with Make the Road
19 New York and the Urban Youth Collaborative. Council
20 Member Krishnan represents me and the City Council
21 and Council Member Won represents my school
22 neighborhood.

23 ESTAFANIA LANCHIMBA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
24 [07:53:52] - [07:54:16].

25

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1 INTERPRETER: When I first arrived from Ecuador
2 in 2021, I appreciated the guidance counselor guiding
3 me. Now as a senior, I rarely get to see my
4 counselor and the for guidance counselors at my
5 school are overwhelmed by the number of students they
6 need to support when they can't get enough attention.
7

8 ESTAFANIA LANCHIMBA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
9 [07:54:32] - [07:54:38].

10 INTERPRETER: I sent email after email but it's
11 still a struggle to get an appointment to see a
12 guidance counselor.

13 ESTAFANIA LANCHIMBA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
14 [07:54:43] - [07:54:50].

15 INTERPRETER: We used to have only two lunch
16 periods but now we're up four different lunch periods
17 and the school is so crowded.

18 ESTAFANIA LANCHIMBA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
19 [07:54:56] - [07:55:05].

20 INTERPRETER: And with the increase in students,
21 there's also an increase in school cops and on an
22 everyday basis, I see more cops than I see guidance
23 counselors.

24 ESTAFANIA LANCHIMBA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
25 [07:55:15] - [07:55:27].

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1
2 INTERPRETER: New York City has the largest
3 school police in the country with 4,000 cops in a
4 budget of more than \$400 million. We have the
5 largest school cop to student ratio in the country.

6 ESTAFANIA LANCHIMBA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
7 [07:55:38] - [07:55:43].

8 INTERPRETER: In New York City we have one school
9 cop for every 200 students.

10 ESTAFANIA LANCHIMBA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
11 [07:55:47] - [07:55:57].

12 INTERPRETER: However, in LA, Los Angeles is the
13 second largest school district in the country.

14 There's one school cop for every 3,000 students.

15 ESTAFANIA LANCHIMBA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
16 [07:56:05] - [07:56:19].

17 INTERPRETER: And that's a huge difference and a
18 lot of money to spend on school cops. Instead of
19 cutting the budget of services, we actually need like
20 counselors, mental health supports, restorative
21 justice, justice community, schools and student
22 success centers, we should remove that money from the
23 school police budget.

24 ESTAFANIA LANCHIMBA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
25 [07:56:35] - [07:56:51].

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1
2 INTERPRETER: So, right now, New York City could
3 put a hiring freeze on school cops and stop funding
4 vacant school cop positions that would immediately
5 free up over \$90 million.

6 ESTAFANIA LANCHIMBA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
7 [07:57:02] - [07:57:10].

8 INTERPRETER: Removing that money from the school
9 police and reinvesting it in our education would help
10 me and all my classmates thrive so much more.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: One quick question, how long
13 does it take you to see a guidance counselor or
14 social worker?

15 ESTAFANIA LANCHIMBA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
16 [07:57:25] - [07:57:29].

17 INTERPRETER: Almost a month.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much for
19 your testimony. Okay, new sign ups were closed at
20 five o'clock, however, if you had signed up on Zoom
21 previously and are now in chambers, please feel out a
22 slip just so we know that you're here in person and
23 no longer on the Zoom list.

24 Okay, our next panel Chauncey Young, Youth, okay,
25 I'm sorry, I can't read it. Young, okay. Sandra

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1 Mitchell, Kulsoom Tapel, Jakoub Chen, Julie Wu, Kyle
2 Lin, and Aqida Rama. [07:58:27] - [07:59:01] Okay,
3 let's start from my right, go ahead.
4

5 KULSOOM TAPEL: Good evening. My name is
6 Kulsoom. I am testifying on behalf of the Coalition
7 for Asian American Children and Families. We're an
8 advocacy organization fighting for equity for Asian
9 Americans under children and families.

10 New York City students regardless of their income
11 or background deserve well resourced, safe and
12 accessible schools. What we're witnessing first hand
13 is the detrimental effects of continued budget cuts
14 on essential educational programming. More than \$700
15 million in COVID-19 funding has been used by the city
16 to fund essential services for students in schools.

17 As federal stimulus funding comes to an end, CACS
18 has worked with the Emergency Coalition to save
19 education programs to ensure New York Schools
20 continue to receive money they need to support our
21 students. Recently, this Administration is pushing a
22 false narrative that budget cuts have been restored
23 and that education is receiving appropriate funding.
24 This is just not true. There is still several
25 critical programs funded with temporary federal

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1 dollars that were not restored at all. Restorative
2 justice, immigrant family communication and outreach
3 programs, students success centers and mental health
4 continuum are all at risk of being completely cut on
5 June 30th.
6

7 Additionally, there are still several critical
8 programs funded with temporary federal dollars that
9 were not fully restored, including school social
10 workers, translation interpretation services, pre-
11 school special education, 3K, community schools and
12 libraries.

13 Cuts or complete ends to these programs will have
14 drastic negative consequences for our students and
15 our school communities and for our AAPI families and
16 students, access to translation interpretation
17 services in mental health care are essential parts of
18 our educational needs.

19 As the budget process moves forward, it moves
20 forward, we demand that the Council restore these
21 fundings and we implore you to fight for our
22 students. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

24 AQIDA RAMA: Good evening. First, I want to
25 thank Chair Joseph, Chair Brannan and the rest of the

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1 Council for allowing this conversation. My name is
2 Aqida Rama and I am a senior at Brooklyn Technical
3 High School. I'm also a youth leader, I'm a youth
4 advocate at the Asian American Student Advocacy
5 Project, also known as ASAP language access campaign.
6 ASAP is the ACS Youth Leadership Program. Our
7 language access campaign is dedicated to ensuring
8 that every student including immigrant students feels
9 proud of their identity and please use themselves in
10 the school setting.
11

12 As someone who was once an ESL student, I want to
13 point out that the challenges we face are beyond
14 translation needs. Last year, we conducted a survey
15 across various New York City high schools gathering
16 insights from AAPI ELL students speaking over 14
17 different languages. We discovered that the
18 struggles of AAPI ELL students extend far beyond
19 academic challenges. They face issues of cultural
20 assimilation, exclusion and insecurity about their
21 identities and they are judged by how fast they learn
22 English or how well they speak English. One
23 prominent struggle was the pressure to assimilate,
24 where students felt compelled to abandon their
25 heritage and language to fit in. This goes beyond

1 academic hurdles and directly impacts their sense of
2 a belonging.

3
4 One students shared, due to the fact I was an ELL
5 student, I had to put in more effort than my peers.
6 Another student expressed; I don't have many friends.
7 The constant fear of making a mistake or pronouncing
8 a word wrong keeps me silent. This quote sheds light
9 on the social isolation experienced by many AAPI ELL
10 students, stemming from a deep seeded fear of
11 judgment and rejection, highlighting the need for
12 addressing cultural challenges in addition to
13 language barriers.

14 Students also shared that their teachers and
15 counselors would often emphasize how important it is
16 to pass NYSIS test. As passing it is the most
17 important thing for them. We need schools to
18 actively foster an environment where all students
19 feel genuinely welcomed and supported to be
20 themselves and thrive. We firmly believe that simply
21 providing translation resources is not enough.
22 Similarly, translating the materials for immigrant
23 families is not enough. The city must urgently
24 invest in how these materials are shared with
25 families. Hiring bilingual staff is not affective if

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1 we don't have disaggregated data on what languages
2 students are speaking and what languages are spoken
3 by staff to see what languages are not served yet.
4 Finally, the city must invest in increasing
5 culturally responsive staff, integrating cultural
6 elements into the curriculum and promoting cultural
7 empathy and sensitivity among all students. Our
8 ultimate goal is to create a school environment where
9 every student, including English Language Learners
10 feel proud of their identity and are fully included
11 in the school setting. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

13 KYLE LIN: Good afternoon. My name is Kyle Lin
14 and I'm a senior at James Madison High School and a
15 youth leader at the Asian American Student Advocacy
16 Project. Thank you Chair Joseph and the rest of the
17 Council for having this conversation. Chair Joseph,
18 last year during the budget hearing, you asked me
19 what makes me feel safe and supported in schools. I
20 said that means everyone, including myself should be
21 comfortable being who they are. We should have
22 someone to talk to when needed and that no one is
23 being devalued.
24

25

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1 While I'm a grateful to be here a year later, but
2 unfortunately feeling safe and supported in school
3 still isn't a reality for many of us. Being a part
4 of the mental health campaign team at ASAP, our
5 research delved into the critical needs of social
6 workers, especially within the AAPI community. Often
7 times, we are perpetuated by stereotypes such as the
8 mono minority myth. Who tend to not be seen as a
9 group of individuals who don't need support.
10

11 My ethnicization not determined my needs for
12 social support and my mental wellness. Social
13 workers embodied the progression of student wellness
14 within our school systems. Not only do we want to
15 feel academically well, but we want to feel mentally
16 confident as well.

17 The Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget restores
18 the funding for the 450 school social workers to
19 students is still way too high. My school has two
20 social workers with 3,600 students. When I want to
21 talk to them, I have to ask myself, do I deserve that
22 time to talk? No one should be asking themselves
23 this question. We need to stop undermining the
24 importance of taking care of ourselves and our mental
25 health. Lastly, I want to point out that the city

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1 must address our mental health needs holistically
2 from different aspects. Bilingual programs, outreach
3 for immigrant students and families, restorative
4 justice programs and many other educational programs
5 are all essential in our school system. No issue is
6 a singular issue. They are all interconnected.

7
8 When immigrant students are being left out in the
9 school communities, who are they going to turn to
10 when there already is a lack of social workers with
11 students sometimes even having a language barrier.
12 When AAPI students are being made fun of in schools,
13 getting called names or treated with negative
14 stereotypes and with no restorative programs or staff
15 in our school, who is going to address the mental
16 health state of the school community?

17 We ask the city to fully and holistically invest
18 in our school communities. We all deserve to feel
19 welcomed, heard, supported and valued in our school
20 communities and the city must invest to make that a
21 reality for all students in New York City. Thank
22 you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

24 JULIE WU: Good afternoon. First, I want to
25 thank Chair Joseph, Chair Brannan and the rest of the

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1 Council for allowing this conversation. My name is
2 Julie Wu and I'm a senior at Millenium High School
3 and a youth advocate at the Asian American Student
4 Advocacy Projects Mental Health Campaign. In my
5 team, we have identified that one of the big reasons
6 why AAPI students did not reach out for mental health
7 support is because they were raised around the belief
8 that showing their emotions and talking about how you
9 feel is a sign of weakness. I resonate with this as
10 I have my own struggles being Asian American. There
11 were often times when mental health support seemed
12 more like a luxury than a necessity but that is not
13 okay.
14

15 In my school, there are only two social workers
16 responsible for all 4,000 students that attend. Many
17 of us don't even know who they are or which room
18 they're in. How can we say that is accessible and
19 responsible care for mental health support? I want
20 to talk to school social workers who are culturally
21 responsive and who see me for me. I want to be seen
22 as an individual. We all deserve to be seen in our
23 own ways, not as a foreigner who doesn't belong here.
24 Not as well behaved students who don't need help and
25 especially not as scapegoats. We deserve, we need to

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1 offer spaces where students can openly talk about
2 their feelings. I know there is the NYC Teen Space
3 where highschoolers can connect to virtual therapy.
4 However, I am not using these services because I want
5 to connect with a real person.
6

7 I want to be able to have an actual conversation.

8 I want to build relationships and connections with
9 someone in my school, not someone I can't even see.

10 Chair Joseph, I am grateful to share another
11 conversation with you since our last meeting at
12 Staten Islands Town Hall but this month, it was
13 difficult for me. The sign up was hard and I needed
14 someone to hear me out. Sometimes it just felt so
15 loud when everyone was shouting and telling me what
16 to do and telling me what was best for me. I didn't
17 need someone to help me make a decision. I just
18 needed someone to listen. Along with making such a
19 big decision in my life, it was also coupled with
20 family expectations, pressure from others, and
21 figuring out what I wanted to do and my own
22 expectations.

23 I know I'm not the only one who needs a space to
24 be heard. The FY25 Executive Budget needs to
25 maintain the current number of school social workers

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1 and can maybe even hire a little more. However, I
2 think we can all agree that the current ratio of
3 school social workers is to students is too high and
4 irrational. So, why is it not reflected in the
5 budget that the city needs to invest more?
6

7 We believe that every student deserves to feel
8 seen, heard, supported and valued in our schools but
9 this budget does not allow us to thrive. We ask the
10 Council and the city to prioritize the needs of our
11 students and families to ensure that we all have the
12 adequate resources we need to be successful. Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much.

15 JAKOUB CHEN: Good afternoon. First, I want to
16 thank Chair Joseph and Chair Brannan and the rest of
17 the Council for allowing this conversation. My name
18 is Jakoub Chen, a sophomore at Curtis High School in
19 Staten Island and I'm a youth advocate at the Asian
20 American Student Advocacy Project Anti-Bullying and
21 Harassment Campaign.

22 The anti-bullying and harassment campaign team
23 aim to identify safety related challenges faced by
24 AAPI students in New York City Public High Schools
25 and to advocate for a school environment where all

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1 youth feel safe and supported. Through our survey,
2 we found out that many students, especially AAPI
3 students experienced race based harassment so often
4 in school that are not reporting the incidents to
5 their adults in the school. Many students express
6 that the reason why they are not sharing their
7 experience and reporting them is because they don't
8 think their schools will be able to address the
9 issues meaningfully and properly.
10

11 AAPI students face numerous amounts of bullying
12 and harassment in schools. Due to the mono minority
13 myth, AAPI students are seen as weak and quiet. When
14 I started middle school, I was trying to settle in to
15 a new environment. My fellow peers made fun of me
16 for being quiet and not saying a word to them.
17 Others completely ignored me, thinking I was too
18 reserved and I was in the same situation when I
19 started high school last year. Small incidents like
20 these have left a big impact on me. I started to
21 question whether I belonged in that space. I have no
22 doubt that teachers and staff observed these
23 situations too. I am not sure if they knew what to
24 do or did they just think that it was normal. When
25 we sent out a survey to AAPI high school students

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1 across the city, we heard stories of students being
2 made fun of their accents and the food that they eat.
3 They were questioned about their identity and they
4 were asked if they were terrorists. Are these normal
5 too? Our schools are not addressing any of these
6 issues. We all deserve to feel seen, heard,
7 respected and valued in our school. However, when we
8 found out that the FY25 budget did not invest in
9 restorative justice programs in our schools, we felt
10 lost and abandoned. How can our schools not
11 cultivate an inclusive culture and environment for
12 all students and not invest in programs that
13 emphasize in empathy and community? We ask the city
14 to prioritize students safety and wellbeing. Safety
15 isn't punishing and policing students for doing
16 something wrong. It means the presence of students
17 wellness. We also believe that every school in New
18 York City must incorporate a restorative justice
19 program to not only resolve bullying and harassment
20 but also allow opportunities to learn, heal and grow
21 as a community. Thank you.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

24 SANDRA MITCHELL: Blessings to all. My name is
25 Chaplain Sandra Mitchell and I am a parent leader

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1 with the New Settlement Parent Action Committee. PAC
2
3 is a member organization with the New York Dignity in
4 Schools Coalition. A healing centered schools
5 working group and the Emergency Coalition to Save
6 Education Programs.

7 As a Bronx parent and a mental health advocate,
8 it is clear that the City of New York needs to invest
9 in our schools, in our families and invest in social
10 emotional support for students and families not
11 increasing funding in policing.

12 A student in crisis doesn't need policing, they
13 need counseling. Our students and families need
14 trauma responsive care and culturally responsive
15 healing centered practices, not pepper spray and
16 restraints. Our school staff needs to be provided
17 with the support and guidance to develop trauma
18 responsive healing centered schools. It is time for
19 New York City to reinvest in the highest quality
20 education that respects the dignity of all students
21 and pursues restorative approaches to conflict and
22 harm. Reinvestment in supportive staff positions and
23 continuous professional development.

24 We're calling for funding to hire Black and Brown
25 New Yorkers for jobs that support young peoples

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1 social, emotional and mental health. We need to hire
2 necessary personnel such as restorative justice
3 coordinators, paraprofessionals, community outreach
4 staff, nurses, social workers and guidance
5 counselors. Reinvesting in our public schools is the
6 right thing to do. We must protect, empower, inspire
7 and nurture the genius in our New York City students.
8 This is how we should be investing in our children in
9 our city's future and the city and the City Council
10 should no longer be invested in metal detectors and
11 policing of our youth. We should be investing in our
12 future, not in furthering the cradle to prison
13 pipeline. It is our demand that the City Council
14 invest \$5 million in the mental health continuum,
15 fully restores funding to restorative justice
16 programming, community schools, 3K and Pre-K
17 immigrant family communication and outreach and
18 Preschool special education funding.

19
20 A city budget is a moral document. It shows our
21 city's and our leaders priorities. We hope you
22 decide to invest in the future of our children and
23 the future of New York City. I plead with you.
24 Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

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CHAUNCEY YOUNG: Good evening honorable Chair

Joseph and New York City Council Members. My name is
Chauncey Young, I am a Bronx Parent living in the
High Bridge neighborhood of the Bronx and the
Director of the New Settlement Parent Action
Committee. PAC is a member organization with the
Dignity in Schools Coalition, the Healing Centers
Schools Working Group, the New York City Coalition
for Educational Justice and the Emergency Coalition
to Save Education Programs.

For nearly 30 years, PAC has been led by Bronx
parents who believe that every child deserves access
to a quality education. The Parent Action Committee
is based on a new settlement, a community led,
mission based settlement house. We've worked
together to build the resilience and aspirations of
youth and families in the South Bronx by delivering
programs in after school education, workforce
development, college readiness, health fitness, and
member driven community organizing for better housing
and safer schools.

As Sandra and our partner organizations already
stated, we're extremely concerned about the budget
for New York City Public Schools. The City of New

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2 York needs to invest in our schools and families and
3 invest in the social emotional supports for students
4 and families, not increasing funding and for leasing.
5 Students and families need trauma sensitive care and
6 culturally responsive healing centered practices. We
7 need to invest in our future, not furthering the
8 cradle to prison pipeline. We are outraged that New
9 York City has announced their claim to create a
10 junior school safety agent program, a position that
11 seems extremely concerning proposing to have recent
12 school graduates policing their peers. And yet they
13 slashed the budget for restorative justice. A
14 program that could use this funding to train young
15 adults to train young adults to be school based
16 restorative justice coordinators.

17 Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks have cut funding
18 to restorative justice while continuing to increase
19 funding to Project Pivot now to \$15 million.
20 Although I believe City Council, the Public
21 Advocate's Office and the Comptroller's Office that
22 are all asked or been asked how this money is being
23 spent as there is no RFP's for organizations to apply
24 or organizations or schools are selected to
25 participate. We demand city invest in mental health

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1 continuum, fully restore funding to restorative
2 justice communities school, 3K, Pre-K, immigrant
3 family communication outreach and pre skill education
4 funding. The budget is a moral document. Thank you.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

7 CALVIN ZHOU: Hello everyone. My name is Calvin
8 Zhou. I am a sophomore at Brooklyn Technical High
9 School and an organizer at Teens Take Charge. I
10 spoke to you during the hearing on March 18 about
11 reallocating funds to the guidance counselors instead
12 of policing in schools. I feel like the issues we
13 students face in the education system are still not
14 being addressed when it comes to our concerns
15 regarding having opportunities for students. NYC
16 public school students is similar to me, already have
17 limited opportunities and a monetary cut to funding
18 will further limit what youth can accomplish in their
19 schools, especially in lower income schools.

20 Student educations are being limited because of
21 the economic status they are born into and the
22 neighborhood they're in. Many classes offered in
23 these lower income schools are not on par with the
24 quality or quantity of the classes provided by much
25 more well resourced schools. In my case, I am very

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1 privileged to go through Brooklyn Tech, where the
2 school is generously funded. We have majors and
3 major based classes to pursue our interests and
4 career paths further.
5

6 One of my friends in a local school in Bayside
7 Queens, she has significantly fewer options for her
8 to explore her passions and interests or to pursue
9 them. Furthermore, her school only has around a \$28
10 million budget compared to mine, which is around \$48
11 million budget and that's not including PTA funds,
12 which would further widen the gap even more.

13 Although we went to the same middle school, our
14 high schools drastically changed our futures. My
15 school provided me with more resources, classes and
16 opportunities. Where she could have received the
17 same type of education I did despite the fact that
18 both of us to a public school in NYC.

19 As you can see, there's an intense budget in the
20 quality among public schools and that doesn't even
21 include a budget of private or charter schools where
22 students get the opportunity to study abroad, conduct
23 infill internships and take gaps years to ensure
24 their mental health. Students across NYC aren't
25 receiving the education they deserve because of the

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1 school they attend. These budgets cuts will
2
3 disproportionately affect low income schools as these
4 schools rarely have the funds to stay functional. We
5 should implement a system that fairly allocates funds
6 across NYC schools and if the schools have access
7 funds, it can fairly distribute – it could be fairly
8 distributed to schools in need of funds. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You talked about seeing a
11 social worker and you said how long did it take each
12 and every one of you?

13 JULIE WU: For me, I had to schedule an
14 appointment a month before and then she canceled. Oh,
15 can you hear me? Oh, sorry. For me, I had to
16 schedule an appointment a month before and the day
17 before she canceled on me, so I had to wait another
18 month after that.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And you have to wait another
20 month after the month is canceled?

21 JULIE WU: Yeah, because usually it's really busy
22 for us and during our lunch breaks, they're not
23 available sometimes for certain periods.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What school do you go to
25 again?

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JULIE WU: I go to Brooklyn Tech.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Brooklyn Tech.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Alright that's right,
right.

AQIDA RAMA: Uhm, Aqida, I have to wait like
around a month to schedule just because like
conflicts with lunch and everything and to be honest,
I didn't even know their office since this year just
because these resources aren't heavily like bestowed
to us. We don't know anything about it, so I never
seek like for help inside schools, when in reality, I
think that I should just because I'm a first
generation immigrant, that I don't have the resources
to you know look for college applications or even
find resources. My parents don't understand the
college application. So, like seeking a social
worker, these will help us direct us to you know
simple like guides to like FAFSA, CSS, scholarships
and there's so much more to it than that.

JULIE WU: I really resonate with Kyle's story.
Yeah, also I haven't been able to like see a school
social worker because I'm not even sure which one
they are in as like mentioned earlier or who even
like they are but I've heard that there's like a

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1
2 psychiatrist and there's like another school social
3 worker and that's all I know and I wish it wasn't
4 like that.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And you mentioned Teen
6 Space?

7 JULIE WU: Yeah, the Teen Space, I actually
8 figured out it existed this year but it's only from
9 13 to 17 and I just turned 18 last month.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That means you don't even
11 qualify to be on Teen Space, okay.

12 CALVIN ZHOU: For me, I have no idea who my
13 social workers are at my school. I know who my
14 counselors are and my school is lucky to have a
15 majority amount of counselors compared to my peers
16 but yeah, I have no idea who my social workers are
17 and you know that's it.

18 JAKOUB CHEN: Similarly to what they said before,
19 like my guidance counselor, she's sometimes
20 available. You don't really know like if she is
21 available or if she's not available. There's not
22 like oh she has to be available for you type of
23 thing. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.
25

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1
2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thanks everybody. Okay,
3 our next panel Arturo Enamorado, Michael Cohen,
4 Esther Lelievre, Maureen Silverman, Jessie Daniels.
5 [08:22:45] - [08:23:34] Okay, do you want to begin
6 from the left, my left?

7 ESTHER LELIEVRE: You want to try my last name
8 again?

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: No.

10 ESTHER LELIEVRE: We did this on Monday.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You could tell us; I'll
12 pronounce for him.

13 ESTHER LELIEVRE: Lelievre.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Say it.

15 ESTHER LELIEVRE: Lelievre.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Lelievre.

17 ESTHER LELIEVRE: Le-

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Le-

19 ESTHER LELIEVRE: Lievre.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Lievre.

21 ESTHER LELIEVRE: Yeah, there you go.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, I just couldn't read
23 it.

24 ESTHER LELIEVRE: Look at this. Well good day
25 Committee of Education and Higher Education and

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1 Finance. I am Esther Lelievre, one of the two Co-
2 Founders of Cultivated Community Foundation, a proud
3 parent of DOE student and we have been in your
4 community doing schools, education on cannabis and
5 vape prevention.
6

7 Our approach of education is on the facts based
8 on cultural awareness and data driven education. We
9 have worked with some of your education teams and
10 provided support with students, parents, faith based
11 leaders, seniors, veterans, city and state agencies
12 which includes NYCHA smoke fee division, ACS, CPS,
13 infant safety and community boards.

14 And from the beginning of cannabis lift off
15 towards around New York City and our impact has been
16 40,000. We are requesting a budget of around
17 \$200,000 and I want to speak on some of the redirect
18 of expansions and support of our funds for our
19 communities with a very complex situation and various
20 solutions.

21 Agency training, there's a lack of agency
22 training across the board. Everyone's confused about
23 what the laws and as the laws are changing, those
24 trainings are not getting updated. The Committee
25 could put pressure on Department of Health, as you

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1 guys announced the smoke out act. We had convenience
2 stores transferring into deli's and regular
3 convenience stores, which is causing confusion in the
4 actual community itself. We have an upkeep of
5 medical patients. When we're talking about medical
6 patients, we're talking about seniors and D75 parents
7 who are getting stigmatized and calling the ACS and
8 CPS cases. In addition with higher education, as
9 we've been working into the schools, guidance
10 counselors don't actually have information on the
11 SUNY and CUNY cannabis programs that have been
12 launched since 2022 and there has been an upkeep of
13 interest with senior students wanting to get into
14 agricultural, medical, recreational, research, nurse
15 practitioners, plumbing, cooking, and careers and
16 entrepreneurship in this. Peer leadership, within
17 the peer leadership that also gave us the
18 opportunities of kids who are actually dealers
19 wanting to transition out without actually knowing
20 about those actual programs going on and that's an
21 opportunity that we are missing. In addition, we are
22 partnered with the SAPIS and CUNY Health and working
23 with them is figuring out the stigmatization and in
24

25

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1
2 addition with the training and the lack of
3 information going on.

4 I would like to thank Committee Chair Joseph for
5 discussing it with Albany and advocating for parents
6 in this space. I'm here with data information, I
7 give you my information and you can ask any questions
8 that you may want. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

10 MICHAEL COHEN: I had testimonies for both Higher
11 Ed and Ed but I'll do our Higher Ed and I'll submit
12 electronically the Education.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

14 MICHAEL COHEN: Thank you Chair Brannan, Chair
15 Dinowitz, members of the Committee. I want to thank
16 you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is
17 Michael Cohen and I am the Eastern Director of the
18 Simon Wiesenthal Center. I'm testifying today
19 because we need to acknowledge that fundamentally in
20 CUNY right now and throughout college campuses, this
21 is about protecting Jewish students from antisemitic
22 harassment and physical attacks on all of New York
23 City College Campuses. We need to recognize that
24 there is an urgency to this situation. We New
25 Yorkers and families across the nation have witnessed

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1 the destructions and forced cancellations of
2 graduation ceremonies and students who have worked
3 for years to achieve and hard working families who
4 have contributed so much to do so.
5

6 In addition to being a CUNY graduate myself, I am
7 a member of the CUNY Chancellor's Advisory Board on
8 Jewish life that was established last summer because
9 of the antisemitism students were facing. The
10 Committee helped, this Committee held hearings two
11 years ago on these very issues and heard Jewish
12 students talk about the unconscionable conditions
13 they were facing.

14 Now in May 2024, we are not involved in a zero
15 sum game. Today we can both be highly concerned
16 while acknowledging efforts are being made by the
17 Administration to protect students. We should
18 commend Chancellor, the Chancellor of CUNY for
19 stating last summer that he needed help with
20 antisemitism on CUNY's campuses and for setting up
21 the machinery to change an unacceptable status quo at
22 the time.

23 I want to recognize that the Chancellor has been
24 assessable and willing to engage in difficult
25 conversations in the way that most of us did not

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1 expect and that matters. However, we must also look
2 at what occurred at City College just two weeks ago.
3 We must understand that not only were Jewish students
4 put in danger simply for being Jewish but that
5 buildings were occupied, property destroyed and even
6 the roof of one of the buildings was set on fire. We
7 have even had some students glorifying and justifying
8 violence specifically against Jews. We need to make
9 sure that there's accountability for those who broke
10 the law or those who deprive students of their
11 opportunities to attend their classes. What occurred
12 at City College was a result of abject failures at
13 Columbia, at the new school and other campuses, which
14 ended up leading to a domino affect there.
15

16 The institutions of higher learning failed -
17 those institutions of higher learning failed to abide
18 by their own rules and regulations and never before
19 did we see the Executive Director of a campus Hillel
20 in New York City have to tell Jewish students to go
21 home, simply because it was unsafe to be Jewish on
22 campus. Never before.

23 It's also not just Jews who are being placed in
24 harms way. Organized labor is suing colleges such as
25 Columbia for placing its members attacked in occupied

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1 buildings in danger. Announced already by TW
2
3 President John Samuelson. I'm testifying today
4 because we need to have a sense of urgency in
5 responding to these acts. During these challenging
6 times, the Jewish community is ready to work with our
7 elected officials and university administrators to
8 ensure that students can return to classes sure that
9 their physical safety is protected. Let us do what
10 New Yorkers do best, let us come together and protect
11 the safety and security of our institutions for this
12 great city. Thank you so much for the opportunity to
13 testify.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

15 ARTURO ENAMORADO: Good evening everyone, my name
16 is Arturo Enamorado. I'm a member of PSA CUNY and
17 faculty member at Kingsborough Community College. I
18 am a life long New Yorker and have been blessed to be
19 in the higher education profession for the last five
20 to seven years, it depends on what semester you want
21 to count. I also want to represent another serious
22 issue that we're facing. I, as I said, part of
23 Kingsborough Community College, we are one of the
24 nine schools that have been tasked to cut more, to
25 bleed a stone. We, as you've heard with CUNY being

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1 here, the Community College had been cut \$94 million.

2 Our campus in the last three years have been cut \$11

3 million. I am also a representative and a member of

4 the New York City Men Teach Program. I'm the

5 Assistant Program Manager. I'm also an advisor for

6 the LGBTQ club and among many hats I wear but I do it

7 because I love it.

8
9 However, it's becoming increasingly hard for us

10 faculty members to even give an opportunity as you

11 heard from the students that were here and giving

12 their speeches, given their dreams but it's becoming

13 increasingly impossible to guarantee that they will

14 have a quality education when we continue to cut,

15 when our advisors are leaving and we cannot hire

16 more. We are doing an emotional labor and again it

17 seems that we must cut again and again and again.

18 I was lucky to survive and start my career during

19 COVID and that alone should say that we can overcome

20 this but again, as students and as faculty, we need

21 more supports. We ask the Council to reverse the

22 cuts, reverse the PEGs, returning the funding that we

23 have. I can only tell you 1,000 times but I only

24 have 28 seconds to put this together, I have faculty

25 members who have had tiles fall on their head. My

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1 neighbor next to me, his office floods every time it
2 rains. I ask you, what is the purpose of us having a
3 beach on Kingsborough if I have to worry about when
4 it rains that it will flood or the next five years
5 that this will crumble. We used to have a marine
6 program in the hopes that this would be the next
7 generation of Long shoreman and members of marine
8 biology that now has gone to waste and we are trying
9 the best we can. Thank you again.
10

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much for
12 your testimony.

13 PANEL: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Okay, next
15 panel Nuha Hatter(SP?), Pamela Vasquez, Nellis
16 Trevil, Sury Gitte, Xavier Alcantra, Martin Glaster,
17 Christina Karahiarstelatis (SP?). I mean, I'll keep
18 trying. It's easy. Oh yeah I was making it harder
19 than it was. [08:32:46] - [08:33:01].

20 Okay, you want to start from the left? My left.
21 Okay, you're the boss.

22 CHRISTINA KARAHIARSTELATIS: Thank you for the
23 opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of
24 Generation Citizen. My name is Christina
25 Karahiarstelatis and I am a Program Manager at

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1 Generation Citizen. Via our action civics
2 curriculum, middle and high school students apply
3 social studies learning to the real world by studying
4 and advocating on an issue of importance in their
5 communities. Before joining Generation Citizen, I
6 was a teacher in the New York City DOE for seven
7 years and it is an honor to be here today alongside
8 dedicated educators, hardworking change makers, and
9 our inspiring students.
10

11 Thank you Chair Joseph, Chair Brannan, and Chair
12 Dinowitz and members of the City Council for holding
13 space for us today to testify and for fighting for a
14 stronger budget to maintain New York City DOE
15 schools.

16 Generation Citizen is extremely thankful for the
17 Council's \$500,000 investment this year in our
18 programming and youth civics education through the
19 civics education in New York City Schools initiative.
20 The City Council has generously funded this
21 initiative for GC since 2017 originally meant to
22 support our programming in 125 classrooms. Since
23 then, our footprint in New York City has doubled. In
24 this school year, 2023 to 2024 we are serving
25 approximately 250 classrooms and 6,250 students

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1 across New York City in all five boroughs. To ensure
2 that we can continue and maintain our growth, GC
3 seeks an increase of \$100,000 for a grant of \$600,000
4 in fiscal year 2025 to support the significant and
5 continued expansion of programming across the city.
6

7 In my previous role as a high school English
8 Teacher in Title I schools in the New York City DOE,
9 I saw first hand the detrimental effect that
10 decreasing school budgets has on our students. My
11 students emotional and learning needs were not always
12 met because there was not enough staff at hand. If
13 we see even more budget cuts, that means that more
14 students are not able to meet with their school
15 counselor, students with disabilities and English
16 Language acquisition needs may not receive the
17 services we need and our immigrant population may not
18 receive a school placement in a proper timeframe. We
19 need to ensure that our schools are properly funded
20 and taken care of.

21 Today, we are thrilled to present the work of one
22 of our partners, Global Learning Collaborative in
23 Council Member Brewers District. Social Studies
24 Teacher Martin Glaster and 11th grader Sidngina
25 Alam(SP?), Xavier Alcantra, Sury Gitte and Nellis

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1
2 Tarel will share issues and concerns that emerge from
3 their implementation of GC's action of its curriculum
4 this year in relation to the proposed budget cuts and
5 I am happy to introduce Martin Glaster. Thank you.

6 MARTIN GLASTER: Good afternoon. Thank you for
7 the opportunity to testify at today's hearing. My
8 name is Martin Glaster and I am a Social Studies
9 teacher at the Global learning collaborative on the
10 upper west side of Manhattan. I teach AP government
11 and politics and civics and run the student
12 government so this is like the Superbowl for me right
13 now.

14 So, as a veteran public school teacher committed
15 to the education and wellbeing of my students, I sit
16 before you today to advocate against the proposed
17 budget cuts facing the New York City Department of
18 Education particularly concerning mental health
19 related services. So, I'll be as quick as possible.
20 This year, my students and I have been working with
21 Generation Citizen on implementing actions to these
22 projects in my classes. For these projects, my
23 students they've been tasked with discussing issues
24 obviously relevant to our community. So, all of my
25 classes have selected mental health issues in some

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1 capacity, which is a testament to the severity of the
2 mental health crisis the vast majority of students
3 are currently facing as other schools have previously
4 testified. We keep hearing mental health over and
5 over again and the need to fund for more funding to
6 alleviate these issues, certainly not less funding.
7

8 So, just moving down the line, as a teacher in
9 the class room day to day, my students, they focused
10 on social media and the kind of the cell phone,
11 social media addiction that teenagers are currently
12 struggling with. So, I see just how devastating social
13 media and cell phone addiction has become, right?

14 So, they have targeted passage of the stop addictive
15 feeds exploitation for kids acts. They choice this
16 goal because they are negatively impacted by how
17 social media companies are currently rigging their
18 apps to keep kids addicted to their devices at all
19 hours of the day. As I'm sure you know, this is a
20 hot topic issue now in our society and it is not an
21 exaggeration to say that social media companies are
22 purposefully choosing profits over the mental
23 wellbeing of their primary consumers.

24 So, I'm able to do projects like this because of
25 the tremendous help from organizations like

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1
2 Generation Citizen and with the generosity of the
3 City Council's funding of Generation Citizen, my
4 school community is able to see the first hand
5 benefits of cultivating and empowering the voices of
6 our students. If the City Council is able to
7 continue funding Generation Citizen, more of our
8 students can benefit from the Action Civics
9 curriculum.

10 And I'll just close, the effects of these
11 proposed budget cuts will be devastating because this
12 will lead to significantly less students being
13 exposed to an impactful civic education and we don't
14 want that and my students here are going to speak to
15 that.

16 SIDNGINA ALAM: Good afternoon. My name is
17 Sidngina Alam(SP?) and I'm honored to testify at
18 today's hearing. I am currently a junior at the
19 Global Learning Collaborative High School, where I
20 had the privilege of participating in a semester long
21 action civics project through Generation Citizen
22 earlier this school year.

23 During this project, my classmates and I engage
24 in meaningful discussions about issues impacting our
25 community. The number one issue that came up in our

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1 discussions was issues pertaining to the teenage
2 mental health crisis. We ultimately decide to
3 specifically focus on the topic of social medias
4 impact on teenage mental health and set a goal to
5 advocate for the passage of the Stop Addictive Feeds
6 exploitation Safe for Kids Act in the New York State
7 Senate.

9 As a 17 year old student, I've experienced first
10 hand how mental health struggles can negatively
11 impact one's academic performance and overall
12 wellbeing. The COVID-19 pandemic and the escalating
13 cell phone addiction epidemic has highlighted the
14 importance of mental health support in schools.
15 Students have experienced a significant decline in
16 their mental health due to various factors, such as
17 the loss of loved ones during COVID and emotional
18 isolation, which led them to depend on their phones.

19 The increased screen time has resulted in
20 teenagers becoming both depressed and anxious because
21 they simply can't get off of social media. Social
22 media plays a crucial role in impacting teenage
23 mental health because the constant exposure to
24 unrealistic images and viewing the lives of others
25 allows us to compare ourselves to others, which

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1
2 undermines our self-esteem. Thus contributing to
3 feelings of anxiety and depression among teenagers.

4 Therefore, it is imperative that mental health
5 services in the DOE are not cut by the City Council
6 in the budget because they are crucial for helping
7 teenagers navigate the challenges we face in both our
8 academic and personal lives.

9 Whether it's managing stress, anxiety, or coping
10 with depression and trauma. These services offer a
11 lifeline for students in need of assistance. I as a
12 representative of students at my school firmly
13 believe that access to its mental health resources is
14 vital for savings lives and reducing the risk of
15 chronic illnesses associated with depression and
16 substance abuse, which is glorified on social media
17 in today's culture among teenagers.

18 I implore the New York City Council to take
19 concrete action to not only continue to fund school
20 based mental health services but to increase funding
21 towards mental health services and focus on
22 implementing policies that regulate harmful contact
23 and allocate resources to support mental health
24 services in schools can reduce the negative impact of
25 social media on teenagers mental wellbeing.

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1
2 For starters, helping us get the stop addictive
3 feeds exploitation for Kids Act passed in the New
4 York State Senate will be a great help. Addressing
5 social medias impact on teen mental health requires a
6 comprehensive approach. By recognizing these
7 challenges and implementing targeted interventions,
8 schools and policy makers can support teens in
9 navigating social media while preserving their mental
10 health wellbeing. However schools need the money to
11 do this and they won't be able to do it without you.
12 Thank you for your attention to this critical issue
13 and I look forward to seeing meaningful progress
14 towards improving mental health services in our
15 school. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

17 XAVIER ALCANTRA: Test, test, guys can you hear
18 me? Cool, cool, thank you. Alright, hello, my name
19 is Xavier Alcantra. I am currently an 11th grade
20 student at the Global Learning Collaborative.
21 Throughout my semester, my classmates and I have
22 engaged in an action civic project through Generation
23 Citizen.

24 For our project, we've delved into issues
25 effecting our community and ultimately decided on

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1
2 addressing the importance of mental health services
3 in school and the need for increasing funding for
4 these services. Thus, our goal is to advocate for
5 increased funding and support for mental health
6 resources in the New York City Department of
7 Education Schools.

8 On behalf of 500 students who attend my public
9 school, I believe that maintaining adequate funding
10 for these services is crucial because every student
11 deserves access to the support that need to thrive
12 emotionally and successfully.

13 I am testifying today because mental health
14 services are vital for me and my classmates. Having
15 access to trained professionals who provide support
16 and guidance are essential for fostering and
17 developing a healthy school environment. I would
18 alike to also point out, the impact of COVID-19 has
19 heightened the need for mental health resources in
20 our school. Many students including myself have
21 faced – have experienced increased anxiety,
22 isolation, depression and uncertainty during times of
23 need or during times of you know. While schools have
24 made efforts to support students, there is still a
25

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1 need for additional resources and staffing to address
2 the growing demand for our mental health services.

3
4 The proposed budget cuts are not only effecting
5 students for the future generations and mine, but as
6 well, like future students that come after. As an
7 older brother to two siblings, my younger sister
8 Nylag Gantra who is 10th grade following then coming
9 to my grade and a younger brother who is in the
10 second grade, I'm actually mortified for these budget
11 cuts because I do not want them to be effected
12 because of these things and not having the support
13 that I did growing up.

14 You know COVID for my younger brother, he got
15 effected by it. As much as he may be young, he still
16 has issues and I don't want him to have to deal with
17 this kind of negligence of not being able to find
18 support in these schools. Hearing other students
19 today saying that they couldn't find help from their
20 council's for months, that would mortify me. I'm
21 lucky that I would be able to support him but I'm not
22 a professional.

23 I urge the New York City Council - sorry, I urge
24 the New York City to consider the voices of all the
25 students that have spoken today and mine included.

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1 Mental health is a very important matter to not only
2 me but to all the students around me. Please,
3 please, please, hear us. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

5 SURY GITTE: Hello, okay. Good afternoon. Thank
6 you for giving me the opportunity to testify at
7 today's hearing. My name is Sury Gitte. I'm
8 currently in the 11th Grade at the Global Learning
9 Collaborative where I have also been participating in
10 a semester long action civics project through
11 Generation Citizen.
12

13 I'm testifying today because mental health
14 matters and I don't think funding for mental health
15 services in our schools should be cut. Mental health
16 has impacted our education for so long since we are
17 the COVID and Zoom generation and there has sadly
18 been no real solution to the increasing depression
19 and anxiety rates amongst teenagers and adolescents.

20 Someone who may be struggling may not even know
21 who to turn to or confide in or if there is anyone at
22 all to hear them. No one deserves to feel negatively
23 in their school environment but to feel like there's
24 no one at all at school who can help you or just
25 listen to your problems is even worse. There is a

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1 lack of trusted adults we have in school that we feel
2 comfortable with turning to. So in turn, cutting the
3 little staff that we do have would heavily impact our
4 school community in a negative way.
5

6 In school, there could always be more people who
7 genuinely care. Not just staff who repeatedly ask
8 you the same questions of "and how did that make you
9 feel?" Someone who genuinely wants to help our
10 community and better it. As students, our ability to
11 handle our social and emotional wellbeing is
12 important to our future success and life. Without
13 knowing how to handle our social and emotional
14 wellbeing, the pressures of life could make us crack.
15 It can lead us to not knowing how to deal with
16 challenging situations in life or how to come out of
17 it. That is why it is not only important to educate
18 students on mental health but to have people who are
19 there for their mental health because emotional
20 support pushes you and your brain to want to concur
21 anything that life throws your way.

22 As an example, how would anyone be able to
23 perform well in their career if they're facing
24 feelings of depression or anxiety? The answer is
25 that they can't because of the mental toll it takes

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1 on you and your mind. Additionally, in our school
2 community, crimes committed by adolescents have been
3 rising and ever going in the last year since COVID.
4 To think if there was someone who can steer a teen or
5 an adolescent in the right direction of not choosing
6 violence and instead helping them with any issues
7 that they might be having, the crime rate would be
8 lower.
9

10 Our project relates to this hearing because it
11 focuses on cutting the budget on mental health
12 services and it emphasizes our need in school
13 communities for these services. I'm hoping that the
14 New York City Council shows that they care about our
15 communities and our futures. I'm hoping that they
16 increase the budget for mental health services in our
17 schools because we are facing a health crisis among
18 students and as current students of the City of New
19 York, we are the future of this city. Thank you for
20 your time.

21 NELLIS TAREL: I want to start off by saying good
22 evening esteemed members of the New York City
23 Council. MY name is Nellis Tarel and I am currently
24 a student attending the Global Learning
25 Collaborative. Today, I sit before you to advocate

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1
2 against budget cuts that could jeopardize students
3 like myself. As a student in an NYC DOE school, one
4 that also comes from the foster care system, mental
5 health services are a crucial resource for all
6 students. With the stress and pressures of school,
7 family and life in general, having access to mental
8 health programs and providers is essential to our
9 mental and emotional wellbeing. These services not
10 only help us cope with the tough challenges but also
11 help us build resiliency. Do I feel that there are
12 enough staff members to support me and my classmates
13 emotionally outside of the classroom?

14 Simple answer is no. Our staff tries their best
15 to accommodate everyone's needs inside and outside of
16 the classroom but it will never be enough, especially
17 in classes where teachers have to deal with 30-
18 something students each period.

19 Further, the impact of COVID-19 has been immense
20 on our emotional wellbeing, as many of us have
21 experienced increased anxiety, depression and
22 feelings of isolation. Now, if the city were to cut
23 these staff members even more, it would be devastating
24 for students like myself. Students with anxiety,
25 depression, and other disorders as we rely on these

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1 professionals for guidance, support and a listening
2 ear. Additionally, I have a younger sister Chloe who
3 will be directly impacted by these budget cuts. It
4 is essential to advocate against these cuts to ensure
5 that future generations can thrive in an educational
6 system that caters to their mental health and their
7 academic needs.
8

9 Without these programs and extra-curricular
10 activities, how do we know where they'll end up? In
11 the past week alone, there have been four tragic
12 incidents of teen stabbings in our city. These
13 senseless acts of violence have shaken our community
14 to the core and are a stark reminder of the
15 challenges our youth face every day. It is
16 imperative to recognize that decreased budgeting for
17 schools not only leaves students vulnerable to
18 partaking in these acts of violence but also makes
19 them more susceptible to becoming victims themselves.
20 When essential programs and resources, such as mental
21 health services, support staff and extra-curricular
22 activities are lacking.

23 Students are left without the necessary tools to
24 address their emotional struggles and conflicts
25 effectively. We must prioritize the wellbeing of our

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1 students by ensuring adequate funding that can
2 prevent such tragic incidents from occurring in the
3 future.
4

5 Thank you for the opportunity to advocate, not
6 only for myself but for my sisters and generation and
7 hopefully many generations to come.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much for being
10 here today. I have a question. What mental support
11 currently exists in your schools right now?

12 NELLIS TAREL: Uhm, right now, we do have social
13 workers as well a counselors but due to the growing
14 conflict and the growing need for these mental health
15 services, it's kind of hard to actually get through
16 to these people. Like, for me alone, I was trying to
17 make an appointment with my counselor and it took me
18 over three weeks to even get seen.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Go ahead.

20 SURY GITTE: Not only that but we only have one
21 social worker that works at our school. Even though
22 we have uhm, guidance counselors for each grade, we
23 don't have a specific social worker that we can go
24 to. Like having one social worker accommodate for
25 400 students in our schools is absurd. We need more

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1 than one person to you know help all these people and
2 that's overwhelming for not just the social worker
3 that works in our school, but also for the students
4 because they feel like they're not being heard. They
5 feel like they're not getting the time that they
6 should be getting with their counselors or with their
7 social workers to talk about these issues.
8

9 MARTIN GLASTER: In addition to what Sidngina had
10 said, so our social worker, predominantly also is
11 responsible for the 10^t grade and us being juniors,
12 predominantly all of us. You know we would have to
13 either try to talk to our guidance counselor or
14 somebody else. Mr. Viamore has been somebody who has
15 been supporting me since the 9th grade since I
16 arrived during the time when we're transitioning out
17 of Zoom calls and it was the end of COVID.

18 So, to have to put all that responsibility on
19 him, I mean for me personally, like I feel bad
20 because he is someone that I genuinely care for.
21 Someone whose been able luckily to help me in my
22 growth in supporting me. I can come to him and stuff
23 like that but sitting down like you know one on one
24 is a little bit harder because there's other people
25 that he has to schedule with because I want him to be

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1
2 able to also accommodate for everybody else's
3 feelings and needs, not just so much mine.

4 So I really do advocate that we really do need
5 this. We do need more social workers and more
6 support within our school, especially yes, we may be
7 a smaller school but that doesn't make it any less
8 important.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct, the needs are still
10 there. Thank you. So, what would you like? If you
11 could, what would you like to see? Anyone of you?

12 NELLIS TAVEL: Well, me personally, speaking from
13 experience and speaking from dealing with things like
14 ADD and anxiety, I would like to see more social
15 workers as coming out of the foster care. A lot of
16 kids in our school are also trying to make that
17 transition and it is hard on them to only have one
18 like Xavier previously said. So, I feel that putting
19 more budgeting into having more social workers into
20 having more staff workers that allow us to feel
21 comfortable in our school community.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And you're transitioning out
23 of foster care you said?

24 NELLIS TAVEL: Uhm, a lot of people in our school
25 are either transitioning like from middle school to

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1 high school and there's I know some other people that
2 have come from the foster care system as well.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you know that New York
5 City Public Schools have an office just for students
6 in foster care?

7 NELLIS TAVEL: I did not know that.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: It was created under my
9 leadership.

10 NELLIS TAVEL: Wow, thank you so much.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Because I'm a — my two boys
12 came from there and I know what it's like, right?
13 So, it's very important.

14 NELLIS TAVEL: Thank you so much.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, reach out to one of the
16 folks. There's an office to deal with students in
17 foster care.

18 NELLIS TAVEL: Thank you so much.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much.
21 Alright, our next panel. Solomn Blocker, Samuel
22 Rodriguez, Isabel Ariza, Esther Nunez, Ava Harris,
23 Rayn Jenkins, Alin Frias, Helen Joan Brady, Catherine
24 Jeosia. [08:55:17] - [08:55:34]

25

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1
2 UNIDENTIFIED: Excuse me? There's two young
3 people who had to leave but we were wondering if two
4 people could be added to the panel to read their
5 testimony in place of them?

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSPEH: Did they fill out a form
7 already?

8 UNIDENTIFIED: Yeah, they did but -

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Alright, bring them up.

10 UNIDENTIFIED: And Pamela Vasquez.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Bring them up. [08:56:03] -
12 [08:56:38] Just state your name okay.

13 SOLOMON BLOCKER: Yeah, okay great. Uhm, are we
14 ready to start? Yeah, okay. Good afternoon
15 Education Chair Joseph and the Education Committee.
16 My name is Solomon and I am 17 years old. I go to
17 NEST and I live in Manhattan. I'm also a member of
18 CB3. I would like the city to fund \$600 million in
19 the capital budget to electrify and upgrade 500
20 schools by 2030. It is extremely important that the
21 city reduces carbon emissions and schools are a major
22 contributor to emissions in New York as I'm sure you
23 are aware but we also have the solutions. It is
24 possible for us to make greener, healthier schools
25 and even save money in the long term with the lower

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1 maintenance costs. My school, I'm very lucky has
2 solar panels but we are still using a gas boiler. In
3 many cases for many schools, we can switch to
4 electric boilers to a more efficient appliances but
5 also to solar and more renewable energy. New York
6 City is only a small part of emissions going into the
7 air from the world but we need to try our best to
8 reduce emissions to be a model to other cities.

9 Electrification can provide additional revenue to
10 schools and it already has in many places that have
11 created more efficient appliances and solar panels.

12 Our schools would have less noise, more control
13 over temperature and more money for supplies. So we
14 need to invest in climate changes mitigation now so
15 we won't face catastrophic impact later. We will
16 lock in emissions otherwise. Thank you so much.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Can you pass on
18 the mic? Thank you.

19 ESTHER NUNEZ: Hello, my name is Esther. My
20 pronouns are she, her and I'm a youth leader with
21 Make the Road New York. Council Member Carr is my
22 representative for where I live and go to school.
23 Thank you Chairwoman of the Education Committee Rita
24

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1 Joseph for giving me the time and space today to
2 talk about the school budget priorities.
3

4 In my schools, there's only two counselors with
5 over 1,000 students. That's almost one counselor for
6 694 students. There's also no social workers and one
7 restorative justice coordinator. From my experience
8 though a sophomore student was facilitating the
9 restorative practice process. So, even then with one
10 restorative justice coordinator, they still need help
11 from other students and by that tactic, not all
12 students can be – not all conflicts can be solved
13 when there's 1,000 students.

14 Even with some of the education budget being
15 restored, it still means that I will only have two
16 counselors, even with the recent announcement of
17 investments for the DOE, important programs and
18 services were not on the list like restorative
19 justice due to centers and a mental health continuum.
20 These are vital resources that open up a lot of
21 opportunities to young people because in my
22 experience, restorative justice helps to resolve
23 conflict at school.

24 It resolved a conflict between me and a peer a
25 couple of months ago. There was a young person who

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1 said untrue rumors about me disliking his partner.
2
3 His partner wanted to fight me because of this and I
4 was mostly frustrated about him starting a problem
5 with a girl that I did not know. A staff member
6 approached me and asked me about the situation where
7 he suggested a restorative circle with the girl to
8 have a conversation and hear each other's side of the
9 story. Restorative Justice was a solution to my
10 situation. Another point that should be made is that
11 the NYPD approved 400 new school cop positions to
12 create a pipeline to recruit youth straight out of
13 high school to be school cops. As of right now,
14 there is no job description of an assistant school
15 cop. While these assistants harass and target
16 students like regular school cops. How will we tell
17 the difference between the assistant and the actual
18 school cop? Why are assistant school cop positions
19 opening up for fresh high school graduates? How can
20 you fund these new positions and can't open up more
21 options and opportunities for graduates that
22 accomplish their goals? Some graduates might want to
23 be a nurse. Internships for these jobs should be
24 opened up to high school graduates. If the city
25 cares about job opportunities for youth, we need more

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1 money invested. We need to place a hiring freeze on
2 school cops and cut funding for the 574 vacant school
3 cop positions. This would give us close to \$90
4 million that we could use to immediately fund school
5 support staff placed in schools whether they have
6 assistants or not do not make students feel safe.
7 What keeps us safe is the support we get from our
8 guidance counselors, social workers and restorative
9 practitioners.
10

11 We need to continue to fund and increase the
12 funding on mental health support in our schools
13 because we deserve the resources and services that
14 will help us into our futures. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Go ahead. Yes,
16 go ahead.

17 AVA HARRIS: Hello, good afternoon elected
18 officials, peers and community members. My name is
19 Ava, my pronouns are she, her and I am a youth leader
20 for Sisters and Brothers United at the Northwest
21 Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition and the Urban
22 Youth Collaborative. I am here today because at the
23 last hearing, I shared my experience with our school
24 metal detectors and how racially profiled I felt by
25 the cops who every morning managed them. I shared

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1 that the police in my school make me feel judged,
2
3 uncomfortable and extremely unwelcomed.

4 I have described in the past my own experience
5 about being made to get scanned two or more times on
6 a multi weekly basis, despite not having anything on
7 me and the alarm not ringing, as well as often times
8 still being pulled to the side for an additional wand
9 check despite the alarm silence.

10 In my last testimony, I asked the City Council to
11 fight for a budget that doesn't criminalize us and to
12 invest in us and our future. Unfortunately, we still
13 see some significant cuts to vital school programs
14 and still see funding for vacant school police
15 positions and no hiring freeze in school cops. The
16 hundreds of millions of dollars the city currently
17 chooses to spend on NYPD school policing division
18 should be redirected away from policing young people
19 and towards hiring supportive school staff and
20 sustaining restorative practices. These are what
21 schools need to support young people to learn, grow,
22 and pursue their dreams.

23 Another thing to note that I and many others
24 found very alarming is that this morning, I walked
25 into my school and was met with brand new metal

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1 detectors, which is shocking because I thought we
2 were in a budget crisis.

3
4 These shiny new metal detectors have only
5 exacerbated the challenges I named last time. When I
6 walked through them this morning, despite having
7 nothing more than the normal things I carry on me
8 every day, the metal detector went off. This hasn't
9 happened previously with other detectors. I saw
10 someone walking next to the metal detector, not
11 through but at least six inches next to it and it
12 still went off.

13 The dysfunctionality of the scanners has now
14 added even more time for people at the scanners
15 because now a larger amount of people walking through
16 or even walking by are ringing with nothing on them.
17 While today was the first day, I already see this
18 being another reason to make students feel like
19 criminals throughout any school activity. It was bad
20 enough that we had to feel like criminals at the
21 beginning of the day. With these new metal detectors
22 that can be moved, we now can be scanned everywhere.
23 I know what these or any metal detectors being
24 implemented in my school, I will always feel the
25 condescending judgement and negative perceptions when

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1 walking anywhere within the premises. It feels like
2 the city continues to take steps back while you all
3 and the Mayor continue to prioritize policing over
4 our futures and we the students have to pay the
5 price.
6

7 Next year our school counselor will be
8 transitioning out of her role and soon making this
9 ratio 12 cops to 0 mental health counselors. With
10 this it feels evident that schools are only
11 prioritizing police and I fear that the students in
12 the school won't have a counselor who can support
13 them.

14 This doesn't and never has felt like the right
15 thing to do, especially because in many cases that I
16 have seen policing as well as metal detectors in
17 schools has been shown to not be effective, also not
18 help students with what they really need and instead
19 make them feel uncomfortable and threatened. I have
20 witnessed many times at a minimum, two times a week
21 where a student isn't in a mentally stable position
22 due to the one counselor in our school often being
23 with another student during those moments, the
24 students is left without support in an environment
25 that adds more stress to them and are unable to

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1 access mental support. This can lead to outbursts as
2 the students aren't able to get what they need to
3 support them. Outbursts that could have been easily
4 prevented with more counselor, conflict mediators and
5 restorative justice practices.
6

7 We call for the City Council to fight for a
8 budget that secures a hiring freeze on school cops.
9 This hiring freeze will not allow for the city to
10 fill for attrition. Cut funding for the vacant
11 school cop positions. Use the money from both these
12 divestments to baseline funding for school support
13 staff that schools like mine desperately need.

14 It's time that the city school council stand for
15 students and fight for our budget that funds our
16 futures and not our criminalization.

17 RAYN JENKINS: Good evening elected officials and
18 all those who join us today. I'm Rayn Jenkins. I am
19 part of Sisters and Brothers United and Northwest
20 Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition and the Youth
21 Urban Collaboration.

22 As a student who has attended public school for
23 all my life, I am here to testify today because I
24 believe students like me know best how our schools
25 could improve. We know the things we need most and

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1 the things that would make us feel supported, safe
2 and supported. As a student, I'm always looking for
3 a brighter future, however, I feel like it's hard to
4 achieve when we don't often have all the things that
5 we need to succeed but we always have all - I'm
6 sorry. But we always have all the things criminal to
7 - all the things to criminalize us while the programs
8 that help us grow and thrive are at risk of
9 disappearing. The school is buying school cops
10 pointless new materials, directors and bullet proof
11 vests at my school. Policing practice impacts on
12 learning on a daily basis. For example, in the
13 morning, I'm often late to school because the long
14 line of metal detectors. Even if I come about 15 to
15 30 minutes early, you could walk in late, needing
16 often missing part of early classes and can impact
17 your grade. As a student, I think there is better
18 investments than police in our school.

19
20 As a sophomore, it is important to me to have
21 more opportunities that help prepare us for the
22 future. I believe resources like extra-curricular
23 activities, job opportunities, and cultural competent
24 counselors will give us more real world experiences
25 and changes to succeed in the long run. The safest

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1 schools have more resources, not the most police.

2
3 It's past time to take action and listen to the
4 youth. Look at Chicago, Oakland and New York needs
5 to step up and lead the way.

6 Today, my peers and I are calling for the Mayor
7 and the city to prioritize our care, not
8 criminalization with the following budget demands:

9 One, secure and freeze hiring of school cops and
10 allow them to fill or not allow to fill for uhm,
11 what's this called. I can't say it.

12 [UNIDENTIFIED]: Attrition.

13 RAYN JENKINS: Attrition. Two, cut funding for
14 the remainder vacant school cop positions. Three,
15 use the funding for both these divestments to protect
16 the expand restorative justice mental health and
17 other staff and practices that would help the
18 students learn and thrive.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Go ahead.

20 SAMUEL RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon elected
21 officials. My name Samuel. I'm in the 10th grade
22 and I am a Youth Leader at Make the Road New York. I
23 go to a community school in Brooklyn. Our school
24 should feel safe, not like prisons. Students like
25 myself, the [INAUDIBLE 9:10:34] investment in our

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1 education not more school cops. That's why I'm here
2 today. Every day I enter my school building, I see
3 cops screening the students while we're going through
4 the metal detectors. Every morning it's chaotic.
5 There's always a long line of students trying to get
6 to class. Sometimes I get late to my class which
7 leads to a phone call to my family saying I was late
8 and at the end being in trouble for no reason.
9

10 A couple weeks ago, my school received new
11 scanners and earlier in the year school cops received
12 new bullet proof vests in which cost \$3 million but
13 our new counselors, our new therapists, restorative
14 justice and nurse. That's what we really need.

15 Cops in our schools don't make us feel safer.
16 They only add to the injustices of policing Black and
17 Brown neighborhoods and schools. We're calling for a
18 freeze on hiring more police officers because their
19 presence make us feel worse when we have done
20 nothing. We want to walk through our school doors
21 feeling like students not like suspects.

22 Hiring more police in school makes it more likely
23 for young people like myself to fulfill the school to
24 prison pipeline. Restorative justice will help us
25 talk things out and find solutions together. There

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1 are 574 vacant cop positions in our schools. That's
2 a whole lot of money just sitting there wasted.
3 Instead of pouring cash into filling those positions
4 let's cut the funding and put it where it matters
5 into our education. Put into programs to help us
6 such as restorative justice support services and
7 staff trained to be in those rolls. No counselors,
8 no nurses, and therapists. We need more support for
9 us when we need it the most. We're not numbers in
10 the system, we are real people too. It seems that
11 our city and Mayor recognize that and give us the
12 help we deserve. The money we are using to fund cops
13 in our schools could be addressing those lack of
14 resources.
15

16 It's time for a change. It's time for Mayor
17 Adams and the City Council to listen up and take
18 action for investing in students futures. Let's make
19 our schools a place where we can learn, grow and
20 thrive without over policing and surveillance of
21 students. We can build a future where students feel
22 safe, supported and empowered. Thank you for your
23 time.

24 ISABEL ARIZA: Good afternoon Chairwoman Rita
25 Joseph and Council Members. My name is Isabel Ariza.

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1 I am a proud student from Brooklyn. I am also a
2 member of Make the Road New York, New York's Youth
3 Power Project. I am here today to talk about our
4 education budget priorities. My school is combined
5 with three schools all in the same building. My
6 counselor has to help over 90 students per week and
7 it makes me mad that there are more school cops than
8 guidance counselors. Now, imagine walking into
9 school every day so early in the morning and going
10 through the metal detectors and school cops screaming
11 and rushing you, making you feel under pressure and
12 not wanted in school. Students like myself should
13 feel wanted and supported.
14

15 It is upsetting to learn that New York City
16 spends over \$200 million on its safety and security
17 program, which funds metal detectors and video
18 surveillance. The city's Mayor spent \$3 million on
19 bullet proof vests for all school police this year,
20 equipment that school cops don't even want to wear.

21 Instead of investing in equipment and school cops
22 that criminalize Black, Latinx, migrant, and LGBTQIA
23 youth, we should invest in our futures and staff that
24 can help students thrive, such as restorative justice
25

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1 coordinators, guidance counselors, nurse and other
2 staff.
3

4 On April 17, 2024, I received an email from my
5 school letting us know we were going to be getting
6 new metal detectors. That truly got me mad and sad
7 at the same time because it really shows what are the
8 city's priorities when it comes to investing in our
9 youth's future. The presence of police officers and
10 in interest of surveillance in our schools has
11 created an unsafe environment. This is not an
12 atmosphere for learning and grow. Having more police
13 in schools makes it more likely for young people like
14 myself to fall into the school to prison pipeline.
15 Youth are calling for three demands: One, have a
16 hiring freeze. We don't need new cops. Two, cut
17 funding for the 574 vacant school cops positions.
18 Three, use that money from the first two demands and
19 put it toward hiring more guidance counselors, nurses
20 and restorative justice. Roles like these are
21 essential to students. We should invest in these
22 positions. We invest in the future of our students.
23 We invest in an environment where students feel safe,
24 supported, and are able to focus on their education.

25

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1
2 This approach promotes healing, accountability,
3 community building and fostering a sense of belonging
4 and security among students and staff. Other cities
5 like Chicago and Oakland have already taken steps to
6 remove police from schools. If they can do it, why
7 can't New York? Thank you. If they can do it, why
8 can't New York? Thank you.

9 ALIN FRIAS: Good afternoon. My name is Alin
10 Frias. My pronouns are she, he and I'm a youth
11 leader with Future of Tomorrow and the Urban Youth
12 Collaborative and I am a sophomore of Franklin K Lane
13 High School.

14 I am here today to demand the City Council to
15 saying no to taking more money out of resources we
16 need and putting it into policing our schools, and
17 instead invest that money in our schools and
18 resources we need and prioritizing students. School
19 policing makes my school feel like an unsafe place
20 filled with stress and constant intimidation and
21 discrimination against students who look like me.
22 Every morning I wake up and I feel discouraged going
23 to school. My mind goes over every item I have in my
24 backpack to make sure I don't have a hair pin
25 misplaced. I feel uneasy just the thought in my mind

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1 that my hair, my Blackness and my mother's background
2 could be a trigger that causes a school cop in a bad
3 mood to disturb my learning process.
4

5 All the time, we see in the news how police
6 regularly arrest, be and even murder Black and Latinx
7 youth who very often are going through mental health
8 processes and just need someone to talk to who are
9 often screaming for help. Recently, I was chosen for
10 a program at my school called Peer Leading. It's a
11 program that lets you talk to your peers who are in
12 conflict and with them think of solutions to
13 deescalate the problem before taken disciplinary
14 actions. Programs like this help deescalate
15 conflicts between students and offer them support
16 based and long term solutions that would help the
17 students come out of these conflicts, thrive and head
18 towards success.

19 I urge you today to say no to the Mayor's budget.
20 To prioritize our mental health and provide us with
21 real resources that will help us thrive. Today, I
22 want to make sure that students voices are heard and
23 that our city invest in programs like peer mediation
24 and restorative justice that we get the support that
25

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1 we need from counselors and social workers instead of
2 school cops.

3
4 I urge you to secure hiring freeze on school cops
5 that does not allow for attrition and use the funding
6 from these divestments to invest in our care and
7 essential resources we need. Let's make school a
8 safe and welcoming environment instead of a place
9 that feels like a prison. A safe school is not one
10 with police and surveillance but one with resources.
11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

13 NUHA HOTTER: Hello, I'm speaking on behalf of
14 Nuha Hotter who was here but had to leave earlier.
15 Good afternoon everyone. My name is Nuha Hotter, my
16 pronouns are she, her. I am a Youth Leader at
17 Bushwick Campus, that means that I and seven other
18 students support our peers not only through the
19 college process but also in becoming more involved
20 with our community. My students success center has
21 become a safe space to talk about real world
22 conflicts and issues knowing that we will be heard
23 and seen. Our students success center is always full
24 with students who come to decompress at lunch or get
25 help with scholarship applications. I have seen

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1 proof that the SSC works because one of my teachers
2 now was a student at Bushwick Campus who worked as a
3 college advisor while in high school for the students
4 success center. And now, she teaches a class on
5 career readiness that I am in. I can see that the
6 SSC gave her a space for a passion of assisting
7 others and answering the questions of what happens
8 after high school. She works with the SSC in the
9 creation of her own class and I have found it to be
10 so helpful by being a point person for students in my
11 school who need advice and it's always so cool to be
12 taught by someone who went through what I am
13 experiencing right now.

14
15 As a YL Youth Leader, I have learned to give
16 career advice, counseling, social, emotional
17 counseling advocacy and when don't know something, I
18 know who in the SSC to go to. I have taken the
19 resources that I have learned at my SSC and I have
20 shared scholarship opportunities, CUNY, SUNY events
21 and common insight with my friend who goes to high
22 school in Manhattan. She doesn't have an SSC in her
23 school and I wasn't aware of how lucky I was to have
24 one, a designated space in my school that is
25 dedicated to my success.

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1 If the SSC was not here today, I would not have
2 been as involved in my community as I am now.

3 Without the SSC, I would have been lost in my college
4 process and would have probably not cared as much.

5 Now I am a senior who has her post-secondary plan
6 all figured out and I was upset when I heard that the
7 city spent \$3 million on bullet proof vest for school
8 police this year, when that money could have gone to
9 supporting SSC's and students and figuring out their
10 future and following their dreams. This choice the
11 city made makes me feel like a criminal rather than a
12 student because of the environment that the city
13 enforces and funds is scary and intimidating. I
14 believe that the only reason police need bullet proof
15 vest is due to the city's lack of funding to schools
16 and programs. If the city properly funded schools,
17 then there would not be any need for extra police
18 protection. Treat the students you want to be
19 treated because after all, students are still humans.

20 In conclusion, student success centers are
21 important to our growth and success. They improve
22 grades and prepare us for college and careers and
23 change our lives for the better. Please invest in
24 our futures and fund SSC's. Thank you.
25

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CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

PAMELA VASQUEZ: I am also reading a testimony on behalf of someone else, Pamela Vasquez, who had to leave early. Good afternoon Chair Joseph and members of the City Council. My name is Pamela Vasquez. I work at Make the Road New York and I'm the College Counselor at our schools student success center. I am before you today as a proud advocate for funding students success centers across our city. These centers, like the one at the Bushwick Campus are more than just spaces. They're beacons of hope and opportunities for students who have been told they're not enough or aren't trying hard enough.

Let me share the story Lewis. A remarkable young man who migrated from the Dominican Republic in 2018. Starting school at BSSJ, Lewis became a beacon of inspiration as a youth leader at the student success center. Despite facing challenges, he pursued his dreams steadfast, utilizing SSC services for his post-secondary plans. Today, Lewis stands on the brink of obtaining his PHD in neuroscience at Brown University, a testament to the transformative power of student success centers. And then there's my journey. As a Dominican immigrant, I discovered the

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1 Bushwick Campus SSC during my senior year of high
2 school. With their unwavering support, I navigated
3 the daunting college and financial aid application
4 process, setting me on the path to pursuing my
5 dreams. From seeking to become a police officer, to
6 pursuing the degree in international criminal
7 justice. I owe much of my success to the guidance
8 and opportunities provided by the SSC. The impact of
9 the student success center extends far beyond
10 individual stories. Just this past fall, Bushwick
11 Campus SSC played a pivotal role in helping 90
12 percent of seniors complete their college
13 applications and provided essential support during
14 the chaotic FAFSA rollout. With over 50 workshop and
15 events including college fairs and resume preparation
16 sessions, the SSC is not just a resource. It's a
17 lifeline for our community.

19 In closing, I implore you to recognize the vital
20 role that student success centers plan in shaping the
21 futures of our youth. They are not merely facilities
22 but sanctuaries of empowerment and possibility. By
23 investing in these centers, we invest in the promise
24 of a brighter tomorrow for generations to come. Let
25 us ensure that every student has access to the

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1 support and guidance they need to thrive
2 academically, professionally and personally. Thank
3 you.
4

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Thank you all
6 very much for testifying. Okay, next panel, Crystal
7 Alcock, Aarmeen Khan, Umida Ibagimova, Safowana
8 Islam, Simrin Begum, Faith Jones, Liz Aceles.

9 [09:26:22] - [09:26:27] I can't read it. Oh, Liz
10 Aceles, hey. Yeah, we got to invest in handwriting
11 in the schools.

12 [09:26:35] - [09:27:12] Okay, you want to start?

13 LIZ ACELES: Thank you Chair Brannan and Chair
14 Joseph. My name is Liz Aceles, I'm the Executive
15 Director of Community Food Advocates and I'm here to
16 speak on behalf of Community Food Advocates and the
17 Lunch for Learning coalition. I am submitting
18 written testimony, so I'm going to keep this very
19 brief because I know you're deeply familiar with this
20 topic. We at an amazing moment in school meals
21 program with Chancellor Banks including full funding
22 for cafeteria enhancement in his five year capital
23 plan for all the remaining high schools and middle
24 schools. This will mean a warm, welcoming student
25

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1 center cafeterias for every high school and middle
2 school student in New York City.

3
4 This has been a real team effort with our Lunch
5 for Learning Coalition partners, Youth Food
6 Advocates, the Mayor, Chancellor, and of course the
7 City Council and the Office of Food and Nutrition
8 Services. I want to take this moment to acknowledge
9 this and the Council's special role in championing
10 school meals and cafeteria redesign. I just want to
11 thank you both and the Speaker for supporting this
12 and the Council's response to the Preliminary Budget
13 and we look forward to this being finalized in the
14 June budget and experiencing the rollout and
15 transformation of all high school and middle school
16 cafeterias in New York City.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

18 UMIDA IBAGIMOVA: Good afternoon Chair Brannan,
19 Chair Joseph and distinguished members of the City
20 Council. First of all, I would like to thank you all
21 for allowing us the opportunity to testify. My name
22 is Umida and I'm a student at FTR High School and a
23 Youth Food Advocate for about a year now. Today, I
24 stand before you not only as a representative of my
25 school but as a young advocate passionate about

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1
2 modernizing our school environment and integrating
3 sustainable into every facet of our education system.

4 The proposed \$150 million investment for
5 cafeteria enhancement as outlined in the Chancellors
6 five year capital plan and supported by this Council
7 in response for the Fiscal 2025 preliminary budget is
8 a groundbreaking step towards modernizing the
9 facilities that play a critical role in our daily
10 school life. This commitment is crucial for schools
11 like mine where the cafeteria not only serves as a
12 place for meals but also a community help for
13 interaction and engagement among students.

14 Since the implementation of cafeteria upgrades in
15 some schools, we have observed a significant
16 improvement in student participation during lunch.
17 These enhancements have transformed our cafeterias
18 into welcoming and efficient spaces, encouraging more
19 students to utilize the facilities and importantly to
20 enjoy health care school meals. The ripple effects
21 are evident. Better nutrition leads to better
22 student engagement and academic performance. The
23 \$150 million allocation requested to complete
24 cafeteria enhancements in all New York City middle
25 and high schools will modernize these spaces.

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1 We ask that you begin to look ahead with us to
2 ensure our cafeterias are sustainable. This approach
3 will improve the functionality of these spaces and
4 instill a lifelong respect and responsibility for our
5 environment among students. Together, let's build a
6 future where every student not only thrives but also
7 respects and protects the world we all share. Thank
8 you for your time and consideration.
9

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

11 AARMEEN KHAN: Hello, good afternoon Chair
12 Brannan and Chair Joseph and City Council members.
13 My name is Aarmeen Khan and I am a junior currently
14 at the Brooklyn Latin School and I have been a Youth
15 Advocate for the past two years for school lunch.
16 Today, I come in support of the proposed \$150 million
17 cafeteria – for cafeteria redesigns in the
18 Chancellors five year capital plan and this Council's
19 response to the Fiscal 2025 Preliminary Budget.

20 While I may be the sole representative of my
21 school here, I assure you that I carry with me the
22 unwavering support of my entire campuses student body
23 compromised of a rate of 100 students.

24 Accessing school food is difficult for many
25 students due to limited options and scheduling

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1
2 issues. At Brooklyn Latin, since the enhanced
3 cafeteria update, more students have come in and out
4 of the cafeteria to get lunch. I remember
5 specifically walking into the cafeteria when it
6 reopened for the first time and my friends were so
7 shocked by the results.

8 As it's been an entire year of this update, the
9 cafeteria hasn't been seeing a consistent increase in
10 students taking and eating lunch. The atmosphere and
11 the lunch has become more enjoyable and positive,
12 making the student feel like they have a space to
13 relax and belong in. With your support for these
14 changes, students like me can feel affirmed and
15 valued and know that we are the focus of why we are
16 all here today.

17 We appreciate your support in helping bring this
18 big change. The Chancellor's Capital Plan and this
19 Council's support and investment in cafeteria
20 redesigns represent more than just a financial
21 allocation. IT symbolizes a commitment to the
22 wellbeing and success of every student. You affirm
23 our value as students and prioritize our needs at the
24 forefront of decision making. Your continued support
25 is indispensable in realizing our vision for a school

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1 environment that fosters growth, inclusivity, and
2 opportunity for all. As we sit on the cusp of
3 transformative change, we express our deepest
4 gratitude for your consideration of this vital issue.
5

6 We hope that you will continue championing our
7 cause in allocating resources towards initiatives
8 that will empower and uplift students across the
9 city. Together we can create a future where every
10 student thrives. Thank you for your time.

11 FAITH JONES: Good evening members of the NYC
12 Council. My name is Faith Jones and I'm a junior at
13 Brooklyn Technical High School located in District
14 13. I've been a youth advocate for three years and I
15 started in the summer before my freshman year at high
16 school. When I started in the summer of 2021,
17 approximately 88 middle and high schools had enhanced
18 cafeterias that were serving around 55,000 students.
19 This translates to roughly a majority of NYC
20 students. Missing out on the academic benefits such
21 as better attendance rates and better test scores as
22 stated by the CDC. Due to the circumstances were
23 outdated cafeterias with inefficient lunch lines,
24 lack of seating and lack of variety deterred students
25 from eating school meals. Furthermore, there are

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1 added health implications of inaccessible cafeterias
2 that result and students are more likely to have in
3 the adequacies, especially for low income students to
4 suffer a worsened diet quality and in the future
5 discourage healthier food selection in their daily
6 lives.
7

8 However, in May 2024, almost three years later,
9 with the greatly appreciated funding from the City
10 Council, \$125 million in the last two years, we have
11 secured the funding for 250 schools to get an
12 enhanced cafeteria. Already in these past few years,
13 we are able to see the positive changes in school
14 environment. As Hillcrest students in Queens speak
15 out on the reduction of the 20 minutes long cafeteria
16 line, and the newfound ability to concentrate in
17 class with a new variety of lunches. Moreover, at
18 Midwood and Brooklyn, a student shared their
19 experience of comfort in the intimate cafeteria
20 environment and how it encouraged her to utilize the
21 lunchroom more often and to eat the school lunch.

22 While we have made many powerful changes in the
23 current cafeteria system, there are about 250 schools
24 are struggling with the previous mentioned poor
25 experience of inadequate cafeterias that have led to

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1
2 problem concerning student wellbeing and academic
3 performance in school. This is why I appreciate your
4 continued support as City Council Members to secure
5 \$150 million in the Fiscal Year of 2025 to fund the
6 rest of the middle and high schools in the NYC's
7 cafeteria enhancement. That is the only equitable
8 solution.

9 Also, lastly I would like to add, that especially
10 with the fast approaching end to my high school
11 career as a junior, I hope to see a day in the near
12 future where my peers in the largest district in the
13 country are all able to receive a cafeteria fit for
14 their needs.

15 One that provides some of the safe and nurturing
16 environment to thrive in the future because these
17 cafeterias will hold the future generations of
18 doctors, politicians and advocates. Ultimately, I
19 hope that you can at least give them the proper food
20 and safe spaces throughout their journey and
21 collaborate with others as well as gain their needed
22 nutrients. Thank you for your time.

23 CRYSTAL ALCOCK: Good afternoon Chair Brannan,
24 Chair Joseph and City Council members. My name is
25 Crystal Alcock and I'm a sophomore at the Bronx High

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1 Schools of Science and a Youth Food Advocate. I come
2 before you today to support the \$150 million for
3 enhanced cafeterias including Chancellor Bank's five
4 year proposed capital plan and the City Council's
5 response to the Fiscal 2025 Preliminary budget.
6

7 Like most students in the New York City Public
8 Schools, I don't have the most positive relationship
9 with school food. In fact, for the majority of my 11
10 years as a student in the system, I often refused to
11 eat school lunch. I would go without eating due to
12 the stigma associated with school food. The school
13 menu not having options I liked and the unwelcoming
14 environment at the cafeteria. This would of course
15 negatively impact my concentration and attitude in
16 school. However, since my school received the part
17 of the cafeteria enhancement, my relationship with
18 the school food has significantly improved.

19 Because of this initiative, I can choose the
20 school lunch options that I enjoy and I eat school
21 lunch frequently. I no longer have to stand in the
22 lunch line for more than half the period giving me
23 more time to destress from school and spend time with
24 my friends. As a student athlete balancing other
25 extra curriculums after school, this makes all the

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1 difference and sustains me until I get home. The
2 cafeteria enhancement has made a positive difference
3 in my life and for thousands of other students lives
4 as well. I've seen people who refused to eat school
5 lunch at all eagerly join the lunch line with a smile
6 on their face because of this experience.
7

8 Chair Brannan, Chair Joseph and City Council
9 members, \$150 million for enhanced cafeterias in the
10 capital plan and the City Council's response to the
11 preliminary budget is an absolute necessity. With
12 your support, all New York City's middle and high
13 school students include students who come from low
14 income homes and are struggling to get by, and
15 student athletes like me, who were put off by the
16 cafeteria before will have access to nutritious meals
17 of their choice and engaging cafeteria that will help
18 them get through the day. Thank you for your
19 continued support and for paving the way for a better
20 tomorrow for the current and future generations of
21 students.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Just a quick
24 question. When your cafeteria was upgraded and meal
25

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1 participation increased, were there an instance where
2 food was running out or not available?
3

4 CRYSTAL ALCOCK: In some cases, there were some
5 instances and I know in other schools like across New
6 York City, that is often like a common problem.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay.

8 FAITH JONES: Uhm for my school, we also have
9 that problem. It's kind of more common than you
10 would think because there's a lot of options
11 available but they all run out and especially because
12 in our school we have like a specific amount of time
13 where we can go to grab lunch in the beginning of the
14 period.

15 So, whenever like all the options run out, then
16 they start closing it and they don't like, they're
17 not actively like refilling the options because
18 they've just run out for the day and also with like,
19 how many students are participating in that school
20 for that specific period, it's really dependent on
21 that. So, it's like not viable in that moment for
22 them. Considering how they know like the activity
23 and like the participation as well.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How many of them have you
25 redone across the city?

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1
2 LIZ ACELES: There are roughly about 200 done, a
3 little bit more. They are constantly, OFNS has
4 really accelerated since the last two years. It's
5 been a significant investment so the process is
6 really expedited, so it's over 200 and then there's
7 about 250 or so in the balance. So, the funding
8 would cover all other schools.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And I hear elementary
10 schools are also asking for them. I think it would
11 be good for elementary schools.

12 LIZ ACELES: Yeah, we're definitely looking at
13 going forward and talking with OFNS about a model
14 that's appropriate for elementary school students.
15 So, starting that experience in a positive way young.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Chair Brannan
17 and I, we were commenting on your T-shirts.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Double x, what are we
19 doing? Come on guys.

20 LIZ ACELES: We'll get you some.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Alright. Thank you guys.
22 It's really an impressive program and it's really
23 opened our eyes of what a cafeteria should look like
24 but like Chair Joseph said, if we're redoing these
25 cafeterias now you also have to stock them. More

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1
2 people are eating, which is the point, you can't be
3 running out of food, so that's something we got fix.

4 AARMEEN KHAN: That's our new direction.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Ahh, we see you're on a
6 mission, alright.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thanks guys.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

9 PANEL: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, next panel, Randy
11 Levine, Maggie Moroff, Jackie Okin Barney, Lori
12 Podvesker, Maggie Sanchez, Mark Gonzales, Susie
13 Gumes. [09:39:42] - [09:40:09]. You want to start
14 from my right?

15 RANDY LEVINE: Thank you for the opportunity to
16 speak with you. My name is Randy Levine, I'm Policy
17 Director of Advocates for Children of New York. We
18 appreciate that the Executive Budget includes around
19 \$600 million for critical education programs that
20 were at risk of drastic cuts or elimination due to
21 the expiration of federal stimulus funds. These
22 initiatives benefits hundreds of thousands of
23 students every year and their loss would have been
24 devastating. Yet a number of important education
25 programs included as priorities in the City Councils

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1
2 response to the preliminary budget remain on the
3 budget chopping block.

4 With respect to early childhood education, we
5 urge you to ensure that the final budget rejects the
6 \$170 million proposed cut to 3K and PreK. The final
7 budget must also include sufficient funding to meet
8 the city's legal obligation to provide preschool
9 special education classes and services to all
10 children who need them. These services are not
11 optional but currently more than 700 children are
12 waiting for a seat in a preschool special education
13 class and thousands of preschoolers are waiting for
14 their mandated services. And DOE testified today
15 that they requested \$125 million from OMB but
16 received only \$25 million in the budget.

17 For K-12 education, we urge you to ensure that
18 funding is restored and baselined for restorative
19 justice practices to reduce the use of suspensions,
20 address students underlying needs and keep them in
21 school. The mental health continuum to help students
22 with mental health needs access the mental health
23 care they need.

24 The Mayor highlighted this model in a press
25 releasee last month before it's funding was left out

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1 of a budget, just one week later. Immigrant family
2 communications and outreach to help immigrant
3 families get needed school related information,
4 community schools to provide wraparound support to
5 students and student success centers while the
6 funding for these programs is set to expire in June,
7 the needs are not going away. The city must also
8 address the long-standing inaccessibility of school
9 buildings.
10

11 Our written testimony has more information about
12 each of these priorities. Thank you for the
13 opportunity to speak with you and for the work you
14 have already done to help ensure the continuation of
15 important education programs funded with student to
16 expire federal funds.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

18 MAGGIE MOROFF: Thank you for your patience and
19 the chance to speak briefly. My name is Maggie
20 Moroff and I'm the Coordinator of the ARISE
21 Coalition. Our members have been working together
22 for 16 years now to address systemic concerns
23 effecting the city's more than 200,000 students with
24 disabilities. I also work as the senior special
25

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1 education policy coordinator at AFC. I'm here today
2 on behalf of ARISE.
3

4 The vast majority of the city's public school
5 buildings have historically been inaccessible to
6 individuals with physical accessibility needs.

7 Students with accessibility needs have far too
8 frequently been excluded from the schools, their
9 siblings and their friends attend and have had to
10 travel sometimes significant distances to school.

11 Parents and other family members with physical
12 disabilities have had trouble joining PTA meetings
13 and attending school performances and community
14 meetings. They've been unable to visit their
15 students classes for family days and parent teachers
16 conferences. Staff with accessibility needs are
17 limited as well. That's the case, despite the
18 Americans with Disabilities Act having been enacted
19 over 30 years ago. Three decades is a long time to
20 wait for change.

21 Ahead of the development at the last capital
22 plan, when only 18 percent of public school buildings
23 here were fully accessible, members of the community
24 advocated for improvements and with the help of the
25 City Council, the 2020 to 2024 capital plan included

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1 \$750 million to make schools more accessible. And
2
3 with that, the city will have moved to 31 percent
4 full accessibility in public school buildings at the
5 end of the current five year plan. That's progress
6 that we should be excited about but it still leaves
7 around two thirds of school buildings less than fully
8 accessible.

9 ARISE members are calling for \$1.25 billion in
10 the 2025 to 2029 capital plan to improve school
11 accessibility, an increase of \$450 million from the
12 current proposal. With inflation, the current
13 proposal actually represents less of a commitment
14 than that of the last plan. An investment of \$1.25
15 billion over these next five years could and should
16 bring our schools to at least 50 percent full
17 accessibility. We appreciate that the Council's
18 response to the Preliminary Budget included the need
19 to increase funding beyond the proposed \$800 million
20 to make schools more accessible. And we are due to
21 ensure that the final budget includes \$1.25 billion
22 over the next five years to improve school
23 accessibility. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.
25

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1
2 JACKIE OKIN BARNEY: Good evening. Thank you so
3 much for staying here so late. [09:45:19] with you
4 after us. My name is Jaclyn Okin Barney, I here
5 Parents for Inclusive Education. We are an
6 organization that advocate for inclusion in the
7 city's school system. I'm here and many others to
8 talk to about the accessibility of our city schools
9 and to urge you to support a capital plan that makes
10 a real difference in the accessibility of our
11 schools.

12 All students deserve access to all our schools
13 but as you just heard, only 34 percent of our schools
14 are compliant with the ADA. That means many students
15 with disabilities do not have the same choice as all
16 other students in this city and that is not equal and
17 that is not fair.

18 In addition, the schools that are partially
19 accessible, are not totally accessible in the various
20 areas within the building, a student with disability
21 cannot access. Again, I'm here to ask you to adopt a
22 capital plan that makes even more of a difference in
23 the accessibility of our schools. Like Maggie said,
24 30 years is a long time to wait for accessible
25 schools. It really is time to give an equal

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1 opportunity to all our students as we are seeing them
2 pride themselves on school choice but with the
3 inaccessibility of buildings, so many students don't
4 have the choice that their peers have. Thank you so
5 much.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

8 SUSIE GOMES: Thank you for a long day.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: You got to pull the mic
10 over to you.

11 SUSIE GOMES: Thank you for a long day and for
12 your guidance and patience today. My name is Susie
13 Gomes and I'm the Chair of the City Affairs Committee
14 at the League of Women Voters. I am here today to
15 share with you from a seasoned early childhood
16 educator on the importance of early childhood
17 education for all children.

18 She couldn't be here today at the hearing because
19 the date had been changed and she had a class today.
20 Although given the time, she might have been able to
21 be here. So, having said that, I am going to share
22 her notes with pride and speak on her behalf.

23 These are her notes. My name is Kira Hederman
24 and I have over 25 years of early childhood
25 experience in New York City. As a classroom teacher

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1 with two to five year olds, as an Administrator, as
2 an SCIT, where I worked with special needs preschool
3 children in public and private schools and most
4 recently, I am the founder of a downtown [INAUDIBLE
5 09:48:53]. A process art and sensory play studio for
6 one to four year olds in the seaport. I was asked to
7 speak to you today by Susie Gomes, whose child I had
8 the pleasure of teaching when he was four years old.
9 So, this goes back awhile.

11 There was a fancy word in brain development
12 called neuroplasticity. Basically, neuroplasticity
13 is the brains ability to make connections and grow.
14 It's how we learn new things. The word always makes
15 me think of plasticine, you know that putty like clay
16 that you can shape and mold. It's the same idea.

17 We all have neuroplasticity going on right now.
18 However, neuroplasticity is the strongest in the
19 early childhood years, specifically birth to age
20 five. These are the crucial years for brain
21 development and I'm always amazed each year as I
22 watch this development and grow and unfold. It is
23 here in these early childhood years that the
24 foundation for lifelong learning, development and
25 success is laid. Study after study has shown that

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1 children who receive a high quality early education
2 are more likely to succeed in life. High quality
3 early programs do the following: Place a focus on a
4 whole child development of social, emotional,
5 cognitive and physical, value of play based
6 environment and allow a brain development in this
7 play exploration. Provide opportunities for children
8 to express themselves through open ended exploration.
9 Partner with families and provide ongoing teacher
10 professional development. I stand here today to
11 advocate for children who are not able to advocate
12 for themselves. We must ensure that every young
13 child in New York City has access to high quality
14 early education programs that set them up for success
15 in the future. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

18 MAGGIE SANCHEZ: Thank you Chair Brannan. Thank
19 you Chair Joseph. My name is Maggie Sanchez. I'm
20 the Public Advocate Appointee and the Recording
21 Secretary on the Citywide Council on Special
22 Education. I'm speaking on behalf of our Council.

23 Our Council has sent out surveys to the community
24 and we've provided those results to the DOE. In our
25 November 2023 related services survey, a vast number

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1 of students were not receiving all of their related
2 services mandates, due to lack of staff. We continue
3 to request of the DOE abide by students related
4 services mandates as per their IEP required by law.
5 There is still a \$25 million gap in preschool special
6 education. Current investments are insufficient due
7 to the ongoing of shortage of seats and legally
8 required preschool special education classes.
9

10 Some programs critical to students with
11 disability like the Seed and the Summer Rising
12 Programs received only a one year reprieve. These
13 are programs that should be baselined in the final
14 budget. Additionally, the DOE has had a history of
15 paying para professionals, teaching assistants, among
16 other providers very late. Para professionals are
17 among the lowest paid employees in the DOE. Para
18 Professionals making it possible for children with
19 disabilities to access programs like Summer Rising.
20 Therefore the DOE must be more transparent with a
21 breakdown of payments to these providers and make it
22 available to the public.

23 Furthermore, according to an NYC Comptrollers
24 report on the investigation of the implementation of
25 the 60-day rule for asylum seeker families, the city

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1 has implemented a 60 day rule in a haphazard manner
2 without adequate policies or training in place. This
3 policy alone has severely impacted newly arrived
4 families with students with disabilities. According
5 to this report, city policies specifically provide
6 that returning families with children in kindergarten
7 through sixth grade may not be placed in DHS sites.
8 The city offered no rationale for this policy.
9

10 Multilingual special education students are
11 especially subject to more challenges and endless
12 violations to their education from the 60 day rule
13 policy. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

15 MARK GONZALES: Good evening Chair Brannan. Good
16 evening Chair Joseph. Thank you. My name is Mark
17 Gonzales, I'm Co-President of the Citywide Council on
18 Special Education. I am speaking on behalf of our
19 Council Members and the more than 200,000 students
20 with disabilities that we serve.

21 The Mayor talked about getting stuff done but
22 based on the Executive Budget, he doesn't know how to
23 get things done and he needs you, the City Council to
24 get things moving and to educate him. The mayor
25 promised that there would be a seat for every special

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1 education student eligible for preschool special
2 education, yet another year he has gone by and he has
3 failed to get the job done and it continues to break
4 federal law. We heard in testimony today that we
5 need at least another \$50 million, \$25 in the
6 Executive Budget and another \$25 million to maintain
7 the current levels and to provide seats for the more
8 than 700 students that are not receiving federally
9 mandated classes and services as required by federal
10 law.
11

12 Thank you for discussing pay parity earlier for
13 special education preschool teachers. Let's keep in
14 mind though that those same students that go to the
15 improved special education elementary, middle or high
16 school have teachers that don't currently receive pay
17 parity. There is a need to continue to expand pay
18 parity for the 853 school teachers as well.

19 The Mayor promised that he would screen all
20 students for dyslexia but he has failed on that and
21 he has failed to get stuff done. The Mayor promised
22 big changes for dyslexia programs and promised to
23 have dyslexia schools in every borough but again, the
24 Mayor has failed to get stuff done. The Mayor has
25 cut back on Summer Rising this year. Students with

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1 extended school year on their IEPs in middle school
2 will not have only four days of classes instead of
3 five. IBO estimates we need additional \$80 million
4 in funding to cover Summer Rising.
5

6 The Mayor's DOE has recently leased a school that
7 doesn't comply with ADA law. We heard about it in
8 testimony earlier. The school actually would have a
9 rating of one on accessibility, rating of one to ten
10 and they are planning to move students with autism
11 spectrum in the NESS program into this fully
12 inaccessible school. It will actually have fire
13 escapes in the classroom, endangering students and
14 putting our kids in harms way. The Mayor's PEG cut
15 funding for D75, the students who need it the most.

16 The Mayor has failed again to get stuff done.
17 The Mayor is also planning on cutting about 3,000
18 teachers over the next two years with his expected
19 staffing levels. Putting our city at risk for not
20 complying with the class size law. Again, the Mayor
21 has failed to get stuff done. The Mayor is all talk
22 but when it comes to really getting stuff done, the
23 only thing he's done is talk and fail. The Mayor has
24 flunked. We need you, the City Council to educate
25

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1 the Mayor and support our students and families.

2 Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Today, uhm, this if for
5 Randy. New York City Public Schools testified that
6 the current federal funding for restorative justice
7 is \$8 million. We know that with some of the other
8 programs funded in the executive budget that we're
9 replacing federal dollars. The Admin put in the
10 programs actual pass expense rather than the prior
11 budget. What do you think the case is here with the
12 funding for restorative justice? He said we couldn't
13 pick one or the other when I asked them if Project
14 Pivot was a successor.

15 RANDY LEVINE: Please let me know if I'm
16 misunderstanding the question but there is no doubt
17 that we need to ensure that the final budget includes
18 funding to continue restorative justice practices
19 that have been funded with the student to expire
20 federal stimulus funds. As the DOE noted today, the
21 federal funding is the majority of funding going to
22 restorative justice practices in New York City and at
23 Advocates for Children, we hear frequently from
24 students and parents who are facing school
25

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1 suspensions and we know that restorative justice can
2 be an effective way to help students repair their
3 relationships and keep students in school instead of
4 resorting to exclusionary discipline practices.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSPEH: And we talked about the
7 impacts of students, Black and Brown students are
8 more impacted by those suspensions as well. We
9 talked about preschool special education today and
10 uhm, there's also that \$27 million just being moved
11 between budget. We didn't hear where it's going to
12 land but they also said that they had made a special
13 need, a new needs because I had asked if there was
14 any new needs to OMB. They said it was \$125 million
15 but I don't see it anywhere.

16 We've been calling for school accessibility from
17 the day I walked into this building.

18 JACKIE OKIN BARNEY: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: It's important because all
20 students have to leave their communities in order to
21 access schools with services that meet their needs.
22 So, we hear you loud and clear and I believe it was
23 in our budget response as well.

24 JACKIE OKIN BARNEY: Thank you.
25

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1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSPEH: The funding was way too low
3 for accessibility for our students, so we hear you
4 and see you. Thank you.

5 JACKIE OKIN BARNEY: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much.
7 Okay, next panel Kesi Gordon, Claire Silven, Micah
8 Dicker, Natasha Quiroga, Amin Elkherly. I'm sorry.
9 Razon Al-Abed Allat, Khedam Al-asmav. [09:59:30] -
10 [09:59:45]. Okay, you want to start off from my
11 left?

12 NATASHA QUIROGA: Good evening and thank you
13 Chairs Brannan, Joseph, and members of the Finance
14 and Education Committees for the opportunity to speak
15 today. My name is Natasha Quiroga, I am Director of
16 Education Policy and Inside Schools at the new School
17 Center for New York Affairs. For 20 years, Inside
18 Schools has served as a vital resource for millions
19 of families throughout their children's public-school
20 experience by serving as the one stop shop where
21 families can better understand New York City Public
22 Schools.

23 Since last summer, Inside Schools has been
24 helping over 600 newly arrived migrant families
25 navigate the New York City public school system

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1 through workshops and shelter and office hours at
2 community-based organizations. We are accompanying
3 West Africans 17 to 21 year olds to family welcome
4 centers to help them enroll and have called schools
5 on their behalf and not a single one was given the
6 option to enroll in an EL transfer school. They were
7 told that transfer schools were full this school year
8 and summer or the student is too old or doesn't have
9 enough credits so that they should enroll in a
10 pathways to graduation program despite their desire
11 to attend high school. After going through this
12 process, one 17 year old said, I am very discouraged.
13 I want to learn but the schools don't want me.

14 Those who are referred to pathways to graduation
15 programs find out that these programs are also full.
16 We took a group of students to a Bronx referral
17 center and they were all placed on a waitlist of over
18 200 people for an ESL class. Not a GED class, since
19 GED classes are only available in English or Spanish.
20

21 After two months of waiting while not in school,
22 they were finally able to register for a District 79
23 ESL program. Our immigrant families struggle to
24 navigate programs for older youth and programs for
25 the youngest learners because the processes are not

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1 user friendly and there isn't enough outreach. Even
2 of 3K seats wont be cut further next year, it doesn't
3 do any good if families don't know the program
4 exists, how to apply for a seat, how to navigate my
5 schools to accept an offer or get into a wait list.
6 If a parent calls on my schools helpline, they hear
7 two minutes of an English message before hearing a
8 prompt for only Spanish and Mandarin. The City
9 Council must ensure DOE has sufficient funding to
10 support our most vulnerable students and fund new
11 English letter programs at six transfer high schools.
12 Professional development to ten high schools to build
13 their capacity to serve immigrant youth and increase
14 outreach to immigrant families, especially to limited
15 English proficient and digitally disconnected
16 families through funding organizations with the
17 expertise to support these efforts.

18
19 All students, including immigrant students
20 deserve good schools. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

22 MICAH DICKER: Good evening. Thank you Chairs
23 Brannan, Joseph and members of the Finance and
24 Education Committees for holding this hearing and
25 allowing us testify. My name is Micah Dicker and I'm

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1 an outreach worker and communication specialist at
2 CIANA. The Center for the Integration Advancement of
3 New Americans. A community based organization in
4 Astoria Queens, a member of the New York Immigration
5 Coalition and its education collaborative.
6

7 Through my work, I am regularly exposed to the
8 needs of newly arrived migrant youth and the support
9 they are lacking. We ask that the city invest
10 \$800,000 to increase the number of high schools
11 prepared to teach and support recently arrived asylum
12 seeker and immigrant youth through flexible classes,
13 internship opportunities, and mental health services.

14 Schools such as Lower East Side Preparatory High
15 School, one of the original ELL schools, transfer
16 schools offer the education that all newly arrived
17 migrant youth need. Intensive English as the new
18 language classes, flexible class schedules,
19 internships, and learn to work programs that enable
20 students to work without prematurely ending their
21 education.

22 Prior to the current influx of asylum seekers,
23 CIANA hosted interns from lower east side prep and
24 not only support CIANA through their service but
25 supported their fellow immigrant community members

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1 and began building their own careers and futures. In
2 spite of the challenges that they did face, these
3 particular interns had English proficiency. They had
4 the time and social emotional ability to complete
5 their semester at CIANA.
6

7 I'm not sure if we can say the same for all the
8 newly arrived youth who often have very little to no
9 English proficiency, who don't have stable housing,
10 very little to no money, and have endured enormous
11 trauma. Many of them might benefit from the same
12 programs and services that are offered at schools
13 like Lower East Side Prep, not only the connections
14 with jobs and internships but potential mental health
15 support and language accessibility.

16 The problem is that many of these schools are
17 often at capacity. Leaving many youth without a plan
18 on how to continue their education. Recent data
19 shows that English Language Learners have the highest
20 dropout rate of all students at 17 percent compared
21 to their non ELL peers at 5.4 percent. I have
22 personally interacted with newly arrived teenagers
23 who contemplate giving up on school entirely due to
24 inconsistent support from schools and difficulty
25 navigating the system. Investing in ELL transfer

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1 schools will reverse these discouraging numbers and
2 trends.

3
4 With the right support, ELLs are 30 percent more
5 likely to graduate high school. We join the New York
6 Immigration Coalition in urging the City Council to
7 invest \$300,000 for new English language learner
8 programs at six ELL transfer high schools and
9 \$500,000 towards comprehensive educator development
10 at ten high schools to build their capacity in
11 supporting older newcomer ELLs. Immigrant students
12 deserve good schools. Thank you for the opportunity
13 to testify today.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

15 CLAIRE SILVEN: Hello? Hi. Thank you very much
16 Chairman Brannan uhm and the members of the Council
17 that are still persisting and staying here with us as
18 we have persisted in our efforts to share with you
19 our experiences. My name is Claire Silven. I am the
20 Founder and Senior Strategic Advisor at
21 Internationals Network for Public Schools.
22 Internationals Network for Public Schools is an
23 organization that was founded in 2004 on the basis of
24 the work done for original schools. 11 schools were
25 added to that over the years in partnership with the

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1
2 DOE and we now have 15 district high schools in New
3 York City and one middle school, which serves almost
4 6,000 newcomer MLL ELLs in New York City.

5 On average within our schools, which are not
6 considered transfer high schools, except for one, 57
7 percent of the students in our schools are over aged
8 and under credited. As we work with immigrant
9 advocates and Internationals Network for Public
10 Schools while a partner with the Department of
11 Education to Open Schools, also as a member
12 organization of the New York Immigration Coalition
13 and also part of the Education Collaborative.

14 We are working with them to enroll an influx of
15 newly arrived students in temporary housing
16 particularly and in the summer of 2023,
17 Internationals Network reached out to our 15 schools,
18 high schools and our one middle school to keep their
19 doors open, fill and overfill as much as possible
20 their classrooms. Still, even with the addition of
21 the ELL seats in six more transfer high schools,
22 which happened two years ago and our schools efforts,
23 we knew that there would not be enough room for all
24 the newly arrived refugees, immigrants, asylum
25 seekers. So, starting in August, we rolled out free

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resources on our website for both district and school
leaders and teachers.

Further, we developed project soaring to provide
hands on timely support to schools outside our
network to transform their schools into welcoming
environments with appropriate structure supports,
instruction and culture. With philanthropic support
for nine schools and a tenth school added to the
cohort funded through the UFT, Project Soaring is
working with three high school districts in New York
City. It supports vertically aligned communities of
professional learning for district leaders, school
leaders, teacher leaders and teachers and provides
one to one coaching for school leaders to plan
strategically with a vertically based school team to
continue to transform their schools.

In one example, after the first session with
school leaders, they walked away with plans
successfully implemented to revise intake procedures.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

CLAIRE SILVEN: As part of the efforts of the New
York Immigration Collaborative, we ask your support
for overaged, under credited MLL students in New York

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1 City to include funding of \$500,000 for Project
2 Soaring.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

5 KASI GORDON: Good afternoon. My name is Kasi
6 Gordon and I'm the Senior Manager of Education Policy
7 with the New York Immigration Coalition and as Senior
8 Manager, I oversee the Education Collaborative, which
9 is a cohort of community based and nonprofit
10 organizations focused on education policy and
11 advocacy for immigrant and asylum seeking youth.

12 Thank you Chair Brannan, Joseph and the members of
13 the Finance, Education Committees for holding this
14 hearing and allowing us testify.

15 We demand the city to invest \$800,000 to increase
16 the number of high schools while prepared to teach
17 and support recently arrived asylum seeking and
18 immigrant youth. This includes \$300,000 for the new
19 English Language Learner programs at the six transfer
20 high schools to ensure that they have the resources
21 they need to effectively serve ELLs and \$500,000 to
22 fund a second cohort of Project Soaring, so ten high
23 schools with large numbers of immigrant youth can
24 receive comprehensive school and educated development
25 from experts.

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1 Transfer schools specialize in helping under
2 credited students who are at risk of dropping out by
3 providing them with tailored instruction, wrap around
4 support and other things like my colleague mentioned
5 such as internship opportunities and so much more.
6 Last year, the Educating Collaborative successfully
7 advocated for the expansion of transfer schools
8 across the city where immigrant youth live and work
9 and since then, it's unclear if the DOE has continued
10 to provide the basic level of funding to ensure these
11 programs can properly support our newcomer youth.
12 Transfer schools and programs are a cornerstone for
13 the students they serve. Last week, we were able to
14 visit Manhattan comprehensive night and day school,
15 one of the original ELL transfer schools serving
16 almost 800 English Language Learners and Asylum
17 Seeking Students.

18
19 In Manhattan Comprehensive, where every staff is
20 bilingual has been connected to a CBO called
21 Comprehensive Youth Development offering students
22 intensive ENL classes by certified ENL teachers,
23 tutoring by peers, our alumni and Saturday and summer
24 school test prep. And though there is high demand
25 for ELL transfers, many of our schools like Manhattan

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1
2 Comprehensive as well as the other transfer programs
3 have reached their maximum funds that the school can
4 allocate towards these programs. But without these
5 programs our ELL students will continue to drop out
6 at high rates, including the 17 percent rate that my
7 colleague mentioned, not to mention the one in five
8 asylum seeking students who have dropped out since
9 the implementation of the 60 day shelter rule.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Currently how many ELL
12 transfer schools do we have citywide?

13 KASI GORDON: Citywide there are about I believe
14 ten. Uhm, there's six, the six new transfer ELL
15 programs and I think five of the original ELL
16 transfer programs. There are 50 in total transfer
17 schools.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many fall under D79?

19 KASI GORDON: Uhm, I'm not sure how much fall
20 under D79 actually.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, because the Manhattan
22 night school I know they're having a crisis with a
23 huge amount of influx of students. 800 is
24 understated.

25

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1
2 KASI GORDON: Yeah, there is not a total. 800 is
3 - almost 800 students and that's just the ones like
4 you said that are accounted for.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct and they struggle
6 with everything from language access to food
7 insecurity. I spoke to Principal Williams.

8 KASI GORDON: Oh really?

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes, so thank you for that.

10 KASI GORDON: Thank you for your advocacy.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much.
13 Okay, next panel. Annie Minguez, Nakisha Francis,
14 Marie Alsis(SP?), Jenny Valez(SP?), Paula
15 Inargu(SP?), Shelly Lore(SP?), Sara Ader(SP?).
16 [10:12:42] - [10:12:48].

17 ANNIE MINGUEZ GARCIA: Good evening Chairs. My
18 name is Annie Minguez Garcia and I'm the Vice
19 President of Government Relations at Good Shepherd
20 Services. I'd like to focus my testimony on the \$14
21 million funding gap for community schools and the
22 \$3.3 million funding need to support student success
23 centers. The Mayor has not restored community
24 schools funding in three occasions and while we
25 appreciate the restorations, there is a \$14 million

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1 funding gap. \$5 million that support ten community
2 schools that are in the districts that were most
3 impacted by COVID and the remaining \$9 million which
4 supports 52 community schools across the city.
5

6 In 2021, there was a change in how the Department
7 of Education funded community schools and these 52
8 schools saw a major decrease in their budgets. This
9 impacted organizations like Cypress Hills, Catholic
10 Charities [INAUDIBLE 10:13:37] Division, Saya and
11 Good Sheperd, my org which supports Clinton High
12 School in the Bronx.

13 These cuts mean that the school will lose staff
14 and critical supports next month. At Dewitt, our
15 Community Schools contract also supports the youth
16 leaders employed as part of the student success
17 centers. Student success centers is an evidence
18 based model that needs to be baselined and expanded.
19 SSC's help promote a college going culture in 34
20 schools across the city. While providers are
21 contracted, they're not – they don't have a contract.
22 They are contracted through MTAX which pose many
23 challenges. We want to thank the Council for
24 including both community schools and student success
25 centers in your Council response and ask your support

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1 to ensure that the adopted budget includes the \$14
2 million for community schools and \$3.3 for student
3 success centers. Thank you for the opportunity to
4 testify.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

7 NAKISHA FRANCIS: Thank you Chair Joseph and
8 Chair Brannan and staff for riding with us. My name
9 is Nakisha Francis and I'm the Policy and Advocacy
10 Manager at Good Shepherd Services. I'm here today
11 representing the Emergency Coalition to Save
12 Education Programs, which has come together to
13 advocate sustained, essential education programs that
14 are on the chopping block due to expiring funds and
15 proposed cuts. We appreciate that the Executive
16 Budget includes around \$600 million to continue many
17 education initiatives including school social workers
18 and psychologists, shelter-based coordinators,
19 learning to work, bilingual supports and more.
20 Though some programs received only year reprieve and
21 should be baselined in the final budget, yet other
22 essential programs were left out of the budget or did
23 not see a full restoration and are at risk of being
24 rolled back or eliminated this July. This piped the
25 investments in the Executive Budget, there is still a

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1 proposed cut of \$170 million to 3K and PreK, which
2 would impact thousands of children. The investments
3 in preschool special education do not represent a
4 full restoration and are insufficient to meet the
5 need given the ongoing shortage of legally required
6 preschool education, classes and services.
7

8 There is still a \$13 million gap. Due to
9 expiring one year of city funds, there is still a \$14
10 million gap for community schools which provide
11 wraparound support to students and families. There
12 is no funding to replace the \$2 plus million in
13 expiring federal funds currently supporting
14 restorative justice practices, which have allowed
15 more schools to use alternatives to exclusionary
16 discipline. There is no funding sustained for the \$5
17 million mental health continuum, which is helping
18 students at 50 high need schools access expedited
19 mental health care. There is no funding to continue
20 the 4 million immigrant family communication and
21 outreach program which helps immigrant families get
22 key information about the school system. There is no
23 funding to sustain student success centers. There is
24 no funding to replace the \$65 million in expiring
25 federal funds that are currently enabling every

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1 school building to have a nurse. We appreciate the
2 City Council call for funding each of these programs
3 in its response to the Preliminary Budget. We look
4 forward to working with you to ensure the final
5 budget includes funding to sustain these vital
6 support and services. Thank you for the opportunity
7 to speak.
8

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

10 Thank you Chair Josphe and members of the
11 Committee of Education for the opportunity to
12 testify. The Day Care Council of New York is the
13 membership organization of early care and education
14 providers across New York City. DCCNY sees a future
15 where all children have access to quality early
16 childhood education and where early childhood
17 providers in the workforce have the tools and
18 resources necessary to offer the highest quality
19 early childhood education. The Day Care Council of
20 New York is an active member of the campaign for
21 Children and the Emergency Coalition to Save
22 Education Programs.

23 The 2025 Budget is a parulis moment for New York
24 City's early childhood system. Despite the partial
25 restorations included in the Executive Budget, it

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1 still includes drastic cuts to early childhood
2 education and fails to take action on the workforce
3 crisis impacting early childhood education. Without
4 major changes, this budget will leave many New York
5 City families without access to child care and
6 contribute to the exodus of working families out of
7 New York City.
8

9 In the announcement of his Executive Budget,
10 Mayor Adams repeated that every child who wants a
11 seat in an early childhood education program will get
12 one. We acknowledge and appreciate the \$92 million
13 restoration of sunsetted federal funds for 3K
14 expansion and the \$56 million in preschool special
15 education funding. However, these restorations exist
16 within a larger context of immense scale backs of
17 Pre-K for All programs, including a three year
18 succession of \$170 million PEGs to Pre-K and 3K
19 programs, which are slated to take effect in this
20 upcoming fiscal year. Without further investments in
21 the childcare system, the city will not be able to
22 fulfill the Mayor's crucial promise. The city must
23 act now to make the investments and reform its
24 current 3K system so that all children in New York
25

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1 City have the opportunity to access early childhood
2 education, not just a select few.
3

4 DCCNY urges the city to enact the following
5 recommendations: Commit to fund current 3K program
6 levels and restoring the timeline for 3K expansion.
7 Implement the conversion of 3K school day, school
8 year seats to extended day year around seats for the
9 City Council funded in the Fiscal Year 2024 budget.
10 Invest a robust level of resources and linguistically
11 and culturally appropriate for multimedia marketing
12 community engagement and enrollment efforts and
13 reform enrollment procedures so community based
14 organizations have the option of directly enrolling
15 children whose families fight for 3K and Pre-K and
16 salary parity which we've talked about at length at
17 other places. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Can you tell me how many
20 students does the Student Success Centers serve?

21 NAKISHA FRANCIS: Chair, I'll get back to you
22 specifically on the entire because I know for
23 example, at Randolph High School, we're supporting
24 over 700 students, juniors and seniors and at Clinton
25 we're supporting a school that has over 1,000

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1 students. And so, I can get you the number for the
2 entire coalition.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And the \$14 million gap you
5 talked about in community schools, how many community
6 schools does that cover?

7 NAKISHA FRANCIS: That's the 52 that were
8 impacted by the funding formula and then ten that are
9 in the high COVID need areas. Both of which the
10 Council really has been the prime advocate for and is
11 the only reason why we were able to get the funding
12 for them for one year.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, next panel. Eric
15 Poindexter, Kimberly Olsen, Steven Moralis, Marlene
16 Delgado, Derwin Greene, Eleanor Geogan, Sean Miller,
17 Faiza Azam, Ben Dorman, Debra Freeman, Jennifer Choi.
18 This is like last call. Hey Kim.

19 KIMBERLY OLSEN: Hey there. Thank you so much
20 Chair Brannan, Chair Joseph, uh your incredible
21 colleagues as well for this percolating day and for
22 your support of arts education in New York City. My
23 name is Kimberly Olsen and I am so proud to be the
24 Executive Director of the New York City Arts and
25 Education Roundtable. I'm here testifying as part of

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1 our It Starts with the Arts Coalition calling on our
2 city to prioritize funding for arts education in New
3 York City schools and communities. First off, a huge
4 thank you for the City Council's support in
5 including arts education in the budget response as
6 well as with the recent \$41 million restoration of
7 art spending that was due to expire at the end of
8 this year. However, we recognize that this is just
9 the baseline. The basement, the sub-basement to get
10 us towards equity and access to arts education for
11 all students because unfortunately, arts education is
12 in New York City, is historically underfunded and
13 consistent inequitable. Only one third of middle
14 schoolers are meeting arts learning requirements,
15 instructional hours in the arts very greatly at the
16 elementary school level and for the first time since
17 2016, there were high school students that - high
18 school graduates who did not meet state arts learning
19 requirements before graduating.
20

21 Most concerning is that we learned at the last
22 hearing that 307 schools do not have an arts teacher.
23 To put that into context, in 2014, the city released
24 a state of the arts report from them Comptroller.
25 This was the first ever school by school breakdown of

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1 the state of arts in our schools. In that report,
2 ten years ago, it said that 306 schools did not have
3 an arts teacher. So, we're now ten years later and
4 at the same number of schools that lack an arts
5 teacher. Our young people deserve better.

6
7 Something that is different from then compared to
8 now is back then, we had a geographic breakdown of
9 where those schools were and unfortunately, access
10 was disproportionate, the lack of access rather, fell
11 disproportionately on our city's lower income
12 neighborhoods, especially the South Bronx and Central
13 Brooklyn. Now, we do not know what schools are
14 impacted unless transparency and policy is
15 introduced. A bright spot is that there are more
16 than 600 arts and cultural organizations that
17 partnered with New York City schools last year. It
18 shouldn't be a surprise this coincides with the \$45
19 million add on to Department of Cultural Affairs
20 budget.

21 My full testimony is included in the written
22 response but I'll end by saying, arts teachers and
23 cultural organizations are essential partners in the
24 delivery of arts instruction but they can't do that
25 without sustainable funding. Otherwise we stand to

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1
2 only widen the access gap for years to come. Thank
3 you so much.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Go ahead.

5 DEBRA FREEMAN: Thank you for the opportunity –

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Just turn your mic on. One
7 more time.

8 DEBRA FREEMAN: Okay. Alright, thank you for the
9 opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Debra
10 Freeman and I am testifying on behalf of For Freedoms
11 Democratic Club.

12 As an emergency coalition member for freedom
13 supports increased funding for public schools and
14 sustaining vital education programs, public schools
15 need increased funding and supported programs to help
16 students recover from the pandemic and the related
17 mental health challenges. We're pleased that the
18 budget includes around \$600 million for sustaining
19 critical education programs that were at risk due to
20 expiration of the stimulus funding, including arts
21 programming, social workers and psychologists and
22 much more. Yet we remain concerned that essential
23 education programs remain at risk of elimination or
24 cuts.

25

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1 Since they left out of the budget they were not
2 restored to current funding, these programs excluded
3 from the budget include the mental health continuum,
4 which supports mental health in high need schools,
5 school nurses ensuring a school nurse in each school,
6 restorative justice programs. The students have made
7 it clear how critical these programs are and how loss
8 or cuts to these programs would be devastating at
9 this time of a mental health crisis.
10

11 In addition, programs at risk include 3K and
12 community schools with huge cuts. The budget must
13 include full funding to sustain these programs. In
14 addition some vital education programs were given
15 just one year of funding including arts programming
16 and 3K. Those programs must be baselined. The city
17 must also close the equity gap and access to arts
18 education ensuring that every school has at least one
19 certified arts teacher with an investment of \$38
20 million.

21 Arts education provided by arts teachers is
22 necessary for a well-rounded education and it must be
23 provided by certified arts teachers. Arts education
24 supports social emotional learning and yet 307
25 schools do not even have one arts teacher. We

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1 appreciate the City Council funding. This investment
2 must be included in the budget. We urge City Council
3 leadership to provide sufficient funding to meet
4 public school needs, prioritize funding for public
5 education including arts education and mental health
6 in the budget since New York City students are the
7 future of our city. Thank you very much.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

10 MARLENE DELGADO: Hello, my name is Marlene
11 Delgado and I'm the Director of our College and
12 Career programming at the Kingsbridge Heights
13 Community Center and I'm here to talk on the behalf
14 of the SSC Coalition, though they're not here
15 anymore.

16 Thank you to all the young people that took the
17 time to come here and advocate for yourselves and
18 your peers. You're all amazing. At KHCC we have
19 student success centers at the JFK and Walton
20 Campuses in the Bronx and the respective districts of
21 Council Member De La Rosa and Dinowitz. We were able
22 to salvage our SSC's three years ago through the
23 stimulus funding which has not been reinstated for
24 fiscal year 2025. Without this funding, we would not
25 be able to continue operating our SSC's and our

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1 private funders have told us that they will not fund
2 the work that New York City public schools should be
3 doing. At the JFK campus, we assist over 1,000
4 students through our services. At the Walton Campus
5 we work with a middle high school for English
6 Language Learners. We are only funded to work with
7 the high school but make sure to also work with the
8 middle schoolers as well.

9
10 To answer your previous question to Annie. The
11 SSC's work with over 16,000 students in 41 schools
12 and we hire over 130 young people to be peer college
13 leaders. Last week, one of our principals even said
14 that what she loves is that when she goes into our
15 college office, she can't tell which students
16 specifically attends her school because all the
17 students feel extremely comfortable in that space.

18 Students stand to lose a lot due to the loss of
19 this funding. The CBOs running these SSC's aren't
20 just helping with college apps. We have students
21 explore career options, write resumes, we take them
22 in overnight college trips to HBCU's and provide jobs
23 to our students at CBO's. One of our KHCC's first
24 youth leader from eight years ago is now a full time
25 staff member with less as the operations coordinator

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1 of our Bronx Theater after school program, which is
2 also at stake by the way due to the DYCD budget cuts.

3 We provide mental health supports because many
4 schools don't have funding for social workers. So,
5 KHCC provides those services with our own social
6 workers and our social work interns.

7 Many of our students see the positive experience
8 their friends get through therapy, that they start
9 seeking us out to get their own therapist. Uhm, our
10 students are generally anxious about the possibility
11 of us not being in their schools next year. They ask
12 us, "but who is going to help me with my college ap?
13 Who is going to listen to me?" They're sad that
14 they'll miss out on our scholarships, our special
15 events, like today most of our students couldn't be
16 here because they had a decision to event and they
17 are sad that they couldn't be here to advocate for
18 themselves.

19 It's unethical to take these services away from
20 our neediest students who are already experiencing so
21 many hardships on a daily basis. If the funding
22 isn't reinstated, who will continue our work? It's
23 also unethical to put CBO's in the position of laying
24 off staff due to a loss of this funding. Staff that
25

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1
2 grew up and continue to work in these communities,
3 nonprofit staff that already don't make a huge
4 salary. Why are all these budget cuts effecting
5 those that need these services the most? Why are we
6 collateral damage? Thank you for listening to my
7 testimony.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

9 ELEANOR GEAGAN: Good afternoon Council Members.
10 My name is Eleanor Geagan and I am an alumni of and a
11 staff member at the Kingsbridge Heights Community
12 Center which works with three different success
13 centers in the Bronx. In our official capacity, we
14 serve about 700 students and as my boss said.
15 Students from these schools come to the success
16 centers even though we are not contracted to work
17 with them. So, outside of our official capacity, we
18 work with several thousand students.

19 New York City has an official recommendation, no
20 more than 250 students to one guidance counselor.
21 The reality is that our schools have an average ratio
22 of 325 students per guidance counselor. Students
23 Success Centers ease the burden of our workload by
24 giving students and another staff who they can go to
25 give them the college support that they need.

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1
2 Additionally, according to CARA, the organization
3 College Access Research and Action, first generation
4 students who go to schools at success centers are 36
5 percent more likely to enroll in college and we know
6 that those students are more likely to go into CUNY,
7 which we know is an investment in New York City's
8 future.

9 The 34 schools that have students success centers
10 tend to have higher numbers of first generation
11 students as well as students in poverty. It only
12 takes \$3.3 million to maintain the MTAC contracts
13 that keep student success centers running in our
14 schools. These students deserve access to college
15 counselors that aren't overburdened and staff that
16 has the time to meet with them, as we've heard over
17 and over and over from the students here today.

18 If we remove these success centers, they lose
19 financial literacy classes, social emotional
20 learning, college trips, and one on one counseling
21 when they need it. We cannot sacrifice our students
22 futures in these budget cuts. They are worth so much
23 more than being collateral damage. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Uhm, did you
25 testify? You didn't testify?

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1 UNIDENTIFIED: No, not yet.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Oh, okay.

3 I know it's been a long day and I'm trying get
4 two minutes.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, go ahead.

6 UNIDENTIFIED: So, what I'll say is my college
7 have done a great job of you know detailing what's
8 happening on a quantitative level with the work that
9 we're doing at Kingsbridge Heights Community Center.

10 As a person who is on the JFK campus as the
11 afterschool program director on Monday's and
12 Wednesdays because the funding doesn't allow me to be
13 there any other day, I have seen students fast track
14 out of school to graduate like in December, January,
15 February, just because the school does not have, the
16 schools do not have the ability to deal with the
17 behavioral issues.

18 I am restorative justice trained. When I have
19 tried to engage the principals about restorative
20 justice and how to train their staff, there's been
21 push back about PD not having the time to do it. Not
22 having the funding to do so but I see the amount of
23 suspensions. I have seen the amount of safety
24 transfers, quick fast. Faster than families who need
25

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1 them can get them. I have seen, I am literally right
2 now watching a student who just came a month ago
3 about to get transferred right out of the school
4 because they don't have the ability to engage him.
5 And today is decision day, I signed a shirt that said
6 DCU and what the student told me was that that means
7 the crib university. We failed. That student was
8 not engaged or activated in any kind of way to think
9 about their opportunities past high school, whether
10 it's college or something else. Their plan is to sit
11 at home and wait and figure out and wait for life to
12 happen.
13

14 We know the detriment that can be because they
15 are going to be 18 years old and their parents can
16 literally at any moment say, your swatter rights are
17 done. I don't have to do anything for you. Legally
18 there's nothing for me to do and that person will be
19 society's problem. And that's why we need to keep
20 the funding going for these programs and that's it in
21 a nutshell because I'm tired and I know you are too.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Can you please state your
23 name for the record?
24
25

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1
2 DERWIN GREENE: Sure, I am Derwin Greene, I am
3 the Bronx Afterschool Program Director at the
4 Kingsbridge Heights Community Center.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for that. Uhm, we
6 keep that in mind as a forever educator that always
7 resonates with me.

8 The Chancellor stated today that some schools
9 don't have art teachers but they have CBO programming
10 and it has more expansive arts program. Why do you
11 think certified teachers - I know he was trying to
12 balance it out but we still need certified art
13 teachers.

14 KIMBERLY OLSEN: Yeah of course, so we at the
15 Roundtable always say it's certified arts teachers in
16 partnership with cultural organizations. While we
17 are so excited to see the most ever cultural
18 organizations partner with schools last year with 607
19 organizations, we know from the arts and schools
20 report that only 74 percent of schools actually
21 partner with arts and cultural organizations. Yet,
22 we don't know what the overlap is of certified arts
23 teachers and cultural partners.

24 I'll also say that due to how the data is
25 gathered around this, a cultural partnership could be

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1 one workshop. It could be a robust yearlong
2 educational curriculum. That information isn't
3 gathered and so, that is why we advocate for a
4 baseline of an arts teacher in every school because
5 we know that there will be sustained education across
6 the year and ultimately, we find that they end up
7 inviting and bringing in arts and cultural
8 organizations, recognizing the resources that they
9 bring, not only in terms of money but curriculum and
10 access to other art forms that that teacher might not
11 have the background or ability to teach.
12

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Why you think there's a
14 shortage in art education teachers? There's also a
15 shortage as well across the board.

16 KIMBERLY OLSEN: Yeah, no, as a teacher prior to
17 my role here now, I understand that teacher shortage
18 is real. I also teach at the CUNY level and
19 unfortunately, my classes, I teach for theater
20 teachers at preservice. My classes haven't been able
21 to run. Then I think it really is a mix of
22 unfortunately folks being removed from their roles
23 and I think it's also sort of a systemic issue around
24 ensuring that folks are able to be there to take
25 those jobs. I do think that there are excellent

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1 candidates, though in the pipeline within the CUNY
2 system through NYU but I will also say sort of more
3 data is needed from the DOE to find out, is it
4 retirement? Is it folks leaving the system? Is it
5 positions being accessed? We're sort of hearing a
6 mix anecdotally from teachers in the field.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I think it's a little bit of
9 both. Uhm, my art teacher left. She moved upstate,
10 so I didn't have an art teacher in my school anymore
11 but she was amazing. Uhm, thank you so much for what
12 you do for young people and we have one more
13 testimony. Hello?

14 JENNIFER CHOI: I get to go last, I'm so excited.
15 Thank you. My name is Jennifer Choi, I am a special
16 education advocate and the founder of a 1500 member
17 group called, NYC Parents of Teens with Disabilities.
18 I am here to ask you to remember the billion dollar
19 payments for impartial hearing cost and we believe
20 the fair student funding formula is to blame.

21 At the last budget hearing, I presented a
22 graphic, which shows that a school will not be given
23 more funding despite one child, Ruth needing about 50
24 percent more special education teacher, human
25 resources over another, Amanda. Since then, I have

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1 received email from a top level special education
2 official confirming that based on the fair student
3 funding formula in deed Ruth's school would get only
4 the same funding as Amanda's.
5

6 If that's the case, how can the school pay for
7 Ruth without tremendous pain and if they don't, which
8 they probably won't, how can Ruth's parents not file
9 an impartial hearing request? And that is the
10 chicken and the egg of New York City Special
11 Education.

12 Here's a true story. After getting that email,
13 the panel I sent testimony and evidence to the panel
14 for education policy and the panel introduced me to
15 an education policy official and from him, I learned
16 the core checklist appeals process and that the
17 appeals process, two separate things uhm, is two
18 separate things and they're like special education -
19 it's a process to get special education money to hire
20 more teachers faster.

21 What's the core checklist? It's an appeals
22 process where principals ask the district for money
23 because the fair student funding formula is not
24 enough to pay for IEP mandated teacher services. And
25 if that's the case, the principals have to provide

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1 names of multiple students and their IEP dates and
2 grades, ID's. They have to list unscheduled funds.
3 I'm almost done. List funds allowable thresholds and
4 also funds in their satisfied services. I presented
5 all of this testimony to you.
6

7 If that is the case with this appeals process
8 that's supposed to be faster, how and you know, how
9 is this okay? How is this not discriminatory? And
10 you know, so basically, at the end of the day, what I
11 came here to tell you is that this chicken and egg
12 cycle has to stop because it is causing damage to not
13 just New Yorkers but it is causing damage to New York
14 City students with disabilities and their families.
15 Please help us. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Kim, I wanted
17 to ask, I think we asked the Chancellor today but
18 they didn't have an answer. What do we think it
19 would cost to actually mandate that every school had
20 a licensed art teacher?

21 KIMBERLY OLSEN: The figure that I've gotten in
22 the past is \$38 million, which would be something
23 that could be rolled over of a period of about three
24 years and it would be a mix of not only sort of
25 giving schools funds to be able to kick off the

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1 hiring of arts teachers but also to bring back the
2 supplemental certification pilot that was
3 successfully run prepandemic that took existing
4 teachers and gave them training to be able to get
5 their certification within an arts disciplined as
6 well.
7

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Why did they end that?

9 KIMBERLY OLSEN: I don't really know.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Good enough, okay, thank
11 you so much guys, really appreciate you hanging in
12 there with us.

13 PANEL: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, next panel on Zoom
15 starting with Abimbola Ajani.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

17 ABIMBOLA AJANI: Hello.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Hi, are you there?

19 ABIMBOLA AJANI: Yeah, sorry.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: That's okay, you can begin
21 when you're ready.

22 ABIMBOLA AJANI: Uh, yes, hold on let me pull
23 this up. Hello. Thank you Chair Joseph and the
24 Education Committee and the members of the Council
25 for the opportunity to testify this afternoon. My

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1 name is Abimbola Ajani and I'm currently a senior at
2 Transit Tech High School and I live in Brooklyn. I
3 love my schools encouraging staff members who try
4 their hardest to point you to the right direction but
5 however, in all my four years of being in this
6 school, I've seen the school deteriorate drastically.
7 The walls are chipping, there are electrical wires
8 exposed and overall environment – the overall
9 environment of the school feels like a jail cell then
10 a learning space.
11

12 There is heating within the school where
13 typically inside the building feels more frigid than
14 outside. This probably effects students like me who
15 are anemic and are shivering due to the poor heating
16 and distracting me from focusing on my assignments.
17 The water fountains are also undrinkable due to the
18 poor infiltration and causing many students to revert
19 to being dehydrated and possible health risks for
20 those who don't have access to water by means of
21 buying it from the schools. These are two examples
22 of issues that arose in my school that don't
23 encourage us students to become the leaders and the
24 world changers we were meant to be.
25

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1 I'm asking the city to fund \$600 million in the
2 city's capital budget to electrify and upgrade
3 Transit Tech and prioritize the other schools
4 Treeage, identified for official year 2025.
5 Investing in green, healthy schools can make a
6 positive difference in my community by creating a
7 habitat that pushes the younger generation into the
8 right path. Learning how to recycle, seeing how they
9 actually can improve their surrounding and many more,
10 can motivate many students who have a bleak view of
11 the world.
12

13 However, how can this be possible when the school
14 feels like a confined space where growth is
15 discouraged due to its infrastructure? The better
16 world around us – I mean, the world around us could
17 be better by having gardening programs and recycling
18 programs that students could interact with nature.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now we have
21 Andrea Artula.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

23 ANDREA ARTULA: Thank you Chairs Brannan and
24 Joseph and members of the Committee for the Council's
25 longstanding support of New York Edge. With the

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1 city's finances in much better shape than in January,
2 we ask that Council increase our funding in the
3 Fiscal Year 2025 budget. We are seeking \$1.2 million
4 under the Council's Afterschool Enrichment
5 initiative. An increase of \$200,000 over last year.
6 This would be our first increase in 16 years. We are
7 also seeking \$250,000 under the Council's social and
8 emotional supports for students initiative. SCL is
9 integrated into every element of our programming.
10

11 Increased funding is vitally needed, unlike
12 contracts with DYCD and other agencies, Council
13 discretionary contracts are not eligible for a COLA
14 increases. This is making it increasingly difficult
15 for New York Edge to attract and maintain quality
16 staff and to continue to offer the wide array of
17 programs that we are known for. New York Edge is the
18 largest provider of school based afterschool and
19 summer programming in New York City, serving almost
20 30,000 students in over 100 schools and 37 of the 51
21 Council Districts throughout the five boroughs. We
22 have been as the largest afterschool provider in the
23 nation, offering SCL supports. We are also one of
24 the city's largest providers of college access
25 programs across all educational levels and have been

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1 a leading community school partner for over a decade.

2 Our mission is to help bridge the opportunity gap
3 among students and under invested communities.

4 Council citywide funding has enabled us to abridge
5 and expand our school year and summer programs and
6 has allowed us to develop and implement new unique
7 and engaging programs.

8
9 New York Edge, its students and families are
10 extremely grateful for the Council's 32 years of
11 support and partnership. We are now looking to you
12 to meet the needs as the next generation of young
13 people by supporting our FY25 funding requests.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now we have
16 Marie Altus.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Marie? Marie, are you
19 there? Okay, now we have Suba Habiv.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Suba Habib?

22 SUBA HABIV: Hello?

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Hi.

24 SUBA HABIV: Okay, hi. Uhm, okay thank you Chair
25 Joseph, the Education Committee and members of the

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Council for the opportunity to testify this evening.

My name is Suba Habiv and I am currently a sophomore at Transit Tech Career and Technical Education High School in Brooklyn. Growing up in East New York, I have seen first hand the disparities in our education system and the neglect of essential services in our communities.

Our schools are struggling with outdated infrastructure from inefficient heating and cooling systems to poor ventilation exacerbating health issues like asthma among students and staff. Mayor Adams decision to cut essential services from the New York City budget only worsens these conditions prioritizing real estate interest over the wellbeing of New Yorkers.

Our school built 90 years ago suffers from old ventilation systems, dim lighting and outdated electrical wiring. We lack basic resources like modern science lab and energy efficient shades. Classrooms and gymnasiums have inefficient heating and cooling, making it difficult to maintain a comfortable learning environment. During the summers, our facility should be accessible to

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1 community members, offering resources for youth and
2 programs.

3
4 Additionally, we need updated fields for
5 communities and modernized room where critical
6 thinking is highly encouraged. Investing in these
7 improvements is not just about maintaining a
8 building, it's about fostering innovation and
9 supporting the growth of our students and community.
10 I'm here to demand action. We need \$600 million
11 allocated in the city's capital budget to electrify
12 and upgrade Transit Tech High School and other
13 schools identified by Treeage for Fiscal Year 2025.
14 Investing in green healthy schools isn't just about
15 improving infrastructure. It's about investing in
16 our future. It's about creating a learning
17 environment where students can thrive, breath from
18 the health [INAUDIBLE 10:46:47] of outdated building.
19 It's about addressing the climate crisis and ensuring
20 a sustainable future for generations to come. Mayor
21 Adams, we're counting on you to prioritize the needs
22 of our communities over the interest of developers.
23 Investing in green healthy schools isn't just a
24 choice, it's a necessity for the wellbeing of New
25 Yorkers and the future of our city. Let's build a

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1 world a better world together starting with our
2 schools. Thank you for your time.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much. Now
5 we have Tanisha Grant.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Tanisha Grant? Okay, Lupe
8 Hernandez.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

10 LUPE HERNANDEZ: Hi, good evening Chair Brannan
11 and Chair Joseph. Thank you for this opportunity to
12 speak to you guys this evening. I am a New York City
13 public school parent and I also serve on the citywide
14 Council for Special Education as some of my members
15 spoke to you tonight on behalf of the members. I am
16 speaking to you tonight in my own personal capacity.

17 I want to thank you for the restorations that you
18 guys have sustained, many of the programming that was
19 funded by our stimulus dollars. But I just want to
20 uplift some of the gaps that we are seeing even with
21 this preliminary budget that has been provided.

22 Our early childhood special education services,
23 the gap, I could tell you as a parent of a 3K
24 student, we have still been waiting for our related
25 services and I say that again as a parent that is

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1 serving on my citywide council have access to folks
2 in Central and really if the funding doesn't exist,
3 it doesn't matter the access is really limited even
4 if you have the resources. And we see that many of
5 our newest families are struggling and I could tell
6 you that early day, our extended day, extended year
7 program, there are many families that actually
8 qualify and have no idea and again, it's a very
9 strenuous process. They only recently actually
10 provided families the income thresholds in an
11 accessible way. It is not accessible to all
12 languages, so there is a gap that we could be
13 fulfilling there. We need \$1.25 billion dollars to
14 make our schools more ADA accessible and compliant.
15 This continues to not only segregate and exclude our
16 students with disabilities but it also takes into our
17 carter cases increasing within our district schools.

18
19 Students said it best today, we need to make sure
20 that we fund restorative justice practices in healing
21 centered schools. I know this today was both Higher
22 Education and Education but will submit for Higher
23 Education.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired. Thank you.

25

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1
2 LUPE HERNANDEZ: Please, just support our
3 students in using their voice and being civil for our
4 society to be able to be future leaders. Thank you.
5 \$3.3 for students success and nurse as well. Thank
6 you.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now we have
8 Tensen Tispell.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

10 TENSEN TISPELL: Hi everyone. My name is Tensen
11 Tispell(SP?). I am a resident of Jackson Heights
12 Queens and I'm currently a junior at Bard at Queens.
13 I'm also a part of Treeage and I want to highlight
14 how schools are a large source of emissions because
15 of something mondain such as paper usage.

16 Every day faculty and students use thousand of
17 papers for exams, final essays and worksheets and
18 some might say that this is because they want to
19 maintain the old school tradition in an increasing
20 tech driven society and really in reality, many New
21 York City students including mine are unable to
22 afford technology and efficient network for barely a
23 quarter of our student body to use all at once.

24 These resources are essential to succeed in
25 school but it also sets up for our future

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1 professional endeavors and schools being the largest
2 consumer of paper, we can only hope that these papers
3 make it in the recycle bin but most of the time it
4 doesn't. Instead, I see papers scattered on the
5 streets, the entry part, the staircases leading to
6 the seven and large bodies of water already effected
7 by pollution.

9 This in turn effects our school buildings air
10 quality and most importantly our wellbeing and
11 investing in green healthy schools can harness waste
12 to modernize our ways of sustainable living. This is
13 the reason why I'm asking for the city to fund \$600
14 million in this years capital budget to electrify and
15 upgrade Bard Queens and prioritize other schools
16 Treeage has identified for Fiscal 2025. I want to
17 see steps towards a greener future starting right now
18 where law makers listen and show up to current
19 climate issues of our environment that are already
20 showing us the desperate need for change.

21 As a student, I want to rely on my school to be
22 able to thrive without the need to doubt
23 accessibility and safety and I thank you for
24 listening to my voice and countless of other students
25 here today. Thank you.

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1
2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now we have
3 Anwin Paul (SP?).

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

5 ANWIN PAUL: My name is Anwin Paul, I live in
6 Dennis Park in Brooklyn and I'm currently a junior at
7 Bard High School Early College Queens. I'm currently
8 the leader of my schools key club and botany and
9 sustainability club, as a student of climate justice
10 has always been incredibly important to me. I've
11 seen the impact that it can have and I'm proud to
12 testify my experience here today.

13 So, I've been working with my club, school
14 administration, even DOE officials to try to
15 establish effective compost and recycling program at
16 Bard for two full years now. However, its been
17 disappointing to see the lack of support from school
18 administration due to DOE guidelines that actively
19 prevent us from these sustainable practices and
20 alternatives.

21 For example, Bard produces immense amounts of
22 waste that goes straight to landfill and in addition
23 to this, our heating and cooling systems are
24 outdated, inefficient and uncomfortable. I am asking
25 the city to fund \$600 million in this years capital

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1 budget to electrify and upgrade Bard Queens and
2 prioritize other schools Treeage had identified for
3 the Fiscal Year of 2025. Specifically, Transit Tech
4 High School in Brooklyn, Beacon in Manhattan, Curtis
5 High Schols in Staten Island and Fannie Lou High
6 Schol in the Bronx.

7
8 Myself and the students who I have gotten the
9 chance to work with are eager for more sustainable
10 schools. We hope to learn in a building that is
11 safe, comfortable, has clean water and is conscious
12 about its waste practices. Both my peers across the
13 city and those as young as in elementary school have
14 felt these urban climate impacts and we are
15 passionate to work within our schools and communities
16 to create change. This proposed budget has the power
17 and potential to provide a cleaner, healthier and
18 safer space to these students and so many more.

19 We've been working hard to make these changes but
20 simply don't have the access to the networks and
21 resources to make them a reality, despite these
22 continuous best efforts. I hope to see these urging
23 concerns of students heard and act upon by the
24 Council and thank you very much for your time.

25

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CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now we have
Allison Maguire.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

ALLISON MAGUIRE: Hi, my name is Allison Maguire
and I'm a member of Treeage. A student led climate
justice organization with over 1,000 high school
students across all the five boroughs fighting for a
greener future in New York City and state. I am also
a junior at Bard High School Early College Queens.
Throughout my time in high school I have witnessed
the drastic effects of climate change on our planet.
Last year in 2023, New York City was faced with a
devastating flood that flooded many homes of my
classmates, teachers and family members. I remember
students and teachers walking into school with their
wet socks and shoes in their hands.

Last year, we also experienced air contamination,
causing the skies to turn orange and air qualities
become a safety hazard. As students and citizens of
New York, we should not have to experience these
events, which not only put a pause on our education
and work but also threaten our health and safety.

I am asking the city to fund \$600 million in the
city's capital budget to electrify and upgrade Bard

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1 High School Early College Queens and all other
2 schools Treeage identified for the Fiscal Year of
3 2025.
4

5 I am fighting for green, healthy schools because
6 fast changes must be made. We owe it not only to our
7 generation but all the future generations that are
8 coming after us. Providing them with the proper
9 resources and creating a cleaner world will allow
10 them to strive in an uncertain future. Thank you for
11 your time.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now we have
13 Nakisha Francis.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Marie Alsis.

16 MARIE ALSIS: Hello.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Hi, go ahead.

18 MARIE ALSIS: Thank you for having me here.

19 Thank you Chair Joseph and the Education Committee
20 for the opportunity to testify. My name is Marie
21 Alsis and I am an Education Advocate at Good Sheperd
22 Services and a former foster youth who has the
23 privilege to access education programs that allowed
24 me to be successful and led me to where I am today.
25

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1 Albert Einstein once said everybody is a genius
2
3 but if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a
4 tree, it will live its whole life thinking that it is
5 stupid. This call is a direct insight into what will
6 happen to our children if these programs are excluded
7 from the budget. Educational programming tailored to
8 young people with varied and specific needs, should
9 be widely accessible. Out of 400,000 children in
10 foster care, nearly 270,000 of these foster children
11 are school age. Foster youth are more likely than
12 their peers to experience a host of barriers that
13 lead to troubling outcomes, including but not limited
14 to low academic achievement, high drop out rates and
15 higher rates of mental health disorders. Now more
16 than ever we need to have a holistic understanding of
17 what it takes for children to be successful.

18 It is these programs at the Student Success
19 Centers, restorative justice and mental health uhm
20 continuum that are tailored to these academic and
21 behavior needs that will enable our children to
22 prosper and thrive. I am speaking today to fight for
23 these programs. The age group which the programs are
24 tailored to is a critical junction point where
25 development and centered milestones can be assets in

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1 our work. Our brains at the age have this incredible
2 ability to create new pathways and change the
3 trajectory of success. A school can and should be a
4 community to raise up our children. It was for me
5 and I work in this field to do the same for others so
6 they can grow up to be young individuals to create
7 their own sense of purpose and pride. We are doing a
8 disservice to our future generation and our children
9 by excluding these programs out of the budget. The
10 less resources for individuals with mental barriers –
11 excuse me. Special education needs and trauma, the
12 less we can protect them from the negative outcomes
13 that are likely to occur.
14

15 As an employee in the foster care field, our duty
16 is to recognize what can be done but without the
17 funding and the access to these programs that provide
18 to our young people, we are at a loss. Thank you for
19 the opportunity to testify.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now we have
21 Brianna Abad.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay Tanisha Grant.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts.

25 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Tanisha, go ahead.

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2 TANISHA GRANT: Okay, I'm going. I'm here.

3 Okay, so everybody I'm Tanisha Grant from PSCNY,
4 executive director but we are also a part of the
5 Emergency Education to Save Education Programs. I
6 want to thank Chair Brannan and thank Chair Joseph
7 for being diligent about the community and I also
8 want to send a shoutout to all the advocates,
9 education advocates, all the students that I have
10 heard speak here today.

11 I want to talk about nurses. So, give me a
12 second. Uh, so DOH public health school nurses have
13 posted 700 vacancies because of the huge salary
14 disparity between DOH public health school nurses,
15 DEC 37 and DOE UFT nurses. Rather than addressing
16 the salary disparity that DOH nurses have faced for
17 over a decade, DOE has a multimillion budget to hire
18 untrained temporary nurses. Temporary nurses can't
19 provide quality nursing care services in a nursing
20 role that requires long term commitment. And even
21 greater impact is that over half of the schools are
22 staffed with temporary contact nurses that have only
23 a two day training, no computer access and minimum
24 supervision by their agency nurses supervisors.

25

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1
2 Furthermore, DOHMH School Nurses and supervisors
3 are part of the city emergency plan and have served
4 in a multitude of emergencies such as 911, H1N1,
5 Hurricane Sandy, Amtrack, Ebola, Measles and other
6 communicable diseases with the depletion of public
7 health school nurses who will respond to the next
8 public health or emergency environmental emergency?

9 Chairs, I just want to say that nurses are a part
10 of our school community. They help our kids stay
11 safe and it's very, very important that we fund these
12 deserving nurses and have them take care of our
13 children as they have done for decades. Thank you
14 for listening to me.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much. Okay,
16 thank you so much, with that, the -what day is it?
17 Eight, no, that's everybody. Okay, with that the
18 budget hearing for Education and Higher Education and
19 Department of Education is adjourned. [GAVEL]

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25

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 June 30, 2024