

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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February 10, 2026
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HELD AT: 250 Broadway - 8th Floor - Hearing
Room 2

B E F O R E: Eric Dinowitz,
Chairperson

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

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

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

Mari Moss

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1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: This is a microphone check for
3 the Committee on Education, recorded on February 10,
4 2026, located in Hearing Room 2 by Nazly
5 Paytuvi (SP?).

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and welcome to
7 today's New York City Council hearing for the
8 Committee on Education. If you would like to
9 testify, you must fill out a witness slip with one of
10 the Sergeant at Arms.

11 Just a reminder, there are no food or beverages
12 allowed in this room. Please silence all electronic
13 devices and no one may approach the dais at any time.

14 Chair, we are ready to begin.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: [GAVEL] Good morning
16 everyone. I'm Council Member Eric Dinowitz, proud
17 public school alum, former public school teacher and
18 now Chair of the Committee on Education.

19 Welcome to our hearing on Mayoral control of New
20 York City Public Schools. Today's hearing will
21 examine the system of mayoral control, it's origin,
22 it's current structure and the implications for
23 accountability, transparency and equity across the
24 largest school district in the country.

1
2 New York city has operated under mayoral control
3 since 2002, when the state legislature fundamentally
4 restructured school governance by consolidating
5 authority in the mayor, and the mayor appointed
6 school's chancellor.

7 That restructuring replaced the former Board of
8 Education with the Panel for Educational Policy or
9 PEP, invested broad executive authority over
10 curriculum, budgeting, staff and school operations in
11 the Chancellor, who serves at the Mayor's pleasure.

12 From the onset that Mayoral control was adopted
13 as an experiment. It was intended to replace a
14 fragmented governing system with a single point of
15 accountability, streamlined decision making, and
16 improved coordination across a complex school system.

17 It included a sunset requiring periodic renewal
18 by the state, creating an opportunity for ongoing
19 evaluation and adjustment. Over more than two
20 decades, the state has renewed mayoral control
21 multiple times, sometimes for several years,
22 sometimes for just one, while making incremental
23 changes to its structure. More recently, in April of
24 2024, the legislature extended mayoral control
25

1 through June 30th of 2026, expanded the PEP and
2 increased the states role in its selected leadership.
3

4 At the same time, mayoral control remains the
5 subject of active debate. During his 2025 campaign,
6 now Mayor Zohran Mamdani raised concerns that
7 centralized government limits community voice and
8 local decision making. After taking office however,
9 the mayor reversed course and expressed support for
10 the renewal while signaling interest in reforms to
11 expand community involvement.

12 As of today, however, there's no detailed public
13 proposal outlining what structural changes if any,
14 would accompany a continuation of mayoral control.
15 Over the years, parents, educators and other
16 stakeholders have raised persistent concerns about
17 transparency, checks and balances, and the
18 concentration of authority in a single executive.

19 Public testimony and a 2024 review by the State
20 Education Department, have highlighted questions
21 about whether the PEP has functioned as an
22 independent policy making body or at times, as a
23 rubber stamp for mayoral priorities. Some high
24 profile decisions, such as school closures,
25 colocations, and significant budget proposals have

1
2 been exemplified as ways centralized power can limit
3 meaningful public input.

4 Concerns about participation and voice are
5 particularly acute at the community level. While
6 community education counsels were designed to allow
7 parents and local engagement, they have limited
8 policy making authority and recent elections have
9 seen extremely low voter turnout. This raises
10 important questions about whether existing structures
11 meaningful incorporate the perspective of families,
12 educators, and students, especially in historically
13 under represented communities.

14 Equity is also essential to this discussion.
15 Despite more than 20 years of centralized government,
16 significant disparities and resources and outcomes
17 persist across districts and neighborhoods. Schools
18 serving higher poverty communities in higher needs
19 populations often face greater fiscal and operational
20 strain.

21 While access to services for students with
22 disabilities, multilingual learners, and students in
23 temporary housing continues to vary widely. The 2024
24 State Education Department report and national
25 research suggest that mayoral control on its own has

1
2 not consistently produced improved outcomes or
3 reduced longstanding inequities.

4 As we look ahead to enrollment shifts, fiscal
5 pressures and ambitious policy goals, these
6 governance questions take on renewed urgency.
7 Governor Hochul has proposed extending mayoral
8 control for an additional four years with few
9 structural changes, while the mayor has expressed
10 interest in reforming, rather than dismantling the
11 current framework.

12 We therefore have a responsibility to examine
13 what has worked, what has not, and what
14 accountability mechanisms are necessary moving
15 forward.

16 At today's hearing, the Committee seeks to
17 understand how the current system of mayoral control
18 shapes decision making at both the citywide and
19 community levels. Whether existing oversight and
20 participatory structure are sufficient and what
21 reforms are needed to ensure transparency,
22 responsiveness, and equitable outcomes for all
23 students.

24 Is the Public Advocate here? Thank you. We will
25 come back to the Public Advocate. I look forward to

1 hearing today from the Administration and of course
2 from all the witnesses who are here and I would like
3 to thank my staff, my Chief of Staff Jenna Klaus and
4 Adam Staropoli my Legislative Director.

5 The Education Committee Staff, including Council
6 Alejandro Carvajal, Senior Policy Analyst Chloe
7 Rivera, Policy Analyst Katie Salina, and Financial
8 Analysts Andrew Lane-Lawless, and Grace Amato for
9 their work on today's hearing and I would like to
10 thank Regina Paul, the former Policy Analyst for her
11 moral support through life.

12 I would also like to thank my colleague who are
13 here, Council Members Narcisse, Wong, Joseph, and
14 Louis, and Council Member Schulman is here on Zoom.

15 I would like to remind everyone who wishes to
16 testify in person today that you must fill out a
17 witness slip which you could find at the desk of the
18 Sergeant at Arms near the entrance of this room.
19 Please fill out this slip even if you have already
20 registered in advance that you will be testifying in
21 person today.

22 I also want to point out that we will not be
23 voting on any legislation today. To allow as many
24 people as possible to testify, testimony would be
25

1
2 limited to two minutes per person, whether you are
3 testifying in person or on zoom. I am also going to
4 ask my colleagues to limit their questions and
5 comments to five minutes. Please note that in
6 general, with some exceptions, witnesses who are here
7 in person will testify before those who are signed
8 into the Zoom webinar.

9 As a reminder to our witnesses, please state your
10 name prior to your testimony for the record. If
11 anyone here today requires an accessible version of a
12 presentation given at today's hearing, please email
13 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Now in accordance with
14 the rules of the Council, I will administer the
15 affirmation to the witnesses from the mayoral
16 administration.

17 I will call on each of you individually for a
18 response, please raise your right hands. Do you
19 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing
20 but the truth before this Committee and to respond
21 honestly to Council Member questions?

22 PANEL: I do.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. You may begin
24 your testimony.

1
2 KAMAR SAMUELS: Alright cool. Alright, good
3 morning City Council Members. Thank you Education
4 Chair Dinowitz and the Education Committee Members
5 for the opportunity to testify today on the topic of
6 Mayoral Accountability and governance of our school
7 system.

8 My name is Kamar H. Samuels and I am proud to be
9 the Chancellor of New York City Public Schools, our
10 nations largest school system. As a former teacher,
11 principal, superintendent and as a parent of two NYC
12 PS students, I have experienced our system from a
13 multitude of vantage points over the last 20 plus
14 years. I have seen the incredible feats we have
15 achieved under mayor accountability, resulting in
16 increased equity and educational excellence across
17 our city and for that reason, I support Governor
18 Hochul's proposed four year extension and I have also
19 seen examples of how our system can do better on
20 behalf of students, families, and communities.

21 Too many families feel their voices are unheard
22 and that there are too many barriers to effectively
23 engage but I want to be clear, this is not a zero sum
24 game. I believe mayoral accountability and family
25 empowerment can and must coexist.

1
2 Our children deserve both. The central oversized
3 and execution that allow for real impactful change
4 and the local input and decision making that give our
5 families a meaningful say. Let me repeat, mayoral
6 accountability and family empowerment are not
7 mutually exclusive. We need them to operate in
8 tandem to lift our schools to new heights.

9 I entered the classroom as an elementary school
10 teacher in the Bronx shortly before mayoral
11 accountability was first implemented. Our schools
12 have made significant strides since then; high school
13 graduation rates have risen by approximately 30
14 percent. We have the fair student funding formula,
15 one of the most equitable school funding formulas in
16 the nation and it's funded at 100 percent.

17 Family satisfaction with our children's education
18 has grown nearly ten percentage points to 96 percent
19 since the survey was first administered in 2007.

20 Mayoral Accountability has been and will continue to
21 be essential to this growth. It allows us to pursue
22 big, bold systemic goals to ensure equity across our
23 system and to respond effectively in moments of
24 crisis.

1
2 First, mayoral accountability ensures real change
3 for our students. Think of the largest most
4 impactful initiatives of the past 20 years. From the
5 expansion of early childhood education to the launch
6 of NYC Reads to the current implementation of the
7 class size law. This is work that fundamentally
8 transforms the school experience for New Yorkers,
9 students, families, staff, and entire communities and
10 none of this would possible without mayoral
11 accountability.

12 As an example, NYC Reads resulted in a 7.2
13 percentage point increase in reading scores in a
14 single year and the key to its success has been its
15 consistency across our system. Instead of 32
16 different reading curricula and uneven levels of
17 coaching and support across our district, we've been
18 able to disseminate high quality, evidence based
19 practices to every elementary school classroom.

20 In a city as large as ours, moving the needle
21 requires strong, sustained, central oversight and
22 execution. Second, mayoral accountability ensures
23 our highest need students and families receive robust
24 and equitable support. Rather than navigating
25 disjointed or conflicting policies and programs, our

1 families have a single source of truth regardless of
2 where they live or which school they attend.

3
4 Not only is there a clear point of
5 accountability, a single entity the public can hold
6 responsible for outcomes but with centralized
7 governance, we can apply an equity lens to everything
8 we do, such as allocating resources, programs and
9 staff. This means that our most vulnerable students,
10 including our students with disabilities,
11 multilingual learners, students in temporary housing
12 and foster care, and more are never pushed to the
13 side. They are consistently front and center in our
14 work. For instance, we added a wait to the Fair
15 Student Funding Formula to support students in
16 temporary housing in direct response to changing
17 community needs.

18 We've also been able to prioritize community
19 schools in areas where students and families could
20 benefit most. And while the work is always ongoing,
21 we've made major strides in providing excellent
22 special education programs and services citywide.
23 Because we've been able to centralize - to centrally
24 plan, prioritize, and set policy across all
25 districts.

1
2 And third, mayor accountability allows us to
3 respond effectively in the face of challenges and
4 crisis. From the recent pivot to remote day to the
5 current anxieties around ICE activity, we've been
6 able to act quickly, decisively, and comprehensively
7 thanks to mayoral accountability without
8 contradictions, confusions or delay that would impact
9 school safety and student safety.

10 In the case of the recent storm, we made a single
11 citywide decision instead of dozens of localized ones
12 to go remote, notifying and preparing families and
13 schools well in advance of that Monday morning.
14 Plus, thanks to the work we did during the pandemic
15 to ensure digital connectivity, we had enough devices
16 for every student, a feat once considered near
17 impossible, and in 2022, NYCPS launched Project Open
18 Arms to coordinate wrap around services for our
19 immigrant students and families across five boroughs.

20 The team streamlined enrollment, stood up
21 trainings for staff and families, provided supports
22 and in areas ranging from transportation to health,
23 partnered with the mayor's office on immigrant
24 affairs, and city agencies and more.

1
2 In each of these instances, mayoral
3 accountability allowed us to leverage the full force
4 of city government in service of our students and
5 families. As a Superintendent, I felt the positive
6 impact of this governance structure directly. I was
7 able to implement New York City Reads, uniformly and
8 effectively because I received dedicated funding and
9 comprehensive guidance from central offices.

10 I was able to serve newcomer students, connecting
11 them with city and community resources because there
12 was a shared priority across city government to
13 mobilize support. If not, for this central cohesion,
14 Superintendents in schools would be on their own.
15 Each operating as their own island without common
16 resources, consistent supports, or collective wisdom
17 to come from - that come from functioning as a
18 unified system.

19 In other words, a centralized governance
20 structure is not about undermining schools at the
21 local level. On the contrary, it supports and
22 improve them.

23 We know however that mayoral accountability
24 cannot exist in a vacuum. It only works when paired
25 with strong, family empowerment practices. Practices

1 that bring families to the table. I know this to be
2 true, both as the Chancellor and as a parent myself.
3 I am so proud of the work our system has done and
4 will continue to do to engage families and
5 communities in innovative ways.
6

7 On top of the engagement structures outlined in
8 State law, including community and citywide education
9 counsels, school leadership teams, parent
10 associations and parent teacher associations and
11 more, in the past several years, NYCPS has launched
12 community working groups, advisory counsels on issues
13 that are top of mind for families, including students
14 with disabilities, multilingual learners, fair
15 student funding and class size.

16 Additionally, as the panel of Education policy
17 has grown, we've launched PEP specific working
18 groups, on topics ranging from busing to data
19 privacy. While the PEP has also formed its own
20 community committees and special commissions.

21 Moreover, we've created and strengthened family
22 support structures from forming a parent coordinator
23 advisory council to launching new programs like NYC
24 Reads Ambassadors and family connectors empowering
25 thousands of families and family and community

1
2 members. We've expanded our covered languages for
3 our translation and interpretation as well, from nine
4 languages to twelve, to improve communication between
5 schools and families. These are promising starts,
6 yet I am keenly aware that there is still much more
7 to do. I am committed to ramping up this work
8 significantly in the upcoming months, after all, we
9 can talk about improvements all day but if families
10 are not feeling those impacts, if they're not feeling
11 involved in decision making, then we need to do
12 better. We need to pursue not just engagement but
13 true empowerment of our families.

14 To that end, I am already meeting with parent
15 leaders and advocates, and community members from
16 across the city to gather their feedback and input
17 into family empowerment.

18 Second, I'm excited to share that my community
19 conversation series open to families, students, staff
20 and community members begins tonight in Staten
21 Island. During these series, we'll be making ten
22 stops total, two in each borough to hear directly
23 from our community on this and other key issues.
24 I've also been busy visiting schools. Within my
25 first 60 days on the job, I will have visited all 45

1
2 of our superintendents across the city, meeting with
3 parents and community leaders, school staff and
4 students.

5 Additionally, my team and I are developing new
6 ideas for how we can enhance our family engagement
7 mechanisms for increasing flexibility around SLT
8 meeting structure, from increasing flexibility around
9 SLT meeting structure to further empowering our
10 parent coordinators to increasing CEC partnership and
11 participation. I look forward to sharing these ideas
12 with you in the upcoming weeks as we continue to
13 refine them and I hope to hear from you directly as
14 well to gather your input and ideas.

15 Ultimately, I believe that both mayoral
16 accountability and family empowerment are necessary
17 features of a strong school system. We know that our
18 students achieve when families, communities and
19 schools collaborate and we need to continue nurturing
20 this collaboration and strengthening ties with
21 families and communities. This approach paired with
22 a clear accountability structure that enables equity
23 and excellence will ensure our students have the high
24 quality schools they deserve. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much
3 Chancellor and thank you for being here, for your
4 testimony. I want to say on the record, it's been a
5 pleasure getting to know you over the past I guess
6 month, month and a week. I know you're counting the
7 days every time, 22 days, it's been 25 days uhm, but
8 I - but so far really appreciate the communication
9 with you and your office and I look forward to that
10 continuing.

11 Before I get on to my questioning, I want to turn
12 it over to our Public Advocate Jumaane Williams and
13 also recognize that we've been joined by Council
14 Members Zhuang, Farias, and Lee.

15 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you Mr. Chair,
16 much appreciated. Good morning, as mentioned my name
17 is Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate of the City of
18 New York. I want to thank Chair Dinowitz and the
19 members of the Committee on Education for holding
20 this important hearing. Happy to be here with our
21 new Chancellor. Welcome again.

22 Now, I do remain unwavering in my belief that New
23 York City and local government should have
24 jurisdiction over New York City Schools. We need to
25 implement a system of checks and balances with the

1 mayor and coordinating bodies are held accountable.
2
3 There are various models that give local government
4 and the community some more control over what happens
5 in their schools. I have since Mayor Bloomberg been
6 opposed to mayoral control and more support of
7 municipal control. Governmental bodies, including
8 this City Council could take a greater role in
9 working in tandem with the mayor and assessing the
10 needs and constraints of New York City Education
11 system. Minimally, although there are different
12 models, minimally the City Council I believe, should
13 have advice and consent on who the Chancellor will be
14 when it comes to New York City public schools.
15 Optimally, the entire school community can have a say
16 in their own governance as they often know best
17 what's needed.

18 As intergovernmental collaborations and
19 partnerships continue to expand, New York City public
20 schools are very much often feel siloed entirely
21 under one mayor. Our children's education should not
22 be dependent on one person, especially during a time
23 when we need heightened collaboration. Now, one
24 person is great if that person is very good. If that
25 person is not, it is a high risk and high reward.

1
2 So, this is not about any one mayor and one
3 chancellor. I'm excited to see what the Chancellor
4 is going to do and obviously I'm excited about this
5 mayor, but I think it's a longstanding criticism of
6 the way the systems are set up.

7 Under mayoral control, mayors have gotten away
8 with decisions that were harmful to New York City
9 youth, parents and communities because they didn't
10 have any other way of recourse when something went
11 wrong. The problem with mayoral control again, it's
12 not just any one mayor. Simply put, one person
13 controlling New York City public schools does not
14 allow sometimes for - too often for students of
15 parents, community members to have a true say in
16 decisions related to our schools.

17 Other major cities like Chicago, Los Angeles,
18 Detroit, and Oakland, have moved away or are moving
19 away from mayoral control models of school
20 governance.

21 As New York City students and families continue
22 to recover and cope with the stress, trauma,
23 uncertainty and upheaval of the COVID-19 pandemic, it
24 is more important than ever to be working
25 collaboratively to provide the academic, social

1
2 emotional and physical and mental health services
3 that our students need. Many Pre-K and 3-K students
4 with disabilities unable to find seats in the Special
5 Education programs, may disable students and students
6 in temporary housing or foster care do not have
7 reliable bus services to get them to schools.

8 We can create a system with some additional
9 checks and balances where the mayor and coordinating
10 bodies are held accountable. Governmental bodies
11 including the City Council can take a greater role in
12 working tandem with the mayor in assessing the needs
13 and constraints of New York City education system.

14 Various advocates, groups, and organizations
15 already look to the City Council to create change but
16 as the law stands, they sometimes are unaware of the
17 limitations that this body has in the education
18 system.

19 As mentioned, the hiring of a school chancellor,
20 should not be a unilateral decision made by just one
21 person. We must make room for other voices to weigh
22 in on education issues. The City Council can provide
23 some - does provide checks to many other city
24 agencies that have difficulty doing the same with New
25 York City Public Schools. The public schools and

1
2 NYPD are probably the two biggest ones that we need
3 some oversight on. It's the ones we have the most
4 difficulty because of the way the system is set up.

5 We have a chance to change it and provide a level
6 of consistency across the board when it comes to
7 agency accountability. All students deserve to have
8 a reliable and consistent education system that puts
9 them first.

10 We need to set an example for our students and
11 show them successful work can get done through
12 collaboration. I appreciate you giving me the
13 opportunity to speak and I'm hoping that we can find
14 a system that works where other bodies and
15 particularly the Council can have a larger voice.

16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Mr. Public
18 Advocate. It's great having you here. Uhm, you know
19 before we get into the questions, I want to be clear
20 because we're hearing - we hear this in the debate
21 and we hear this even in the testimony, that it's
22 sort of this choice between this old model that doom
23 and gloom of the old model of school boards or just
24 renew mayoral control and everything is perfect and I
25 think for a lot of us, the answer may lie somewhere

1
2 in between. That there are accountability measures
3 that can be put in place while perhaps having you
4 know an executive in charge just like we have in any
5 of our agencies. While giving parents and teachers a
6 voice, while giving the municipal local government a
7 voice and real oversight and legislative authority.

8 But the first thing I want to ask about is
9 academic accountability. The strides, you mentioned
10 in your testimony uhm, our schools have made
11 significant strides since then and then you
12 referenced high school graduation rates and the Fair
13 Student Funding Formula. Can you talk more about
14 what metrics you were using to measure the academic
15 success of mayoral control?

16 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, great question and yeah I
17 think in general, the metrics we look at number one,
18 is you know I talked a little bit about what our
19 parents are thinking across the board. You know
20 we've increased in terms of what our parents feel
21 about the system but specifically, we look at test
22 scores, graduation rate and I think over the last 20
23 years, we've certainly focused a lot on the NAEP
24 scores as well.

1
2 And so, for example, in fourth grade reading in
3 New York City, we've gone up you know about six
4 points, which is not hugely important or not huge but
5 when you think about it in the context of the rest of
6 the state, the rest of the state has gone down ten
7 points right NAEP scores.

8 In 8th grade reading, scores, we've gone up seven
9 points and in the rest of the state has gone down ten
10 points. When we think about grade 4 math, we've gone
11 up 12 points. The rest of the state has stayed flat.
12 In 8th grade math, we've stayed flat and the rest of
13 the state has gone down ten points.

14 And that you know similarly when it comes to high
15 school graduation rates, I talked about the increase
16 of 30 points over the last 20 years. Uhm, but in
17 that time, our black and white gap, racial gap has
18 closed by 14 percent and our Latin gap has closed by
19 17 points.

20 When it comes to post-secondary enrollment, that
21 means our kids of the 9th grade cohort, how many of
22 them have enrolled in post-secondary education.
23 We've seen an increase of 23 points. Right, so we've
24 moved significantly in the right direction. We also
25 look at AP exams, right? The number of kids taking

1
2 AP exams have more than tripled between 2006 and
3 2024. You know up by 247 percent and then compare
4 that with the national average of 130 percent. So,
5 in many different metrics, uh we look across a
6 diversity of metrics and in many of these metrics,
7 we've seen significant increase and some of that can
8 certainly be attributed to our mayoral control for
9 example, for our work, just a lot of different
10 pieces.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, so let's break some
12 of those down. As a commentary, I think the high
13 school graduation rates are dubious at best. I don't
14 know if there are any high school teachers here but
15 we have something called credit recovery. I see some
16 people nodding along and that's the way some high
17 schools kind of got their kids to graduate.

18 I have been in the room when I heard an
19 administrator say to teacher, uhm, you know what?
20 Can you pass this kid and they promise they'll do the
21 work over the summer?

22 So, like, uhm, I just want to point that out.
23 Not under your leadership of course Chancellor.

24 KAMAR SAMUELS: Thanks for clarifying that but I
25 also do think in many different ways this is not just

1
2 about during COVID times when things have been - in
3 many different ways, our high schools have made
4 significant progress. It's a time that I joined the
5 system and they a lot of the work, I don't want to
6 poo poo the work of the vast majority of kids who I
7 think have made progress to graduate high school.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Neither do I but the
9 question is about the metrics and as you you know
10 alluded to your answer, how much of it is attributed
11 to mayoral control? And generally, over the past
12 almost quarter century, since this has been
13 implemented, that the NAEP scores have actually
14 remained pretty stagnant, pretty straight and
15 compared to the rest of the country, do you know how
16 the NAEP scores have done to the rest of the country?

17 KAMAR SAMUELS: Uhm, I don't have that number in
18 front of me right now but uhm -

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, I'm sure one of your
20 team will text you.

21 KAMAR SAMUELS: We can try to get that for you.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But I belief they've -
23 it's - there's no statistical difference in the NAEP
24 scores for example, as you referenced between New
25 York City and some of these other places that have a

1
2 variety of governance structures. And so, the
3 question for me is, how has the current system
4 improved or supported students achievement? What is
5 it about the mayoral control that has done that?

6 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, so I'll certainly go back
7 to what we can talk about in recent memory. The idea
8 that we have a system in New York City that can be
9 compared to no other system where we can across our
10 system, guarantee a couple of things. Number one,
11 what we've seen in you know certainly over the last
12 four years, when a child comes into school for the
13 first three months, now we are able to say, no matter
14 where you are in our system, you will receive what we
15 call a screener. Just like when you go to the
16 doctor, you get your blood pressure taken, they get a
17 sense of where you are. That's happening in every
18 single school now across our city. We couldn't
19 guarantee that without a centralized governance
20 structure that allows us to say, okay every school -
21 you need to give either the MAP or the I Ready screen
22 to get a sense and then on top of that now we have a
23 centralized curriculum right, where we're able to say
24 across our system for grades 3 to 8, or sorry, grades
25 K to 8, we have a very defined curriculum so that

1
2 teachers have a roadmap as to what to do when they
3 enter the classroom. We would not be able to do that
4 without a system level strategy that we've been able
5 to implement.

6 So, I think and that work has certainly led to
7 significant increases in our ELA scores.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I want to note
9 we've been joined by Council Member Krishnan and
10 Restler. Thank you. Oh, there he is. Why are you
11 sitting there? Come closer.

12 KAMAR SAMUELS: People came on to see me.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That was a good line. So,
14 uhm, so thank you for that. I just want to push back
15 a little because there's an assertion that the only
16 way to do any screener would be for the Mayor or the
17 Chancellor to do it but we have people, I mean that's
18 the assertion right? Having a centralized structure
19 under the leadership of a single chancellor and Mayor
20 right?

21 KAMAR SAMUELS: I would say the only way to
22 guarantee across the system that that's done by
23 October is to have a centralized body, yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right, there's another
25 way, which is to have the City Council right? We are

1
2 able to pass legislation but there's this thing in
3 the state where we're not able to legislate in the
4 same way we do other agencies the Department of
5 Education.

6 And so, would the DOE - is it the position of the
7 DOE? Because we share the same goals, right? There
8 have been discussions about screeners at this level
9 and at the state level. And would the DOE be willing
10 to grant more legislative authority to the New York
11 City Council so we can share in those goals and
12 partner and ensure that these citywide initiatives
13 are implemented?

14 KAMAR SAMUELS: Well, as you know, I'm in support
15 of the governor's extension of mayoral control for
16 the next four years. I would say that we have
17 guaranteed this already, this screening process
18 already. We have it in place. We have centralized
19 curriculum in place. I think we've partnered, as you
20 know, in Special Education and the reports that we do
21 to the Council on Special Education and when we are
22 required to do those, we will happily abide by that
23 and so, you know whatever laws come into play for us,
24 we're happy to abide by that.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But I just want to make
3 sure the position of the DOE is a straight extension
4 and not to grant the City Council, we're representing
5 51 different districts, we represent you know people
6 just like the Mayor closer to the ground. The
7 position of the DOE is that they are not interested
8 in considering working with the Council to grant more
9 legislative authority, just as we do over any other
10 agency.

11 KAMAR SAMUELS: So, I think the position of the
12 DOE is to continue to work with the Council in the
13 ways that we can and will. We're always open to
14 that, but when it comes to the governance structure
15 of mayoral control or mayor accountability, we are -
16 we believe in it. It's been shown to have
17 significant, a significant, a positive impact on our
18 system from our perspective and we certainly don't
19 want to, like you said, it's not necessarily - we
20 certainly don't want to go back to what it was prior
21 to mayoral control. We are open to partnering with
22 the Council as we always have.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Again, I do
24 want to push back on the it's been shown to show as
25 is, this great change in student achievement. I

1 think those uhm - I think that statement is dubious
2 at best, especially when looking at more broad-based
3 scores like the NAEP scores, I think as I mentioned.
4 The graduation rates are that's questionable and that
5 could be changed based on certain policies that are
6 implemented by mayoral control. And that's
7 absolutely not to take away from the incredible work
8 that you and I have seen going on in our schools.

9
10 When it comes down to this, when we're talking
11 about numbers. We also know that when you are
12 measured, when your success is measured on a
13 graduation rate, your going to get that graduation
14 rate up you know no matter what at whatever cost.
15 So, I want to turn it over to my colleagues. We're
16 going to come back. I have some more questions. I
17 want to recognize that we've been joined by Council
18 Member Gutiérrez and I'd like to turn it over to
19 Council Member Joseph for questions. And we've also
20 been joined by Council Member De La Rosa.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you Chair Dinowitz.
22 Good morning Chancellor. How are you? I have a
23 couple of questions because we know around mayoral
24 accountability, parent engagement is very important.
25 So, in the last CC election we saw two percent voter

1 turnout in 2025 election. What does that indicate
2 about community engagement under mayoral control and
3 what steps will be taken to strengthen CEC authority
4 and participation? Because if we are really looking
5 for parent engagement, that was a big dozy, so I
6 would love to see how we're going to move forward and
7 fix that.

9 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah. CEC elections uh just like
10 you know any other election in our city is super
11 important for the participation of our parents in our
12 system. We believe in civic engagement and that is
13 something that we are really committed to.

14 You know I think the job of the department over
15 the next four years is to figure out how to increase
16 those numbers and to really make sure that our
17 parents see the value in participating in CEC. We
18 did see an increase in the number of appoint- people
19 who applied but we continue to really work to make
20 sure that the participation rate is improved. And I
21 want to turn it over to our Deputy Chancellor,
22 Cristina Meléndez to talk a little bit more about
23 that.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: If we have almost 900,000
25 students in the system and only two percent

1
2 participate, I could do the math. We could do the
3 math. The math is not mathing at all.

4 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: Or maybe it is but
5 absolutely. Chair -

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Council Member Joseph.

7 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: Council Member Joseph, thank
8 you. Uhm, the number of applicants -

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm sorry to interrupt.
10 Can you just say your name for the record?

11 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: Cristina Meléndez.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much.

13 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: The number of applicants did
14 increase by 24 percent, which means that for us, much
15 of the work that we have done around making our
16 families aware of what does it mean to be CEC member?
17 What does it mean to be part of this body and how
18 powerful this is and could be influential to your
19 community? That work was done better and we're
20 definitely open and committed to continuing to grow
21 that with some other outreach opportunities, which
22 currently we are doing in light of the 2027
23 elections.

24 Making sure that families go to these meetings.
25 That they understand what this body is and then we

1
2 want to - but we did see a decrease in the voter
3 turnout.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: But some of the
5 candidates, their name wasn't even on the ballot.
6 So, there was a lot of missed steps. I would love to
7 see how plan to correct that in the future, engage
8 parents and families and not just reach out. Not
9 just on a regular 9 to 5. We know our families in
10 New York City operate on different time levels. We
11 also have to meet communities where they are.

12 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: Yeah, we've done a lot of the
13 outreach opportunities outside looking really closely
14 at our lowest performing ten percent districts that
15 have a hard time getting out. How do we get them out
16 and engaging them in a multitude of different ways?
17 We will definitely be thinking about more creative
18 ways to do that. Every election, we have gotten
19 better but I think that the one thing that you just
20 raised, uhm which is really important for us is, what
21 are we - what are they - how do we get families to
22 come out and understand what this work is about?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Have you done survey's?

24 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: We have done survey's. We've
25 also had uhm, I'm sorry, uhm -

1
2 KAMAR SAMUELS: So, I'll say also the math is
3 mathing but it's extremely disappointing.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: No, it's not. Hmm, hmm.

5 KAMAR SAMUELS: The math is extremely
6 disappointing.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: We didn't carry over. We
8 didn't gain anything.

9 KAMAR SAMUELS: So, I'll say this, it's extremely
10 disappointing. I would say that one of the things we
11 are doing and we are going to do is to ensure that we
12 strengthen the parent coordinator role. I think all
13 of this starts at the school level right? At the
14 school level, where kids and families are making
15 connections with each other. That's where this
16 starts and so we need to build the capacity of our
17 parent coordinators. We need to invest more in our
18 parent coordinators and their training and then also,
19 coordinate at a district level with our family
20 leadership coordinators and family support
21 coordinators to ensure that families feel a strong
22 connection, not just to the school but to the
23 community in and of itself. And I think that's the
24 work between now and 2027.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you.

1
2 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: And just to add to that
3 Chair, uhm Council Member Joseph.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Council Member Joseph.

5 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: We've also uhm, changed our
6 vendor. Part of the problem with the ballots last
7 time was our vendor was very, very disappointing but
8 uhm, we were able to rectify those in 12 hours' time
9 or less but our vendor now is no longer something
10 that we're looking towards and we're doing the work
11 in house.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: I have five minutes, so I
13 have to make sure that I can get to my next question.
14 Given that under the mayoral control, the mayor has
15 responsibility for New York City Public Schools and
16 other city agencies. How have you - uhm, how have
17 City Hall - City Hall needs stronger interagency
18 coordination for City Hall to bring together agencies
19 to support students who are in temporary housing,
20 students in foster care, and how will you plan on
21 bringing all these agencies? Agencies don't like to
22 talk to each other but we do the same work and it
23 overlaps. So, DHS would be having conversations with
24 you. ACS should be having conversations with you.

1
2 How do we strengthen that to make sure that we're not
3 leaving anyone behind?

4 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, one of the first things
5 that we have to do is also strengthen it within the
6 department itself, right? So, we have to make sure
7 that our Office of Community Schools is communicating
8 with open arms. We have to make sure that our
9 attendance folks are communicating with uhm, and this
10 is all within the department so we have to strengthen
11 those and there's a plan to do that and then also
12 yes, we are in our - in this administration, we are
13 going to make sure that we are connecting with inter
14 agencies. As we are doing first with uhm our rollout
15 of early childhood, that has to happen as we see 14
16 percent of our students experiencing housing
17 insecurity. That kind of interagency connection is
18 critical and we've seen it with our every child and
19 families known that we started to do that and we have
20 to expand that outside of the agency within our
21 agency department.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: The Chair says I have to
23 wrap up. I just wanted to know the work that you're
24 around District 3 and the merger. Can you please
25 talk us through that process?

1
2 KAMAR SAMUELS: Okay, great. Uhm, so uh I think
3 we've been in conversations in District 3 for over a
4 year and this is a very, very important precursor to
5 what we will - to how I plan to deal with parents and
6 engagement. So, you know we first start with a
7 problem that the community is facing. We listen to
8 folks talk about their problem. We go back, we come
9 back with ideas and then families give us feedback on
10 those ideas and then we come back. We don't even
11 have a - we don't have a proposal in District 3 yet
12 but folks know about it because they've been talking
13 about it for so long. That's why they have opinions
14 and so, that is vastly different from work that we've
15 done in the past where the first time, some families
16 are hearing about it is when they have a proposal.
17 So, more to come on that. There is a lot of
18 conversations that will be generating about that but
19 thank you so much for your question.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member.
21 I want to follow up on what Council Member Joseph
22 said about our CEC's and the parent engagement
23 because the question for me isn't just like what are
24 you doing more to engage? My question is what is in
25 the law that is requiring you to do this engagement

1
2 and not just engagement but involvement? And we've
3 gotten complaints that even though it's by law, these
4 trainings exist. The training for CEC's is not
5 robust enough that SLT's used to be brought together.
6 Not so much anymore and so, one, as a policy, are you
7 willing to do more robust training and engagement and
8 involvement with SLT's and CEC's?

9 But as the second part, more importantly, are you
10 willing to say it on the record that you are willing
11 to codify that more robust trainings and support
12 should be given to CEC's and SLT's?

13 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yes to both.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, thank you. I'm
15 going to turn it over to Council Member Narcisse for
16 - I'm sorry, Council Member Louis and then Narcisse
17 for questions. Council Member Narcisse.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay, thank you for my
19 turn.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm sorry, we've been
21 joined by Council Member Brewer.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Don't take my time now.
23 Oh, thank you Chair and thank you Chancellor and your
24 leadership here with you all that are doing amazing
25 work to keep our city moving with our children.

1
2 One of the things that caught my attention is
3 family engagement. This is one of the key; I will
4 say very instrumental in order to move our children
5 in the right direction. What kind of support are you
6 really giving to the family knowing that we have
7 newcomers in our city and language barrier can be a
8 problem and so many other issues surrounding us, from
9 shelter to moving around the city? How are you going
10 to get the parent engaged? What are you willing to
11 do? How far are you willing to go to make sure
12 parents are engaged?

13 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah and you know you talked
14 about newcomer families and how many there are in the
15 city and I would say you know, as an immigrant
16 myself, this is something that's really important to
17 me and as our administration thinks about changing
18 the feeling in the city, uh we think you know we've
19 done - we want to make sure our families know that we
20 are a city that adheres to the sanctuary laws that we
21 have. That we do not ask immigration status in our
22 schools, of our families, and that we are prepared
23 and willing to stand to prevent nonlocal law
24 enforcements from entering our schools and nonlocal
25 law enforcement meaning ICE.

1
2 And for me, this is really, really critical
3 because if we are not connecting with families, then
4 they will not feel safe in our schools. And so,
5 again, I think we rely - nobody sends their kid to a
6 Chancellor or a district. They send their kid to a
7 school and that school is led - and the first point
8 of content is often always the parent coordinator and
9 we have some amazing work happening with our parent
10 coordinators and we need to figure out how to share
11 some of those best practices, especially with the
12 community that you're talking about, right?
13 Especially when somebody is new.

14 What we've done as a system is increase the
15 number of languages that we are able to translate
16 from 9 to now 12 and make sure that those are uh
17 connecting with families that we have. And then we
18 also have a SAM, \$7 million SAM, where schools are
19 able to do their own translations. They have access
20 to do that with vendors for themselves right? And
21 so, to me, I think it's all about equipping schools
22 with the necessary resources that they need to
23 connect with families and to protect families. If
24 you want to add Cristina.

25

1
2 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: I just want to add that we've
3 been able to train 4,280 family connectors, which are
4 just parents in the communities all across our
5 districts that are really there to support parents
6 and the information that they have is about all of
7 the city agencies and all the services they provide,
8 so that they can be that trusted messenger. Because
9 a parent will connect with a parent and say, I have
10 this problem, right and then they'll have some
11 direction, some place to send them. That's really
12 one of the services that our great city is providing.

13 We've also trained about 5,383 family New York
14 City Reads Ambassadors. Families who just at every
15 single language are able to understand what their
16 children are learning in school around New York City
17 Reads and what they can do at home with their
18 children to support that work. And then another
19 thing that the Chancellor has also continued to
20 support is this idea of the Hello App, that helps
21 translate everyone in real time at our schools.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you. This is
23 important but I want to - you want to add something
24 because I don't have time. My time is limited.

25 KAMAR SAMUELS: Alright, go ahead.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: What example can DOE
3 provide where mayoral control allowed the city to act
4 more quickly and decisively than you otherwise?

5 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, well, certainly the most
6 recent example would be to pivot to remote day. When we
7 were faced with weather conditions that were adverse
8 to the students going to school, it was a very - it
9 required quick and decisive decision making because
10 we know that would have put us at a disadvantage with
11 our 180 day requirement with the state. And so, we
12 decided to pivot to remote and we gave every student
13 who needed it had a device that went home and we also
14 were able to connect with families to make sure that
15 they knew what the plan was. And so, I would say
16 that was one big one but just to return finally to
17 the last point, I think we have to make sure that
18 we're understanding that our newcomer families,
19 particularly are families that are most vulnerable
20 that don't speak English are a huge opportunity for
21 our city. Because invariably when those young people
22 learn English, and they understand academic English,
23 they often time out perform students who were never
24 else.

1
2 And that means that for our city, those are folks
3 who are going to really be connected - connected
4 residents in our city that are going to move the city
5 forward. So, for me, that is what our schools are
6 supposed to be doing is providing that opportunity.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I know my time is up
8 because I've just been blessed with the clock. So,
9 one last question. In what ways does mayoral control
10 have align, curriculum, staffing, capital planning,
11 and budgeting towards shared citywide priorities?

12 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yes, mayoral control does that.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I'm going to leave
14 after that.

15 KAMAR SAMUELS: Does all of that, so thank you
16 for saying that.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Chair, you can have
18 your mic back.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Oh, thank you so much.
20 Thank you Council Member Narcisse and Chancellor, I
21 want to thank you again for you know affirming all of
22 our students rights to be in the school, to be safe
23 in the school. I think it's a value every educator
24 shares. Like, when a kid walks through those doors
25 of our building, of our classroom, they are charged

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2 and we take care of them and we protect them and I
3 want to thank you for reaffirming that. I will now
4 turn it over to Council Member Wong.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yes, thank you. Thank you
6 Chancellor for coming today.

7 KAMAR SAMUELS: Thank you for having me.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Uhm, I served at my school
9 board, Community Education Council 24. I served for
10 four years and out of that two years I was President
11 and we passed various Resolutions that gets forwarded
12 to DOE, and it's my experience that a lot of
13 Resolutions does not follow through and we've never
14 heard them. There were no replies, no follow ups and
15 my question is, what is being done to change that
16 because we feel very frustrated that we have
17 identified issues and we pass Resolutions and then we
18 felt that our voices are not being heard and I think
19 it's true for CEC Resolutions in general. So, can
20 you talk about what are you - what's being done to
21 change that? Thank you.

22 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, uhm, first of all, I
23 totally understand having been a Superintendent
24 across two districts. This is something that I've
25 heard for years and so, one of the things that we've

1
2 done now is to actually start having responses to the
3 Resolutions, whether you know I can't guarantee that
4 people will like the responses that they'll get but
5 we have in - we have now started to significantly
6 respond to those. And so, I'm going to turn it over
7 Cristina to talk a little bit more about that.

8 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: We - it's actually been
9 codified in state law. That's one of our
10 requirements to make sure that we respond because you
11 are absolutely right for years we never did and it
12 felt like we don't really have a voice here. And so,
13 not only is it codified in state law but we've also
14 been responding to all of our resolutions and we're
15 even creating themes around them and using that
16 information to support our trainings and all of the
17 things that our CEC members are raising.

18 KAMAR SAMUELS: And I'll just add to this, last
19 year, I was a part of a superintendent CEC
20 collaboration, right and one of the things a CEC had
21 started to voice was this, they were very upset with
22 the presentation by the SCA and they were very upset
23 with not being clear around the Department of
24 Facilities and the work that they did. And so, in
25 response to that kind of outcry from our CEC, we had

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2 a project that we worked together, the Chancellor and
3 I and the CEC partnered together and we learned so
4 much from that process that we've codified some of
5 that work and disseminated it and we're going to be
6 informing the rest of the city around how to make
7 sure we leverage the voice of the CEC's to move the
8 parent engagement agenda forward.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you because we have
10 to bring back and tell the parents all the ideas they
11 gave us that led to many of these Resolutions. They
12 want to hear a response more often than from CEC
13 members.

14 KAMAR SAMUELS: That's right.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: But it's just as important
16 we need replies and actions on these CEC Resolutions.
17 Thank you.

18 KAMAR SAMUELS: 100 percent, I agree.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member.
20 Can you clarify which part - which, in the state law,
21 what requires a response from the DOE?

22 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: The CEC Resolutions?

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes.

24 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: They submit Resolutions and
25 we're expected to respond.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, thank you. Uhm,
3 alright now I will turn it over to Council Member
4 Restler.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: What a treat. Thank
6 you. Congratulations Chair Dinowitz and
7 congratulations to the Chancellor. As the Chancellor
8 knows, I was heartbroken when we lost him as our
9 Superintendent in District 13. Incredibly
10 disappointed that he went to the upper west side, but
11 I'm glad that he's back looking out for the kids.
12 You're laughing because it's true. I was pissed.

13 Uhm, but I am, I'm very pleased that the students
14 in District 13 are under his tutelage once again as
15 are the students across our city. I think this was
16 really a tremendous appointment by the Mayor and I'm
17 really looking forward to working with you and
18 excited for you to build your team at Tweed and to
19 navigate one of the toughest bureaucracies in city
20 government. And I'm grateful that you and the mayor
21 have leaned in on mayoral control. I similarly am
22 committed to mayoral control and think it's the right
23 system or maybe, what do they say about democracy?
24 It's - it's, no, I was going to say that it's the
25 best in the government we got. Similarly, I think

1
2 mayoral control is the best of our options but I do
3 think there are some opportunities for improvement.

4 During the campaign, Mayor Mamdani leaned in to
5 the need for procurement reform and contracting
6 improvements at the DOE and I think part of the
7 challenge and as the Contracts Chair now, I'm focused
8 on this as well. Part of the challenge that we face
9 I think is backed into how mayoral control is
10 approved. That everything goes through the PEP
11 process. DOE is not subject to the same oversight
12 for MOCs and the city procurement, the PBB rules and
13 city procurement oversight that other agencies are.
14 As you look to see mayoral control extended this
15 year, do you think that we should revisit how
16 procurement is handled at the DOE? Should it be
17 subject to the same mayoral agency oversight that
18 every other city agency is?

19 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, so first and foremost, well
20 first of all, thank you for the kind words. I
21 appreciate it and I'm happy that we're connected
22 again. Uhm, procurement reform is a huge part of
23 what we should be looking at DOE, especially when I
24 think of having vendors, we want to make sure that
25 vendors have an accountability metric for what they

1
2 are providing to us. So, certainly that is something
3 that we are looking for - looking to do. I'm not
4 fully sure what the other agencies are subjected to
5 but I will say that from our perspective, this is
6 something that we're working on. Elisheba, do you
7 want to come? So, oh and I guess she needs to be
8 sworn in. Yeah, sorry, yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Please raise
10 your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth,
11 the whole truth and nothing but the truth before this
12 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member
13 questions?

14 ELISHEBA LEWI: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay and before you
16 testify, you can move the mic down and speak into it
17 and then state your name for the record.

18 ELISHEBA LEWI: Elisheba Lewi, Chief Procurement
19 Officer at the DOE. Thank you Council Member. In
20 terms of the procurement policy that the DOE follows,
21 it's very similar to the PPP, which governs other
22 city agencies. I would say that we've been having
23 recent conversations with the Mayor's Office of
24 Contract Services about how we can align our
25 processes with the city so that we could leverage the

1
2 use of the cities procurement systems. These are
3 just preliminary conversations and these are
4 conversations that we had some time ago but it wasn't
5 necessarily a priority at the time but it's
6 definitely been engaged with the Mayor's Office of
7 Contract Services.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I appreciate that and I
9 just considering that the Mayor leaned into this so
10 hard on the campaign trail, recognizing the waste and
11 abuse and the inefficiency in our contracting system.
12 My colleague and neighbor and friend Council Member
13 Gutiérrez, is pushing legislation for greater
14 oversight around the delays in payment for early
15 childhood providers where we are so far behind,
16 embarrassingly behind and really, you know we all
17 know what happened to Sheltering Arms and how that
18 organization closed. In no small part because of
19 DOE's inability to pay in a timely fashion and we've
20 seen time and again, when we talked to the early
21 childhood providers in our districts, that they are
22 struggling to keep their lights on, struggling to pay
23 their staff because DOE is so consistently far behind
24 on payment.

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2 And so, I do really hope that as we go up to
3 Albany and you have me as a partner and advocating
4 for mayoral control but that we take a look at
5 procurement reform as a part of the mayoral control
6 conversation to ensure that there is greater
7 oversight accountability in delivering for our
8 providers who are so integral to our system. As we
9 look to grow the early childhood system, get on our
10 pathway to universal childcare, we're going to be
11 relying on our providers more than ever but if we
12 have to pay them, it's not going to work.

13 So, I really do think this is something that
14 merits Chancellor your attention. I also would say
15 the school bus contracts. I was really disappointed
16 that the previous administration just extended these
17 school bus contracts with these corrupt providers for
18 three more years but it will now be on this
19 Administration to determine how we move forward.
20 We're pushing for legislation for greater
21 accountability and oversight to ensure that the
22 school bus contracts - the school bus providers are
23 providing real data and transparency so that we can
24 hold them accountable to together and we really hope
25 to start the planning process now for getting away

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2 from these corrupt providers that have owned our
3 system for decades and shouldn't.

4 So, I had a bunch of other questions but I get
5 too excited, so Chancellor, I'm excited to be working
6 together. Congratulations again and thank you Chair
7 Dinowitz for the time.

8 KAMAR SAMUELS: Thank you and just to say, I
9 share your urgency around both the providers for
10 early childhood, making sure that they are paid. Not
11 just paid but paid on time and also your urgency
12 around the bus contracts for sure.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member
14 and you should know that people like Lincoln, all the
15 Council Members who used to work with you when you
16 were their superintendent in their districts, they
17 all texted me such wonderful things about you as soon
18 as you were named. So, you have a lot of fans in the
19 City Council.

20 I will now turn it to Council Member Guti rrez.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTI RREZ: Thank you. Good to
22 see everyone. Good to see you Chancellor, thank you
23 Chair. I will keep my time and I will monitor my
24 enthusiasm. I will temper it. Great, so I just had
25 a couple of questions. I'm really encouraged by you

1 testimony and I got here a little late, so my
2 apologies. I just have one question specifically on
3 ICE. I think the last Administration famously really
4 lagged on a unified response for our parents, to ease
5 parents and for administrators and for personnel and
6 staff. I don't want to single out principles but we
7 have great principles in District 32, 14, 24, and
8 many of them felt like they were not being supported
9 because there was not - there was not a centralized
10 protocol. They were very unclear on what they could
11 do. They knew what they wanted to do as people with
12 morals but didn't feel like they were supported and
13 then I think a policy did eventually come out a
14 couple weeks later.

16 So, want to know how you all are addressing that.
17 I think in the meantime, I think our principals are
18 doing great. They're watching the news. A lot of
19 our colleagues are really unified. A lot of the
20 communities are doing great, ICE watch and rapid
21 responses. So, I want to acknowledge that but a key
22 piece is are our schools and so I want to know how is
23 there something more centralized, more unified for
24 staff and principals and if at all you are working
25 with some of these groups, the ICE Watch groups? And

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2 then my second question is related to CEC and parent
3 engagement. I will say that it feels like uhm,
4 sometimes school do it very specifically and very
5 well. I'll shout out my daughters school but it
6 feels like as a school district, that doesn't happen.
7 It's not - it's kind of like the parents are on their
8 own on What's App Chat. It's kind of like discussing
9 things and it feels like something the CEC should be
10 doing to just centralize that information, to just
11 unify it and you know I represent District 14 with my
12 colleague Restler. We've gone through a lot. The
13 Deputy Chancellor certainly knows and we have a lot
14 more work to do so I'm specifically interested on the
15 work that you're doing CEC to CEC, District to
16 District to unify folks. To have hard conversations.
17 To have uncomfortable conversations but really not
18 just sit there and be like, well we're going to let
19 the temperature - we want to let the temperature cool
20 down because I think that's really unfair and our
21 kids are being impacted. That's it, thank you.

22 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, thank you. Two tough
23 questions. So, let's get back to the ICE question,
24 just really quickly. I think you know from a New
25 York City Public Schools perspective, despite the

1
2 fact of what was happening in our city, I think we've
3 always been clear with our principals about the idea
4 that our schools should be safe havens. So, we have
5 generally now safer access doors. Alright, so you
6 have to buzz to be let in to a school.

7 Uhm and given that our school safety agencies
8 have been trained centrally to say - to ask questions
9 about who is at the door and in the event that there
10 is no local law enforcement at the door, they have
11 been trained to notify the principal.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: When did that start?

13 KAMAR SAMUELS: That has - I mean that was
14 before, right? I think what you're -

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: It's true, I get it
16 from my daughters -

17 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, what you're pointing out
18 though is that the environment has shifted right, so.
19 While there might have been different messages coming
20 from the media, from City Hall, from schools, right
21 now, the message is very clear, right and it's as an
22 immigrant myself, our mayor is an immigrant. We have
23 a very clear message and very clear commitment that
24 we are going to stand in defense and we also have
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2 trainings that we have consistently done and Danika,
3 you want to add something here?

4 DANIKA RUX: And I just want to add; we actually
5 just had a training yesterday that was open to all
6 principals citywide and those are ongoing. We do
7 them virtually. We do them in person. In addition,
8 I just want to add that whenever there is an
9 incident, everybody is on board. The superintendent,
10 we get legal counsel on the call. We've had calls.
11 I know just a couple of weeks ago, the Chancellor
12 went to visit a family that was in crisis at a
13 school. Uhm, so we are all hands on when we have
14 incidents with ICE. It is a high priority for us for
15 our families to feel safe. So, the training is
16 ongoing. It continues, training for superintendents
17 is ongoing and continues as well.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: It's not mandatory
19 training though?

20 DANIKA RUX: It's not mandatory but we encourage
21 all of our principals to participate in those
22 trainings. Superintendents are monitoring also who
23 is attending those trainings and we know in certain
24 communities, there is a need for it and so we
25 encourage them to participate in those trainings.

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2 KAMAR SAMUELS: I think what you're getting at is
3 the consistency across system is very - sometimes
4 difficult to get to. I think over the last month in
5 particular, we've seen more movement towards
6 understanding what the administration wants to
7 happen.

8 And I think that same idea of consistency goes
9 towards your second question about parental
10 involvement. You are absolutely right, you know I'm
11 going to watch that group myself as a parent and
12 those watch groups can get you know really
13 interesting but I think from the systems perspective,
14 we all need to make sure that we have a baseline
15 understanding of what needs to happen in our schools
16 when it comes to connection and parent engagement.
17 Now with CEC's and across Districts, I think that's
18 something that we should be looking into to think
19 about how to create more opportunities for CEC's to
20 learn from each other for CEC's, even at the district
21 level to really be engaging. This idea of
22 understanding and disseminating best practices
23 because there are places in our city where CEC's work
24 very well together. Everybody, they have the voting,
25 everybody is there but then there are other places

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2 that need support and there's often times the best
3 people that give you support are the people who you
4 are going through it with, right? So, other CEC's
5 and we obviously can play a role in supporting and
6 facilitate that and we should.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you Council
8 Member. Council Member Brewer.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. We
10 are pleased that you are the Chancellor but there's a
11 lot of hell going on in District 3. I just want to
12 let you know. My question is mostly on the PEP. The
13 issue is in the past, one of the reasons I think that
14 we were talking about less mayoral control and I
15 certainly support mayoral control, was because the
16 PEP didn't feel that they were in charge of anything.
17 It was just the Chancellor.

18 So, my question is how are you going to change
19 that because I do think you know particularly with
20 issues that come from the district, you do want to
21 have some control.

22 KAMAR SANUELS: Yeah.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, that's a very fine
24 line and I'm just wondering how do you expect to
25 manage it because of course you know when the school

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2 communities disagree with a central policy, they're
3 all going to show up at the PEP.

4 KAMAR SAMUELS: That's right.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And I know who is going
6 to show up soon.

7 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yes, yes. Uhm, yeah so when
8 schools are really important parts of the city's
9 ecosystem and when we're trying to intervene in a
10 school, it ought to be something that is transparent
11 and something that where parents have the opportunity
12 to voice what they need to voice. What I think we -
13 some of the ideas that we have are to - is how do we
14 incorporate more structures at the CEC level right,
15 so and how do we codify those structures, so that
16 families know they have an official place to go
17 before it actually gets to the PEP right and there is
18 deliberation there and thinking there about how we
19 can operate.

20 And now, you know over the last several years,
21 we've seen some significant changes on how the PEP
22 operates. The PEP now is a bigger body of the 23.
23 It has representatives that are chosen by, voted on
24 by CEC members. Obviously Borough Presidents,
25 members as well and then also, an independent Chair,

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2 right and so, that is something that I believe is
3 making the PEP a more deliberative body and a
4 stronger body and so for me, uhm when families are
5 voicing their opposition to you know I as you know
6 Council Member Brewer, I -

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Gale is fine. Thank you.

8 KAMAR SAMUELS: As you know Gale, when I worked
9 in the district, I looked at the major problems. In
10 this case, we have a class size problem. We have a
11 performance problem in one of our schools and I
12 wasn't going to shy away from the big question. And
13 so, the question is, how do we solve these issues
14 together? We come up with ideas after hearing the
15 problem and sometimes - and then we get a feedback
16 from our parents.

17 Now, you know, in one example, we're trying to
18 phase out a school. We haven't done that as a system
19 in years. That is now a Kamar Samuels idea. We're
20 doing that because we heard from some parents who
21 said, oh, since I already chose to go to this school,
22 I don't want to just be merged with another school, I
23 want my child to finish their experience here. And
24 that's why we made the pivot to think about that.
25 That is not something I came up with. And so, the

1
2 idea's need to be flushed out. Now, in the end, not
3 everyone is going to agree with the idea. And you
4 have some people who agree and some people who don't.
5 And so, we have to go with - as best as possible and
6 a new superintendent will have to do this, to think
7 about what's best for the entire community.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, that all sounds
9 good except I'm stuck with six schools who are in
10 that situation and I'm trying to deal with it best I
11 can.

12 KAMAR SAMUELS: We'll continue to deal with it
13 together.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Oh my God. One other
15 question I have is we're all concerned because I
16 would love every school to be excellent but they're
17 not. So, I guess my question is, how do you - you
18 look at a school that needs assistance and help. How
19 do you look at that in terms of assessing it? What
20 kind of policy will be of assistance? Now, that's
21 obviously a hard question because every school is
22 different but is there some kind of metrics? Because
23 I see it.

24 KAMAR SAMUELS: Okay, this is such a great
25 question and I say yes, schools are complicated,

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2 however, there are several really dynamic metrics
3 that you can look at. Number one, of course, we
4 talked about test scores earlier. You can look at
5 the test scores, then you can go into the school and
6 look qualitatively at what's happening. I've spent a
7 lot of time in school, really walking around as a
8 part of my - what we call principal observation
9 visits, PPO visits and otherwise. And then one of
10 the key metrics is actually a learning environment
11 survey. We can look at what do the teachers think
12 about the school. What do the principals - what do
13 they think about their principal? What do students
14 think about the school? What do parents think about
15 the school? You take all of those things, multiple
16 measures into consideration before you make a final
17 decision and then that also involves parents or
18 engagement. You know some of our schools are having
19 such a hard time you know finding the resources to
20 have art teachers. Finding the resources to have
21 robust arts. Partly because the under enrollment of
22 the school and they don't have the resources and so,
23 we have to make sure that we're continuing the
24 conversation with schools and families to say, look,
25 when we think we can do a better - we can give your

1 child a better experience, we will try to do that.
2 But there are a myriad of ways to think it through.
3 Danika, you want to add anything.
4

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Danika has good ideas.

6 DANIKA RUX: I just wanted to add that under New
7 York City Reads, one of the things that we're doing
8 is uhm the professional development and the coaching.
9 Superintendents can identify which schools need the
10 most training. Which schools need the most days of
11 professional learning in their district and they can
12 allocate those days to those specific schools? So,
13 that is something that is being done very
14 intentionally to support the most struggling schools
15 in the system.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, can you let us know
17 if we have those in our district? Not to say that we
18 don't know because we can do the same analysis.

19 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, you do. We can follow up.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member.
22 I just uhm, just to clarify on the PEP, because we've
23 been talking about the PEP more. The Chair, I know
24 it was cities and he or she is an independent but it
25 is chosen by the mayor.

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I think these -

KAMAR SAMUELS: So, I'm going to ask Katie.

Katie, do you want to come up?

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, no, I'm just clarifying for the record. It's from [INAUDIBLE 01:18:20].

KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, from [INAUDIBLE 01:18:21].

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: The Regents, the Speaker and the Majority Leader.

KAMAR SAMUELS: Yes, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: The mayor chooses and he can reject all three and they'll do another round. So, there is I guess some level of independence but ultimately the mayor does pick who that Chair is. So, I just want to clarify that point for anyone who is watching.

KAMAR SAMUELS: Sure, and I think something else that they've done as we're experiencing now. The terms will be served out no matter who the mayor is right? So, you have folks on the PEP now who are mayoral appointees. We can't now remove them just because you have a new mayor. They'll serve out their term and yes, that is - that's an independent -

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2 there's a level of independence in the fact that they
3 were presented by the Regents and so on.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Council Member
5 Lee.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, sorry. Thank you
7 Chair and congrats on your first official hearing
8 Chair Dinowitz. I'm excited to see what you continue
9 to do with the Committee. So, thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: And Chancellor, it's great
12 to be here. I'm glad we got you on the board of
13 being a fan of roast pig now from the Luner New Years
14 celebration. So yes, we - just a couple things. I
15 wanted to also talk about how you know I wanted to
16 echo some of the sentiments of the previous comments
17 on how I think we do need to make sure we include CEC
18 voices, as well as the PEP's because they really do
19 know and understand their school community. So, just
20 wanted to echo that and also on the procurement
21 contracting reform point, as someone who used to be
22 on the provider side, I can say that you know it
23 would in terms of efficiency time on the staff for
24 the nonprofit organizations and the groups that
25 provide some of these services, uhm, having a more

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2 uniformed system where they're not having to talk to
3 different systems and input and upload things
4 differently would be hugely helpful and so, I know
5 that that's something that we've heard from some of
6 the provider side as well.

7 Okay, so my question. I had two questions. Uhm,
8 in terms of internal review of how mayoral control
9 effects transparency and responsiveness, uhm, I know
10 that when you guys look at the you know the surveys
11 that go out to the parents in the different schools.
12 You take a look at that data and information, looking
13 at various metrics like poverty levels, income levels
14 of the parent and just speaking from someone who has
15 both District 26 and 29 schools. Uhm, I know that
16 there's also a lot of hidden poverty and there are a
17 lot of communities that don't necessarily respond to
18 those questionnaires and so, I just wanted to know
19 how is it that you're reaching out to those families
20 to get more accurate information and data? Because
21 sometimes what you see on the responses may not
22 always be a fair assessment of where a lot of those
23 communities are. So, just wanted to pass that along.

24 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, that's such a great
25 question because I think you're right. Uh, our most

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2 vulnerable families are not always the families that
3 are you know completing the survey and I think you
4 know, that's why we rely so heavily on our community
5 schools partners, our CPO partners who actually make
6 in many schools, make a specific effort to make sure
7 that our most vulnerable families in our community
8 are completing the surveys but really what they do is
9 really implement strategies to make sure that we're
10 meeting the needs of those families each and every
11 day as much as possible as we've seen over the last
12 number of years. Just an increase in the number of
13 families, students with disabilities, who are also
14 uhm English Language Learners, who are also
15 experiencing a high level of poverty. And that I
16 think is our commitment across every child and
17 families known across community schools, across our
18 open arms work to make sure that we are deeply
19 invested and that we don't depend on that kind of
20 macro survey to actually meet the needs of those
21 families.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right, and then also making
23 sure hopefully that the resources going to those
24 schools and districts is also equitable as well. And
25 uhm, so okay, I know I have limited time. I have a

1 bunch of questions but I'll limit it to, I know that
2 one of the things coming up in the budget and
3 obviously we'll dive more into this when we do the
4 preliminary budget hearings but in terms of the class
5 size laws right, because I know that that is
6 something that you know tomorrow we're going on ten
7 cup day and we're going to be going to Albany with
8 our requests and so, just wanting to know, you know
9 where the schools that are facing the potential
10 barriers to the class size compliance uhm, how you
11 are going to decide when to enforce uniformly versus
12 allow phased or flexible implementation and I say
13 that with a caveat of obviously we're going to be
14 requesting assistance from the state but if that
15 let's just say hypothetically does not come through,
16 what are your plans to sort of help with the phasing
17 in and the resources because there's a lack of
18 teachers in the pipeline from my understanding and
19 that's a lot, it's like 6,700 I think teachers that
20 might be in 602 million that is going to be needed to
21 meet that. So, just wanted to hear that.

23 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, I hear you quoting my
24 testimony to the state. So, that's correct on the
25 teacher piece and just to kind of put a final point

1 on this idea of equitable resources, right? So, you
2 talked about mayoral control helps us to make sure
3 that we are able to meet that equitable resource
4 allocation and so, when it comes to class size, you
5 know you asked you know, obviously it's a state law
6 and I am not uniformly able to say, this is how we're
7 going to phase it in and so on. So, we're in
8 constant conversations and negotiations with our
9 union partner, as well as with the state as we think
10 about in these upcoming m, is there an opportunity to
11 look at some common sense revisions to these laws?
12 But most importantly, uhm I think we first have to
13 look at what is available within our system right
14 now? How are we currently using our system to make
15 sure that we are maximizing the underutilized spaces
16 that we have as well as figuring out how to come up
17 with a citywide utilization plan is going to be
18 critical. Because what's currently happening and I
19 want to make sure this is very clear, we have
20 principals, completing surveys about what's happening
21 in your schools and what happens is that a principal
22 then has to make a decision, am I going to lower my
23 second grade class or my first grade class and as
24 parents, here on the panel, you don't want to be one
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2 of those parents whose class wasn't lowered right?
3 And so, we're essentially putting the nexus of
4 accountability on the back of our principles and I
5 think we should shift that not only to districts but
6 to the system by developing a strategy for looking at
7 our utilization strategy of our buildings and then,
8 look at the places where we really need to build long
9 term so we can lower what that cost projection is and
10 then have a really serious conversation about it.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, thank you Council
12 Member Lee. Council Member Zhuang.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Thank you. Thank you
14 Chair and thanks Chancellor come to our district. It
15 was very good to see you there and I'm very happy
16 when I heard the Mayor in his campaign said that he
17 wants the whole government to give CEC and also
18 parents more power in the education system. Because
19 I believe parents also know their kids.

20 In our city, I see, especially in my district,
21 that we have some issues about don't have enough
22 access to a lot of programs and when city have
23 centralized; like a lot of times like special needs
24 education or gifted and talented program, how does
25 the central decision making impact extend to in which

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we are able to close the gaps and increase access for all the students for the education - in the education system.

Because a lot of parents told me if they have special needs kids, take two hours to get to school and two hours to get home. A lot of the time, parents choose just don't go to school. So, it's very difficult, especially for special needs families and also, in my district, I'm an immigrant like you. I came here when I was 20 years old because of education. I learned English. Because of Education, I changed my life but a lot of times, when the immigrants have very limited choice, they want to go to special schools like gifted and talented program because a lot of Asians go, they canceled the program. I think this is racist.

So, is anything centralized, give Mayor more power and are you guys going to change that?

KAMAR SAMUELS: So, alright so I just want to be clear. The specialized high school program has remained the same and has remained the same for years as the state law, right? A lot of families uhm make use of you know our accelerated GNT program that's in place right now. The issue is that part of the issue

1 is that it's not attested in at kindergarten right?
2 So, we do have uhm, you know several accelerated
3 programs. I think the mayor has said that he's you
4 know open to thinking about if we have a test, could
5 that or an admissions criteria, it's more appropriate
6 to do that at 3rd grade. And I think so for me, when
7 it comes to specialized high schools or GNT programs,
8 those two are not necessarily the same. People lump
9 them in the same conversation but they're actually
10 separate conversations.
11

12 And so, when we talk about elementary school and
13 thinking about how we make sure we have access to one
14 accelerated programs, right because a lot of our
15 families want accelerated programs.

16 That is a broad conversation that we are going to
17 have to enter in as a city over the next couple of
18 months because I think there - even within the
19 community that supports and that wants accelerated
20 programs, there is some concern with the system that
21 we currently have. And then families, many families
22 feel that there are inequities that come with having
23 a program. So, that requires again, through because
24 we have mayoral control, this is going to be a broad
25 conversation throughout the city.

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2 And I think we have right now in our system,
3 several ways that we ensure accelerated programs and
4 that we're meeting the need of every child. Every
5 child needs - so we have a system called MTSS, we
6 just make sure that the principals have a system in
7 place. That if you are off track, you're going to
8 get what you need. If you are above grade level
9 during that time, you will get what you need. It's
10 really what we call - they call it strategic reading
11 periods or what I need periods. And during those
12 times, our schools are now being trained so that
13 students are getting the interventions that they
14 need, right. We're very clear now about the
15 interventions and what their purposes are. And then
16 also that students can get the enrichment activities
17 that allow them to accelerate.

18 So, we're looking at all of it. There's more to
19 come around that in the next couple of months.

20 Yeah, so our students with special needs or
21 sorry, our students with disabilities, they will -
22 they also need really early intervention. And so,
23 because we are clear as a system about what good
24 intervention practices are, they absolutely benefit
25 from that. The issue of busing is a very serious one

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2 and we take it very seriously. We bus about 150,000
3 kids every single day. We have contracts that I
4 think the Chair outlined. It's like from 1979 and we
5 have to actually get that fixed over the next three
6 years, so that most of - so that we can get more kids
7 on time to school because when our most vulnerable
8 kids end up being late for school or miss school,
9 that really is something that we cannot be proud of
10 and we cannot stand by. We have to work on that.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: I have a follow up.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Let's do it later. I know
14 another Council Member has to leave, so we could do a
15 second round if you want to do a follow up , okay.
16 Council Member Krishnan.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you so much Chair
18 Dinowitz. I appreciate you holding this important
19 hearing too as the first hearing and appreciate your
20 leadership very much in this Committee as well. Uhm,
21 thank you Chancellor for your testimony today too.
22 It's good to see you and it's good to hear your
23 vision too and obviously all the experience you bring
24 to the table as well, not only as a Council Member
25 but also as a public school parent myself too.

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2 My question goes to things that we've been
3 struggling around throughout the hearing in terms of
4 mayoral control and how we can improve it. I think
5 it's very clear that it is not a perfect system.
6 Uhm, it is not a system that works best. It's the
7 system we've got right now but as the Public Advocate
8 has mentioned in his testimony too, there are many
9 other ways to think about how we create a system of
10 accountability and transparency that brings in every
11 stakeholder. But again, as I mentioned, it's what
12 we've got now and I think at some level, you know
13 centralization works well for certain things. Like,
14 I think as you testified to before, you know there
15 were differences, vast differences across the reading
16 curriculum and methods of teaching across our school
17 system. I was very supportive of the changes as a
18 parent teaching my seven year old youngest son how to
19 read too and seeing the differences and seeing what
20 works and what doesn't work. Struggling with him at
21 home and figuring it all out but I do think that
22 makes sense. But in other ways, what centralization
23 does and we've heard it too, is that it takes away
24 the individual attention that each school and school
25 district needs to. And that comes up on a you know

1
2 in an ad hawk basis. For example, in my school
3 district in Jackson Heights Elmhurst, in District 30
4 overall, because of that lack of attention, when for
5 example we had a whole influx of asylum seekers
6 coming here. The burden of that was faced especially
7 by my school district in particular and as I have
8 always mentioned, it's a stronger component of
9 bilingual education. We saw the lack of the DOE's
10 investment in bilingual. Not only do I think it's an
11 important tool for children, but also we needed more
12 certified teachers when we had a number of
13 monolingual Spanish speakers otherwise coming in. We
14 simply didn't have the infrastructure in place,
15 right? But there are also larger systemic problems
16 from that to class size to in Jackson Heights, we
17 have even with more schools, they're still
18 overcrowded with little outdoor space for many of our
19 children to play during recess and otherwise.

20 And so, I bring that up to say, mayoral control
21 and centralization removes that lack of more
22 specified attention on the needs. And not just one
23 school or two schools but on school districts and
24 neighborhoods in particular. And my question is, how
25 have you thought about given this imperfect system we

1
2 have, how do you address that on a district by
3 district basis. Absolutely being a parental
4 involvement, more family engagement, better
5 involvement of the CEC's, more responsive PEP does
6 those things on a macro level but if there are other
7 more localized issues across the city, how do we
8 address that?

9 KAMAR SAMUELS: It's a great question. You know
10 often times I say you know sometimes we function as a
11 system of schools and sometimes we function as a
12 school system right? And so, I think what you're
13 talking about is delineating the difference between
14 those things because sometimes we should be a system
15 of schools where we have so many different unique
16 needs across the system and sometimes we do need to
17 be a school system and that's true of district by
18 district as well, right? So, when you think about
19 the 32 districts across the city, they are vastly
20 different and they all have their own unique set of
21 circumstances. For example, uh, what you described
22 was a little different than what we experienced when
23 I was superintendent of District 3, when we had the
24 influx of new New Yorkers. We had dual language
25 programs that were under enrolled and we were able to

1
2 prioritize the investment that those programs for
3 students were coming in and we still had a shortage
4 of multilingual teachers, right or bilingual
5 teachers. That is uhm, I can't say that that's
6 because of a lack of investment, like when we think
7 about class size and when we think about the need for
8 more teachers, we have to work with the state. We
9 have to work with our colleges to make sure that we
10 are recruiting in a different way because we have you
11 know you have folks who are bilingual but have not
12 chosen teaching, right and they choose other things
13 and we want to make sure that we are investing in the
14 recruitment process to make sure that we're finding
15 folks where they are to let them know that there's
16 nothing better than coming to the Department of
17 Education NYC Public Schools to teach kids.

18 And I think that's where you know we would - I am
19 incredibly open to partnering with the Council, to
20 figuring out how we impact our recruitment process.
21 And then, like you said, it's just important that we
22 have connections across districts, connections across
23 schools to make sure that even thinking about a
24 school down the block, sometimes we have schools not
25 far away from each other experiencing the same

1 challenge and those parent coordinators may not be
2 connecting and so on. And so, we need to make sure
3 that we're providing more opportunities for that so
4 that the uniqueness of each school will be addressed
5 outside of like the systemic issues.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: And I look forward to
8 that part of a ship too and I think that's just one
9 area we've got to really keep in mind with you know,
10 as long as we have mayoral control, how do we elevate
11 these issues? Individual schools will have issues,
12 citywide there will be issues. There's that middle
13 layer too for district per neighborhood, that I think
14 right now the system doesn't find a good way to
15 capture but looking forward to our continued work
16 together on that.

17 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah and as a former community
18 school superintendent, I think that's where we have
19 to leverage that space to make sure that that's
20 happening.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you Chair.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member.
23 I will now turn it over to Council Member De La Rosa.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Thank you Chair and
25 hi Chancellor and team. Thank you for being here. I

1 appreciate the conversation around parental
2 engagement. I think in districts like mine, it's so
3 important and across the city. So, I want to thank
4 you for those efforts. I do want to talk a little
5 bit about mayoral control in terms of class size.
6 You know Chancellor, we were just in a meeting last
7 week and we talked about enrollment and how
8 enrollment doesn't always look the same across
9 schools in the same communities. And so, one of the
10 things that we've been thinking about is, in this
11 conversation around mayoral control and I know some
12 of my colleagues did ask about class size. But my
13 question is more around what is the planning around
14 the class size mandates that are in place right now
15 that are required by law and the plan for how do we
16 customize what enrollment looks in schools across
17 districts because you know we talked about this a
18 little bit last week but you know in some schools, we
19 have trouble getting folks to even enroll and great
20 things are happening there.

22 And then in some schools everyone wants to send
23 their kids to those schools and they're so over
24 capacity that we have to literally build another
25 school building in their playground. So, what is the

1
2 plan? Understanding that the class size mandates
3 comes from Albany but is there a plan right now as we
4 have this conversation around mayoral control?

5 KAMAR SAMUELS: It's a great question. Uhm, so
6 first, one of the things you outlined was essentially
7 how parents make choices for schools, right? And
8 they - and part of that is reputation and some of our
9 schools while doing great things may not have
10 invested in like branding themselves and getting out
11 there and so on and again, I have to rely here often
12 on the capacity building that needs to happen with
13 our parent coordinators and with our family
14 leadership coordinators to ensure that they're
15 connecting with new students and really making sure
16 that everybody is doing - has all they need and
17 understand what they need to about how well and the
18 resources that that school has.

19 Uhm, with regards to class size, uhm, I think
20 it's very important that we look at how our buildings
21 are being used now. So, for example, if you have a
22 school up the block from one school that might be
23 overutilized and then another school is
24 underutilized, how do you create opportunities for
25 them to - for us to figure out how to use that to

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2 level the playing field even or to make sure that we
3 are utilizing that space.

4 I think we have a discussion in the school with
5 district one that's similar to that. They now want
6 to have an annex or a split site or something like
7 that. And so, we have to look at those opportunities
8 that are really, really important if we're going to
9 get to the bigger issue, even the bigger issues of
10 building schools.

11 I am you know, I don't believe that we have like
12 a quarter of our schools that are not meeting the
13 class size mandate and they only need about four
14 rooms, right? We're not going to build for four
15 rooms. We need to figure out how to utilize the
16 spaces for those four rooms. And so, that has to do
17 also with communication across districts and we're
18 going to be working and supporting superintendents to
19 make sure that they're getting - they're beginning to
20 have those conversations across the city.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: I appreciate that. I
22 think that you know, I'll give you an example in my
23 district, uhm, we had a rezoning and new buildings
24 are coming up, right? And so, we have seen
25

1
2 situations where there are gaps, for example in
3 Inwood.

4 After a certain street, there isn't an option for
5 a middle school. Right, a middle school that serves
6 the community and that has left this open for Charter
7 schools to come in and sort of take over the
8 landscape. We've seen that in northern Manhattan,
9 we've seen that in Harlem, we've seen that in the
10 Bronx. And so, as we think about capital planning,
11 we also have to think about like those gaps that
12 exist because if there isn't a natural elementary
13 school there, like folks with small children aren't
14 going to move in there, right? Uhm and so we're
15 creating these gaps in communities and so, as we
16 think about building capacity, we also have to think
17 about the type of communities we're looking to build.
18 Right because on this and we're approving projects,
19 saying yes, we want more affordable housing but that
20 comes with families right and those families want to
21 make sure that the school they're sending their child
22 to is in the community, walking distance is
23 available. It's quality, all of those things go into
24 the decision making. So, I hope that we can work
25 together on the capital planning side.

1
2 KAMAR SAMUELS: I am completely committing to the
3 Committee to working with you to figure those issues
4 out because just like you've outlined, you have an
5 area that doesn't have a middle school right? I had
6 the same conversation when I went to District 3,
7 where in Harlem, they didn't have a standalone middle
8 school that they wanted to. And so, we tried to
9 figure out how to get that standalone middle school
10 there, and that requires real hardcore conversations.
11 Is it that you need a new building? Is it that you
12 need to repurpose an existing school? So, all those
13 things. I'm happy to work with your Superintendent
14 Renzo to figure that out.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: And then I just got
16 to plug Chair, I'm sorry but Paraprofessionals, I
17 leave the bill here. We're going to try to see if we
18 could do something legislatively but they are so
19 important to the like the critical existence of a
20 school building and we you know my colleagues have
21 talked about special education, they are critical in
22 that infrastructure, so we got to figure that out.

23 KAMAR SAMUELS: And we got to figure out how to
24 get more them to move into teaching as well.

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Unless they want to stay
3 Paraprofessionals, which is also a totally great
4 career because I know for me, I said this publicly, I
5 have had significantly more mental health breakdowns
6 if not from my para's, I'd be in a gutter somewhere
7 if it were not for my Para's.

8 KAMAR SAMUELS: I know it's true though.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, I want to go back to
10 the PEP. This was brought up a number of times, not
11 just at this Committee hearing so far but in a lot of
12 conversations. It seems to be a real source of
13 concern but it's also the thing that it feels
14 leveraged by the Administration to say look, there's
15 community input but I want to ask, Council Member
16 Restler mentioned about contracts and the curriculum
17 was brought up. These are things that are voted on
18 by the PEP. Can you talk about whether it's
19 contracts are choosing these large curricula. What
20 transparency mechanisms are in place per the law that
21 allow for public input and the digestion of that and
22 so that would allow and require for public input.

23 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yup, uhm, so what I'll say is we
24 have significant - we've done significant work you
25 know to prepare our PEP members, leading up to any

1
2 kind of proposal, right? And so, in terms of you
3 know our contract processes, this is you know I think
4 my first PEP, there was a contract. It wasn't a
5 dispute but the idea of AI being in our contract was
6 an important issue, right and so, it was presented
7 before, it was voted down. We went and we removed
8 the AI from the process and from the vendors, AIP's
9 and then it was put up again and voted on. This is a
10 matter of what - and so we were able to really work
11 with our PEP to inform them of not - it's not
12 necessarily the contract procedures but what are in
13 the contracts. They have several briefings and I
14 want to - I just want to invite Katie to talk more
15 about how we brief our PEP from month to month.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm going to swear you in
17 but I want to clarify my question.

18 KAMAR SAMUELS: Oh.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Please raise your right
20 hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole
21 truth and nothing but the truth before this Committee
22 and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

23 KATIE JEDRLINIC: I do.

24 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And so -

25

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2 KAMAR SAMUELS: Oh sorry, I did not understand
3 the question.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: No, no, no you did so but
5 I want to clarify it. My question isn't around the
6 preparation work that's done. My question is about
7 well; it's on that but what requirement is there and
8 I'll just share that we've gotten a lot of feedback
9 that PEP members aren't even provided the contract.
10 They're not even allowed to see it and they're
11 expected to vote on something. That the public, the
12 last day for input is the day of the meeting and you
13 compare that to other city agencies and I know you
14 testified earlier trying to align it more with city
15 contracts with the rest of the contracts to in the
16 city. But for agency rule making, there are days and
17 days and days of public input and then it is after a
18 certain time that decisions are made, based on the
19 public feedback and so those are some of the stories
20 that we've heard about the PEP but please but please
21 if you wouldn't mind.

22 KATIE JEDRLINIC: Yeah, so I'll just clarify that
23 you know the ED part where the panel reviews and then
24 votes on a contract is the end of an often lengthy
25 contract process that starts often with an RFP or an

1
2 RFI and could happen up to two years before you know
3 the part that we see at the panel, uhm, we post the
4 contracts agenda along with an RA for each item,
5 which is a description of each item that hits on some
6 of the key components. Ten days in advance of the
7 meeting, that's how the state law expects that we do
8 it and then we take public comment through email up
9 until the meeting. We then try to respond to that
10 public comment in a short window before the meeting
11 itself to get the most opportunity for public comment
12 but then also to get the response out and then of
13 course we have the actual public feedback process
14 during the meeting itself where people can give input
15 before the panel votes.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, tell me what's the
17 purpose of public comment?

18 KATIE JEDRLINIC: The purpose of public comment
19 is to give PEP members information and perspective
20 that they may not have them throughout their briefing
21 process.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But the contracts kind of -
23 or the decision is kind of baked right? And so, my
24 question, let's say just around the timeline. Is I
25 guess what you're asking PEP members to do, is to

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2 vote on a contract they may or may not have seen
3 right because we've heard those stories, and to hear
4 the public feedback up until the moment they have to
5 vote without any time to vet it or to digest it or to
6 ruminate on it or anything like that. That's the
7 current process right?

8 KATIE JEDRLINIC: We brief the panel members in
9 advance of the meeting. We hold at least for agenda
10 items; we hold at least two briefings for agenda
11 items to give them a chance to ask any questions and
12 of course we have a team that works to follow up on
13 any specific questions to give us any feedback that
14 is possible for us to take into account. Sometimes
15 as you may have seen, we may move an agenda item you
16 know determining that we - based on the PEP feedback,
17 we need to alter it some way. I think the Chancellor
18 is referencing a little of the feedback we've gotten
19 about various contracts that have an AI component and
20 that's one way of taking that into account. And then
21 you know, if the panel votes yes or no, they don't
22 actually vote yes contrary to what I think people
23 believe.

24 We have to go back to the drawing board and
25 figure out how to think about that contract again. I

1
2 will say you know, many of the contracts, like I
3 said, they come after possibly multiple years of you
4 know RFP, review, awarding the contract, so you know
5 there's a lot that goes into that.

6 ELISHEBA LEWI: Thanks for the question, so you
7 asked a question about the contract not the panel
8 members not being able to see the contract. The
9 request for authorization that we present to the
10 panel, it provides them with all of the pertinent
11 information

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Oh, I'm sorry, would you
13 say your name for the transcript?

14 ELISHEBA LEWI: Elisheba Lewi.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I think we swore you in.

16 ELISHEBA LEWI: Yes, okay, yup. Okay, so the
17 request for authorization provides all the pertinent
18 information related to the contract. What we're
19 asking the panel to do is to give us permission to
20 enter into the contract. So, there's no contract
21 that exists at the time of the vote. The vote, we
22 meet with the panel, we engage with them so that they
23 and provide them with the pertinent information that
24 would allow them to make an informed decision about
25 whether or not we should move forward. In the more

1
2 recent months, there have been lots of controversy
3 surrounding AI and so, they you know as an
4 independent body, voted down those contracts. And
5 so, it's within their jurisdiction and their power to
6 make a decision about whether or not we can move
7 forward with those contracts.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Does the PEP currently
9 have a Contracts Committee?

10 ELISHEBA LEWI: Uh, there is a Contracts
11 Committee, yes. Is there? No more? Oh okay, okay
12 yup sure.

13 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: So, in the past, the PEP had
14 a Contracts Committee. That was the mechanism
15 through which a smaller group of members just like
16 you guys have committees, could do a more in depth
17 review. We didn't have really good attendance at
18 those meetings, both from PEP members and from the
19 public, both virtually and online. The PEP, within
20 its bylaws, has a certain amount of leeway to
21 determine how they would review that process, so
22 they've made a determination not to you know utilize
23 the system that we used in the past but there is a
24 lot of interest from the PEP about how we can do a
25 better job around transparency around contracts and

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2 there's lots that they can think about within the
3 context of their bylaws.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right, there used to be a
5 contract - so to be clear, there used to be a
6 Contracts Committee. These meetings were public.

7 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And this is where they
9 would discuss a potential contract?

10 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: It's where the contract is
11 going to be presented by the team with the list of
12 contracts and determine to move forward.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Does the DOE support
14 reinstating a Contract Committee that would discuss
15 these contracts publicly?

16 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: I think we're supportive of
17 creating a mechanism that has that transparency, that
18 seems to be more effective than what we've seen in
19 the past.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Is the DOE ready to go on
21 the record and say that should be codified into law?
22 These discussions around big contracts and big
23 decisions, should be public with public input
24 including a timeline before the actual decision has
25 to be made?

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2 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: So right now, that's
3 something that the panel can make a determination
4 based on their bylaws and I think that their input is
5 really valuable in that, so I think that's the route
6 that we're looking at right now.

7 KAMAR SAMUELS: I agree.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Does the DOE agree that
9 more transparency and a timeline for allowing public
10 input to actually be implemented and influence the
11 decision of the PEP members is a positive?

12 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, I think we can say that
13 uhm, we're open to listening to the PEP around - but
14 it's obviously their decision on how they move
15 forward with their bylaws. That can become more -

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That's my question, if the
17 DOE believes in more transparency and it was
18 testified to that align it closer to the city
19 administrative procedure act, that's what you want
20 your procedure to align to. Uhm, is the DOE -

21 KAMAR SAMUELS: We're open to that discussion.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right, I mean, to
23 implement that into law because it's very easy to say
24 well, let the PEP do it but the whole purpose is that
25

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2 they didn't do or they haven't done it and so, that's
3 really the question.

4 KAMAR SAMUELS: But we're saying that they had uh
5 a process that was aligned to what you're describing,
6 however, the participation rates and so on wasn't
7 what they wanted it to be and so, they tried another
8 thing and if they were open to try another, uhm
9 another system would be or structure would be open to
10 that too.

11 If the goal is to get to more transparency in the
12 discussion of contracts prior to, I think we can
13 definitely be open to talking about it.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But I think about it in
15 terms let's say comparing it to the CEC's where what
16 did we say the voter turnout was, two percent?

17 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And I don't think anyone's
19 suggesting to get rid of the CEC's and part of that
20 is because it's in the law that these CEC's exist.
21 So, we know that the parent engagement and
22 involvement is important. We know that we need to do
23 more. You've done that as a superintendent. You've
24 invested more time and energy in your CEC's but we're
25 able to have a discussion because it is the state law

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2 and I think it would be very easy for a future
3 Chancellor to say, well, the participation rate is
4 very low, so let's get rid of the CEC's. But the PEP
5 can get rid of this public uhm, sort of you know
6 public discussion about the contracts because it's
7 not codified and so that's really the question, is
8 the DOE willing to say let's codify something. That
9 aligns it to the City Administrative Procedure Act.

10 Let's codify something that requires more public
11 discussion about what whether you're talking about
12 millions of dollars, tens of millions of dollars or a
13 curricular change. Like, requiring that
14 transparency. Requiring it to align more to what we
15 otherwise do in the city.

16 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, I think I don't want to get
17 ahead of the PEP, the body, that actually is working
18 on this and so, I think we're open to that discussion
19 with them. I mean I'm not sure what to say on that.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay.

21 KAMAR SAMUELS: I mean I can but that's something
22 that I'm certainly open to -

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay and in line with this
24 discussion about the PEP and engagement, involvement,
25 the requirement for engagement. Can you talk about

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2 what levers or what mechanisms teachers and
3 principals had or have when a new curriculum is voted
4 on beyond public comment during the PEP?

5 KAMAR SAMUELS: Okay, so -

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, just to specifically,
7 what's HSM?

8 KAMAR SAMUELS: The high school?

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: The reading curriculum.

10 KAMAR SAMUELS: Oh, HMM.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

12 KAMAR SAMUELS: Okay, HMM.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: By the way, just so the
14 public knows, they have an entire glossary on the DOE
15 website of acronyms. That's how many acronyms there
16 are.

17 KAMAR SAMUELS: In fairness though, that's not a
18 DOE acronym. That's like that's a vendor and -

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: True, true.

20 KAMAR SAMUELS: but I see that acronyms are an
21 issue.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: It's a lot and you are
23 doing great with all the acronyms, the whole team.
24 That's probably the hardest part of the job.

25 KAMAR SAMUELS: Alright uhm -

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2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So yeah, so what mechanisms
3 and levers are in place to ensure that principals and
4 teachers have a voice in the selection of these
5 curriculums.

6 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, that's a huge one and I
7 think we've been - as a Superintendent I obviously
8 implemented uhm, in our case wisdom, which is not an
9 accurate name of the curriculum. Uhm, and we had a
10 host of engagement sessions. Over a year with
11 parents, teachers, principals, weighing in on that.
12 We had one now that is related to the New York City
13 Solves curriculum where we are actually doing the
14 same process. If you - what's very clear here is the
15 need for a community superintendent to manage an
16 outline, a process that really takes in teacher
17 feedback and principal feedback and have, I mean we
18 can - there are so many different ways to do it but
19 what we advise is and what we strongly recommend is
20 that you have a runway of months to make sure that
21 you have these appropriate engagement exercises and
22 then they are also recorded by our central staff.
23 There's uh that you provided evidence that you've
24 done this and I can turn it over to Deputy Chancellor
25 Rux to talk a little bit more.

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2 DANIKA RUX: I love this topic, so I might go on
3 a little long but uhm, so once we identify the
4 curriculum citywide, what we do is we give principals
5 and superintendents a ground zero year to ensure that
6 they engage their community and their stakeholders in
7 the process of identifying the curriculum that best
8 meets the needs of their specific district. We do
9 trainings. They do town halls, the superintendents,
10 they bring everyone together and they have the
11 vendors there to present information on it.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can I pause you for a
13 second?

14 DANIKA RUX: Yes, you can.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Because I can tell how
16 excited you are about this.

17 DANIKA RUX: I am super excited about it.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm sure you've worked
19 very hard on the curriculum and I certainly you know
20 love the idea of saying well, kids got to read. You
21 know and I was teaching phonics to some of my
22 students in high school because it was despite what
23 some superintendents wanted to do and dissuade that
24 from being taught in high school, my principal and I
25 knew it was the right thing.

1
2 So, I'm 100 percent with you. Kids need to learn
3 how to read and I think no matter what age. My
4 question really is not about the after; my question
5 is about the before.

6 DANIKA RUX: It is the before that I was
7 answering.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, thank you. I
9 thought you were talking about -

10 DANIKA RUX: No. That happens before the
11 selection is made where the district, the
12 Superintendent, is looking at the different options
13 and engaging the entire community in that process.
14 So, they bring together parents. They bring together
15 principals; they bring teachers as well to look at
16 the curricula options to make a selection to consult
17 with the Superintendent on the selection of the
18 curriculum for that particular district. That all
19 happens before the selection is actually made and
20 that is what Chancellor Samuels was just talking
21 about because he was a New York City Solves District
22 and he just before he transitioned to become
23 Chancellor of our system, he was engaging in his
24 community in selection of curricula for math in his
25 district.

1
2 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah and so, there are two
3 selections that happen, right? The first selection
4 is a citywide selection, which you know we have folks
5 who are really have a lot of time to dedicate to
6 figure out are these the right curricula for our
7 city, right? And then in the case of Reads day gave
8 you know three options and then of those three
9 options, locally superintendent decide and that's a
10 very long, long ways. So, I just want to clarify the
11 reason you were wondering.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, thanks for the
13 clarification and my last question about this, then I
14 want to turn it over to Council Member Brewer again,
15 which is, is there a requirement per the law that any
16 curricula that's chosen or voted on or contract
17 that's voted on by the PEP be supported by data?
18 Does that requirement exist?

19 DANIKA RUX: So, what I can say to that -

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I see the face, so do you
21 understand the question?

22 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, because you're talking
23 about many different - are you talking about reading?

24 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: The curriculum.
25

1
2 KAMAR SAMUELS: Oh, you're talking about
3 curriculum.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Curriculum that's like a
5 contract like that that's voted on by the PEP. What
6 is the requirement in the law that says it must be
7 bolstered by data and findings and research and I
8 want to be clear, not just in academic achievement
9 but also to think culturally responsive for example.

10 KAMAR SAMUELS: So, what I'll say is our
11 interventions, our - the curriculum that we have
12 thought about in the process of thinking about our
13 curriculum, the rubrics that we have really outline
14 to our thoughts about research and best practices
15 across the nation and in terms of how we're reading
16 or math is really addressed.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Before we have, if you
18 could just say your name every time before you speak.
19 That's for I guess everyone.

20 ELISHEBA LEWI: Elishba Lewi. So, I just want to
21 ask a clarifying, you're asking if it's codified or
22 is there some -

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Is it codified into the
24 law? And again, this isn't - this is coming from
25 educators, teachers, principals, superintendents who

1
2 have shared with me their concern that is this, is it
3 research and based on the science of reading these
4 reading curricula. Is it doing more to harm than
5 help with socially sort of culturally responsive
6 education, this is feedback I've received. So, is it
7 codified?

8 ELISHEBA LEWI: I can't speak to whether it's
9 codified or not but we do get a lot of questions
10 about efficacy. As the Chancellor stated, there are
11 rubrics that require that whoever is evaluating the
12 curriculum establishes that. It's culturally
13 responsive and I'm sure that Dr. Rux could actually
14 provide more insight no that but it's definitely,
15 it's definitely come up in conversations at panel,
16 regarding specific contracts related to instructional
17 material.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Alright, thank you. I'm
19 going to turn it over to Council Member Brewer.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much.
21 It's just back to the early ethic you mentioned, the
22 CEC level needs, you know there needs to be more
23 deliberation. This is a problem. First of all, the
24 technology is terrible. They might have an owl, they
25 might not. They have a tiny screen. So, they're

1
2 looking at their computers and there's no screen even
3 above like here to have that kind of conversation
4 with the public. So, I'm usually the only one there
5 at the CEC, just me and the members.

6 So, people do show up when there's a problem and
7 then they never show up again. So, I guess what I'm
8 saying is, if the CEC is supposed to be the place
9 where there's more deliberation, particularly when
10 there are challenges and there will be. Then it's
11 going to end up at the PEP but I think parents are
12 understanding, we understand like, are we really
13 going to listen to what the CEC deliberates and
14 states as advisory unless it's moving the lines, but
15 that's not the topic of today. If it gets to the
16 PEP, then will the CEC's deliberation be taken
17 seriously? I don't think parents - first of all
18 parents, I was shocked to find out that they never
19 heard of CEC until it's a problem, then they show up
20 and I said, you have to show up all the time. You
21 got to show up.

22 But there's a real, I mean if we're going to be,
23 which is understandably making some changes in the
24 next four years, then I think we really need to
25 tighten up this process because parents really feel

1
2 not listened to, particularly if they are upset and
3 then if it's like advisory at the CEC, even though
4 we've deliberated but the PEP does something
5 different, I don't know how this is going to be taken
6 seriously in terms of a process.

7 So, I'm just asking how do you see this process
8 working itself out? Needless to say, in District 3,
9 I'm trying to work it out but we got all of these
10 issues tonight. So, I'm trying to understand just
11 down the road, how does this process work, CEC, PEP,
12 etc.?

13 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, uhm, thank you Gale for
14 that. So, uh, I think it's important that the CEC is
15 super active in the process for the entire time and
16 early on. That's what happens in District 3. The
17 CEC Presidents and members of the CEC have been
18 really engaged in the working group process that took
19 place and so they have a very nuanced understanding
20 of the - not just the issues but more importantly the
21 issues we are trying to solve and the process that we
22 use to get there. Now, uhm currently, CEC's passed
23 Resolutions on proposals, if the PEP does not uhm, it
24 does something different than what the CEC

25

1
2 recommends, there has to be an explanation by the PEP
3 on that.

4 I do think there is an opportunity to say - so
5 currently, uh there are some CEC's that decide to do
6 these Resolutions. There are some that don't. I
7 think there's an opportunity for us to say there
8 should be a Resolution all the time for these and
9 that there's an opportunity to say where is - that
10 the PEP must respond to as is already codified.

11 Okay, so and you know in the context of District 3, I
12 think I'm super proud of the work that we did with
13 our CEC members there. There's some really good very
14 active ones and uhm, the CEC is very engaged and very
15 knowledgeable about all the nuances that are taking
16 place because they were really engaged in the working
17 group process over the last year.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, do most districts
19 have a working group or is it, I know it's something
20 that you to your credit put into effect but most of
21 them don't. Should there be working groups?

22 KAMAR SAMUELS: I think - I mean I am going to
23 work to try to make sure that uh superintendents are
24 - we build a capacity of everyone that when they're
25 beginning to think about these things that they're

1
2 launching working groups. In our case, we had three
3 in the Harlem section, the mid-district and the
4 southern district. I think that is something that is
5 very, very critical to this process because again,
6 some folks deeply agree with the issues. Some folks
7 deeply disagree but what is very clear is that we
8 were solving a big problem together and the CEC and
9 even in some cases the President's Council where
10 we're involved.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, alright, thank you.
12 It helps a little bit. I will say that when the
13 problems are huge, they still continue and spill over
14 and it's not going to end but I appreciate that.

15 KAMAR SAMUELS: I agree.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: What about technology for
17 the CEC's? Who's working on that?

18 KAMAR SAMUELS: Oh yeah.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It sucks in District 3.

20 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: We have about only five of
21 our CEC's have chosen not to be hybrid, so the
22 majority of our CEC's are hybrid. Which brings up,
23 how do we work with the technology and make sure that
24 they have what need? A lot of them have gotten
25 support from their superintendents to be able to work

1
2 together to purchase the materials or select schools
3 that make the most sense acoustic-wise and -

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, the CEC's don't have
5 any money to get their own?

6 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: They have their allotted
7 \$25,000 every year to be able to budget however they
8 need.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

10 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: We are always happy to
11 support them.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: My suggestion would be
13 somebody to take a look even though it might be
14 already they can do, they can do. They're not.

15 So, I can go through all the issues as to why
16 without getting into them but you really need to look
17 at the tech. If we're saying that we need
18 participation at the CEC's, as you indicate, then the
19 world of technology has to come to them. It is
20 horrific. I won't even get into how horrible it is.
21 So, can you commit to that that you will look at
22 somebody to do an analysis of the technology of the
23 CEC's and see how it can be upgraded if necessary?
24 We will definitely work with our family leadership

1
2 coordinators that have a one to one connection with
3 the CEC's to help us understand.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Do they understand
5 technology?

6 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: We will work with them and
7 then look at the information and take inventory as
8 well as the face specialist that supports the CEC.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

10 KAMAR SAMUELS: I agree Gale that we should be
11 looking at the technology and we're going to look at
12 that.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes, and I appreciate your
15 commitment before about - excuse me, thank you
16 Council Member Brewer. Appreciate your commitment
17 before about the training and engagement of CEC's. I
18 just want to point out that \$25,000 for the CEC's,
19 uhm is not enough and you know -

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: You can't buy an owl for
21 that.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: This isn't codified into
23 law but just to let you know when uhm, between
24 technology, I believe some you know you buy food for
25 the people who come to the meeting or childcare.

1
2 Like that money runs out very quickly and if we're
3 serious about engaging with more community and more
4 family, then we probably have to bolster those
5 budgets and we also do a lot more engagement with the
6 voting as has been discussed.

7 KAMAR SAMUELS: I hear you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Just to speak of CEC's,
9 the question of Resolutions came up before and I just
10 wanted to clarify CEC's passed Resolutions.

11 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: The DOE response.

13 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Is there a requirement
15 that the PEP sees those Resolutions?

16 CRISTINA MELÉNDEZ: They have 30 days. We have
17 30 days to respond to the Resolutions and then we
18 submit them to the PEP for review.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Are you sure? Are you
20 sure? I'm asking because I have heard from multiple
21 PEP members that they do not see these Resolutions
22 and it's only responded to by the DOE but please
23 state your name.

24 KATIE JEDRLINIC: Yes, hi Katie Jedrlinic. So,
25 the CEC sends us Resolutions and we are required to

1 respond to them and we have a process for doing that.

2 If a CEC sends a Resolution related to a PEP agenda
3 item, uhm, first of all, they have the ability to
4 send it to the PEP's themselves. They don't have to
5 rely on us for that but we also share that with them.
6

7 As the Chancellor mentioned, if they do a
8 Resolution regarding the school utilization proposal
9 in their district, the PEP is actually required to
10 review it and then if they are going to move forward
11 with it in the meeting, respond to the Resolution.

12 So, that's how that works.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Are there certain
14 Resolutions that are required to go to the PEP and
15 others that are not?

16 KATIE JEDRLINIC: Items that are on the PEP
17 agenda, like the school utilization, where the
18 Council has a direct role in giving feedback, yes.
19 Those would go to the PEP.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Are there any other ones
21 for instance, if the CEC passes a Resolution about a
22 curricular change, about a contract, are any of those
23 required to go to the PEP who then end up voting on
24 those items?

1
2 KATIE JEDRLINIC: Required by law, no but they
3 certainly are able to and many of them do send them
4 directly to PEP members or to the uh broader panel
5 email.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah would you be or are
7 you opposed to having the PEP see, at least see those
8 Resolutions and the responses?

9 KATIE JEDRLINIC: I don't think oppose; I mean I
10 think they see the vast majority of them. Council's
11 are allowed to send us a Resolution on anything.
12 Sometimes they send us Resolutions on things that are
13 at the purview of the state legislature and CEC.
14 Sometimes they send us things about another agency
15 say like, oh we want to know about these tennis
16 courts across the street. So, you know I would most
17 certainly say like there able to do that and I think
18 the panel is always really interested in hearing
19 what's going on in school communities but there are
20 points where the CEC may be saying, like this is not
21 a PEP issue, so they're not making that choice.

22 KAMAR SAMUELS: So, wait, can I just clarify your
23 question? Are you asking if the CEC writes a
24 Resolution about something the PEP is going to vote
25 on, should we make sure that PEP's - so it could be a

1 contract like you're saying. It could be something
2 else. Should we lift that, make sure the PEP sees
3 that proposal, is that what you're asking? I think
4 that's something we should commit, we can commit to.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And I do want to again
7 thank you for that commitment and I do want to make
8 that distinction between like best practice and then
9 what's codified into law and the reason I say this is
10 because you're great. We like you. You're doing a
11 good job so far and every Council Member whose worked
12 with you as Superintendent you heard it up here. I'm
13 not concerned about you. I'm concerned about your
14 successor. I'm not concerned about Mayor Mamdani.
15 I'm concerned about his successor. What do we have
16 in the law that it's going to ensure your best
17 practices are adhered to by whoever your successors
18 are.

19 I want to go back to the education, like the
20 student achievement because I think there is I guess
21 disagreement about how the mayoral control in and of
22 itself has impacted overall student achievement.
23 Uhm, you know even the NYSED 2024 report said, any
24 gains or losses is not causal based, mayoral control
25 is not the cause of those changes necessarily. Uhm,

1
2 so as for state law, certain schools in DOE policy
3 schools have schoolwide comprehensive education plans
4 and you were required, as a superintendent, you were
5 required to do a districtwide comprehensive education
6 plan.

7 Is there a requirement for the city to have let's
8 say a one in a five year citywide comprehensive
9 education plan? And I want to distinguish that from
10 initiatives.

11 KAMAR SAMUELS: No, no, no, I got you. It is a
12 requirement that we have a citywide comprehensive
13 education plan. I'm going to call up Sharon Rencher.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, I'm going to swear
15 you in and then you will turn the mic on and then
16 you're going to state your name for the record and
17 then share your answer. Do you affirm to tell the
18 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
19 before this Committee and to respond honestly to
20 Council Member questions?

21 SHARON RENCHER: I do.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

23 KAMAR SAMUELS: And before Sharon starts, I'd
24 just like to say so just like I said before,
25 sometimes we're a school system and sometimes we're a

1
2 system of schools. The state is similar to how they
3 view the city. Sometimes they view us as one school
4 district, which is the New York City school district
5 and sometimes there are districts in between, so the
6 32 districts. So, for specifically whether or not we
7 have a citywide, there's things that we have to do
8 citywide but I think Sharon, I just wanted you to
9 address what the requirements are from the state
10 citywide.

11 SHARON RENCHER: Sure, thank you and thank you
12 very much for having us. From a state regulatory
13 perspective -

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can you say your name?

15 SHARON RENCHER: Yes, my name is Sharon Rencher.
16 Thank you. From a state regulatory perspective, as
17 the Chancellor said, there are some requirements that
18 are very specific to community school districts and
19 some that are required of us as a whole system and
20 currently, we're required as a system to develop
21 what's called a District Comprehensive Improvement
22 Plan and that really describes how we are supporting
23 in particular our lowest achieving schools and our
24 lowest achieving students.

25

1
2 In addition, as a citywide body, we are required
3 to develop a comprehensive professional learning
4 plan, which our individual community school districts
5 also are required to develop and do. So, those are
6 the two plans that as a system we're required to
7 develop. The other plans are as was mentioned by the
8 Chancellor developed locally. The District
9 Comprehensive Improvement Board District
10 Comprehensive Education Plan and the School
11 Comprehensive Education Plan.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Is it your
13 view that the city should be required - we are - to
14 be clear, the Mayor and the Chancellor is going to
15 have more control over this school system than I
16 think any other system in the country. Given that
17 centralization of power, there's also elevated
18 responsibility. Is the DOE's view that beyond what's
19 already required by State Law, that because of how
20 unique the system is, should you be required to have
21 a citywide comprehensive one year, five year, what
22 are the goals over the many years where the
23 professional learning is rooted in that and the
24 school Comprehensive Educational Plan is rooted with
25 that as its north star?

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2 KAMAR SAMUELS: Yeah, so as Sharon described, we
3 do have that at the state level uhm and we have
4 multiple - and again, New York City is completely
5 different in we have 32 school districts. We have
6 you know, we're governed by the state in many
7 different ways and so, uhm, you know I'm open to
8 having a discussion about what that could look like
9 but thinking about an additional level, layer of
10 bureaucracy again potentially, I think that's
11 something that we ought to take a look and see what
12 the general one is that we do now and see if there
13 are things there that you don't think are captured or
14 whatever the situation is. But before bringing to
15 that, we ought to kind of reassess what are the
16 things that are currently in place.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah and I would frame it
18 as clarity, not bureaucracy. I don't think any of us
19 here like bureaucracy.

20 KAMAR SAMUELS: Okay, clarity. That's fine.
21 I'll go with you.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Certainly, teachers and
23 principals and like we just want to help the kids.
24 But if we can -

25

1
2 KAMAR SAMUELS: That's because you haven't filled
3 one out in a while.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I think uhm, you know if
5 we can say on the record like how great is it to have
6 a unified curriculum for the entire city. One that
7 is for math or English, then I guess the logical
8 conclusion of that is well, wouldn't it be great to
9 have a unified some sort of plan? Some sort of north
10 star where we can all look towards.

11 SHARON RENCHER: And our District Comprehensive
12 Improvement Plan serves in that role currently. We
13 can always improve upon its structure, it's format
14 but essentially, it really articulates our systemwide
15 priorities and our goals for achieving our systemwide
16 priorities that give guidance to our districts and
17 the development of their plans and our schools in the
18 development of their plan. So, our goal is always to
19 have a systemwide structure where in order for us to
20 improve right, it's largely dependent on what happens
21 at our school level, right in the classrooms. The
22 improvement strategy is sort of happening at the
23 school level but that then are informed by the
24 individual community school districts based on the
25

1
2 needs of those communities and that inform what we do
3 at central to support our districts in schools.

4 But we're certainly open to ensuring that we have
5 instruction, a format that responds to your
6 suggestion and I think we can go back and think about
7 how we best accomplished that, so thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you and I would love
9 to continue those conversations and again, the
10 fundamental question for me is, I think we all agreed
11 there are improvements to be made in our system and
12 that includes in our governance structure. That
13 includes as you've heard from members today,
14 everything from the PEP to the CDC's to what certain
15 types of instruction look like and how important that
16 is, issues of equity and funding and the goal is to
17 make sure that if we believe in this and if we all
18 believe as a city together, that we can codify that
19 into law and when you go up to Albany to lobby for
20 the reauthorization of mayoral control, that we lobby
21 with those accountability and transparency measures
22 in mind to reach all of our shared goals.

23 I want to thank everyone from the DOE for
24 testifying today.

1
2 KAMAR SAMUELS: Thank you Chair. I'm looking
3 forward to working with you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you and we'll be
5 moving on to public panel in just a moment [02:24:05-
6 02:29:44].

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Could everyone please find
8 your seats? Keep it down. Keep it down please.
9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Would everyone please find
11 their seats? We're going to call the first panel up.
12 If you need to continue to talk, you may step
13 outside. Thank you our first panel from the IBO, we
14 have Independent Budget Office we have Julia Konrad,
15 Jason Wong and Alan Chen.

16 When ready, you may begin and please state your
17 name for the record.

18 JULIA KONRAD: Hello, I'm Julia Konrad. Good
19 morning Chair Dinowitz and members of the Committee
20 on Education. I am Julia Konrad, Assistant Director
21 for the Education team at the New York City
22 Independent Budget Office. I am joined today by my
23 colleagues, Alan Chen ad Jason Wong, who are urban
24 fellows with IBO this year.

1
2 IBO is a nonpartisan independent government
3 agency mandated by the New York City Charter and our
4 mission is to enhance public understanding of New
5 York City's budget, public policy and economy through
6 independent analysis. Thank you for the opportunity
7 to testify at this oversight hearing on mayoral
8 control.

9 In my testimony, I will begin by describing IBO's
10 authority under state education law and its
11 connection to mayoral control. I will then discuss
12 how IBO serves the public with the data access and
13 resources provided by that state law. This testimony
14 builds upon our ongoing work including research led
15 by Alan and Jason to explain how mayoral control
16 works.

17 In 2009, as part of the amendments that extended
18 mayoral control, the state legislature authorized IBO
19 to secure the information and data necessary to
20 provide public reports on financial and educational
21 matters within New York City. The state granted this
22 authority in response to New Yorkers calls for
23 greater accountability and transparency under mayoral
24 control.

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2 To fulfill these responsibilities, the state
3 legislature mandated the city allocate not less than
4 an additional 2.5 percent of the budget for the
5 Mayor's Office of Management and Budget to IBO for
6 education research alone.

7 This is on top of the ten percent of the Office
8 of Management and Budget's budget, guaranteed by City
9 Charter Chapter 11, which established IBO. Because
10 the additional funding allocation is written into
11 state law and not subject to budget negotiations, IBO
12 serves as an independent resource for New Yorkers
13 year over year to gain information on the city's
14 education budget and policies. With each renewal of
15 mayoral control, the state has renewed IBO's role
16 under New York State Education Law.

17 For the past few years, IBO's also sought to
18 establish this authority as stand alone legislation
19 with senate and assembly members. Distinct from the
20 renewal of mayoral control. Because of this state
21 granted authority, IBO receives data from the New
22 York City Public Schools on students, teachers, and
23 schools as well as school and central administration
24 budget data.

1
2 In calendar year 2025, this access to data
3 enabled IBO to publish 14 education reports and
4 provide testimony on education topics at city and
5 state hearings. And these include education
6 indicators, a report on student demographics, student
7 achievement, staffing and space. The impact of
8 foundation aid proposals on New York City revenue, an
9 analysis of the funding impact of changes, proposed
10 changes to the states foundation aid formula, and
11 we've just updated that analysis and published
12 yesterday.

13 A Slow Start, which was a report to track the
14 city's progress towards compliance with the states
15 class size law, What's in a Wait, an assessment of
16 changes to the New York City Fair Student Funding
17 Formula and its budgetary impact on schools, and
18 Utilization Up, Capacity Down, an examination of
19 changes and enrollment and capacity for 3K and Pre-K
20 programs.

21 With the staffing and resources appropriated
22 under state law, IBO has engaged in extensive
23 community outreach and engagement in 2025, including
24 over a dozen interactive school budget workshops,
25 which we've held across all five boroughs. And we've

1 included presentations at four community education
2 council's and seven community boards.

3
4 We've hosted a public event with Chaulk Beat New
5 York, to discuss New York City schools and its
6 funding. We've also written high school curriculum
7 on the city's budget and we're teaching it for the
8 second time at a New York City Public School, high
9 school this year. We've presented at academic
10 conferences and education seminar series hosted by
11 the federal reserve and the Columbia Teachers
12 College. And then finally, IBO is proud to serve as
13 a resource to parents, to students, advocates,
14 journalists, and elected officials alike. IBO takes
15 requests from the public to explore specific research
16 questions and to lead budget trainings at community
17 meetings and you can go to our website to request
18 either.

19 For example, in 2025, at the request of Council
20 Member Brewer, we estimated the cost of expanding the
21 city's school yards to playgrounds, programs,
22 citywide. We are available to answer every New
23 Yorkers questions, none too big and none too small.
24 As the city and state consider the next extension of
25 mayoral control, IBO will continue to provide the

1
2 public with additional transparency and understanding
3 of the city's education budget and policies, as was
4 intended by the State Education Law.

5 Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I'm
6 happy to answer any questions.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you and thank you
8 for your work. I know the work you do not just in
9 education but around all of our city agencies and the
10 function of our city is invaluable and I got to give
11 it up to some of the titles, whoever writes the
12 titles of these things, like What's in a Wait.

13 JULIA KONRAD: Yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Is that your fellows who
15 did that?

16 JULIA KONRAD: No, but they'll come up with some
17 new ones. I think that will be great too.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That's your number one
19 task, come up with clever titles to the next report.
20 Uhm, and we've read some of the - you know I've read
21 a number of these reports. They've been invaluable
22 at hearings and then there are some elements of the
23 report where I said, you know I think there could be
24 more robust information.

1
2 So, one example of that, is around due process
3 cases, Carter cases where you reported on how much is
4 spent and in what area. So, for instance related
5 services or on private school education on legal fees
6 and you had a very robust report. What it did not
7 include was what I thought was something critical to
8 our understanding of our education system, ability to
9 address the actual need, the disability
10 classification. Can you talk more about what
11 information you have access to or why that wasn't
12 included in that particular report and what can be
13 done to improve the information sharing so you can
14 better do your job?

15 JULIA KONRAD: Right, so thank you. State law
16 ensures that we have access to data but we do work
17 with really closely with DOE partners and I will say,
18 we're grateful to our DOE partners who facilitate
19 that data sharing.

20 For that specific report, I agree, so one thing
21 we've been trying to do more and more, we are a
22 budget office but we're very interested in human
23 impact. So, looking at dollars but also making sense
24 of them as students and individuals. In that case,
25 in particular, we have requested additional data from

1
2 New York City Public Schools and we're in the process
3 of acquiring it.

4 So, I am hopeful that we will have student level
5 data that we can then come back and provide
6 additional information.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Is there a timeline, like
8 a legal timeline by which they are supposed to
9 provide data?

10 JULIA KONRAD: So, written into our memorandum of
11 understanding, there is a requirement that we receive
12 an estimated time that they will deliver data to us.
13 So, we expect that we get an ETA but then we work
14 with and I will give some credit to the New York City
15 Public Schools data. Transfer can be very hard and
16 paramount is student privacy and making sure that
17 we're doing it in a way that is very responsible and
18 secure.

19 So, it can take time and I'd say for some data
20 sets, we're grateful they're delivered really
21 quickly. Others take a little longer than we'd like.
22 I think that's one where in particular, we're hoping
23 the timeline speeds up soon.

24 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And are you hoping it
25 speeds up or is that something that you believe as

1
2 mayoral control is likely renewed, should be codified
3 into law in some manner?

4 JULIA KONRAD: I think state law guarantees us
5 access and it's an access that we think gives us a
6 lot of a foundation to stand on. So, I think what it
7 comes down to in terms of what could be improved, is
8 really thinking about the strong relationship we
9 have, maintaining that. And the other thing I'll
10 note too is that you can only really do research on
11 what you have data that is measuring actual student
12 factors. So, the quality of the data really matters.
13 That's something that we often can't control and then
14 the staff capacity. So, are there staff at DOE who
15 have the time to provide that data and make sure that
16 it's ready and can be used for analysis?

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right and I will note this
18 is one of the elements I spoke about earlier in the
19 hearing where the City Council is you know seeks to
20 be a partner in a lot of the governance of schools
21 because we care so much about our schools but we in
22 the city don't legislate the type of data that can be
23 collected, just reported on.

24 So, that's one of those areas where we could have
25 been partners if not for the state law. That is an

1
2 area that could change. Uhm, your budget, you said
3 in your testimony the budget is from I want to read
4 the line properly but you said it's codified in state
5 law that the specific amount you have in your budget
6 and -

7 JULIA KONRAD: Hmm, hmm, for education
8 specifically right? So, the City Charter, grants IBO
9 ten percent of the Mayor's Office of Management and
10 Budget. State Education Law adds 2.5 percent or 2.5
11 percentage points that we then get specifically for
12 education research.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And that's 2.5 percent out
14 of the city budget, not 2.5 percent from the state?

15 JULIA KONRAD: It's 2.5 percent of the Mayor's
16 Office of Management and Budgets budget. So,
17 whatever team and staff that are there, 12.5 percent
18 of that Office of Management and Budget's budget is
19 IBO's.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: No, I'm talking about the
21 actual money. The money, the state law is just
22 dictating what the percentage is. They're not
23 providing additional money.

24 JULIA KONRAD: Right, that's correct.
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, wouldn't it be great
3 if the state gave us more money, gave you more money?

4 JULIA KONRAD: I think what I will say is I have
5 an amazing education team with that 2.5 percent and I
6 hope what people hear today too is we are here to do
7 research. We do really rigorous methodologies,
8 really rich studies and we also go to people and make
9 it make sense. Our goal is not just to write reports
10 but to make people feel like they are empowered with
11 information underneath them. So, not just rigorous
12 but also accessible.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I think your agency does a
14 fine job of that. Lastly, you mentioned a
15 curriculum, is there an assessment or evaluation
16 associated with this curriculum?

17 JULIA KONRAD: Not yet but we always take request
18 from the public. So, if there is something of
19 interest, we think about, do we have the data to
20 answer those research questions and if not, can we
21 request that data?

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I certainly think in any
23 curriculum, it should be able to - we should be able
24 to ask like what did the students learn or how did
25 the students benefit and that's where a good

1
2 assessment or evaluation would come in. Are the
3 fellows testifying to anything?

4 JULIA KONRAD: No, but they're here to support.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, you're doing a great
6 job supporting. I want to check one thing. I want
7 to thank you for your testimony today and thank the
8 fellows for I guess the moral support you've been
9 providing this past few minutes. Thank you.

10 JULIA KONRAD: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: We'll now call the next
12 panel. Okay, next we're going to hear from President
13 of the United Federation of Teachers Michael Mulgrew
14 and he'll be joining us virtually.

15 Alright, uhm in the meantime, thank you everyone
16 for your patience. We are going to call a panel
17 Leonie Haimson from Class Size Matters, uhm and just
18 if I mispronounce your name, just correct me
19 politely. Naila Rosario, Ellen McHugh. Okay, and you
20 may begin when ready. Just state your name for the
21 record and make sure your mics on. Thank you.

22 LEONIE HAIMSON: My name is Leonie Haimson. I am
23 the Executive Director of Class Size Matters. Thank
24 you so much for holding the hearing today and also
25 for your excellent questions before hand.

1
2 I'm going to start; I have a very lengthy
3 testimony. I'm going to try to summarize it as
4 briefly as possible. There are a lot of miss
5 connected to mayoral control in terms of
6 accountability. Those I'd like to address. First of
7 all, a Mayor is elected only every four years and
8 voters make their choices on many issues but also,
9 Mayor's rarely follow through on their promises.
10 When Bloomberg first ran for Mayor, he promised lower
11 class sizes in the early grades and yet, class sizes
12 increased to the largest levels in 15 years when he
13 left office. During his Administration, the DOE
14 failed to use state funds meant for smaller classes
15 appropriately according to three different audits and
16 when asked what parents could do if they disagreed
17 with him, Bloomberg said they can boo me at parades.

18 Similar with Bill de Blasio promised to lower
19 class size. He did not. When mayoral control was
20 extended in 2022, they said it would be linked to
21 compliance with the Class Size Law and yet Mayor
22 Adams instead cut the budget for new school
23 construction by \$2 billion and cut funds for schools,
24 so when most schools class sizes went up.

1
2 Another common myth is that mayoral control is
3 necessary because it is less corrupt than the
4 community school boards. However, the community
5 school boards had their power for spending money
6 taken away six years before mayoral control and since
7 then, the mayoral control, there have been huge
8 multimillion dollar contracts, fraud, people have
9 been convicted and put in jail. I have a list of
10 some of these things in my appendix. The spending on
11 comp consultants increased 455 percent. Data systems
12 costing many millions of dollars were created and
13 then ditched and then one of the more recent myths
14 around mayoral - oopsie.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can you finish your last
16 thought?

17 LEONIE HAIMSON: Yeah, is around Pre-K and of
18 course that was a great thing - a great initiative.
19 It was done very quickly but it was actually done
20 with a lot of damage, so they spent \$1 billion in
21 creating Pre-K centers, the city where they were not
22 needed. They do thousands of kids out of CBO's,
23 which put them in economic peril. Some of them
24 closed and they overcrowded schools. 352 schools
25

1
2 that were already overcrowded got Pre-K's
3 contributing to worse overcrowding for -

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

5 LEONIE HAIMSON: Almost a quarter million
6 students and now, even now, three quarters of the
7 schools that do not have space for smaller classes
8 have 3K and Pre-K classes.

9 So, I do have a number of recommendations.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I know there is more, I
11 know there's more, we'll hear it and for anyone
12 testifying today of course we'll have your two
13 minutes testimony. Of course, you can always submit
14 more written testimony at testimony@council.nyc.gov.
15 It's very easy, testimony@council.nyc.gov. Alright,
16 you may begin, please state your name for the record.

17 NALIA ROSARIO: Hi, my name is Nalia Rosario. I
18 am the President of the NYC Kids PAC. Thank you so
19 much for having this hearing and congratulations on
20 your first hearing. So, uhm, I'm the President of
21 New York City Kids PAC. We were established over ten
22 years ago. We are the only parent based Political
23 Action Committee focused on supporting candidates
24 based on their positions in record, supporting our
25 city's public schools.

1
2 We enthusiastically endorse Zohran Mamdani for
3 Mayor. When he was pulling at three percent in the
4 primary and also in the general election and we did
5 this based on his progressive position on a variety
6 of important education issues, including school
7 funding, class size, and the need to support our
8 immigrant students and more oversight to stem the
9 abuses of Charter schools. But one of the major
10 reasons we supported him was his stance on mayoral
11 control. He was one of the few candidates that uhm,
12 queued for mayor over the last 20 years that
13 recognized that this system of governance is
14 inherently flawed and needs to incorporate more
15 checks and balances, parent and community voices and
16 more democracy in a place of the current autocratic
17 decision making that's often weakened you know - it
18 has weakened our public schools. Uhm, here is what
19 Mamdani wrote on our candidate questionnaire
20 concerning the issue. He said, "I am opposed to
21 mayoral control and envision a system of which
22 parents, students, educators and administrators work
23 together to create the school environment where
24 students and families will best thrive. While the
25 governing with or without mayoral control, a decision

1
2 determined by Albany, I would work to create a more
3 practical educational system strengthening co-
4 governance through its PP, PEP, SLT's, DLT's, and
5 CEC's in particular."

6 Then he went ahead and checked off several boxes
7 saying he would support reform. And I also just want
8 to wrap up with just saying that we, you know we're
9 waiting, you know we are hoping that he will fulfill
10 his promises as well as be more responsive than
11 previous mayor's and for the needs of our children.
12 And you know, we really deserve more equitable and
13 accountable educational policies.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

15 NAILA ROSARIO: And spending priorities.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Last, please
17 turn the mic on and state your name for the record
18 please.

19 ELLEN MCHUGH: My name is Ellen McHugh. It's
20 nice to meet you and thank you for the opportunity to
21 speak today. Also, the people who have spoken before
22 us have spoken in support of mayoral control. I
23 can't.

24 Recently, an appointee to the PEP, Mr. Joseph
25 Borelli, used the word retarded in his posting.

1
2 Obviously, he felt very comfortable using it and
3 obviously he felt that it wouldn't be an insult.

4 I want to remind this Council, as well as this
5 Committee that up until 50 years ago, retarded was
6 also a category on report cards. You were promoted
7 or retarded. Retarded also meant that doctors felt
8 comfortable saying to parents whose children had been
9 diagnosed, take them home and institutionalize them.
10 Sent them to a specialized environment. One of those
11 specialized environments, Letchworth in upstate New
12 York, housed many people. They didn't - they didn't
13 care for them so much as they housed them. People
14 stayed there until they died. If you walk around
15 Letchworth now you see the cemetery. The individuals
16 who died while there do not have headstones. They
17 have a grave marker with their case number on it.
18 Using the word retarded; though my son is - I'm not
19 denying this but my son is not retarded. My son is
20 deaf. He's also had a very good education in the New
21 York City Public School System, as have my other two
22 children.

23 The unfortunate part is that this - the former
24 mayor took little to no time in my opinion to
25 investigate, question, or gain knowledge of Mr.

1
2 Borelli's relationship or viewpoint on individuals
3 with developmental disabilities. Currently, 25
4 percent of the -

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Please finish up your last
6 thought. Thank you.

7 ELLEN MCHUGH: Are kids with IEP's. I don't see
8 how he is an individual on the PEP making decisions
9 that will affect them, can be considered either well,
10 I suppose I shouldn't say this, worthwhile or honest.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, thank you.

12 ELLEN MCHUGH: I'm going to ask your support in
13 finding ways to encourage mayor's or uhm enact ways
14 for current mayor's to start asking -

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

16 ELLEN MCHUGH: More in depth questions of their
17 appointees.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you and I think that
19 last part does speak to the governance. I do also
20 want to share that in this Council under it was
21 Carlina Rivera in 2021, passed legislation which
22 actually changed our City Charter to remove the R-
23 word from; I think it was the City Charter
24 Administrative Code right? And that's, you know that
25 to me was a very important bill, especially as a

1
2 special education teacher making sure we are speaking
3 with dignity as well as treating people with dignity.

4 I want to ask about - when you started to talk
5 about budgets and I just want to know if you have a
6 sense of what some of the corruptions, scandals, or
7 some of the wasted money was on contracts under the
8 Board of Education and how that compares to I guess
9 verify claims of waste, of financial waste in our
10 current system under the PEP and mayoral control?

11 ELLEN MCHUGH: Well, spending overall on
12 contracts has increased rapidly under mayoral
13 control. Part of that is inevitable of course
14 especially with the expansion of Pre-K in the CBO's
15 and others but there's a huge amount of money still
16 wasted on consultants, on all sorts of programs -
17 have no evidence behind them as sited in the RA, in
18 the Request for Authorization.

19 As you mentioned, PEP members can't see the
20 contracts. In the past, they could on occasion when
21 they asked for it and one of the things that is so I
22 think unfortunate is that PEP members do get briefed
23 privately on contracts and other issues and they are
24 told not to reveal any of the information that
25 they're told by the DOE to anyone in the public and

1
2 to me that's unacceptable as public officials. They
3 also mentioned that you can email PEP members. For
4 years, a lot of the PEP members didn't either have
5 their names on the website or their contact
6 information and only because I and others kept
7 complaining for many, many years about this that
8 yesterday, they apparently put them all up on the
9 same time. So, there's no way for the public to
10 communicate to the PEP and there's very little way
11 for the PEP to actually communicate what they've
12 learned to the public and that puts them in a
13 category that's unlike any school board in the
14 country to my knowledge.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much.

16 NAILA ROSARIO: On that topic, it is often said
17 that Special Education is expensive and it's even
18 more expensive not to educate the children. I do
19 want to bring up the fact that 4410 and 853 schools,
20 which are self-contained schools for individuals with
21 disabilities are reimbursed to the New York City
22 school system up to 85 percent of the cost. Bringing
23 the cost of educating a child down to or slightly
24 below the same level as used here.

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Yes and we
3 certainly have those in my district and I want to
4 thank this panel for their testimony today. Thank
5 you so much for coming in and a reminder, you can
6 send more testimony, more written testimony.

7 Okay, our next panel, I'd like to call on Andrea
8 Ortiz from Dignity in Schools Campaign, Imani Wilson
9 from Abolition and Education Justice Collective,
10 Jonathan Greenburg from ECC, Isa Abraham from
11 MALIKAH, and Sheree Gibson from Alliance for Quality
12 Education.

13 We will go from my right to my left, starting
14 with you. Uhm, I get the feeling you wanted to go
15 last but sorry. You got this. You got this. Just
16 turn your mic on, state your name for the record and
17 begin your testimony. Remember you have two minutes
18 and anything else you could submit at
19 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

20 SHEREE GIBSON: Red light means on. Yeah. Good
21 afternoon. Thank you Chair Dinowitz and the
22 Education Committee for hosting this hearing on
23 mayoral control. Giving the students, parents,
24 teachers, invested partners, an opportunity to share
25 their lived experience under mayoral control.

1
2 Because what was expressed today by the Chancellor
3 and his team, seemed to be what they hoped is done
4 and not what actually happens day to day in this
5 system and that is the problem with mayoral control.
6 As a school governance model, this experiment has
7 failed our children and our families. As a parent
8 leader, my name is Sheree Gibson. As a parent leader
9 who has served in many of the roles outlined for
10 parents to have a say in education their children
11 receive, I can attest to more performative actions
12 than actual - then actual ugh, breathe Sheree, actual
13 initiatives that produce positive outcomes.

14 A lot of your questioning today has centered
15 around family engagement, which I'm heartened to see
16 but is something that is not being done well by our
17 system currently. I'm going to speak specifically as
18 a Title I parent leader today. I've been supporting
19 our leaders, our parent leaders with their knowledge
20 and understanding of family engagement. In a
21 presentation that I use, I utilize the rocket
22 spaceship launch as a metaphor for family engagement.
23 Where our students success equates to the rocket
24 space launch and the mission control is the team that
25 happens, that makes it all happen from

1
2 mathematicians, scientists, engineers, etc., etc.,
3 their equivalents are our parents, teachers,
4 administrators, staff, all the vested parties in our
5 public school system.

6 Our students have been calling Houston, New York.
7 We have a problem. They are not being launched.
8 They are not being supported. We have curriculums
9 that are - that were harken to be culturally
10 responsive.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Although New
12 York City was A-Houston{SP?} but it's fine. You may
13 begin and state your name for the record.

14 IMANI WILSON: Hello City Council Members. My
15 name is Imani Wilson. I am a community educator and
16 organizer with the Abolition to Education Justice
17 Collective as well as a member of the Dignity in
18 Schools Campaign. More formerly, I am a doctoral
19 candidate in sociology of education at New York
20 University researching histories of school governance
21 and movements for education justice and also working
22 with young people across New York City to think about
23 how they envision the building of safe, supportive
24 and liberatory educational spaces. And so, I'm here
25 today to urge you all to consider the importance of

1
2 utilizing your positions of power to call on your
3 colleagues, Mayor Mamdani and state representatives
4 and not only ending Mayoral control but creating
5 pathways towards a community led commission made up
6 of youth, parents, educators, organizers, advocates
7 and researchers to ensure they're central to the
8 development of a new, more equitable and just school
9 governance system in New York City.

10 Mayoral control since its inception in 2002 under
11 Bloomberg, has systematically failed to honor the
12 needs, ideas, and decision making abilities of
13 students, families, and educators. The
14 centralization of power in the hands of the New York
15 City mayors, reenforces these histories of violent
16 exclusion and disenfranchisement that Black, Brown,
17 disabled immigrant and low-income communities have
18 dealt with throughout histories of schooling in the
19 U.S. and even here, specifically in New York City,
20 therefore, in a system that continually places these
21 needs at the margins of our education system. And we
22 see people do not feel supported and seen by the
23 current structures as through mayoral controls,
24 CEC's, PEP, DOE. This is critical moment to do
25 something radically different. And so, as we think

1
2 about what a just education system can look like,
3 this includes empowering and creating tangible
4 avenues for parents, educators and especially our
5 young people to have power and deciding and creating
6 an education governance system that can justly and
7 rightfully participate in.

8 And so, I'm calling on you all to think about
9 what our young people deserve, uhm and their present
10 and their futures and ending mayoral control and
11 establishing community powered solutions.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much.

13 ANDREA ORTIZ: Thank you. My name is Andrea and
14 I'm with the Dignity in Schools New York. A
15 coalition of students, parents, educators and
16 advocates. We are calling on New York City Council
17 to pressure and work with Mayor Mamdani to establish
18 a commission of parents, educators, students,
19 advocates, experts and researchers tasked with
20 engaging communities and designing a democratic
21 school governance system that finally centers the
22 needs and experiences of our most marginalized and
23 underserved communities, including BIPOC, LGBTQIA
24 youth, English Language Learners, immigrant
25 newcomers, students with disabilities, students in

1
2 temporary housing, foster care and low-income
3 students.

4 We also call on the city to create immediate
5 changes to the existing governance bodies, including
6 making them more inclusive and creating more
7 transparency, participation, accountability, in the
8 DOE, PEP, School Construction Authority, contracting
9 voting processes. For over 20 years, mayoral control
10 has centralized power while silencing parents,
11 students and educators. During that time, even
12 progressive mayors have reversed promises and policy
13 wins overnight with no accountability. Communities
14 have repeatedly seen hard won victories, dismantled
15 behind closed doors including police free schools,
16 restorative justice expansion, culturally responsive
17 and sustaining education, antibias training and more.
18 Models of participatory governance exist throughout
19 the country, especially in more affluent communities
20 and unsurprisingly, mayoral control is only employed
21 to disenfranchised Black, Brown and low-income
22 communities.

23 This disenfranchisement effects more than our
24 educational decisions. It effects our political
25 realities. Across the country, school boards are

1
2 launch pads for civic engagement and political
3 advancement. We can teach using families to be
4 leaders by creating a new democratic school
5 governance system that invests in young people,
6 parents and teachers and being meaningfully involved
7 in educational decisions.

8 We can get youth and families involved in school
9 governance, register them and begin to vote as soon
10 as possible and even fight to broaden youth and
11 family leadership throughout our institutions. Now,
12 is a great time to teach how civic engagement and
13 global leadership start by standing up for your
14 school community because we must learn to fight
15 fascism and take care of each other.

16 And also, we don't need mayoral control to have a
17 remote day for snow day. There's many decisions that
18 we can have without that.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Uh, you know of all the
20 things I hear and feelings I have, I didn't need to -
21 look, you know we agree and disagree on things but I
22 don't need to push back at everything but that was
23 one I kind of regret not sharing. Like, I had snow
24 days when I was a kid and to be clear I went to
25 school in the 1900's. I also want to share, I do

1
2 appreciate that as we're talking about communities,
3 one of the communities that is often left out are
4 students with disabilities. So, I do just want to
5 share that I appreciate that being uplifted time and
6 again.

7 You may begin. State your name for the record
8 please.

9 ISA ABRAHAM: My name is Isa Abraham and I'm the
10 Youth Program Coordinator at MALIKAH, an antiviolen
11 ce nonprofit in Queens and a member of the Dignity in
12 Schools New York Coalition. I work with Muslim girls
13 across New York City Public Schools to empower them
14 with the skills to make their schools more safe and
15 just spaces for all. I'm urging you to allow
16 students, parents, educators, and youth led CBO's
17 from under resourced and immigrant communities to
18 take the lead in creating a more democratic school
19 governance system via an independent commission,
20 tasked with working with the city to replace mayoral
21 control. Under mayoral control, the students in our
22 fellowship and their peers again, primarily Muslim
23 students of color from working class backgrounds have
24 had to endure punitive and discriminatory school
25 practices regardless of city leadership, budget cuts,

1
2 metal detectors, and police in schools, all of which
3 had been constant across administrations, if not
4 growing have contributed to negative, emotional and
5 academic outcomes and a pipeline of incarceration.

6 My students have been harassed, made late to
7 class and subject to degradation and invasive
8 surveillance in the name of safety, only for these
9 same schools to fail to protect them from racist
10 harassment on campus, Islamophobic administration and
11 even physical attacks. Meanwhile parents, educators
12 and youth workers like myself, who have real trusted
13 relationships with students and have raised our
14 concerns time and time again have no real decision
15 making power to support them systemically.

16 If we believe in teaching our youth to be
17 leaders, why not create systems that invest in their
18 meaningful involvement? My students know themselves
19 and their peers best. When given the opportunity to
20 have a real impact, I've seen them come alive,
21 dreaming of alternatives and peer support networks.
22 I'm here as a witness to the fact that our students
23 are ready and capable of community driven school
24 governance.

1
2 So, I'm urging you all to change the law to
3 authorize high school juniors and seniors to vote on
4 citywide education councils and the PEP increase the
5 pool of eligible students, create a democratic
6 process for them to vote on who should actually
7 represent them in governance bodies. You have my
8 testimony.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you so
10 much for your testimony.

11 JONATHAN GREENBERG: My name is Jonathan
12 Greenberg. I'm the Chair of the School Governance
13 Committee of the Education Council Consortium. The
14 ECC strives to develop and support New York City
15 Public School parent leadership through education,
16 networking and organizing.

17 Mayoral control was created through a statute in
18 state law in 2002. Our version of mayoral control in
19 New York City is quite an extreme version compared to
20 other versions of mayoral control of schools in other
21 cities historically. The mayor really has a lot of
22 power. You know, appointing the Chancellor and the
23 majority of the PEP, without any kind of guardrails
24 on those appointments. This system, is both
25 centralized and concentrated. It's centralized away

1
2 from the 32 community school districts into a central
3 office and it's concentrated into the hands of one
4 person, the mayor. These are different things and as
5 we think about how to improve the system and devise a
6 new system, we don't need to conflate those things.
7 We can still have certain things that are
8 centralized. We can have decisions like when to have
9 a snow day that are made at the central office. We
10 can have guardrails about what must house students
11 you know, students with disabilities are educated and
12 treated that are made at the central office. Not
13 everything needs to be - uh but we do need a balance.
14 We need to be able to reach communities and I just
15 want to say that all of the things that the
16 Chancellor touted about what the DOE has done over
17 the past four years, these things are very possible
18 under lots of other types of school governance
19 system.

20 I also want to make a distinction between parent
21 and community engagement or voice and governance and
22 decision making. You know it is really important if
23 you've been in a district where bad decisions have
24 been made, where bad principals have been hired,
25 where schools have been closed or mergers have taken

1
2 place that shouldn't have happened, you know that
3 those communities could have benefited from students,
4 parents, teachers, having a voice in those decisions.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your
6 testimony. Thank you so much to this panel. I will
7 now call the next panel. On Zoom, take two,
8 President of the United Federation of Teachers
9 Michael Mulgrew.

10 MICHAEL MULGREW: You and me - hold on.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: We can hear you.

12 MICHAEL MULGREW: Okay, great now you just need
13 to see me.

14 COUNCIL MEMBERS: Yay Michael.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You can't hear them but
16 they're clapping for you.

17 MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you. Thank you everybody
18 and please excuse me. I'm dealing with some medical
19 stuff, so I'm in and out at certain times but thank
20 you so much for having this hearing Chair. We do
21 appreciate and once again, I am testifying that New
22 York City's mayoral control does not work. Let's
23 just keep this simple. We have enough evidence at
24 this point from numerous administrations that the
25 form of mayoral control as the previous panel has

1
2 pointed out, ours is the most extreme form of mayoral
3 control in the United States. It has proven at
4 times, especially in crisis, to be catastrophic in
5 terms of mayor's making decisions based off of
6 politics versus what's in the best interest of the
7 school children in our communities that we serve.
8 And if you look nationwide, mayoral control is
9 falling out of fashion across this country. It has
10 not really worked anywhere and people are seeing it's
11 more because when community truly does not have voice
12 in the direction that its schools are going, then
13 that leads to bad results. It leads to frustration.
14 It leads to anger and it also leads to again the most
15 important piece here, is bad policy decisions. I can
16 point to where they make good policy decisions but
17 there's always bad ones and it always comes down to
18 the mayor and their administration thinking about the
19 school systems through a political lens on how it
20 effects them. I mean, the last Administration here -
21 I mean the last thing we thought they were going to
22 do is the first thing they did educationally was to
23 attack the 3K and Pre-K program of New York City.
24 That is - nobody ever thought that was going to
25 happen and we found out why. Why it was because they

1
2 wanted to claw back money into the traditional K-12
3 school system and they did not really want to fund
4 the 3K and Pre-K system. And of course, then what
5 happened? Communities got involved, we were
6 involved, teachers were involved, principals were
7 involved and we had to fight back.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: That's the end of your time.
9 Time is expired.

10 MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you. There should have
11 been no fight to begin with. That is always the
12 problem and it's this constant frustration between
13 community and City Hall when it comes to these
14 things. And it's not about any one person. It's
15 just a bad policy is a bad policy and you cannot
16 continue to have a place where every major decision
17 gets made by one single person and just when we look
18 at the PEP, the procurement process is a wreck. Now
19 we're using emergency provisions versus non-emergency
20 provisions. The number of consultants is still
21 growing dramatically despite years of people saying
22 how horrible it is and it's not working for our
23 schools. And so, why does the PEP get the budget
24 information at the last minute before they have to
25 vote on it? Because it doesn't matter. Nobody has

1
2 to read it. The PEP is already set up where they're
3 going to get the result that they want. So, they
4 don't care about getting the information in a timely
5 matter. School utilization, that's a major component
6 for everybody in the community. When you start
7 changing the utilization of a school in the
8 community, you have to be transparent. Tell them the
9 truth. Why is this happening? What are we looking
10 at? Be truthful with them. Don't treat it as in the
11 end, we're going to get what we want, so we don't
12 have to respect you. You know these are the things
13 that really will make a difference.

14 So, you know we've submitted our testimony but
15 again, this is not working and we have evidence.
16 Every Mayor has made major mistakes because of their
17 complete control of the school system and everyone
18 has testified for years that we're going to stop
19 this. We don't want another band aid or political
20 fig leaf coming out of Albany where oh, okay we heard
21 all your concerns and now we're going to put more
22 bureaucracy inside of the Department of Ed. Because
23 now that's actually starting to hurt our school
24 system. Fix what everyone is asking for. We need

1
2 checks and balances and that's all this comes down
3 to.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, Mr. President, you've
5 made some - there are some recommendations for the
6 PEP for example, when we discussed at the hearing
7 today about what some of those checks and balances
8 look like. Can you talk a little bit about what a
9 check and balance would look on the PEP and on the
10 CEC as it relates to things you mentioned,
11 colocations, budgets, things of that nature?

12 MICHAEL MULGREW: A check and balance simply on
13 the PEP is - you've asked the simplest of all, that
14 the mayor does not have an automatic vote before they
15 even ask the question. And that's what we have had
16 for all of these years. The Mayor has an automatic
17 vote because they have the majority of the members,
18 everybody knows this.

19 So, the whole idea is I mean just to you know try
20 with a plus one or a plus two. If you can't convince
21 one person that you're idea is not really not a
22 really, really bad idea, then it's probably a really,
23 really bad idea and -

24 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And by the way, I had a
25 delegate assembly like 15 years ago. I think I heard

1
2 you say the exact same thing. So, if nothing else,
3 you're consistent. You can't convince one person,
4 how could is the idea? Exactly the same thing.

5 MICHAEL MULGREW: Do you think the panel, if it
6 was independent say four years ago at this point,
7 when they say, "oh we're going to start defunding our
8 Pre-K and 3K program." Do you think the PEP panel,
9 if they were independent would have said, "oh yeah,
10 go right ahead." They would have said, "Are you
11 nuts?" This is now part of the school community.
12 Yes, we need to move the seats around. Yes, it has
13 to be managed better but that's on the Department of
14 Ed. That's not on us and that would have happened or
15 when they say, "we're putting in a new curriculum."
16 If everyone says, "it's a good curriculum, we want to
17 move forward with it." Would the PEP panel of
18 approved it? Probably yes. I mean, so the basic
19 things, the things that we all point at that are so
20 good about our schools is if they would have been
21 approved by the PEP. You didn't need mayoral control
22 to do it. I mean right now, we're working with this
23 mayor on fulfilling the class size law but let me be
24 clear, the first two years of the class size law, we

25

1
2 were fighting with an administration that was
3 fighting to stop the law in the first place.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, that's right in our
5 laws you know, as has been said again, good policy is
6 good policy and it shouldn't just depend on who the
7 Chancellor or the Mayor is.

8 MICHAEL MULGREW: You understand.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, so we may be working
10 with the mayor. Now, working with the Chancellor now
11 but we also want to legislate or codify things into
12 law for the next Chancellor and the next Mayor to
13 make sure these systems are in place.

14 Mr. President, thank you so much for testifying
15 today and for all the work you do on behalf of our
16 teachers and the hard workers here in New York City.

17 MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you everyone and have a
18 good day.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Alright, our next panel is
20 Dr. Kaliris Salas-Ramirez, New Yorkers for Racially
21 Just Public Schools, Sohini Das, Whitney Toussaint,
22 and Chauncy Young.

23 You may begin when ready. State your name for
24 the record please.

1
2 DR. KALIRIS SALAS-RAMIREZ: Sure, Dr. Kaliris
3 Salas-Ramirez, pronouns she, her, is. Here not just
4 as part of New Yorkers for Racially Just Public
5 Schools but I'm a current CEC President District 4
6 and a former panel member, and I will say that being
7 in this space today was incredibly triggering because
8 a lot of the things that were said were not true. As
9 a CEC member, I have sent multiple Resolutions to the
10 Department of Education and only have received
11 communication from Deputy Chancellors or the head of
12 the policy team. I've never received a response from
13 any PEP members. I've actually attended PEP meetings
14 to alert PEP members of what our Resolutions are
15 like. As a sitting PEP member, I never saw a
16 Resolution from any of the CEC's in Manhattan. I
17 knew about their Resolutions because the ECC has a
18 Resolution bank and because I attended CEC meetings
19 across Manhattan. A lot of the work that PEP members
20 do are behind the scenes. If you really want to be
21 intentional about that position, you have to visit
22 communities, engage communities and negotiate for
23 those communities. And the example that I want to
24 use was a reciting of Edward A. Reynold's Transfer
25 High School where PEP members were mayoral appointees

1 attended several engagement sessions with this
2 transfer school had a building and I'm sad that Gale
3 isn't here, had a building that was built for them.
4 The Tisch family that is part of the Student
5 Engagement Network and runs Twills, wanted that
6 building for one of their schools and they called it
7 a swap, however, the kids in the Edward A. Reynold's
8 would lose a life center where students could get
9 daycare. They would lose a primary healthcare
10 clinic. They would lose a field for their sports
11 programming and a lot of their instructional
12 facilities, to move to a commercial building that was
13 not conducive to support transfer students that have
14 been moved from school to school.

16 What happened the weekend before the vote, which
17 was pushed twice, was that Mayor Eric Adams invited
18 mayoral appointees to Gracie Mansion, provided them
19 with dinner and with a threat that if they didn't
20 vote in favor of the proposal, they would be removed
21 and that happened to several PEP members. This is
22 what happens under mayoral control.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

24 SOHINI DAS: Hello, my name is Sohini Das, I'm a
25 Community Educator and Organizer with the Abolition

1
2 and Education Justice Collective and member of
3 Dignity in Schools Coalition, and also a former
4 teacher at PS 146 in East Harlem. Formerly also a
5 doctoral candidate at New York University in
6 psychology and social intervention studying the
7 impacts of school carcerality of Black and Brown
8 students and families.

9 I am here testifying today on behalf of parents,
10 youth and educators, part of the Abolition at Justice
11 Collective, including students who are not able to
12 join at this time. In this future, I hope we can
13 consider their availability during scheduling
14 hearings.

15 I am here today to urge Mayor Mamdani and City
16 Council members with a creation of a well-resourced
17 commission of parents, educators, students,
18 advocates, experts and researchers to be created to
19 engage communities in designing a truly democratic
20 school governance system that centers educators,
21 particularly the needs of Black and Brown immigrant,
22 LGBTQIA+ low income students, students in temporary
23 housing and foster care, students with disabilities
24 to replace mayoral control.

1
2 My opposition to mayoral control as a governance
3 structure is not in response to a single mayor or a
4 single administration but in response to a system
5 that for over two decades has concentrated decision
6 making authority in one office and administration and
7 shut out meaningful governance of students, families,
8 and educators. Under mayoral control is critical
9 educational decisions including those related to
10 curriculum, school safety, discipline, English
11 Language Services, Special Education Services, and
12 budgeting have been made with limited community
13 involvement, insufficient accountability to the
14 communities most impacted. This structure has
15 contributed to the implementation of cultural
16 destructive K-12 curriculum , increased reliance on
17 policing, ICE presence in schools, high suspension
18 rates, and growing classroom sizes. While these
19 decisions have been made by mayoral administration
20 after mayoral administration, parents and students
21 have been denied meaningful authority in shaping
22 their educational environments.

23 For more than 20 years, parents, advocates,
24 parents, community advocates, educators and students
25 have consistently articulated what they want for

1
2 their schools. They have called for culturally
3 responsive and sustaining education, K-12 blackened
4 studies curricula, and demand restorative justice
5 practices in the place of exclusionary discipline.

6 I'll submit the rest of my testimony.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much.

8 WHITNEY TOUSSAINT: Thank you. My name is
9 Whitney Toussaint and I'm a parent member of AQE and
10 Parent Support and Parents New York and I also
11 current serve as the co-president of CEC 30. I'm
12 also the parent of a 7th grader, who has seen six
13 Chancellors and a second grader who has already seen
14 three. That's a lot of curriculum whiplash and
15 leadership turnover. We have been told to reimagine,
16 revise, and recreate but it's always the same
17 communities who are asked to reimagine while other
18 communities get the resources and funding. It should
19 be common sense to keep what works but I'm urging you
20 to work with the Mayor to commission a real
21 representative group of parents, educators, students,
22 advocates and experts to engage communities in
23 designing a truly democratic school governance
24 system. Because even when Mayor's Campaign on
25 Progressive Education Platforms, those promises can

1 be undone overnight when there is no accountability.

2 We saw that when the Adams Administration announced
3 pre-school and early childhood special education cuts
4 then reversed it once it was clear it wasn't an
5 election year.
6

7 Families and providers were put through
8 unnecessary stress and programs were placed at risk
9 for no reason. In my district, we've also been
10 harmed by some of the most pro-Charter policies from
11 the prior administration that I've ever seen as a
12 parent in New York City Public Schools. Charter
13 school hearings function as PR campaigns, not
14 accountability spaces. At one hearing, only four of
15 us spoke up for a collocated public school that
16 primarily serves Queensbridge houses, where these
17 students are receiving services in hallways.

18 Required shared space committee meetings were never
19 held. Meanwhile, collocated Charter Schools receive
20 renovation budgets that make the collocated public
21 schools look like the real life have and have nots.

22 Another example that we still have no answers for
23 in my district, in Astoria, a state of the art
24 facility intended for Boys and Girls Club, included a
25 space that was first offered to our D30 public school

1
2 children and it was quietly redirected to a Charter
3 School.

4 The School Construction Authority has made this
5 decision without any community engagement,
6 transparency, or explaining why our public school
7 students were shut out. I'm still waiting to hear
8 who made that call and why it happened behind closed
9 doors and if we're going to pay the rent.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

11 WHITNEY TOUSSAINT: So again, thank you. We peat
12 the pavement to mayoral accountability but like you
13 said, it's like a slogan without accountability and
14 codified checks and balances. So, that's what we're
15 asking for. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much.

17 WHITNEY TOUSSAINT: I'll submit the rest and we
18 also passed a Resolution about mayoral control.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Alright, well if you have
20 extra copies of that, I would love for you to - you
21 can hand it to the Sergeants. Thank you.

22 WHITNEY TOUSSAINT: Thank you.

23 CHAUNCY YOUNG: Good afternoon. Thank you Chair
24 Dinowitz and members of City Council for holding this
25 critical hearing. Chair Dinowitz, congratulations to

1
2 your appointment of Chair of Education. The fact
3 that you've made this mayoral control one of your
4 first topics of discussion speaks volumes about your
5 character and your deep commitment to the families of
6 this city.

7 I am about to say that sir. My name is Chauncy
8 Young and I am a parent in the Highbridge. You know
9 me Council Member. I don't need to introduce myself.
10 Anyways, will you take my time back? Anyways, my
11 name is Chauncy Young. I am a parent in the
12 Highbridge neighborhood of the Bronx and I'm here
13 representing New Settlement Parent Action Committee.
14 PAC is a parent led organization founded in the Bronx
15 in 1997. PAC is a member of several coalitions,
16 including the New York City Coalition for Education
17 Justice, Dignity in Schools Coalition, New Yorkers
18 for Racially Just Public Schools and the Healing
19 Centers Schools Campaign.

20 Our members are not new to this fight. PAC has
21 been deeply involved in conversations surrounding
22 community and mayoral controlled schools since the
23 early 2000's. We have seen first hand how the
24 current system often leaves families on the very
25 decisions that shape our children's futures. For too

1
2 long, accountability has been used as a buzz word to
3 justify top down approach that lacks transparency and
4 authentic parent, student and community and education
5 engagement. We believe that our schools to truly
6 thrive the system must shift away from a model of
7 absolute power and move to ones that honors the
8 expertise of families and communities who live in the
9 reality of our school system every day.

10 We are proud to join Dignity in Schools and our
11 other coalitions in calling for an immediate
12 establishment of a commission to review mayoral
13 control. This is not just about a change in
14 leadership; it is about a fundamental restructuring
15 about how our schools are governed. We need a system
16 that prioritizes community input over political
17 expediency, ensures checks and balances that holds
18 the Department of Education accountable to parents,
19 students, educators and community members, not just
20 the mayor, centers the dignity and rights of every
21 student.

22 We look forward to working with this Council to
23 ensure that the next chapter of the New York City
24 Education is written by the many, rather than the
25

1
2 few. Thank you for your time and for your dedication
3 to our children.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well timed. Thank you to
5 this panel. I will now call the next panel. Thank
6 you so much. The next panel will consist of Crystal
7 McQueen-Taylor from Students First New York, Gavin
8 Healy from AQE, Aligns for Quality Education, Kulsoom
9 Tapal from CACF, Lacey Jordan from District 4 and
10 Robert Murfeld from PTA Advocacy Committee from the
11 Neighborhood School.

12 KULSOOM TAPAL: Thanks for changing it up for me.
13 Uhm, good afternoon, my name is Kulsoom Tapal, I'm
14 the Education Policy Coordinator at the Coalition for
15 Asian American Children and Families. The nation's
16 only Pan Asian advocacy org dedicated to advancing
17 equity and opportunity for AAPI children and
18 families. Our communities represent some of the most
19 linguistically, culturally, and economically diverse
20 families in New York City yet they are too often
21 systematically excluded from current school
22 governance structures. Nearly one in five New York
23 City students identify as AAPI and for over 20 years,
24 mayoral control has centralized power over New York
25 City's public schools, while silencing the voices of

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2 parents, students and educators, especially AAPI
3 Black, Brown, immigrant, low income, ELL, students in
4 temporary housing, foster care and students with
5 disabilities. CACF is calling for the creation of a
6 funded time bound commission to design a new
7 democratic school governance model that centers the
8 leadership and lived experiences of our most impacted
9 communities. We urge the Council, the Governor, the
10 Mayor, and all communities and important stakeholders
11 to work together to build this new democratic system.
12 With only a short two year extension of mayoral
13 control to allow this process to take place and the
14 extension should not be tied to the state budget.

15 Without shared decision making, budgets ignore
16 community needs, policies become disconnected from
17 school realities and implementation suffers. For
18 example, under the previous administration, immigrant
19 and family outreach funding was repeatedly
20 threatened, even though many AAPI families rely on
21 these programs. Existing structures like CEC's have
22 not solved this problem. Non-English speaking
23 caregivers and working class AAPI families are often
24 excluded because outreach is not provided in language
25 or in culturally responsive ways and participation in

1
2 these structures aren't compatible with demanding
3 work schedules.

4 Governance of the largest school system in the
5 country deserves transparency, accountability, public
6 input and real decision making power for parents,
7 students, and educators and this system must go
8 beyond listening sessions with communication and
9 meetings in all boroughs in all communities,
10 especially those that have a densely populated AAPI
11 community. Thank you so much.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much.

13 LACEY JORDAN: Good afternoon everyone. My name
14 is Lacey Jordan and I am a parent and advocate from
15 East Harlem. I'm a Vice President and D75
16 representative on the CEC District 4. Every day I
17 work with families and district leaders and I'm here
18 because school governance is not just about
19 education, it's about public accountability.

20 Too many families feel that their input is
21 collected but not truly listened to. We attend
22 meetings and give feedback and read reports, yet
23 there's rarely any transparency about how community
24 voices shape decisions or any clear way to challenge
25 those decisions once they're made. The problem is

1
2 mayoral control. A structure that concentrates power
3 while limiting meaningful oversight. As a parent of
4 students in both D4 and D75, I see what happens when
5 systems lack strong family partnerships, confusion,
6 delays and parents are left navigating the problems
7 alone. Accountability should not depend on how loud
8 or persistent a parent can be. It should be built
9 into the system itself. This isn't about any one
10 mayor or one chancellor, it's about structure.
11 Systems without checks and balances lose public
12 trust, especially in communities that live with those
13 consequences. That's why I support the mayoral
14 control as it is and creating a representative
15 working group of parents, teachers, students and
16 community partners to design a governance model
17 that's transparent, inclusive and accountable.
18 Mayoral control was never meant to be permanent.
19 It's time to build a system that families can trust,
20 one where accountability depends not on who you know
21 but on a fair, open and measurable governance. Thank
22 you.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Good job with the timing,
24 very impressive. Okay, please state your name for
25 the record. You may begin when ready.

1
2 CRYSTAL MCQUEEN-TAYLOR: Good afternoon. My name
3 is Crystal McQueen-Taylor. I'm the Executive
4 Director of Students First New York and I want to
5 represent a slightly different position than what has
6 been reflected today that it's something that you
7 reflected earlier Chair Dinowitz, that it may not be
8 either or but a both and.

9 Uhm, we do support an extension of mayoral
10 accountability. However, that does not mean the
11 system is perfect. There's real work to do to
12 strengthen parent and teacher voice, transparency and
13 community engagement. My support for mayoral control
14 is not only grounded in policy but also lived
15 experience. So, I'm a former New York City Public
16 School student also in the 1900's, when there were 32
17 school boards. We have recently moved to District
18 18, which was a newly - it was the demographics of
19 that community was newly changing and my family was
20 the wave of first west Indian immigrant groups who
21 were moving into a largely Jewish and Italian
22 neighborhood, and I was not allowed to take the
23 gifted and talented test because of that and we went
24 to the super—we talked to teachers, principals,
25 superintendent and would not be heard. We sat in the

1
2 superintendent office for days ignored and until they
3 finally just got sick of seeing my mother's face and
4 there was no recourse for her. There was no person
5 else for us to go to.

6 And in addition, uhm, I also was a former Public
7 School Teacher at PS 75 at the Bronx and I also led
8 the New York City Teaching Fellows program for almost
9 a decade, and at that program, we worked directly
10 with the Central Department of Education to
11 strategically identify the highest need schools and
12 direct teacher talent where it was most urgently
13 required. It wasn't based on who knew who. It was
14 based on where did the kids in the schools need those
15 teachers most, which required us to send more
16 teachers to the Bronx into high need subject areas
17 like bilingual education and special education.

18 So, I know I'm at time, so I think it's both and
19 that there is something that can be maintained while
20 also improving and taking a lot of feedback that
21 you've heard today around actually having real
22 community and parent input.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah and as a teaching
24 fellow myself, I think we just missed each other in
25 the teaching fellows but I do have to say a fantastic

1
2 program that does exactly that, gets in my case maybe
3 not to talented but otherwise, one of those talented
4 people in high need areas and I fully support that
5 program.

6 ROBERT MURTFELD: Thank you Chair Dinowitz and
7 also thank you to [INAUDIBLE 03:36:07] for holding
8 this important hearing. My name is Robert Murtfeld.
9 I sit here before you as a parent of two young
10 children at the Neighborhood School, which is part of
11 a progressive consortium of elementary schools in the
12 east village that were founded in the early 1990's.

13 I also represent today the position of my PTA's
14 Advocacy Committee. The Committee meets monthly to
15 discuss policy in New York City Public Schools.
16 Council Member Dinowitz himself, kindly joined us
17 only last week for a February meeting. We're
18 grateful for his time and participation. Mamdani's
19 reverse law mayoral control was indeed surprising and
20 delivered at such sort notice. Only six hours before
21 midnight on New Year's Eve, yet we support the newly
22 elected mayor and we will help him to pursue and I
23 quote Mr. Mayor Mamdani, "an aggressive
24 democratization agenda to make sure the entire system
25 has a voice."

1
2 We especially urge the Mayor to start such an
3 agenda by fostering capacity building and community
4 organization at the school level and not at the
5 district or citywide level. All the discussion about
6 community education councils, while it's important,
7 is and all the other acronyms, PEP and CPAC and
8 everything else is somewhat a distraction. Parent
9 teacher associations, as well as school leadership
10 teams, if organized properly with resourced
11 allocation and professional governance, under the
12 regulations as they exist have far greater power and
13 participatory potential than is presently known by
14 most.

15 The PTA Advocacy Committee at the Neighborhood
16 School is a great example. Built up over the last
17 two years for a community that was destroyed by
18 COVID, the Committee reaches today more than 50
19 percent of the parent body and works collaboratively
20 and daily with the entire school, including teachers,
21 Para's, school aides, parent coordinator, custodial
22 stuff, food service, school safety, principal and
23 superintendent.

24 I'm proud to say that we're close to a true
25 democracy. PTA's and SLT's are a silver bullet Mr.

1
2 Mamdani. Please focus on these two bodies, that way
3 you will be successful. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much. I will
5 now call our next - thank you for your testimony
6 today. I really appreciate it. I will now call our
7 next panel Mari Moss, Yiatin Chu, Yolanda Marshall,
8 and Ephraim Zakry and Raul Soto.

9 RAUL SOTO: Thank you. Hello, Chair Dinowitz,
10 members of the - well, everybody else is here but my
11 name is Raul Soto, I'm the Co-Executive Director of
12 the Ya-Ya Network. We're a hub for youth advocacy and
13 organizing for young people throughout New York City
14 on all issues that impact high school age young
15 people. We're also a member of the Dignity in
16 Schools Coalition and New Yorkers for Racially Just
17 Public Schools.

18 I'm here today - I'm usually not the person at
19 the mic. Usually, my young people are the people at
20 the mic but unfortunately this hearing is scheduled
21 during the school day. Hopefully we can schedule
22 subsequent hearings that are not during the school
23 day but I'm here to just represent their interests.
24 They are calling four years is far too long of an
25 extension for a process in a system that doesn't

1
2 include youth voice in any meaningful way. For this
3 reason, we're calling on the Council to join us in
4 just a two year extension where we can actually pair
5 that with a call for a commission in order to think
6 through a new democratic process. This is especially
7 important to me as an adult leader of an organization
8 that prepares young people to take their rightful
9 place in government and in community. We engage
10 hundreds of young people every year who feel
11 disengaged from the current system, who feel like
12 they go to adult leaders and they just get told, "you
13 don't understand the process. You don't understand
14 the system. So, we can design a new model that
15 actually takes their voice into account. We're not
16 just advocating this because Mayor Mamdani promised
17 to change it but our coalition and partners have been
18 doing this for many years with a deep moral and
19 structural understanding that schools are not
20 currently governed well under this system and
21 outcomes cannot be improved when they are subject to
22 political cycles.

23 To that end, we're also asking for more supports
24 for the structures that currently exist, CEC's,
25 SLT's, all that, all the acronyms but also, because

1
2 young people are already disengaged from those very
3 bodies and that's because there is a lack of support
4 to meaningfully create support systems, programs, in
5 order to have them participate fully.

6 Uhm, I'll finish off. Now is the moment to
7 improve the system because we are all experiencing
8 what the consequences of a tax and democracy are on
9 the federal level. As a city, looking towards a new
10 era of governance and we see the City Council is part
11 of that. We need to build a new democratic model
12 that's not - democratic education model that's not
13 subject to political cycles. Thank you.

14 Good afternoon Chair Dinowitz and members of the
15 Education Committee. I am Yolanda Marshall, Chief
16 Executive Officer of Student Leadership Network. For
17 nearly 30 years, our organization has worked hand and
18 hand with the New York City Public Schools to ensure
19 that a student's zip code does not determine their
20 destiny. We currently serve 6 all girl schools, the
21 young women's leadership schools and 20 co-ed schools
22 through our College Bound Initiative program, CBI.
23 We place a full-time college counselor in each of
24 these Title I schools and work hand and hand with
25 students and their families to ensure that they are

1
2 all on a path to post-secondary success. Many of the
3 students that we work with will be the first in their
4 families to attend college.

5 I am here today to testify in support of the
6 continuation of mayoral control for the work that we
7 do. Mayor Mamdani has rightly stated that New
8 Yorkers need to know where the buck stops and for
9 nonprofit partners like ours, the buck represents the
10 stability required to scale life changing programs.
11 In the decades before mayoral control, scaling a
12 model like the College Bound Initiative across 26
13 schools would have been nearly impossible under a
14 fragmented system of 32 community boards.

15 Mayoral control provides a centralized
16 accountable partner that allows us to implement high
17 standards, college and career guidance consistently
18 across the five boroughs.

19 The results of our partnership with the New York
20 City Public Schools is undeniable. While the city
21 high school graduation rate has climbed significantly
22 under this governance model, our students achieved a
23 98 percent high school graduation rate. And high
24 school graduates from our partner schools enroll in
25 four year colleges and earn college degrees at double

1
2 the rate of their peers nationally. Mayor Mamdani's
3 vision for a different kind of mayoral control, one
4 that empowers communities is exactly what our model
5 does.

6 We don't just provide a service; we build a
7 college going culture from the ground up and we urge
8 the state and city to maintain this governance
9 structure to ensure that the progress of the last 30
10 years is not just protected but accelerated.

11 And we invite you out to our schools to come and
12 witness the work firsthand. I think you'd be
13 impressed.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I am impressed actually,
15 we worked on with one of your teachers, getting some
16 of your students a tour of City Hall. And so, I have
17 - and I have met in the past with one of your
18 teachers and their class. They always are armed with
19 excellent questions. This is a former colleague of
20 mine who then switched to one of your schools but
21 happy to come visit anyone's school to see incredible
22 work that's being done all throughout our city.

23 MARI MOSS: Good afternoon. My name is Mari Moss
24 and I'm here to speak about parental involvement,
25 domestic violence and the urgent need for

1
2 codification that prevents parental alienation
3 through the education system.

4 This occurred pre-COVID and pre-ICE. None of the
5 emergency frameworks or enforcement climates that are
6 now cited existed at the time. I was not absent or a
7 disruptive parent. In fact, I was Chair of the
8 School Leadership team, part of the Parent
9 Association and serving on the Community Board. I
10 was deeply engaged in my children's education and in
11 DOE governance. I attended community education
12 council meetings, participated in decisions around
13 the panel for education policy, and regularly engaged
14 with superintendents and senior DOE leadership.

15 Uhm, at the time, I knew that Chancellor, the
16 superintendent who is now the new Chancellor who now
17 serves in senior DOE leadership. I was known within
18 the system. My engagement was visible and so were my
19 children because they were with me, appropriate and
20 welcomed. What changed was not my conduct, what
21 changed was the systems response once domestic
22 violence entered the picture. Instead of protection,
23 domestic violence became a pathway to parental
24 alienation, lawful parental involvement was refrained
25 as a safety concern, FERPA rights were restricted

1
2 without a court order, without due process and
3 without written notice or appeal. And let me be
4 clear, FERPA does not become optional because a
5 situation is uncomfortable. Absent a court order
6 limiting parental rights access to child's education
7 must not be denied.

8 Domestic violence survivors must offer mothers,
9 most often mothers, are especially vulnerable to this
10 kind of institutional harm. When schools rely on
11 allegations rather than law, they participate in
12 erasing a safe parent from a child's life. If this
13 body is serious about codification, then codification
14 must include guardrails. We need clear language that
15 stays. No court order, no exclusion, domestic
16 violence cannot be weaponized into parental
17 alienation and known engagement parents cannot be
18 erased by an administrative discretion.

19 YIATIN CHU: Good afternoon Chair Dinowitz. My
20 name is Yiatin Chu, a mom to two New York City Public
21 School Students and Cofounder of Place NYC. I am
22 here to advocate for gifted and talented programs, a
23 rational approach to class size and mayoral
24 accountability. First, we must protect and expand
25 gifted and talented programs. Accelerate learners

1 thrive in rigorous learning environments and they
2 deserve to start young. The latest research from the
3 University of Connecticut, urges us to begin
4 identifying students early in kindergarten and first
5 grade, not second or third to reduce the widening
6 achievement gaps and to find ways of identifying
7 gifted English Language Learners.
8

9 Second, on the class size law, we urge a
10 sensible, flexible implementation guided by the DOE's
11 Class Size Working Groups Minority Report. Strict
12 enrollment caps would disrupt high performing schools
13 and force longer commutes for families and students.
14 Even the UFT President concur that there should be no
15 caps imposed on popular schools.

16 Additionally, the Class Size Mandate, should not
17 crowd out space or funding for art, music and other
18 electives including advanced placement courses. The
19 city should instead work to build in new schools and
20 invest in a pipeline of high quality teachers.

21 Finally, we support renewing the new mayor with a
22 two year extension of mayoral control with some
23 improvements. This targeted renewal provides
24 continuation of literacy reforms that we've seen for
25 the last few years and the ability to drive some

1 changes to the math curriculum, and to expand gifted
2 and talented programs and to make progress on the
3 Class Size Law. History shows mayoral control
4 enables efficient, citywide improvements. Let's give
5 it time to work.
6

7 In closing, I believe these improvements and
8 priorities will build a stronger public school system
9 to benefit all New York City families. Thank you.

10 EMPHRAIM ZAKRY: Good afternoon Chair Dinowitz
11 and esteemed members of the Education Committee who
12 used to be here. I'm Ephraim Zakry and I'm here to
13 share insights gained from serving to full terms on
14 the PEP. I was elected by parents to this position,
15 rather than appointed by the Mayor or the Borough
16 President. A distinction that provided me with
17 unique vantage points on our school system.

18 When we discuss mayoral control, we are
19 fundamentally discussing the composition and
20 functionality of the PEP. As a recent member, I have
21 witnessed the inner dynamics of the panel first hand
22 and believe there is a clear path toward meaningful
23 improvement. While Albany revisits this issue every
24 two years, the conversation often becomes political
25 and necessary reforms are deferred.

1
2 However, establishing a robust mechanisms for
3 checks and balances is imperative regardless of who
4 is in City Hall. Nevertheless, the Mayor should
5 remain accountable as the head of the executive
6 branch. Returning to the old local school system,
7 uhm that was rified corruption and efficiency is
8 certainly not the answer. To make the panel more
9 effective, I propose the following: Streamline
10 membership. The PEP has become unwieldy. The recent
11 increase in the number of members has made it
12 difficult to achieve a quorum, particularly in birds
13 meetings. Here bigger is not better.

14 I recommend a leaner body consisting of five
15 parent representatives and six appointed by the
16 mayor, a total of eleven. Ensure they right for
17 presentation. Parent representatives, one from each
18 borough to reflect their unique needs should be
19 elected directly by parents, using a process similar
20 to the CCHS election. The technology is already
21 there. Prioritize experience, at least four of the
22 six mayoral appointees should be parents who have had
23 the child in the public school system within the last
24 five years and have served on an educational council.
25 These should be individuals with boots on the ground

1
2 experience, not political appointments. Protect
3 independence, all members should serve fixed two year
4 terms and be protected from removal without due
5 process.

6 In conclusion, the PEP must serve as a functional
7 check and balance for students. I would be happy to
8 share more suggestions and details with the Committee
9 at a later time. Thank you for this opportunity.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes, of course, you can
11 send those directly to me and of course, the
12 testimony for the record can be sent to -

13 [CROWD testimony@nyc].

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Close,
15 testimony@council.nyc.gov. We'll get there. We'll
16 do it. Thank you. Thank you to this panel,
17 appreciate it. Our next in-person panel, Dr. Darling
18 Miramet, Laura Barbieri, oh and Christopher Leon
19 Johnson and we will continue my left to my right.
20 You have to turn it on and then state your name.

21 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, yeah, hello. My
22 name is Christopher Leon Johnson. I support, vote
23 mayoral control in the schools. The City Council be
24 on the record and disclose to people that all the
25 nonprofits that are supporting for the removal of

1
2 mayoral control to schools are some of the biggest
3 anti-White, antisemitic, and self-hating Jewish
4 nonprofits in the city. These are the same
5 nonprofits that got Zohran Mamdani in. Of course,
6 they want to remove this because they want to point
7 an antisemite Jumal Bowmen as the Chancellor.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, we don't have to go
9 into insulting other people in the testimony but
10 please continue testimony of mayoral control. Thank
11 you.

12 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: It's the truth about
13 mayoral control. They want an antisemite to be a
14 Chancellor like Jumal Bowmen. They want their people
15 to be the Chancellor of the city, of the New York
16 City Department of Education. This is what is going
17 on here. I'm going to reclaim my time but I make
18 this clear that uhm, the City Council needs to be on
19 the record and call and tell Zohran Mamdani to not
20 appoint another if Mr. Samuels was to resign because
21 they're going to try to - these non-profits,
22 especially AQE is going to try pushing this guy out
23 the door. AQE which is a racist anti-White nonprofit
24 that pushing for the eradication of White people out
25 of the schools and control the school system and the

1
2 Jews running the school system, they are going to try
3 to appoint the anti-semi to be the Chancellor of New
4 York City and once that happens, it will be the end
5 of New York City as we know it. We will have full
6 antisemitism, full Jew hatred in these schools if
7 this goes the way that they want it. So, like I said
8 before, we need full mayoral control in the schools
9 and the City Council and the Speaker need to tell
10 Zohran Mamdani if they want to point a new
11 Commissioner in the years to come, do not appoint an
12 anti-semi. Do not appoint a Chancellor that has a
13 record of antisemitism, racism, Jew hatred and anti-
14 White sentiments. Thank you so much.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for your
16 testimony.

17 LAURA BARBIERI: Good afternoon. Thank you very
18 much for your endurance in listening to everyone.
19 Chair Dinowitz, my name is Laura Barbieri, I run a
20 law firm for education law, special education, and
21 civil rights and employment law.

22 I wrote a white paper on mayoral governance, yes.
23 My master's thesis was on mayoral governance at
24 Teachers College Columbia University and I graduated
25 in 2022. So, I went back to school after practicing

1
2 law for 40 years. Uhm, my thoughts are much like
3 yours, that codification is necessary in order to
4 ensure that there is balance and checks and balances
5 and guardrails in the system. Mayoral control has
6 not proven to be effective in any academic result and
7 there is no causality as the NYSED report reported.
8 There's no causality demonstrating that mayoral
9 control supports or helps students and it's the
10 academic education and excellence that we want to
11 ensure in our city.

12 As far as the types of controls and guardrails
13 that you could do here in the City Council, you don't
14 have a lot of power over the Department of Education
15 because it is a state - the education law is a state
16 agency. Although the mayor likes to think that the
17 Department of Education is a mayoral agency, it's not
18 and the Education law controls. So, there are
19 administrative things that you can do in order to try
20 to enhance the checks and balances.

21 One of the things that I recommend is a pilot
22 program, rather than try and change the system
23 totally, do a pilot program with the district on co-
24 governance and that will help you study how to
25 effectively change the system. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much.

3 DR. DARLING MIRAMET: My name is Dr. Darling
4 James Miramet. I am New York City Public School
5 Educator with parents and a former member of CEC 3
6 challenging Samuel, Council Samuel as a
7 superintendent. Then CC 14, CCLL and at the end of
8 the panel before education policy mayor appointee.

9 For years, I had to work with city agencies on
10 how to fully be on the education system, steal
11 believers math proficiency to only about half of
12 students overall and to barely one-third of English
13 Language Learners.

14 My testimony comes from sitting with the
15 families. So, these days with the universal
16 [INAUDIBLE 03:57:12], families across New York City
17 gain another light of support and at the same time,
18 we must be honest that there is no such thing like a
19 universal student. So, our children's come with
20 different languages, disabilities, traumas,
21 challenge, immigration histories and community
22 realities, and any governance system that treats them
23 as a single abstract, will continue to fail those who
24 need this most in our schools. Uhm, so I'm for
25 conditional renewal with the real

1
2 reforms, which keeps a single point of responsibility
3 with the hard writing equity, transparency and shared
4 power of intersystem. I believe this path is most
5 reasonable and a realistic option for New York City
6 at this moment with hard accountability for outcomes,
7 real parents and community power and physical
8 transparency and professional oversight. Thank you
9 so much.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much. That
11 concludes the in person portion of our public
12 testimony. We will now move to remote testimony. If
13 you are testifying remotely, please listen for your
14 name to be called and once your name is called, a
15 member of our staff will unmute you. You may then
16 start your testimony once the Sergeant at Arms sets
17 the clock and queues you to begin.

18 Our first witness is Evan Stone and you may begin
19 once you are unmuted and the Sergeant queues you.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

21 EVAN STONE: A significant capacity strength.
22 What do you think? You disagree?

23 UNIDENTIFIED: I think it would be very uhm - I
24 wonder if there's a balance to say hey, if
25

1 something's coming up locally that matters to you,
2 but if it's a small number -

3 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Is this your testimony?

4 UNIDENTIFIED: Given a limited capacity, the idea
5 that national capacity -

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Evan? Evan Stone?

7 Alright, it sounds like this is a hot mic. Why don't
8 we mute Evan Stone. Thank you. I'm going to now
9 call Jenn Choi.

10 JENN CHOI: I'm unmuted? Great, uhm, thank you
11 Chair Dinowitz for having this hearing today. I am
12 so pleased that a former high school special
13 education teacher is leading this Committee. My name
14 is Jenn Choi and I am a Special Education Advocate
15 and a parent of two New York City Public School
16 graduates who had IEP's and the leader of New York
17 City parents of teens with disabilities. We have a
18 membership of 2,200.

19 As you consider all of the options regarding
20 mayoral control, I ask you to please remember that
21 after mayoral control was established, funding for
22 special education teacher services was drastically
23 changed, in which a cap was placed on how much a
24 school can have for any single student who needs to
25

1
2 be taught by a special education teacher. It's
3 basically paying for 21 periods out of 35 per week
4 and that doesn't include lunch. That funding doesn't
5 pay for any special education training that the
6 teacher needs, regarding like say autism or Orton-
7 Gillingham, the time required to collaborate with
8 other teachers or if a student needs more intensive
9 time with a teacher, like one to one or just more
10 time in another class.

11 According to federal and state law, caps are a
12 violation, which I'm sure you already know, behind me
13 is a scenario that the DOE is already seeing and has
14 already admitted to and that the cap exists. These
15 two students, one student needs way more special
16 education instructional services than the other but
17 they actually get the same amount. So, Persha here,
18 she's just not going to get that. They are going to
19 have a meeting with her and they're going to say,
20 "you don't need those things." But she goes to a CTE
21 school where they offer ready to use technology
22 certificates that are expensive outside of high
23 school. She's dyslexic, she has ADHD, and she would
24 like to have that cyber security certificate and also
25 learn Spanish just like her colleagues but it's just

1
2 not going to happen. This - the PEP already knows
3 about this. They still voted on the formula. We
4 need your help. We need it now, please thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you and thanks for
6 talking about Fair Student Funding Formula. It's
7 like a very exciting topic and you know not to
8 mention, you know ask yourself how many schools put -
9 assign kids more special education periods to get
10 above that 60 percent in order to get, qualify for
11 that funding but that's another topic for another
12 time. I will now call on Laura Simpson.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

14 LAURA SIMPSON: Hi, I'm Laura Simpson. Good
15 afternoon. I'm a Jackson Heights parent of two
16 children who are in school three and seven years old
17 and I'm also a secretary of Community Education
18 Council District 30. We represent over 40,000
19 students across western Queens and one of the most
20 diverse school districts in America.

21 Last night, CEC 30 passed a Resolution calling on
22 Mayor Mamdani and the state legislature to codify
23 meaningful governance reforms in the June 2026
24 mayoral control renewal. I'm the author of that
25 Resolution. So, I'm here to deliver that message

1
2 directly. Democracy, dignity and accountability
3 cannot wait. The 2024 NYSED report found that a
4 majority of public hearing participants said that
5 they do not feel heard or included in decision making
6 and that's my lived experience. I was elected by
7 parents who believed that voices should matter but
8 except for drawing zoning lines, I really don't have
9 a binding authority. I hold meetings where our
10 districts families share their needs. I hear
11 educators describe what students actually need and
12 then I watch the DOE do whatever I want anyway.

13 Democratic governance ensures transparency,
14 accountability and community ownership. It must go
15 beyond listening sessions. It must empower students,
16 parents, and educators with real decision making
17 authority. Mayor Mamdani promised involvement that's
18 tangible and actionable, not ceremonial.

19 And here's what that might look like if we
20 codified it into law. So, CC 30's Resolution calls
21 for three specific reforms. First, we structure the
22 PEP. Remove the mayoral, super majority, and add
23 citywide council representation elected by parents of
24 citywide council of special education, English

1
2 Language Learners, District 75, and on high schools
3 voting together.

4 Second, give CC's binding authority over what
5 effects our students most. Charter applications -

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

7 LAURA SIMPSON: Oh, thank you for the time.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your
9 time. I think we'll try Evan Stone one more time.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

11 EVAN STONE: Good afternoon Chair and members of
12 the Council. Thank you for the opportunity to
13 testify. My name is Evan Stone. I'm a former New
14 York City Public School Teacher, the Founder and CEO
15 of Educators for Excellence, representing over 18,000
16 New York City teachers and a parent of a Pre-K
17 student at PS 9 in Brooklyn.

18 So, I come to this as a former educator, a union
19 member and advocate, an organizer and a parent and my
20 perspective is shaped by 20 years of working in and
21 alongside New York City Public Schools. Based on
22 that experience, I believe mayoral control is
23 essential to creating an effective, well-funded,
24 equitable school system, and that weakening it would
25 not be a neutral change. It would jeopardize funding

1
2 progress that we've made over the last 20 years. It
3 would jeopardize instructional improvements that
4 we're making in reading and math and it would make
5 implementation of the Class Size Law much more
6 difficult. It would also make an effective role out
7 of true care more challenging as it was essential to
8 universal Pre-K and 3K.

9 First, on funding, since the start of mayoral
10 control, New York City's share of public school
11 funding has increased roughly 15 percentage points,
12 reversing decades of flat, local investment before
13 mayoral control.

14 The city used to contribute about in the mid-40
15 percentage range of the total NYC PS budget. Now,
16 New York City makes up 60 percent of the total
17 education funding for New York City Public Schools.
18 And this was true except for the brief exception of
19 the COVID years. This shift happened because New
20 York City Public Schools had mayoral control. The
21 pattern is unique among New York City's big five
22 districts. In Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Yonkers,
23 whose schools are governed by independent boards.
24 The local share of funding has remained flat or
25

1
2 declined. The districts have become increasingly
3 dependent on the state.

4 Mayors can deflect responsibility and school
5 boards lack fiscal power and New York City parents
6 and the Council know exactly who to hold accountable
7 and we have done that. Mayor Adams tenure
8 demonstrates how this accountability works. When
9 education cuts were proposed, families, educators,
10 Council Members directed our pressure squarely at the
11 Mayor.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

13 EVAN STONE: And it worked. The Administration
14 reversed course and increased funding. That's one
15 critical reason why we need mayoral control to make
16 sure New York City is maintains equitable education
17 funding. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for your
19 testimony. I will now call on Kaiser B.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

21 KAISER B: Hi, good afternoon Chair Dinowitz and
22 Education Council Members. My name is Kaiser, I'm
23 the Community Organizer for the Alliance for Quality
24 Education, AQE. I'm also a parent and a former DOE
25 teacher. Mayoral control actively disenfranchises

1
2 students, families and educators. We are calling on
3 the New York City Council to pressure and work with
4 Mayor Mamdani to establish a commission of parents,
5 educators, students, advocates, experts and
6 researchers to engage communities in designing and
7 democratic school governance system to replace
8 mayoral control that centers the needs of lived
9 experiences of our most marginalized and underserved
10 communities.

11 Much has been said today about empowering
12 families and other stakeholders to engage with the
13 school system, whether through CEC elections, working
14 groups, SLT's etc.. Unfortunately, what we see
15 repeatedly under this system is performative
16 engagement. We can see that today. NYCPS staff
17 advocated for tweaks to mayoral control that would
18 propert to take community input into account.
19 Meanwhile, we are hearing testimony after testimony
20 from community members who are saying, "we don't need
21 tweaks, this system is not made for us."

22 There are ample chances for input but when it
23 comes to decision making, the Chancellor and PEP are
24 free to ignore that input and they frequently do.
25 And this is particularly harmful given that mayoral

1 control has employed exclusively in systems like ours
2 that serves students in poverty, students of color
3 and immigrants. This system is paternalistic and
4 operates under the assumption that the best decisions
5 for those communities couldn't possibly come from
6 those communities themselves, and we know that's
7 false.
8

9 Chair Dinowitz, as a former educator yourself, I
10 think you will agree that the classrooms that run the
11 most smoothly where students are most invested in
12 their own learning, are the ones where students know
13 they have power too, not just the teacher. And the
14 same is true here. We must empower students,
15 parents, community members and school staff; to share
16 power with superintendents and principals and we must
17 make the PEP an actually deliberative body increasing
18 transparency and accountability.

19 And additionally, we ask that as our local
20 representatives, you advocate to your colleagues on
21 the state level for a short extension of the mayoral
22 control law and during the commission.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

24 KAISER B: Along with elimination of the mayoral
25 majority on the PEP. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. You should
3 know that there were people here cheering for you
4 right before you testified. And last, we have on
5 Zoom, we have Allie Ryan.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

7 ALLIE RYAN: Hello, my name is Allie Ryan. I
8 want to thank the Committee on Education for hosting
9 this meeting today. I am here as a former public
10 school parent of two daughters who were in the gifted
11 and talented program to hold the line and keep gifted
12 and talented starting in kindergarten.

13 I advocated years ago for gifted and talented
14 because I saw firsthand, not just through my
15 daughters but their classmates and Title I
16 districtwide gifted and talented program going into
17 kindergarten not knowing how to read and graduating
18 from kindergarten at a second grade reading level in
19 a first and second grade math level and then going
20 into first grade and learning multiplication and
21 division in first grade and being able to read a
22 fourth grade reading level.

23 I think it is really important to note that
24 there's never been studies conducted of New York City
25 Public School students to find out how quickly that

1
2 they learn when they're given the opportunity for
3 accelerated curriculum education.

4 In my situation, I always asked for my children
5 to be skipped a grade. I was always told no and I
6 think if you want - the wonderful part about New York
7 City Public Schools is the wide range of diversity
8 and educational opportunities. So, please fight to
9 keep gifted and talented starting for students who
10 want to pursue it kindergarten. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your
12 testimony. Uh next, I'd like to call Gavin Healy.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

14 GAVIN HEALY: Good afternoon. Thank you for this
15 opportunity. Uhm, I hope you can hear me okay.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: We hear you fine.

17 GAVIN HEALY: Thank you. Thank you sir. So, I
18 uhm, you know I've served on the District 2 Community
19 Education Council for the last close to three years
20 now. Before that, I've been an SLT member involved
21 in my schools PTA. Uhm, I would like to ask that uhm
22 I don't believe that mayoral control should be
23 extended indefinitely, not for four years. I think
24 that we should have a limitation. We should have a
25 commission that will study this issue in more detail.

1
2 I think New York City is quite unique among you know,
3 among municipalities in our state and nationwide in
4 being such a large school system with so much power
5 invested in one person.

6 I would also think that the uhm, it shouldn't -
7 mayoral control should not be tied to the state
8 budget. It should be separated from that. It's not
9 a budgetary issue. So, it should be uhm it should be
10 its own distinct issue. I do think also there are
11 many aspects of mayoral control that have not really
12 worked out very well in our city. One of these
13 relates to our Community Education Council, Switch.
14 I think part of the bargain for getting the mayor you
15 know so much power you know under any administration
16 is that we have a system of sort of democratic you
17 know sort of governance or voice. And certainly, in
18 our case in District 2, I don't think we've really
19 had that voice. We hadn't had the support we need
20 from the Office of Family and Community Engagement of
21 the Department of Education to really fulfill that.
22 Uhm, so I would ask that uhm you know your Committee
23 really you know kind of take that to heart and look
24 for ways that you know power could be shared
25 democratically and not just -

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

GAVIN HEALY: Renewed indefinitely. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much. Uhm, if there is anyone else present in the room who has not had the opportunity to testify but wishes to do so, please raise your hand. I know. I want to thank everyone for coming to hear about this important topic today. There's clearly a lot of work to do. You know when we talk about mayoral accountability, just simply asking, what accountability actually looks like. How are we codifying ways to ensure there's more parent, teacher, students, administrative involvement in this actual decision making and holding accountable exactly what they're asking for, holding the mayor and the Chancellor accountable for the decisions that impact all of the hundreds of thousands of kids in our system? And I look forward to continuing that conversation and pushing for real changes in mayoral control, so we can make sure we give parents more of a voice and we can hold our system accountable just in the way that was testified to today, and this hearing is adjourned. [GAVEL]

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 February 24, 2026