

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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March 15, 2023
Start: 9:37 a.m.
Recess: 10:12 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Rita C. Joseph
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Alexa Avilés
Carmen N. De La Rosa
Eric Dinowitz
Oswald Feliz
James F. Genarro
Jennifer Gutiérrez
Shahana K. Hanif
Kamillah Hanks
Shekar Krishnan
Linda Lee
Farah N. Louis
Julie Menin
Mercedes Narcisse
Lincoln Restler
Pierina Ana Sanchez
Lynn C. Schulman
Althea V. Stevens
Sandra Ung

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

Jumaane Williams
Public Advocate

David Banks
Department of Education Chancellor

Daniel Weisberg
Department of Education First Deputy Chancellor

Emma Vadehra
Department of Education Chief Operating Officer

Kara Ahmed
Department of Education Deputy Chancellor of
Early Childhood Education

Seritta Scott
Department of Education Chief Financial Officer

Flavia Puello-Perdomo
Department of Education Chief of Schools for
Community Supports and Wellness

Kenita Lloyd
Department of Education Deputy Chancellor of
Family and Community Engagement and External
Affairs

Christina Foti

Melissa Ramos
DOE Chancellor Chief of Staff

Nina Kubota
President and CEO of New York School Construction
Authority

Cora Liu
Vice President of Capital Plan Management NYC
School Construction Authority

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

John Shea

Anuraag Sharma
Chief Information Officer

Thomas Taratko

Kevin Moran

Michael Mulgrew
President of United Federation of Teachers

Henry Rubio
President of Council for School Supervisors and
Administrators

Donald Nesbit
Executive Vice President of Local 372 District
Council, AFSCME

Shirley Aldebol
Executive Vice President SEIU 32BJ

Donovan Swanson
Education and Engagement Policy Analyst for
Brooklyn Borough Hall

Salvatore Puglisi
Urban Assembly School for Emergency Management

Jason Acosta
UASEM Student

Leah Storm Poche [sp?]
UASEM Student

Randi Levine
Advocates for Children of New York

Melinda Andra
Legal Aid Society

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

Greg Mihailovich
Community Advocacy Director at American Heart
Association

Andrea Ortiz
New York Immigration Coalition

Suhali Mendez
NYLPI

Liz Accles
Community Food Advocates

Ileana Vargas
Children's Hospital of New York Presbyterian,
American Academy of Pediatrics Chapter Three

Fariah Attaya [sp?]
Student

Simiran Bugum [sp?]
Student

Shirley Wong [sp?]
Student

Fariah Satara [sp?]
Student

Smitha Milich
Alliance for Quality Education

Natasha Capers
NYC Coalition for Education Justice

Alexandria Lowe
Black Education Research Center

Mary Cheng
Chinese American Planning Council

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

Lois Lee
Chinese American Planning Council

Aqida Rama
Asian American Student Advocacy Project

Max Shimbo
Asian American Student Advocacy Project

Soha Mursalien
Asian American Student Advocacy Project

Kyle Lin
Asian American Student Advocacy Project

Sufan Wan
Asian American Student Advocacy Project

Annie Minguez
Vice President of Government and Community
Relations at Good Shepherd Services

Lena Bilik
Senior Policy Analyst at Children's Aid

Brenda Triplett
Director of Educational Achievement and
Partnerships with Children's Aid

Eliza Porcella [sp?]
Youth Food Advocate with Community Food Advocates

Andrew Barrett
Food Ed Hub Director at Laurie M. Tisch Food
Center

Allison Marino
Edible Schoolyard NYC

Anthony Wary [sp?]
Student

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

Joshua Lin
Youth Food Advocate

Yusin Liu [sp?]
Student

Gregory Brender
Day Care Council of New York

Paulette Healey
Co-President of Citywide Council on Special
Education

Kate McDonough
Director of Dignity in Schools Campaign

Damien Andrade
CUNY Student

Dante Bravo
United Neighborhood Houses Youth Policy Analyst

Rebecca Charles
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

Brian Birkeland
Eastside House Settlement

Beatrice Weber
Executive Director of YAFFED

Phylisa Wisdom
Director of Development and Government Affairs at
YAFFED

Nadia Narcisse
Youth Food Advocate

Faith Jones
Youth Food Advocate

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

Armine Khan [sp?]
Youth Food Advocate

Ashley Yang
Youth Food Advocate

Yasmine Bonilla
Youth Food Advocate

Albania Jimenez
LINC

Andre Eaton
ParentChild+ New York State Director

Emmanuel Novy
ParentChild+

Rachel Payne
Coordinator of Early Childhood Services at
Brooklyn Public Library

Anari Coleman [sp?]
Make the Road New York Youth Leader

Alyssa Figueroa
Coalition Coordinator at Urban Youth
Collaboration

Eileen Friaz [sp?]
Urban Youth Collaborative

Nyl [sp?]
Urban Youth Collaborative

Nile Borja
Make the Road New York, Urban Youth Collaborative

Jennifer Choi
Special Education Advocate at Special Support
Services, NYC Parents of Teens with Disabilities

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

Karen Simmons
Executive Director of Children's Law Center

Kathleen Dennin
Staff Attorney at Legal Services NYC

Elizabeth Sumpter
Development Director at Mouse

Lisala Beatty
Music and the Brain

Tamia Blackman-Santana
Ballet Hispanico

Anthony Guerrero
Local 28 Sheet Metal Workers

Tory Kaso
Carbon Free and Healthy Schools NYC

Rakaya Hasan [sp?]
Ya-Ya Network

Tina Zeng [sp?]
Ya-Ya Network

Elizabeth Wassib [sp?]
Ya-Ya Network

Christie Balka
Vice President of Policy at All Our Kin, Inc.

Sharon McLennon-Wier
Center for Independence of the Disabled New York

Beth
New York Edge

Amber Decker
Special Support Services

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

Christine Serdjenian Yearwood
Armenian American Action Network

Jeannie Ferrari
Principal at Humanities Preparatory Academy

Jaclyn Valane
Principal at International High School at
LaGuardia Community College

Mark House
Principal at Bronx Engineering and Tech Academy

Crystal Rodriguez
Bronx Healing-Centered Schools Working Group

Martin Urbach
Restorative Justice Leader at Harvest Collegiate
High School

Jennifer Finn
Teachers Unite

Amaya Gilman [sp?]
Teachers Unite

Alexis

Dr. Jennifer Cadenhead
Executive Director at Laurie M. Tisch Center for
Food, Education and Policy

Nancie Katz
Executive Director of Seeds in the Middle

Sara Catalinotto
Parents to Improve School Transportation

Lupe Hernandez

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

Sheree Gibson
Department of Education Panel Education Policy

Jean Hahn
Queens Parent United

Tanesha Grant
CEJ Parent

Kimberly Olsen
Executive Director of Arts in Education
Roundtable

Ariel Herrera
Dance NYC

Shoshana Brown

Ursula Jung [sp?]

Khin Mai Aung
Executive Director of Generation Citizen New York

Akyla Tomlinson
Freedom Agenda

Jeremy Kaplan

Carleen

Rasheedah Brown Harris
Parent Healing Ambassador

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3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: At this time can
4 everyone settle down, please. Can the host please
5 start the webinar? Good morning and welcome to the
6 New York City Council hearing of the Committee on
7 Education. At this time, can everyone please silence
8 your cell phones? If you wish to submit testimony,
9 you may send it to testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again,
10 that is testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you for
11 your cooperation. Chair, we are ready to begin.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Good morning, and
13 welcome to the Education Committee hearing. [gavel]
14 Good morning and welcome to the Education Committee
15 hearing on the Fiscal 2024 Preliminary Budget. We
16 will start off the hearing today with a focus on the
17 Department of Education's Preliminary Expense Budget.
18 We will be hearing from Chancellor Banks on the
19 Agency's operating budget and priorities for the
20 upcoming fiscal and school year 2023 and 2024. The
21 Department of Education's Fiscal 2024 Preliminary
22 Budget totals \$30.7 billion dollars, excluding
23 pension and debt service, and has grown to represent
24 30 percent of the City's total budget. This budget
25 is \$295 million dollars less than the Fiscal 2023

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2 Adopted Budget. While the plan provides billions of
3 dollars for our city's education system, it fails to
4 make necessary investments to address the growing
5 needs of students, families, on contracted service
6 providers in areas such as Special Education, 3K,
7 prompt and expedited contract reimbursement, the
8 increasing need for mental health support, additional
9 social workers, and services to support students in
10 temporary housing. Additionally, the plan does not
11 provide the necessary continued support for program
12 and operational costs brought up by the pandemic that
13 has been financed with federal stimulus dollars that
14 will soon be expiring. DOE's Preliminary Budget
15 includes a number of programmatic decreases resulting
16 from dwindling federal stimulus funding as well as
17 cuts and reallocations of existing programs. Some
18 major program areas in which the budget has reduced
19 include \$65.5 million reduction for pupil
20 transportation, \$65 million for charter schools, \$56
21 million for school facilities, and \$41.5 million in
22 Early Childhood programs. While the looming stimulus
23 fiscal cliff exists and several essential programs
24 such as 3K, community school expansion, mental health
25 for all, and more that were funded through federal

1 funds are in jeopardy of continuing. The DOE has not
2 put forward a plan on how it will sustain these
3 essential programs. The recent influx of asylum-
4 seekers since last spring has placed added stress on
5 DOE's resources. The impacts on teachers,
6 administrators, and schools to be creative and
7 scramble last minute to provide the necessary support
8 for these students independently has been felt
9 intensely by education community throughout the City.
10 According to the latest data shared by DOE in
11 December 2022, the approximate number of asylum-
12 seekers students enrolled in K-12 was 10,186 with the
13 numbers expected to grow the next time DOE tallies
14 this population. Our students continue to be in need
15 of additional in-school support as evidence by the
16 rise of numbers of incidents as recorded in the last
17 PMMR. In order to maintain a supportive school
18 environment we need to ensure every school has
19 adequate numbers of social worker and guidance
20 counselors. Not only does the DOE lag far behind the
21 ratio of 250 to one, set by the American School
22 Counselor Association, it also lags behind nationwide
23 average of 408 to one. According to the latest data
24 made available, DOE has an average ratio of 472
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1 students to one social workers, and 374 students to
2 one guidance counselor. The pandemic continues to
3 leave its mark on a generation of students. It is
4 our responsibility to provide them with the support
5 necessary to overcome the academic barriers placed in
6 front of them by the pandemic, so that they may make
7 the most of their education. This brings me to my
8 next point. Special Education according to report
9 recently released by DOE on Special Education data,
10 1.6 percent of students with disabilities are not
11 receiving Special Education instruction, and 11.7
12 percent are only receiving half of the instructions
13 they're entitled to as outlined per their IEPs. Many
14 of my colleagues and I fear that the pandemic has
15 exacerbated the need for Special Education
16 instruction and services, and without immediate
17 attention, many of our neediest students will fall
18 behind. I find it unsettling that instead of making
19 investments in Fiscal 2024 and in the out-years to
20 expand Special Education services and instructions,
21 we are instead increasing funding for Carter [sic]
22 cases in Fiscal 2023 by \$220 million. Why are we
23 okay with spending that much on lawsuits, but not
24 with investing additional dollars into related
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1 services and Special Education support staff? This
2 year, the State Executive Budget proposal included a
3 \$500 million increase in foundation [sic] aid,
4 funding which would finance much of the programming
5 that was reduced in DOE's Preliminary Budget. I hope
6 that the State enacted State Budget will provide New
7 York City with the education dollars it needs to meet
8 the challenge of supporting an increased number of
9 students in temporary housing, increase Special
10 Education mandates, as well as turning vital program
11 funded with federal stimulus dollars into long-
12 standing programs. Some housekeeping: I would like
13 to remind Council Members that the Chancellor is here
14 to testify on the Expense Budget. Council Members
15 will be limited to five minutes in the first round of
16 questions and three minutes in the second round if
17 time allows. Public testimonies on Education budget
18 will begin at approximately 2:00 p.m. Before I
19 conclude, I would like to thank the committee staff,
20 Monica Saladi, Niya Hyatt, Assistant Director
21 Elizabeth Hoffman, Jan Atwell, Chloe Rivera, Nadia
22 Jean-Francois. I would like to thank my staff
23 Juvanie Piquant, Taiquan Coleman, Joel Desouve,
24 Vinuri Ranaweera, and Roslyn

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2 Joinvil. I'd like to remind everyone who wish to
3 testify today that you must fill out a witness slip
4 which is located on the desk of the Sergeant at Arms
5 near the entrance of this room. To allow as many
6 people as possible to testify, testimonies will be
7 limited to three minutes per person whether you're
8 testifying on Zoom or in-person. I would like to
9 introduce my colleagues who have joined us this
10 morning. I'd like to especially welcome our Speaker
11 Adrienne Adams, Eric Dinowitz, Council Member
12 Dinowitz, Council Member Stevens, Council Member
13 Narcisse, Council Member Schulman, Council Member De
14 La Rosa, and our special welcome to Public Advocate
15 Jumaane Williams. Now without further, I'd like to
16 turn over to our first witness panel. I will now
17 turn over to Counsel of Committee Nadia Jean-
18 Francois to administer the oath.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning, DOE. I
20 will call on each of you individually for a response.
21 Please raise your right hand.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I would like to
23 introduce the Speaker first to make her opening
24 remarks.

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2 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you so much Chair
3 Joseph and welcome. Chancellor, welcome to your
4 entire team this morning. It's great to see you all
5 as always. Thank you Chair Joseph for leading today's
6 Preliminary Budget hearing for the Committee on
7 Education as well as Chancellor Banks and your staff
8 for being here today to testify and to answer Council
9 questions. The Department of Education Fiscal Year
10 2024 Preliminary Budget is \$30.7 billion dollars
11 representing the largest area of spending in the
12 City's budget. DOE's FY24 Preliminary Budget is
13 \$295.3 million dollars less than its Adopted Budget
14 for the current Fiscal Year. This decrease reflects
15 the absence of one-time funding and Council
16 initiatives that were included in the Adopted FY23
17 Budget. Approximately one million students across
18 more than 1,600 schools, and 1,889 Early Childhood
19 Centers rely on the DOE budget to support their
20 success. High-quality and affordable Early Childhood
21 Education is one of the best investments we could
22 make for our children's future because of the long-
23 term cognitive development it provides. It sets our
24 children up for success and helps working parents,
25 particularly in black, Latino and Asian communities

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2 to advance their careers and provide for their
3 families. We must work to correct the course that
4 has weakened our 3K system. This requires ensuring a
5 strong, adequately staffed Early Childhood division,
6 providing contracted providers with outstanding
7 payments and one-time reimbursements, fixing the
8 structural problems with the program and preserving
9 its budget investments. It is also critical that we
10 ensure our public schools have the funding necessary
11 to support the success of our students. The effects
12 of the pandemic will be felt by students for years to
13 come with a learning resulting from shutdowns and
14 remote schooling, unable to be overcome in just a
15 couple of years. As federal COVID stimulus funding
16 that assisted in students' education recovery is
17 diminishing, we must enhance our funding of schools
18 to provide the resources that our students need and
19 deserve. Our education investments are essential to
20 the health and safety of communities and the entire
21 city. Chancellor Banks, I look forward to hearing
22 from you and your staff today about how the DOE will
23 work to meet the needs of our schools, students, and
24 Early Childhood Education programs. Thank you very
25 much, and I turn it back over to Chair Joseph.

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2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Speaker
3 Adams. Now, we turn over to Public Advocate Jumaane
4 Williams.

5 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you,
6 Madam Chair. My name is Jumaane Williams, Public
7 Advocate of the City of New York. I want to thank
8 the Chair and the members of the Committee on
9 Education for holding this hearing. I want to
10 welcome Chancellor Banks as well and everyone from
11 the DOE who I know, just like us, really care about
12 what's happening with our kids in these schools. Last
13 year, the Administration made \$370 million dollars in
14 cuts to our schools' budget. For many schools this
15 meant no or limited arts and music programming,
16 larger class sizes, fewer social workers, and
17 insufficient academic and mental health support. We
18 know that black students in our city are more likely
19 to attend overcrowded segregated schools in high-
20 poverty areas. After all that our student have
21 enduring this pandemic, we should double-down on
22 investments in schools to reduce class sizes, allow
23 greater emphasis on social and emotional learning,
24 and create opportunities for creative expression in
25 arts and music classes. After experiencing and

1 continuing to experience the trauma of the past two
2 years, our students need more support for their
3 mental health and school officials agree. While I do
4 believe there's probably and likely money not spent
5 as efficient as should be, possibly waste, that money
6 should be reallocated and not cut. There must be no
7 cuts to school budgets this year, and the City should
8 restore the funding and staff lost due to prior
9 budget cuts. This includes Early Childhood Education
10 programming as well. There must be no cuts to 3K and
11 a recommitment to Universal 3K. For Universal 3K and
12 Pre-K to be successful, the City must also fulfill
13 salary parity for the Early Childhood Education
14 workforce. Public schools are the main youth mental
15 health system in our city, and an audit published
16 last year by the State Comptroller found that too
17 many public schools are understaffed with mental
18 health professionals, are not adequately training
19 staff, and only a few have seriously readily-- have
20 services readily available, and that the DOE provides
21 little oversight to ensure students receive the
22 required mental health instruction critical to
23 developing their awareness and resiliency. Further,
24 the majority of schools did not meet the recommended
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1 ratio of school counselors and social workers to
2 students. It is critical that the City hire 500 new
3 social workers and school psychologists, nurses, and
4 expand restorative justice practices for \$151 million
5 with the following spending breakdown: Hire 500
6 school social workers to provide support to students.
7 Hire Psychologists and family workers to address
8 delays in the evaluation of IEP development for
9 students with disabilities. Ensure every school has
10 a nurse. Support the expansion of school-wide
11 restorative justice practices. In the past, the City
12 has invested in community-led programs focused on
13 making our schools truly healing-centered. The City
14 paid about 650 parents and caregivers from schools in
15 areas hit hardest by COVID-19 to participate in
16 trauma-related training sessions over the summer, and
17 then present their own workshops to their school
18 communities. These ambassadors are human capital
19 that the City has already invested in but is not
20 using, and we should prioritize programs that empower
21 our school community who knows their needs best.
22 Between July 2022 and February 2023, 13,200 school-
23 aged [inaudible] of asylum-seekers enrolled in New
24 York City public schools, many of whom do not speak
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1 English or have limited English proficiency. These
2 children have high needs including warm clothing,
3 food, accessible education, evaluations and services,
4 trauma-informed counseling, and language support.
5 ELLs have historically been left behind in our
6 schools and have the highest high school dropout rate
7 of any student group. We must be intentional in our
8 support for these students. The City should invest
9 \$11 million dollars to expand bilingual programs to
10 improve outcomes for ELLs, and \$7 million dollars
11 should be allocated to the DOE's Office of Language
12 Access. I'm looking forward to the Department of
13 Education, the Mayor's Office, and City Council to
14 ensure our city students have the support services
15 they need to be successful. I do want to end with
16 just saying, a few years ago, I put forth a plan of
17 how we can deal with violence in our schools, and I
18 want to point out that it was one of the most
19 disingenuous union leaders who spread lies about what
20 that plan was, when really we were saying we cannot
21 just count on the NYPD infrastructure that's already
22 in the schools, because our kids are harming and
23 killing themselves going to and from schools, as well
24 as harming themselves. We see suicides going up.
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2 Just yesterday there were three shootings in and
3 around schools. I think the day before there was a
4 stabbing near the school. This is the type of thing
5 that we were concerned about. I know that the
6 Administration is going to be putting more police
7 near those schools. My question primarily is what
8 other resources are going to those schools today and
9 the surrounding communities, not just police
10 officers. We do know that just adding police at best
11 is a Band-Aid, and we've been using this Band-Aid for
12 many, many years. I believe that Band-Aid is now
13 drenched with the blood of overuse for decades. And
14 so I'm really concerned about what it is that we're
15 going to do, and I believe that cutting these
16 programs really add to the trouble we're already
17 having with public safety. These programs do add to
18 public safety. We can't cover everything, including
19 our education and support that's needed while
20 continuing to put and fund our law enforcement who
21 are partners, but our other partners need this
22 funding as well. Thank you so much.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Public
24 Advocate. And turning it over to our Counsel
25 Committee.

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning. I would now like to swear in the Administration. So I will call on each of you individually for a response. Please raise your right hand. You can stand as well. I'll also be calling the other DOE people so you can stand as well [sic]. Chancellor David Banks-- oh, I'm sorry. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth before these committees and to respond honestly to Council Member questions? Chancellor David Banks?

CHANCELLOR BANKS: [inaudible]

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Daniel Weisberg [sp?]?

FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Emma Vadehra?

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: [inaudible]

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Carlyne Quintana?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: [inaudible]

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Seritta Scott?

CHIEF SCOTT: [inaudible]

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Flavia Puello-Perdomo [sp?]?

CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: [inaudible]

1 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Melissa Ramos?

2 MELISSA RAMOS: [inaudible]

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Kara Ahmed?

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: [inaudible]

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Kenita Lloyd?

6 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR LLOYD: [inaudible]

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Christina Foti?

8 DEPUTY CHIEF FOTI: [inaudible]

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, you may be
10 seated, and you may begin your testimony.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Can I acknowledge,
12 Council Member Menin and Council Member Gutiérrez who
13 has joined us. Thank you. And Velázquez who's on
14 Zoom. Thank you. You may begin Chancellor Banks.

15 CHANCELLOR BANKS: All set? So, good
16 morning, Chair Joseph. I want to also say a special
17 good morning to Speaker Adams. I'm so happy to see
18 you here this morning as well as our Public Advocate
19 Jumaane Williams. Thank you so much. And all of the
20 member of the Council Committee on Education, I want
21 to thank you all for inviting me to testify today
22 about the Fiscal Year 2024 Preliminary Budget. I
23 think you all know, my name is David C. Banks,
24 Chancellor of the New York City Public Schools, which
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2 by the way, I want to just point out I know we refer
3 to it as the DOE. We have taken to getting away from
4 using the term, DOE. We refer to it as New York City
5 Public Schools. All across the nation there is no
6 other city in the country which refers to its school
7 system without even referring to the name schools.
8 If you go to Atlanta, it's Atlanta Public Schools.
9 If you go to Chicago, it's Chicago Public Schools.
10 New York City, it's the Department of Education. It
11 sounds like a bureaucracy. We think that language
12 does matter, and I just wanted to point that out. So
13 we've been trying to be consistent in referring our
14 system as New York City Public Schools. I'm joined
15 today by First Deputy Chancellor Daniel Weisberg,
16 Chief Operating Officer Emma Vadehra, and Deputy
17 Chancellor of Early Childhood Education, Dr. Kara
18 Ahmed. I'm also joined by several other members from
19 our Administration who are available to be called on
20 if necessary. it is great to be here with so many
21 colleagues and champions for the New York City Public
22 Schools on the City Council, and most especially to
23 Chair Joseph who I've spent a great deal of time with
24 since I've become Chancellor. My team and I have
25 greatly enjoyed joining many of you at events,

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2 community meetings and school visits. Your
3 leadership and advocacy truly make a positive
4 difference for our schools. You've led the fight for
5 schools to reach and sustain 100 percent of their
6 Fair Student Funding. You've ensured that every
7 school has funding to hire a full-time social worker.
8 You've increased funding to support our multi-lingual
9 learners and their families through additional
10 funding for our Office of Language Access. You've
11 increased funding to expand outreach and support for
12 our students in temporary housing, and you've
13 partnered with my team to take significant steps to
14 stabilize the Early Childhood sector and prioritize
15 the expansion of Special Education preschool seats,
16 particularly in under-resourced communities. So
17 those are all meaningful accomplishments for our
18 students, families, and schools, and we are grateful
19 for your partnership in achieving them. Beyond those
20 collaborative successes with the entire Council, I
21 would also like to briefly thank individual members
22 for their support on particular issues.
23 Specifically, I want to thank my gratitude for Chair
24 Joseph for taking bold steps to stabilize the Early
25 Childhood Sector, expanding preschool Special

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2 Education seats, and holding schools harmless during
3 the mid-year adjustment period. Thank you. Council
4 Member Stevens, for your outreach, strong leadership
5 and oversight to ensure that quality programming
6 reached every zip code during the Summer Rising
7 Program. Council Member Gutiérrez for your advocacy
8 on behalf of our community-based partners such as
9 Nuestros Ninos [sp?] so that they can continue to
10 deliver important services to children and families
11 in the communities that we serve. Council Members
12 Lee, Krishnan, and Ung, for their advocacy and
13 support of the development of our successful AAPI
14 curriculum pilot which we recently launched and plan
15 to expand. Council Members Dinowitz and Riley for
16 supporting a new bus stop at Pier 16 in District 11,
17 adding flexibility on school meals, and providing
18 other assistance to meet the need of newly-arrived
19 students. Thank you. Council Member Hanif for her
20 partnership on our Project Open Arms initiative that
21 centrally coordinates inter and intra departmental
22 efforts to swiftly welcome and support newly-arrived
23 families. And Council Member Menin, for your strong
24 advocacy for dual language programming in District
25 Two, specifically in French. And so many others who

1
2 have helped in so many different ways. That's clear
3 collaboration and real results, getting stuff done
4 for our schools and our kids, and I'm certain we will
5 continue to work together individually and
6 collectively to build on all those successes. All
7 this work is deeply personal to me, and it's a
8 continuation of my lifelong career as a New York City
9 public servant and educator, and as fellow public
10 servants thank you for everything that you can do for
11 our schools and for all the work we will do together
12 in the future. Now, since 2017, we have lost over
13 120,000 students, including 70,000 in the last two
14 years prior to my arrival. The reasons for leaving
15 may vary, but the answer to declining enrollment is
16 clear. We have to give our students and families the
17 opportunities and experiences they want in school,
18 while showing our students how their school will give
19 them the skills and knowledge that will ultimately
20 drive success in their lives. All the initiatives we
21 will be discussing today are focused on rebuilding
22 that trust with our families while bringing families
23 back to our schools, all guided by our four pillars:
24 reimagining the student experience, scaling
25 sustaining and restoring what works, prioritizing

1 wellness, and engaging families to be our true
2 partners. I want to be clear that the foremost
3 priority of this Administration-- and we don't hear a
4 lot about this-- is to teach every student to read.
5 I want to repeat that. The foremost priority of this
6 Administration is to teach every student to read. I
7 often talk about creating bright starts and bold
8 futures, and bright starts begin when we enable every
9 child to become a skilled reader by Third Grade, to
10 be a confident learner who can see a bold future
11 ahead. That's the foundation for all learning, and
12 therefore more important than any other single
13 challenge facing us. Unfortunately, we remain far
14 from achieving that goal. Nearly two-third of our
15 black and Latino students are not proficient on the
16 State English Language Art exams, so we are taking
17 important steps to address that challenge head-on.
18 We're going back to basics by strengthening phonics
19 instruction, and under Mayor Adams' leadership, we're
20 doing early literacy screenings for our students,
21 making sure we identify any barriers like dyslexia,
22 but there are others that need to be addressed and
23 supported to ensure full literacy. We've also made a
24 \$205 million dollar investment in expanding proven
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2 research-based programs such as ASD, Ness [sic],
3 Horizon, and SEED [sic] to improve outcomes for
4 students on the autism spectrum and with other
5 special needs, and we all know that overlaying
6 everything is making our kids safe going to and from
7 school as was just said by the Public Advocate. On
8 that front, we're making strong improvements
9 including investing in mental health supports, a
10 mental health continuum in coordination with DOHMH
11 and Health + Hospitals, and additional mindfulness
12 programming to support our students and ensure that
13 every school has at a minimum access to a social
14 worker or a school-based mental health clinic.
15 Launching a pilot program that uses the latest
16 technology to provide stronger safeguards at our main
17 school entrances by using automatic door locking to
18 ensure that only authorized visitors gain access to
19 our schools. Working with the NYPD to hire an
20 additional 560 School Safety Agents, and launching
21 Project Pivot which is a multi-million dollar
22 investment in community-driven, neighborhood-focused
23 programming focused on connecting our students with
24 caring adults and building a safe and welcoming
25 culture across many of our schools and campuses. in

1 that vein of engaging families, I want to be sure to
2 mention that we made good on our promise from last
3 spring, to convene a working group of volunteers
4 representing parents, advocates, union leaders, and
5 school finance experts from across our city to
6 recommend long-needed changes to the Fair Student
7 Funding formula. Earlier this year, we announced the
8 findings of that working group. We're proposing two
9 important changes, adding funding weights for
10 students in temporary housing and for schools that
11 serve high numbers of students with special needs.
12 Those bold changes will be the first of their kind to
13 be implemented among the nation's five largest school
14 districts. The Panel for Educational Policy will
15 vote on these changes to these weights on April 19th.
16 We also welcome the Council's support in advocating
17 that Albany follow our lead and update its outdated
18 State Foundation Aid Formula which currently does not
19 have a specific funding weight for our students in
20 temporary housing. I now want to turn to our Fiscal
21 Year 2024 Preliminary Budget which totals
22 approximately \$37.5 billion dollars. That includes
23 \$30.7 billion in operating resources, and another
24 \$6.7 billion for education-related pensions and debt
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1 service funds. Our funding is a combination of city,
2 state, and federal resources with City Tax Levy money
3 making up the largest share. In Fiscal Year 24, it's
4 projected to be at about 53 percent, state funds at
5 only 37 percent, and the federal dollars at 10
6 percent. Acknowledging the realities of enrollment
7 which has declined and short term stimulus funding,
8 the Mayor's budget does two things. First, it cuts
9 central office vacancies by approximately \$25 million
10 dollars in order to meet the citywide PEG target.
11 Second, we continue to support schools who have lost
12 enrollment by including in the Preliminary Budget an
13 increase of the hold harmless allocation for schools
14 in Fiscal Year 2024 by \$80 million dollars, growing
15 to a \$160 million dollar hold harmless this year.
16 Now many schools continue to experience big changes
17 in their enrollment, and we don't expect schools to
18 make these shifts right away. We will again use
19 stimulus funding to help schools facing enrollment
20 fluctuations to restore a percentage of the impact of
21 enrollment losses in Fiscal Year 2023 and 24. For
22 this upcoming school year, schools will be held
23 partially but not fully harmless using stimulus
24 dollars. Perhaps most importantly, the actions I've
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1
2 described will allow us to meet the Mayor's
3 commitment to fiscal responsibility while continuing
4 to provide schools with 100 percent of their Fair
5 Student Funding. It is imperative that we continue
6 to meet that benchmark for all our schools. So, in
7 conclusion, I want to thank the Council for your
8 continued advocacy for Fair Student Funding in the
9 recent years and ensure you that it remains a high
10 priority. I'm excited to continue to work together
11 with all of you to support our students and our
12 schools, collaborating on issues that matter to all
13 of us to help ensure that we're giving our students a
14 world class education. So I thank you, and I look
15 forward to answering your questions.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you,
17 Chancellor Banks. I'll turn it over now to the
18 Speaker.

19 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you, Chair Joseph.
20 Once again, welcome to all of you. And I just-- I'd
21 like to acknowledge also before I start my questions,
22 I want to acknowledge our former New York City
23 Council Education Chair Mark Treyger.

24 [applause]

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2 SPEAKER ADAMS: The Preliminary Budget
3 currently plans for reducing 6,000 vacant 3K slots in
4 order to achieve a savings of \$283 million dollars in
5 Fiscal 2024. The success of Early Childhood
6 Education and Childcare is a shared vision of both
7 the Administration and the Council. However, the
8 Council has its concerns of the impact on the
9 Preliminary Budget, especially if the cause of
10 vacancies are due to administrative issues. In the
11 Preliminary Budget, compared to the Adopted,
12 headcount for full-time pedagogical positions were
13 reduced from 817 from Adopted to Preliminary plan.
14 OMB has indicated that the 817 positions were for
15 Universal Pre-K. What titles, programs or
16 departments are associated with these cuts, and which
17 of these are vacancy reductions, and which are not?

18 CHANCELLOR BANKS: So first of all, let
19 me just say this, and I'm going to ask one of my
20 colleagues to respond very specifically to the
21 question. But I do want this body to know that the
22 Early Childhood sector is critically important to
23 everything that we're trying to do. We didn't come
24 here to destroy the Early Childhood programming, but
25 when we came and I came here as Chancellor, what I

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2 inherited was a great idea that had a lot of
3 implementation challenges. So we are very much in
4 the process, and we have been since I've been here,
5 to try to right-size Early Childhood. But to your
6 very specific questions, Madam Speaker-- Emma?

7 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: I'm
8 going to call up our CFO Seritta Scott [inaudible].

9 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER SCOTT: Sorry.
10 So, for the Preliminary Budget, the central vacancy
11 reduction was actually 390 positions, and that was in
12 our central and field administrative titles.

13 SPEAKER ADAMS: The question was that
14 from the 817 positions, they were for Universal Pre-
15 K. We're looking for the titles, the programs, or
16 departments associated with the cuts, and which of
17 those were vacancy reductions and which weren't.

18 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER SCOTT: Okay, so
19 if the-- if this is going back towards November
20 budget or earlier, we can get back to you with that
21 specific information.

22 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, I'm going to slice
23 it a little bit.

24 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER SCOTT: Sure.
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2 SPEAKER ADAMS: In talking about the
3 titles and the programs, was there a rationale for
4 what titles and programs were actually chosen?

5 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER SCOTT: So, for
6 any of the titles that impacted Universal Pre-K they
7 were sort of lift and shift, so out of Early
8 Childhood program and into schools. So I think that
9 was associated with the Universal Literacy Program,
10 and that just shifted those dollars and heads out of
11 the Early Childhood budget and into the school's
12 budget. But I can get you a more detailed break-out
13 of the titles, specific titles.

14 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, but for sure they
15 had to do with universal literacy programs.

16 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER SCOTT: A bulk of
17 it is, but I definitely want to get back to you with
18 the specifics.

19 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. How has the
20 Administration worked to encourage enrollment into 3K
21 programs, and did the Administration set aside a
22 budget, and did it execute any marketing and outreach
23 to increase sign-ups with providers.

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Good morning
25 and thank you so much, Speaker Adams. There is a

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2 number of ways that outreach is being done through
3 email marketing, robo calls, community events, nearly
4 7,600 outbound phone calls to families to promote 3K
5 for this past fall of 2022 and going into for this
6 new school year. Robo calls to over 100,000 families
7 to remind them to apply in multiple languages,
8 English, Spanish, Chinese. There's a robust
9 marketing campaign to spread awareness of Early
10 Childhood programs, digital ads on the MTA that you
11 might have seen, paid ads in low turnout communities
12 in all five boroughs, paid ads on Twitter and
13 Instagram and all other social media, email campaigns
14 to nearly 100,000 families who have signed up for
15 information, information sessions for families
16 interpreted in multiple languages, and as I've shared
17 previously and at other hearings and with chair
18 Joseph, community events which we find to be some of
19 the most impactful in being very accessible to
20 families on the spot. And so we thank Chair Joseph
21 and others who have invited us to attend those events
22 and to be ready to support families with enrolling.

23 SPEAKER ADAMS: So, speaking of community
24 events, has the Administration built in funds for
25 providers to do any outreach?

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2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: So, providers
3 are supported with their outreach, right? So as a
4 system we are supporting with outreach for our 3K,
5 our Pre-K, and for our infant/toddler. So everything
6 that I named is holistic of all of our programs in
7 portfolio to provide families with all of their
8 options. You know, we're excited to say that 3K
9 applications are even up approximately 42,000 from
10 33,000 two years ago and more than ever before.
11 That's a 27 percent increase from 2021. Pre-K apps
12 are also up approximately 54,000, up from 50,000 from
13 last year, so another eight percent increase.

14 CHANCELLOR BANKS: And you should just
15 know that, Madam Speaker, we've also-- we've
16 allocated about 4.5 million dollars to support the
17 Early Childhood marketing.

18 SPEAKER ADAMS: That's great. I like to
19 hear the increases. The 3K deadline, though, moved
20 from March 11th to March 15th. What has been the
21 impact of applications since the extension?

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: I don't know if
23 we have the exact impact over the last few days, but
24 the overall impact of what we're seeing, again, is
25 the increase from over two years, and we're seeing

1
2 over 42,000 applications already in. The deadline--
3 has it been increased another few days for additional
4 families to, I think, sign up-- is what heard even
5 this morning. So, families can continue to register.

6 SPEAKER ADAMS: Past the 15th?

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: And they can
8 continue to apply. I think there's some additional
9 information this morning. They'll be placed on a
10 wait list and then programs will be able to make
11 those offers once the initial offers go out. So we
12 still encourage families to continue to apply to
13 indicate their choices, their preferences, and then
14 after offers go out, they will then have another--
15 another reoffering from those programs that they've
16 selected.

17 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, those numbers
18 are still coming in. We can certainly get you the
19 very specifics of where we are to-date.

20 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, I just want to note
21 that the extension was made because of a parent
22 demand for that-- for that line to be moved from
23 those-- for an opportunity for those positions. So,
24 I'd like to hear that's been extended even further.
25 That's--

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2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] Yeah, no.
3 We're trying to be responsive, absolutely. So, we're
4 drawing any hard lines in the sand. Parents needed
5 more time, that's what we want to do.

6 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you. How many 3K
7 seats are being budgeted for FY24 and can you provide
8 us a breakdown of it via zip code?

9 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: So, there are
10 approximately 55,000 3K seats currently, and for FY
11 24 those numbers will fluctuate, and they will
12 fluctuate because we are consistently looking at what
13 unmet need is, where there's an oversaturation of
14 seats, where there need to be resources that need to
15 shift, and so we're constantly either increasing or
16 adding seats, or reducing seats where there isn't a
17 need. So for FY24 those numbers are not certain yet,
18 because that work is still underway.

19 SPEAKER ADAMS: Do you have any idea for
20 us what the highest need communities are?

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: There are
22 numbers by zip code, which I think we can absolutely
23 get back to you on. I know we've shared numbers by
24 district with Chair Joseph and with City Council, so
25 we can certainly share additional information.

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2 SPEAKER ADAMS: Do you have any previous
3 information that has been shared that we can go on
4 record for today? If you said you shared information
5 previously, is there any of that data available for
6 us to put on record today in this hearing?

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: I think we're
8 going to have to get back to you on anything related
9 to that granular level of the zip code.

10 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. What is the
11 current cost per slot for 3K programs for each seat
12 type, school day, extended day, and year, and Head
13 Start?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: That we can
15 also get back to you on. There would have to be--
16 they do vary. The per-child rate varies from program
17 to program from setting to setting.

18 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. Do we have current
19 vacancy and enrollment rates for each seat type?

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: We do.

21 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. Can you give that
22 to us?

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Sure. We can
24 go through it one by one. Is that helpful?

25 SPEAKER ADAMS: That's perfect.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Okay, great.

So, when we're looking at our infant/toddler-- so there's many different seat types. I'll just sort of give us a preview, right? We have our EDYC types which are extended day, extended year, year-round programming. We have Head Start seats, and we have school day, school year seats, right? So those are your traditional six-hour 20 minute days going 'til June 30th. So when we are looking at our infant/toddler EDYs, we are looking at a capacity of over 10,000 and enrollment of slightly over 7,000 and about 3,600-3,700 vacant seats in this moment. For Head Start for infant/toddlers, those will be our early Head Start, 134 is our capacity. Our enrollment is at 119 in the moment, and there's about 15 vacant seats. For our 3K EDY capacity, 8,732; EDY enrollment at 4,514 and our vacant seats at 4,218. 3K SDY, those are our school day school year seats, 43,210 SDY enrollment at 36,479, and our vacant seats at 6,731. For Head Start 3K 2,684; 1,852 enrollment, 832 vacant seats. Our Pre-K EDY 6,162, our EDY enrollment 2,853 and our vacant seats at 3,309. Our SDY Pre-K 66,367; enrollment at 54,108, and our vacant seats 12,259. And then finally our Head Start

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2 for Pre-K 3,005, Head Start enrollment 1,758 and our
3 vacant seats at 1,247. And I do believe Chair
4 Joseph, you may have some of this data as well, and
5 we can certainly get this to you again if you need to
6 reference it.

7 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you very much.

8 Let's look at the contracts for a bit. Many
9 providers are currently finding it difficult to
10 continue the program because of late payments. That
11 seems to be a systemic thing, unfortunately. How
12 many outstanding invoices are remaining for FY22
13 contracts?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Sure, yeah. I
15 can start. Yeah, great. So, just taking a step
16 back. In November our Chancellor and under his
17 leadership he made a commitment to help stabilize the
18 sector and recognizing that it had been de-stabilized
19 prior to the pandemic, and in that we set up a rapid
20 response team in which our Early Childhood staff
21 supported with targeted supports our providers across
22 their settings to submit close to 4,000 back invoices
23 from FY22, many of which predated our Administration
24 going back to the onset of the Fiscal Year back in
25 2021, and that was totaling close to 130 million

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2 dollars in less than 12 weeks. And so that was
3 pretty rapid response and pretty supportive for
4 vendors and really making sure that we can support
5 them with those back invoices. At this time, we will
6 still continue to collect any FY22 invoices if
7 providers have them--

8 SPEAKER ADAMS: [interposing] Do we have a
9 number?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: We couldn't
11 tell you the estimate, that would still would paid
12 [sic]-- so payment would be based on once the invoice
13 is actually submitted to see what their enrollment
14 and their expenses are. But we'll certainly still
15 continue to support providers with FY22 invoices, and
16 absolutely they should still submit them.

17 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. And you're
18 speaking of the Rapid Response Team which is good.
19 Will the Administration maintain that team beyond FY
20 2023? Do you know?

21 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes.

22 SPEAKER ADAMS: Yes?

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Yes.

24 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes,
25 Madam Speaker, we-- the Rapid Response Team remains

1
2 in place and as a result for FY23 we have already
3 paid out approximately 3,500 invoices this fiscal
4 year. We have another 1,700 or so that have been
5 submitted, and the good news is-- and this is
6 something that we get a report on every single
7 morning about 8:30 a.m. We have fewer than one
8 percent of those invoices are over 30 days. So the
9 commitment the Chancellor made was to pay all those
10 invoices within 30 days, and in the vast, vast
11 majority of cases that is happening. Obviously, we
12 track down every one of those 43 that we saw this
13 morning to see what's going on, why it's continuing
14 for more than 30 days. So we made great progress
15 over the last several months.

16 SPEAKER ADAMS: That's great to hear. I'm
17 sure that you all don't want to see these invoices
18 backlogged any more than the people that want to be
19 paid.

20 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Absolutely.

21 SPEAKER ADAMS: You get that, so.

22 CHANCELLOR BANKS: In fact, I will tell
23 you, Madam Speaker, you know, one of the things we
24 are hard at work is really figuring out how to do
25 this system very differently.

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SPEAKER ADAMS: Yeah.

CHANCELLOR BANKS: Providers should not have to be submitting invoices. They're busy taking care of our babies.

SPEAKER ADAMS: That's right.

CHANCELLOR BANKS: And the burden that has been placed on them, we have to have a very different way in which we're engaging our providers, and we are looking at that. And I want our providers to know I'm here for them. We're not their adversaries. We are trying to support them. We're trying to fix this plane while we're flying it at the same time, and we're committed to doing that.

SPEAKER ADAMS: And I can appreciate that. I've actually been aquatinted with a provider for quite some years, and what they've gone through over the years has been-- just it's insane. And I can imagine if I'm aware of one provider, you know, from past experience, how much of this is pervasive throughout the system, and it's really difficult to work with. It tends to hold things up. It holds up programming.

CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yep.

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2 SPEAKER ADAMS: You know, and as far as
3 our children are concerned and a lot more of the
4 things that keeps us from getting the adequate
5 teaching and educators within our organizations as
6 well. So, do you have any number on average how many
7 times our CBO budget's rejected before they're
8 finally approved for payment?

9 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: I don't have an
10 average number for that. It does vary and it's very
11 unique to each budget. For a variety of different
12 reasons, a budget may be rejected. There are errors.
13 There's missing information, and there's an exchange
14 that goes back and forth between staff and the
15 provider, lots of comments in support and really
16 making those corrections and resubmitting it as
17 quickly as possible.

18 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. In looking at new
19 Pre-K Centers, the OMB Director mentioned \$760,000
20 contract with the consulting firm Accenture [sp?] to
21 map out needs and seats for 3K. Is this a DOE
22 contract?

23 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Thank
24 you very much for the question. It's actually a
25 contract run out of EDC, but DOE is funding it and

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2 the amount we are spending on the Accenture analysis
3 in particular is actually \$350,000.

4 SPEAKER ADAMS: \$350,000 through DOE.

5 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: From
6 DOE through--

7 SPEAKER ADAMS: [interposing] From EDC.

8 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: their
9 contract with Accenture. Yeah, but we're the ones
10 working with them on the budget.

11 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, do you know when
12 the firm actually started its work?

13 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Could
14 get back on an exact date. I would say a couple
15 months ago. And should be winding up very soon.

16 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, that was going to
17 be my next question. The parameters that you're
18 looking at for the work?

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Sure. So
20 Accenture is conducting a needs analysis to really
21 support and help understand where there are areas of
22 unmet need and where there are areas of
23 oversaturation and where there's a need to shift
24 resources. And so that work did begin, to Emma's
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2 point, a few months ago and we're hoping to tie that
3 up in another few months, in the coming months.

4 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, great. So if
5 you're looking to tie that up in the coming months,
6 then when would the Council expect a report back?

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: I think as soon
8 as we have an analysis that's something that I've
9 committed to, Chair Joseph, that we would absolutely
10 want to work in collaboration with her and with you,
11 obviously, Speaker Adams to share that and to have
12 your support and partnership and working through
13 decisions.

14 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. Just a couple
15 more, then I'm going to turn it back over to the
16 hands of the Chair. In November 2022, it was
17 announced by DOE and the Administration that New York
18 City Public Schools will hold school budgets harmless
19 for any lower than projected enrollment in this
20 year's mid-year adjustment process, ensuring that no
21 school will lose money due to mid-year enrollment
22 losses. Year over year most schools are still seeing
23 lower enrollment, but the decrease is now smaller
24 than initially expected, again, partially due to
25 migrant students. If some schools do show a decrease

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2 in enrollment, how is the DOE planning on maintaining
3 funding to sustain school operations?

4 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: For
5 next school year, you mean?

6 SPEAKER ADAMS: Yes.

7 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Yes,
8 thank you very much for the question. So, as you
9 noted last year-- as you noted, overall funding is
10 linked to enrollment and that's always been true. So
11 as we've seen a decline of 120,000 students, one
12 would expect to see declines in school budgets. As
13 you noted, last year, going into the year, school
14 budgets were held harmless for an additional \$160
15 million dollars out of stimulus money. So that
16 didn't fully hold them harmless from any enrollment
17 losses which is what had been true before, but it did
18 partially hold them harmless going into last school
19 year, and then through the mid-year adjustment an
20 additional \$200 million dollars went out to school
21 budgets either through hold harmless or through
22 actual increases for schools that had seen additional
23 students coming in. Going into-- and all of that
24 money just to say it is all stimulus dollars that's
25 being used for all of that. So both of those hold

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2 harmless [sic] are dollars that are going away
3 after next school year. For next school year, the
4 Mayor's Preliminary Budget does include that \$160
5 million dollars for hold harmless again, which is
6 the same as what was done at the beginning of last
7 year from a hold harmless perspective. Again, this
8 will not fully hold schools harmless, but partially,
9 and again, it is on the stimulus dollars that we're
10 doing that, but that's what we have so far going into
11 next year.

12 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, thank you. I'm
13 going to ask a couple questions on our former
14 Education Chair's favorite subject and that's Fair
15 Student Funding, Mark Treyger. The Fair Student
16 Funding work group approve the inclusion of two new
17 Fair Student Funding waits after diligent work last
18 year. would Fair Student Funding, or FSF, be fully
19 funded for school year 2023-2024 based on the
20 Preliminary Fiscal 2024 Budget? Yes, the Chancellor
21 said--

22 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] Yes.

23 SPEAKER ADAMS: nodding happily. Yes.
24 Alright, so if the new waits to FSF are approved at
25 Panel for Education Policy in April 2023, how much

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2 additional is the agency expected to budget for FSF
3 for 2023-2024 going forward?

4 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Thank
5 you for the question and big thank you to those of
6 you, including particularly the Chair, who sat
7 through all of our Fair Student Funding Working Group
8 meetings and informed the work-- and Jan, although I
9 can't see her at this moment. Currently, we are
10 estimating those two new waits, one for students in
11 temporary housing, one for students serving the
12 highest concentration of students with additional
13 needs, including students in temporary housing,
14 students in the foster system, low income students.
15 Together, we estimate \$90 million dollars. That, of
16 course, will fluctuate based on the action enrollment
17 projections but that's what we're looking at.

18 SPEAKER ADAMS: How is the agency seeking
19 to fund this \$90 million dollars?

20 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: So, as
21 you know, we are still working through the budget
22 process and where exactly those dollars are coming
23 from TBD, but it's something we've committed to fund
24 and prioritize going forward as well as the full Fair
25 Student Funding.

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2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: It won't come out of
3 school's budgets, that's for sure.

4 SPEAKER ADAMS: Duly noted.

5 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Right,
6 yes. Sorry.

7 SPEAKER ADAMS: Duly noted. Thank you.
8 When the DOE finalizes individual school budgets, can
9 the agency provide us with a breakdown of funding by
10 a school level with comparisons to prior year
11 funding?

12 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Sure.

13 SPEAKER ADAMS: Great. Alright, and my
14 last line of questioning has to do with two-for-one
15 hiring. The Vacancy Reduction Memo issued in
16 November described a change in the City's hiring
17 process, ending the policy that allowed agencies to
18 fill one of every two vacant positions. Since
19 November, has your agency been enabled by OMB to hire
20 to fill all vacant positions, or are you still
21 required to provide two vacant positions for everyone
22 to be hired?

23 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER SCOTT: So, we
24 are able to actually send to OMB every position that
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2 we want to hire for, so it's no longer the two-for-
3 one.

4 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, so that said, how
5 has your hiring process changed over the last few
6 months?

7 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER SCOTT: It's
8 changed minimally. We still have to go through the
9 same vetting process and answer the questions, so
10 only minimally.

11 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, thank you. When we
12 take a look at terms and conditions that were
13 negotiated together, the City Council attaches
14 certain conditions to city agency funding during
15 budget negotiations with the Mayoral Administration
16 which we did last year, of course. These conditions
17 usually require agencies to provide data to the City
18 Council, but can also require other types of action.
19 There are multiple units of appropriations or funding
20 tied to the delivery of 11 reports to the Council
21 from the DOE on a range of issues including busing,
22 UPK, 3K, and Early Childhood, community schools and
23 various reports on charter schools, and to-date the
24 council has yet to receive several of these reports
25 and those that are shared are post-due by several

1 months as well. What is the Department's rationale
2 for these persistent delays, and what can be done to
3 expedite the delivery of these reports?
4

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I would say to you
6 that if you can get me those specific reports to me
7 directly that you're looking for, I will move on
8 those right away. I'm not 100 percent sure why we've
9 had delays on getting them to you, but I'll look into
10 that right away.

11 SPEAKER ADAMS: And Chancellor, I guess
12 I'll just ask along those lines. We've got 11
13 reports with issues with them. What-- are they given
14 to specific individuals, specific units, specific
15 departments, so we would be looking at a specific
16 department to return these reports?

17 CHANCELLOR BANKS: IGA generally
18 coordinates all of this for us, so that's generally
19 the point of reference for you to help-- you know,
20 they do the chase-down within the agency, very large
21 agency, but I am very concerned about any significant
22 delays that the Council has to suffer through while
23 waiting on us. So, yeah, but IGA-- Mark is really
24 who you should work with, but I'm going to pay
25 particular attention to this.

1
2 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, we'll be sure to
3 get that information to you.

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

5 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you very much for
6 you testimony. Chair Joseph, back to you.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Madam
8 Speaker. Thank you Chancellor. I'd like to
9 recognize the following Council Members, Council
10 Member Lee, Council Member Nurse, Council Member
11 Feliz, and Council Member Krishnan. I just wanted to
12 go back a little bit on 3K for a second. I had a
13 question about 3K. You said what is the total value
14 of the invoices that has not been processed as of
15 FY22?

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Dan, I'm sorry.
17 I can start. So we are-- we're not certain what that
18 value would be. It all depends on what the invoice
19 is. Some invoices don't result in a payment, and the
20 payment amount is based on enrollment and expenses.
21 So without seeing yet any unsubmitted invoices, it's
22 difficult to estimate what the total might be.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And you have all of
24 your resources to make sure that all of these
25 contracts will be paid.

1
2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: That is
3 correct.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many staffers
5 work on processing invoices from start to finish, and
6 how does that number compare to last year?

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: The number of
8 folks right now that currently support with the
9 Finance Team in Early Childhood is almost close to
10 100, 100 different individuals. As we've talked
11 about previously, Chair Joseph, this is also very
12 cross-divisional work, and so there are other
13 divisions within the New York City public schools
14 that supports in this payment process, and we're all
15 sufficiently staffed in working together in
16 collaboration to create the systems that are needed
17 to really support invoice payment.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So you 100 last
19 year, how many staffers did you have?

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: I wasn't here
21 last year in the previous Fiscal Year, but the
22 Finance Team has remained intact since the onset of
23 my tenure.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We talked about this.
25 The DOE acknowledged this system is flawed, invoice

1
2 and computing system known as Pre-Kids. If so,
3 there's a plan to overhaul the system to make it
4 easier for providers to use?

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's the work that
6 we're looking into now. It is-- there are a number of
7 options that we are looking into now. It is-- there
8 are a number of options that we are looking at to
9 really overhaul the entire system. we're not prepared
10 to speak to it now, because that's the work that
11 we're doing a deep dive on, figuring out how we get
12 out in front of this so providers are not constantly
13 having to invoice invoices. Those that are our DOE
14 providers don't have to go through this process.
15 Those who are community-based have a very different
16 process, and so we're looking too figure out how do
17 we-- how can we align those, but we don't have enough
18 information to share with you just yet to say what
19 that overhaul will actually look like but that we are
20 in fact committed to an overhaul.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Wonderful. In the
22 last hearing, I had asked this question. Why can't
23 providers receive their funds up front and deal with
24 the paperwork on the backend?

1
2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, that's a huge
3 part of what it is that we're talking about. That's
4 the premise that we're trying to work from. There
5 are a number of state and federal laws as well and
6 regulations that are in place that may prevent us
7 from doing some of those things, but that's what
8 we're actually looking at right now. That's where
9 we'd like to go. If I could do it tomorrow, that's
10 what we would do, but there are some stipulations in
11 place that make it a little bit more complex than
12 that. But that's what we're-- that's what we're
13 looking at.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So my providers
15 would be happy. Will DOE commit to hold providers
16 harmless again for 75 percent of their contract value
17 like they did for FY22?

18 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah. I mean, I
19 couldn't tell you definitively today that that's
20 we'll be, but we're still looking at it.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What is the cost
22 estimate to provide pay parity for all CBO teachers,
23 directors, and support staff?

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: I don't think
25 we have that exact figure. Again, the wages vary.

1
2 They also vary by setting and by certification
3 status, and so we can certainly get back to you with
4 any additional details around specific salary gaps,
5 but we know that that is certainly a priority for our
6 Administration, and we thank you for all of your
7 support and advocacy as well.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Does the Division of
9 School Facilities provide maintenance and operational
10 support for CBO providers? If so, where is that
11 reflected in the budget?

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: We do not.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: No? Okay, thank
14 you. Public Advocate wanted me to ask this question,
15 because he had to leave, about school climate. When
16 an incident happens at a school, what are the steps?
17 For example, yesterday's shooting, what are the steps
18 that are taken to address that?

19 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, first of all, we
20 have a central team that we send. Mark Rampersant is
21 the head of our Office of Safety and Youth
22 Development, and depending upon where this situation
23 takes place, our Superintendents also have a team of
24 folks who go and provide a wide range of supports to
25 the schools. And so depending upon what the issue is

1 will warrant what the particular response will be.
2 But we're also looking to expand on some of what
3 we're doing to respond as well. Some of it is just
4 very immediate outreach to families and to provide a
5 level of grief counseling to the kids in the school
6 as well as to the staff. But we're also looking at--
7 we're also looking at providing a deeper level of
8 support as well. One of the things we're doing
9 through Project Pivot, as you heard us mention, is--
10 these are credible messengers from the community who
11 we're also deploying. But we want to get them more
12 fully involved in the post-violent incident scenario.
13 Many of them are playing a role now up front for us.
14 They're mentoring. They're providing safe passage to
15 and from schools. There's a wide range of supports.
16 But when you have a very specific incident of a
17 shooting, there's more things that I think that we
18 can do. So we're looking at all that.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. If we
21 talk about-- let's stay on school climate for a
22 little bit. Can we-- do schools expect to see an
23 increase in restorative justice programs next school
24 year?

25

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2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We're still looking at
3 that. I don't want to say-- you know, listen, we
4 believe in restorative justice. We continue to
5 support our school's restorative justice programs.
6 We see Project Pivot also as a big part of the
7 restorative justice. It's not called restorative
8 justice, but it is in essence a restorative justice
9 initiative as well, which we're also looking to
10 expand. I think for us, anything that we can do to
11 engage members from our community-- this notion of
12 the village, being much more involved with our
13 schools and not just school personnel is something
14 that we're looking to support.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How do you track
16 data from Project Pivot? If so, what data are you
17 using to track it, and can you also engage the
18 Council in sharing that data with us?

19 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, yeah. And you
20 know, Project Pivot is very new. We just started over
21 the last several months, but we're certainly looking
22 to track it particularly by incidents, because one of
23 the-- the places that we have gone into with the
24 Project Pivot have been some of our highest incident
25 schools, schools that have had the greatest number of

1 incidents throughout the City. That's where we have
2 started. We want to expand it beyond that as well,
3 but the goal here is to ensure that more of our- that
4 we're able to reduce the number of incidents, in
5 fact, that are happening in school and outside of
6 school. One of the things we're really happy is that
7 our numbers of incidents in our schools have not
8 increased dramatically. What has increased is the
9 number of weapons that our kids have brought to
10 school. That has increased dramatically, but not
11 necessarily the number of incidents in schools. What
12 has increased is the number of incidents happening
13 across the street from the school, around the corner.
14 All these incidents that we're watching on the news,
15 they're not happening in schools, they're up the
16 block, and the kids are telling us they're bringing
17 these weapons to schools not to deal with issues that
18 they have problems with their classmates, it's to
19 protect themselves as they're going to and from
20 school. It's one of the reasons why the Mayor had
21 actually brought the-- every New York City principal,
22 we all got together on a Zoom with the Mayor,
23 together with NYPD as well. We said we're not going
24 to militarize our schools. We're not bringing the
25

1
2 police into our schools, but what we are doing is to
3 say we want to make sure that we're in communication
4 so that they're hearing about things that are going
5 to manifest two blocks away from the school. We need
6 to know. We need to be working together to ensure
7 that we can stop those things and prevent those
8 things from happening. And we certainly want all of
9 that data to be represented within the work of
10 Project Pivot, and even beyond Project Pivot, but to
11 the degree that we have the data that's being
12 compiled, and again we're very early on, we'll
13 certainly share any of it with you.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely. As you
15 may know, data drives an educator's instruction, so
16 it should also drive policy and how we invest money
17 in young people and restorative programs. There's an
18 article that came out in Chalk Beat a couple of weeks
19 about absenteeism, how 200,000 students went missing.
20 We have no idea. So what is the Administration's
21 plan to combat that, especially for the most
22 vulnerable students and is there any plan in the
23 budget? Is it reflected in the budget for that?

24 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, let me have--
25 I'm going to have Flavia Puello-Perdomo come and

1
2 speak to that. She leads this office. You know,
3 when we came on board chronic absenteeism was already
4 at about 40 percent when we assumed office. We are
5 trending in the right direction. We're down to 30
6 percent. It's a 10 percent decrease. Still a long
7 way to go, but Flavia, could you speak a little bit
8 about some of the efforts that we've been engaged in?

9 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: Absolutely, I can.
10 Good morning, Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Good morning.

12 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: So, as the
13 Chancellor mentioned, post-pandemic chronic
14 absenteeism has been a critical issue for New York
15 City public schools and districts across the country,
16 also internationally, as well. One of the things that
17 we're doing as the Chancellor is mentioning is
18 working in partnership with superintendents. So
19 something new that this Administration put in place
20 is to ensure that each superintendent's office at a
21 local level has a dedicated point to support with
22 attendance intervention and policy. In addition to
23 that, chronic absenteeism is really about being
24 proactive. It's not about waiting for a student to
25 be permanently absent to figure out where they are,

1 but it's about looking at a month-to-month basis any
2 student who's in school less than 90 percent of the
3 time which I think is critical pivot to prior ways in
4 which we have looked at attendance. In addition to
5 that, some of the efforts that we're doing like
6 Project Pivot, like community school is all around
7 looking at wrap-around supports. Success mentor,
8 ensuring that every student is paired with an adult
9 that knows that student, that they feel deeply
10 connected to that student. Also, my team centrally
11 is providing on-site coaching to the schools
12 directly, partnering with community-based
13 organization and ensuring that we're calling students
14 when they are out. So as an example, our new central
15 system allows any parents who's registered for New
16 York City account to get an automatic message when
17 students are out. So that's are all new strategies
18 that were not in place a year ago that we have and
19 it's an area that we continue to pay attention
20 critically to ensure that we know why students are
21 not coming in and that we mitigate those barriers.

23 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Chair Joseph, let me
24 just say this as well, and thank you Flavia, I
25 appreciate that. Those are our technical responses.

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2 Those are strategies that we're putting in place. We
3 want to get kids back to school. We want to reduce
4 chronic absenteeism. We've got to change the overall
5 experience that our kids are even having in our
6 schools. It's a big part of the pillar of what we're
7 talking about, reimagining the school experience.
8 Many of our kids are coming off of this pandemic, and
9 many of them have given up on school because they
10 feel like schools have given up on them. It's not
11 anything having to do with any of the particular
12 teachers or anything. They don't find the relevancy
13 in school. I visited Rikers Island and I spoke to a
14 group of young men and I asked them about their
15 stories. How did you wind up here? And every one of
16 them told me about their eventual disconnect from
17 school. They were just going to school every day,
18 but not having a relevant experience. But yet, they
19 were at Rikers Island and they were doing HVAC
20 training, electrical, plumbing; they were learning
21 skills. And one of the young men put his hand up and
22 said, "Mr., if I was doing things while I was in
23 school, I would have gone to school every day." And
24 it just thought about how profound that was. There's
25 young people saying they're finding themselves when

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2 they go to jail. We need to provide those
3 opportunities and experiences in our schools. That's
4 what bright starts and bold futures is really all
5 about, the investments that we're making in this
6 career technical education career pathways work,
7 giving our kids a reason to be in school. And it's
8 really hard to do all of that if they can't read.
9 And I'm-- it's just-- it's just mind blowing to me.
10 I hear very little from very few people who talk to
11 me about reading. I hear about lots of other
12 programs, but the most fundamental core problem that
13 our school system is that 25-30 years ago, we went to
14 a different approach to how we teach our kids to
15 read, and our kids are not reading, and by the time
16 they're in third grade, if don't-- if they're not
17 fluent readers, they're playing-- they're fighting an
18 uphill battle, and many of them give up on themselves
19 over time. That is what I'm singularly focused on as
20 my top priority is to ensure that all of these kids
21 learn to read, because by the time they're in the
22 ninth, tenth, eleventh grade and they don't have that
23 reading fluency, then I've got to spend even more
24 money on these various programs that we all think are
25 really important because we didn't get it right in

1
2 the beginning and our kids are not having a good
3 experience, because they're in the eighth grade and
4 they read on a third grade level. And so all these
5 other things are just playing around on a margin,
6 because the core mission of what this agency is
7 supposed to do, it has failed to do, which smart
8 people, people who love kids are committed because
9 they-- the approach to how we teach kids to read has
10 failed miserably. We're going to turn that around.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I was with you on
12 that trip, and I turned around to you and I said if
13 we don't do what we got to do on the outside, more of
14 our children will end up in Rikers Island. I was
15 with you on that trip.

16 CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's right.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I remember that
18 young man. So that is the reason why we're here
19 today to make sure we're fighting for that young man
20 that no longer entering the system as they are. This
21 is why this council, this Speaker invested in
22 expanded CTE training to make sure that young people
23 have a pathway to reading. We abandoned reading how-
24 - what we knew we abandoned the basics.

25 CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's right.

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2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Because we were
3 fancy. We need to go back to the basics and teach
4 our students. Third grade, the window was closed on
5 reading, unfortunately but we got to go back to the
6 basics.

7 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I appreciate that and
8 I appreciate your leadership in this council.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The-- I'm going to
10 go back to climate for a minute. The PMMR shows that
11 other incidents increased in school, that's 6,000,
12 school safety in Fiscal 2027. Please explain. What
13 is considered other incidents?

14 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Say-- ask that again.
15 You said what? I just want to make sure I got the
16 question clear.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The PMMR shows other
18 incidents increased to 6,000 in schools in 2022. So
19 what does that mean, other incidents around schools?
20 It was-- it just said other incidents.

21 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I don't know off the
22 top. I'd have to take another look and be real clear
23 about what the "other incidents" might be if they're
24 not-- if it's-- it might be referring to bullying.
25 It might be referring to a wide range of other things

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2 that they just kind of lumped all together. We can
3 give you a full-on definition of what's wrapped up in
4 that "other incidents."

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We would love a
6 breakdown. We would love a breakdown. We're going
7 to have our favorite conversation around FSF, which
8 is Mark Treyger's favorite conversation.

9 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Can we get Mark
10 Treyger up here?

11 [laughter]

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We know FSF funding
13 provides schools with funding basis on their
14 projected enrollment. As we saw this year, when the
15 numbers of students out of school declined, the
16 school budget gets reduced. How many students are
17 currently enrolled in the New York City public
18 schools, and how does the numbers compare to last
19 year's enrollment?

20 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: It's--
21 we'll get you the exact number. I think--

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] You
23 guys do your homework?

24 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: It's
25 approximately-- 3K to 12 is approximately 903,000.

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2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And last year's
3 enrollment? I'm looking for this year and last
4 years.

5 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yep,
6 let me find out.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

8 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: We
9 were down 1.8 percent this year. That's our
10 projection from last year, but I'll find the actual
11 overall numbers.

12 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We'll have that in
13 just a moment.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Alright. How many
15 schools are currently slated to receive a reduction
16 in FSF funding for 2023-2024 year for their current
17 funding based on declining enrollment?

18 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: So, we
19 don't-- so we don't have final projections for the FY
20 2020-- sorry, for school year-- fiscal year-- that
21 starts next year, so those are still in process and
22 being developed. I think right now they're being
23 reviewed by principals and superintendent. Our
24 enrollment office works with them to get the school
25

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2 by school projections, and then budgets are based off
3 those.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And you will kindly
5 share that with the Council as well? Thank you. Have
6 the influx of migrant students into the school system
7 have been taken into account when determining school
8 budgets for FY24?

9 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Yes.
10 So where those students are in our schools now, those
11 are being worked into projections for next year.
12 There are cases of students coming in and then
13 leaving, of course. So school by school we're
14 looking at what that looks like. But those students
15 that are now enrolled are being worked into the
16 projection process.

17 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We're talking about
18 14,000 students, yeah.

19 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: And
20 Chair--

21 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] and
22 growing.

23 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Excuse
24 me, I'm sorry. Chair, that number from last year was
25

1 919,000 and preliminary for this year 903,000.

2 That's 3K to 12.

3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And do you have--

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] But let
5 me-- but we would say over the many years we always
6 said we had 1.1 million students in our schools. We
7 no longer have that.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You have to find out
9 why.

10 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Can I--
11 Chair Joseph, just one thing.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Sure.

13 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: I just--
14 I think you know this, but just so folks know, as
15 those migrant students have been entering our schools
16 for this year, we've also put out additional FSF
17 funds for the schools as they've come in. So we've
18 currently put out I think an additional \$80 million-
19 ish in FSF fund for schools that have enrolled those
20 students this year as well, as well as working them
21 into next year.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And to-date, how
23 many asylum-seekers do we have in our system?
24

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2 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: I think
3 we believe the number-- you know, we don't track it
4 quite like that, but the number is about 14,000 as
5 the Chancellor said that we had come in.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. We're
7 going to go to Carter cases. Since FY 2016, DOE has
8 been budgeted to pay costs for students with
9 disability placed in private schools. The largest
10 share of the spending comes from Carter cases. The
11 amount of city spending on carter cases has been
12 growing rapidly in recent years. And in the Fiscal
13 Year 2022 city spending the Carter cases has reached
14 a new high of \$918 million dollars which is more than
15 80 percent increase over the \$499 million spent by
16 the city just three years ago. In the current Fiscal
17 Year, DOE budgeted again an additional \$445 million
18 at Adopted and Preliminary Plan to increase its
19 budget for Carter cases by \$220 totaling
20 approximately \$666 million. Yet again, DOE budgeted
21 another \$445 million for Carter cases in Fiscal 2024.
22 What is the total cost to-date on Carter cases?

23 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So,
24 Chair, we expect that to grow to over one billion
25 dollars this year. we obviously don't have the final

1
2 figures, but we-- you know, as you are 100 percent
3 accurate, those numbers have exploded over the last
4 several, and that is for tuition as you're saying for
5 private schools, but also for services for students
6 who are in parochial and other schools.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, the total cost
8 to-date is how much? Just need it for the record.

9 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: The
10 projection is over a billion dollars this year. We
11 will get you the exact figures that affirms that.

12 CHANCELLOR BANKS: And last year, we were
13 about \$900 million, over \$900 million in spending.
14 The numbers are still growing.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many cases were
16 settled to-date?

17 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: I
18 believe for this year to date the number is about
19 3,000 cases.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: 3,000?

21 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: I
22 believe so. Dan, do you [inaudible]

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What was the
24 average settlement fee per case, for which years were
25 these settlements?

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2 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: It's
3 about-- it's over \$50,000 average. It obviously
4 varies, but it's approximately \$57,000 per case.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What does the agency
6 continue to budget-- why does the agency continue to
7 budget for \$400 million when the actual three-year
8 average cost is \$812 million?

9 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: That
10 continues to be what is built into our budget with
11 OMB at the beginning of the year, although the
12 numbers has, as you noted, outstretched that each
13 year for a number of years now, and they project it
14 will again this year.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Why? Why dos the
16 numbers keep going up? That's one of the things I
17 know in the last hearing I spoke about. If we are
18 providing the related services and support for our
19 students with mandated IEPs, why are we seeing the
20 numbers going up? They're ballooning. And the last
21 I saw in a report was what \$2.2 billion dollars?
22 That's a lot of money to spend on private schools
23 when we have the services in our schools.

24 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: The
25 greatest share of the growth, Chair, is-- we can get

1
2 you specific numbers on this-- is actually for
3 students in non-public schools. So these are not
4 students who necessarily were ever in our schools or
5 looking to attend our schools, but they're non-public
6 schools who are receiving services such as set
7 services. So that's fueling a lot of the growth as
8 opposed to families that are seeking private school
9 tuition based on a claim that they're child can't be
10 served adequately in a public school.

11 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: If I
12 can also just jump in with one clarification, I
13 believe, and you should totally tell me if this is
14 wrong. I think that \$2.2 billion is larger than just
15 the Carter case number. That \$2.2 billion also
16 includes a set of other ways dollars are leaving us
17 for--

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Does
19 that include Carter cases as well?

20 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: It does
21 include Carter cases, but it also includes state
22 contract schools where students with severe
23 disabilities are going. It also includes-- the
24 federal government requires us to send Title I funds
25 in proportion to private schools, so it's just a

1
2 larger bucket that the Carter number is closer to the
3 billion.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So when the students
5 leave you, it also leaves you with the federal-- the
6 Title I funding as well?

7 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Portion
8 of Federal Title I and the other title funds are
9 required. This has always been true-- are required
10 to go to private schools.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay.

12 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Small
13 portion.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: It's still a lot of
15 money. Still a lot of money. Okay.

16 CHANCELLOR BANKS: And this is something
17 we-- we welcome an opportunity to even work with you
18 on. What do we do to wrestle it down? Because this
19 is a major, major issue, and it has exploded over the
20 last several years.

21 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: And
22 this is-- Chair, as you know, we under the Mayor and
23 the Chancellor's leadership we are opening up
24 additional dyslexia programs and programs for
25 students with print-based disabilities the Chancellor

1 mentioned in his testimony. Additional investments
2 in ASD Nest for students on the autism spectrum.
3 Those are-- we're doing that to provide quality
4 services to students who may not be getting them
5 right now because there's not enough supply of those
6 quality programs. One of the outcomes of that should
7 be over time fewer families that are seeking private
8 school tuition to serve their children.

9
10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Also, related
11 services in terms of OT/PT, speech pathology,
12 psychiatrists, and all of the support system, that is
13 supposed to happen.

14 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes,
15 Chair.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, thank you.
17 Now we're going to get into-- I'm going to be jumping
18 around a little bit-- charter schools. The
19 Governor's executive proposal includes opening the
20 charter caps statewide as well as reissuing 21 new
21 so-called Zombie [sic] Charters. This could mean more
22 charter schools could open in New York City which
23 already met its charter cap of 290 in 2020. This
24 fiscal year, DOE's paying 189 million in charter
25 lease subsidies for which the state reimbursed at a

1
2 rate at 60 percent leaves the cost to the City at
3 about 76 million. This is in addition to 9.5 million
4 in which annual rent DOE pays directly to lease the
5 buildings for six charters for which there's no state
6 reimbursement. Firstly, considering the cost the
7 Preliminary Budget decreased funding for charter
8 schools by 65 million, what is this decrease
9 attributed to?

10 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: That, I
11 don't know, but I'll get you an answer very quickly.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [inaudible] very
13 quickly, okay. What additional costs does DOE
14 foresee in the Fiscal 2024 budget if the cap were
15 lifted?

16 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: If the
17 cap were lifted, OMB's estimate is about \$1.2 to \$1.3
18 billion dollars additional costs.

19 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Not--
20 that would be phased in over multiple years as the
21 additional charters are opened. So that's not FY24
22 cost--

23 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:
24 [interposing] Yes, thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Dos it have an
3 impact on our New York City kids? This is for--

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing]

5 Absolutely, yeah. I mean, we currently have 140,000
6 students that are in charter schools right now. We
7 have nearly 300 charter schools, 124 currently co-
8 located in our traditional public schools. As you
9 said, close to \$200 million that's being paid for
10 leases for the schools. So what happens is that--
11 first of all, we are mandated by state law that if a
12 charter school is approved and authorized we have to
13 find space for that charter school. We're the only
14 City in the state that has this mandate on us, that
15 we have to find that space. So when we are trying to
16 locate a charter school inside a-- collocate them
17 inside of a traditional public school and the
18 community rises up and says there's no room, we don't
19 want them here, it's not a good fit, that doesn't get
20 us off the hook. We still have to find space for
21 them, and if we have to find private space for them,
22 we pay for that more than we would be paying if they
23 were in our traditional public schools. That's why
24 we work so hard to try to find the space for them in
25 our traditional public schools. So right now

1
2 currently paying almost \$200 million dollars, those
3 are dollars that in fact could be used in our
4 traditional public schools, but we are mandated by
5 the state to pay those dollars to locate those, the
6 charter schools.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Will you have to use
8 existing funds within the budget to cover the cost,
9 or this will be new funding added?

10 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: For--
11 for additional charters?

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Uh-hm.

13 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: So,
14 some of the cost the state does provide additional
15 funds for. so student, you know, students-- per-
16 student there's a per-student cost that the state
17 covers some of but not all of. As you said, for
18 facilities, the state reimburses some but not all,
19 but there will definitely be additional costs to the
20 City budget in addition to whatever the state would
21 provide.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And this rolls in
23 right into class size. A lot of these times we
24 don't-- the schools, the charter schools come into
25 the building. We have no space. And I visit

1 schools. And Chancellor, you know, we both visit
2 schools.
3

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: True.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Public schools have
6 no space, and now you have a class size law coming in
7 to effect. What is the total expected cost of the
8 newly-passed class size laws? And those are the
9 reasons why we fight so hard to make sure we can't
10 collocate. Class size come into effect. There's no
11 space, and there's times charter schools just take up
12 the space to take up the space. And I visited
13 schools where classrooms are closed, rooms are closed,
14 and no one is using it, but yet the public schools
15 kids cannot use the space. So we have to be fair and
16 to be fair. So now class sizes coming into effect,
17 so that's why you see a lot of parents and families
18 are fighting. No collocation.

19 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Sure.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: When you put this
21 law into place, where are they going to go? Where
22 are schools-- where our students in public schools
23 are going to go? So what is the total expected cost
24 of the newly-passed class size law, capital and
25 expense if you can?

1
2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: So let me just say
3 first of all, our reasonable rejection-- first of
4 all, we're given five years for the full-on roll-out
5 of the class size. Our expectation is that K12, we
6 are going to have to spend close to-- we're going to
7 have to hire about an additional 9,000 teachers. So,
8 let me tell you what that looks like. What the law
9 calls for, the class size law, the mandate for class
10 sizing K-3 is 20. It's interesting because our
11 average class size right now in K-3 is 22.1. For 3-
12 8, grades 3-8 the mandate is 23. Our average class
13 size right now is 24.7. And for the high school
14 students the mandate is 25. Our average class size
15 right now, while there are many schools that are
16 greater than that is 23.7. This is all because of
17 the loss of the number of students that we've
18 actually had. For us to reach the markers that we
19 need on this class size over the next five years, we
20 think we're fine over the next couple of years. It's
21 by the time we hit year 3-5 is when the challenge is
22 going to happen. And Dan, let's just talk about what
23 we see as some of our projections on cost and capital
24 expenses.

1
2 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes,
3 Chair, on the expense side we estimate an additional
4 cost when this law is fully phased in of 1.3 billion
5 dollars. On the capital side, we-- to fully meet the
6 mandate, we estimate a cost of \$30 to \$35 million
7 dollars.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. What is
9 the--

10 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] And what
11 that is going to also potentially talk about is some
12 of these temporary classroom units, because we're
13 going to be mandated to find the additional space,
14 and I know a lot of us don't like those temporary
15 units set up--

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Oh, I
17 know, my Council Member Feliz hates them.

18 CHANCELLOR BANKS: in the school yard, so
19 I'm very clear. None of us like those, but that will
20 probably become a reality for us as we are doing the
21 build-out that this mandate is going to require us to
22 do. It's interesting when I talk to school
23 principals. We'll say, listen, I've got a second
24 grade teacher who's got 21 kids in her class, she's
25 fine. It's not going to be up to her. If the

1
2 mandate is 20, you're going to have to hire that
3 additional teacher. So if you're principal of your
4 school and you say, "But I wanted to use those
5 dollars for a different level of programming," it's
6 not up to you. It's not up to the teacher. It's not
7 up to the principal. It's going to be mandated to
8 hire the additional teachers to bring that class size
9 down, and we're going to be also mandated if we got a
10 build out more space in school, whatever it is that
11 we have to do, that's the mandate of the law, and
12 we're going to be forced to be in compliance with
13 that law.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, but research
15 also shows that smaller classrooms, students tend to
16 do much better. And the TCU units were mostly built
17 in the Bronx which again, when we visit them, they
18 were not equitably spread out throughout the City.
19 There are none in Manhattan. If you take a look at
20 TCU's, anybody who knows anything about them, if you
21 ever look, there were none ever build in Manhattan.

22 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, I will tell you,
23 what the larger-- with the-- most of our larger
24 classes actually exist in our higher income
25 neighborhoods, and so what you're going to have is

1
2 these extra dollars that are going to be mandated are
3 going to be going into these places, including
4 schools like Brooklyn Tech and Bronx Science and
5 Stuyvesant High School. The extra dollars and extra
6 teachers are going to be going to those schools as a
7 result of this particular mandate. And so it's a
8 body of work that we're all going to have to be
9 looking at and figuring out how we can work together
10 to make sure that there's a level of equity that is
11 shared across the system. It's going to be a
12 challenge. The first couple of years will be fine,
13 but the years 3-5 we're going to see some real
14 challenges.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I want
16 to pass on over to my Council Member Stevens for
17 questions. And I'm also acknowledging Council
18 Member Ung.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Hello, good
20 morning. How's everyone doing?

21 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Good morning.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I just have a
23 couple of questions. I know the Public Advocate
24 already spoke about it earlier that there was three
25 shootings around schools yesterday. One of the

1 students that was shot and seriously injured is from
2 my district, and I've been corresponding with him mom
3 since yesterday's incident. And I know that Project
4 Pivot is a \$9 million dollar investment and operating
5 within cohorts of 130 schools throughout the City,
6 and it's really been sold as like re-imagining public
7 safety for schools. So can you talk about how the
8 CBO partners were chosen, how they're paired with the
9 schools, and what's the actual goal of it? Because I
10 know it's reimagining public safety, but what does
11 that really look like? And is this similar to like
12 CMS sites? Are those the ones that are going-- are
13 those mostly the ones that's on the list for the
14 CBO's. So I guess we'll [inaudible] question.

16 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, yeah. So
17 Project Pivot in many ways is a response to what we
18 have heard from lots of community folks, as well as
19 our elected officials who have said to us over and
20 over again as it relates to safety, we don't just
21 want it to be a police response. It's part of what
22 the Public Advocate said here today. The answer
23 can't simply be more school safety, more police,
24 that's our response. How do you get the community
25 involved? Project Pivot is a community involvement

1
2 initiative. There are groups like Elite Learners who
3 are out in East New York. They're in several
4 different schools. They provide a wide range of
5 supports in the schools that they're working, and
6 they work very closely in the schools during the day.
7 They provide safe passage to school, after school.
8 They got a van. The folks who are in the schools
9 that they're in say they're an essential part of
10 providing a different level of climate for the kids.
11 They're mentoring students.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, and I
13 just-- I agree. I-- 'cause listen, I'm one of the
14 people who advocated to say that we need more CBO
15 programs in schools, so I'm one of the--

16 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] Right.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: folks who was--
18 I was supporting it 100 percent. But could you talk
19 a little bit about like how were those partners
20 chosen, and just could you give us a little bit like
21 how are they paired with schools? Because when I had
22 the conversation with some of the providers, they
23 said that it was a little bit wonky as, like, they're
24 on a list, but they have to do a lot of the outreach
25 to the schools and kind of like lobby the principals

1
2 to get into these schools. So could you talk about
3 how these partners are really paired and what does
4 that really look like, and is it like the holistic
5 goal to look at-- alright, we're looking at these
6 programs that have been successful and they're going
7 here. So could you just talk a little bit about
8 that?

9 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, yeah. So a lot
10 of these are organizations and many of them folks of
11 color. The overwhelming majority of them are folks
12 of color who are from these neighborhoods which have
13 had these high levels of incidents across our
14 schools. Many of them have been doing work in the
15 communities for a long time, and quite a few of them
16 without any real dollars or very limited dollars, and
17 so we made a commitment that we were going to get
18 them into the game, that we wanted them to be much
19 more involved and that we want to put some funding
20 behind them. So they were identified, I think-- I
21 don't know if we put out an RFP on that. I don't
22 recall. But we put some folks in front of this, in
23 charge of this program, and we have been meeting with
24 many of these groups for months before we even
25 started the program. On Saturdays, we would spend

1
2 Saturdays meeting with them, talking with them about
3 the needs across the schools, how we could ultimately
4 all work together. our partnering them with specific
5 schools was around identifying those schools, meeting
6 with the leaders of those schools, and then
7 introducing them to many of these organizations to
8 try to find the right fit, because they don't all do
9 the same exact things, and that's why we say that.
10 So in many ways you're right, it is a little wonky,
11 if you will, but the overarching goal is to create a
12 greater culture and climate in the schools, to
13 provide a greater level of support particularly for
14 those kids where the principal would come to us and
15 say, "I've got this young man. I've got this young
16 woman. We don't know what in the world to do with
17 them. We don't know how to help them. We need
18 help." That's what these groups are there to try to
19 do to provide that level of support for the young
20 people who otherwise might find themselves engaged in
21 that negative behavior in school and outside of
22 school. So we're still working it through. Like I
23 said, they've only been at work now for just a few
24 short months, and we're meeting with them regularly
25 also to talk about lessons learned, what are they

1
2 going through, how do we improve on this program and
3 make it tighter and more efficient.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I definitely
5 would love to talk more offline about this because
6 this is obviously-- this is something that is very
7 prevalent in my community and like I said, I was one
8 of the people who advocated to say that we need more
9 CBOs and community-based programs in our schools, and
10 I think this is the right route. But like I said,
11 I've spoken to some of the providers and they said
12 it's been a little bit wonky, and so definitely want
13 to just kind of like talk so we can like work through
14 some of the kinks and get to the other side--

15 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] I'd love
16 it. Thank you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: because like I
18 said, one of my 17-year-old students was shot
19 yesterday in critical condition.

20 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And this is just
22 like totally unacceptable. And this is a failure on
23 all of our parts, right? Like it's not just the
24 public school side. It's also on the CBO side. It's
25 all of us. I say any time a young person is lost,

1
2 it's our failure as adults. And so want us to just
3 make sure that we're tightening this up and working
4 together. I just have one more question. I'm so
5 sorry. Really quickly. And so we also-- just
6 talking about one. I heard the numbers around like
7 leasing for charter schools which I think is crazy
8 and really ridiculous. But I did want to just talk
9 because I know, especially with charter schools, they
10 typically have a very large budget for marketing
11 outreach. I mean, even on the first day of school I
12 had charter schools outside my public schools giving
13 out flyers, trying to recruit kids, and literally
14 pulling kids from public schools. So can you talk
15 about like what's the budget for recruitment for
16 public schools and what does that look like? Because
17 historically that has not been something that the DOE
18 has had to do or you said today we want to talk about
19 public schools, public schools system. What have--
20 you guys historically have not done that in the past,
21 so how are we moving forward in that direction?
22 Because that to me is one of the reasons why we're
23 losing a lot of our kids to charter, because they
24 aggressively recruit. I mean, they have ads up,
25 buses, and even sometimes you walk into a public

1 school that are collocated, you will see a sign up
2 that's advertising programs, and the public schools
3 will be having just as many programs, but there's no
4 like mention of these things. So, can we talk about
5 what recruitment looks like, what retention looks
6 like, and how-- and what's the plan around this and
7 how much money we're actually going to be investing
8 in that?
9

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR LLOYD: Sure. Thank
11 you for the question. So yes, you're 100 percent
12 accurate. In the past, centralized marketing
13 recruitment for schools has not been done district by
14 district. Most of the marketing in our New York City
15 public schools has been around apply and enroll
16 campaigns which you are familiar with that are
17 seasonal. We are consolidating marketing budgets
18 around the agencies working with specific districts,
19 particularly districts like the seven in the Bronx
20 and others who see a high percentage of charter
21 influx in their neighborhoods. We are increasing our
22 digital outreach and prioritizing digital
23 communication about our schools, about the great
24 things that are happening in our school as well as
25 working individually with respect of departments on

1
2 new campaigns, digital that you'll see in and around
3 the subway, public and upcoming campaigns around
4 summer meals, Summer Rising, language access, and
5 others, but we are ramping up to increase our
6 spending on recruiting public school students.

7 CHANCELLOR BANKS: This is Deputy
8 Chancellor Lloyd. This is something that we have
9 also made another priority for us, which is-- I'm in
10 total agreement with you. The New York City public
11 schools has not had a good enough marketing strategy.
12 There is amazing work that happens in these schools
13 and in all of your districts. I'm sure every member
14 here can point to schools that are in your district
15 that people would line up to go to if they knew more
16 about it. That is where we're trying to go. As I
17 came into this office you have marketing dollars that
18 are spread out across dozens of offices. We're
19 centralizing that now so that we can really have a
20 greater level of control and focus and drive. Not
21 all of the charter schools have a huge marketing
22 budget. Some of the big ones do, but they're a lot
23 of the smaller mom and pop charters as well who don't
24 have the millions of dollars for that. But we are--
25 it is an important notion and I appreciate you

1
2 raising it, and I think we can all play a role in
3 helping to lift up and to celebrate what's actually
4 going on in our schools, because if more parents and
5 families knew about the great work that's actually
6 going on, I think they would be more inclined to send
7 their children.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I hundred percent
9 agree, and you know, District Nine, we're always--
10 we're killing the game over there. It's one of the
11 secrets that people don't like to talk about.

12 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yep.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: They always like
14 to talk about the failing scores but not all the
15 amazing work and all the kids that are being super
16 successful coming out of those places. And so for me,
17 it is important that we are advertising and
18 supporting our schools in that way.

19 CHANCELLOR BANKS: And I would just say--
20 I don't know if you're getting ready to shift, but I
21 would just say this. To any Council Member that's
22 here, we invite you, please, share with us the
23 schools that you think should be lifted up and
24 celebrated.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: All the ones in
3 District Nine.

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Every single one of
5 them?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yep.

7 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Alright, you got it.
8 We'll start with that.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Alright.

10 CHANCELLOR BANKS: But that's my point is
11 that that's the way you turn around the narrative.
12 Changing the name from DOE to New York City Public
13 Schools is a piece. Highlighting those schools in
14 District Nine and the other places that are in your
15 own districts-- I often get asked about, when I'm at
16 town halls and everything, about all the things that
17 people see as problems. What I also try to say to
18 folks is tell me something that's working.
19 Everything can't be broken. And every member would
20 tell me, well I've got this school, this principal.
21 It's phenomenal. Let's lift that up. At the same
22 time where we're all talking about the other things
23 that we do need to fix, because otherwise we stay in
24 a deficit narrative, and that's when people hear that
25 and they say I don't need to be part of those public

1 schools. Let me go find someplace else to go because
2 all they hear about are just the problems. We don't
3 give nearly enough attention to the great stories
4 that are actually happening in our schools, and
5 there's great work happening every single day.
6 Appreciate it.
7

8 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I
9 would just briefly build on those comments, and also
10 invite all the Council Members-- some of you are
11 doing this. You have very close relationships with
12 the superintendents. Each of our superintendents was
13 chosen by the Chancellor based on their ability to
14 connect with community each of them is charged with
15 coming up with an enrollment strategy that is
16 specific to their communities, their neighborhoods.
17 Some of them-- Council Member Stevens, we have one of
18 our superintendents in the Bronx who's going online
19 with the charter parents asking them why they're
20 enrolling their kids in charter--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: [interposing] Is
22 it Harry? Because he's amazing.

23 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I'm
24 not going to disclose the name here, but I'm sure
25 it's somebody you will think very, very highly of.

1
2 And so we have got to-- at the superintendent, the
3 district level as well as at the school level,
4 there's nothing stopping us from marketing any of
5 this, and so we have got to be very close to what it
6 is, that parents are asking for. In the case of the
7 superintendent I'm talking about, one of the answers
8 that he got over and over again was afterschool. So
9 he's thinking about it, how to move resources. We're
10 going to help him do that to create more afterschool.
11 We've got to be very, very responsive, as the
12 Chancellor says is one of his pillars, to what it is
13 that parents are asking for. If we do that, then
14 we're going to see enrollment increase.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Council
16 Member Menin?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Thank you so much,
18 Chair. So I wanted to follow up on a question that
19 the Speaker had asked about this Accenture contract.
20 You had mentioned is for \$350,000 dollars, and my
21 understanding it is to map out needs and seats for
22 3K. So my question is how is a company like
23 Accenture going to be able to do that without doing
24 real community outreach? I have a concern about
25 that.

1
2 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: so,
3 Accenture is part of it. It's a group-- thank you for
4 the question, Council Member. You're exactly right.
5 We are also going to be doing-- part of our research
6 is at the community level, you know, doing focus
7 groups and outreach and so forth. What Accenture
8 will bring to the table which is valuable is looking
9 at the numbers and doing projections at a local level
10 and then at a city level, what the demand is likely
11 to be. And this is not just in 3K. It's going to be
12 very, very helpful, because it'll also be Pre-K and
13 infant/toddler so that we have on that aspect of it,
14 we understand what the numbers are telling us.
15 Obviously, we then have to do some community-based
16 work, which we are also planning to do.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: so what is going
18 to happen with the 3K outreach team? I'd asked about
19 this in a previous hearing, but my specific question
20 is, there was a dedicated 3K outreach team that had
21 lived in the Office of Student Enrollment that had
22 moved from the Division of Early Childhood in 2018.
23 So what has happened to that team? Weren't they
24 really responsible for 3K outreach? Who moving
25 forward is going to be responsible for it?

1
2 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So
3 you're a 100 percent correct. That team which I--
4 you know, this was a prior Administration, I wasn't
5 here, but I understand that that was a launch team
6 when 3K was launched. It got folded into our overall
7 outreach team which is doing extensive outreach for
8 3K. Deputy Chancellor Ahmed went through some of the
9 things we're doing. Some of you may have seen in
10 subways and bus stops doing advertising. So it is
11 part of the larger outreach team. The good news is,
12 we got 3K applications up by 27 percent this year--
13 we'll get you the final numbers-- as a result in part
14 of that outreach. So, it's not a 3K team. It is
15 part of a larger outreach team, but they are doing
16 targeted outreach on 3K.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: And how many staff
18 members are in this new dedicated outreach team?

19 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I'll
20 have to get you the overall number, but it's a
21 significant team.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: And how many
23 languages does the outreach team speak?

24 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I
25 don't know how many languages specifically the

1
2 members of the outreach team speak, but they're doing
3 outreach in the nine primary languages. So for
4 example, the advertising campaign, the social media
5 campaign, most of the advertising is being done--
6 ethnic media and local community outlets in other--
7 our nine primary languages.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay. Because I
9 do have a concern on the outreach. I mean, I know you
10 mentioned that there have been emails and texts to
11 families that have signed up, but we're trying to
12 reach the families that haven't signed up, the hard-
13 to-reach families that might not know about 3K. And
14 so really want to urge the agency to think outside of
15 the box, to use WhatsApp and other ways to reach
16 these families. I say this as someone who ran the
17 census where, again, we were trying to reach hard-to-
18 reach families. I don't-- you know, and that's again
19 why I'm asking about the 3K outreach team, because I
20 just want to say, I remain concerned that it seems
21 like that team has been disbanded and that, you
22 know, the agency is using sort of a different
23 approach.

24 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I
25 wouldn't say-- appreciate it and we would love to

1
2 partner with you, Council Member Menin, and tap into
3 your expertise and any Council Member who wants to
4 partner on. We can always do more outreach. Just to
5 be clear, 3K outreach is not disbanded. The unit was
6 folded into the larger enrollment team, but they are
7 doing targeted 3K outreach. They continue to do
8 that.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay. I'm just-- I
10 do-- I want to say this and I said this at a prior
11 hearing. I am hearing from some of those staffers
12 that they say that they're not doing outreach on 3K.
13 So, I just want to try to get to that discrepancy if
14 we could. But I want to move on. I know I just have
15 one minute left. Carter cases-- I'm hearing from a
16 lot of families in my district who say they have very
17 long wait times for reimbursement. One family
18 contacted us, said it was waiting two years for
19 reimbursement. So could you talk a little bit about
20 what is the average reimbursement time on these
21 Carter cases?

22 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yeah,
23 that's a great question. Obviously, no family should
24 wait two years or anything like that for
25 reimbursement. So, we're happy, by the way, to look.

1
2 I know that's not the specific point of your
3 question, but happy to look into that particular
4 piece.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, Thank you.

6 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: But I
7 don't have an average--

8 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing]
9 [inaudible]

10 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: for
11 you, but one thing we are -- the Office of General
12 Counsel is focused on resolving those cases much more
13 quickly, even as the numbers are expanding. So I
14 will get you the numbers, but the average time it's
15 taking to resolve the case, which isn't the same as
16 payment but it's the first step. That time is
17 getting much, much shorter to resolve the case.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, if we could
19 get the information, though, on the average time for
20 the reimbursement, because that's really--

21 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:
22 [interposing] Yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: where the families
24 are concerned about. Okay, thank you.

1
2 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: We
3 will get that to you, Council Member.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
5 Member Menin. I just have a quick follow-up. What
6 is the DOE's partnership with the Mayor's new Office
7 on Early Childhood?

8 CHANCELLOR BANKS: When I talk about--
9 when we sat down most recent-- it's relatively new.
10 And so we've sat down. We've already had a couple
11 meetings with them. You want to talk a little bit
12 about what we're planning?

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Yeah, sure.
14 We've been meeting-- I've been meeting in particular
15 with the new Executive Director and her Assistant
16 Director, and you know, their work has really been
17 centered on helping to coordinate all of our agencies
18 across the City that support young children and their
19 families. And so you know, they're just embarking on
20 their work, and we will continue to support in their
21 efforts as they're supporting in ours.

22 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We're very early on in
23 this relationship, and of course, the most immediate
24 thing for us was we wanted to get these providers
25 paid. That was like our number one priority. We've

1
2 even been talking about-- but now we shifted in our
3 most recent conversation with them around how do we
4 fix this plane while we're flying and how do we
5 change the system so that we're not perennially in
6 this space of just playing catch-up all the time. So
7 they got some ideas around how we could do that as
8 well. That's why I opened up early on saying I don't
9 have anything to announce on that yet, but we are
10 looking very deeply at like how do we fix this
11 system.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is it going to be
13 working in collaboration with Early Childhood at New
14 York City public schools, or is it a separate agency?

15 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, there is--
16 they're a separate mayoral agency, but they're going
17 to be working very collaboratively with us for sure.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Thank you.
19 Council Member Narcisse?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Good morning
21 and thank you, Chair. Thank you, Chancellor. Thank
22 you to bring all your staff [inaudible] all the
23 question going to be answered. I'm so happy I see so
24 many folks here in front of us. And thank you, Madam
25 Speaker. And Treyger, you're in my district. You're

1
2 my constituent. Let's make it happen. Follow the
3 money, because every cent that I have, I'm trying to
4 put it in school building. I'm very close with
5 principals and superintendent. I'm a product. I
6 benefit from coming from Haiti, and my children
7 benefit from public school. So I have a skin in the
8 game. That's what Jamaican said. So, how did the--
9 how did the cuts to school budgets impact school
10 ability to keep their counselors, their nurses, and
11 their staff at-large. Make it short for me to cover
12 the subject, and you know, long enough. Yeah.

13 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Now I'm
14 nervous. So we-- thank you for the question. So in
15 terms of nurses and counselors we still do have a
16 nurse in every building and funding for that. We do
17 have a nursing shortage across the City, and so that
18 is something we're constantly working with our
19 partners at DOHMH to solve, but there's funding for
20 that and we still have a commitment to a nurse in a
21 building. And then ditto in every school access to a
22 social worker or counselor as well. Some of that--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing]
24 You finished?

25

1
2 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: I was
3 just going to say some of that is dependent on the
4 stimulus dollars we've been talking about.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay.

6 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA:
7 Relevant in the future.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: So, how does
9 public schools tracking school access support? Like,
10 how you know where they need support, and for the
11 school, do you track that?

12 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, well, I mean,
13 we-- when you say support, just-- I just--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing]
15 The support within the school building. Let's say
16 for nurses, or whatever the support they need in the
17 school, how-- you keep track of all the schools?

18 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, yeah, yeah,
19 yeah. So--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing]
21 How you do that?

22 CHANCELLOR BANKS: So we work very
23 specifically through our superintendents, right?
24 That's part of the reason why our superintendents
25 each have their own 25 to 30 schools that they have.

1
2 We meet with them on a regular basis, and they have
3 tracking systems of all these things across the
4 schools. So, to the degree that, you know, they make
5 us aware around the issues and the challenges of what
6 those additional supports are that are needed. And
7 it varies from school to school, but we really work a
8 lot through our superintendents on that.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay, let's go
10 back to professional-- the nurses, [inaudible]
11 professionals, and nurses. We understand there are
12 student who are still waiting for the DOE to assign a
13 mandated bus paraprofessional or nurse. While
14 waiting student who need this support are not allowed
15 to ride the bus. How many students are currently
16 still waiting to be assigned the mandated bus
17 paraprofessional?

18 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Christina Foti from
19 our-- leads our Office of Special Education.

20 CHRISTINA FOTI: Good morning. I will
21 get-- I will follow up with the exact number, but we
22 know that this is a critical-- remains a critical
23 issues. We've been contracting where we have
24 shortages, but I will get you the number, the exact
25 number.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: thank you. How
3 many students have a mandate for a nurse on the bus?
4 I guess it's you again?

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Have a mandate for a
6 nurse on the bus?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Yeah.

8 CHRISTINA FOTI: Same answer. I'm going
9 to follow up with you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Same answer?
11 What step is DOE taking to ensure all student have a
12 mandated bus nurse or paraprofessional this year and
13 beyond?

14 CHRISTINA FOTI: Yeah, so we've been
15 working with superintendent and district offices to
16 ensure that when a school cannot provide a
17 paraprofessional on the school bus, that a posting is
18 extended district-wide to try to recruit a
19 paraprofessional from the district outside of the
20 school. And in instances where still cannot serve as
21 a paraprofessional, we've been working with
22 contracted agencies to try to contract that service.
23 We are working with DOHMH on the nursing issue as
24 well to ensure that every student has a nurse on the
25 school bus. We certainly do not want a lack of a

1 nurse or paraprofessional to be a reason why a child
2 misses school, and I will definitely follow up on the
3 exact numbers.

4
5 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: By the way, I'm
6 a Registered Nurse over 30 years, that's my interest.
7 I have a skin in that game, too.

8 CHRISTINA FOTI: You sure do.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I have another
10 question for you. We have certificate given in our
11 high schools. How many certificate that we have
12 we've been giving for let's say-- let's put it in two
13 years, in the past two years? Because they're not
14 getting high school diploma. They're getting
15 certificate which cannot lead to college. So how
16 many of that that we have in the past two years?

17 CHRISTINA FOTI: Yes, I think you're
18 asking for graduation outside of the typical diploma.
19 Before I leave today I'm going to get you-- I'm going
20 to try to get all three of those numbers.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Chair, one more
22 question.

23 CHRISTINA FOTI: So you're not waiting.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: If I may?
25 Thank you. Drop-out, code 39, when our children in

1 the school, right, in regular high school-- now, they
2 decided high school is not for them. They want to do
3 a trade. Because it's not a DOE program, those kid
4 are putting out for drop-out, and that impact our
5 high school in the black and brown community. So,
6 what can we do to turn that table? Because those
7 kids, not every one of them can be a doctors or
8 lawyers, but they can get a skill if they choose to
9 do so.
10

11 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Absolutely, yeah. No,
12 that--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: So what can we
14 do then?

15 CHANCELLOR BANKS: No, we're already
16 working on that. That's a huge part of the work that
17 we're-- it's part of our Career Pathways work where
18 we are creating opportunities for kids to get the
19 kind of skills, credentials that they need so that
20 when they graduate, even if they're not going to
21 college, they can step right into the world of work.
22 So we have launched a number of initiatives already
23 focused on that, and we will continue to build that.
24 That is our-- when I talk about the theme bright
25 starts and bold futures, that's exactly what we're

1
2 talking about. The bright starts is the early
3 literacy, making sure all of our kids can read on
4 grade level, and the bold futures is all the career
5 technical education, the career work, the college
6 work. All of the stuff that says when you leave our
7 schools, what are the real opportunities for you?
8 Because there's nothing worse for them to graduate
9 and have a diploma, but they don't have any real
10 options, and so that's what we are focused on and
11 we're working to continue to build on those programs.
12 We're just getting started.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Last year, I've
14 been busy. I didn't have time to be your best
15 friend, but I'm going to be in your office calling
16 you. You're going to be annoyed by me, because I
17 believe--

18 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] Not at
19 all.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: in possibility
21 and opportunity in the black and brown communities,
22 and I know you believe in that, too.

23 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Absolutely.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: So, what I
25 would like to see we talk about reading.

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CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: so, I would like to see every time I turn on channel 12 or where my phase [sic] book [sic] wherever I have to see a child, a black or brown child with a book reading.

CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Because that's what I had done for my own children and it can be done and we need to promote that. And I'm in agreement with you. All children by the time they're in third grade they should be able to read no matter what their needs, because every child are gifted and talented if we invest in them. So let's invest in our children. We can bring a better tomorrow, and Rikers will be out of business. Thank you.

CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's right. That's how you put--

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing]
For most part.

CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's how you put Rikers out of business, absolutely. If we teach our kids to read and we put them on the path to success, that's how you put Rikers out of business. I will say this to you, I welcome you. As you know, I have an

1 open door. You and I have met many occasions. I
2 encourage you to continue to meet with me, my team.
3 We're here to work to solve these issues. And I think
4 collectively we should create a real citywide
5 campaign together with the Council around reading.
6 We all know reading is fundamental, but if we don't
7 get this right, all of these other things-- we're
8 spending money on stuff that we're trying to fix
9 because we don't get it right at the very beginning.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: You're not
12 telling me that. You should be seeing me on
13 Facebook, everywhere in my school building,
14 everywhere from Canarsie, [inaudible] throughout the
15 district--

16 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] Yes.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: because like I
18 said, I have skin in the game. Our kids is our
19 future. We have to do right, and we're talking about
20 31.2-- whatever, two billion dollars. So, I feel
21 like we can do better, much better, and I'm counting
22 on you, and we going to hold you accountable just
23 like you are holding us accountable. And my speaker,
24 by the way, believe in it because as a former
25 educator, every time we turn around that's all we're

1
2 trying to do to support, making sure that our
3 children are our future for real. So thank you for
4 your time.

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: In appreciate it.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: And thank you
7 Madam Speaker and Chair.

8 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You got it. Thank
10 you, Madam Speaker?

11 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you Madam Chair.
12 You know, Merci, I couldn't resist. Just piggy-
13 backing onto what Council Member Narcisse-- I'm sorry
14 just called you Merci in public, I'm sorry. To just
15 kind of piggy-back on this IEP certificate, because
16 it's brand new to me. I didn't know what this was. I
17 didn't know once we started conversing about it. It
18 became quite a concern for those of us, you know,
19 paste educators, and those of us that have been so
20 involved in the education of our children for so
21 long. So, if the-- what is the intention or was the
22 intention of this IEP certification if not to promote
23 our children into college or something else. What--
24 what is-- what is this?

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2 CHRISTINA FOTI: I think you're referring
3 to the CDOS [sic] credential which is a credential
4 exactly for this purpose of-- if a child or a student
5 wants to pursue a career pathway outside of the
6 typical diploma, this is an agreement with the state
7 that allows students to get time, experience, and an
8 actual credential on a vocational career pathway.
9 And we're pulling up the exact number of students who
10 have been eligible for the pathway. What I should
11 also add is that these are not mutually exclusive
12 pathways, right? So you-- a student can get-- earn
13 the CDOS credential while on the pathway of earning
14 other credits in General Education courses or typical
15 credit-bearing courses. And we're pulling the number
16 of students that have the CDOS-- that have earned the
17 CDOS credential.

18 SPEAKER ADAMS: And she also, I believe,
19 asked for demographics and who--

20 CHRISTINA FOTI: [interposing] Yes.

21 SPEAKER ADAMS: which communities are
22 receiving this particular credential? Okay, thank
23 you.

24 CHRISTINA FOTI: Yes, Madam Speaker,
25 thank you.

1
2 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Just
4 want to piggy-back real quick. Universal Literacy
5 Program: For six years Universal Literacy Program
6 worked towards the goal of ensuring 100 percent of
7 our New York City third graders can read on grade
8 level by 2026 by pairing reading coaches with K-2
9 teachers in more than half of New York City
10 elementary schools. About 53 percent of third
11 graders were considered proficient in reading before
12 the pandemic. Disrupted state testing up from 12
13 percent points since the program launched. As of
14 Fiscal 2023 Adopted Budget, DOE has 498 full-time
15 teachers for this position programmed with a budget
16 of \$53 million. The Fiscal for 2024 Preliminary
17 Budget reduced the program by \$36.5 million and the
18 number of positions to 178. So if the goal is to
19 reach reading proficient, why are we cutting, and
20 furthermore, why is the Administration sought to
21 reorganize the capacity of these coaches by requiring
22 the coaches to work between two to five schools at
23 elementary level instead of one to two, and between
24 five to six schools at the secondary level. The
25 coaches were required to reapply for these new roles.

1
2 So if the goal is to reach reading proficient,
3 explain to me the rationale behind that.

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: You're going to hear
5 the rest now. It's hard for me to tell it to you
6 right now. The U-Lit [sic] coaches were tied to an
7 old system. We're changing the entire system. I
8 think that's-- in many ways that's what the answer
9 is. The U-Lit coaches were trained in a system where
10 our kids were not achieving reading proficiency. So
11 I'm not staying and tied to anything that was there
12 before I got here that I deemed was not working. It
13 was nothing against the individuals that are U-Lit
14 coaches themselves. It's the-- the whole language
15 balanced literacy approach has not worked for our
16 kids. We're going to change the whole entire system,
17 and we're doing that where everything is on the table
18 now in terms of what that support will actually look
19 like. It may involve many of those coaches. It may
20 not. I don't know yet. That's the work that we're
21 leaning into right now. As we get ready to-- over
22 these next few weeks you'll be hearing more about it,
23 and because our goal is to be in many district by
24 this September with teaches in those schools who are
25 fully trained and ready to go, and over the next

1
2 couple of years, to really get to every school around
3 the City. Take the elementary schools, because that's
4 where we've got to get it right. So I'm not-- I'm
5 just not as committed to just, you know, people that
6 were in certain positions in the past. I'm really
7 looking to revamp all of the ways in which we're
8 working, because while those individual people may
9 have been good, the system itself was a dysfunctional
10 system, and we're trying to change that. And we do
11 believe that many of those people are going to still
12 be part of this with us, but in a different role, in
13 different capacity. It may have a different title,
14 but we wanted to hit the mark much closer to where we
15 think our kids need to be successful.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: are these coaches--
17 will also be trained in dyslexia screening?

18 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Some of them are.
19 Many of them, and these are all the things that we're
20 actually looking at now as well, yep. And there'll
21 be some new people that we engage in this process as
22 well. We haven't locked in yet on what some of this
23 reading curricula is going to be that we're looking
24 at, but we've got a reading council. We're taking
25 their advice. They're doing the study, the deep dive

1 on this, and our Literacy Council, and we're going to
2 be guided by a lot of what they get back to us, and
3 that's what I mean, you're going to hear more about
4 this in the coming days.

5
6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The-- we realize
7 that you allocated \$37.8 million for the Universal
8 Literacy Program to Literacy Collaboration for Fiscal
9 2024 and the out-years. The reallocation also moves
10 with 321 positions from Universal Literacy into the
11 literacy collaboration program. What are the pre-
12 assessment, post-- is there a pre-assessment and
13 post-assessment to measure the effectiveness of this
14 program?

15 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes, there will be
16 absolutely. Our Deputy Chancellor for Teaching and
17 Learning is not here with us today, but we're
18 absolutely going to be doing full-on assessments of
19 that to figure out the best way forward.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And we've always
21 seen throughout the curriculum, is this curriculum
22 being used-- is it culturally relevant?

23 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Absolutely. What we--
24 I'm committed to any curriculum that we roll out
25 being culturally relevant. My entire career has been

1 about cultural relevancy. And so the work that I've
2 done while I was a teacher, the work that I've done
3 throughout the years at the Eagle Academy, I worked
4 to create a culturally relevant library together with
5 Scholastic years ago. That's been used in school
6 districts all across the nation where young men get a
7 chance to see themselves wrapped up in this work.
8 This is a body of work that I'm the form
9 representation of, and I will not be rolling out any
10 curricula that I don't feel is going to be culturally
11 relevant to the young people that we have in our
12 schools, which are not simply black and brown. The
13 whole world is here, right? Like-- in New York City.
14 It's what makes this place so unique. When you're
15 sitting in this seat as Chancellor, I visit these
16 neighborhoods all across the City. It is an amazing
17 place of various language and culture. It is really
18 amazing. And so we've got to make sure we're meeting
19 the needs of all of our children, and that's what
20 we're committed to doing. It's not the thing you just
21 do overnight, but it something that we are making
22 sure that we're focused on. The diversity that is
23 New York is the beauty of New York City, and it's the
24 reason why we continue to roll out the new curricula.
25

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2 It's fluid for us, because we've got to make sure
3 we're not locked into just oen approach of one thing,
4 but that every child gets a chance to see themselves
5 represented in the curricula.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Your literacy
7 coaches, while you're redesigning this program, what
8 will they be doing in the meantime?

9 CHANCELLOR BANKS: You want to speak?

10 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Many
11 of them, Chair, as you know, are involved in our
12 dyslexia program. So they're assisting with the
13 screening that is occurring universally throughout
14 our schools, and then very importantly they're
15 supporting the interventions. As you know, you know,
16 when the screening is just the first step, and so if
17 it shows that a child is struggling with reading,
18 there are interventions that occur. We will, by the
19 way, share data on that which we're generating now,
20 but we want to share that with you once we have it
21 firmed up to see how kids are progressing once these
22 interventions are put into place. The coaches are
23 instrumental in training up the capacity of teachers
24 at the school level to do those interventions, to
25 look at the data from the screeners very carefully,

1
2 and then to administer secondary screeners, because
3 some children in the course continue to struggle in
4 some cases because of dyslexia or the print-based
5 disabilities. So they are very involved in that.
6 They will continue to be involved in that as the
7 Chancellor's talking about it, as we make sure that
8 every educator-- you know, the best coach in the
9 world, even if they have two schools, they might see
10 a particular classroom maybe once a week. Of course,
11 you have a fulltime who's in front of those children
12 every single day, seven hours a day, we have to make
13 sure that classroom teacher is using great content,
14 understands the science of reading as the Chancellor
15 was talking about, is really comfortable and trained
16 up, and has what they need. So that's part of what
17 we're tackling, but certainly coaching will be a--
18 will continue to be a critical part of the equation.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Council
20 Member De La Rosa?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Thank you,
22 Madam Chair, Madam Speaker, and thank you Chancellor
23 and team for being here. I have a few follow-up
24 questions regarding enrollment and the impact to
25 schools. Specifically, I want to ask about a plan to

1
2 hold schools harmless when they've seen, you know,
3 such large reductions. We saw last year this was sort
4 of the crux of our budget negotiations, and there's a
5 lot of concerns on the ground. I continue to hear
6 them about, you know, the programs that get cut when
7 there isn't a plan. So I wonder what is the plan?

8 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, we could speak
9 to it fiscally. Again, and I mean, you could talk
10 again about the numbers that we're putting there to
11 try to hold schools as harmless as we possibly can,
12 but I think the fiscal reality, though, for us is
13 this. If you have a school that 800 students and
14 they were funded for 800 students and now the school
15 has 400 students, the school doesn't get the same
16 budget. They never had, even pre-pandemic. I was a
17 principal for many years. I was very clear. My
18 enrollment went up, I got more money. If my
19 enrollment went down, we got less money. You talk to
20 the Principals Union, they're very clear, that's-- it
21 goes up, it goes down from year to year. We
22 understood that when we were in the pandemic it was a
23 very unique set of circumstances, and that's why
24 those stimulus dollars were being used to try to do
25 everything they could to hold schools as harmless as

1
2 possible, but the hold harmless will not last
3 forever, because the stimulus dollars are not going
4 to last forever. And so we're going to do everything
5 we can to try to keep the schools as whole as
6 possible while they continue to fight the good fight
7 of getting kids to come back to the school. But the
8 challenge for us really is the stimulus dollars are
9 not going to be here forever. They're running out,
10 and that's the challenge.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: And on that
12 fight to help the schools bring as many kids in as
13 possible, I mean, I think that's part I mean, at
14 least for me, on the experience on the ground why the
15 3K programs are so important, right? We have to
16 build up that pool of students that are committed to
17 a school community. In districts like mine in upper
18 Manhattan where there is, you know, where there's an
19 uptick of asylum-seekers which we welcome, but at the
20 same time those students come with some [sic] needs.
21 It is important for us to make these school buildings
22 more and more attractive so that more families can
23 choose our public schools rather than the
24 alternatives that are out there.

25

1
2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: No, listen, I'm in
3 full agreement with you and I'd love to work with you
4 around any of it, and if there's specific schools
5 that you have some concerns around. Our goal is not
6 to hurt our schools. We're trying to do everything
7 we can to support our schools. I will tell you,
8 though, a couple things. One, which you raised on
9 Early Childhood. We're committed to Early Childhood.
10 We're committed to 3K, but not necessarily a full-
11 borne expansion that just says here's a number, are
12 you going to hit that number? That's the work we're
13 doing with Accenture. We're trying to say, where are
14 the seats that are needed? I could care less about
15 giving 3K seats in a particular district if what the
16 parents are saying is that we need infant/toddler
17 seats. So I'm committing to some artificial number.
18 No, I'm not going to commit to that. What I'm
19 committed to do is to ensure that we meet the needs
20 of what those specific parents in that community
21 actually need, that's what we're committed to. One
22 of the challenges I have, though, as it relates to
23 our traditional schools, we have some schools that
24 are just so small that they're very difficult to
25 maintain as schools. We literally have some schools

1 right here across our boroughs that have 120 kids.
2 They got a principal, an assistant principal, they
3 only have 120 kids.
4

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Well, I'm
6 committed to working with you on the community
7 outreach and targeted, you know, communications.
8 Language access is an important part in my district
9 as well, and I welcome those opportunities.

10 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: I want to ask
12 you also about the vacancy reduction. So there's a
13 plan to eliminate 817 positions as I understand it,
14 and can you speak more as to what those positions
15 are, what they look like, what is the detail on that?

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR LLOYD: So, thank you
17 for the question, and it actually allows me to answer
18 your question, Madam Chair. So, the 817 is actually
19 associated with the budget cut, the 3K budget cut
20 that happened in November Plan. So not only did it
21 take down the dollars but it took down the associated
22 headcount, and those were for titles such as teachers
23 and paras that were not hired as yet so planned for.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Okay, thank
25 you for answering that question. I'm going to switch

1
2 over to restorative justice for a little bit. You
3 know, Chancellor, if you've been watching the news in
4 the last few days there was an incident my district
5 just two days ago where an anti-black slur was used
6 as a young student was attacked on a subway station
7 by other students, right? And it is not my goal to
8 criminalize these youth, but I will tell you that
9 that is the system of-- that is the symptom of a
10 system that is dismantling before us, right? It's
11 crumbling, and there are failures that are present
12 when we see that behavior. So my question to you, is
13 can you speak a little bit more to the restorative
14 justice funding? I know that Project Pivot is one of
15 the main cornerstones of that plan, but is there--
16 can you explain what other cornerstones exist there?
17 And then there was a memo that was sent out,
18 Restorative Justice Implementation that said 250
19 schools would be included for a budget of \$2.8
20 million, and I wanted to know how these schools were
21 chosen and how they participate in that project and
22 if there's plans for expansion. And thank you.

23 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, so I would just
24 say, I think we're continuing to provide funding to
25 participating schools for restorative justice

1
2 trainings, professional development, and ongoing
3 coaching to build schools' implementation of the RJ
4 and social/emotional learning, which for us is all
5 connected. We're going to continue to find ways to
6 provide students with the help that they need long
7 before the find themselves getting in trouble. So
8 extending this work through programs like Project
9 Pivot and our PSAL expansion as well to ensure that
10 kids are finding positive outlets. So there are a
11 number of things that we're doing. We're making
12 greater investments in PSAL and the sports and the
13 teams and the programs that keep kids engaged as
14 well. All these things are on the table. we know
15 that you all have been very engaged now, the Mayor's
16 Office and negotiating those things that are
17 critically important to ensure that they're in the
18 budget, and at the end of the day, you know, I'm
19 going to implement the budget that I'm given. But
20 restorative justice is something that is important to
21 me, and again, we see Project Pivot also as part of
22 that restorative justice ecosystem, if you will. So
23 there are a number of pieces.

24

25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Just a quick
3 point of clarity. What about restorative justice
4 coordinators, is there a plan to fund positions?

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, so it's all
6 still on the table as well. We've not taken
7 restorative justice off the table. We just want to
8 make sure that in the final analysis depending upon
9 the dollars that we have, what we're able to do where
10 it can be most impactful for us. So, certainly would
11 love to-- I'd love to follow up with you and talk
12 about how it's actually showing up in your district.
13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Council Member
15 Schulman?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you. I
17 want to thank the Chair and I want to thank Madam
18 Speaker for her support, not only this hearing but of
19 our education system in general, our public education
20 system. I am a produce of public schools, I'm very
21 happy to say, and our kids only get one chance at a
22 good education. So, I have a few areas. One is that
23 hasn't been mentioned today is that numerous studies
24 show that students really thrive when they have
25 access to music, arts, and physical education. So

1
2 what are plans for that in terms of the strategy in
3 general, and also what budget costs are involved with
4 that.

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: So, our budget, and
6 you talk a little bit about this right? I mean,
7 we're allocating with \$500 million dollars
8 [inaudible]. Why don't you talk about that?

9 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Yes,
10 thank you very much for the question and the interest
11 in the issue. And I will say, this is oen where the
12 Chancellor has really been pushing us to see how much
13 we can maximize including where we have stimulus
14 dollars now put that money out to schools for arts in
15 particular. So for this year, our overall arts
16 budget is about \$500 million dollars. A good chunk
17 of that sits in school budgets, about \$450 million, I
18 believe, sits in school budgets. A portion of that
19 is actually in part due to stimulus dollars. So when
20 we put out stimulus dollars to schools for academic
21 recovery, we included arts as a component of those
22 dollars, \$25 million dollars flowing out to schools
23 for academic recovery including arts for that. So
24 that's one piece in schools, as well as art teachers
25 and art programs across our schools. And then in

1
2 addition to that, we have some central spends on arts
3 as well which you can imagine is professional
4 learning. It's funding to CBOs to work directly with
5 schools around arts programming as well.

6 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Let me just say,
7 Council Member, also, you know, one of the-- I
8 wouldn't say challenge, but it's one of the realities
9 that we also face is that we don't often mandate to
10 the schools to spend their dollars in very specific
11 ways. So while the dollars are there for them to
12 hire an art teacher or a music teacher, it's often
13 left to the school leader working together, you know,
14 with their school leadership teams to determine what
15 they want to do. Because of this Council we actually
16 have with the Fair Student Funding, every school now
17 has the opportunity to hire a social worker. The
18 vast majority of them have. Some have not. Some
19 have decided to use those dollars in other ways that
20 they deem most-efficient for their particular school.
21 I did not want to sit as Chancellor and say everybody
22 must do this. So sometimes when we do face issues
23 where there's a reduction in budget and it'll be said
24 to the Chancellor, the school, you know, you made
25 them-- I got rid of their art teacher. I didn't get

1
2 rid of their art teacher. They are left-- the school
3 leadership still gets to decide who they are going to
4 hire for their schools. No school wants a reduction
5 in budget. I don't ever want to have to give a school
6 reduction in budget. We're just faced with the
7 fiscal reality some times.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Well, no, I'm
9 glad that you mentioned that, Chancellor, because you
10 said a little earlier that superintendents are
11 working with the communities and I assume that's part
12 of that process.

13 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: I want to make
15 sure that the Council Members are included in that,
16 because there are times that schools make decisions
17 or superintendents in my district make decisions, and
18 I know nothing about it until I find out after the
19 fact, and I just want to, you know, to be included so
20 that we can put-- you know, so we can have some input
21 into the process.

22 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I'm making a clear
23 note of that, Council Member, because that is the
24 kind of thing that I really don't want to hear. I
25 want our school superintendents to know that they

1
2 should be working hand-in-hand with you. Every one
3 of them--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: [interposing]
5 Some do, some don't.

6 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, some do, some--
7 and to the degree that as members, if you feel like
8 you know who the superintendent is, but they very
9 rarely meet with you, they're not responsive, they're
10 not working with you, they're making major decisions
11 and no one is informing you, please let me know that.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Well, I let
13 Mark know.

14 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes, okay.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: No, he's been
16 great. No, I appreciate that, and I by the way-- I
17 was a member of the school band in my junior high
18 school, my public junior high school, so and that's
19 where I learned to read music, sheet music. So, and
20 that's been a-- it's been really wonderful for me.
21 So, the other thing I wanted to ask is you mentioned
22 earlier about pay parity for Early Childhood
23 Education staff, the directors, assistant directors
24 and said it's a priority of the Administration to do
25

1
2 that. What does that mean? Like, is there a time
3 table? Is there a plan?

4 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So,
5 you know, the good news on that with the support of
6 Chair Joseph and the Council, is we took a step in
7 that direction with the enhancements of what are
8 called the 4410 contracts that provide Early
9 Childhood programming for children with disabilities.
10 So, that was part of the rationale behind that
11 investment, which is a significant investment. The--
12 you know, being able to-- we don't have a particular
13 plan, Council Member. I can't give you a particular
14 plan that says by this date we will get there. This
15 is something that we are trying to size and figure
16 out how to do it. At the same time the Chancellor's,
17 you know, talking about flying the plane while we're
18 changing out engine while we're facing this fiscal
19 cliff. So we don't have a plan. We would love to
20 talk to you about how we can do that in a sustainable
21 way to make sure we're not putting resources in that
22 later on get taken out.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Chair, can I
24 just ask oen question as a follow-up to that? You
25 mentioned disabilities. So one of my questions, too,

1
2 is making schools accessible for students with
3 disabilities because I mean, in particular there's
4 one school in my district that's a very tall school
5 and the stairs are very steep, and I was told by the
6 principal there's a school-- a student that uses a
7 wheelchair that has to be taught on the first floor,
8 and so that's not acceptable to me, but I just want
9 to know what the plans are just around that.

10 CHANCELLOR BANKS: It's always a
11 challenge, right? Some of these-- some of the
12 buildings that we're in are old buildings and were
13 designed many years before we actually shifted to
14 some of these. Some of them have the ability for us
15 to kind of bring them to code, and some of them cost
16 an inordinate amount of money to bring it to code if
17 the building is just so old, and so sometimes we try
18 to find other places for students, in fact, to be.
19 But again, you make us aware of that. You want to
20 speak to it again?

21 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Yeah,
22 in school facilities, and Tom Taratko, specifically
23 on our team has been working with schools and really
24 has asked and invited Council Members to lift those
25 schools that are most important that be addressed

1
2 from an accessibility standpoint. So we should
3 certainly put you in touch with him, and I will take
4 that back to him with that to reach out for more
5 info.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: I appreciate
7 that. And just so you know, like now that we have
8 redistricting, some of us have schools that we didn't
9 have before, so we're learning these now. So that's
10 something that, you know, if we can work hand-in-hand
11 with you on that, that would be great. Thank you so
12 much.

13 CHANCELLOR BANKS: When in doubt, call
14 Treyger.

15 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: This
16 is something, Council Member, we've allocated in this
17 capital plan-- this may be for the next hearing
18 coming up, Chair, but \$750 million dollars for
19 accessibility, and that's allowing us to make a lot
20 of progress as Christina has talked about, but
21 there's much more to do, so please let us know about
22 these situations.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you very
24 much.

25 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Second round,
3 Council Member Narcisse?

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Wanted to follow up
5 quickly on Council Member De La Rosa's question. In
6 the Preliminary Budget decreases funding in the
7 Office of Community Schools by 11.5. What is the
8 current staffing level at the Office of Community
9 Schools?

10 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: thank you for your
11 question, and I want to begin by saying that we
12 actually haven't reduced the support for community
13 schools. We actually have increased including the
14 fact that this year we have 100 more community
15 schools than what we previous had. The challenge, as
16 we know, which our chancellor has highlighted is that
17 all of the expansion for current community schools
18 has taken place through stimulus funding money,
19 positions.

20 CHANCELLOR BANKS: So, we've expanded by
21 over 100 this year. We currently have funding now
22 for 420 community schools, which is up from 317 in
23 Fiscal Year 2022. So, as you know, the community
24 school's expansion implemented is funded by the
25 stimulus money as was just said. Over 100 community

1 schools currently funded through the stimulus funding
2 which expires after Fiscal Year 24. That's the
3 challenge. So we strongly support the community
4 school model concept. So much of it is driven by the
5 available funding that we have.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: But I have one small
8 problem, though. When the PEP's scheduled to vote on
9 the remaining school contracts that have not yet been
10 registered, there are 68 schools that still don't
11 have their contract registered. How many of your
12 providers will be able to quickly bring these schools
13 online given there's only three months left until the
14 end of the Fiscal Year? So what is-- meanwhile, what
15 does the DOE plan to do to support the schools?

16 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: so, I can speak
17 specifically to what we're doing in the meantime, and
18 one of the things that we did in collaboration with
19 our Finance Department was that we released a summer
20 location so that all of those schools have funding
21 that was provided to them be a [inaudible] so that
22 they can begin to leverage some of the community
23 school practices to be embodied [sic]. I think part
24 of what we're navigating here is the challenge that
25 historically community schools were announced without

1 the schools being actually connected to a contract,
2 which is something that we're looking to so that in
3 the future we can have more efficient, more targeted
4 ways to do the contract, and you know, a lot of that
5 is the work that we're doing through our WMBE, the
6 work that Chief Apollen [sic] is doing, the work that
7 Emma and their team are doing. But in the meantime,
8 those schools do have access to funding through the
9 same that was allocated to them. And I do agree the
10 execution and completion of the contract is something
11 that I know this Administration and that I'm looking
12 to think in a more thoughtful and comprehensive way
13 because the reality is that a lot of those schools
14 were announced without having a contract mechanism to
15 actually allow them to physically spend dollars as a
16 community school.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And we plan on
19 fixing that. There was also a one-year extension to
20 restore \$1.16 million dollar cuts to 52 community
21 schools. What is the long-term goal to fund these
22 community schools sustainably? Those schools clearly
23 need resources, and we know how well community
24 schools work. So how does the DOE plan to-- New York
25 City Public Schools plan to work with schools to

1
2 determine ongoing need in the second year of this
3 restoration?

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, we're-- that's
5 an open question. That's one that we're going to
6 have to work together with this Council to do. You
7 know, the expansion was fine. We had plenty of
8 stimulus dollars flowing, but that's going to be the
9 issue for us on a number of fronts. As stimulus
10 dollars wind down, how do we ensure with a limited
11 pot of dollars that all these programs that we love
12 and support are going to actually remain? We're
13 going to have to work with you around that in the
14 negotiation process with the city to ensure this
15 sustainability. I can't tell you definitively right
16 now that I know to tell you all these things are
17 going to be funded, because wherever that funding
18 would happen for that, it's going to come from
19 someplace else, and those are the issues that we
20 face. They're going to be tough choices that we have
21 to make. Why does the Office of Community Schools in
22 DCP continually understaff? You have one-time full--
23 you have one-time-- understaffed with only one full-
24 time director and who's been interim for months. So,
25 please address that.

1
2 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: I'm going to go
3 back again and say that I wouldn't say for the record
4 that we're understaffed. I do know that the office
5 has gone through transition, including myself who I'm
6 relatively new for the role. So I think it has been
7 key for the Chancellor and for the Administration to
8 find dedicated staff, people who have a vision who
9 believe in this work, but also people who have both
10 the content knowledge of understanding community
11 school and strategy and that can help to navigate
12 some of the challenges that we're discussing here
13 like the physical challenge. I can't speak directly
14 about the staffing at DCP. That's something that my
15 colleagues can share more, but I know that this
16 office and this work, as the Chancellor has
17 mentioned, is something that's critical to him, to
18 his administration and to ensure the continuity of
19 this work with your support, given the fact that so
20 much of the expansion or all of the expansion to be
21 clear, has been done through stimulus funding.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: so what's the
23 headcount for the office right now?

24 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: I can provide you
25 the total headcount across the board, I don't have

1 that immediately with me. That's something that you-

2 -

3
4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] We'll get
5 that to you.

6 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: are requesting, we
7 can definitely get that to you.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: so you don't have
9 the headcount now. In the previous year, what was
10 the headcount?

11 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I don't know. We can
12 get-- we can find that out, too. We can find out
13 before we leave today. We'll get it for you.

14 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: We can certainly
15 double-check on that and can get that information,
16 the total headcount, yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Alright.

18 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: And just to be
19 clear, just to give you an example. In the past
20 Office of Community School was also aligned with
21 Office of Students in Temporary Housing. So as an
22 example, for the Office of Students in Temporary
23 Housing, we just added 100 more people last year now.
24 But we'll get the numbers for you.

25

1
2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, we should get
3 them before we leave here today. That should be easy
4 to get, last year and this year.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, thank you.
6 Next person, Council Member Lee?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hi, Good mor--
8 afternoon, morning, Chancellor. Thank you so much,
9 Chair Joseph as well as our Speaker. So, just really
10 quickly wanted to dive into a little bit more about
11 the mental health professionals that are located in
12 the schools. So, I believe there's what, over 1,800
13 public schools in New York City if I'm not mistaken?
14 And so out of those schools, do you know how many of
15 them actually have mental health professionals or
16 social workers located in the schools? And I know
17 that you just mentioned now that it's up to the
18 principals, and so for those especially who want it,
19 do you know how many still do not have that? Because
20 I think I said it at last-- one of the previous
21 hearings and it wasn't sure. And is there a timeline
22 to get those numbers up?

23 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: Thank you for your
24 question. What I can say is that we have over 5,000
25 social workers and school counselors in our public

1
2 school system servicing school communities. As the
3 Chancellor has mentioned, prioritizing wellness as a
4 means to academic success is a priority for him, and
5 as a result of that every school has either access to
6 a social worker, to a school counselor, or to a
7 community health center that provides mental health
8 supports.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, so you guys--
10 that was actually going to be my next question. So
11 do you have partnerships with some of the local CBOs
12 that have the outpatient clinics and the Article 31s,
13 and can they collocate and have satellite offices in
14 the schools, or are there regulations against it, or
15 is that okay?

16 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: We actually do
17 that.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, good.

19 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: So, that's a great
20 question. So, 328 mental health clinics in our
21 school system serve approximately 800 schools.
22 That's because of campuses where you have multiple
23 school communities. So that's something that we
24 currently do, but not only something that we're
25 looking to stay there, it's something where we're

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2 working with DOHMH, with our partners at the State to
3 look for viable opportunities to continue to expand
4 mental health clinics in addition to other ongoing
5 work that we have such as the mental health continuum
6 that also allows to have access to mental health
7 clinics within the community. So, yes, that's
8 something that we currently do.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Okay, and I'm
10 assuming those mental health professionals that are
11 coming from the clinics, they're not-- are they
12 subcontracted through DOE or is that separate where
13 they're going through their insurance system and
14 it's-- because I would imagine that would also be a
15 cost savings to DOE then if they have partnerships
16 with those clinics.

17 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: There's a
18 reimbursement component to it. I wouldn't know all
19 of the details, because that's actually handled more
20 closely by DOHMH, but if you want more details on it,
21 I-- we can certainly look into providing more
22 information about cost savings and reimbursements.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, no, yeah, just
24 in terms of who pays for the actual professionals. If
25

1
2 it's through DOE or if it's through DOHMH. I was
3 just wondering where the funding comes from for that.

4 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: For the clinics,
5 we are not paying for those directly--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: [interposing] Okay.

7 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: out of our budget,
8 but Emma, I don't know if you have anything else that
9 you would like to add here.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Okay. And then
11 just really quickly going back to the Carter cases,
12 which I know a few of us have brought up. But, you
13 know, it seems like for a lot of the families that--
14 so I guess my question is are there ways to-- and I
15 know that this requires cultural organizational
16 shifts and mindsets, right? But is there a way to
17 shift those dollars like you said back into the
18 school system, and is there a way to sort of identify
19 and evaluate and track as the students' progress,
20 right? So, in other words, some of them may progress
21 and not need those services anymore, and others may
22 need it continuously throughout their time in the
23 education system. So is there a way to have those
24 dollars go back into the public schools? And also,
25 the reason why I bring this up is because there's a

1
2 lot of low-income families that can't afford to pay
3 for those private dollars and education until the,
4 you know, verdict is given about, you know, whether
5 they're going to get reimbursed, because it is a
6 reimbursement-based system. So are there ways to--
7 so how do we help support those families that can't
8 afford to put their kids in the private schools and
9 get that service when they should be getting it in
10 the public schools?

11 CHRISTINA FOTI: Thank you, Council
12 Member. And I appreciate always your attention to
13 our special education students and your support. We
14 really feel it and it makes a big difference. A few
15 things, you know, one thing to note is that the
16 skyrocketed numbers that we are talking about has
17 happened over-- since 2014. But of those cases, just
18 for background, only about-- and this number should
19 be zero, but of our over 180,000 students with IEPs
20 that we're serving, about 1,100 file due process
21 complaints, and most of those that are filed from the
22 public schools are in fact resolved within our public
23 schools. The vast majority of those other cases
24 that-- the thousands of cases that we were talking
25 about earlier, are students that are not public

1 schools students. They never-- we didn't fail them.
2 They didn't-- they never came to us in most
3 instances. And so I just want to be clear that it's
4 not-- these are not students that have left us to go-
5 - in most instances. I'm speaking in generalities.
6 But to your point about equity and how do we provide
7 equitable programs for our students with IEPs in our
8 public school system, you know, that is why we have
9 made the investments we've made in our programs that
10 we know are working. Our students attending our ASD
11 Nest [sic] programs, our Horizon programs have four-
12 year graduation rates of about 95 percent, and these
13 are high school programs, Council Member Lee, that
14 are really benefitting our students and that really
15 do offer competitive alternatives, and there are more
16 than just those programs. Those just tend to be our
17 popular programs that people know about. But it's
18 also why we're investing in things like building 70
19 additional sensory gyms to provide additional related
20 services, high-quality services that I don't know of
21 any other district that is offering that level of
22 support. And again, this is all number one, an
23 effort to provide our children and families with
24 high-quality and free supports, but it also is part
25

1
2 of our strategy to attract and retain students. We
3 want to be providing these services and provide
4 families with things like assistive technology
5 support while they wait for their child to receive
6 their therapies. But all of these in terms of
7 innovation and investment, these are our attempts to
8 really build high-quality programs that serve
9 students in an equitable and valuable way.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Thank you so much.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
12 Member Lee. Council Member Krishnan?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you so
14 much, Speaker Adams and Chair Joseph, for today's
15 hearing. Thank you all so much for your testimony.
16 Chancellor, good to see you.

17 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Good to see you, too.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: I have a few
19 questions, but first, I just want to start by-- and I
20 know I've been a broken record at every Education
21 hearing, but I do want to emphasize again, the DOE's
22 approach to 3K, the scaling back of 3K is very, very
23 concerning. We know-- I'm a parent of someone who
24 has just gone through 3K myself. We know the
25 foundational benefits of the 3K, and my concern is

1
2 rather than explore different methods of outreach to
3 ensure-- because there's so many families. We all
4 know it. You know, so many especially working
5 parents depend on 3K. It just logically doesn't seem
6 possible that the vacancies cannot be filled given
7 the number of working New Yorkers in the City that
8 depend on childcare to go to work. So what I'm
9 concerned by is the approach to scaling back the
10 program that we know is critical where New York
11 should be a leader on this really before exploring
12 every method possible to do outreach in communities,
13 to work with CBOs and partner with them to fill those
14 seats. So I just wanted to make that point as-- I've
15 made it many times before, but you know, it's a very,
16 very big concern that I have. My next question is
17 on-- about the hold harmless issue that we've spoken
18 about that Speaker Adams identified as well. And I
19 just want to get a clear answer for the record.
20 Knowing the DOE's efforts last year and this year, is
21 it the Department's intention to hold schools fully
22 harmless that are seeing a reduction in federal aid?

23 CHANCELLOR BANKS: No.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you.

25 And--

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2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] We said
3 earlier today, our intention is to hold them
4 harmless, very significant percentage, but it will
5 not be 100 percent. I can't be more clear than that.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Sure. No, and
7 I-- that clarity is important. That's something
8 that-- and you've heard from my colleagues and myself
9 too that we're very concerned about because schools
10 depend and rely on this funding, understanding that
11 there was stimulus aid infusion. The fact of the
12 matter is there's reliance built up by these schools
13 over time. They've invested in programs. We know
14 our schools need more funding anyway. So, to not
15 have a full hold harmless provision is deeply
16 problematic and creates major issues for the school
17 as well. But--

18 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] Let me
19 just say, we want to work very closely with you as
20 partners. You all are in negotiation season right
21 now, and so at the end of the day, the budget that we
22 ultimately get at New York City Public Schools will
23 be a budget that you negotiate, and so you make it
24 happen, and we're going to-- I'm going to implement
25 the budget that I'm given. I'm just sharing with you

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2 what our reasonable projections are on what we think
3 would happen, but this is-- this is a process that
4 you all are engaged in, and you play a critical role
5 in that process.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Agreed. And on
7 that point about projections, what do you project the
8 total amount of schools galaxy [sic] budgets to be
9 next year compared to this year?

10 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Thank
11 you for the question. We don't-- we covered this a
12 bit earlier, but we don't have a projection for that
13 yet. We are still working through our enrollment
14 projections, and as we're discussing our school
15 budgets are based on enrollment, and that process is
16 still yet to be finalized. Schools will get-- the
17 projections themselves school by school is yet to be
18 finalized. Schools will get their budgets in in late
19 May, early June, so that's when we'll have a sense of
20 the whole in terms of the initial budget.

21 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Let me say this, the
22 enrollment decline has lessened this year. Dan,
23 let's talk a little bit about that-- which we think
24 is ultimately going to help with respect to budget.

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2 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yeah,
3 we should have fewer schools as Emma says. We don't
4 have the projection yet. We'll get that to you, but
5 the decline has slowed in our projections. We hope
6 that it's reversed.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: And we we've
8 obviously talked a bit about the class size mandates
9 and the importance of DOE's compliance with the law.
10 so just given the Preliminary Budget that's been
11 proposed, given the testimony in prior hearings as
12 well where you all recognize the class size mandate
13 that we have and the importance of complying with it,
14 I'm just not able to see-- it seems to me class sizes
15 will increase in contravention [sic] of the mandate
16 if there is scale back-- first, with the Preliminary
17 Budget in place, and if funds aren't being put into
18 schools. So I'm just trying to understand how you
19 all will seek to address that gap between what the
20 mandate is and what it will look like as class sizes
21 begin to increase with the Preliminary Budget we're
22 looking at.

23 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, no, you're
24 right. Let's talk a little bit more about that,
25 because this class size law as a mandate is going to

1
2 present a real challenge. The issue for us is that
3 we've said earlier that over the next two years, it
4 won't be a major challenge. We'll be fine. For the
5 next two years, we will be fine. Where we're going
6 to need to work together with you all is by the time
7 we're at years three through five. That's where the
8 challenge is going to be.

9 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: And
10 just quickly, Council Member Krishnan, you know, the
11 good news is-- you're right, school budgets and class
12 size definitely have a relationship. The good news
13 is as a result of your support and advocacy, your
14 colleagues on the Council, 100 percent fully funding
15 FSF has already resulted in class sizes being
16 decreased. So we're at about 24.2 overall average
17 class size this year. That's compared to 26.1
18 average before the pandemic. So, just to say, some
19 progress really has been made already, but these are
20 going to be the trade-offs the Chancellor's talking
21 about. How do you meet that statutory mandate at the
22 same time as, you know, preserving programming.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: But then we're
24 also seeing, if I understand it correctly, a
25 reduction in the capital plan, too. I think you

1 testified earlier, Mr. Weisberg, the capital costs
2 are going to increase as well for class size. Is
3 that correct?
4

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, absolutely.

6 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:

7 Capital costs are, you know, absolutely going to
8 increase. The Chancellor painted the picture of an
9 elementary school that might have several classes
10 that are 21, 22, 23, and no further class space. In
11 that case, what the law would indicate is you'd have
12 to build an annex or something like that. So think
13 about a world where you're building annexes all over
14 the City at a very high cost, and what does that mean
15 in terms of capital dollars that might not be
16 available for things like building upgrades.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: I'm just not
18 seeing, and I think it's a [inaudible] that, you
19 know, the Administration has to really address.
20 There is a disconnect between all of these cost
21 reductions from the capital side, the expense side
22 and the class size mandate. And so I'm just not--
23 that's a tension that continues and I think we have
24 to address that, because the legal obligation is
25

1
2 clear, but all of these proposals, I don't know how
3 you reconcile that without legal obligation.

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: No, and that's why I
5 think we have to work together. That's-- we
6 absolutely have to work together, because when you
7 have these mandates from the state that you must do
8 this, and yet, we still want to continue to say we
9 want to have restorative justice, we want to have our
10 community schools, we want to have our afterschool
11 programs, we want to make sure every school has the
12 libraries, we want the arts, we want the music, we
13 want all of those things-- we are faced with very
14 difficult choices, and that's why I'm saying there's
15 going to be a process of negotiation around all of--
16 around all of these things. As the Chancellor, how
17 could I as Chancellor ever say that I don't want to
18 see smaller class size? Of course, I want to see
19 smaller class sizes. But I do know when they're a
20 mandate as they now are, when you're a principal of a
21 school and you've got 21 kids in the second grade,
22 and the mandate says 20, you are now-- we are now
23 legally mandated to hire another teacher regardless
24 of whether that principal or that teacher said we're
25 fine. No, no, it's not up to you. It's the law.

1
2 and when you have to-- and our projection is that's
3 going to mean about 9,000 more teachers into the
4 system, many of which are going to be going into the
5 wealthier districts in the City, because that's where
6 the overcrowding primarily is. And so-- and the
7 capital costs to build out new facilities, new
8 classrooms, are going to go to the wealthier
9 districts in the City. This is an equity as well,
10 but it's one in which our hands are going to be tied.
11 So we need to be grappling together. It's not just
12 what is New York City public schools, what's the
13 Chancellor's plan? It's all of us I think are going
14 to have to wrap our arms around. The good thing is
15 that we do have some time to figure it out, and I
16 welcome an opportunity to engage with nay of you
17 around any of these challenges.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you. And
19 this is my final two questions if the Chair will
20 permit, very brief. Is one, you know,-- we talked
21 before and you testified earlier about the
22 collocation of charter schools in public schools and
23 how, you know, New York City is the only district in
24 the state and the country obligated for public
25 schools to provide space to charter schools, which to

1
2 me is just absurd on its face, because I think we
3 need to be doing so much more to support our public
4 schools and giving this space away. So, you
5 mentioned, testified before, that it's a state law.
6 What are DOE's plans, your plans Chancellor, the
7 Mayor's plans to advocate on the state level to make
8 any efforts in Albany this coming budget season and
9 going forward to change that? Because to collocate
10 charters with public schools fundamentally undermines
11 public schools that are already so overcrowded, too.

12 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I think that's a--
13 this is place and you all are legislators, right?
14 And so, you know, I stand with you. It is a state
15 law that your colleagues in the state government made
16 that a law. I have to follow the law in our schools
17 no matter what my position happens to be, and so I'm
18 going to do that, but I do know the challenge that it
19 does present, and for me, I'm not an anti-charter
20 person at all. I think there's some phenomenal work
21 that our charters have been doing. What I have stood
22 up to say to the charter sector is that I want us to
23 work together as partners to share best practices,
24 which doesn't mean necessarily expanding brick and
25 mortar on a regular basis, but what are the lessons

1
2 learned? What are the charters that have gotten
3 really great results for their kids? How can we
4 share some of those lessons across our schools so
5 that we can expand on the impact of the work, but not
6 necessarily say we're going to continue to build out
7 more and more schools? That's what I'm interested
8 in, I think, to really expand on the overall impact
9 of some of the Charter work that has really been
10 very, very impactful. But as it relates to the law,
11 these are your colleagues in state government, and
12 you know, I certainly urge you to be in conversation
13 with them.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Well, I hope
15 that we can join together in that advocacy when you
16 all go to Albany and are testifying at the hearings,
17 too. It's certainly-- we in the Council have been
18 very vocal, a number of us about the issues, and I do
19 hope the Administration will join our efforts. My
20 final question is-- I think you all know, too,
21 [inaudible] should I keep beating the drum on this.
22 Representing proudly the most diverse district in the
23 world in Jackson Heights and Elmhurst-- I may be
24 biased, but I do think so. And the best food, too.

25

1
2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: You've never invited
3 me though for any of the food.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: But, you know,
5 my-- I think bilingual education is such a crucial
6 part about education, and we've seen that even more
7 and more so with the asylum-seekers coming here as
8 well and students coming into our schools, and I'd
9 like to know what the Department's plans are to
10 really focus on expanding bilingual education.
11 Frankly, I think we should have it throughout our
12 schools. I'm a big, big proponent of it and very
13 vocal about it, and it-- we're seeing how crucial it
14 is for education, especially for immigrant students
15 and children immigrants coming here too, so--

16 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing]
17 Absolutely.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: What are the
19 Department's plan in that area to invest in bilingual
20 education?

21 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah. First of all, I
22 want to have my Chief of Staff, Melissa Ramos, speak
23 to this. Bilingualism is a superpower, and that is--
24 that is actually the word from our Secretary of
25 Education Cardona who I'm going to be leaving here

1
2 shortly to meet with. It is something that, again,
3 we want to be fully locked in. The demographics of
4 our city are changing rapidly and they're very
5 different than what they were 10 years ago, and it
6 will continue to change. In fact, for those who
7 don't know, before I turn to Melissa, out of New York
8 City public schools, 41 percent of our students are
9 Spanish-speaking. And we talk about black in New
10 York City public schools, 24 percent. People
11 sometimes are surprised to hear that number. They
12 thought it was much higher than that. The Asian
13 population in our public schools, 17 percent and
14 climbing. Latino's 41 and climbing. African-
15 American black 24 percent and dropping. White 15
16 percent and dropping. This is a very different New
17 York City that we're watching unfold before our eyes
18 every single day. Bilingualism is critically
19 important for any of our students to be able to
20 thrive. Melissa, just talk a little bit about what
21 we're talking about what we're talking about, some of
22 the work we're trying to engage in.

23 MELISSA RAMOS: Council Member Krishnan,
24 it's a pleasure to meet you in person.

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Good to meet
3 you in person, and thank you for all your advocacy
4 and support on [inaudible]. We work together on
5 these issues in my district, and I appreciate it.

6 MELISSA RAMOS: Appreciate you as well.
7 And so to your point and even prior to the influx we
8 saw in asylum-seeking students, we prioritize as an
9 Administration bilingual education. And so
10 currently, there are 557 bilingual education programs
11 across 375 of New York City public schools, and those
12 programs are in 12 different languages. We are
13 currently on track to open additional schools this
14 year, and so we are looking at opening nine new
15 bilingual education programs in the fall. As a
16 result of working closely with the superintendents,
17 there was need to engage our superintendents and our
18 principals around the desire to open bilingual
19 programs. Just putting on principal hat shortly,
20 sometimes we will not post vacancies or we will not
21 convey that there is an interest for a bilingual
22 program because there is-- everybody knows that it is
23 very hard to recruit and retain teachers, which is
24 also something that we're working on parallel to this
25 plan. And so now that we've engaged our

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2 superintendents and principals and we know the
3 interest and the need, combining that with the influx
4 of asylum-seeking students, we are on-track to open
5 36 new bilingual education programs in fall of 2023,
6 and we continue to work with superintendents and
7 principals to identify where we can expand more of
8 those programs, and making sure that we're launching
9 them as quickly as possible.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you, and
11 thank you, Chair.

12 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Before I
14 pass it on to Council Member [inaudible] I have one
15 quick question. Why is DOE cutting really effective
16 programs that work for students, for example,
17 community schools, affinity schools, MSQI, and
18 learning to work programs? Take your time to explain
19 each one of them, please.

20 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I think the challenge
21 for us again always just fiscal challenges. We're
22 not trying to cut programs that work, but we are
23 trying to make sure that we are ultimately meeting
24 the needs of all of our kids. So where you may see
25 something that is a cut in one particular place, that

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2 may be supported in another one. So, all of these are
3 just meant to be an opening opportunity for us to
4 talk about these programs. We've been doing our own
5 deep dive and analysis of some of these programs, and
6 figuring out which ones work, which ones don't work,
7 and what we can ultimately afford to do. I know
8 there are a number of Council Members who believe
9 very much in MSQI.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yep.

11 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I think-- I support it
12 as well. I think it it's a good program. The
13 challenges for me is that if I had unlimited dollars,
14 it wouldn't even be on the table, it'd be fine. I'm
15 also trying to find dollars to ensure that kids can
16 read by third grade. I hear very few members raise
17 that as an issue for me. So they-- I get-- I get
18 issues raised about lots of other programs. Very
19 little actually around the fact that our children are
20 not reading at proficiency level. Forty-nine
21 percent, on 49 percent of all of our kids across the
22 entire New York City school system are on grade
23 level. Think about that. Sixty-five percent are
24 black and brown children are not on grade level. But
25 I get asked about MSQI. I get asked about other

1 kinds of programs, which are all good programs. I'm
2 not knocking any of them, but I've been asked to be
3 the Chancellor by this Mayor who has said literacy is
4 fundamental. We have to make sure that our kids who
5 have dyslexia are seen and we mitigate for that. So
6 that may mean sometimes there's certain other
7 programs that people are really tied to that we don't
8 have the funding to do all of it. If I did, I would
9 support and fund every one of these programs. But
10 there's sometimes where you have to establish what
11 are the priorities. And we're saying, Early
12 Childhood is a priority, we got to make sure we're
13 doing that. We've got to make sure that we send
14 career pathways are really important work, that kids
15 know why they got go school in the first place.
16 Parents say to me all the time when I'm at these
17 various town halls and I even mention career and
18 technical education, ensuring that kids who are not
19 going to go to college are going to get the skills
20 and the credentials that they need, they almost give
21 a standing ovation. They say, "We've been saying
22 that for years." But all of these programs cost
23 money, and I've got to figure out-- so when I shift
24 dollars from one programs, it doesn't mean I don't--
25

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2 I think the program is worthless. It's because I'm
3 recognizing that everything can't be a priority. You
4 can't fund everything, and I'm doing the best that I
5 can to try to put the dollars in place where I think
6 they will have the greatest impact.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That was a great
8 summary, but in terms of programming, MSQI, why is it
9 on the chopping block? It's only funded-- MSQI is an
10 excellent program in terms of bidding of students and
11 debates. The data speaks for itself.

12 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.
13 What do you have on MSQI?

14 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: So, I
15 think I would say on MSQI [inaudible]. I think on
16 MSQI in particular, and I don't think we have our
17 Deputy Chancellor here, but I think she would say a
18 lot of the literacy work we are moving forward, and
19 MSQI has been folded into that--

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing]
21 Correct.

22 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: and is
23 being built off of that. So that's not going away as
24 the Chancellor's been indicating. We're looking very
25 closely at making some substantial moves around the

1 literacy work and just modeling it in a way that is
2 evidence-based and most likely to have an impact for
3 kids. So that's what I would say about MSQI in
4 particular. On some of the others, I would say
5 they're in the--

6
7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing]
8 Affinity Schools?

9 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Right,
10 and so they're in this category of--

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] They're
12 all tied to literacy. MSQI is tied to literacy, and
13 it's tied to writing. If you can't read, you cannot
14 write.

15 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Chair Joseph, I would
16 just humbly say this to you as well. I meet with so
17 many groups, the Affinity groups, I meet with
18 advocacy groups, and everybody says the same thing to
19 me. We know you're facing very tough fiscal times,
20 but please don't cut my program. All these programs
21 are good programs, every one of them, but if we
22 funded every one of them, we would not-- there's not
23 enough money in the budget to fund all of them. But
24 again, this is-- we're in a process now, and if MSQI
25 is something that this Council decides we want to

1
2 draw a line in the sand, it must be in the budget, it
3 will be in the budget. I'm just offering up to you
4 what we see as our vision for how to ensure a level
5 of success for our kids. This is not an anti-MSQI or
6 any particular initiative, but if we don't have the
7 funding to ensure that our kids can read by third
8 grade-- MSQI is a middle school initiative. If our
9 kids cannot read by the third grade, we're spending
10 dollars on things trying to play catch-up. I'm
11 trying to get in front of the curve, and that's where
12 I see the priority of dollars that have to be spent,
13 but they're not a knock against any particular
14 initiative or program.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I will circle back
16 to you.

17 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Sure.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Council Member
19 Restler.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so
21 much, Chair Joseph and Speaker Adams, for your
22 leadership. It's good to see you, Chancellor and
23 team.

24 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Good to see you.
25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Mercedes
3 mentioned that Mark is in her district. Dan is in
4 mine, so I'll be nice to Dan today. Have
5 constituents before all else. But Chancellor, you
6 noted that schools will not be held harmless to
7 fluctuations in enrollment in--

8 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] No, not
9 100 percent.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: so, what are
11 you-- last year-- 70 percent of schools lost about
12 half a billion dollars in funding in aggregate. What
13 are you planning for in your budget planning docs for
14 next year at this time?

15 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Yes,
16 thank you very much for the question. So, we're not
17 yet, because it will be in part based on enrollment
18 as Dan said. Thank you, Dan for that--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]
20 There's no preliminary planning documents? There's
21 no-- in the Preliminary Budget, you have no
22 intention, no--

23 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA:
24 [interposing] We don't have our school budget numbers
25 set yet. We have said--

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] You
3 do have preliminary estimates, though, on enrollment
4 at this time. You do.

5 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Our
6 enrollment estimates are worked through our
7 principals and our superintendents before we consider
8 them, and that's the process that is going on now.
9 We want to make sure they're in input. They know
10 their communities best. They have an understanding
11 of what their schools will look like.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I appreciate
13 there's a process, but you have preliminary estimates
14 on enrollment at this time. You do have-- and I can't
15 imagine that you don't have preliminary estimates on--
16 - what declines you're planning to impose to school
17 budgets.

18 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: So--

19 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:
20 [interposing] Council Member, good to see you, sir.
21 Just to jump in here to clarify, just to make sure
22 we're all working of the same facts. You know, we
23 have an estimate for this year. For next year, we
24 don't have school by school estimates as yet.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay, you will
3 have final estimates in a couple months. You do
4 preliminary estimates at this time. So, you're not
5 prepared to share any information with the Council
6 about what reductions in school funding you're going
7 to impose next year? No information whatsoever?

8 CHANCELLOR BANKS: No, those-- that's a
9 process that we're engaged in right now. So as we
10 sit here today, we don't have numbers.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I just want to
12 say, it would be indefensible, unconscionable,
13 impossible for a City Council to consider a budget
14 that doesn't understand the impacts that it's going
15 to have on our neighborhood schools, our most
16 cherished institutions. And if you're unwilling to
17 provide that information until June 1st, then you're
18 giving very little time for us to try to fill those
19 gaps and provide support to our schools. What
20 happened last year where we got 11.5 hour information
21 on cuts was unacceptable, and we need to communicate
22 and coordinate better to have a better outcome in the
23 budget, but if you're not committing to provide any--
24 you're not willing to provide any information at this
25 time, and you're telling us that it's going to be

1
2 months longer before you provide any information. It
3 feels like you're setting up for a very tense budget
4 fight.

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, we don't have
6 those-- we don't have that information now, Council
7 Member, but I will tell you, what I am committed to.
8 I will work very closely with you as these dollars--
9 as we get that information, the moment that we have
10 it. But we don't have those projections right now.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And you're
12 anticipating the end of May or June is when you'll be
13 sharing information with us.

14 CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's what I want to
15 figure out.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: MY understanding
17 is that preliminary estimates on school by school
18 enrollment have already--

19 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] Might be
20 sooner than that.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: been developed,
22 not final.

23 CHANCELLOR BANKS: It may be sooner.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But preliminary
25 estimates on school by school enrollment have been

1 developed. They're just not finalized. So with the
2 preliminary estimates, you could provide us with
3 insight and information on what you're anticipating
4 that are not yet final so we could see where this is
5 going, but I'm disappointed you're choosing not to do
6 that.

8 CHANCELLOR BANKS: NO, no, we're not
9 choosing not to do that. I will tell you, any
10 information that we do have, we can certainly sit
11 down and share it with you, but the numbers that
12 you're talking about we do not have right now. I'm
13 not saying it's going to be months from now, but as
14 soon as we have it, we will be willing to share with
15 you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: The only--

17 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] We're
18 not hiding anything.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: The only dates
20 we've heard from your colleagues and yourself up here
21 today are late May, early June, which is very close
22 to the end of the budget process. I do believe, as I
23 said, there are preliminary estimates on school by
24 school enrollment that you've already developed at
25 this time. It would be helpful for us to understand

1
2 that and the implications on what school by school
3 funding reductions we will see. I hope that you'll
4 provide-- be more forthcoming in providing
5 information as possible.

6 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Absolutely, we'll be
7 as--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] I'm
9 tight on time.

10 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We'll be very
11 forthcoming, absolutely.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I just want to
13 shift gears. I was scrolling through Instagram a few
14 weeks ago on a Friday night-- best place to get
15 information, and I saw a 3K-- an Early Education
16 party for outreach workers that had been disbanded
17 from the Early Education Enrollment Team, and there
18 were former city officials that were there with them.
19 The 30-odd folks who were disbanded from the Pre-K
20 and 3K outreach team are no longer doing enrollment--
21 outreach and enrollment work. I appreciate that the
22 ethos of enrollment is informing their jobs, but they
23 are no longer doing outreach and enrollment work, and
24 to me, the data is what is so clear. Only 49 percent
25 of extended-day, extended-year seats for 3K are

1 filled today. If we were doing effective outreach,
2 then the most sought-after seats in the City of New
3 York that every family that I ever speak to and that
4 all of my colleagues speak to are clamoring for,
5 those seats would be filled. And so I just-- please
6 explain to us why would you choose to disband the
7 Early Childhood Education Outreach Teams?
8

9 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: We
10 haven't disbanded anything. The proof is in the
11 pudding, Council Member. So we've gotten more
12 applications for 3K than ever. Then, so with all due
13 respect to whoever former employees, former officials
14 were at a party, they--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] You
16 weren't invited?

17 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: didn't
18 produce the results that we're producing right now.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Well, I did I
20 see a modest--

21 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:
22 [interposing] 42,000--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]
24 increase to 42,000 applications--
25

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2 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:

3 [interposing] 42,000 applications.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: that's right.

5 So I think--

6 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:

7 [interposing] The problem is, if I could just say--

8 so one possibility is there's not enough outreach

9 being done, and I take that as a possibility. We

10 want to work with all of you to try to do the best

11 outreach we can. We have 55,000 seats. Somebody

12 decided to build 55,000 seats without any reference

13 to what the demand was. That's how you get into this

14 situation. We're going to do our level best to fill

15 every one of them, extended-day, school day, whatever

16 it is, but if we have the highest application rate on

17 record, and it's not even getting close to the

18 capacity we built--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] I

20 just have to--

21 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: that's

22 a problem.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Deputy

24 Chancellor, with all due respect, we are 30 percent

25 down on UPK enrollment from the peak in the program.

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2 To say that we have the highest number on record is
3 somewhere between disingenuous and outright wrong.

4 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:

5 Talking about 3K, 3K.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And for 3K we're
7 up by 2,000 applications this year, but we have far
8 more three year olds in New York City than we do have
9 seats that you all are planning to fill. So there's-
10 - I know you're doing a study now with Accenture.
11 I'm a little confused at what you all are trying to
12 achieve there, but there are 42,000. Are we
13 guaranteeing that there's going to be 42,000 slots
14 for three year olds in New York City next year?

15 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Oh,
16 there's 55,000 slots. Now, they're geographically
17 not all in the right places, so we may-- we're going
18 to have places that have waiting lists. The
19 Accenture work is about projecting what the actual
20 demand is. So not just picking at random a number of
21 seats and then building to that, but figuring out how
22 many seats we need of different types in different
23 neighborhoods, and we will share that with you when
24 we have it.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I just-- I feel
3 that we are failing at outreach, and if we are
4 failing at outreach and not engaging the immigrant
5 families, the marginalized communities, and bringing
6 them in to connect to the 3K program, to the UPK
7 program, we will continue to not achieve the maximum
8 enrollment that we need. Before Chair Joseph kicks
9 me off--

10 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] Certainly
11 willing to work with you around your ideas around
12 what we could be doing a better job in terms of
13 outreach, absolutely. We can work together on that.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I would love
15 that.

16 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: The last
18 question I have before Chair Joseph kicks me off.
19 There's some discrepancy in what's been reported. Is
20 it a \$284 million dollars cut or a \$568 million
21 dollar cut to 3K in FY24? Just a one-- if that's
22 okay, just because I know I'm in trouble on time.

23 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: It's
24 not a cut. It's continuation of current funding
25

1
2 level. It was-- there was a planned increase of \$284
3 million, that's \$284 million, and that is what is--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] Not
5 being funded.

6 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: been
7 reduced. Yes, but it was an increase, not a cut.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And got it. And
9 the three-year number on 3K funding that you're no
10 longer planning to fund is an aggregate?

11 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: The
12 two-year number is actually where that \$568 comes
13 from. The three-year number--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] My
15 understanding as well.

16 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: I don't
17 have in front of me.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: My understanding
19 was that there was some additional funding that was
20 put into the budget in a different funding stream,
21 but that it was \$284 over the next three years each
22 year for three years. So we're looking at close to
23 900 million dollars in funding that we are not-- that
24 had been allocated that is no longer going to be
25 going to 3K.

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2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Not if it's not
3 necessary for the seats that we're trying to fill.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: If we don't do
5 the outreach, then we're not going to fill the seats.
6 So thank you very much.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
8 Member Restler. I'd like to acknowledge Council
9 Member Sanchez, Council Member Brewer, Council Member
10 Hanif, and Council Member Gennaro. I just wanted to
11 piggyback a little bit about the programs that we
12 talked about earlier. Those programs that we talked
13 about and when you referenced our visit to Rikers
14 Island, these are the types of programs that keeps
15 kids in schools. So that's why these investments are
16 important. We are always going to circle back to
17 literacy. It is the center of everything, we
18 understand that, but when you have programs like
19 Affinity School, MSQI, Community-- they keep students
20 in schools. The data matches. Data drives our
21 instruction. Data drive our policies as a Council
22 Member, for me, so I know the data's there to support
23 that.

24 CHANCELLOR BANKS: No, no, I'm not-- I'm
25 not disputing it, not at all. I've said to you, I

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2 come from the Affinity Schools. I was an Affinity
3 School principal for 11 years, so the argument
4 doesn't need to be made to be about the importance of
5 any of those programs, but what I will take exception
6 to is the fact that literacy has not been at the
7 center of everything that we believe in. Literacy is
8 very rarely talked about. I hear about lots of other
9 programs, but I don't hear about literacy. We should
10 be screaming from the mountain tops the fact that our
11 kids have not been taught how to read. And I'm
12 saying we're making that a major priority. I'm still
13 going to try to do everything we can to maintain all
14 these other great programs. I acknowledge, those are
15 great programs, absolutely. But if I only had a
16 dollar left, I'm going to use it to teach a kid how
17 to read.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you,
19 Chancellor Banks. I'd like to call on Council Member
20 Dubowitz.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Like \$38
22 billion dollars left, though. Don't just have a
23 dollar left. Good to see you. It was great to hear
24 you had a great performance yesterday.

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2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Oh, my gosh. The kids
3 from Ceilia Cruz [sp?] performed at Tweed yesterday
4 for our Women's History Month. They were amazing,
5 amazing, amazing.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: They're amazing
7 musicians, amazing students. I taught there for five
8 years. It was great to sneak away during my lunch
9 period to hear them rehearse once in a while.

10 CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's great.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I have a few
12 questions. First, about the Carter cases. You
13 expect to spend how much this year on Carter cases,
14 Carter Cooper cases? Is-- what's the-- just the
15 number you expect?

16 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: We
17 don't have a precise number, but it'll be over a
18 billion dollars.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: And that's
20 essentially money for families to go to private
21 school because the public school system couldn't
22 provide the Special Education services that were
23 required, is that-- that's essentially what we're
24 talking about, right?

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2 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Just
3 one clarification.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Yeah.

5 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: You're
6 absolutely right for part of it. Part of it is
7 actually as Christina Foti was explaining, part of it
8 is for services for kids who are nonpublic schools,
9 who were never on our schools, probably don't to
10 intend to ever be in our schools.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Those are-- so
12 are those-- they're called Educational Consultants on
13 the IBO website. Are those separate educational
14 consultants, or are those DOE employees?

15 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: We
16 have to get a little bit of a crosswalk between
17 what's on the IBO website. What I will say those
18 services, for example, set services that are provided
19 to kids in non-public schools, those are a
20 combination of our folks and contracted folks.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: It seems to me
22 that if you shifted those-- that half that you're
23 talking about, the services for students in private
24 schools, I imagine that you-- DOE does this a lot,
25 they use third-party contractors and private

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2 services. I imagine if you used DOE employees, you
3 have team members, you'd be saving money there. But
4 I'm also curious what steps are being taken to
5 actually provide the services for students with
6 disabilities within our public school system, both of
7 the moral obligation we have--

8 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing]

9 Absolutely.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: but also the
11 financial-- you know, the financial aspect of it.

12 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Let me say this to
13 you, Council Member. This is one of the first things
14 when I became Chancellor-- it blew me away. For over
15 a decade we had spent about \$300 million dollars on
16 these cases. Parents had to fight, you know, to get
17 these cases settled. But since about 2017 or so,
18 the-- maybe a little before that-- 2014, rather.
19 The-- we started to settle these cases and the
20 numbers skyrocketed from \$300 million to now where we
21 are, close to a billion dollars.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Yeah.

23 CHANCELLOR BANKS: And I asked the
24 questions, why aren't we providing the supports that
25 the families need?

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Well, that's
3 what I'm asking you.

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, that's what I--
5 and so I just want you to know that this is not going
6 unnoticed. We are-- why they had not been doing it
7 in the past, I can't speak to that, but I can tell
8 you what we are trying to do now, and we are
9 expanding. This is a classic example of--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: [interposing]
11 But like, so--

12 CHANCELLOR BANKS: fixing the plane while
13 we're flying.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I understand. I
15 don't mean to interrupt. I hope we get to talk more
16 about this.

17 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I only have a
19 minute and 50 seconds left.

20 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We're expanding the
21 services.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I'm asking for
23 example, like, are you looking at-- hey, you know, 50
24 percent of the students that settle Carter cases have
25 speech language delays, so let's hire a more speech

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2 language therapists and do intensive. Are you
3 looking at what ages most of these cases are
4 happening, and in investing in that age range?

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: This is what we're
6 doing right now, Council Member, absolutely.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So when do you
8 expect the cost to go down when you--

9 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] It's
10 going to take-- it's going to take some time. That's
11 part of the challenge that we have. It doesn't turn
12 around overnight, and so we've got to build this out.
13 We're expanding on different programs. ASD Nest
14 [sic], our Horizon programs, and then you got to have
15 a marketing strategy so the parents and families know
16 that you have these as well. So, all of these are
17 things that we're doing all at the same time. There
18 are like 25 things that are like priority at the same
19 moment in time for this agency to do in order to turn
20 stuff around.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: It's the
22 biggest agency, but this is a moral imperative, but
23 it's also a financial imperative, and I know you--
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2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] And we
3 are locked in on trying to do that. Just very
4 quickly.

5 CHRISTINA FOTI: I just wanted to say that
6 we are a looking by district, Council Member at what-
7 - why kids-- what services kids are pursuing outside
8 of the public school. So like you said, if it's
9 speech, if it's autism, and then not only that, but
10 what are the services that they're getting at the
11 private schools that we could be building, which is
12 why we've been investing in ABA. It's why we've been
13 investing in additional speech services through our
14 seed [sic] sites. But we are very much making sure
15 that our schools can provide competitive options.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I think it
17 would be beneficial to all of us if you shared that
18 data and gave us an update of what that looks like,
19 because this is for our most vulnerable students--

20 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing]
21 Absolutely.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: and it's a
23 financial imperative as well.

24 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yep.
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2 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I only have 13,
3 so I will leave with this. I've mentioned this at
4 hearings before. We've spoken about this. We have
5 high schoolers who can't read. We have middle
6 schoolers who can't read at grade level, and yet
7 there is no incentive for any school to provide
8 phonics education. And I was very fortunate to have
9 a principal my first year teaching high school who
10 didn't care about her QR. She didn't care about any
11 of that. She gave me a class of a handful of kids to
12 learn, and guess what, they learned to read. But
13 most principals aren't near retirement and haven't
14 been teaching for 30 years and just like don't care
15 what the superintendent says. Most principals will
16 work based on incentives, and if they're not
17 incentivized to teach literacy, teach reading,
18 they're not going to do it, and unless our-- unless
19 schools can get credit and students can get credit
20 for learning literacy, they're just going to be--
21 we're just going to continue the cycle of not
22 learning how to read and being expected to pass at
23 English Regents.

24 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Right. Well, listen,
25 you've struck at the core of everything that we are

1
2 trying to be focused on and you are very fortunate to
3 be in that kind of a school. We're going to be
4 working very closely with our schools with a very new
5 approach for teaching kids how to read. We're not
6 going to leave this open to principal by principal.
7 The system can do better, and it will do better,
8 because if we get that right, there's a lot of
9 dollars that we spend on lots of programs that we
10 wouldn't have to spend if we got it right at the
11 beginning. So I'm glad to work with you and learn
12 more about what you've done as well, but that's where
13 we're going.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Well, I do hope
15 it means giving schools credit or scores, or however
16 you're assessing schools these days for doing
17 literacy. Even high schoolers should know how to
18 read already.

19 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Absolutely.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: But they don't,
21 and that's where they are. We have to meet kids
22 where they are, and unless the DOE incentivizes that
23 sort of education and that sort of structure within
24 every school--

25 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] Yep.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: our kids are
3 going to continue to be left behind, and I look
4 forward to seeing what that looks like and how our
5 students are going to learn to read [inaudible].
6 Thank you.

7 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you, Council
8 Member. That's where we're going. Appreciate that.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
10 Member Dinowitz. I'd like to recognize Council
11 Member Fariás. And Council Member Brewer?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. I do
13 want to thank Mark Treyger, and I want to thank Early
14 Education for talking about our mystery school which
15 we have now found, and I really-- obviously, yeah,
16 Kamara Samuels [sp?] is an excellent superintendent.
17 Okay, so we want third graders to read we all agree.
18 What kind of money do you need in order for third
19 graders to read? And one of the things that I find
20 abhorrent is a number of contracts that the DOE has.
21 I mean, I was Borough President. I went to every
22 school district. I went to every school, and there
23 are these ridiculous contracts out there that have
24 been going on for years and years and years. Cut 'em
25 all.

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CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And some of them were because you can't hire fast enough. You need a psychologist, have to by law. So, but we can't hire because it takes too long, Gale, so therefore I have to get an outside contractors. Come on. So what's your contract budget? How can you cut it, and what are you doing about it? And then you could pay for your third grade. Really, what is your contract budget, and can you get us a list of all the contracts that DOE has?

CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes, yes.

FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: It's tons of them.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know. I used to watch these ridiculous people show up from all over the country.

CHANCELLOR BANKS: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: With some cockamamie idea they had and they were getting paid by the Department of Education.

CHANCELLOR BANKS: Right, absolutely.

And so listen very clear. The Mayor had made it very clear to us as well. We got to cut through all of

1
2 that nonsense, and we should only be funding the
3 things that have some level of a proven track record.
4 So no, that's--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] So
6 what are we doing about it?

7 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We are leaning in
8 right now. We're going to be announcing in the next
9 few weeks this work around literacy and a focused-
10 approach to how we're going to have all of our
11 schools engaged with teaching kids how to read.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

13 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Which is then going to-
14 - going to allow us to get other contracts and other
15 vendors off the table.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright, so how
17 we're going to get the list of who you're getting off
18 the table, literally? And what is still to be done?
19 Because I can tell you-- I don't want to name any
20 names, but I could.

21 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I understand.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: As some of these
23 of these contracts that are bogus in my opinion.

24 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Listen--
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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] I'm
3 a pretty good judge after all these years.

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's right. I
5 didn't come into this position, Council Member, to be
6 a defender of the status quo.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, but how we
8 going to get-- literally, can you get us, to the
9 Chair, the list of the contracts at DOE?

10 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Absolutely.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: All of them.

12 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yep.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright. There
14 was some big huge number without the specifics,
15 right? Okay. Number two, really I feel very strong--
16 you could pay for your-- all your schools with these
17 goddamn contracts. Number two, on Affinity. I know
18 you don't want to hear about specifics, but at this
19 gentleman's wonderful hearing yesterday on CUNY, CUNY
20 says we are not cutting our portion of Affinity, but
21 we will if DOE does. Now, I know this is not third
22 grade, I got it, but it's for the schools that you
23 get the college credit, blah, blah, blah. You know
24 the program well. It works. So, and DOE, you don't
25 pay for the whole thing. CUNY pays for some of it. Is

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2 that one of those issues that when you get rid of all
3 those contracts you would be able to pay for? But
4 literally, this program works. Why are you cutting
5 Affinity? Is this for the same thing you said
6 earlier, I have to make choices?

7 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] Bad
9 choice to cut Affinity in my opinion.

10 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We're not locked in on
11 cutting Affinity, but I just want you to know, you
12 just said get rid of all the contracts. Affinity is
13 one of the contracts. Do we get rid of Affinity?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Well, Affinity is
15 a contract with CUNY.

16 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, that's just one
17 of the contracts.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

19 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We got-- we've got
20 many contracts that are Affinity contracts, that's my
21 point.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I would be
23 glad to have a look at it and figure out how you
24 could bare bones it down. I know because I teach at
25 Hunter.

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CHANCELLOR BANKS: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I've started one of the high schools with Jennifer Rabb [sp?]. So I have a familiarity with this program.

CHANCELLOR BANKS: Great, I know.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, I would say that there may be ways to change it and get rid of some of the contracts, but still keep CUNY and the high school working together.

CHANCELLOR BANKS: Here's my point though, Council Member--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] CUNY is-- I wouldn't consider CUNY a bad contract.

CHANCELLOR BANKS: Not at all, and my only point is coming back is simply to say that for almost every one of these contracts there's a group of people who will come in and say this is a great contract, this is a great organization, this is a great body of work--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] I-- give me the list.

CHANCELLOR BANKS: We understand, but don't cut us.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Give me the list
3 and I will start cutting.

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Okay.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright. The
6 other thing I have is about buses, because buses for
7 foster care. I know this is, again, something that
8 is important to all of us, because those children, as
9 you know, are often not in school and you know the
10 whole story.

11 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Right.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: so, will you be
13 able to guarantee bus service for those who are in
14 foster care who need to maintain it in order to go to
15 school?

16 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Yeah.
17 First of all, thank you for the questions. I will
18 say I'm new here, but I really appreciate the focus
19 by you and the Chair on these particular issues, and
20 I promise we are working pretty actively on them. We
21 will see what we can do. In terms-- so we do
22 guarantee busing.

23 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Hold on one second.
24 Just know this, the buses that we use primarily are
25 through contracts that we have. Okay?

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. But that's
3 a different-- if I may say, that is a different kind
4 of contract than-- I don't even want to mention
5 names. These people show up from Florida and I don't
6 know where else with some kind of stupid book that
7 nobody needs to read, and I'm looking. My mother
8 wrote this book.

9 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I'm with you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Who the hell is
11 your mother to get a contract--

12 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] I'm with
13 you.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: with DOE?

15 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I'm with you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay?

17 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I'm totally--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] Let
19 me-- give me that list.

20 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We going to give you
21 the list, absolutely. But don't cut the bus
22 contracts, but we need the bus--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] The
24 buses, that's a service as opposed to what I just
25 described.

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CHANCELLOR BANKS: Right, right, right.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, let's hear about the bus, yes.

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: First we're going to find, guys, the book with the mom from Florida is definitely top of the contract cutting list.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know who that person is.

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: So you can just tell [sic]. In all seriousness, busing contracts are actually one of our biggest contracted spends quite substantially. When you get that full list, you'll see they're a very high proportion of the total, 52 of them to be precise.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: So, student-- so we do guarantee-- we do guarantee provide busing for students in the foster system who are within the City. When we are going outside the City, we work with other school districts. We have to work with our bus companies to do what we can. We still provide transportation, but it's not always busing. We are looking at whether we can improve

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2 upon that. I will say, when we hear about this it's
3 often not about there being no bus, but there being a
4 delay in the bus assignment, in particular.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I was going to
6 mention that.

7 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Yeah.
8 And so-- and that is, I think, also a big part of the
9 issue, and I will say there's really just a couple of
10 sort of systems issues there about how quickly we
11 know, and you know, for students who are moving how
12 quickly, you know, how quickly that gets put in the
13 system and whether there's more automation we can do
14 around that. So we are looking at whether we can cut
15 that time in particular for those students,
16 understanding they're transient. That's part of the
17 situation here, and so we're working on it.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: okay. I mean, we
19 had an Oversight and Investigations with Education
20 hearing on bus service, as you know, the Special Ed,
21 and obviously, foster care is the same problem. We
22 have to get those buses there on time. And I think--
23 I thought maybe one company was better than the
24 other, but I think they all have challenges. So,
25 alright. And the other-- this final question I have

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2 is, in terms of, I don't know, the-- how do you-- do
3 you feel-- I know this came up earlier, but do you
4 feel that every school now has an afterschool
5 program? That's a contract, but it's a good contract
6 if I may say so. I'm -- you know, I'm-- there's a
7 difference between contracts that are not needed and
8 those that are. So, the afterschool is in every
9 single school now?

10 CHANCELLOR BANKS: No, it's not in every
11 single--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing]
13 Elementary in particular.

14 CHANCELLOR BANKS: No, no. It's in a
15 good chunk of schools, but most of those-- most of
16 that work goes to DYCD.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

18 CHANCELLOR BANKS: As opposed to New York
19 City public schools. So that's a question that's
20 probably better for them. They've got all of the
21 numbers on the numbers--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing]
23 Yeah, but they're your kids.

24

25

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2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: No, I get it. I get
3 it. So we can certainly get it, but I don't have the
4 number right here right now in front of us.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Can you get us a
6 number where there are or are not--

7 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] We can
8 get it. We can get it from them, yep.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you, Madam
10 Chair.

11 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you, Council
12 Member.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
14 Member Brewer. Council Member Farías?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Thank you, Chair.
16 Good afternoon everyone.

17 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Good afternoon.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: I just have some
19 quick questions about the-- our DOE school nurses.
20 Do you folks happen to have the numbers or the
21 vacancy number of how many we have vacant right now
22 in titled positions?

23 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: I don't
24 have it. We can definitely get it to you today, and
25

1
2 actually this is another place where we're using a
3 contract to backfill the positions we can't staff.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Yeah, so that
5 will be my line of questioning.

6 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Should we get rid of
7 that contract? I'm just--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: [interposing]
9 Yes, actually we should. We should just pay our DOE
10 nurses more and fill--

11 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] Right.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: those vacancies.
13 So, for me, will you just answer the question, if
14 we've been filling those vacancies with contracted
15 nurses since the COVID pandemic? I know it's been
16 exasperated a bit more. Yes? Okay.

17 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: So,
18 yes. Just one clarification. There's actually both
19 DOE and DOHMH nurses--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: [interposing]
21 Sure.

22 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: in our
23 schools. We do actually have an easier time filling
24 the DOE nurse positions than the DOHMH nursing
25 positions. We are trying actively to fill both of

1
2 them, but yes, when we can't fill either, then it is
3 a contracted nurse.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Okay, and is
5 there a wage difference between DOHMH, DOE, and the
6 contracted nurses?

7 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Yes,
8 there is, and there is across all of those. So, DOE
9 nurses are paid more and on a different schedule than
10 DOHMH nurses and contracted nurses and nurses more
11 broadly are paid--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: [interposing] Got
13 it. And in terms of credentialing, training,
14 qualifications, and standards, are they the same
15 across the board for each of those in different
16 agencies? The silence in this room is freaking me
17 out. I get it. I'm hitting something hard.

18 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Thank
19 you for the question.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Sure.

21 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: And do
22 actually really appreciate this line of questions, as
23 it's something we're trying to work with DOHMH to
24 address as well as we can. Can I just say one other
25 thing to your point?

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COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Yeah.

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: Part of the initial challenge is, of course, the commitment we have and are sticking to to have a nurse in every building, right? Which expanded our nursing need, expanded the pool at exactly the same time so many other people also needed additional nurses, and so it sort of exacerbated what the shortage would have been in any other case. The qualifications, they all need to meet the baseline qualifications, but there are absolutely training differences in terms of what we expect from our staff nurses versus the contracting nurses and what the requirements are for what they need to do.

COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay, thank you for that response. And then I just have a question around spending. Do we know, do we have today the list of differences or how much we're spending for each of these differently within our schools or within the DOE?

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: We do absolutely have that. I don't have it in this binder right here, but we can get it to you. We have all three spends.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay, great.

3 Yeah, I would appreciate both giving myself and the
4 Chair that information so we can review in
5 anticipation of May, so we can have a more thorough
6 discussion around some of this. And with that, I
7 will yield the rest of my time. Thank you, Chair, for
8 giving me an opportunity, and thank you for your
9 answers.

10 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
12 Member. Council Member Sanchez?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you.

14 Thank you so much, Madam Chair, and good afternoon,
15 Chancellor and members of the Department of
16 Education.

17 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Good afternoon.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. So,
19 as Chair Joseph mentioned earlier, DOE enrollment
20 rates have continued to be low compared to pre-
21 pandemic numbers, but lesser than projected.

22 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Right.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Which to me
24 indicates that we could be seeing a bounce back to
25 pre-pandemic enrollment numbers. So my question is

1
2 around school closures, school mergers and proposals
3 of that nature. Any proposed school closures and
4 mergers would lower hard-to-attain student capacity.
5 Having SCA build new schools is a tough endeavor.
6 Such as in my district we have a proposed merger for
7 PS307 and PS340, and a significant number of parents
8 in these schools, in PS307 in particular, are very
9 upset. And squaring this away, I want to-- my
10 question is asking to put this merger, proposed
11 merger, in context in addition to, you know, as was
12 also mentioned earlier, the state's historic class
13 size reduction bill will require smaller class sizes
14 and presumably more classrooms, more capacity. So
15 putting the merger in context and also considering
16 the state's mandate, how does the Department of
17 Education's Planning Unit square away lowering school
18 capacity when numeric trends indicate that there
19 could be a narrowing of these declines and state
20 policy mandates indicate looming-- the looming need
21 for more school seat capacity?

22 CHANCELLOR BANKS: You know, what we've
23 done is-- thank you so much, Council Member, for that
24 question. We've left a lot of this in the hands of
25 our superintendents to take a look at the numbers

1 right across their districts and then make
2 recommendations, and many of them -- not many of
3 them, but several of them have made recommendations
4 where appropriate for mergers, and those mergers are
5 really when we're dealing with schools-- as I
6 actually mentioned a little earlier, we've got some
7 schools-- people are surprised to find-- have 125
8 kids. It's a high school and 125 students. That's a
9 very-- the small schools movement did a formula that
10 the numbers should really be no less than about 400.
11 And there are some that are a little less than that.
12 But when you-- you start to reach a point where it's
13 economically efficient to even maintain a school,
14 because the school has to have an administrative
15 assistant, a principal, a guidance counselor. It has
16 all of these things and are only 100 kids. And so if
17 you got one school on the third floor with 125
18 students, and on the fourth floor with 150, we said
19 let's merge them. We're looking at merging them into
20 one school, not to increase class size, but to create
21 greater efficiencies, those schools were never
22 designed to be that small. You can't-- and we've
23 watched them lose numbers. You can't reach a point
24 when you say there's 20 kids in a school, but make
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2 sure that we maintain a school and just keep it open
3 no matter what. You do reach a point where you just--
4 - you have to make some other decisions, and on that
5 schools that are really, really small, our
6 superintendents are taking a look at that. They're
7 making recommendations to us, and then we'll make
8 decisions.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you,
10 Chancellor, and recognizing that PS307 is one example
11 of many, but the school utilization rate at that
12 particular school is still at 104 percent. It's a
13 small building. So, it's just-- it's helpful to hear
14 that but it's-- you know, I'd be curious about how
15 it'd being applied in different places.

16 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Sure. Have you met
17 with superintendent-- is that Huller [sp?]?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Yes, yes, we
19 met-- actually yesterday we were having a
20 conversation. So wanted to bring it up here--

21 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] Okay,
22 thank you.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: [inaudible]. And
24 as I said to our superintendent, I'm a product of
25 District 10. I went to PS46 and MS45, and my memories

1
2 is of overcrowded schools, right? I used to get
3 bused to some other location off of Webster Avenue,
4 and you know, I just don't want to go back there
5 without needing to, right?

6 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Sure.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: By getting rid
8 of capacity that could serve us--

9 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing]
10 Absolutely. We don't either. So, again, if they're
11 unique situations, and you're saying this really-- I
12 understand it as a concept, but this doesn't make
13 sense for this place, please let us know and work
14 closely with the superintendent. We're just trying
15 to get it right.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Great. Thank
17 you so much. And a quick follow-up if I-- I have 50
18 seconds. So, it was mentioned earlier that the Fair
19 Funding formula-- Fair Funding student formula is
20 changing and our Chair was a participant in many
21 working group sessions. So, coming-- I also
22 represent District Nine which has the highest
23 percentage of students in temporary housing. Can you
24 help us understand what differences, what changes
25 they might see in their funding?

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2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, they're going to
3 see-- they're going to see additional dollars in
4 their school budgets, if this in fact, this proposed
5 change, is agreed to by the Panel for Educational
6 Policy on April 19th. We fully expect that it will.
7 Many of the members of the panel have been pushing us
8 since I became chancellor specifically for this. So
9 I expect it to really be a unanimous vote, and once
10 that happens there's a percentage of dollars that
11 will go specifically to those schools that have the
12 students that are living in temporary housing. So
13 it's all dependent upon how many. If you got five
14 students in temporary in housing, you're going to
15 have more dollars. If you got 50 students, you're
16 going to get even more dollars. And so there's an
17 added weight that we put there. We're certainly
18 encouraging all of you to push the state to also
19 follow suit with their formula.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Yeah.

21 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Because their formula
22 does not take this into account.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you.

24 Thank you so much, Chancellor.

25 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: And thank you so
3 much, Chair, for your leadership here.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much,
5 Council Member Sanchez. I wanted to touch upon
6 really quick with Deputy Chancellor Ahmed on our
7 4410, my favorite set of young people. The most
8 recent data released by DOE show approximately 30
9 percent of preschoolers with disabilities which is
10 more than 7,000 students went all year without
11 receiving at least one of their legally-mandated
12 services such as speech or physical therapy or part-
13 time Special Education teacher services. The New
14 York City public schools hired a small set of
15 preschool service team this year, but we understand
16 there's still numerous preschoolers with disabilities
17 waiting for services to begin, and many children
18 haven't even been evaluated for services due to
19 shortage of preschool Special Education evaluators.
20 What percentage of and how many preschoolers with
21 disabilities are waiting today for at least one of
22 their mandated services to begin?

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: I can start,
24 and then certainly I'd like to have my colleague,
25 Christina, provide more detailed information on

1 related services. But again, as you know, Chair
2 Joseph-- and thank you for your support-- we were
3 able to lift up the 4410 contract enhancement over
4 130 million dollars in December and stand up over 600
5 new seats for our young children with disabilities
6 and stabilize over 6,000 seats in just the last few
7 months, which is incredible work, and again,
8 incredibly thankful for your partnership and
9 commitment to our young children with disabilities.
10 We heard a lot around Carter cases during this
11 hearing, and I certainly channel my dear colleague
12 Mark Treyger, when you think about doing this work at
13 a very young age helps to prevent the Carter cases of
14 tomorrow.

15
16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct.

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: And so we thank
18 you for your partnership and for your commitment
19 because this all matters and makes a difference.
20 About related services, I know Christina can
21 absolutely give more details on that.

22 CHRISTINA FOTI: Of course. Thank you
23 Chair. Thank you, Deputy Chancellor. A few things
24 on the related service front that we have done, we do
25 still have our 21 Prac [sic] teams up and running in

1 areas with-- and we prioritize hiring for those Prac
2 teams. Those are the assessment teams. So they do
3 the assessments that you were just talking about. We
4 prioritize hiring of those teams to reflect the
5 languages spoken in those neighborhoods. Those are
6 still up and running and doing those assessments. We
7 did add five pre-K center-specific sites to provide
8 related services to our pre-k students, recognizing
9 that we are in need of providing additional related
10 services. We are also expanding the coverage of our
11 contracts to take into account the post-COVID
12 marketplace, and allow for independent providers to
13 more easily provide services through our contracts.
14 Sorry, Council Member Brewer, for that. Expanded
15 itinerant team-- we have about-- the positions that
16 you were mentioning, Council Member Joseph, Chair
17 Joseph, was that we have about 60 positions that
18 we've hired to provide itinerant-related services,
19 and we are also in the process of sending an MTAC
20 [sic] to PEP that would allow us to provide increased
21 related service coverage to high need areas. And
22 Council Member, if I may, I just wanted to give you
23 the data that I promised before the end of the
24 hearing. The first on the CDOS [sic] credential is
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2 that we had about 2,900 students take advantage of
3 that credential, 35 percent black, 41 percent
4 Hispanic, nine percent Asian, 13 percent white.
5 That's a little disproportionately black compared to
6 the overall population in New York City, but we are
7 very glad that folks are-- that students are taking
8 advantage of that pathway. And regarding
9 paraprofessionals, we have about 175 students in New
10 York City public school students who are taking-- who
11 do not have paraprofessionals currently, but that we
12 are working diligently to arrange services for on the
13 school bus. And in the interim, Chair, we're
14 offering ride share services to those students.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. I'm not done.
16 What would that-- what is the cost attached to that?

17 CHRISTINA FOTI: I'd have to get back to
18 you on that, Chair.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How can we help
20 ensure funding is added to FY24 budget so
21 preschoolers receive their evaluations, their
22 mandated Special Education services and teachers?
23 And as you mentioned, if we get in front of this,
24 less Carter cases.

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2 CHRISTINA FOTI: Do you want to talk
3 about related services or?

4 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So, on
5 the funding issue, yeah, we hear you that you can pay
6 now or you can pay later. So this is something
7 [inaudible] looking at.

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Yeah, I mean,
9 obviously we know that this is a commitment and the
10 more proactive that we could be at a younger age, the
11 better off we will be for our children and for their
12 families. So, as you heard Christina say, that work
13 is going to continue to ensure that we're getting
14 related services to where they're needed, both in our
15 General Ed classrooms for inclusive classrooms, but
16 also in our special classes.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. One of
18 my colleagues text me. She had to leave. About our
19 new New Yorkers or migrant students, they wanted to
20 know what's the status of Open Arms? We have not
21 seen it as visible as it was from the very beginning.
22 We want to know where it is, updates.

23 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you, Chair Joseph.
24 And so just to give you some updates, we are now at
25 nearly 14,000 asylum-seeking students. The way that

1 we track as you well know, but for everyone else,
2 students in temporary housing who have a new admit
3 [inaudible] New York City public schools since July
4 1st, we do not specifically ask them for their
5 status. At this point, we continue to work closely
6 with our superintendents and monitor progress across
7 the school. So where are we still seeing an influx?
8 Who still has vacancies for whether it's for an ENL
9 teacher, a bilingual teacher, or just a classroom
10 teacher. Because of the influx we did issues the
11 additional money through the school allocation memo
12 to provide funding for those schools, in addition to
13 making sure they got their Fair Student Funding mid-
14 year adjustments much sooner than they normally
15 would. We continue to offer professional development
16 also, particularly targeting districts that have seen
17 an increase in multi-lingual learners that have not
18 seen them before. And so that's really important
19 particularly in some of our districts in Brooklyn. We
20 were really very, very happy when superintendent
21 Kirkland [sp?] reached out to us and said, hey, this
22 is very new to us, please support us. And so making
23 sure that we are leveraging those resources that have
24 always existed to support newcomers, right? That
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2 this is not a new-- this is not something new to New
3 York City public schools. The volume is new. That
4 is what-- that is what we have had to really spend
5 [sic] around. So in the beginning when Project Open
6 Arms first launched, there was this aspect of, you
7 know, crisis and emergency and making sure that we
8 quickly pivoted so that way students were quickly
9 enrolled in schools, making sure that we were keeping
10 up enrollment access with the number of emergency
11 shelters that were being launched as well as with the
12 HERRCs that H+H run. Now that those systems are in
13 place, now it is merely us keeping in touch with our
14 partners across agencies and tweaking and supporting
15 where there are gaps, and we know that there are
16 gaps, and we welcome all of the feedback that we get
17 on those regular meetings that are facilitated
18 through City Hall because your feedback and
19 escalation have really supported us in tweaking those
20 plans across the specific districts.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. and out
22 of your-- the new New Yorkers, again I'm always going
23 to ask this question, is-- how-- do you know how many
24 SIFE students you've received so far, and what kind
25 of support is in place for our SIFE students?

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2 UNIDENTIFIED: So, there are a number of
3 existing supports for our SIFE students and that
4 works for the multi-lingual learners division. In
5 terms of the number of asylum-seeking students who
6 have been identified as SIFE officially, I would have
7 to get those numbers for you and we'll make sure that
8 we get them to you. But I mean, really at this point
9 we are looking at them as all unofficially SIFE,
10 right? They have had some sort of interrupted formal
11 education, and so we are treating them as such, but
12 in terms of formal numbers, we will get those for
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And is the Federal
15 Government supplementing the funding for that?
16 Because I know there's a line of funding that comes
17 out of the Federal Government for SIFE students. Can
18 somebody talk about that for me?

19 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER VADEHRA: At this
20 point we are not getting any additional funds from
21 the Federal Government that is flowing into our
22 budget for these purposes. There has been lots of
23 talk of lots of things, but our budget has not seen a
24 reflection of those increased dollars. There's

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2 existing Title III dollars for this, but there's not
3 been new money for this purpose.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. My colleague
5 earlier talked about students in temporary housing
6 and the Bronx have one of the highest numbers. So we
7 had hired a 100 shelter-based community coordinators
8 to help students living in alternative housing; 75 of
9 them was funded with COVID money, and 25 came from
10 the Council. That is scheduled to expire in June
11 2023. We noticed that there was no funding in the
12 FY24 Preliminary Budget to extend the funding for the
13 25 coordinators. Meanwhile, we have 13,000
14 additional students in temporary housing that have
15 enrolled in our school system since July, increasing
16 the need for coordinators. Can you talk about the
17 importance of these community coordinators, and we
18 know they make the difference in making sure our
19 schools, our students, and also DHS as part of the
20 conversation, because they are the landlords to our
21 New York City schools. So they also play a role in
22 making sure that our students who are living in
23 temporary housing are also showing up for school. Out
24 of the data that I saw, a lot of our students that
25

1 are not coming to school are in temporary housing.

2 So, DHS also has to play their part as well.

3
4 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: So, thank you,
5 Chair, and I appreciate the question and will echo
6 your sentiment that yes, these positions that we have
7 staffed, the 75 that were part of our budget, the 25
8 that we received from Council are critical. Many of
9 them are the people who are servicing our newcomers,
10 our new students who are also in our emergency
11 shelters. So, some of the shelters that are the Rec
12 Centers that are run by Health + Hospitals-- we do
13 work in close partnership with DHS. We have
14 consistent communication in meeting with them. I
15 will have to echo here what our Chancellor has shared
16 before around the current condition of our physical
17 budget and the multiple critical work that we have
18 funded through stimulus funding where we're looking
19 for both partnership and your advocacy to ensure that
20 we can sustain those positions. I also, if I may,
21 wanted to go back to one of your prior questions
22 around community school staffing which I know you
23 mentioned that you wanted to get more details. So
24 prior physical year we have 29 staff on the Office of
25 Community School. There were two of those staff

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2 members who were funded through a grant that we no
3 longer have, and it's a State grant, and I can get
4 details. So at the moment, we have 27 positions for
5 the Office of Community School. And that grant was a
6 grant that we hadn't had now for a couple of years
7 that our finance team was just helping to sustain the
8 team with that, but the number is 27 positions.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what about your
10 Director, do you have a Director?

11 CHIEF PUELLO-PERDOMO: We are currently--
12 we have an interacting [sic] person as we mentioned
13 that we're looking to staff as fully as possible,
14 like to bring on board. We are currently in the
15 process of interviewing and finalizing that for the
16 Executive Director which I think is what you're
17 asking.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct.
19 Chancellor, as we talked earlier, we talked about New
20 York City is changing, right? So in communications
21 outreach with our immigrant families, over 40 percent
22 New York City public schools families speak one other
23 language than English at home. Last year, the
24 school-- the Council fought, of course, to get four
25 million dollars in the budget for the immigrant

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2 family communication, but this funding was not
3 baselined and will expire in June unless it gets
4 extended. Given the recent increase in newly-arrived
5 immigrant families, the need has grown. Can you talk
6 about the importance of extending funding for this
7 program for the DOE, New York City Public Schools to
8 better communicate with immigrant families? Have you
9 talked to City Hall, OMB, about the importance of
10 including funding for this program in the Executive
11 Budget? I know, I come to you, money, money, money,
12 right?

13 CHANCELLOR BANKS: NO these are all--
14 this is all great stuff. This is what we should be
15 talking about.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely.

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR LLOYD: Sure. So, just
18 to give you an update on what we have done with the
19 funding allocated last year-- we provide, as you
20 know, translation and interpretation services in the
21 nine languages in addition to English. We have
22 refreshed all of our language access print materials
23 that are available in every single school. We have
24 trained language access coordinators for all schools.
25 If any school does have a language access

1 coordinator, please feel free to be in touch with me.
2 These materials are available at our welcome centers.
3 You will see additional advertising citywide and in
4 ethnic and community media. We have improved our
5 language access technology and that increases our
6 ability to be able to serve more families each year,
7 and we have expanded capacity on the language access
8 team, as well.
9

10 CHANCELLOR BANKS: And I think again, in
11 terms of baseline funding and whatnot, all of these
12 are things that are on the table to be negotiated.
13 So, all important services. As well as a lot of the
14 other programs as well.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Out of what? I
16 didn't hear that.

17 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I said as well as a
18 lot of the other programs. A lot of this is to be
19 determined. We're in the midst of this whole
20 negotiation process now.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I received a text
22 message I get, like, live. Mosaic curriculum, it was
23 a curriculum that the City spent over \$200 million
24 dollars but was never implemented. So I received a
25 question about that. It was supposed to be from K-12

1
2 and included in all of the subject areas. Can
3 someone address that for me? Because parents are
4 still-- parents still ask about the curriculum
5 Mosaic, the Mosaic curriculum.

6 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank
7 you, Chair.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Was it a
9 contract?

10 CHANCELLOR BANKS: They're all contracts,
11 Council Member.

12 [laughter]

13 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: And
14 just to clarify, I want to make sure folks know, the
15 \$200 million dollars was not spent. This was
16 stimulus funds that were allocated. I would just
17 say, so there is work that has been completed. Some
18 of the curricula resources that you've heard about
19 around black studies, AAPI, Latinx studies, these are
20 happening under the aegis [sic] of Mosaic to fill the
21 gaps where they exist. And I would just say, the
22 Chancellor talked about a major push on literacy, but
23 also on curriculum there. And so that's something--
24 and you made the excellent point, Chair, about making
25 sure that whatever we produce is culturally

1 responsive, and whatever the kids receive is
2 culturally responsive. That's a commitment of ours.
3 So, Mosaic continues to-- that work continues. It's
4 not K-12 all subjects, you know, creating something
5 new, because frankly that's not necessary. There are
6 really good, high-quality rigorous research-based and
7 culturally-responsive curricula that are out there.
8 Many of them are being used in our schools already,
9 so we don't want to reinvent the wheel, but I would
10 also just say, you know, stay tuned. We certainly
11 want to talk to you, in particular around K-5 ELA and
12 the curriculum strategy coming up there.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. And
15 also, they also said as you're changing the
16 curriculum and it's reflective of what New York City
17 really look like, make sure the tests that you
18 provide these students are also aligned and they're
19 critically-- because next week, they're getting ready
20 to take exams, and normally they don't see themselves
21 in those exams and there is no connection at all.
22 So, therefore-- so the curriculum should align along
23 with the testing.

24 CHANCELLOR BANKS: And that's why, you
25 know, we as a New York City school system we are an

1
2 entity of the state. So many of these exams and
3 these assessments are state-driven. They're not
4 exams and assessments that we necessarily even
5 provide. They're not coming from us, and so that's
6 always a challenge. As we recognize the changes we
7 need to make, we got to try to do the best we can to
8 advocate with the State also to make changes to their
9 assessments.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: so that's why we
11 will be doing a City and State partnership.

12 CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's right.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We're calling on
14 Lester Young and Commissioner Rosa to make sure this
15 aligns with our New York City children. So, thank
16 you so much. We have a next panel coming up. I
17 thank you for your testimony. Go ahead Senator
18 Dinowitz.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: No, on behalf
20 of Council Member Brewer, I just want to know about
21 the damn DESSA-- did I talk like you when I said
22 damn? The DESSA exam, you know what I'm talking
23 about. The DESSA, tells you everything you need to
24 know. No, my question is about charter schools. I'll
25

1
2 get back to that. The charter schools, you reimburse
3 100 percent of rent for charter schools, DOE?

4 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: It's
5 a-- the statute provides-- it's essentially all the
6 lease expenses they pay, but it's not everything.
7 Everything is not included.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Do you have any
9 say in negotiating power in negotiating for the lease
10 space for charter schools? In other words, if I'm
11 opening a charter school and Gale's my landlord--
12 we're good friends. And I know--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] I
14 wouldn't rent to a charter school.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: In this-- I
16 wouldn't open a charter school. So we're both
17 pretending. No, meaning what-- you know, she's my
18 friend. She's going to say I'm going to make your
19 rent, I don't know, \$236,000 dollars a month which
20 actually is the case in my community that a charter
21 school has \$236,000 a month rent and you're
22 reimbursing it. Do you have any role in negotiating
23 down the rent so that we're not on the hook for the
24 charter schools?

1
2 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: We
3 don't have-- we don't have a role in negotiating with
4 that landlord, that's true, but we absolutely do
5 review. Our Charter Office reviews every single
6 lease that comes in for reimbursement and there's a
7 rigorous process where we go back and forth, and
8 frankly, some disputes from time to time about what
9 is reasonable and what's covered and what's not.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: But in the end,
11 what's reasonable? I mean, it just-- with this rent
12 that I'm looking at \$236,000 a month for one of my
13 charter schools in my district, it doesn't sound as
14 though the Charter Office says that was unreasonable,
15 and that's about almost double what it was two years
16 ago, the rent. There's something going on with the
17 rents and, you know, do you have any legal authority
18 to step in and say this isn't fair market value, it's
19 way too much, or are you just kind of looking at
20 well, this rent complies with the law? Because
21 there's a different between complying with the law
22 and actually doing real negotiations and doing what's
23 fiscally responsible and fair to our students here in
24 New York City.

1
2 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I
3 don't want to speak for the Law Department or our
4 General Counsel, but I will say we do have an
5 obligation under the law to review, to determine the
6 reasonableness of the leases that are submitted for
7 reimbursement, and so, you know, if something is way
8 out of whack with market value, that is something
9 we're going to flag.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So your office
11 does look at reasonableness? I've never used that
12 word in my life. Reasonableness.

13 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes.

14 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, yeah.

15 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes,
16 we do.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay.

18 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I will
19 say, you know, just to editorialize for a second,
20 statute is not crystal clear. So having more clarity
21 would be helpful, but yes, we do look at--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: [interposing]
23 This is the State statute you're referring to?

24 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:
25 Correct, State statute.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Which means you
3 can interpret it as giving yourself more authority to
4 step in and you know, save them money. I just-- I
5 did want to reference what I mentioned before which
6 is the DESSA. It's the Devero [sp?]--- something
7 French-- emotional, social, something assessment.

8 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes,
9 SEL [sic] screener.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Sure. Yeah,
11 they know. I haven't found-- I think this is just an
12 example of one of these contracts where none of the
13 teachers that I've spoken to thought it helped--
14 mostly-- they were dealing with all the pandemic
15 stuff, then they do this assessment, and then haven't
16 even seen the data, let alone been able to-- since
17 this is a three-year contract. And I just wanted to
18 put it out there as oen of those-- as an example of
19 one of those contracts Gale was bringing up. I think
20 it was \$18 million dollars, yes, with stimulus
21 funding, but it's not out of the blue to think that
22 the DOE would spend its own city funding on that.
23 And so it's--

24 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] Yeah.
25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: a good example
3 of a contract that we just don't need and no one
4 asked for.

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Absolutely, that's
6 right. Yeah, and that's the example, the kind of
7 thing that we're actually looking at, and we've heard
8 from many of our school as well. They're not founded
9 to be particularly useful, although initially
10 everybody recognized that we should be doing
11 something to kind of gauge where are our kids. So,
12 again, it is under review and you may not see funding
13 for, you know, much further, but it is something that
14 we're looking at.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: If no one's
16 using and no one likes it, I would hope that you cut.
17 That's an easy, I guess, one-third-- what is it, six
18 million dollars left in the contract if you're
19 dividing it by three? That's-- the money can go a
20 long way for a lot of our schools to do what they
21 know actually works for our kids social/emotional
22 health.

23 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: it is
24 no longer mandatory. I don't want to-- I don't want
25

1
2 to agree that nobody finds it to be valuable,
3 because--

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: [interposing] They have
5 some-- there are lots of schools that are still using
6 them, as well.

7 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: There
8 are some that do find it valuable, but we hear you.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: thank you.
10 Thank you, Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Dinowitz.
12 Thank you so much.

13 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Any other-- any
15 other questions I will email for the answers.

16 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank
17 you.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.

19 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, and we'll
21 be taking a 10-minute break before we get on to the
22 next panel.

23 [break]

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Good afternoon
25 everyone. We're about to start our new-- we're

1 coming to order to start the new-- come to order.
2 [gavel] Thank you everyone. Good afternoon and
3 welcome to the New York City Council Education
4 Committee hearing on the Fiscal 2024 Preliminary 10-
5 year Capital Strategy, Capital Budget, and Capital
6 Commitment Plan for the Department of Education.
7 Today's hearing is focused on approximately \$19.4
8 billion proposed February amendment to the Fiscal
9 2020 to 2024 Five-Year Capital Plan for proposed
10 February amendments. I want to begin today's hearing
11 by welcoming Nina Kubota, President and CEO of New
12 York School Construction Authority. I also want to
13 welcome Dan Weisberg, First Deputy Chancellor New
14 York City Department of Education, and Cora Liu, Vice
15 President of Capital Plan Management New York City
16 School Construction Authority for coming to testify
17 before the Committee today. The proposed February
18 amendment totaling \$19.4 billion, a decrease of \$1.25
19 billion when compared to the Adopted Budget. The
20 decline is due mostly to a decrease of \$1.89 billion
21 to the Capacity Program offset partially by an
22 increase of \$678 million in capital investment. The
23 decrease to the Capacity Program is also accompanied
24 by a major shift within the category's program areas.
25

1
2 These shift within the Capacity Program are results
3 of changes to seat need projections and target class
4 size that represent a major change to the Five-year
5 Plan. While the proposed February amendments have
6 many great projects, it also shines a light on the
7 areas that have always lacked project transparency.
8 The proposed amendment does not have a listing of all
9 the projects funded prior plan completion, limiting
10 the public's ability to review a leading area of
11 growth. The proposed amendment has also never listed
12 schools that are receiving technological enhancement
13 just like other projects funded in the amendment. We
14 encourage the SCA to document what technology
15 projects are happening and where. Additionally, the
16 Council has repeatedly called for more transparency
17 of D75 seat type in calculating seat need which is
18 still not reflected. Since 2022, alongside the
19 shifts within the capacity program, the amendment
20 disaggregates District 75 seats needed in the Five-
21 Year Plan. This came after years advocating by the
22 Council and advocates for increased transparency on
23 District 75 seats, need, and siting. The new
24 information showed District 75 by sub-district one-
25 sided. However, all un-sited seat needs for district

1 75 students are lumped into a single category with no
2 disaggregation by borough. Beyond these issues of
3 project transparency, the proposed amendment plan
4 lacks clarity in its priority seating and seat need.
5 The public has a right to know how DOE determines how
6 many seats each district needs and how it goes about
7 prioritizing capacity projects across the City.
8 Lastly, accessibility is still an issue. While there
9 have been many efforts made to support students with
10 special needs in making schools accessible for
11 physically disabled students who have accidents, may
12 need to use elevators, larger bathroom stalls,
13 special seating in cafeterias so they can participate
14 in schools. We will cover these issues and others
15 with SCA to get to understand hopefully how to remedy
16 our provide guidance for future projects. Thank you.
17 I'd also like to acknowledge Council Member Dinowitz,
18 Council Member Stevens, Madam Speaker. Thank you for
19 joining us-- Council Member Narcisse. I'm opening
20 the questions to Madam Speaker. Committee Counsel?

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear
23 testimony from SCA. Before we begin I'll administer
24 the affirmation. Panelists, please stand and raise
25 your right hand. I will read the affirmation once and

1 then call on each of you individually to respond. Do
2 you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and
3 nothing but the truth before this committee and to
4 respond honestly to Council Member questions? Nina
5 Kubota?
6

7 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: I do.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Cora Liu?

9 VICE PRESIDENT LIU: [inaudible]

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Kevin Moran?

11 KEVIN MORAN: I do.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Tom Taratko?

13 TOM TARATKO: I do.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Dan Weisberg?

15 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: I do.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: If there are any--
17 anybody else who's testifying, if you could please
18 just give the Sergeant at Arms a witness slip, and
19 then I can swear you in after. You may begin your
20 testimony, and then I'll swear in the other ones
21 after.

22 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: Great, thank you. Good
23 afternoon Speaker Adams, Chair Joseph, and members of
24 the Education Committee. My name is Nina Kubota and
25 I am President and CEO of the New York City School

1
2 Construction Authority. I am joined by First Deputy
3 Chancellor Dan Weisberg from the New York City
4 Department of Education and by Cora Liu, Vice
5 President of Capital Plan Management for the SCA. We
6 are pleased to be here today to discuss the February
7 2023 proposed amendment to the current FY 2020 to
8 2024 Five-Year Capital Plan. It's hard to believe we
9 are entering the last year of our current Capital
10 Plan. Tomorrow, we will celebrate the topping off of
11 the new high school building at Northern Boulevard,
12 which is the largest building ever built in our
13 history at over 3,000 seats. Not too long ago it was
14 serving as a COVID testing site, and now we look
15 forward to opening this building in 2025. We are
16 incredibly proud of the work we have done together
17 with the Council and other partners. I can't
18 overstate the importance of the partnership between
19 the City Council, the SCA, and DOE. Our
20 collaborative relationship is vital to the successful
21 implementation of our Capital Plan which directly
22 provides the state of the art facilities that our
23 students need to succeed. From beginning
24 construction on a two-acre learning farm in Bergen
25 Beach, Brooklyn, funded mostly with Reso A dollars,

1
2 to investing in cutting-edge STEAM and STEM
3 technology. Our partnership with the Council is
4 invaluable, and we look forward to continuing our
5 work together as we begin planning for our FY25 to 29
6 Capital Plan. As you may know, our plan is broken up
7 into three distinct sections: capacity, capital
8 investment, and mandated. And I will talk through
9 the highlights of the February amendment for each of
10 these sections. Through the Capacity Program we seek
11 to build new school seats as part of the effort to
12 reduce overcrowding and provide public schools
13 students with world-class educational facilities so
14 that they can grow, learn, and thrive. We achieve
15 this goal through five distinct programs that all
16 work together as part of the comprehensive effort to
17 bring additional capacity to the public schools
18 portfolio: new capacity, Class Size Reduction
19 program, capacity to support removal of TCUs, the
20 Facilities Replacement Program, and the Early
21 Education Initiative. As part of the work we
22 undertake to identify locations for all of the 46,010
23 new seats funded in this plan, so far we have sited
24 27,826 and are working to finalize acquisition for
25 another roughly 6,100 seats. This means we are

1
2 nearly 75 percent of the way toward siting the seat
3 need as identified by this plan. Next slide, please.
4 I would like to take a moment to share some of our
5 successful capacity projects with you now. The new
6 Capacity Program is the primary vehicle for creating
7 new seats. Several projects in this category
8 include, as we seen on the screen, PS195, 196
9 addition in the Bronx with almost 600 seats. Will
10 allow for the removal of two temporary structures and
11 create outdoor play space for the students. On the
12 bottom right you can see the two outdoor-- sorry--
13 the two temporary structures on the left and the
14 right of the building. We are creating the annex on
15 the left which will provide for the 600 seats and
16 then we'll remove the temporary structure on the
17 right. It's very hard to see, but the lower part
18 there-- to create the outdoor play space. Next
19 slide, please. Also, in the Bronx we are building a
20 new elementary school building at PS163 which will
21 allow for the removal of the TCUs and provide
22 adequate learning facilities by replacing their
23 existing building that was constructed with an open
24 classroom concept that was not functional to the
25 program needs of the school. So as you can see the

1
2 sort of construction site in the back is where the
3 new facility will be built, and then we'll be able to
4 provide play space where the existing building, the
5 sort of red circle, will be demolished. Next slide,
6 please. Lastly, in the Bronx at 639 Saint Anne's
7 Avenue we demolished eight TCUs to make way for a new
8 elementary school that will provide for over 500
9 seats including 96 seats for D75 Special Education.
10 Next slide. These projects represent three of the 25
11 buildings that we will be opening in 2024. Now I
12 would like to highlight two of the middle schools in
13 Brooklyn that we are building with funding in this
14 plan, both of which are anticipated to open in
15 September of 2026. The first on the screen will
16 create a 550-seat school that will serve as a feeder
17 school to John Dewey High School and allow for
18 innovative instructional and programming
19 opportunities for both the junior high and high
20 school students. Next slide please. The other
21 middle school located at 4002 Fort Hamilton Parkway
22 will add approximately 500 seats, including 72 seats
23 for D75 Special Education. This project will include
24 an array of sustainability measures such as a solar
25 panel canopy as part of a recent City pilot program

1 through Local Law 41 of 2021. Next slide, please.
2
3 Also included in this sustainable design pilot
4 program from Local Law 41 is the new elementary
5 school at 2350 Water's Edge Drive in Queens where we
6 are elevating this building eight feet in accordance
7 with the 100-year flood map as well as providing a
8 solar panel canopy. This will include roughly 550
9 seats including 96 seats for D75 Special Education
10 and is expected to open in 2026. Next slide. At 24-
11 - one more. Great, thank you. At 24 Shelly Avenue
12 in Staten Island, we're building a 550-seat
13 elementary school that will provide 96 seats for D75
14 Special Education. This school, like all of our
15 other schools, will have state of the art amenities
16 including a HVAC system, kitchen cafeteria, gym-
17 atorium [sic] and specialty rooms such as art and
18 music rooms, and we look forward to opening it in
19 2025. Next slide. Through the capacity to support
20 the removal TCUs, we are building an addition to PS96
21 Queens, which will not only remove one TCU at the
22 school, but will provide state of the art, double-
23 height gymnasium at the school which was previously
24 lacking. This project is currently in construction
25 and is anticipated to open in 2024. As you can see

1 from the bottom right picture, we're actually
2 building the addition to the right of the existing
3 building first to allow for the TCU in the upper left
4 of that bottom picture to be removed. Students are
5 currently in the TCUs, so the addition has to be
6 built first before we move the TCU. Next slide,
7 please. Our replacement program provides for the
8 development of seats for schools that must be
9 relocated from their current facility. One of the
10 projects funded through this program is the
11 replacement building for PS-IS 18 and 278 at 3761
12 10th Avenue in Manhattan. This building when it
13 opens in 2024 will provide over 770 seats
14 accommodating the two schools whose lease is
15 expiring. This new building will include enhanced
16 instructional facilities as well as new rooftop play
17 space. While creating seats is a vital part of what
18 we do, we cannot forget that more than 200 of our
19 buildings are over 100 years old, and the majority of
20 our buildings are over 70 years old. The plan
21 directs a total of \$7.94 billion for capital
22 investments. The capital investment portion of the
23 plan includes two main categories, \$3.65 billion for
24 the Capital Improvement Program which includes
25

1 building upgrades and necessary capital repairs such
2 as roof and faced work, structural repairs, upgrades
3 to life safety systems, and safe-guarding our
4 buildings against water infiltration, and \$2.85
5 billion for school enhancement projects which funds
6 the realignment of existing facilities to better suit
7 instructional needs along with bathroom upgrades,
8 science labs, accessibility, and other necessary
9 improvements. In addition, over \$1.44 billion has
10 been allocated by the City Council, Borough President
11 and Mayoral Council sources for additional capital
12 improvements in our schools throughout the City, and
13 we are grateful to our elected official partners for
14 their steadfast support. Every year, we made
15 progress on removing TCUs. This plan dedicates \$317
16 million for the ongoing removal of these units with
17 dedicated capacity funding allocated to construct the
18 needed seats to allow for the removal of the TCUs.
19 To-date we have removed 281 TCUs and developed plans
20 to remove an additional 43 units, leaving us with
21 only 30 remaining TCUs. We are particularly happy to
22 announce a removal project at John Bound [sp?] high
23 school that will create a new 630 seat annex for this
24 popular high school in Queens where six TCUs are
25

1 current located. The proposed February amendment
2 allows-- sorry-- allocates \$1.02 billion for
3 technology which includes funding for emergency
4 remote learning student devices, increasing bandwidth
5 in school buildings creating a disaster recovery data
6 center and several new application systems.

7 Throughout the pandemic, DOE worked to ensure that
8 all students had access to remote learning devices.

9 The DOE has purchased over 500,000 LTE-enabled iPads
10 since 2020 to ensure families have the technology

11 they need in order for our students to thrive in
12 today's learning environment. We are grateful for

13 the Council's longstanding and continuous investment
14 in technology for our schools. This amendment

15 continues to recognize the importance of ensuring
16 access for all students and has emphasized

17 accessibility as a major priority. As a result of
18 support from the Council and our community partners,

19 the February amendment continues to include \$750
20 million dollars towards the critically important work

21 of making our school buildings more accessible. We
22 greatly appreciate the Council's support in this

23 area. Working together, the DOE and SCA have
24 identified 65 accessibility projects and we are on-

25

1 track to make a third of buildings in every district
2 fully accessible and at least half of our elementary
3 school buildings fully or partially accessible. At
4 the center of all we do is student safety and
5 wellbeing. The proposed amendment includes \$48
6 million dollars for a new visitor control system that
7 will add an additional layer of security to ensure
8 student safety. We have begun the process of
9 identifying schools as prototypes giving schools the
10 opportunity to test the technology before we go full-
11 scale. The mandated programs category with \$3.47
12 billion allocated includes approximately \$650 million
13 dollars for boiler conversions in buildings currently
14 using number four oil. The remaining funds are
15 assigned to cover other required costs including code
16 and Local Law compliance, the SCA's wrap-up
17 insurance, and completion of projects from the prior
18 plan. Many factors contribute to the successes we
19 have experienced in implementing our capital plans
20 but one of our strongest core values is our
21 commitment to our MWBE contractors. The SCA is
22 continually developing a larger and more diverse
23 group of contractors who can bid on our work and
24 complete large and complicated jobs. We have been
25

1
2 incredibly successful in increasing the participation
3 of minority-owned businesses. In this plan so far
4 the SCA has obligated over \$1.65 billion dollars in
5 prime contractor obligations and \$985 million in
6 subcontractor awards to MWBE firms. Our Mentor
7 Program seeks to cultivate smaller MWBE firms by
8 providing them with the skill and experience needed
9 to develop and grow within the construction industry
10 and to establish long-term business relationship with
11 the SCA. We currently have 130 firms in our Mentor
12 Program and roughly 87 percent of those firms have
13 won contracts. We intend to award over \$140 million
14 dollars in our Mentor Program to small contractors by
15 the end of this Fiscal Year. While we are incredibly
16 proud of our accomplishments, we continue to identify
17 more ways to build on these successes. As a way to
18 further support and develop our mentor firms, our
19 maximum contract value that they are able to bid on
20 increased to \$3 million dollars last July. Next
21 slide please. Oh, sorry go-- stay. Thank you. In
22 the fall, we were proud to stand alongside Mayor
23 Adams and other partners in government to announce
24 the ground breaking of the first all-electric
25 building conversion at PS5 in Bedford-Stuyvesant

1
2 Brooklyn. As part of the Administration's leading
3 the charge effort, \$400 million dollars was allocated
4 in our Capital Plan to facilitate the conversion of
5 100 existing schools to all electric heating and
6 cooling by 2030. Our projects will prioritize
7 communities disproportionately burdened by climate
8 change and environmental justice and help develop the
9 next generation's green workforce. Next slide.

10 Additionally, the SCA has committed that all new
11 school buildings that we build will be all electric,
12 continuing upon the successes of the first two all-
13 electric pre-k facilities, one located at 168 Eighth
14 Street in Brooklyn. Next slide, please. And the
15 other at the Hall of Science in Queens. The SCA has
16 spearheaded the effort to reduce greenhouse emissions
17 at our schools, becoming the first commit to building
18 all electric new schools while working with our city
19 partners to retrofit existing buildings. Thanks to
20 the Mayor's support, we will continue to be at the
21 forefront of researching, developing, and providing
22 state of the art learning facilities while combatting
23 climate change. as I close, I would also like to
24 take this opportunity to acknowledge and recognize
25 the hardworking and dedicated team at the SCA who

1 show up day-in and-day out to deliver these amazing
2 facilities for our students. They are brilliant and
3 tireless, and I would like to express my gratitude
4 for all that they do on behalf of New York City's
5 public school children. Thank you for allowing me to
6 testify before you today. I along with my colleagues
7 at the Department of Education SCA will be happy to
8 answer any questions you may have.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
11 testimony. Before we move on to questioning, I will
12 swear in the remaining two members of the
13 Administration. Please raise your right hand. Do
14 you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and
15 nothing but the truth before this committee and to
16 respond honestly to Council Member questions? John
17 Shea?

18 JOHN SHEA: I do.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Anuraag Sharma?
20 Thank you. You may be seated.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Speaker
22 Adams?

23 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you very much,
24 Chair Joseph, and welcome once again to all of you to
25 this hearing. President Kubota, it's always great to

1 see you. And Dan, thank you for hanging out with us
2 today. So I just have a few questions. We spoke in
3 the previous hearing quite a bit about class size,
4 and this council is extremely concerned about ongoing
5 efforts to accommodate state law with regard to class
6 size. The Chancellor just referenced us going back
7 to the TWUs and I don't even want to think about it.
8 But given the need to reduce class size according to
9 the new state law, why did the SCA cut funding for
10 new school construction by \$2.3 billion dollars and
11 the actual number of seats to be built by over 21,000
12 or 38 percent in the proposed February amendment to
13 the Five-Year Capital Plan compared to the plan
14 adopted in June 2021?

16 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: Thank you, Speaker,
17 for that question. I just want to clarify that it
18 wasn't the-- the funding wasn't cut. It was pushed
19 into the next-- into the subsequent years. The
20 shifting of funding from this plan to the next is
21 really as a result of a couple of factors, economic
22 realities of this time, a drop of enrollment, as well
23 as a challenge in identifying appropriate sites to
24 build. I think as I mentioned in my testimony, we
25 continue to look for sites for all 47,000 seats that

1
2 we've identified in this plan, although the funding
3 for construction may have been pushed to the next.

4 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. How much capital
5 funding is needed to comply with the new class size
6 law, and does SCA have all of it?

7 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: The--
8 thanks once again, Madam Speaker. The estimate that
9 we have to fully comply from a capital perspective
10 would be \$35 billion dollars. That would largely, if
11 not exclusively, be in the next Five-Year Capital
12 Plan. So you know, we obviously don't know the size
13 or the contours of that plan as yet, but that's our
14 current estimate.

15 SPEAKER ADAMS: What's the plan to
16 comply? Is there a plan?

17 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: What's
18 the--

19 SPEAKER ADAMS: [interposing] Is there a
20 plan to comply?

21 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So, as
22 the Chancellor mentioned, you know, you're-- it's--
23 as you know, it's phased in 20 percent essentially of
24 classrooms over five years, and so for the-- because
25 we have many classrooms across the City that already

1 meet the new caps. We will be in compliance year one
2 and year two without too many changes. But for year
3 three, it will require both hiring of additional
4 teaches and possibly other personnel, and some new
5 classrooms being built. So, you know, these are
6 plans. We're talking to our labor partners now about
7 the plan for year one, but we will be consulting with
8 you, Madam Speaker, and your colleagues and other
9 stakeholders. We actually-- I should-- maybe should
10 have mentioned this morning that we're forming a
11 working group on class size, and certainly will be
12 reaching out to your office and your colleague's
13 office to get your input, but this will involve
14 significant trade-offs to comply once we get to years
15 three to five on both the expense and the capital
16 side.

18 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. Thank you. I'm
19 going to touch on the TCU thing again, because it
20 raised a flag with me when the chancellor said, we
21 may have to go back to TCU's. And we just had this
22 beautiful presentation from our President with a
23 whole lot of pride and we take pride with you. That
24 was one of the first things that I did in my district
25 was to get rid of horrible eyesores in the front of

1 beautiful buildings. So I've always been very
2 grateful to SCA for helping us in District 28, too.
3 Totally eliminate those horrible eyesores. We see
4 we've got some left. I just want to know whether or
5 not SCA still commits to removing all TCU's.
6

7 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: Yes, we fully commit to
8 removing all TCUs.

9 SPEAKER ADAMS: Awesome. What is the
10 total expected cost, or do we know the total expected
11 cost of the newly-passed class size law, capital and
12 expense?

13 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: On the
14 expense side, our estimate is full compliance will
15 require about \$1.3 billion dollars, and as I said,
16 our estimate on the capital side is \$30 to \$35
17 billion.

18 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. What's the expected
19 increase in foundation aid from the State this year,
20 and will those funds be used to reduce class size?

21 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: We
22 don't-- I believe we know as yet, Madam Speaker,
23 exactly what that increase will be. As the budget
24 situation in Albany becomes clearer we'll see. That
25 increase would not be as sufficient even if it's

1
2 carried forward to pay for the full cost of the class
3 size bill.

4 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. And as I
5 questioned the Chancellor in the first panel, I'm a
6 big proponent or we try to be proponents of
7 compliance in those things that Council passes in our
8 past with our State partners. Why has the School
9 Construction Authority not yet fully complied with
10 Local Law 167 passed in 2018 meant to make fully-
11 transparent the SCA's methodology and data to
12 estimate the need for new school seats for example?
13 Why do the enrollment projections posted online that
14 are supposed to help determine your estimate of the
15 need for new school seats exclude the growing number
16 of 3K D75, D79 and collocated Charter School students
17 in DOE buildings?

18 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: Thank you for that
19 question. I think 167-- I just want to be clear that
20 we have posted all required documentation on the
21 website by December 1st as required by Local Law 167.
22 I think what we've heard in the past is that we--
23 while we posted these documents, it wasn't very clear
24 as to the methodology. So last year, we did provide
25 a couple of new sections to Local Law 167 posting

1
2 that hopefully would clarify. In terms of the
3 specifics, I'm actually going to turn it over to my
4 colleague Cora Liu to talk about exactly some of the
5 things you discussed.

6 VICE PRESIDENT LIU: Thank you, Madam
7 Speaker for your question. So, as Nina mentioned we
8 have posted all the required document on website for
9 Local Law 167, but we're always happy also to
10 continue that conversation if there other information
11 you find will be helpful for you to understand our
12 process. We're always happy to have the conversation
13 meeting with you help you understand. Regarding the
14 3K projection, that is the projection for 3K Early
15 Childhood is primarily performed by Early Childhood
16 at DOE. So I'll probably refer back to them to
17 answer that question. In terms of District 75, I
18 just want to point out for the first time, we are
19 including a separate line [sic] to account for the
20 number of D75 seats will have created through the
21 plan, and that is really to encourage and motivate
22 the creation of D75 seats. When we create new
23 capacity projects where the-- if the site is big
24 enough to accommodate a D75 program, we always
25 maximize the opportunity to make sure a D75 component

1
2 is included. we have also worked with our partners
3 at DOE to identify existing buildings where with some
4 renovation we can create a wing [sic] to create
5 additional space for District 75, and when we create
6 those spaces, we try to make sure the space is
7 flexible enough to accommodate and be able to serve a
8 wide range of programs, right? Because the student
9 needs might change along time and we want to make
10 sure the space is not restricted just to one program.
11 They can serve all kinds of programs, and we work
12 with the DOE offices to make sure the D75 office is
13 aware where we're creating those seats so that when
14 the school building is set to open, we can furnish
15 them accordingly.

16 SPEAKER ADAMS: And I'm just going to
17 jump into something else, because something that you
18 just said brought-- because I do have District 75
19 obviously in my district. How responsive is SCA when
20 changes need to be made in schools regarding District
21 75 accommodations?

22 VICE PRESIDENT LIU: So, we have across
23 department working group that meets monthly. We
24 review all the data sets and that's becoming
25 available whether it's the travel time by students or

1
2 the number of program seats needed in different
3 districts, but we do let our colleagues at the
4 Department of Education, Department-- district office
5 of D75 space planning and enrollment office to take
6 the lead. We follow their lead, tell us-- when they
7 tell us where to create those seats, that's where we
8 go.

9 SPEAKER ADAMS: Are those accommodations--
10 - and I didn't mean to cut you off, Nina. I'll let
11 you jump back in there. Are those requests
12 prioritized?

13 VICE PRESIDENT LIU: Yes. So, for
14 example, we have what we call Capital Taskforce
15 Program. It is a very-- it's a small program that
16 allow us to make quick renovation in existing
17 buildings. You are seeing our capacity section. We
18 actually have identified a couple projects where
19 we're able to use that program to create seats in
20 much more speedier [sic] way.

21 SPEAKER ADAMS: And I'm not necessarily
22 just speaking about seats. I'm speaking about
23 accommodations that may come up in order to provide
24 flexibility for students. I remember some years back
25 there was a very simple request, and that was for,

1
2 again, collocated school in my district, using the
3 gymnasium. There had to be space for District 75
4 children, for them to have their programming. At the
5 same time there had to be space for gym activities
6 for another class to come in, hence the reason I
7 don't like collocations. I am totally on record and
8 unabashedly very, very sure about that. But where we
9 watch those program-- that programming happen. There
10 should have been a partition in the middle of that
11 gym floor, and it took way, way too long for that to
12 be accommodated for those two classes, those two
13 schools. So I just wanted to get to, you know, the
14 expediency of the request for District 75
15 accommodation in such situations.

16 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: Right, and I think
17 Cora's primarily talking about new capacity. So, as
18 you know, it takes several years to build a school,
19 and we do accommodate with the principal and with
20 D75's input. Sometimes handrails are asked of us,
21 and of course, we accommodate those requests. And
22 Cora alluded to Capital Taskforce which is, again, a
23 capital program. It doesn't take three years to do,
24 but it is a shorter timeframe. But actually, I think

1
2 we're going to ask Tom Taratko to talk about how to
3 respond to quicker requests.

4 TOM TARATKO: Yeah, so our whole process
5 of reasonable accommodations are on our website under
6 school life accessibility. We accommodated 46
7 requests last year in a very expeditious way. We
8 follow through with the schools and the family on
9 those. This may have been an instance where we went
10 through a regular facilities-type space management
11 type track and did not treat it as a reasonable
12 accommodation, which would get a little bit of a
13 different time frame, but we can go in and arrange
14 for a different room to be used for physical
15 education for the D75 kids so they get the-- all the
16 services they need while we accommodate a larger,
17 such as a gym-- a gym door would be a much larger
18 thing than some of the things we do in reasonable
19 accommodations. But that's all on the website, and
20 when in doubt with any of that stuff,
21 accessibility@schools.nyc.gov will get you the
22 quickest response on anything with D75 and children
23 with disabilities. We're all over that. We track
24 it. We monitor it. We can report on it.

1
2 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you. Thank you for
3 your response. I'm going to segue really, really
4 quickly, and then I'm going to turn it back over to
5 the Chair. With regard to Capacity Programs,
6 according to the February Amendment Plan, the
7 decrease in the Capacity Program area is driven by
8 the reduced projections of new students, updated
9 demographic data and new class size guidelines as
10 revised in the infamous Blue Book. I just get a
11 chill up and down my spine when I say the word Blue
12 Book. Can you please reassure me your faith in the
13 Blue Book, because after 13 years or so, dealing with
14 schools and all of this I have no faith in it. I
15 will be perfectly honest with you. I have no faith
16 in Blue Book and the reliance that we put on the Blue
17 Book. Madam Chair, I'm sorry, I know you come from
18 DOE expertise and all that good stuff, but in my
19 experience we've just not had a whole lot of good
20 things to say about the reliability of the Blue Book
21 as it relates to capacity within our DOE schools.
22 This reassure-- reassure us. How can you reliably
23 determine projections for the incoming year or
24 anything else, or what is this Blue Book thing?

1
2 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: Yeah, that's a very
3 good question, and I think for many years it was sort
4 of this unknown thing and what goes into it, and I
5 think we've had a few working groups over the years
6 to make it a little bit more transparent, and
7 actually in 2019, I believe-- was it 2019? We
8 adopted the now class size numbers, 20, 23, 25.
9 Thank you, Jan. So it-- so I think that that
10 provided a little bit more clarity in terms of how
11 the classroom buildings are used. But I think, Cora,
12 if you want to talk about more of the specifics, I
13 think [inaudible].

14 VICE PRESIDENT LIU: Thank you. Yes, I'm
15 sorry to hear you don't like Blue Books. It's
16 [inaudible] areas I work and we-- Nina mentioned, we
17 actually had a working group I think a couple years
18 back where Jan was a very critical part. We have
19 made a lot of changes to try to improve the
20 transparency and to make it easier to understand. As
21 Nina mentioned, in 2021 for the first time we
22 published a Blue Book adopting the current class
23 [inaudible] targets. It is-- it's a number
24 calculation does not necessarily tell the-- does not
25 tell the principal how to program their space. So it

1
2 is a tool we use to help us plan for capacity needs.
3 It is based on information provided by principal
4 through annual survey we do every year, and we also
5 do site visits. We talk to principals to make sure
6 they understand the information we're asking and the
7 information they're providing. There's certainly
8 room for improvement, and we're happy to sit down
9 with you to explain what the Blue Book does, but it
10 has been improved tremendously as a result of the
11 Blue Working Group that was put together.

12 SPEAKER ADAMS: Is it a year off as far
13 as the information when it comes to new class size
14 guidelines?

15 VICE PRESIDENT LIU: So it really is
16 because the time it takes for us to connect the
17 information. As I mentioned the information in Blue
18 Book is based on the annual survey. We open the
19 survey up for the principal to fill out. There's a
20 lot of information we ask from the principals. They
21 have tell us for each room how they are using the
22 rooms and if nearest [sic] location [inaudible]
23 shared. So we ask for a lot of detailed information.
24 We want to make sure we gave principals sufficient
25 time. So the survey itself takes a couple months for

1 principal to finish. We then contact the quality
2 control process where we do site visits. We do phone
3 calls. Make sure, you know, the information we
4 collect is correct. Then we take the time to, you
5 know, compile the data and put a report together. We
6 typically try to publish the report at the end of the
7 school year. So there is a slight lag, but it's the
8 time that needs for us to really have the information
9 together.
10

11 SPEAKER ADAMS: How susceptible is
12 information in the Blue Book subject to
13 misinterpretation in your perspective?

14 VICE PRESIDENT LIU: Asking me as the
15 business owner of the group, I will say it is really
16 accurate, but again--

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] It is?

18 VICE PRESIDENT LIU: it is just a tool,
19 right? It reflects certain numbers and there are
20 certain assumptions we made for the calculation. It
21 does not necessarily reflect-- every principal have
22 their authority to program the space based on their
23 need. So, they might not see the-- they might
24 [inaudible] program different from the standard
25 assumption and then might feel there is a difference.

1
2 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: And I also think that
3 it's just the basis, right? Because Cora's talking
4 about the process. It opens it up to the principals
5 to fill out the survey which typically takes pretty
6 much the beginning part of the school year, September
7 through the end of the year. We then add-- we
8 calculate using audited register as a 1031 which is
9 not usually available until the new calendar year.
10 And then we go through this quality control process,
11 but it's laying the basis that it's consistent with
12 all schools. Now, and I think that that's where we
13 rely on our DOE partners to say, okay, that's the
14 basis. You know, what is the reality for this school
15 versus that school, and that's I think we have a
16 great partnership with the DOE, the space planning,
17 enrollment, to say, you know, what are the nuances
18 for each of these different schools. And it's also
19 what's going to help us with class size reduction.
20 As a program, how are we going to reach our class
21 sizes according to the bill?

22 SPEAKER ADAMS: I'm-- just my final
23 statement, and just as the Chancellor wants to
24 rebrand DOE from DOE to New York City School System,
25

1
2 I think we need to rebrand Blue Book. So let's think
3 about that. Thank you for your testimony.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Madam
5 Speaker. In terms of accessibility I wanted to find
6 out-- I have a question, hold on. How much of the
7 \$750 million in capital have been spent on making
8 schools more accessible. Do you have a breakdown of
9 what schools receive this funding and where can we
10 expect to see all the projects completed?

11 TOM TARATKO: Hi.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Hi.

13 TOM TARATKO: Up to date right now we
14 have 65 projects approved and fully funded in this
15 Capital Plan. I think we've spent \$739 million of
16 the \$750 allocated, and we have the list of those
17 schools, and you know, the work it's done. Those are
18 major projects, too. They're not small projects.
19 They're adding elevators, ramps, seating, lifts where
20 necessary, bathroom upgrades throughout. They are
21 big projects of those 65. So they're taking schools
22 that had no accessibility, bringing them to fully
23 accessible.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many schools?

25 TOM TARATKO: 65 buildings.

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CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: 65 buildings.

TOM TARATKO: They could have multiple organizations in the buildings.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You'll be able to share the list of where these projects are completed with the Council?

TOM TARATKO: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. And why aren't common spaces-- why are common spaces included in the AC for All Plan?

PRESIDENT KUBOTA: So, the initial program which was started in 2017 and we were supposed to be complete by 2022. We actually were completed a year ahead of schedule 2021. We installed 15,000 units in 750 schools. So that was a very successful program. I think that, you know, the complication for PA spaces, we can put window air conditioners to provide the proper cooling. So that is a much larger, more complicated, and quite frankly a more expensive program. But I think Kevin Moran has some insight into this, and I'd like to turn it over to him.

KEVIN MORAN: Yes, thank you very much for the question. For us this is a very popular

1
2 program outside of the AC for All which just targeted
3 just instructional spaces. So we rely on outside
4 electeds to help us with some of the larger spaces
5 like a cafeteria, auditorium, gymnasium where we use
6 a Reso A project that is community-driven where a
7 principal solicits support of the local elected, and
8 some projects could \$250,000. Some could be
9 \$500,000. So it's considerable investment for
10 schools, but it is a very popular project that we
11 partner with the SCA on. We make sure we get quotes
12 and bids out. We're in the Reso A cycle for any
13 member that's interested and has heard from a school.
14 I think that's pretty expedient. We're looking at
15 jobs that turn around within the cycle after Adopted
16 Budget in July that roll through in a year. So
17 you're looking at like 12 to 18 months getting a
18 project completed in a large public assembly space.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, thank you.
20 And the cafeterias, the kitchens, I know that was
21 also a project.

22 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, so the latest--
23 first, of all, I want to thank you for your advocacy
24 for Chair Joseph. I think, you know, the cafeteria,
25 we put a considerable investment in the plan for the

1 cafeteria enhancement experience and also the kitchen
2 air conditioning to provide relief for our staff
3 members. Chris Jakeriko [sp?] and I walk kitchens
4 quite often, and with your support we've identified
5 schools to make sure that we're moving forward where
6 we can with window air conditioning units. We
7 identified 324 since last year, kitchens that would
8 benefit from AC window unit installs. That requires
9 certainly different wiring. These are large units,
10 36,000 BTU units. But where we have in those 342
11 kitchens, we will finish by this June those kitchens
12 to provide immediate relief. We're excited about
13 that. There are an additional 465 kitchens that
14 while they have functioning ventilation and exhaust
15 and fresh air intake. They would also benefit from
16 an air conditioning solution. Those are required--
17 that split unit system that we talked about could
18 range between \$300,000 for one unit, anywhere of \$1.2
19 million depending on the size of the kitchen. So
20 those are considerable investments, but something
21 that we are-- we're proud of some of the efforts
22 we've made. Over \$300 will be done by June-- will
23 provide immediate relief for staff in the kitchens.
24 And also, part of during the COVID experience we
25

1
2 learned about focusing on our exhaust systems. We
3 made repairs. So actually working on exhausting,
4 because you know there's a lot of heat generation in
5 the kitchen with units and equipment as well as
6 bringing their fresh air intake. So we're happy to
7 go visit any site that you-- that is in your district
8 of concern and partner up on a solution.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Council
10 Member Stevens?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Hello. So, I
12 guess one of my biggest concerns right now is after
13 this first year of doing a lot of tours in my
14 district and my-- visiting my schools, one of the
15 issues that I'm having and just trying to get some
16 clarity around is outdoor play space. So I have a
17 number of schools in my district that does not have
18 outdoor play space, and then even a few that has
19 inadequate outdoor play space, and then I have, like,
20 put in a request for Reso A for a rooftop play space,
21 and I was quoted at six million dollars. And so I--
22 which I think is a very large number. And so
23 thinking about one, I don't really think it should be
24 the Council Members' responsibility to be funding and
25 getting these play spaces. So, why do we have

1 schools there-- and these are all elementary schools,
2 by the way. Why do we have elementary schools where
3 children do not have outdoor space? Is there a plan
4 to figure out how do we make this a possibility and
5 not put it all on the Council Members' plate? And
6 like I said, I have a number of schools who have
7 none, and then the ones that do have inadequate, I
8 have schools-- it's like three schools in one area,
9 and then it's literally like an alley that they play
10 in, and it doesn't have any sunlight and equipment,
11 and it's really crazy to me. So I love all these
12 great schools that you're building and getting, you
13 know, all these programs going. And I even have a
14 new school that's coming in my district, but I have a
15 real issue with young children not having outdoor
16 play space and being able to go out in the sunlight
17 during the school day because we built schools
18 without it. So I would love to hear what this plan
19 looks like, and when are we going to start rolling it
20 out?
21

22 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: That's a great
23 question. Yeah. And we-- we're not-- we don't
24 pretend that every school building has a play space.
25 We know that that's not true. We are spending about

1
2 \$130 million dollars in this plan to provide play
3 space. Some of it is through when we remove the TCUs
4 we are able to take that space and create play space.
5 I think one of your questions was rooftop playground
6 and why it would cost six million dollars.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: No, I'm just
8 saying like--

9 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: [interposing] Right.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I have a school
11 that doesn't have any and so we were looking at
12 solutions and the rooftop was one of the things we
13 were looking at.

14 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: Correct.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: But it was six
16 million dollars, and why is that put on the Council
17 Member, right? Like this is something that I believe
18 you guys should be looking at and evaluating and
19 saying, like, this is a problem that we need to
20 address. And I'm just-- you know, this is my second
21 year here. I haven't heard anything about it. So
22 I'd love to hear, like, is there a plan in place? Is
23 there something that you're looking to do in the
24 future? Because young people not being able to go
25 outside is a problem. And I just feel like if, you

1
2 know, when I think about the things we fight about
3 and we talk about for like Close Rikers Island and
4 all those things, that's part of the conversation.
5 So why are people not outraged that young people
6 don't have play space and able to go outside every
7 day in the same way?

8 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: Right, no, and we
9 agree 100 percent that play space is a necessity, and
10 what I'm saying is that there's not always adequate
11 real estate to provide for that play space, which is
12 why we will get alternate solutions such as rooftop
13 play, which you mentioned as well. I know that we do
14 work with DOE. We in some cases have to close
15 streets to provide that outdoor play space. I think
16 Dan, you were about to switch on-- did you-- to say
17 to that?

18 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Just I
19 wish I had an immediate solution, Council Member. I
20 don't, but I think your point is 100 percent on
21 target. There's a series of things like this where
22 it may not be legally required. It isn't legally
23 required that every building, you know, has an
24 outdoor play space, but it's something we would want
25 from all of our children, our own kids and kids in

1
2 our communities. And so these sorts of decisions for
3 the next Capital Plan, I would say, not that some of
4 these things can't be addressed in a shorter term,
5 but we're heading into the next Capital Plan. These
6 are the sorts of trade-offs that-- I will say, we're
7 talking about internally with Nina and her team, with
8 the Mayor and his team, with the Chancellor
9 obviously, because wouldn't it be something if were
10 able to say in the next Capital Plan just as an
11 example that we are guarantee outdoor play space to
12 greatest extent possible. As Nina said, sometimes
13 there's just real estate, but to the greatest extent
14 possible for every elementary school. I would say
15 that, you know, without an estimate on that, that is
16 within our grasp for the next Capital Plan, but it
17 means trade-offs. It means some other things
18 probably would not get done as quickly as we might
19 want, but these are the sorts of guarantees that the
20 Mayor, the Chancellor particularly in under-served
21 communities want to make. Not just everything's up
22 to code and it's a good-- you know, it's a good, safe
23 learning environment, but that there are things like
24 play spaces that, again, we would want for all of our
25 kids.

1
2 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: And I will say we
3 have-- we have done and will do about 100 and-- over
4 100 playground upgrades in this Capital Plan. And I
5 think if we look to the next Capital Plan where we
6 can potentially partner with other organizations--
7 Trust for Public Land is one that we have worked with
8 in the past. They're a great organization and they
9 bring actually design funding to the Capital Plan
10 where we do not as a city expend those dollars. And
11 you know, we're in constant contact with them, and I
12 think that might be a good partnership going forward
13 as well.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: No, thank you,
15 and I really appreciate that, but I just-- I want to
16 just say again, especially when we're thinking about
17 like some of these older schools that were built, and
18 yes, obviously real estate is an issue, but we should
19 have been thinking about that before we built a
20 school there, that those things are needed for
21 elementary school children so they're able to go
22 outside and get air and play and that's part of their
23 learning experience, and so we should not be taking
24 that away. And so when we're thinking about the next
25 Capital Plan and all these things that need to be

1 considered, because like I said, I had a school who--
2 I have maybe like five or schools who don't have, and
3 that's-- I didn't get to all 55 of my schools yet.
4 But like it's about five or six that we've already
5 identified, and even when we're like trying to help,
6 like six million dollars, that's our capital money.
7 So, like, how do we work together and really think
8 about how does-- it's an issue, because I don't
9 really feel like this is the local elected issue.
10 This is a issue that was made by-- what are you guys,
11 the NYC Public Schools, because I know we're
12 rebranding, so I'm on-brand. This is an issue that
13 was created by you, so then how are you now going to
14 fix it because I do see it as a real issue, and it is
15 a necessity for our young people, and I just really
16 believe that other people should be just as outraged
17 as I am, so thank you.

18
19 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: We
20 welcome your partnership on the Council.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Absolutely, and
22 I also have some ideas around like-- because I know
23 you said, like, providing like you know, open streets
24 and stuff like that. Those things have not been
25 offered up to my schools either, because that's

1 something I've been working with them trying to get,
2 and so those options haven't been working, and also
3 I've been working with the Parks Department who are
4 looking at local parks to kind of help us to give
5 those things, but I don't understand like why I had
6 to step in for this to happen. These things should
7 be a ongoing thing, because as you guys know, if
8 there was no place space, then that should be the
9 offer to the school. Like, there's a nearby park, or
10 let's get you an open street, and I don't understand
11 why that's not part of the process especially when
12 we're talking about elementary school young people.

14 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:

15 Understood and agree.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Dan agrees, that's
17 great. On the record.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Dan always
19 agrees with me. We're friends.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Council Member
21 Dinowitz?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you, and
23 thank you, Council Member Stevens. I think I
24 endorse 100 percent of what she said, and just to
25 highlight it, it is a real challenge. I would hope

1 that as a city agency you would work with other city
2 agencies like the DOT regarding open streets and
3 safety for our kids. I'm going to start with
4 playgrounds, and just to say you have an opportunity
5 in Community Board Eight, in Kingsbridge in my
6 district, to build a school that actually has
7 significant outdoor play space that meets the need of
8 the community, and when we in the Community Board and
9 the Council approved the site for the school, it was
10 something that we in the community want, a new
11 school. This is 160 Cortlandt Park South, the former
12 visitation site. And then we see the plans, we find
13 out it's going to be only on half an acre, that you
14 had made a deal with a development company, the
15 details of which we don't know. We don't know how
16 much you gave away to this developer, but we do know
17 that the school which we had envisioned as being a
18 good size for kids is now going to shove 700 children
19 in the site of half an acre and raises real
20 questions, you know, around academics, around the
21 play space, around-- do you even have room for a gym,
22 an auditorium, all the basic questions you would
23 want. And while we're still struggling with schools
24 that were built however long ago and don't have play
25

1
2 space and don't have adequate facilities, we have an
3 opportunity to build from the ground up and do it
4 right with the right number of students and with the
5 right facilities. The main problem is this, you
6 refuse to come to Community Board Eight. And I want
7 to know if today you can commit to coming within the
8 next month to Community Board Eight, so as a
9 community we can share with you all of our concerns
10 and all of the needs of the community, both during
11 the construction period and in longevity, in
12 perpetuity, the way the school functions and how it's
13 going to meet the needs of the children.

14 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: I think you are aware
15 that the SCA is in active litigation in this site,
16 and so we cannot discuss much. We will consult with
17 counsel to see what the next steps are.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: But just
19 because you're in litigation means you can't share
20 with us what the current plans are? I mean, how
21 secretive is the SCA that you can't share what the
22 current plans are for something that's-- what?

23 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: There's no secret.
24 The design is not done. I mean, we're not saying
25 anything.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So you're
3 halting design until the litigation is done?

4 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: We are not complete
5 with design.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay. Now, do
7 you not think it is worth coming to the community to
8 hear what we would like to see in our local school?

9 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: Yeah, we have been
10 advised by counsel not to at this point engage with
11 the Community Board.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I understand.
13 I'm asking-- okay. You've been advised by your
14 lawyers to ignore the community where the school's
15 going to be built, essentially. Right? We have
16 concerns and needs in a community. We want a school
17 here, and we want to do right by our children, and
18 it-- I'm going to guess that you do too. I believe
19 fully that you do, too, but you can't do it, you
20 know, in some office building off in some other
21 borough. It needs to be rooted and based in the
22 needs of the local community of where you are
23 building, and so far, you've been unwilling to even
24 hear and listen to the needs of that community. And
25 so I hear that you're being told by your counsel not

1
2 to engage with the Community Board. I would say that
3 is a terrible decision and that you should reconsider
4 meeting with our local Community Board because we
5 have concerns about the play space, and we don't want
6 to come back in 20, 30 years in the next council
7 complaining why don't we have play space. We have
8 concerns about things, regular things that everyone's
9 concerned about, traffic flow-- there are
10 environmental concerns in the specific site that was
11 chosen, and we have people in our community who have
12 a lot of good input to share if only you would
13 listen. So I would request that you go back to your
14 lawyers or whoever's controlling this situation and
15 say that you do want to engage with the community.

16 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: Yes, thank you. We
17 will go back to counsel on that. I just do want to
18 point out that we did meet with Community Board three
19 times before this went into litigation.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Before, right.
21 Before it went-- that was the beginning of the
22 process what you're mandated, in 2022, end of 21
23 winter. It was December 21 and January of 2022, yes,
24 and there are new issues that have come up and it has
25 to be a recurring conversation. It can't just be do

1
2 a check box to say you went in front of the Community
3 Board. This really is about building something for
4 our future of our community and the future of our
5 children, which again, I would hope that you would
6 agree with, that you want to be good community
7 partners.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
9 Member Dinowitz.

10 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yeah,
11 just to say-- I'm sorry, Chair. But just to, you
12 know, I guess put on my SCA Trustee hat for a second.
13 I mean, yeah-- look, you know, we have to certainly
14 consult with counsel. There's active litigation. I
15 don't have knowledge of this particular situation,
16 but you know, we'll certainly talk to Nina and the
17 team about it and to the, you know, maximum extent
18 possible we will consult, but certainly whatever
19 happens with the design process-- and again, I don't
20 know about this situation. We always want to be in a
21 situation-- SCA invests heavily, but this is
22 something we're going to double-down on. During the
23 design process to make sure-- and not just during the
24 design process, during the build process that there
25 is regular touchpoints and consultation, and there

1
2 are always-- any of these projects there's going to
3 be trade-offs. Nobody ever gets everything you want
4 on any project. That's true whether you're
5 renovating your home or building a school. we just
6 want-- we are going to make sure and we're going to
7 commit that community members understand what those
8 trade-offs are and have input into those decisions on
9 the front end. So we're with you. We are definitely
10 with you. sometimes litigation throws a monkey
11 wrench into the timeline, but trust-- you know,
12 please, hold us accountable for-- to the maximum
13 extent we can right now being communicative, and then
14 certainly, you know, before the design is complete
15 making sure that we hear everything the community has
16 to say about it.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I do-- I do
18 hope the actions of the SCA match what I'm hearing
19 now, and I would just point out that, you know, with
20 regard to litigation, you know, I believe these sorts
21 of things could be avoided with more communication,
22 right? And the litigation is obviously the result of
23 a need that wasn't being met in the community and
24 concerns that weren't being addressed in the
25 community in the first place.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
3 Member Dinowitz. Council Member Narcisse?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you,
5 Chair. Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you SCA
6 for being here. But my question, in 2017-- we're
7 talking about AC. In 2017 it was announced that
8 every classroom in our city will have AC by 2022.
9 Right now, is every classroom have AC on?

10 KEVIN MORAN: Yes, thank you for the
11 question. The initiative set over the course from
12 October 17 through July 22 to put in 19,005 units
13 across the City in places that did not have it
14 functioning. That was completed. To Nina's point
15 earlier-- early. And on our side we ended up putting
16 in monies over the next year to make sure that any
17 window unit that is broken, that we replace it. We
18 have a direct replacement program that will make sure
19 that if a classroom had a unit that has since broke--
20 let's say they were running it during the winter time
21 and then the compressor, you know, didn't work in the
22 spring. We'll make sure we'd replace it this school
23 year. So if there are instances where a classroom
24 was moved into a different space, that's something we
25 could follow up on, but to answer your question, yes,

1 every school, classroom, instructional space has air
2 conditioner.
3

4 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you. But
5 I have a high school that been complaining for years--
6 - JS278 in Marine [sic] Park. Have that come to your
7 attention, because that's for years?

8 KEVIN MORAN: I'll be there tomorrow and
9 I'll come back to you. I'll get a report.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: That was before
11 my time. if it was my time, it would not go for
12 years, but not-- I want it to be fixed, and not only
13 the school in the 46th District but throughout the
14 City, because the children cannot function if it's
15 hot and believe me, they want to be outside not
16 inside a classroom. I have a question on swimming
17 pool. Our children, one out of three of black and
18 Asian, and I will say one out of four Hispanic, they
19 don't know how to swim. To that point, a recent
20 report stated that we have about 33 operating pools
21 inside our school, and another 15 were under
22 renovation. How is that progress going?

23 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, so your numbers are
24 right on target. The problem that we experience is
25 the last pool we built in the City of New York was in

1
2 1993. That occurred at Fort Hamilton High School in
3 Brooklyn. We'd like to see continued investments in
4 that space. We agree with you. We partner with New
5 York City Parks Department on opportunities to
6 increase access, as well as Department of Health in
7 their Making Waves programs, and a list of CBOs that
8 we could take advantage of private pools. I would
9 say the Department of Health has a really good
10 presentation where you could see a full mapping of
11 the City and thousands of pool permits they give both
12 in public and private spaces. Certainly, we know the
13 number you pointed out that the schools are in
14 disrepair. It would cost a significant amount of
15 money. We estimated it somewhere around \$300 million
16 dollars to bring all 51 pools back online, and any
17 new school pool construction would be inwards of
18 around \$50 million. And those are preliminary
19 numbers, but I would say we're working in earnest
20 with this Administration to make this a key issue for
21 us and to increase access to our PSAL sports team and
22 ultimately the lifeguard recruiting pipeline. But
23 teaching the students to swim at the lower grades is
24 something that we partner up in the second grade with
25 the Department of Health in their Making Waves

1
2 program. It's a very successful program, and we look
3 forward to the planning in the next plan to see how
4 we might remedy this issue.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay, now I'm
6 going to go to lead testing. Hundreds of our schools
7 repeatedly been tested positive from the spill-- I
8 mean, the lead painting from 2020. We're saying that
9 we should not have any lead painting in our school
10 building. Is there still lead painting right now in
11 our schools?

12 JOHN SHEA: Sure, great question, Council
13 Member. There's two big pieces to our lead program
14 in New York City schools, one is lead paint, one is
15 lead in water. We do have both lead paint in
16 schools as well as fixtures that might test for
17 elevated levels of lead. That is fairly typical, but
18 we comply with all of the testing and remediation
19 laws that are put in place to make sure that we can
20 mitigate those issues and make sure that our kids are
21 safe in both of those cases. They just, as a matter
22 of fact, changed the state law with regards to lead
23 in water, and lowered the action level threshold from
24 15 parts per billion to five parts per billion in the
25 testing cycle. So all New York City schools, every

1
2 single one of our fixtures that's in the cohort is
3 tested. It's over 140,000 every years that we are
4 testing, and like I said, we test those on a three
5 year cycle. Any fixture that tests above the action
6 level is immediately taken out of service, and that
7 is remediated. We inform school communities when
8 this work is going on, and we make sure that most
9 importantly those fixtures that do test elevated are
10 not in use until they're remediated-- make sure that
11 our kids remain safe.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you. And
13 most of the school that place around the housing
14 development and I think that's where we should focus
15 a lot, because we still have complaint about our
16 children having brain issues, different things,
17 functional issues, and so is the seniors having
18 difficulty remembering things, and some of them still
19 complaining. So if you can put attention to that,
20 that would be very greatly appreciated. Before I go,
21 \$15 million dollars state of the art working farm
22 that's in District 46 we talking about. Where are we
23 are? Where we are now? When it's supposed to be
24 completed? Thank you, Mr. [inaudible].

25

1
2 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: Yeah, so we completed
3 design. We went into bid. We awarded the contract.
4 I know that there's some delay between awarding the
5 contract and actually getting the shovels in the
6 ground. I think it had to do with permitting, but
7 that work is starting, and completion within two
8 years.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay. I heard
10 the complain about the collaboration, that we want to
11 see more City Council in our district. Community
12 Board, I have seen you, but the one other thing I'm
13 going to tell you honestly, when you have a project,
14 if we don't know about it, how can we help, and we
15 are here to represent to be the-- to amplify our
16 constituent's voice. So therefore, we need to know,
17 because I will tell you, when the city [sic] farm--
18 I'm a farm girl. I grew up since I was five years
19 old going to the farm with my grandmother. Now, this
20 farm was opening in my back yard, and I've been
21 supporting farms, and I did not know. I was just
22 like a guest and my predecessor was the one, unless--
23 so, unless my predecessor going to continue funding
24 you, but if it's me, I need to know. So, thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
3 Member Narcisse. I wanted to follow up on the lead.
4 How many lead have you identified in water and what
5 do you do once you identify there's lead in the
6 water?

7 JOHN SHEA: Great question. We've been
8 testing for lead for quite some time. I could get
9 you the numbers on how many fixtures have tested over
10 the action level and how many we've remediated over
11 time, but we-- once we do get that elevated level,
12 first thing we do is take those fixtures out of
13 service, and we replace them, and then we test them
14 again to make sure that they're below the action
15 level before we put them back into service.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How long does that
17 take?

18 JOHN SHEA: It depends on a number of
19 factors about how long it takes to actually replace
20 the fixture.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct.

22 JOHN SHEA: It doesn't-- you're talking--
23 it should not be more than weeks.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You sure?
25

1
2 JOHN SHEA: If there are situations where
3 you are hearing from schools that it is not done as
4 with all of these issues, I would encourage you to,
5 you know, let the principal know to tell the
6 custodian, or you can follow up with me directly.
7 We're happy to look at those things. If there's
8 something that we've missed, we're going to make sure
9 we're going to take care of it.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, I'll send over
11 the school to you.

12 JOHN SHEA: That's fine.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Council
14 Member Restler? Yeah, great.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I'm ready. I
16 didn't realize I needed to be, but I am. It is good
17 to see you all. Thank you, Chair Joseph and Speaker
18 Adams for your leadership. Chair Joseph says I need
19 to be nicer sometimes in these hearings. Mercedes
20 agrees. So, I will say something nice. I want to
21 shout out Kevin who does a phenomenal job, and every
22 time we reach out to him on local issues in our
23 schools, he is on it in a millisecond and really
24 helps. And having somebody who can move things at
25 DFS as well as he does, it really makes a difference.

1
2 I just want to thank him and if-- I know it's not a
3 one person thing, it's a team. So I just want to
4 express gratitude for this important partnership. I
5 am most concerned again about 3K. And so I wanted to
6 just try to get some additional information. The
7 largest decline in the capacity program is attributed
8 to 3K decreasing from \$1.4 billion to \$756 million
9 dollars, so cut in half. Could you please explain to
10 us why you think we can cut in half the capital
11 spending that was planned for 3K at this time?

12 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: so, again, I think
13 the-- we talked about the push of the capital from
14 this plan to next plan. I think just to--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] So
16 that means in 2028 we'll talking about making
17 additional investments in 3K?

18 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: So, this Capital Plan
19 ends 2024, so we're talking to 2025. So that's--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]
21 2025, okay.

22 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: Correct, a year and
23 change. I will say that we have created over-- or in
24 the process of creating over 6,400 3K seats, and
25 that's not to mention the ones that are in existing

1
2 DOE buildings. You know, I think I do want to turn
3 it over to Dan to talk about sort of the realignment
4 of the need versus the build, which is what we're
5 taking a pause to do.

6 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yeah,
7 it doesn't mean we're not adding any, but when we
8 have 55,000 seats and at this point-- at this point
9 we only have enrollment of about 43,000, and in many--
10 - in many areas, not all areas, but in many areas, we
11 do have oversaturation. We don't want to exacerbate
12 that issue by creating additional capacity, but
13 certainly there are areas where there is higher
14 demand, and we hope there's going to be many more
15 areas with higher demand and we'll respond to those.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I will spare
17 Chair Joseph the repeat conversation that we had from
18 just an hour ago around why I think we are facing the
19 challenges that we're facing on 3K enrollment that I
20 think are self-inflicted by the Department of
21 Education, but I am very concerned about the
22 reduction in seats that we're creating to meet the
23 needs of three year olds around New York City Early
24 Childhood. We all understand, and I hope agree, on
25 the importance of Early Childhood Education. Can you

1
2 provide a breakdown by school district of the \$750
3 million dollars that you're not spending on seats
4 that you're not creating in the next two years?

5 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: So, the 6,400 seats
6 that we are creating were out of-- sorry-- were based
7 on needs that we were given in the areas of need that
8 we were given. Again, we have stopped that program,
9 so I don't think that we can say for the sort of
10 theoretical money that has not been spent for--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] So
12 there had been no plan for where those seats would be
13 allocated in which districts? It was just money that
14 was put into the hope that--

15 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: [interposing] I think
16 that's exactly what the Accenture study is looking at
17 is to figure out where those--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] SCA
19 had no internal plan for how you were going to spend
20 down this money over the next two years for where you
21 were expanding 3K seats, is that what you're telling
22 us?

23 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: We worked with Early
24 Childhood Education to provide us with those areas of
25 need.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: It's very hard
3 for me to believe that you didn't have a plan for how
4 that money was going to be spent, and so we'd like to
5 understand where the intention that you had for those
6 resources. What school districts, what communities
7 are not getting the 3K seats that we were expecting
8 and that we need and deserve? That is what we're
9 looking for and I really hope that you'll provide
10 that information to the Council and follow up to this
11 hearing if you're unable to provide it today.

12 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: Okay, thank you.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay. I will
14 also bug you on a couple of parochial issues because
15 I still have time. So, we have a desperate need for
16 a new school and elementary school in District 14. I
17 know you've been working hard on it. Can you provide
18 us any update on a new location for a safe-- that is
19 safe site? It's not on a super fund location where
20 we could open a new elementary school in northern
21 Greenpoint?

22 VICE PRESIDENT LIU: Thank you Council
23 Member for the question. As you know, we have to
24 schedule a meeting you sometime next week so we can
25 provide you updates. We do appreciate the great--

1
2 there is a great need for the new school and we're
3 working really hard to figure out-- to identify the
4 site and brief you on what we have learned.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay, and then
6 last point I'll make, and I would love your thoughts,
7 your collective thoughts on this. Is-- the Bloomberg
8 Administration did a great job of starting a lot of
9 small schools. Or they did a-- they decided to start
10 a lot of small schools. I'll take my-- I won't
11 editorialize. But what I think we failed to do in
12 the intervening decade is assess which of those
13 schools are really working and need to be expanded
14 upon. And so for example, the Harry Van Arsdale
15 Campus in Williamsburg, we have three great schools
16 that each of 600 kids, Brooklyn Prep, Williamsburg
17 Prep, and as WHSAD, Williamsburg High School of
18 Architecture and Design. Chair Joseph even came and
19 visited it with me, although she's been to every
20 school in the City of New York. It's extraordinary,
21 really. There isn't a school I talk to that doesn't
22 know Rita. But they are busting at the seams, and I
23 keep trying with my superintendent. I keep trying
24 with Office of School Planning and folks at TWEED
25 [sic] to identify. We've got great schools that

1
2 deserve to expand, that need to expand, but there's
3 been no thought or planning to actually make that
4 happen. If the idea of seeding these small schools
5 was let's see what works, we haven't given them, the
6 ones that are really thriving, the opportunity to
7 grow. What can we do about that?

8 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So,
9 here's an area, Council Member, where I think we're
10 in complete agreement.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Oh, my gosh.

12 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: We're
13 making history, Chair. This is-- so but I think you
14 are absolutely right that part of the rationale
15 behind creating these small schools was seeding a lot
16 of good ideas and themes and expanding, scaling what
17 works, which is one of the Chancellor's pillars, and
18 I wouldn't say we have great capacity yet at the
19 superintendent level and at our level to make those
20 things happen. We've got so many schools with
21 tremendous-- that are doing a tremendous job and have
22 tremendous good will and brands in the community,
23 like the ones at Van Arsdale you're talking about.
24 We need to then make sure we're mobilizing around how
25 do we expand that. Sometimes that might mean

1
2 another site that's being created by an assistant
3 principal from that school is becoming a principal.
4 Sometimes it means finding a site to move that school
5 to where they can expand. We are doing those things
6 here and there.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Well, what
8 advice do you have for me? I've met with leadership
9 at TWEED. I've met with the superintendent, and they
10 basically kind of raised their--

11 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:
12 [interposing] Yes, so--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: shoulders. I
14 need help. I want to grow these schools that are
15 doing so well and that are-- cannot fit within the
16 building.

17 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:
18 Council Member, I think you are doing-- you are doing
19 exactly what you should be doing to push us. So, I'm
20 going to take this. This is not one that I heard
21 about. And these are the sorts of things that we all
22 collectively have to mobilize, think creatively--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]
24 Brooklyn Prep has got this amazing AP African-
25 American Studies course. They're a terrific school.

1
2 These are exactly the places that we want to support.
3 So let's figure it out together. I appreciate the
4 openness.

5 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: We're
6 with you. Yes--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]
8 Thank you.

9 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: We
10 will get back to you on that one for sure.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you for
12 the latitude, Chair.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
14 Member. I have question on ratios I wanted to ask.
15 The School Construction Authority is no longer using
16 program ratios for middle and high schools. These
17 ratios were used to account for smaller class sizes,
18 and why these ratios are no longer needed, and how
19 you're ensuring you're hitting your current capacity
20 caps in classrooms?

21 VICE PRESIDENT LIU: Thank you, Chair.
22 As you mentioned, program ratio was adjustment that
23 we included in the Blue Book calculation back then.
24 Now for some flexibility, it is to really account
25 for-- allow the principal to choose between

1
2 implementing smaller class size or have more easier
3 or straightforward programming. So, at the time we
4 didn't have-- we haven't adopted the lower class
5 size. Since in 2021, we have officially adopted all
6 the lower class size in our calculation. Program
7 efficiency ratio was no longer needed and we dropped
8 it from the calculation.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And as the Speaker
10 spoke about earlier, you keeping class-- the new law
11 in mind as you build out these new schools to meet
12 the needs of our students. Okay. SCA has reported
13 that a decrease in funding represent a shift from the
14 plan to the next. What sort of shifts are you
15 occurred based on budgeting? And out of the 7,000
16 pre-k/3K seats, are there any seats for pre-k special
17 needs that's also going to be-- we have about 7,000
18 students with special needs. Are you thinking about
19 them as you're building schools as well? And how
20 many of those seats are D75 for pre-k?

21 VICE PRESIDENT LIU: So, for the pre-k
22 seats, what really-- do is, when we find a site, we
23 try to maximize the number of classrooms that can be
24 provided at each of the pre-k centers. When they
25 open, we then turn the space over to Department of

1
2 Education in terms of programming. I know there are
3 times where-- especially where we build new buildings
4 where we have D75, for elementary school buildings,
5 pre-k, K, Early Childhood, D75 seats will be provided
6 as part of the new building. I don't-- we don't have
7 the-- D75 stays a part of pre-k program right here,
8 but I'm sure we can get back to you.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, we do have
10 preschool students with disabilities. I want to make
11 sure they're being thought of because they're always
12 an afterthought.

13 VICE PRESIDENT LIU: Absolutely.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And we want to make
15 sure that these students are accounted for.

16 VICE PRESIDENT LIU: Yep.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Dan agrees with me.
18 We're making history today, I tell you. So, when we
19 talk about D75, you know, there's different types of
20 service needed for each of the students. How are you
21 building out for them? Because we know some of our
22 schools are still not accessible. I've visited
23 schools that have five floors and there's no
24 elevator, there's no ramp, not even a ramp to get
25 them at least through the front door.

1
2 PRESIDENT KUBOTA: Right, right. And I
3 think, you know, we should probably talk about some
4 accessibility in terms of D75 schools or programs for
5 those. I will say for-- obviously, for new schools
6 where we have elevators and things like that. In
7 terms of the programming for the D75 seats within, we
8 try to build it as flexibly as possible, whether it's
9 12 to one to one, six to one to one, how it ends up
10 being used is not known at the time of design or even
11 construction, but we work with the DOE to make sure
12 that we're building it as flexibly as possible, and
13 put in the right equipment at the, you know, final
14 stages of construction. But that's not addressing
15 your existing facility questions. So I'd like to
16 turn that over to Tom.

17 TOM TARATKO: So, Chair Joseph, so you
18 know that we work very closely with our advocates,
19 the Arise Coalition and Advocates for Children, and
20 one of the clear things that we heard years ago were,
21 you know, you place schools in these buildings that
22 are inaccessible, and that is true, from 30 years
23 ago, handshake deals where schools were place. That
24 is no longer the case, as the Office of District
25 Planning is well aware of the accessibility needs of

1
2 these kids, so we talk about that as collocations or
3 expansions are being talked about nowadays. But
4 right now, due to the work with our advocate friends,
5 and they are our partners. They're very good in
6 telling us what to do and how to do it. We are
7 working currently in 38 buildings that house D75
8 programs. D75 has a higher accessibility percentage
9 across the City than do our general education sites
10 now, and that's because of the work the SCA and DOE
11 have been doing over the last two Capital Plans,
12 because they are a driver on how we select our
13 district programs. If we're looking at a district,
14 we look at geographic, we look at how many kids it
15 serves, what specialized programs they have, and D75
16 is the number one of those specialized programs. So
17 they get the majority of the projects, and we're
18 working in 38 buildings that house District 75
19 programs now. So that 75 percent accessibility will
20 go up and you'll see a goal from us coming for the
21 next Capital Plan that will hopefully get them almost
22 to 100 percent where feasible.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Also,
24 we-- my colleague stressed that earlier building out
25

1
2 the gyms. Are you also thinking because our students
3 with disabilities have adapted Phys. Ed?

4 TOM TARATKO: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Are we thinking
6 about them as well?

7 TOM TARATKO: Well, with the services--
8 services rendered, whether it be physical therapy,
9 occupational therapy, gym, yes, but a lot of it is
10 what President Kubota said was-- is about specialized
11 equipment and then the dedicated space. So we're
12 working on the existing schools to make sure those
13 kids have that dedicated space, you know. Whether it
14 be that curtain or wall in a gym or something else,
15 yes, we'll look into that.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And our playgrounds
17 also have to be ADA compliant.

18 TOM TARATKO: That is going to be
19 included in all of our projects when we go forward.
20 It's going to be accessible playground equipment.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank
22 you for your testimonies today. Thank you. We spent
23 a lot of time together today.

24 FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank
25 you Chair.

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PRESIDENT KUBOTA: Thank you, Chair.

FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: And thank you Speaker and staff.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to the Administration. We will now turn to public testimony. We will be limiting public testimony today to three minutes each. For in-person panelists, please come up to the table once your name has been called. For virtual panelists, once your name is called, a member of our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms will set the timer and give you the go-ahead to begin. Please wait for the Sergeant to announce that you may begin before delivering your testimony. Our first panel will be a hybrid panel. We'll hear from one virtual panelist before returning to in-person panelists, and then concluding with all virtual panelists. Our first panel will include Michael Mulgrew, Henry Rubio, Donald Nesbit, and Shirley Aldebol. For all in-person panelists, you can make your way to the table. Michael Mulgrew, you may begin your testimony.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you. And I want - first, would like to thank our Speaker, Speaker Adams, and of course our Chair, Chair Rita Joseph for

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2 having these hearings, and to all the members of the
3 City Council. As-- I will quickly do my testimony
4 about the things that we know that are working that
5 you have been great partners with us about, our
6 Teacher Centers, United Community Schools, the UFT
7 Member Assistance Programs, the things that you have
8 funded that we can as always say the money went where
9 you wanted it to go and exactly delivering the
10 service on behalf of the students and the teachers
11 and everybody working in the schools of New York
12 City. The main point of my testimony I want to be
13 about today is really about the class size law. You
14 know, and I've heard a lot of discussion about today,
15 and I've also-- I heard a lot of discussion about it
16 since the law has been passed, and I want everyone to
17 remember one thing. This is not something that the
18 City has a decision on whether they want to comply
19 with it or not. This is a law. This is the law in
20 the State of New York that New York City's school
21 system must lower its class sizes. And again, this
22 year, we had close to a thousand people in Albany on
23 Monday lobbying on behalf of funding, as we have
24 always done for the students and the parents and the
25 communities of New York City, and we saw the

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2 Governor's budget, the two-- one house budget came
3 out yesterday, and it's again record among of funding
4 coming to our school system. New York City will
5 receive an additional billion dollars over what they
6 received last year. So, I know the Administration
7 has their political lines to say, but I want to say
8 this emphatically and clearly to everyone. This law
9 is a fully-funded mandate. Again, this law is a
10 fully-funded mandate. And yes, we know for the first
11 two years of the law that we can come into compliance
12 quite easily, but this law is going to require a lot
13 of planning in years three, four, and five, and
14 that's the frustration that you are hearing in my
15 voice right now, as well as so many parents and
16 advocacy groups across this city. In order to really
17 comply with this law, and to do-- have the best
18 interest of students at-hand, we have to have a
19 comprehensive plan in place as soon as possible. And
20 it's disheartening to see at the same time that the
21 City's Capital Plan has lowered by 38 percent.
22 That's 21,000 seats, seats that were in last year's
23 Capital Plan which is absurd that we're lowering the
24 seats at the same time we're trying to-- the City is
25 saying they need additional money to create seats

1 because it's not a funded mandate, which is just not
2 true. So, at times when you see these things
3 happening in the budget, it makes us think about
4 maybe the City's trying to create a scenario where
5 they're saying they can't comply. But it's not an--
6 it's not whether they can or cannot, they must follow
7 the law in New York State. Recently when we were
8 dealing with collocations for charter schools--

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10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank
11 you. Time has expired.

12 MICHAEL MULGREW: in our city, we heard
13 over and over again the City saying the same thing.
14 We will comply with the law. We want to hear the
15 same thing when it comes to class size. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank
17 you, President Mulgrew.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Henry Rubio?

19 HENRY RUBIO: Good afternoon. I'm Henry
20 Rubio, President of the Council for School
21 Supervisors and Administrators. On behalf of the
22 17,000 principals, assistant principals, educational
23 administrators, supervisors of Early Childhood
24 directors and assistant directors of our Early
25 Childhood Centers, I truly appreciate the opportunity

1 to provide some input into the 2024 budget. Before I
2 begin, I want to especially thank our Speaker for her
3 presence and support and thank our Chair Joseph and
4 every committee member for the smart, strategic, and
5 very sophisticated questions that you asked today
6 that were very important. Now, chief among CSA's
7 concerns is the issue of pay parity. The success of
8 Pre-k and 3K initiatives are dependent on the
9 directors and assistant directors of Early Childhood
10 Centers run by community-based organizations. Yet,
11 the DOE-- their DOE colleagues in public schools
12 buildings still to this day earn more than twice as
13 much. CBO directors and assistant directors who are
14 about 90 percent black and brown women of color
15 perform substantially equal work under similar
16 working conditions. Centers continuously share, and
17 we have witnesses throughout the years that the pay
18 parity disparity hinders their ability to recruit and
19 retain the leaders they need for their Pre-K and 3K
20 centers. This pay scale inequity smacks of racial
21 injustice and patent unfairness, but also threatens
22 and compromises both the current and future stability
23 and quality of Early Childhood Education for our
24 city. The DOE often asserts that the same standards
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1
2 apply in all Early Childhood programs, but as long as
3 CBO directors are paid on a lower scale and treated
4 like second-class citizens and the children they
5 serve are then stigmatized and branded as less-
6 important. That makes the pay-- what makes the pay
7 disparity even more egregious is that these
8 professionals work tirelessly during the pandemic,
9 and their programs were the lifeline of this city and
10 its families, and especially throughout this
11 pandemic. when many city workers had the ability to
12 work remotely, these directors, these mostly women
13 that were designated as essential workers, and they
14 took care of our city's children for doctors, for
15 firefighters, EMTs, police officers, and other
16 families that could not work remotely. Previously
17 the City Council recommended \$42 million dollars to
18 be earmarked in the budget for these Early Childhood
19 directors. We know that the Speaker, our Education
20 Chair and many other members of the City Council are
21 on-record to support pay parity for our members. In
22 1987, it marked the celebration of Women's History
23 Month on a federal level during the month of March.
24 We plead that the City mark 2024 the end of pay

1 parity for minority women educators and leaders.

2 Thank you. Thank you so much.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
4 testimony. Donald Nesbit?

5 DONALD NESBIT: Good afternoon members of
6 the Council. We extend our gratitude to the Speaker,
7 to Chairperson Rita Joseph and the distinguished
8 members of the New York City Council. I am Donald
9 Nesbit, Executive Vice President Local 372 District
10 Council, AFSCME. I am here to provide testimony on
11 behalf of the 24,000 members that we represent under
12 the leadership of Shaun D. Francois I. The workers
13 we represent are school crossing guards, school lunch
14 employees, school aides, family workers, SAPIS, amid
15 our community titles in the school. The future of
16 our education system is one of the most important
17 things that we can do. The title of school crossing
18 guard was once considered a seasonal position, and as
19 a result, school crossing guards don't get paid for
20 days when schools are shut down. Whereas the Mayor
21 has made an investment in school crossing guards with
22 \$18 dollar increase pending ratification of our new
23 tentative agreement. We request that school crossing
24 guards are compensated in the same manner that school
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1 employees are compensated. School lunch employees on
2 a normal day feed all of our children, and during the
3 time of the pandemic, they extended this reach by
4 feeding the entire community. During the pandemic,
5 tens of millions of meals were served. This is
6 demanding work and current guidelines spread the
7 staff thin. Whether cooking from scratch, increase
8 in breakfast in the classroom programs, there always
9 new programs increases in feeding, yet we have
10 shortages that make it extremely difficult for us to
11 maintain the level of productivity. A way to
12 alleviate this is by hiring additional staff. Local
13 372 again request 500 to 1,000 additional school
14 lunch employees. The same goes also, if you can't
15 stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.
16 Unfortunately, school lunch employees cannot get out
17 of that kitchen. We request that the City once and
18 for all add cooling situations what prevent heat
19 emergencies and possibly heat-related death. Local
20 372 is also in support of beautifying our areas
21 through the re-design of our cafeterias. SAPIS
22 employees have provided mental health services to our
23 students through a social/emotional strategies that
24 they use to maintain students-- make sure that
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2 students remain learning-ready. COVID has actually
3 added to the drastic mental health conditions, and
4 whereas we see the DOE has recognized this. Some of
5 the incidents that have been reported have been
6 suicide related, and SAPIS are ready, willing and
7 able to step in. And as before, Local 372 has
8 testified of the drastic effect of non-investment
9 into mental health services. So local 372 in the
10 past has requested and has been grateful that the
11 Council has matched dollar for dollar the amount that
12 the State Legislature has put into the SAPIS program
13 and we request that the Council and the City do this
14 again. We request more parent coordinators and
15 community titles that help parents navigate of the
16 difficulties that COVID-- post-COVID era will present
17 itself, more money to address the homeless crisis the
18 city workers experience. Members of Local 372 buy
19 more affordable housing within our city. We request
20 secure funding also for our daycares and pre-k
21 programs and contracts so that the members that work
22 these programs are also paid on time. We also extend
23 our gratitude once again to the New York City
24 Council, you Chair Joseph and the Speaker for the

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2 exemplary work that you do around our education
3 program in schools. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much.
5 Shirley Aldebol?

6 SHIRLEY ALDEBOL: Good afternoon, Chair
7 Joseph and members of the Education Committee. My
8 name is Shirley Aldebol and I'm Executive Vice
9 President of SEIU 32BJ. As you are aware, 32BJ is
10 the nation's largest property services union
11 representing cleaners, property maintenance workers,
12 door persons, security officers, building engineers,
13 school, airport, food service workers across the east
14 coast with 85,000 members in New York. And
15 yesterday, we settled our Bronx contract for 2,400
16 residential workers, and I just want to thank the
17 City. I want to do a plug, a shameless plug, and
18 thank our City Council Members who supported us in
19 that fight. I am speaking to you today on behalf of
20 5,100 cleaners and handypersons employed in New York
21 City schools, support services, and represented by
22 Local 32BJ to call on the City Council to fully fund
23 our city schools including funding for schools'
24 cleaning and maintenance. These hardworking men and
25 women employed by New York City School Support

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2 Services, otherwise known as NYCSSS work under a
3 contract with the Department of Education to provide
4 school facility cleaning and maintenance services.
5 Since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic these
6 essential workers have been on the front lines
7 putting themselves at risk in order to keep students
8 and staff healthy. While schools were closed to
9 students and teachers, they became resource and
10 childcare centers for children of first responders,
11 food distribution hubs, COVID testing sites and more.
12 The school facility staff made sure the schools could
13 remain healthy and safe places for the community at
14 large. The hiring freeze in 2020 and 2021 led to a
15 staffing shortage of nearly 750 workers citywide.
16 Since the reopening of the New York City public
17 schools to students, teachers and staff, workloads
18 for our members have increased and maintenance staff
19 has had to work overtime to deal with the staffing
20 shortages as well as enhanced cleaning and
21 disinfection protocols. As we determine our budget
22 for next year, spending to ensure that New York
23 City's public schools buildings are clean and safe
24 should be a top priority. Maintaining our public
25 schools buildings is necessary to facilitate student

1 learning as it creates a dignified and positive
2 educational setting. Unfortunately, New York City
3 school facilities budget is structurally underfunded,
4 often leaving students' learning environments in
5 state of disrepair. There are still funds from the
6 seven billion dollar package of COVID relief stimulus
7 from the Federal Government that can be used towards
8 fixing this problem and making sure New York City
9 students are educated in a clean, safe, and healthy
10 environment. To that end, NYCSSS must be operating
11 at full capacity, not facing cuts in hours and
12 positions. Funding for NYCSSS represents a small
13 portion of the DOE's annual spending. Under the
14 Mayor's proposal, the NYCSSS funding represents less
15 than two percent of the DOE budget. Even then, the
16 Mayor's proposal for Fiscal Year 2024 falls short of
17 fully funding NYCSSS. However, despite the two
18 percent place in the budget, it has an outside impact
19 on the welfare of our school community. We cannot
20 afford to reduce maintenance or cleaning in New York
21 City Schools in the midst of an ongoing public health
22 crisis. An investment in New York City School
23 Support Services is an investment in the trained
24 cleaning and maintenance workforce we need to ensure
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2 the safety of more than a million public school
3 students, teacher, staff, and particularly in black
4 and brown communities that have historically been
5 underserved. And I appreciate your attention today.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I'm going
7 to start with Donald. What-- how many school
8 crossing guards are you short? Put on your mic,
9 please.

10 DONALD NESBIT: The School Crossing Guard
11 Unit, we have seen an increase of retired school
12 crossing guards. So the total exact number, I don't
13 have now, but we can get it to you.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, please get it
15 to me. You mentioned earlier about them getting paid
16 like regular staff. Can you give us more details on
17 that?

18 DONALD NESBIT: Yeah, so on days where
19 schools are closed like snow days, other school
20 employees are actually paid for those days. Because
21 they work for the Police Department, they are not
22 paid for those days, because they are under a
23 separate agreement, a different agreement. Being
24 that they're school-related and their job is so
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2 attached to school, we request that when everybody
3 else is off and paid, they should be as well.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, and you said
5 you don't know how many-- for the cleaners, you
6 mentioned there was a pay freeze, and how many
7 cleaners do you have across the City?

8 SHIRLEY ALDEBOL: We have approximately
9 5,100 cleaners across over 1,000 school buildings.
10 We have-- during the freeze, it wasn't a wage freeze,
11 it was a--

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Hiring.

13 SHIRLEY ALDEBOL: hiring freeze. We fell
14 short about 750 cleaners because of retirements,
15 because of people leaving, you know, leaving the
16 employment. There were also-- there was also some
17 level of reduction of temporary employees and part-
18 time employees so that number was reduced down by 7--
19 between 750 and 1,000 cleaners. So when school
20 reopened after-- fully reopened after COVID and
21 students came back to the classroom and teachers came
22 back to the classrooms, there were 750 less cleaners
23 to clean the schools and do the Administration
24 enhanced disinfection and cleaning that was required
25 of them. So--

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2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] How
3 were there sharing out the staff? How was that going
4 with a reduction of 700?

5 SHIRLEY ALDEBOL: They were pay-- you
6 know, they were basically doing it on overtime, which
7 is, you know,-- it just becomes unsustainable because
8 people were working six, seven days a week to keep
9 the schools cleaned and properly maintained. And
10 now, the issues the now is that there has been a
11 structural deficit in NYCSSS budget and that deficit
12 has grown year after year after year, and you know,
13 it keeps going to a budget modification. And you
14 know, we hope and advocate and, you know, so that
15 that budget gap gets closed every, you know, November
16 or January. But that deficit it's just kicking the
17 can down the road where it's potentially grown to
18 upwards of \$250 million dollar gap between, you know,
19 the actual, you know, actual cost and what's funded.
20 So our concern is that if you don't close that gap
21 now, it's just going to continue to grow, and if we--
22 once that stimulus money runs out, we're going to
23 have a problem, and possibly face job loss in, you
24 know, an area of work that is essential to the
25

1
2 maintenance and running of New York City public
3 schools.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

5 President Rubio, how many-- in pay parity, how many
6 staffers are you looking for this pay parity, how
7 many?

8 HENRY RUBIO: Thanks you for the
9 question, Chair Joseph. We have 170 directors and
10 assistant directors that work in these CBOs and that
11 sort of thing.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That needs this pay
13 parity.

14 HENRY RUBIO: Absolutely.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How long have you
16 been advocating for this pay parity?

17 HENRY RUBIO: For many, many years. In
18 fact, we were in the midst of negotiations with the City
19 prior to the pandemic, and during those talks we--
20 the Daycare Council that represents the centers made
21 a very fair offer to the union of these workers for
22 pay parity that we actually accepted twice, and that
23 the City refused to fund.

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2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. I noticed in
3 your paper you said there's a lawsuit. Council
4 Member Schulman?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you,
6 Chair, and thank you everybody for testifying today.
7 So I had a few questions. one, the school crossing
8 guards, I know you're going to get the number for
9 Chair, but if you have a breakdown by district, that
10 would be helpful, because then we know ourselves how
11 to advocate for that in our own districts, and
12 that'll aid weight to what you want to do.

13 HENRY RUBIO: Yes, I'll get breakdown by
14 precinct.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay.

16 HENRY RUBIO: Yes.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Alright, thank
18 you. And also the cleaner, in terms of the cleaners,
19 do you have the equipment that you need to clean or
20 is that something else that needs to be funded?

21 SHIRLEY ALDEBOL: As far as I know, we
22 get the -- we have the equipment that we need to
23 clean. I mean, there are-- I mean, depending on the
24 school. You know, each school has its budget for
25 supplies and we have had complaints from members

1 that, you know, they don't have enough toilet paper
2 to stock the bathrooms. You know, simple things
3 that, you know, can be very easily overlooked, but
4 you know, it's important that they have these things
5 so they can do what they need to do to--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: [interposing]

7 Right, because why-- I mean, while we're on the
8 topic, we might as well have all the equipment, all
9 the--

10 SHIRLEY ALDEBOL: [interposing] Equipment,
11 everything.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: everything that
13 they need so that-- yeah, if you put that together
14 for us as well, that would be helpful.

15 SHIRLEY ALDEBOL: Sure.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: And President
17 Rubio, one-- I mean, if you were watching the
18 testimony this morning, we're very supportive of
19 this. the New York City Public Schools, which us
20 their-- what they're calling themselves I think now,
21 as opposed to DOE, we talked-- we asked them about
22 parity and they weren't-- the answers weren't
23 substantive enough, I think. So whatever we can do
24 to be helpful there. We are aware of the situation.
25

1
2 I think you have the support of the Council. I know
3 the Chair has spoken about it. The Speaker has
4 spoken about it. You and I have had conversations,
5 but yeah, we asked them-- they said they have a plan
6 but they don't seem to have-- and I don't know where
7 that is. Are you still having conversations with
8 them? That's what I wanted to--

9 HENRY RUBIO: [interposing] Yes, I've been
10 watching the hearing all day and commend the entire
11 committee and Chair Joseph. You guys are doing an
12 amazing job, and there's been no communication from
13 City Hall regarding this issue or the Department of
14 Education, but we are ready and willing to commence
15 conversations when they are regarding pay parity for
16 our CBO directors and we're eager to do that. I
17 think this is a carry-over issue that needs to be
18 resolved, and I think this is the time to do it.
19 Council Member Schulman, if I could just take a point
20 of liberty here just to say in the time that our
21 school principals are ultimately responsible for the
22 school safety and operations, and this wasn't
23 planned, and I'm getting you know, a little emotional
24 here, because as a school principal in New York City
25 myself, the work of our cleaners and crossing guards

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2 is essential to the safe operation of our school,
3 right? And so I want to commend our colleagues for
4 doing that. And the role of our cleaners has
5 diminished prior to COVID and again, they're being
6 squeezed, and it's going to impact our schools and
7 the quality of cleanliness. So I just wanted to
8 advocate for you guys as well. And I thank you,
9 Council Member, for your support.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: No, and I
11 appreciate that. And also, just going back for a
12 second to the school crossing guards, I know in my
13 district, we have-- we don't have enough school
14 crossing guards, and so if we know exactly what's
15 going on, what I said, we can push, and then-- and
16 year I've gone to City Hall and spoken to them, but
17 it's remained an issue, and we, unfortunately, we had
18 some children that they weren't hurt badly but that
19 were grazed by cars in big intersections where there
20 was schools in the district and so forth. So we know
21 what it means to be able to have the school crossing
22 guards and what they-- and how they benefit our
23 schools and our children. So, across the board I
24 think we're very supportive. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
3 Member. Go ahead.

4 DONALD NESBIT: I have the numbers, Chair
5 Joseph. The DC37 Resource Department is [inaudible]
6 200 level one school crossing guards. I'll get that
7 breakdown by precinct. And for level two, the
8 supervisors, there's 30 that there's a shortage of.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. In our
10 Public Safety hearing that was something we brought
11 up with NYPD. They need to do better in recruitment.
12 They need better pay for these women, mostly women,
13 black and brown women doing this work. So, we're
14 there with you. I visit schools where the principals
15 are the crossing guards. And the days they have
16 meetings, there's no one to cross these young people.
17 And some of these streets in New York City are some
18 of the most dangerous. So thank you so much.

19 Council Member Dinowitz has questions.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Yeah, I mean,
21 the crossing guard issue is serious. There was a kid
22 in my community who got hit by a car just two weeks
23 ago, and I believe that wouldn't have happen if we
24 had enough crossing guards. First, I just want to
25 congratulate you on a contract. I was proud to march

1 with everyone in the Bronx. It's a huge deal. When
2 the Administration was here, we were asking about
3 contracts with, you know, outside vendors. I brought
4 up the DESSA exam half-jokingly. Any teacher knows
5 they're probably not using it. We spent 18 million
6 dollars on it. Do you hear from your principals
7 anything about the DOE giving directives that they
8 have to use certain use vendors, or they have to
9 engage in certain initiatives and are provided a list
10 of vendors that they have spent their school budgets
11 on. Are you hearing any of that?

12
13 HENRY RUBIO: Broadly and then more
14 specifically, I would say that we've testified in the
15 past arguing here that there are millions and
16 millions of dollars at the DOE that I think we all
17 believe are-- strongly believe could be managed much
18 better and those dollars could be in the classroom.
19 And millions of dollars spent on contracts that I
20 think like Council Member Brewer was discussing this
21 morning, we should be taking a very close look at and
22 we could be supportive in that and be in the cla--
23 and put that money towards the initiatives that we've
24 been talking about all morning here, including space.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: And do you--

1
2 HENRY RUBIO: [interposing] And then more
3 specifically, often, perhaps too often, principals
4 are I want to say, you know, forced to try to spend
5 their school dollars on contracted items that are not
6 necessarily in the best interest of their students.
7 And so often we will intervene in those instances and
8 so we get ahead of them when we can.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: And those are
10 let's say directives from somewhere above them.

11 HENRY RUBIO: Central or superintendent.
12 Most recently-- now, we're in conversations with the
13 Chancellor. Many districts across the city, our
14 principals are getting orders from their
15 superintendents that they are mandating one
16 particular curriculum and there is a lot of
17 resistance. We don't believe in that a one size fits
18 all. We can't throw out the baby with the bath
19 water, but I want to commend the Chancellor. Just in
20 the last week and a half, him and I have been having
21 conversations on how to do this in a way that is
22 strategic and not take curriculum away from schools
23 where it is working, but look at resources and
24 curriculum in areas where it's not working, right?

1
2 With subgroups and other districts or schools as
3 well.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Yeah, and I
5 would wonder if your members sort of share with you,
6 I guess, specific contracts. They're being told
7 specific-- again, my experience was seeing that on
8 the professional development side where a principal
9 would spend over a thousand dollars a day per teacher
10 for professional development that didn't help us, but
11 they were kind of pushed in that direction, and if
12 that's happening throughout the City, that's a
13 savings of millions of dollars and all they have to
14 do is listen to members. So, if you have a sort of
15 inventory of that, I think that would be helpful for
16 the DOE to kind of see directly from the principal--
17 you know, the principal and APs, what is and is not
18 working. And I just want to-- and I want to ask
19 about the ACs in the-- this was an issue before the
20 pandemic then obviously. The pandemic hit and we're
21 talking about ventilation. Do we have a sense of how
22 many school cafeterias have ACs and ventilation?

23 DONALD NESBIT: So, Council Member,
24 first, I want to thank Chairperson Joseph for
25 actually asking that question during the

1 Administration's hearing to get a response there.
2 There's -- we do-- we're conducting a study, but
3 there's been several studies over several years.
4 There's a huge problem in cafeterias. I myself was a
5 cook for many cafeterias, and for years we jokingly
6 said, hey, I'm working in a dungeon this period,
7 right-- a school that's 100 years old in a basement,
8 and sometimes we're looking at ACs that are in
9 schools, but the wiring doesn't support the AC,
10 right? I think there's a huge problem when to my
11 knowledge there's one vendor that services all of the
12 schools in regards to wiring and things when they
13 break down. And so members are made to look at a AC
14 that's sitting in a window for months and months
15 without a repair. I think that's an issue in
16 itself. Wiring needs to be addressed, and then if
17 we're going to talk about cooling these spaces,
18 certainly we need to do this immediately. Two City
19 Council sessions ago, the Speaker at the time, Corey
20 Johnson, actually in the Council put together a
21 study, and they were going to put money into the
22 Capital Budget for this, but it didn't happen, and
23 for us, we continuously every year request this,
24 because before a heat-related death occurs, and then
25

1
2 we're being reactive to it. We need to prevent this
3 from actually happening. And I'm going to be here,
4 you know, I'm not forgetting my roots every day. And
5 remembering those conditions from those cafeterias
6 and workers that still are in those conditions
7 suffering.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
10 Member Dinowitz.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to all our
12 panelists. We will now move on to our next panel:
13 Donovan Swanson, Salvatore Puglisi, Leah Storm Roche
14 [sp?], Jason Acosta. Please make your way to the
15 table and on deck we have Randi Levine, Melinda
16 Andra, Greg Mihailovich, Andrea Ortiz, and Suhali
17 Mendez.

18 DONOVAN SWANSON: Donovan Swanson,
19 Education and Engagement Policy Analyst for Brooklyn
20 Borough Hall. Good afternoon Chair Joseph and thank
21 you for holding this hearing today. The Office of
22 the Brooklyn Borough President is here today
23 advocating for families and students across Brooklyn
24 and all of New York City. Our recommendations and
25 priorities for the Department of Education or New

1
2 York City public schools and School Construction
3 Authority's budget for Fiscal Year 24 include
4 continued adjustments and engagement around Fair
5 Student Funding, expansion of 3K and Pre-K education,
6 improved school safety oversight and further
7 investments in other programs for our office that
8 hopes that DOE will sustain. Fair Student Funding:
9 while we applaud DOE for convening a variety of
10 stakeholders in the Fair Student Funding Taskforce,
11 we believe the agency could have done more. Although
12 multiple working sessions were open to the public,
13 DOE failed to strategically target specific
14 populations including, critically, youth. And we
15 also urge-- excuse me. The Taskforce's final report
16 even referenced the lack of authentic partnerships
17 between adults and youth and often they're silenced
18 throughout that experience. We also urge DOE to
19 reconsider the now dropped fourth taskforce
20 recommendation with regards to increasing base
21 foundation funding. It's unacceptable that the
22 status quo only provides base funding in the amount
23 of \$225,000 for a principal and a secretary, when we
24 know firsthand that schools rely on many other
25 administrative staff, including assistant principals,

1
2 guidance counselors, and social workers, which this
3 council has also elevated time and time again. While
4 the governor proposed state budget fully funds
5 foundation aide as per the Campaign for Fiscal
6 Equity's lawsuit in New York City, it is now New York
7 City's time to close the achievement gap for schools,
8 and it begins with the money allocated. Expansion
9 and oversight of 3K and Pre-K education, I just want
10 to say I'm very happy with the conversation and the
11 call to action here today. hearing directly from
12 parents and community members, it's imperative that
13 this Administration commits to the expansion and not
14 the reduction of Pre-K and 3K programs across the
15 City, providing quality childcare that directly
16 reflects community needs, and one of the many tools
17 our city has at its disposal, to increase equity. As
18 the Administration acknowledges within their many
19 blueprints, right, parents of color are most impacted
20 by childcare needs, and one of the reports even
21 estimated 375,000 parents had to leave or downshift
22 their jobs because of a lack of access to quality
23 childcare during the pandemic. And while there are
24 many things I would like to speak, you do have our
25 testimony and it is public, and we continue as an

1
2 office to engage with City Council on how to be
3 partners with many of these recommendations, whether
4 it be also in how do we execute class sizes and hold
5 DOE accountable to bringing down our class size, our
6 safety, and also more transparency around projects
7 like Project Pivot, and SAM [sic] allocations and
8 other additional programs like the expansion of dual
9 language, bilingual education programs, and highly-
10 sought out D75 programming similar to ASD Nest and
11 Horizon. Thank you again for the opportunity to
12 testify today. I look forward to working with the
13 Council throughout the budget process to ensure that
14 DOE and SCA have a robust budget that meets the City
15 needs across all of their programs. And again, we
16 stand here in partnership with the Council, so thank
17 you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Salvatore?

19 SALVATORE PUGLISI: Good afternoon. MY
20 name is Salvatore Puglisi and I am currently a Career
21 and Technical Education at the Urban Assembly School
22 for Emergency Management located at 411 Pearl Street
23 here in New York City. I'm here to discuss the
24 importance today of CPR training across New York City
25 schools, and also request sponsorship and funding to

1
2 purchase additional CPR equipment for all New York
3 City high schools. In 2019, with the-- excuse me.
4 In 2019 with the Teacher Passion [sic] Grant from the
5 SHIPI [sic] Foundation, the students at the Urban
6 Assembly School for Emergency Management created the
7 Hands to Heart CPR team after researching cardiac
8 arrest rates and ambulance response times in low-
9 income areas of the five boroughs. Since the
10 creation of the team, students have trained over
11 1,500 New Yorkers in hands-only CPR. In our first
12 year, a student learned hands-only CPR in the spring
13 semester, and unfortunately in the summer semester
14 she needed to use the training on a three-year-old
15 cousin that was found at the bottom of the family's
16 pool. Because of her training and quick reaction the
17 child was revived and made a full recovery. Without
18 her training in our school program and her self-
19 confidence, the story could have had a much different
20 ending. As an educator, it is powerful to watch
21 students take an interactive plan in classes and
22 learning in and around their own neighborhoods to
23 help bring healthcare equity home to where they live
24 and watch them grow. I've watched shy, timid
25 students learn public speaking and take command of a

1
2 room teaching adults CPR. These are the type of
3 employability skills that students do not get to
4 learn or practice in a regular classroom daily. I
5 have also witnesses the ownership and empathy that
6 comes with students performing community service and
7 outreach. During the pandemic, our students took the
8 entire CPR program that they were performing in
9 person and made it online. They held Zooms, how to
10 build home CPR mannequins, and even how to stimulate
11 and simulate chest recoil. Learning CPR is not only
12 a key to personal emergency preparedness, but it also
13 exposes students to healthcare careers. Since our
14 program's inception in 2019, students who have
15 learned and taught CPR have gone into careers in
16 higher education as well as EMT certification right
17 after high school. The Hands to Heart team was
18 formulated with a simple SHIPI grant of 25,000 to
19 purchase equipment and train students. With that
20 being said, we were able to train over 1,500 people
21 and safe at least one confirmed life. Imagine taking
22 that equation and amplifying across 542 high schools
23 around New York City. The impact is phenomenal.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Salvatore.
25 Next up, Leah Storm.

1
2 LEAH STORM ROCHE: Good afternoon. My
3 name is Leah Storm Roche [sp?] and I'm a junior at
4 UASEM. I'm here to speak on my experiences with CPR
5 in my high school experience. In my life, learning
6 CPR was very important to me given that life is so
7 unpredictable. You never know when someone you love
8 or a complete stranger you've never met can go down.
9 Being CPR-certified--

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: [interposing] Can you
11 pause for a second, and just bring the mic a little
12 closer?

13 LEAH STORM ROCHE: Good afternoon. My
14 name is Leah is Storm Roche and I'm a junior at
15 UASEM. I'm here to speak on my experiences in high
16 school and learning CPR. In my life learning CPR was
17 very important to me given the fact that life is so
18 unpredictable. You never know when someone you love
19 or a complete stranger you've never even met can go
20 down, and being CPR-certified gives a sense of
21 security knowing that I can save a life and be a
22 reason someone goes home to their loved ones at the
23 end of the day. Being an NYPD Explorer who's always
24 been interested in law enforcement and helping people
25 has shown me that crazy things happen every single

1 day, and you truly can never see a lot of things
2 coming, which forces us to always have to be
3 prepared. Given thousands of students under the DOE
4 the knowledge of CPR can save so many lives in the
5 future and give children, adults, and elders another
6 chance. As you know, there are a lot of athletic and
7 active students in school communities like myself.
8 It is not uncommon for a player to just drop in the
9 middle of a football field. Now, what if no one on
10 that field knew what to do, given that they were
11 never taught the skill? As you may know, after
12 cardiac arrest a person has about 10 minutes before
13 the brain starts to die. You would have 10 minutes
14 to find someone outside of the field who knows how to
15 give CPR, and on top of that, having to find an AED.
16 Even if you did find someone, as time goes by the
17 chance of bringing the player back gets lower and
18 lower. Now if a teammate was taught CPR at their
19 school and began CPR right then and there, and
20 someone spent that time looking for an AED, the
21 chance of this person going back to their family was
22 way higher. This is just one of the many examples
23 showing how important the knowledge of CPR is, and
24 this is just in the school environment. New York
25

1
2 City is a very huge and busy place, and anyone can go
3 down at any given time. Us students are the future,
4 and with that being said, we need to learn this
5 important skill so that more lives can be saved and
6 people can be given the opportunity to get another
7 chance and live their life to the fullest. This
8 opportunity that we are asking for will help save
9 hundreds, and we can't do it alone, and we highly
10 appreciate you guys for listening to our voices.
11 Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Leah.
13 Jason Acosta?

14 JASON ACOSTA: Good afternoon. My name is
15 Jason Acosta. I'm also a junior at UASEM.
16 Personally, being CPR-certified gives me a sense of
17 accomplishment as well as security knowing I could
18 help someone. All my life, I wanted to help people
19 no matter how big or small the matter is, but now
20 knowing I could save a life, the sky's the limit.
21 Cardiac arrest happens to anyone, most notably
22 athletes. We all witnessed what happened to Damar
23 Hamlin. Watching it made me worried. What if this
24 happened to me? What if somebody on my field was
25 with me and I didn't know what to do? But seeing the

1
2 trainer who saved his life gave me hope, which is why
3 I'm determined to promote CPR certification. Getting
4 CPR certified brought a sense of hope, knowing life
5 is not guaranteed and you have a chance, the ability
6 to help someone on in need. Not only am I speaking
7 for myself, rather the thousands of other students
8 who feel the same. You see, I'm grateful for having
9 this opportunity already, but we're talking about
10 others receiving the same chance at me, and how not
11 to worry seeing-- not worrying saving another
12 person's life again. Not to mention, added
13 motivation for students to go to school and learn and
14 participate with others. So I'm here as a New York
15 City student and athlete to ask to give fellow
16 students the opportunity to become a life-saver. So
17 it's up to you today to decide if you too are a life-
18 saver. I appreciate being here with you all and
19 given the opportunity to let my voice be heard.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. And I am
22 a life-saver. Thank you for the other day when you
23 guys came. We celebrated Heart Month. You guys came
24 and did demos on the City steps, and I'm about
25 investing in our young people, you know that. So

1
2 whatever the commitment is, we will be talking to the
3 Speaker in partnership to make sure New York City
4 students are receiving-- I know it's mandated by the
5 State that all students learn CPR, but so far that
6 has not been happening. So, know that you have an
7 ally and champion to make sure that it's happening in
8 New York City schools. And I thank you, my young
9 people--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Chair? When
11 you're done, I wanted--

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Oh,
13 yeah, and our Health Chair, oh she's coming for you.
14 She's coming. I have a question for Borough
15 President. Remind me of your name again?

16 DONOVAN SWANSON: Donovan.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Donovan. Question
18 came in and said can you share a little bit about
19 types of afterschool programs that exist in Brooklyn.
20 Are they sufficient or insufficient?

21 DONOVAN SWANSON: So, as you know, their
22 afterschool programs are inconsistent citywide, and
23 there's definitely been a large ask as we've done a
24 lot of engagement with our parents, specifically our
25 CEC Presidents and our CEC appointees on expanding

1
2 afterschool. I will be testifying also at our
3 hearing with DYCD to speak more about expansion,
4 particularly for COMPASS sites. So we're seeing the
5 highest need in elementary. There's also a
6 conversation as far as the need for Pre-K which is
7 unique because there's other barriers as far as
8 Department of Health are concerned, as well as
9 providers and acknowledging the pay parity and the
10 issues there as well. There needs to be a lot of
11 other things in sync with that conversation of
12 expanding afterschool for that specific group. So it
13 is something that the Borough President is interested
14 in, and again, in partnership with City Council to
15 see what funds are necessary, but also looking at
16 from a data perspective in DOE and trying to capture.
17 We need to know. And some districts and some
18 superintendents are really good about that data, what
19 afterschool funding and who's funding it, but then on
20 the-- for other superintendents that data is not
21 necessarily collected, and so how do we get that on a
22 citywide level to make better decisions, and whether--
23 - also, it doesn't make sense to continue to fund it
24 under DOE, DYCD, and you know, leveraging other
25 funding resources. I'm a former community school

1
2 director, so I also know there's school violence
3 prevention money, and you know, there's 21st Century
4 and other opportunities for schools. So we-- I think
5 there needs to be maybe even a taskforce developed to
6 see what does universal afterschool look like.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I currently have a
8 bill in the Council on universal afterschool. In one
9 of the communities we always leave-- we always leave
10 our students in disabilities out of afterschool
11 programming. I would love to see some of that data
12 captured and how can we accommodate our students with
13 disabilities in afterschool program and Summer Rising
14 Programs.

15 DONOVAN SWANSON: I experienced that
16 firsthand as a community school director, literally
17 up until Summer Rising of last year, and we know that
18 there needs to be huge capacity building for
19 providers as well, and also pay to match that,
20 because of unfortunately, the type of specialist and
21 the type of experience and training you would need,
22 most providers are unable to provide simply because
23 of, you know, their budgets.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Pay parity is very
25 important and that's why this council championed 4410

1
2 to make sure our students in disabilities in
3 preschoolers that there was a parity for their
4 providers. So we got you. Council Member Schulman?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Yeah, so I'm
6 very happy that you're here today, and I want to
7 commend you for doing the CPR training and that's
8 great. Just so you know, the American Heart
9 Association has been meeting with me and my staff as
10 the Health Chair about the high schools and also
11 getting the equipment that's needed, the mannequins
12 and all of that so that that can be done as well,
13 because my understanding is that may be an issue. So
14 we're looking at supporting that on a funding level
15 as well. So I just wanted you to know. So we're
16 going-- Chair Joseph and I will be working together
17 on this.

18 SALVATORE PUGLISI: Thank you. Thank you
19 very much.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Of course, of
21 course. When I say young people should be at the
22 table, they are, and we have to listen to their
23 voices, and thank you for coming today. Really
24 appreciate it.

1
2 SALVATORE PUGLISI: Thank you for hearing
3 us.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Of course.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: thank you to all
6 panelists. Our next panel, Randi Levine, Melinda
7 Andra, Greg Mihailovich, Andrea Ortiz, Suhali Mendez.
8 Please make your way to the table. On deck, Liz
9 Accles, Ileana Vargas, Maria Tahea [sp?], Simiran
10 Begum [sp?], Shirley Wong [sp?]. Randi Levine, you
11 may begin your testimony.

12 RANDI LEVINE: Thank you for the
13 opportunity to speak with you. My name is Randi
14 Levine. I'm Policy Director of Advocates for
15 Children of New York. Every year, we help thousands
16 of families to navigate the New York City school
17 system with a focus on students whose needs are too
18 often overlooked. At a time when New York City is
19 receiving increased state education funding and
20 continues to have unspent federal COVID-19 relief
21 funding, schools should receive additional resources
22 to meet students' needs, and certainly should not
23 lose funding. We are concerned that the following
24 programs were left out of the Fiscal Year 2024
25 Preliminary Budget. The Council was instrumental

1
2 last year in securing funding for these important
3 programs that will expire in June, unless extended in
4 the FY24 budget: Five million dollars for the Mental
5 Health Continuum, the first-ever cross-agency
6 partnership between New York City Public Schools,
7 H+H, and DOHMH to help students with significant
8 mental health needs access expedited mental
9 healthcare; four million dollars to help immigrant
10 families get needed school-related information
11 through strategies such as sending paper notices,
12 calling and texting families, and collaborating with
13 immigrant-facing CBOs on information campaigns; 3.3
14 million dollars for shelter-based community
15 coordinators to help students who are homeless get to
16 school and get needed educational support. With the
17 youth mental health crisis and the increase in newly-
18 arrived students living in shelter this is not the
19 time to jeopardize funding for these important
20 programs. The City should also address critical
21 needs by making increased investments in the
22 following areas: 25 million dollars to support 250
23 schools in transitioning to culturally-responsive and
24 effective reading instruction and intervention at a
25 time when only 36 percent of black and Latinx

1 students and 18 percent of students with disabilities
2 are reading proficiently; three million dollars to
3 bolster the six new English Language Learner Transfer
4 School programs, ensuring they have bilingual social
5 workers, staff training, and wrap-around services to
6 support recently-arrived older English language
7 learners; 120 million dollars to expand school-wide
8 restorative justice practices to 500 schools to
9 reduce the use of suspensions, and instead address
10 students' underlying needs and keep them in school;
11 five million dollars to guarantee bus service for
12 students in foster care so students are not forced to
13 transfer schools when they are removed from their
14 homes and families; and 50 million dollars to provide
15 evaluations and services to preschoolers with
16 disabilities, given that more than 7,000 preschoolers
17 went the entire school year without receiving at
18 least one of their mandated services. Elected
19 leaders must also start planning for the expiration
20 of the federal COVID-19 Relief Funding which the City
21 is currently using to fund a wide range of education
22 programs that need to be sustained. Our written
23 testimony has more information about each of these
24 priorities. Thank you Chair Joseph for your
25

1 leadership in focusing on equity in education. We
2 look forward to working with you. Thank you for the
3 opportunity to speak with you. I'd be happy to answer
4 any questions you may have.
5

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Randi.

7 Melinda Andra?

8 MELINDA ANDRA: Good afternoon. My name
9 is Melinda Andra. I am the interim Director of the
10 Education Advocacy Project at the Legal Aid Society.
11 Through-- I want to thank the Committee and Chair
12 Joseph for holding this hearing and for allowing us
13 to offer comments. You know,-- and we also want to
14 thank you for your commitment to students, to equity
15 for students who have traditionally been ignored by
16 the Department of Education. We serve many of those
17 clients at the Legal Aid Society. Every year, our
18 Juvenile Rights Practice represents about 33,000
19 students who are involved in Family Court either as
20 subject children in child welfare cases or who are
21 charged with being persons in need of supervision or
22 with being juvenile delinquents. We also represent
23 students in temporary housing through our Housing
24 Rights Project. We represent students who are
25 English language learners and seeking asylum through

1
2 our Immigration Project. We represent children with
3 disabilities through our civil practice, and we
4 represent children who are having educational
5 difficulties through our education practice. In
6 addition to that, we also represent young people who--
7 - some of whom are still of school age who are
8 graduating from the school to prison pipeline into
9 the criminal justice system. My first question is--
10 and there's going to be more in our written comments,
11 but I want to address the needs of students in foster
12 care and their need for transportation. And I thank
13 the Committee for their attention to this matter.
14 Ever since ESA [sic] was passed in 2016, every year
15 we come to this meeting and we ask for a commitment
16 to providing transportation to those students, and it
17 has still not happened. The DOE's figures show that
18 in the last-- in the 2020 to 21 school year, of the
19 students who requested transportation, 17 percent
20 were given metro cards, and that includes children as
21 young as kindergarten, first grade, second grade, who
22 clearly cannot travel independently. There has
23 actually been an increase in the number of students
24 and the percentage of students who have been forced
25 to change schools. So, ACS' figures show that from

1
2 the 2021 school year to the 2022 school year, the
3 number of students-- the percentage of students who
4 have been forced to change schools because of a
5 change in foster care placement rose from 14 to 20
6 percent. So we are asking for a commitment by the
7 Department of Education. Every year they come here
8 they say, "Oh, we can do that. We're doing that."
9 But they are not doing it. The second thing I want
10 to talk about is restorative justice. That is a
11 severe need, because make no mistake, it is our
12 clients. It is our children who are being pushed out
13 of school and into prison. We know that when it
14 comes to exclusionary discipline. Students of color
15 are over-represented. Students with disabilities are
16 over-represented. Children in foster care are over-
17 represented. LGBTQ students are over-represented,
18 and that over-representation becomes exponential when
19 you have those factors intersection. The last thing
20 I want to talk about is a client that called me
21 yesterday, and that young man witnessed one of the
22 shootings that happened. He was a bystander. He
23 said it happened right in front of him, and as a
24 result of that he is traumatized. He is terrified to
25 return to school. His mother asked the school if he

1
2 could get a transfer, and he was told no, and he
3 reached out to us for help. But these are the issues
4 that our young people are facing, and it contributes
5 to experiences of young people feeling they need
6 weapons in the community. It contributes to young
7 people avoiding school and school truancy and chronic
8 truancy because children are afraid. And so we are
9 asking for a commitment to restorative justice, not
10 in 250 schools, but in all of the schools in the City
11 so that schools will know how to support the
12 emotional learning of students and to help them
13 develop dispute resolution skills. Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Greg?

15 GREG MIHAILOVICH: Okay. Good afternoon.
16 My name is Greg Mihailovich. I'm the Community
17 Advocacy Director for the American Heart Association
18 here in New York City. Thank you Chair Joseph,
19 members of the Committee of Education for the time
20 here today. And American Heart Association is the
21 nation's oldest and largest voluntary organization
22 dedicated to fighting cardiovascular disease and
23 stroke, and I'm here to talk to you about CPR in
24 schools, although I don't know how I'm going to
25 follow the students from UASEM. But teaching

1 students CPR can save thousands of lives by filling
2 our community with life-savers. Each year, more than
3 350,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur in the
4 US and most of them occur in the home, and when a
5 person has a cardiac arrest, survival depends on
6 immediately receiving CPR from someone nearby. Nine
7 out of 10 people who suffer out-of-hospital cardiac
8 arrest die, and CPR especially performed immediately
9 can double or triple the person's chances of
10 survival, and unfortunately, bystanders only perform
11 CPR about 40 percent of the time. Since 2003, it's
12 been recommended that CPR training be incorporated
13 into the standard school curriculum, and as you
14 mentioned Chair Joseph, since 2015 New York State
15 requires that all students in senior high schools be
16 provided with instruction in not only hands-only CPR,
17 but also the use of an automated external
18 defibrillator. Although that requirement was waived
19 for the 2019-2020 year due to COVID concerns. We
20 talk to schools. I don't have to talk to this
21 committee about schools being underfunded, but there
22 are schools that don't have mannequins, they're
23 sharing mannequins. There are actually a handful of
24 schools that weren't even really aware that it was a
25

1 requirement. So if we're serious about putting these
2 life-savers in the community and making sure these
3 kids have the skills, not just how to do
4 compressions, but you see the kind of confidence, the
5 situational awareness when the worst thing that
6 happens, do these students know what to do-- they're
7 up for it. They can learn. They can become the
8 life-savers in the community. so we're asking the
9 New York City Council whether it's part of the DOE
10 budget or a council initiative to dedicate at least
11 \$500,000 in the upcoming budget to support CPR in
12 schools' funding to make sure that these kid learn
13 the-- the schools that they're promised, that they
14 should know, and then they can become life-savers for
15 the community. Thank you for your time.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Greg.
18 Andrea?

19 ANDREA ORTIZ: Thank you. I'm Andrea
20 Ortiz from the New York Immigration Coalition. This
21 year New York City must address a longstanding
22 injustice as a cornerstone of its response to the
23 14,000 asylum-seekers who have arrived in our city.
24 Quality public school programs are inaccessible for
25 thousands of immigrant youth and families. This

1
2 problem has been around for decades. For far too
3 many immigrants are not able to enroll in, let alone
4 find, quality programs. The City must address this
5 through two proven initiatives now, because English
6 language learners have the highest drop-out rate in
7 the City. It's nearly four times that of their
8 English-speaking peers, and we cannot allow that to
9 continue if we want our city to thrive. New York
10 City must invest three million to add comprehensive
11 services to the six new English language transfer
12 schools-- transfer high school programs in the Bronx,
13 Queens, and Brooklyn. These important new programs
14 bring the successful English language learner, or
15 ELL, transfer high school model outside of Manhattan
16 to where immigrant youth live and work, but not
17 enough funding has been available for these new
18 programs to have all the elements of the best
19 practice models, but we can fix that. The three
20 million dollars will fund bilingual social workers
21 trained to support immigrant youth and families,
22 wrap-around supports and community-based
23 partnerships, plus the tools to create a road map
24 that other schools can follow to improve their own
25 capacity to support the newly-arrived immigrant

1 youth. Additionally, this funding will ensure that
2 all staff get professional development which will be
3 crucial for these schools that have graciously opened
4 their doors to our growing newcomer population as
5 they cultivate the capacity to serve students with
6 gaps in their formal education and students who have
7 faced severe forms of trauma. Second, the City should
8 invest four million dollars to expand our Life
9 Project to support 20 community-based programs across
10 the five boroughs to provide culturally-responsive
11 and linguistically-diverse outreach, application,
12 enrollment, and early intervention supports and
13 referral services to immigrant families of three and
14 four-year-olds. The majority of the 165,000 parents
15 of zero to four-year-olds who are limited English-
16 proficient in New York City also lack access to a
17 computer or internet and need robust community-based
18 engagement and supports to learn about and enroll in
19 3K and Pre-K programs. Our Life Project has
20 successfully helped over 500 immigrant families
21 enroll and is incredibly successful. Four out of the
22 five families it helped said that they could not have
23 applied to Pre-K or 3K without that assistance.
24 Finally, New York City must reject further cuts to
25

1
2 our public education system. We have the money to
3 fund our schools, but we cannot afford to throw away
4 our future by choking our engine of economic mobility
5 for immigrants and non-immigrants alike. Thank you
6 very much.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. And
8 Suhali Mendez.

9 SUHALI MENDEZ: Good afternoon. My name
10 is Suhali Mendez and I'm the Policy and Legislative
11 Coordinator at New York Lawyers for the Public
12 Interest. I would like to thank Chairwoman Joseph and
13 the members of the Education Committee for giving me
14 the opportunity to provide testimony this afternoon.
15 I would like to urge the Council to support funding
16 in the following three areas. The first area is the
17 staffing of licensed mental health evaluation
18 providers. Schools serve an important role in
19 meeting not only our children's educational needs but
20 also their social/emotional demands, and overall
21 there is a significant deficit in mental health
22 services for students with disabilities in New York
23 City schools. Students would fare greatly in their
24 academic pursuits if additional funding is directed
25 towards the identification and treatment of mental

1 health issues for children. Secondly, the successful
2 implementation of electric school buses. Following
3 the New York City Council's lead in passing an
4 electric school bus mandate for New York City, New
5 York State has now mandated that all school buses
6 must be zero emissions by the year 2035. It is
7 critical that this year's budget includes the
8 necessary funding to purchase, install, maintain, and
9 train workers on fully-electric school buses and
10 chargers at the pace necessary to meet the all-
11 electric fleet mandate. Lastly, the access to sports
12 equity in all of our schools. We want to urge the
13 Council and the New York City public schools to
14 ensure that the public schools athletic league have
15 the sufficient budget and to prioritize the
16 implementation of the agency's commitments under a
17 class action lawsuit that sought greater sports
18 equity for black and Latinx students. We applaud the
19 New York City Public School's initiative to expand
20 individual access programs to all students for all
21 sports, and urge the agency to devote ample staff and
22 resources to roll out these new opportunities,
23 beginning with the schools and the students and
24 schools, excuse me, that have the least access to the
25

1
2 sports. In conclusion, I would like to ask that
3 funding for the matters that I presented on today be
4 heavily considered and implemented for Fiscal Year
5 2024 and beyond. We look forward to the Council
6 continuing the very important work to improve New
7 Yorker's access to education. A more-detailed
8 testimony will be provided. Thank you very much for
9 your time.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I have a
11 question for Randi. I have quite a few questions.
12 the Chancellor shared today that he found the
13 universal literacy yielded little results in
14 improving literacy, and thus, his Administration is
15 now merging that program with literacy collaboration.
16 Can you share what results you've seen in the
17 universal literacy program and what are your thoughts
18 on the new literacy collaboration program?

19 RANDI LEVINE: Let me start by saying
20 that we are encouraged to hear Mayor Adams and
21 Chancellor Banks have literacy as a priority. We
22 think that that is so important. We get hundreds of
23 calls from parents who are very frustrated that their
24 children are not learning to read within the public
25 schools systems, and even when they reach us it's

1 often hard within the public schools system to find
2 them the resources they need to learn to read. There
3 have been multiple studies of the universal literacy
4 coaching program that have found that it was a
5 promising program, and so we think that there needs
6 to be a multi-pronged strategy for literacy and
7 literacy coaches are one area that we think the city
8 should look at continuing.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. And we
11 did bring up that it should also be culturally-
12 relevant which is also very important. For your
13 students that would like to transfer, there's
14 something called a safety transfer. Maybe we can
15 talk offline about what we can do for our students.
16 And I am going to pursue that commitment to
17 transportation for our students in foster care. I
18 came in-- anyone who knows my story. I am a-- I was
19 a foster mom when I adopted my two boys. But I went
20 through those struggles as well, but not everybody
21 can say okay, we'll just take a car, we'll drive them
22 to school. So we want to be able to-- when a child
23 is placed in a home that they can stay there. And
24 that's traumatic. It's already being hard to be
25 pulled away from a family member and for-- yeah, I

1
2 know they give metro cards to six-year-olds. Just
3 the thought of it really breaks my heart. So the
4 transportation part, I will work. As you know, under
5 my leadership we were able to create an office. We
6 have an office for foster care students because it
7 matters. I want them to be seen and heard. So this
8 is personal for me, and it will be pursued, and they
9 know I'm relentless.

10 RANDI LEVINE: Thank you for all of your
11 advocacy on their behalf.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. CPR in
13 schools? I love it. And they know-- young people
14 know I have the-- they ask. And we will work on it,
15 Council Member Schulman and I, we will work on this.
16 It's important.

17 GREG MIHAILOVICH: I appreciate the
18 support of both of you, I know. But still have to
19 get it in the record.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely,
21 absolutely. And my transfer students, they have a
22 seat. So thank you so much. I hear you and I see
23 each and every one of you, and thank you for your
24 advocacy on behalf of New York City students. Know
25 you have an ally. Thank you.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to
3 everybody on the panel. Next panel: Liz Accles,
4 Doctor Ileana Vargas, Fariah Attaya [sp?], Simmiran
5 Begum [sp?], Shirley Wong [sp?], Fariah Satara [sp?].
6 On deck, Smitha Milich, Natasha Capers, Alexandria
7 Lowe, Mary Cheng, and Lois Lee. Liz Accles, you may
8 begin.

9 LIZ ACCLES: Good afternoon, Chair
10 Joseph, members of the committee. Thank you for the
11 opportunity to speak today. I'm here on behalf of
12 Community Food Advocates and the Lunch for Learn
13 Coalition, as I'm sure you know. I'm going to try to
14 be short and sweet, because I know you have a long
15 day, and we have a whole bunch of people speaking on
16 the issue. I'm here to talk about Cafeteria
17 Enhancement Experience and fully scaling it in this
18 current budget session. So, just by way of
19 background, Cafeteria Enhancement Experience is a
20 model that was originated by the Department of
21 Education. It modernizes the service lines to make
22 it more food court style. The seating area is much
23 more student-friendly, and we know that it has a huge
24 impact. And we know from the-- among other things,
25 the fantastic press conference at Hillcrest High

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2 School with you Chair and the Chancellor and many
3 other folks, that this is something that everyone
4 knows is a huge priority to transforming the school
5 meals experience for all middle school and high
6 school students. We know that many more students
7 participate when the cafeterias are enhanced. It's
8 cost-effective. It has a great impact, and it's
9 done-- there's background work that happens, but
10 within two days within school, and Office of Food and
11 Nutrition Services has done a fantastic job of
12 speeding that process up. Just this month I think
13 they completed 15 schools. So, with the \$50 million
14 dollars that was secured last year in the budget, we
15 now have 80 cafeterias completed and about another
16 115 or so with commitments for funding. So, that
17 gets us to about a third of the way there of about
18 600 middle school and high school cafeterias. And
19 for this to be an experience that all students
20 haven't experienced with in high school and middle
21 schools, we think this is the moment to make sure
22 that that-- the financial commitment of \$200 million
23 dollars in capital funds happens this year so that we
24 know that all high school and middle school students
25 have this experience. Just to show how this works,

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2 FDR High School in Brooklyn pre-- they just had their
3 cafeteria redesigned in January. Prior to the
4 redesign, 1,200 students ate meals at-- it's now
5 2,700 students. So it's very dramatic. And we made
6 these beautiful posters that we couldn't bring in
7 because they were too big, so I'm going to read this.
8 I'm going to read quotes from two principals, one
9 that was in the Daily News. Principal Rashad Meade
10 from Eagle Academy for Young Men in Ocean Hill, and
11 what he said was, "What I've seen overnight literally
12 is the whole stigma of school food shifting because
13 of the mere presentation of the food." I'm just
14 going to take one second. And then Principal Fareed
15 Hasham [sp?] from PS301 in the South Bronx said, "The
16 cafeteria enhancement communicates to students and
17 families that they are important, welcomes, and their
18 social/emotional wellness and health"-- I can't read
19 my own handwriting which is never good-- "are valued
20 by the school as vital levers for success." So we're
21 looking for \$200 million dollars to make sure that we
22 have the commitment for all high school and middle
23 school students to have this. Thank you.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
25 testimony. Doctor Vargas?

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2 ILEANA VARGAS: Is it on? Okay. Hello,
3 my name is Doctor Ileana Vargas. I'm a Pediatric
4 Endocrinologist at Children's Hospital New York
5 Presbyterian, and I'm here on behalf of the American
6 Academy Pediatrics Chapter Three and on behalf of
7 Community Food Advocates. As-- and I've also
8 testified before on behalf of Universal Free Lunch
9 and the Sweet Tooth Act, and this is my famous sugar
10 tube, and this is how much sugar is in a can of soda,
11 and we cannot give these to our children in school or
12 allow them not to have Universal Free Lunch so that
13 they go outside and have Takis and chips and ultra-
14 processed foods along with these drinks. But to make
15 a long story short, when I started my career over 30
16 years ago, I thought I was going to take care of
17 autoimmune Type I Diabetes. Little did I know that
18 shortly after starting my career, I started taking
19 care of children with adult onset diabetes, Type II
20 Diabetes, and as I said before and I testified
21 before, during the pandemic we have seen a 250
22 percent increase in the number of our children having
23 Type II Diabetes. We're seeing fatty liver disease,
24 hypertension. Some of my patients are on the same
25 medications as their grandparents, and this is

1 unacceptable. I'm a believer that food is medicine,
2 and having Universal Free Lunch and having
3 cafeterias-- and I'm going to just give you a couple
4 of quotes that I have from the data that we've
5 received. As Pediatricians we've been able to
6 witness the nutritional impacts of the participation
7 in these programs, but most importantly, these
8 children are consuming more fruits, salads and
9 vegetables. They're consuming three times the amount
10 of bananas, peppers and tomatoes, four times the
11 amount of apples, carrots, and spinach, five times
12 the amount of broccoli, and 30 times the amount of
13 lettuce than before the enhancement of the program.
14 Just to also give you some data that's out there--
15 there was an adult study that showed two servings of
16 fruits a day can decrease your risk of diabetes by 36
17 percent. One serving of leafy green vegetables a day
18 can decrease your risk of dementia by 30 percent.
19 What we're doing to our children who participate in
20 these programs is we're improving their long-term
21 health, and these are our future leaders and we have
22 to protect them. So I'm really-- I actually have
23 spoken to the youth food advocates and, you know,
24 their stories are heart-warming and give you tears
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2 like the stories from before. It's getting to the
3 students-- it's really getting to the students who
4 consumer higher diet quality, but most importantly
5 they also socialize in the schools. If they're
6 eating lunch in the schools, they're not leaving
7 their schools and getting into trouble. So, please,
8 I advocate. We urge that we continue the investment
9 into this program so that our children are healthy.
10 Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
12 testimony. Fariah Attaya [sp?]?

13 FARIAH ATTAYA: Good afternoon Chair
14 Joseph and City Council Members. My name is Fariah
15 Attaya. I am a sophomore at Long Island City High
16 School located in District 30. Our cafeteria takes
17 great pride in serving over 2,000 students a day. At
18 LIC we have fourth period dedicated to lunch in order
19 to provide each student with their nutrition. Since
20 we're a pretty big school, it's common for us to have
21 crowded and slow lunch lines, leading to students not
22 having enough time or interest in eating. Students
23 are very busy catching up on their school work and
24 with their friends, and most importantly, relaxing
25 before their rigorous academic day. I care about

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2 school food because it affects the vast majority of
3 us. We have to sneak food into our classes so that
4 we don't starve. Some teachers don't allow food into
5 the classrooms, leaving students helpless, hungry,
6 and tired. There are students who refuse to eat
7 because they're uncomfortable eating in a space with
8 no privacy. The new cafeteria re-design will provide
9 students with privacy and help those who are
10 introverted, insecure, and shy. Making school food a
11 priority today has a long-term effect on how well
12 students succeed in their school scores and their
13 mental health. Six hours a day without eating is
14 pretty ridiculous, yet some students choose to go
15 hungry rather than be seen in the cafeteria. This is
16 a disadvantage for students, schools, and the future
17 of our city. You can ensure students are encouraged
18 to eat healthy and their needs are met, including the
19 privacy that updates school cafeterias into more
20 privacy. Fully-renovated cafeterias in all middle
21 schools and high schools across NYC will have
22 positive effects on many things including student
23 mental health, physical health, and school sports. I
24 believe that this enhancement won't only enhance the
25 cafeteria, but also enhance our future. Thank you.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
3 testimony. Simiran Begum [sp?] next.

4 SIMIRAN BEGUM: Good afternoon, Chair
5 Joseph and Council Members. My name is Simiran Begum
6 and I'm a ninth grader at Brooklyn Technical High
7 School. If you were to go out to eat right now for
8 lunch, would you want to sit on a long row of plain,
9 boring, and uncomfortable benches? Most likely not.
10 You can imagine that many of the students feel the
11 same exact way. Why should we spend our time in
12 school cafeteria when we could easily go out to a
13 local fast food chain or spend time in our school
14 library? This mindset directly caused by the
15 uninviting cafeteria environment is one of the main
16 reasons students don't participate in school lunches.
17 This also leaves the students not eating during the
18 school day, which studies show can affect how well a
19 student does in school. As a student who has seen
20 both an enhanced and a regular cafeteria, the
21 differences are astonishing. In my middle school
22 many students preferred hanging out in the hallways,
23 library, or recess yard, anywhere except the
24 cafeteria. Most sad thing it's just hard to talk to
25 my friends the way we're seated or I don't like the

1 way we're all squished on a long row of benches.

2 Whereas most people in my school right now don't mind
3 sitting in the cafeteria because it's comfortable and
4 the environment is inviting. Seeing the 35 percent
5 increase in lunch participation after enhancing
6 cafeterias, it is imperative that you take action to
7 fund all schools for enhanced cafeterias now.

8 Investing in enhanced cafeterias is an investment in
9 the future of our city. Your funding of enhanced
10 cafeterias would be one step closer to creating a
11 better school lunch experience for all students.

12 Thank you.

13
14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
15 testimony. Shirley Wong?

16 SHIRLEY WONG: Good afternoon Chair
17 Member Joseph and Council Members. My name is
18 Shirley Wong and I am a junior at Midwood High School
19 located in District 22. Today I'm speaking on behalf
20 of New York City public school students. There has
21 been ongoing complaints about students about school
22 food. One of the element issues of school food is
23 the unwelcoming cafeteria environment and a need to
24 renovate them. As a teenager, I believe most kids my
25 age or younger leans toward appealing food and

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2 appealing space. While most school cafeterias in New
3 York City are modern enough, the enhanced cafeteria
4 will promote what students really want to see. The
5 importance of school food extends to sustain students
6 and reducing the hunger from a long day to
7 understanding that a good number of students do not
8 have the financial means to purchase food or bring
9 lunch from home every day. It's extremely critical
10 for students to get a nutritious meal that follow the
11 USDA guidelines and to allow them to socialize in a
12 comfortable setting. New York City Council Member
13 Marjorie Velázquez said New York City schools are a
14 melting pot of cultures and the food served to our
15 students should reflect that. Enhanced cafeterias
16 help create a welcoming environment focusing on
17 variety and inclusion. Personally, I am compelled to
18 preserve the quality environment and I am displeased
19 to know that the garbage we throw out to landfill
20 such as food waste from school food generates methane
21 which contributes strongly to global warming. The
22 breakfast and lunch that students are served and
23 don't consume is thrown out every day, whereas in the
24 enhanced cafeteria you get to select your own items
25 which helps reduce waste. With the \$75 million

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2 dollars that's been allocated for enhanced cafeterias
3 around the city, a 35 percent increase in lunch
4 participation is seen. The changes in the enhanced
5 cafeteria experience has been apparent since the
6 first update six years ago, and now it's [inaudible]
7 all New York City public schools [inaudible] is the
8 matter of the equity. Thank you for your
9 consideration.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. We have
11 attended the school and cafeteria enhancement, and
12 this council has funded those school enhancements to
13 make sure that you have a great experience and it's
14 culturally-relevant. I went to the one in Hillcrest.
15 They also had a halal section which was very good.
16 So, I'm sure we will continue to make sure we are
17 investing, and we know you're the future, so we must
18 invest in New York City's future. Thank you so much
19 for your testimony. Oh, one more, one more. Thank
20 you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Last on this panel
22 we're going to hear from Fariah Satara [sp?].

23 FARIAH SATARA: Can't tell if it's on.
24 Thank you Chair Joseph and members of the Education
25 Committee for the opportunity to speak with you today

1 about how the Fiscal Year 2024 budget can support the
2 education needs of youth in foster care. First, I
3 would like to acknowledge the Council for its support
4 of students in foster care which help lead to the
5 creation of a DOE team focused solely on students in
6 foster care. My name is Fariah Satara and I'm an
7 Education Advocate for Children's Aid. Throughout my
8 experience working in child welfare, school
9 transportation has always been a challenge. Under
10 federal and state law, kids in foster care have the
11 right to remain in their school of origin. Kids in
12 foster care do not have stable housing due to
13 multiple factors. In one of my cases, two very young
14 siblings, ages five and six, have moved three times
15 during their time in foster care. Their current
16 foster parent is an elderly relative who shared that
17 the only way she can care for these children is by
18 having transportation. After three months of
19 submitting the busing exception form, the children
20 finally received busing. As we awaited a route, I
21 arranged private car service which requires a
22 chaperone since the children are very young. The
23 foster mom's son was able to act as a chaperone,
24 however he had to change his work scheduled. This
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2 was becoming a risk of unemployment as it cost closer
3 to the holidays. Once busing was identified for the
4 children, they were getting picked up on the bus at
5 5:45 a.m., though their school began at 8:20. Yet,
6 another challenge is that the environment on the bus
7 itself was not age-appropriate. Many of the students
8 were older and more mature than the five and six year
9 old siblings. They often spoke about subjects that
10 were not age-appropriate. The six-year-old would
11 return back home and ask her foster parent about
12 these subjects. After advocating for another three
13 months, the children received a new route where they
14 would be picked up at 6:30. Even with this 45-minute
15 change in pick-up time, the route is still two hours.
16 These siblings who once went to school with energy
17 and excitement now arrive there completely depleted
18 of energy and unable to focus on their academics. In
19 another case, a seven-year-old we'll call Lana had
20 three different placements within the last five
21 months. These changes have caused some regression.
22 In an effort to prevent some further regression,
23 teachers are made available for enrichment support
24 before school hours. However, since OPP does not take
25 into consideration breakfast or academic intervention

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2 services, Lana only arrived at school just in time
3 for first period and cannot take advantage of the
4 services. This story is similar to that of other
5 students we support. Adequate and appropriate
6 transportation requires funding. The City should
7 invest \$5 million in the budget to provide bus
8 services or other door-to-door transportation to the
9 relatively small number of students in foster care
10 who need it to maintain school stability. Thank you
11 for the opportunity to speak with you. I am happy to
12 answer any questions you have. I also just want to
13 thank you for just being very flexible with me today.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: No problem. You
15 spoke about transportation for that student in foster
16 care?

17 FARIAH SATARA: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What was-- they had
19 to move how many times?

20 FARIAH SATARA: So, the siblings moved
21 three times their entire time in foster care, and
22 then the seven-year-old moved three times within the
23 last five months.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, different
25 families.

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FARIAH SATARA: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Not staying with
king gap [sic].

FARIAH SATARA: No, king [inaudible]
Thank you, Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank
you so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to the
panel. Next panel we will have Smitha Milich,
Natasha Capers, Alexandria Lowe, Mary Cheng, and Lois
Lee. On deck which will be a virtual-- or hybrid
panel I should say. Aqida Rama, Kyle Lin, Max
Shimbo, Soha Mursalien, and Sufan Wan who will be
joining us virtually on the next panel. When you are
ready, you may begin Smitha Milich.

SMITHA MILICH: Good afternoon Chair
Joseph. My name is Smitha Milich. I am the New York
City Campaign Coordinator with the Alliance for
Quality Education. So, I'm just going to briefly
touch on today the cuts of the DOE, the siphoning of
public dollars to charters, cuts to 3K and investing
in restorative justice. So for nearly three decades,
AQE fought the state to secure full funding for our
public schools. This is why we were really upset.

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2 Parents were really upset last summer when school
3 budgets were cut. We lost nearly about a billion
4 dollars last year, and this year we're seeing more of
5 the same, and those cuts are being-- I think the
6 point here is these cuts are being made despite the
7 historic addition of funds from the state foundation
8 aid that will ensure our schools will be funded at
9 100 percent of the current Fair Student Funding
10 formula moving forward. So, around charters, it's
11 deeply disappointing that when we should be
12 celebrating the fulfillment of the Campaign for
13 Fiscal Equity and Foundation Aid, we are here raising
14 the alarm about the disproportionate impact that
15 lifting the regional charter cap would have on New
16 York City schools, the very birthplace of CFE. Last
17 year, for example, New York City schools received
18 \$348 million increase in Foundation Aid from New York
19 State. In the same year, New York City charter
20 school costs in New York increased by over \$200
21 million, meaning about 57 percent of the Foundation
22 Aid increase went to charter schools. Chair Joseph
23 already unequivocally rejected the Governor's
24 proposal like right away and our parents were really
25 happy about that. And we also know that the Council

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2 doesn't really have much power over what's happening
3 in Albany, but we're just-- you know, this is the
4 second year for majority of the Council. We're just
5 kind of educating so to explain the nuance, because
6 when Council feel like our schools really don't feel
7 fully funded, we want to add that context of why.
8 Just a few things on 3K. We're opposed to the admins
9 reneging on Universal 3K. There are half a billion
10 in cuts in this next Fiscal Year, and more than \$1.5
11 billion through 2026. The admin claims that the
12 empty seats indicate an absence of need, but we urge
13 the Council to interrogate this claim. Some
14 questions like where there were empty seats in one
15 district, can those seats be transferred to another
16 district where there's need? Has the Administration
17 considered as experts have suggested a continuous
18 evaluation process every two months to adjust seats
19 as-need? And also, why are we paying \$760,000 for an
20 outside consultant to evaluate enrollment, when there
21 are 400 in-house experts who can actually do the job.
22 Last but not least, I just want to echo the demands
23 of the youth at the Dignity in Schools and Advocates
24 for Children to ensure that we're funding mental
25 health and restorative justice. The City keeps citing

1
2 a fiscal cliff. Here's some thoughts on where you
3 can find money. Cut the NYPD. Cut the DOC. We got
4 billions in surplus revenue that can be used. So
5 just figuring out how to do that. Almost finished
6 here. If the Council can just commit to using their
7 platform to support revenue-raising legislation at
8 the State level and use the platform of the City
9 Council to work with Albany law makers to pass
10 revenue-raising bills that would bring billions of
11 dollars to the state. Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
13 testimony. Natasha Capers?

14 NATASHA CAPERS: Hello. I am Natasha
15 Capers, the Director of the New York City Coalition
16 for Educational Justice, a proud public school grad,
17 and a prouder parent of a CUNY freshman and high
18 school junior. Chancellor Banks spoke about how
19 students are not having a relevant experience in
20 schools, how we have to teach students to read, and
21 how so few people talk to them about the importance
22 of reading. All CEJ does is talk about culturally
23 responsive and relevant literacy and the classroom
24 experience. Yet, our parents have not been invited
25 into these conversations about literacy by this

1 Administration. CEJ has been committed to literacy
2 for nearly two decades, including seeding the
3 programs that are most successful in the DOE like the
4 Middle School Quality Initiative which was seeded by
5 black and brown parents in New York City, as well as
6 our work on culturally-responsive education,
7 curriculum, and pedagogy. Yet, few are talking about
8 the continual disconnect that occurs in New York
9 City's school classrooms with the continued use and
10 investment in culturally-destructive curriculum,
11 text, and materials. This Administration is pushing
12 for schools especially low-performing black and brown
13 elementary schools to purchase and use curriculum
14 that are racist and xenophobic. How will this
15 increase the love and desire for the 85 percent of
16 black, brown, immigrant, and Asian students for
17 literacy in New York City public schools? Chancellor
18 Banks cannot continue to say that he believes in
19 culturally-responsive education, restorative justice,
20 literacy initiatives, community schools, and Early
21 Childhood, all while continuing to gut them and not
22 live up to what it takes to seed these programs into
23 fruition and success. In 2020, the Department of
24 Education committed to the Universal Mosaic
25

1 Curriculum, which was to be used for English Language
2 Arts and math K-12. The new administration has
3 abandoned this curriculum process that would be
4 tailor-made for New York City students developed by
5 educators in New York City as well as parents and
6 community which would teach them to read and write
7 and would be culturally-responsive, but instead has
8 contracted with several ELA curriculum companies that
9 the previous Administration top officials, educators,
10 parents, students and community members have all
11 deemed to be culturally destructive by using the New
12 York-- the NYU Metro Center Score Card, which CEJ
13 also helped to create. Why is this choice of the
14 DOE? Why are they ignoring the want and needs of
15 educators, students and parents and community members
16 by purchasing harmful curriculum and texts? Why has
17 this DOE not taken the \$202 million dollars itself
18 has committed for this curriculum or leveraged its
19 buying power to force curriculum companies to create
20 something that would be culturally-responsive for New
21 York City students. And lastly, having been educated
22 in New York City public schools, I know that there's
23 no such thing as being held partially harmless. The
24 term is literally an oxymoron. To be partially held
25

1
2 harmless means to also be harmed. And schools should
3 not be harmed. To harm schools is to harm children,
4 and that's on New York City Public School literacy.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
6 testimony. Next we will hear from Alexandria Lowe.

7 ALEXANDRIA LOWE: Good afternoon Chair
8 Joseph and the members of the New York City Council
9 Committee on Education. My name is Alexandria Lowe,
10 the Coordinator of Strategic Initiatives for the
11 Black Education Research Center, or BEREC, at Teachers
12 College Columbia University. We are a group of
13 research faculty, post-doctoral scholars and graduate
14 students who conduct and analyze research with the
15 goal of improving educational experiences and
16 outcomes for students of African descent in the
17 United States and internationally. BEREC is part of
18 the landmark Education and Equity Action Plan
19 Initiative launched by the City Council in 2022 to
20 develop a Pre-K12 Black Studies curriculum for the
21 City's public schools. Since then, BEREC has created
22 over 130 lessons exploring early African
23 civilizations, the continuum of the black experience
24 in America, contributions and accomplishments of
25 peoples of the African diaspora, as well as the

1
2 impact of systemic and institutional racism on all
3 members of society. We have also designed profession
4 development to support educators in bringing these
5 lessons to their classrooms. To date, the curriculum
6 has been piloted in 12 schools across the City and
7 will be piloted in 23 schools in District Five
8 beginning next month. BERC respectfully asks the
9 Council to fund the EEAP initiative in Fiscal 2024,
10 the final year of the three-year commitment. BERC
11 has submitted an application requesting \$2.5 million
12 dollars to pilot Black Studies lessons and
13 professional learning in 10 districts, reaching
14 approximately 2,000 classrooms. This funding would
15 allow BERC to incorporate pilot feedback into the
16 curriculum and expand it to include more than 200
17 lessons. Finally, funding would enable BERC to
18 conduct a thorough and rigorous evaluation of the
19 EEAP initiative and its contribution to improving
20 educational outcomes for our children. At a time
21 when over 40 states have introduced or passed laws
22 restricting teaching children about the complete
23 history of the United States and topics such as race
24 and racism. It is essential that the Council follow
25 a different path. Black children represent one-

1
2 fourth of the students in the City's public schools
3 and research demonstrates children benefit
4 educationally from seeing their cultures and
5 histories reflected in the curriculum. A diverse and
6 inclusive curriculum benefits children from other
7 racial and ethnic groups as well. Black Studies is
8 also widely popular. Polling the Commission shows
9 that adding Black Studies to the curriculum was a top
10 priority for improving public schools among black
11 voters. Without funding for year three, work to
12 incorporate the history and experiences of black
13 people into the curriculum would likely come to an
14 end. By providing this funding, on the other hand,
15 the council would break new ground nationally as a
16 model for correcting its flagrant and historic
17 omission. Thank you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
19 testimony. Mary Cheng?

20 MARY CHENG: Good afternoon, Chair Joseph
21 and members of the Committee. Thank you for the
22 opportunity to testify today. My name is Mary Cheng,
23 and I am from Chinese-American Planning Council,
24 Director of Childhood Development Services. CPCs ECC
25 Early Childhood and School-aged Centers are critical

1
2 safety nets with thousands of working-class AAPI and
3 immigrant families throughout New York City. IN
4 addition to providing childcare for low-income
5 families, CPC's Childhood Development Services Staff
6 are instrumental in supporting the growth [sic] in
7 children of color and with disabilities. CPC would
8 like to testify regarding the continued ongoing
9 issues with New York City public schools birth to
10 five and also as well issues of pay parity. We would
11 also like to highlight concerns in the upcoming
12 Summer Rising year. Last month, I updated at the
13 City Council hearing about FY22 contracting with DOE.
14 We continued to be frustrated by the vendor portal
15 system which is a system created by DOE in hopes of
16 unifying enrollment, attendance, budgeting, and
17 invoicing, but the system is plagued with issues.
18 And although there has been movement in our payments,
19 our FY22 invoices are still outstanding to date to
20 the tune of 1.55 million. FY23 is not any better,
21 because we are facing multiple issues with certifying
22 attendance, which is linked to allow us to invoice--
23 does not allow us to invoice. This issue is plaguing
24 with enrollment and attendance system that isn't
25 accurate, and unfortunately, we also have no way to

1
2 rectify the discrepancies on our own. Currently, DOE
3 has provided us with a separate person from Program
4 Operations at this time who have been diligent to
5 assist in rectifying the issue, but is a multilayer
6 issue within the Department of Education, and it
7 requires the tech support now to resolve. Since last
8 month we are still waiting for these issues to be
9 resolved. This delay in rectifying issues also leads
10 to delay in invoicing and for the work that we are
11 doing. We analyze our enrollment and attendance list
12 so closely because it is directly linked to the
13 percentage of reimbursement we receive back from the
14 DOE. So we must do our due diligence. However, it's
15 very frustrating and tedious process to correct, and
16 we-- what we are due. According to the contracts,
17 regardless of attendance, CBOs will paid at minimum
18 75 percent of our contract. So why can't-- why can
19 we not at least have the bare minimum invoice of 75
20 percent of our contract without attendance?
21 Therefore we are asking DOE to decouple the tenants
22 [sic] from our invoices as we still are required to
23 anticipate to service the amount of children we are
24 contracted for and a re-evaluation of the vendor
25 portal system. We call for DOE to look into fixing

1 the structural issues. In addition, we are
2 contracted to serve New York City children under the
3 same capacity to educate the same curriculum,
4 credentials, and assessments, and requirements. Yet,
5 CBOs, ECC's, and DYCD programs are not-- are funded
6 disproportionately to their counterpart within DOE.
7 It is wrong that DOE still does not invest in
8 equitable benefits and salary parity to all levels of
9 the staff, from directors to custodians, especially
10 when they are considered essential during the
11 pandemic, continuing to deliver service. For
12 example, currently support staff in the ECC without
13 longevity are only paid a mere 30 cents above the
14 minimum wage. This past month, DC37 negotiated for
15 municipal workers to have the minimum hourly salary
16 of 18 dollars. However, this does not apply to us
17 because we are not municipal, although it's under the
18 same union. We hope that the City will continue to
19 move towards true salary parity to recognize the
20 staff's contribution and dedication, and investment
21 on the staff is investing on the quality of our
22 education system. We are seeing exodus of staff from
23 the childcare system due to this disparity. I will
24 also like to note that salary parity is not the only
25

1 thing on the mind of our staff. This past month,
2 DC37 sent out an opt-out waiver for our staff
3 regarding their health insurance. In prior years
4 because the staff salary was so low, they qualified
5 for the state subsidized health insurance, and it
6 allowed for more comprehensive-- to meet the more
7 comprehensive medical needs for these families and
8 our staff. Unfortunately, the union only offers Gold
9 Care One which is although the free option, a lot of
10 the staff has shown dissatisfaction to this plan.
11 There's a limited amount of doctors available on this
12 plan, and the co-pay is just too high. Many of the
13 staff are refusing to take care of themselves,
14 because they can't afford the co-pay required. Staff
15 are not taking preventive care and choosing a
16 reactive care instead. This creates a toxic self-
17 care cycle for our staff, having to pit their health
18 with the needs of sustaining their family, rent, and
19 food on a low income. I want to make a special note
20 because the CBO directors worry to ensure about the
21 health and safety and I know the unions were up here
22 a second ago, in regards to that, and we do that-- we
23 create a culturally-relevant programming ensuring
24 language needs for our community as well as creating
25

1
2 a health and safety environment without the support
3 of crossing guards, without the support of school
4 safety or a school nurse in our system. This all
5 means that directors encompass all these multiple
6 hats that they're wearing and so they do deserve the
7 salary parity for that reason. Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
9 testimony. Lois Lee?

10 LOIS LEE: Hi am a Lois Lee and I am a
11 retired CSA-- last month. I was the CSA Vice
12 President of Early Childhood. I'm also retired as a
13 Early Childhood Director. On the issue of pay parity
14 I thought before I retired after 52 years of service
15 that I would finally see parity in the Adams'
16 Administration way back from the Lindsay
17 Administration. Anyhow, there are some points for
18 Early Childhood. Under priorities for enrollment, I
19 find it really strange that there is no legacy
20 priority. I have students who have come through our
21 school now they're in elementary, but their younger
22 sibling in Early Childhood wants to go and have the
23 same experience that the older sibling had in our
24 Early Childhood, but there is no legacy parity. So
25 what does that mean? That means there's no parent

1 choice. The parent wants to keep them in the CPC
2 program and they're not allowed to. There's no
3 legacy. And on sibling enrollment, too-- we have a
4 divorced family. They live in two separate
5 households and two separate addresses, but they're
6 not considered siblings, but the parents want their
7 kids in the same program, but they can't go there
8 because they're not considered siblings. They are
9 real siblings. Okay, and now I want to talk about
10 Summer Rising. In the first 15 minutes of Summer
11 Rising opening, all the seats are gone, and that is
12 really unfair, because many of our CPC parents were
13 locked out and they have attended our programs for
14 many years. So our solution is 80 percent of DOE
15 centralized, you know, lottery system and 20 percent
16 of-- what we did for many years-- on site enrollment.
17 Because our parents, their jobs are not on a lottery
18 system. They must work and they need summer care,
19 and one family actually had to go to another school.
20 One was picked for our school, the other one picked
21 for not in our school, another program, and then she
22 has to somehow get them together on the school bus
23 and all sorts of nonsense. But anyhow, to continue,
24 you know, by doing on-site enrollment we know the
25

1
2 needy families. We have established relationships
3 with the children and the families and we really
4 understand the complexities of enrollment. So the
5 second issue we want to bring up, not besides
6 children for Summer Rising, is capacity. Now, we
7 lose a lot of our summer staff because they're
8 college students, and they go back to school after
9 six weeks, but the Summer Rising, the DOE support
10 staff is only there for five weeks. So now we're
11 stuck in a hole, this gap, at the end of the summer
12 that we don't have enough staff. And so-- and we
13 also work a 10-hour day. Now, back in the old days,
14 the SYEPs were allowed to go upstairs to help out the
15 DOE staff from 8:00 to 10:00, and the DOE teachers
16 loved it. They said you have language capacity for
17 all our Mandarin-speaking students, our Spanish-
18 speaking students, our Bengali students. They wanted
19 our SYEPs, but DYCD will not allow SYEP to go
20 upstairs. Can I just do two more things? Okay. And
21 so fingerprinting, fingerprinting is an issue, too,
22 because we have to the DOH fingerprinting and the DOE
23 fingerprinting. Can't we just have one system of
24 fingerprinting? That's that. Now, for about the
25 IEPs. We love our special needs students. You know,

1
2 they're all children. They're like my own kids when
3 I look at a special needs child. However, we don't
4 get a heads up on Summer Rising. All of a sudden, we
5 have these special needs students. How can we help
6 them? This should be a smooth transition from the
7 public schools day to the afterschool days. And
8 these principals and others, I know we might not have
9 the privilege to look at their IEPs, but at least
10 give us a DOE specialist to help us navigate, you
11 know, because our teachers are not Special Ed
12 teachers, even though we love to help them. And so
13 I'm going to conclude talking about pay parity. We
14 want the prevailing wage for human service workers,
15 because they need the 6.5 COLA. We need to go through
16 DYCD, DOE, you know, all these college students, they
17 could work at McDonald's even though we love
18 McDonalds, but we're saying that they could work at
19 McDonalds, but they choose to work with kids. And so
20 they need more than the minimum wage. So we really
21 want a prevailing wage. And I'm not going to spend
22 time, but AAPI history and Black history is American
23 history. I just want to say that.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That's right.
25 That's right. Thank you so much. That was one of

1 the things we said in the last hearing last month
2 that registration should be centralized, that DOE do
3 their part and the CBOs do it on-site. And they
4 should have variants when a child gets accepted into
5 a program and they get to stay with their sibling
6 where the parent is not traveling, and we're seeing
7 that. So that's something I will definitely bring up
8 to New York City Public Schools. Mosaic curriculum,
9 I have a question for you. I was typing it out as we
10 were talking. Mosaic curriculum, it's been said
11 there's no single off-the-shelf curriculum
12 academically rigorous, inclusive enough for the City
13 students. What are your thoughts on the impact of
14 this curriculum could have on our students when
15 finally implemented, and what are your thoughts on
16 the current curriculum?

18 NATASHA CAPERS: So, that's absolutely
19 true. There is no off-the-shelf curriculum that is
20 culturally-responsive. We have tested several-- and
21 I can send you the reports both from CEJ, as well as
22 the NYC Metro Center, [inaudible], around this and
23 have tested curriculums both in New York City and
24 nationally. Which is why the DOE under the last
25 Administration started to do two things. One-- but

1 right before the start of the pandemic, they were
2 actually using a RFP process to force the curriculum
3 company's hand to start a process that would create
4 culturally-responsive curriculum for New York City,
5 right? So that would be something that would be
6 designed by curriculum companies that we could
7 purchase and New York City public schools would have
8 access to. Then the pandemic hit, and with the
9 additional funds from the state, because the state
10 and federal funding was supposed to be used for one-
11 time purchases, and not for things that needed
12 ongoing sustainable investment like community
13 schools. They chose to say that they would build
14 that curriculum in-house. And so nothing has been
15 built yet, even though that they are sitting on 202
16 million dollars that was supposed to be used for
17 parents, educators, community members, and curriculum
18 experts to come together in a process to create those
19 curriculums, both for ELA, Math, and for both--
20 through the continuum of the grades. And so you ask
21 about the impact. What we've seen nationally over
22 decades, I really want to see that his is not new
23 work, that we really sit on a century's worth of work
24 and that what we do when we bring in especially ELA
25

1
2 and Math, because those are the two subjects that are
3 every day. Social studies with Black Studies, AAPI,
4 Latinx Studies, Queer Studies, those are amazing, but
5 those are the side salads, right? So your side salad
6 when you go to you restaurant can be delicious,
7 scrumptious, but that then does not mean that your
8 entrée should be served to you on a garbage can with
9 a hair in it, with the pasta undercooked, no sauce,
10 and raw meat. And that is what students are getting
11 in their curriculum every day. They're getting raw
12 meat served on a garbage can. Right? And so when we
13 don't do the work, then we lose students. So there
14 was a lot of talk about students not coming to
15 school, absenteeism, how do we capture students, but
16 then we have them reading things that don't relate to
17 their life, that don't reflect who they are, that
18 actually diminishes how they are, that is homophobic,
19 transphobic, xenophobic, racist, misogynistic, and
20 then we say well, you should be happy to be here, as
21 if we did something. And I think ultimately that we
22 have to remember, because there was a lot of talk
23 about schools, but very little talk about education
24 today, and that schools are not about adults.

25 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: correct.

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2 NATASHA CAPERS: That schools are about
3 children, and that if we don't actually do what's
4 right by children, that if we don't actually build
5 things that are comprehensive, that if we are not
6 working alongside of the folks who are doing Black
7 Studies alongside of folks-- and I have a great-- we
8 have great relationships with Black Studies folks.
9 I'm on the commission with API Study folks, with
10 CACF, but we actually cannot continue to sideline and
11 parcel that out, that it has to be every day, every
12 class, every subject by every adult who is in contact
13 with any child at any time, that schools and every
14 adult associated with it has to be culturally-
15 responsive and that everything that they touch, read,
16 utilize, and have around them also has to be
17 culturally-responsive.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Quick question for
19 you. The Mosaic curriculum, did it also include
20 professional development for educators, because we
21 tend to roll out new programs and just give it to
22 educators, and go figure it out in the corner. Was
23 PD related into that and real experience? We
24 shouldn't only be reading books, but the kids should
25

1
2 also experience what they're reading as well. Was
3 that included in this curriculum?

4 NATASHA CAPERS: We highly suggested to
5 the DOE and they have put out some things that said
6 that they would do that. We-- because we learned
7 lessons through Common Core, right? When Common Core
8 came down all the teachers were like, "Y'all ain't
9 saying nothing to us, and what we supposed to do with
10 this?" And so we said you have to actually train
11 educators and not just in-classroom staff, but you
12 have to train everyone in your school buildings
13 around culturally-responsiveness, but you actually
14 have to train educators on the curriculum before it
15 comes out, and also train them on how to customize
16 things for themselves, because even with growing it
17 ourselves in New York City, that there's so much room
18 for improvement from classroom to classroom, right,
19 from school to school. So also giving educators the
20 tools to add to and to put their own little sasson
21 [sic] on top of what we are actually helping them to
22 build. We also suggested that there has to be a
23 community component that we cannot continue to leave
24 out families in these conversations and these
25 discussions, and that you have to pull in the

1
2 community. If you're not engaging community and
3 families, then you're not doing culturally-responsive
4 education.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I second that. I've
6 always felt that they should also have a Parent
7 University where parents are engaged in this
8 conversation. I've been yelling about that for a
9 very long time.

10 NATASHA CAPERS: you can just send them
11 to be, and I'll [inaudible]

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And you'll do the
13 yelling, right? Smitha, how do we work with our
14 state partners to make sure that we're meeting our
15 goals?

16 SMITHA MILICH: That's a good question,
17 Chair Joseph. I know that you put out a really
18 strong, bold statement that just kind of let the
19 State Legislature and the Governor know, you know,
20 your position. I think that there's a conversation
21 that needs to be had. It's unfortunate that the rest
22 of the, you know, education committee isn't here to
23 hear this. I feel like there are some Council Members
24 who don't fully understand the impact that state
25 policy is having, and what we're seeing on the ground

1
2 are black and brown parents fighting who send their
3 kids to-- who choose, millions of them, who choose to
4 send their kids to public schools, fighting with
5 black and brown parents who choose to send their kids
6 to charter schools. And so that's what we have to
7 deal with. It's really vicious and nasty, and but
8 really it's tied to-- you know, it's bigger than the
9 City Council. A lot of this started from Bloomberg,
10 right? It started from Bloomberg. He privatized--
11 you know, he figured out a way. This is partially
12 the reason why New York City's on the hook and is the
13 only school district in the state and the country to
14 like pay for rent. You know this already Chair
15 Joseph. So I think part of it is kind of just as
16 much as we can getting the Council as a unit, as a
17 block to understand the impact. Because it's not
18 about taking away choice. We're just saying no more
19 growth. We are not taking away anyone's choice, and
20 I feel like there's misinformation out there,
21 unfortunately. We're out-numbered. We're out-funded
22 by the charter industry with this work, but I think
23 just doing what we can to have that basic
24 conversation and basic education to get as many
25 Council Members on the same page, and then to be able

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2 to, you know, just have conversations with the state,
3 particularly in the areas-- there's not-- you know,
4 the charter school had a rally the other day. I think
5 only two state officials came to the actual rally.
6 So it doesn't seem to be much appetite, but there are
7 serious, serious nuances of, you know, particularly
8 going on in our communities about school choice and
9 what that really means. And what happens to parents
10 who-- the millions of parents who are choosing to
11 send their schools to public schools, yet they're
12 being cut and so the shiny new charter down the block
13 seems, you know, more-- seems better. I think that's
14 just a larger conversation to fit into this narrative
15 around Administration cutting our schools.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. In the
17 Early Childhood, is there a-- is the Rapid Response
18 being supportive? Oh, you laughed okay.

19 MARY CHENG: Because they called me once
20 and said I want to set up a meeting with you, and
21 then they were like "there's nothing you can do
22 because it's on our part. We have to send in your
23 invoices. You have to get paid." But there's
24 nothing for them to do, so we are doing our due
25 diligence, but it's just not being handled right.

1
2 So, yeah, I haven't gotten another meeting with the
3 Response Team at all.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. On the
5 record they said-- we suggested that they pay the
6 providers first and then worry about the paperwork
7 later and holding you harmless. We said that. There
8 are books for this curriculum?

9 ALEXANDRIA LOWE: Yes. So, all of our--
10 you know, the lessons that we've created, we have
11 digital resources so for, you know, folks that don't
12 have access to the books or, you know, we have that.
13 [inaudible] pandemic and how remote learning is now
14 taken, you know. So we have that, but books aren't
15 provided yet.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Wonderful. Thank
17 you so much.

18 LOIS LEE: Can I just say something about
19 dual language? There's no dual language curriculum
20 also. When they have these bilingual dual language
21 schools, we have a dual language school that our CBO
22 is in, and we can't even help them with the homework.
23 The parents can't. They're not teaching basic--
24 they're taking--

25 MARY CHENG: [interposing] Foundations.

1
2 LOIS LEE: Yeah, foundations. The way it
3 is is that they take their curriculum that the
4 school's teaching, let's say Social Studies, and then
5 all the Asian teachers or the Spanish teachers, they
6 translate that material, but they never gave them the
7 foundations of how to read and write Chinese. So the
8 parents are very upset about a lack of curriculum in
9 the dual language schools.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to this
12 panel. Before I call the next panel, I just want to
13 apologize for any mispronunciations. Please correct
14 my pronunciation on the record. Next panel will be a
15 hybrid panel. First we'll have Aqida Rama, Kyle Lin,
16 Max Shimbo, Soha Mursalien, and virtually we'll have
17 Sufan Wan. Aqida Rama, you may begin once you are
18 ready.

19 AQIDA RAMA: Good afternoon. First, I
20 want to thank Chair Joseph and the rest of the
21 Council for the opportunity for this conversation.
22 My name is Aqida Rama, and I'm a junior at Brooklyn
23 Technical High School. I'm a Youth Advocate for the
24 Asian American Student Advocacy Project Language
25 Access Campaign. Our Language Access Campaign aims

1
2 to gather AAPI youth to share their own personal
3 stories and advocate for their improved English
4 language learner inclusion by addressing social
5 stigma and barriers they face in public schools. I
6 witnessed firsthand the struggles my family and
7 friends in school had with safety and comfort. For
8 example, my cousin recently moved to the US last
9 year, and since then her-- she had a very bad
10 experience in high school. As a new English language
11 learner there has been a lack of resources in order
12 for her to feel comfortable and understood. This is
13 especially true in the case of her counselor who did
14 not provide her with any information on school news
15 or opportunities assuming she wasn't interested. Due
16 to the lack of culturally-responsive staff and
17 resources, my cousin did not have the opportunity to
18 navigate her interest to support her college or
19 career readiness. I believe in the importance of
20 hiring bilingual school staff, including culturally-
21 responsive counselors and social workers. In these
22 situations, my cousin would have someone to turn to
23 and feel a lot more comfortable sharing her concerns.
24 My cousin was also discriminated against as an ESL
25 student. After only a few days in school, she was

1
2 harassed by kids in the hallway. They called her
3 names and threw her things around. Her counselor's
4 advice was to ignore them. How can increase in
5 funding for school cops and surveillance actually
6 address these ongoing issues facing students every
7 day? No staff looked after my cousin's needs.
8 Nobody asked if she was okay or needed support. If
9 the City is going to prioritize student safety, the
10 City must understand that safety isn't policing or
11 punishing students for one wrongdoing, but instead
12 ensuring the presence of student wellness. We
13 believe that all students regardless of their
14 background and identities must feel heard and
15 supported every day in school. In the case of my
16 cousin, her counselor could not understand the
17 complexity of being an AAPI English language learner,
18 and therefore was unable to provide appropriate
19 support and care. I hope the school and City will
20 redirect funding to create more opportunities and
21 resources for young people. We need more bilingual
22 school staff, as well as culturally-responsive
23 counselors and social workers. I think that a greater
24 amount of culturally-responsive staff will allow
25 students to feel more comfortable, especially during

1
2 the transition between moving to a new country, grade
3 or school. This is what students need. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Kyle Lin?

5 KYLE LIN: Good afternoon. I want to
6 thank Chair Joseph and the rest of the Council for
7 allowing this conversation. My name is Kyle Lin and
8 I'm currently a junior at James Madison high school
9 in Brooklyn. I'm a youth advocate at the Asian
10 American Student Advocacy Project's Mental Health
11 Campaign. We believe that safety isn't policing or
12 punishing students for wrongdoings. We believe it is
13 the presence of student wellness. As a student at
14 one of the most populated high schools in New York
15 City, being able to have an identity is imperative,
16 not only for my high school years, but also for my
17 future. Yes, safety is a top priority, but the
18 conversations among students aren't about extra
19 school cops or surveillance at schools. Students
20 need to be in an environment where they're accepted
21 for who they are despite their race, sexuality,
22 gender, and all aspects of their identity. Ensuring
23 students' wellness and making sure everyone feels
24 respected, supported and valued is the mission of our
25 school, but is that the reality? I remember last

1
2 year I was asked to help someone with a problem they
3 had with their math homework. After I told them I
4 wasn't sure how to do it, they replied, "Aren't you
5 Asian? Aren't you supposed to be good at math?" I
6 do the [inaudible] realizing now it has become some
7 normalized within me that common stereotypes
8 associated with my ethnicity had to be [inaudible] or
9 I wouldn't be seen as normal. All students deserve
10 to feel comfortable with who they are. Increasing
11 school cops does not help students feel safe and
12 welcomed at school, nor does it support students'
13 wellness and growth. During these final years and
14 the beginnings of adulthood students need now more
15 than ever support to be the best selves they can be.
16 This can start with providing more opportunities and
17 resources for us. In order to address the concerns
18 around our safety and our wellness, the City must
19 examine and address the root causes of these systemic
20 issues and increased funding for school cops is not
21 the answer. We want disaggregated data. Last year
22 it was said that the DOE hired 500 social workers,
23 but where's the data on this. Within our school,
24 what we want is more culturally-responsive counselors
25 and social workers, funding for restorative justice

1 curriculum, training for educators and students and
2 an inclusive curriculum dedicated to building
3 solidarity and allowing for the de-stigmatization
4 amongst our AAPI community. We urge the City to
5 redirect the funding from increased school cops to
6 increasing funding for culturally-responsive services
7 that would provide a safe space for students. For us
8 it is essential we feel that school's a place where
9 we will feel seen, heard, valued, and supported.
10 Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Max
12 Shimbo?

13 MAX SHIMBO: Good afternoon. First, I
14 want to thank Chair Joseph and the rest of the
15 Council for allowing this conversation. My name is
16 Max Shimbo and I'm a sophomore at Stuyvesant High
17 School in Manhattan. I'm a Youth Advocate at the
18 Asian American Advocacy Project, ASAP. ASAP is
19 CACF's youth leadership program. I am part of ASAP's
20 Mental Health Campaign Team. Just as many people
21 here today, I also believe it is important to
22 prioritize student safety, but we need to define
23 safety first. And if we are going to talk about
24 student safety, I think the definition should come
25

1 from us students. I would like to describe student
2 safety as student wellness. Students' wellness
3 includes their motivation to fulfil their role as a
4 student. That motivation originating from their
5 mental health. This points to us have adequate and
6 responsive resources and supports in school. For
7 AAPI youth, good mental health involves overcoming
8 mental health stigma such as the Model Minority Myth.
9 We need to push against implicit bias from teachers
10 and administrators that are a result of the Model
11 Minority's perpetuation that AAPI students do not
12 face mental health challenges. The assumption that
13 students who perform well academically do not have
14 mental health needs, when in fact many students
15 experience a great deal of performance anxiety and
16 they link their self-worth to their productivity or
17 grades. And finally, we need to acknowledge and
18 address the lack of culturally-responsive evaluation
19 tools and mental health providers and services.
20 Across the City many AAPI students do not feel
21 accepted by their peers or are pressured to meet
22 unrealistic expectations. This worsens their
23 wellness and their mental health in a system where
24 mental health resources are largely inadequate and
25

1 presents a constant danger to AAPI youth. We believe
2 every student deserves to feel safe in their schools
3 about their own identity and having additional school
4 cops, security cameras, or locking the door does not
5 help student's needs of feeling safe and welcomed in
6 a school, nor does it support students' wellness.
7 We'd like to ask the City to prioritize student
8 wellness and incorporate our voices, students'
9 voices, into decision-making. Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Max. Soha?

12 SOHA MURSALIEN: Good afternoon. First,
13 I want to thank Chair Joseph and the rest of the
14 Council for allowing this conversation. My name is
15 Soha Mursalien, and I am a senior at the
16 Baccalaureate School of Global Education in Queens.
17 I'm a Youth Advocate at the Asian American Student
18 Advocacy Project Mental Health Campaign Team. First
19 I would like to state that the conversation on
20 student safety should be focused on student wellness,
21 and that is when students' physical, emotional, and
22 mental needs are being taken care of in schools. All
23 students deserve to feel safe and comfortable in
24 their learning and growing journey. Schools are
25 places where students go to learn and grow and find

1 out what they want to do now and in the future.
2
3 Wellness in schools includes having teachers,
4 equipment, other faculty and more that are available
5 and readily accessible for students when needed.
6 There is a serious lack of mental health resources
7 and support in schools that should be focused on.
8 Many students go through serious health problems
9 whether it be mental or physical, but they feel that
10 they have nowhere to go. This is especially true for
11 many students of color, such as AAPI students. We
12 often feel the pressures of academic expectations
13 that have been passed down by our families and
14 cultures so many generations. In addition, teachers
15 and school staff often have implicit bias that AAPI
16 students do not need support and care. As an AAPI
17 student myself, I can say that I have experienced
18 this issues firsthand, and I have felt the pain of
19 not knowing where to go, and what is saddening to me
20 is that we have shared our voices and opinions many
21 times along with other youth advocacy groups, by why
22 aren't our opinions being incorporated. The proposed
23 budget to increase school policing fails to meet the
24 needs of students. We ask the City to redirect
25 funding to increase school resources that would

1
2 prioritize students' wellness in schools. As
3 students we should not have to feel the need to keep
4 all our problems bottled up inside and should never
5 have a fear of being judged. We need to put students
6 and teachers first. We urge the City to redirect the
7 funding away from increasing school cops and towards
8 funding for culturally responsive services that would
9 provide a safe space for students to express their
10 identity without fear and being judged. We must feel
11 that a school is a place where we are seen, heard,
12 valued, and supported. Thank you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much.
14 Sufan Wan?

15 SUFAN WAN: Afternoon. First, I want to
16 thank Chair Joseph and the rest of the Council for
17 allowing this conversation. MY name is Sufan Wan and
18 I'm a senior at Francis Louis High School in Queens.
19 As the nation's only Pan-Asian Advocacy Organization,
20 the Coalition for Asian American Children and
21 Families, CACF, aims to improve the health and the
22 wellbeing of Asian American and Pacific Islander
23 children and families in New York City. I'm a Youth
24 Advocate at the Asian American Student Advocacy
25 Project, ASAP. ASAP is a CACF youth leadership

1
2 program and I'm part of Language Access Campaign
3 Team. Last year in May, a shooting happened at 188th
4 Street in Fresh Meadow [sic], a few streets away from
5 where I live. Despite seeing an increase number of
6 police inside and outside of school, I still don't
7 feel any safer walking school hallways and walking
8 home. [inaudible] having additional security might
9 prevent incident. Do anyone listen to what we have
10 to say? As a student, I don't necessarily feel safe
11 or welcome for walking school hallways or going home.
12 I feel safe knowing I have the resources I need to
13 thrive. I feel safe when able to express myself
14 freely without worrying about hateful comments. To
15 me, safety is not just the absence of crimes, but
16 also the presence of wellness. Many incidents
17 [inaudible] trust and the lack of knowledge and
18 resources among communities. As English language
19 learners, what we need is to be able to feel welcomed
20 and supported in school. No one should be made fun
21 of just because English is not their first language.
22 School should be the place where all identities and
23 languages are welcomed and cherished. Additionally,
24 there should be adequate support for restorative
25 justice curriculum, training and opportunities for

1
2 both educators and students. In order to address the
3 concerns around safety and our wellness, the City
4 must examine and address the root causes of the
5 systemic issues and increasing funding for school
6 cops is not the answer. Once again, we're asking the
7 City to redirect funding to hire more culturally-
8 responsive staff and to increase funding for the
9 fully developed and implemented restorative justice
10 curriculum. We are safe when we have the resources
11 we deserve to thrive and our wellness is being
12 protected. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for your
14 testimony. How long does it take for you to see a
15 social worker or a guidance counselor?

16 KYLE LIN: It really depends. It could
17 be like-- like, to see a guidance counselor, you can
18 go to their office, but sometimes they aren't as like
19 resourceful as we need them to be.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You mentioned
21 safety, you being-- the answer to safety, what does
22 that look like for you?

23 KYLE LIN: I'm sorry, can you repeat that
24 again?

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You said safety, how
3 do you define safety for yourself? You said it had--
4 the students have to provide it. Tell me what that
5 looks like?

6 KYLE LIN: Like, it's about identity,
7 having the confidence to be able to trust who you
8 are. Like, walk into a classroom knowing that you
9 are safe, like, in the environment you were and
10 knowing that your peers wouldn't be judged. Just
11 having the respectful, like, area that you're
12 learning in a respectful environment and no one can
13 say anything about you.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I currently have a
15 bill in the Council on anti-bullying where it
16 includes student's voice. So it's always been
17 important to me that you are at the table as well as
18 we make decisions for you-- not for you, but with
19 you. So, are you aware of-- there's a hotline called
20 BRAVE, is that helpful at all to you guys, or has
21 that ever been introduced to you?

22 KYLE LIN: I currently do know what BRAVE
23 is.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah. BRAVE is a
25 anti-- it's a anti-bullying line, and there's also

1
2 MAP for counseling. But we want to know if they're
3 helpful. If they're not, then maybe we need to be
4 looking at other stuff.

5 KYLE LIN: We can look into it and then
6 we can come back to let you know.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And I'm sorry for
8 your cousin who didn't have a great experience with
9 yourself, I believe.

10 AQIDA RAMA: She was an ESL student at
11 Murrow High School in Brooklyn.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Oh, I know Murrow.

13 AQIDA RAMA: She went to her counselor
14 for certain classes. They completely ignored her
15 saying even though she had the credits to do those
16 classes, she wasn't allowed to because they assumed
17 because she was an ESL learner she wasn't going to be
18 able to do it, or she was going to lose interest in
19 them.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Thank you for
21 your testimony. Thank you for being brave and being
22 here. Really appreciate it.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to
24 this panel. Our next panel will be Annie Miguez,
25 Vidal Valentine [sp?], Lena Bilik, Doctor Brenda

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2 Triplet, Eliza Porcella [sp?]. Please make your way
3 to the table. On deck we have Andrew Barrett,
4 Allison Marino, Regina Marte [sp?], Anthony Wary
5 [sp?], Joshua Fin [sp?], and Yusin Liu [sp?]. Annie
6 Minguez, you may begin your testimony.

7 ANNIE MINGUEZ: Thank you, Chair Joseph
8 and members of the Committee for the Education
9 Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to
10 testify. My name is Annie Minguez, and I am the Vice
11 President of Government and Community Relations at
12 Good Shepherd Services. I am the Co-Chair of the
13 Learning to Work Coalition and the Student Success
14 Center Coalition, and I sit on the Steering Committee
15 for the Coalition of Community Schools Excellence and
16 the Campaign for Children, and I support all of the
17 priorities of my colleagues that they will be sharing
18 with you today. Good Shepherd Services operates over
19 94 programs that support over 33,000 children and
20 families across the Bronx, Manhattan and Brooklyn. Of
21 those 94, 31 are education support programs
22 supporting over 7,500 students. My written testimony
23 will focus on the needs of the human services sector
24 and the supports to the Learning to Work Community
25 Schools, Student Success Centers, Early Childhood,

1 Summer Rising, and transportation for youth in care.
2 I just wanted to start with the human services sector
3 ask. You know, DOE's latest school social worker
4 salary pay schedule states that salaries-- the
5 starting salary is \$65,822, and after five years that
6 increases up to \$99,176 along with annual increases.
7 Needless to say, nonprofits cannot compete with these
8 offers, because our contracts will not allow us to
9 pay annual increases or bonuses. While we have seen
10 workforce investments and are thankful in the past
11 two years, Mayor Adams' Preliminary Budget omitted a
12 COLA altogether. This is why the Human Services
13 Council is asking for the Administration and the
14 Council to negotiate a budget that includes 6.5
15 percent Cost of Living Adjustment and salary parity
16 for human services-- so that human services providers
17 across New York City can pay living wages to staff
18 that are equal to the salary compensation and
19 benefits available to city workers. As you know,
20 stimulus dollars will sunset in the fall of 2024.
21 There's things though that the City can do right now
22 to support the program areas that I referenced. In
23 the Learning to Work space, DOE can-- or the Office
24 of Public Schools can allow providers to pay higher
25

1
2 wages to students of \$20 an hour to increase workable
3 hours to 25 hours a week year round, and not just
4 during the spend-down period. Include considerations
5 for undocumented students. Include funding to
6 restore the staffing pattern for three advocate
7 counselors and two internship career coordinators and
8 allow perspective candidates to use three to five
9 years' experience in place of their bachelor's
10 degree. On the Student Success Center side, I just
11 wanted to name that I hope that our Students Success
12 Centers are right now operating under MTACs [sic] and
13 are being fully funded by ARPA [sic] funds that will
14 also sunset. The Coalition calls on the
15 Administration to fully fund Student Success Centers
16 once ARPA funds expire and to develop a multi-year
17 contracting relationship with providers to ensure
18 continuity of services. Thank you for the
19 opportunity to testify.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Vidal
21 Valentine? Vidal? Lena Bilik?

22 LENA BILIK: Thank you to Chair Joseph
23 and the Education Committee and the City Council for
24 the chance to testify today. My name is Lena Bilik,
25 Senior Policy Analyst at Children's Aid. For 170

1 years, Children's Aid has worked to ensure there are
2 no boundaries to the aspirations of young people. We
3 serve 50,000 youth and families at public schools,
4 community centers, Early Childhood Centers, health
5 clinics in 40 sites across the City. So, in my
6 written testimony I go into more detail, including
7 advocating for a holistic birth to five Early
8 Childhood Education continuum. We're also part of
9 the Campaign for Children and support their
10 recommendations as well as the recommendations for
11 busing for students in foster care, but here today
12 I'd like to focus on community schools. For over 25
13 years Children's Aid has operated community schools
14 in partnership with DOE. Community schools offer
15 holistic, integrated services that organize the
16 school around the needs of the whole child. The
17 community school strategy is extremely well-suited
18 for our current moment. Instead of a siloed approach
19 to addressing challenges facing youth for mental
20 health to chronic absenteeism to academic recovery,
21 investing in community schools means investing in one
22 coordinated strategy that addresses all of those
23 things and much more. Last month, Vanderbilt Study,
24 which is actually the largest study of community
25

1 schools yet, found that New York City community
2 schools are having a significant positive impact on
3 academic success, and that includes ELA scores and
4 math scores and attendance. this comes in addition to
5 a 2020 Rand Report that showed positive impacts like
6 better on-time grade progression and reduction in
7 disciplinary incidents. Despite evidence of success
8 and in areas we know are pain points for students
9 right now, we have yet to develop a long-term
10 sustainable funding solution for the City's community
11 schools. So \$60 million dollars of temporary federal
12 stimulus funding was used to expand community schools
13 and restore major cuts from 2020 to existing schools
14 at that time. that is not only the federal funding
15 cliff, and I think there was some confusion earlier
16 from the DOE, so I want to be very clear that this
17 Fiscal Year \$9.16 million dollars is needed to
18 restore cuts to 52 community schools who've received
19 one year of restorations very the last two years, and
20 that's City Tax Levy funding. Those cuts were a
21 result of an OCS funding formula change. one of
22 Children's Aid's schools is one of those schools, and
23 some of the services we provide include afterschool
24 ESL and GED, parent classes, a food pantry, a school-

1
2 based health clinic offering physicals, counseling,
3 resource coordination and more, and that's a really
4 good example of the kind of services those schools
5 provide. So the City is considered a national model
6 in many ways for the growing community schools
7 movement, and so we really urge the City to sustain
8 one of the most successful education programs in New
9 York City. And thank you Chair Joseph for your
10 leadership on this issue and many others.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Doctor
12 Brenda Triplett?

13 BRENDA TRIPLET: Thank you. Good
14 evening. My name is Doctor Brenda Triplet. I'm the
15 Director of Educational Achievement and Partnerships
16 with Children's Aid. And of course, I'd first like
17 to thank Chair Joseph, because I know I'm preaching
18 to the choir here, but you know, I know that with
19 your extensive background you get it, and you are
20 doing this with passion and from your heart, and I
21 really appreciate that. So, I'm a retired public
22 school educator. Having served nearly 35 years as a
23 teacher, building leader, district administrator, and
24 importantly, a foster parent. With my background
25 then I bring multiple lenses to the issue of

1 providing transportation to DOE students who also
2 happen to be youth in care. First, I'd like to
3 recognize and express appreciation for the
4 significant improvements that the DOE has made to
5 prioritize the rights of youth in care, including the
6 new DOE Foster Care Office. I thank you all for
7 that. But I'm here today to advocate not only for
8 guaranteed transportation, but for appropriate, safe,
9 and timely transportation. Just last week we dealt
10 with a case of four siblings, a first grader, a
11 fourth grader, a sixth grader, and an eighth grader.
12 The request for transportation was submitted on
13 January 31st, 2023. It was not until March 8th that
14 the foster parent was notified that transportation
15 had been arranged, only to learn that the foster home
16 was actually outside of the driver's contract,
17 contracted zone. Therefore, a new company and a new
18 route would be necessary. So on March 10th, we
19 received notification from OPP that transit-- that
20 the Transit Services Team was working to find another
21 route. However, "the team is exhausting all efforts,
22 but if there isn't an existing route available, the
23 outcome will be a metro card." A metro card for a
24 first and a fourth grader to commute any distance
25

1
2 from their home is neither a safe nor acceptable
3 alternative. Yet, this would technically count
4 toward the DOE providing transportation, right? They
5 provided a metro card. So, I am hoping and I implore
6 you to look beyond the quantitative data that you may
7 get, that you examine the qualitative data, the
8 stories behind those numbers. Recognizing the safety
9 risks in allowing young students to travel great
10 distances on their own, and as required, yes, Child
11 Welfare Agencies we do take on the -- may I continue?
12 Thank you. They do take on the responsibility of
13 arranging for private transportation services and
14 acting as chaperones. However, this takes already
15 scarce agency staff away from their primary
16 responsibility of supporting families, and in the
17 reunification process, a great detriment to the
18 families they serve. And most importantly, a lot of
19 the families that we're talking about are families of
20 color and poor families. Additionally, reimbursement
21 for setting up these private transportation services
22 is not made in a timely manner to agencies. Right
23 now, Children's Aid just contacted our fiscal
24 department this afternoon. We are owed 18,000 that's
25 still outstanding, and it goes back to the-- to

1
2 Fiscal 2022. Further, we have students who are
3 picked up as early as 4:15 a.m. and as late as 8:30
4 a.m. for school days that start at 8:00, and many of
5 our children arrive at school tired and hungry after
6 unreasonably long bus rides. Yet, they are too late
7 to eat breakfast upon arrival. Others are missing
8 valuable instructional time due to their busing
9 schedules. So I'm urging the City to include five
10 million dollars, a drop in the bucket, relatively
11 speaking, right, for allowable, appropriate, safe bus
12 transportation to students in foster care to ensure
13 school stability as promised and deserved under ESSA.
14 We've heard it over and over again. Budgets are
15 documents that reflect values. I'm trusting the
16 process but I'm here almost every year. I'm
17 confident that New York City values all of our
18 children including our youth in care. So thank you
19 again for allowing me the opportunity to testify.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Eliza
21 Porcella [sp?].

22 ELIZA PORCELLA: Thank you. I'm Eliza
23 Porcella, a current senior at the international
24 Baccalaureate School for Global Education and a
25 member of the Youth Food Advocates with the Community

1
2 Food Advocates. I'm here to advocate for \$200
3 million dollars in funding to be used for cafeteria
4 enhancement in New York City public schools. School
5 food is imperative to a successful school day for the
6 average students. The New York City Public School
7 System boasts 1.1 million students, the great
8 majority of whom do rely on school food. Aside from
9 just eating school lunch, cafeterias are also
10 supposed to be a safe and comfortable environment
11 where students can take a break from thinking about
12 classroom assignments, and students deserve an
13 environment where they're able to focus on eating
14 lunch and socializing. As someone who often relied on
15 school food when my working mom didn't have time to
16 pack me lunch, I've always wanted to see improvements
17 that allowed the next generation of students who need
18 school food to be happy, not hungry. There's a lot
19 of stigma surrounding eating in the cafeteria, and
20 the quality is sometimes disappointing causing many
21 students to go hungry throughout the day. I
22 personally never have enough time to eat in the
23 morning due to my commute, and often find myself
24 waiting for lunch, and with that it's incredibly
25 disheartening when I finally get to sit down and eat

1
2 the school lunch and there's no vegetarian options or
3 it doesn't look appealing. If I don't eat lunch I'm
4 distracted for the rest of the day and have trouble
5 focusing on my assignments. Increasing food
6 participation isn't just for the physical health of
7 students, it's for our mental health, too. Students
8 won't have to stress about their meals and they'll
9 actually be able to focus on furthering their
10 education. With this, I want to advocate for the
11 needed funds to transform all middle and high school
12 cafeterias and to enhanced cafeterias. Enhanced
13 cafeterias will give hungry students the ability to
14 choose what they get to eat, accounting for their
15 dietary restrictions, personal taste, sustaining them
16 through the rest of the day. This can improve focus,
17 health and happiness for so many students. Thank you
18 for your time.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How often do you eat
20 in the cafeteria, and what do you notice when you do
21 have lunch? How is the day-- you said when you don't
22 have lunch you're not focused. So when you do have
23 lunch, what's the difference?

24 ELIZA PORCELLA: I think that I'm
25 definitely way more capable of listening to my

1
2 teachers and focusing on especially exams. And I eat
3 in the cafeteria probably three days a week,
4 depending on what the vegetarian options are.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do they have a salad
6 bar at your school?

7 ELIZA PORCELLA: They do, but a lot of
8 the time it only is half open. So they'll have just
9 like maybe some tomatoes and onions [inaudible].

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, thank you.
11 We're having an influx of asylum-seeker students
12 enroll in public schools. I can only imagine the
13 challenge they face and facing adjusting to their new
14 life here. What impact would a program like LTW
15 program have on students and if it was extended to
16 them?

17 ANNIE MINGUEZ: Thank you so much for
18 your question, Chair Joseph. We are seeing young
19 people who are undocumented already participating in
20 the program. I think one of the things that we're
21 still trying to engage DOE around is how do they take
22 advantage of the internship opportunities knowing
23 that they're not able to work legally in the country.
24 So the supports are there. The advocate counselors
25 are doing the same work that they would do for other

1
2 students with them, and I'm pretty sure we could get
3 you numbers on the asylum-seekers that we're seeing
4 within the LTW community.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. And for
6 our foster care students, while miles are they giving
7 you that they must be traveling in order to get
8 transportation?

9 BRENDA TRIPLETT: so, basically we follow
10 the DOE's guidelines. We-- there's a chart and it's
11 by grade level. And so if a student would qualify
12 for transportation normally, whether they're in
13 foster care or not based on the distance and the
14 grade, well then our youth in care would also. So we
15 have-- the DOE will provide transportation to
16 kindergarten through grade six, grade seven and
17 eight, if they have IEPs with transportation on their
18 IEP. So we're following the same guidelines, but the
19 problem with that is that there isn't a one-size-
20 fits-all for foster youth. There are 10th graders
21 who suffer from-- with trauma and anxiety, and we
22 don't-- and it's not safe for them to travel great
23 distances on their own. So, following a very
24 stringent, you know, the rules, going by the book for
25 foster youth, the same rules for, you know, all other

1
2 children, it's just-- it doesn't-- it's not one-size-
3 fits-all. It's just not appropriate. We need
4 customized people to really look case by case.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. How many
6 hours-- you were saying a child was picked up at 4:15
7 in the morning. What was that day like? How many
8 hours of travel was that?

9 BRENDA TRIPLETT: Right. So, because--
10 and you know, I get it, if there's no existing route
11 we have to wait long periods of time, and then we
12 have to take what we can get which also results in--
13 for example, if there's an afterschool program that
14 that student can participate in. Many people won't
15 even think of asking to adjust the transportation
16 again, because it took so long to get the
17 transportation placed in the first place, so the
18 compensatory services, services that are offered
19 after school or before school. We're just so
20 grateful to get transportation. And the 4:15
21 eventually was changed, I think, you know, to little
22 later in the evening, and not to say that 4:15 is the
23 norm, but it can happen and it has happened, and the
24 early pick-ups where our students on the bus for so
25

1
2 long, and then they get to school lethargic and
3 hungry, and expected to perform academically.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank
5 you for that. Community schools, what kind of
6 support were you providing to the schools during the
7 pandemic, and what are some of the lingering impacts
8 of the pandemic that you see?

9 LENA BILIK: Yeah, I think that's a great
10 question, because community schools, we-- some of our
11 schools during the pandemic said to us I actually
12 literally don't know how we would be doing this if we
13 weren't a community school, if we didn't have that
14 lead CBO partner. We were providing, you know,
15 devices for students that didn't. We were
16 troubleshooting. Like, we had our staff on the phone
17 with parents and grandparents helping them through.
18 We were doing a lot of food access work and food
19 distribution that was-- and this is true. I know
20 this is true across community schools in the city and
21 the state, because we're on the state network, too.
22 Just the whole child approach was more important than
23 ever. We were actually-- you know, we have access to
24 counselors right now, just-- we have six school-based
25 health centers and we coordinate among them. So it's

1
2 not just guidance counselors. We actually have
3 mental health practitioners, and that was really,
4 really important during the pandemic and continues to
5 be. We still see really high levels of mental health
6 challenges, and we know that that's really, really
7 important. We see issues of chronic absenteeism
8 which we know community schools really support with,
9 but we also see kids just wanting to get back
10 together with their peers in afterschool programs,
11 and just doing fun things, and that's also a really
12 big part of this work that I always want to lift up,
13 that kids really are resilient. They just need the
14 tools and the access to the resources that a lot of
15 the kids in the community school communities don't
16 always get and didn't historically always get.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to
19 all panelists. Our next panel, Andrew Barrett,
20 Allison Marino, Regina Marte [sp?], Anthony Wary
21 [sp?], Joshua Fin [sp?], Yusin Liu [sp?]. Please
22 make your way to the front desk.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I wanted to take a
24 quick moment to acknowledge all the young people that
25 are here today. I see you and I hear you.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: On deck we have
3 Gregory Brender, Brian Birkeland, Rebecca Charles,
4 Dante Bravo, and Kate McDonough. Andrew Barrett, you
5 may begin your testimony.

6 ANDREW BARRETT: Hello. My name is
7 Andrew Barrett. I am the Food Ed. Hub Director at
8 the Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food Education and
9 Policy. I'm also a proud public school parent of two
10 girls who love to eat school lunch. Thank you,
11 Council Member Joseph, all of the members of the
12 Committee on Education for welcoming community voices
13 in today's hearing. The Tisch Food Center increases
14 knowledge about the links between a just sustainable
15 food system, education, and healthy eating. We also
16 put this knowledge into practice, developing
17 recommendations, tools, and resources to support
18 educators, policy makers and advocates to help
19 communities access healthier choices. In my role at
20 the Center, I have the incredible privilege of
21 facilitating the ongoing work of the New York City
22 Food Ed Coalition, a diverse group of over 300 food
23 and nutrition education organizations and program
24 leaders, school community members, advocates and
25 other stakeholders serving schools across all five

1
2 boroughs of New York City. It was the hard work of
3 the coalition that helped create the Food Ed Hub
4 first established with funding from the Council in
5 FY20. Our Coalition works to ensure that all New York
6 City students have quality food and nutrition
7 education and sustainably produced, culturally
8 responsive, healthy school food. A welcoming
9 cafeteria is so important as these incredible youth
10 food advocates are highlighting today, and the
11 Coalition believes that so are staffing, resources,
12 and programming. To that end, the Coalition has
13 identified three priorities for the City to ensure
14 stronger, safer, and healthier school communities.
15 The City should invest about \$20,000 per school for
16 food and nutrition education, allocated through an
17 equity lens and based on school size and need, a
18 total of about \$37 million dollars. Flexible funding
19 could pay for teachers who are already champions of
20 this work in their school, but are currently doing it
21 on their own time, enable programs to provide more
22 services to more schools or support important
23 infrastructure investments like cooking supplies and
24 school gardens. The City Council should also renew
25 \$500,000 in discretionary funding for the Food Ed Hub

1
2 to ensure that our important work continues. The Hub
3 is both informed by and serves community needs
4 through our work with the Coalition. We create a
5 space for collaboration and best practice sharing,
6 provide resources and workshops for educators and co-
7 create policy solutions to ensure healthy school
8 communities. Through our work, agencies, advocates
9 and nutrition education programs no longer work in
10 silos. The Hub brings people together for greater
11 collective impact for all New York City school
12 communities. Finally, the City should invest \$3.5
13 million dollars to increase compensation and
14 headcount at the Office of Food and Nutrition
15 Services. The current school building to manager
16 ratio is about five to one, but a ratio of two to one
17 would enable OFNS to increase participation in the
18 school meals program by implementing more appealing
19 menus, partnering with other school staff and outside
20 organizations to connect education with school meals,
21 and to create positive meal experiences, as well as
22 connect families with school food. More competitive
23 compensation would also reduce vacancies and improve
24 retention of OFNS food service staff. To address
25 hunger and nutrition in New York City schools are

1 essential. Healthy school meals ensure that students
2 are well-fed and ready to learn as we've heard
3 earlier, and quality food and nutrition education can
4 improve the long-term physical and mental health
5 outcomes of students and their families.
6 Prioritizing these three investments now will create
7 a stronger and healthier New York City. Thanks so
8 much for you time.
9

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Allison
11 Marino?

12 ALLISON MARINO: I'm excited to introduce
13 myself. My name is Allison Marino, and I'm the
14 Director of Public Affairs at Edible Schoolyard NYC.
15 Thank you to Council Member Joseph for holding
16 today's budget hearing and to the rest of the
17 committee for the opportunity to submit this
18 testimony. Edible Schoolyard NYC's mission is to
19 support access to edible education for every child in
20 New York City. We partner with public schools across
21 New York City to cultivate healthy students and
22 communities through hands-on cooking and gardening
23 education. We believe all children deserve to
24 experience food education, especially New York City
25 children who might not have those opportunities to

1
2 put their hands in the dirt, learn where food comes
3 from and grow into young food justice advocates.
4 Last year, we reached 3,500 students across 10 public
5 school sites and taught nearly 2,200 hands-on cooking
6 and gardening lessons. This year, we're proud to be
7 serving schools in Council Member Joseph's district,
8 Council Member Louis' district and Council Member
9 Narcisse's district, and we're thrilled to continue
10 longstanding partnerships with schools in Council
11 Member Stevens and Council Member Sanchez's
12 districts. We're one of 300 members of the New York
13 City Food Ed Coalition and one of over 75 members of
14 the New York City Food Policy Alliance. Access to
15 healthy, culturally-appropriate food is a continuous
16 issue that New Yorkers face, and yet the current
17 budget proposal only maintains flat funding across
18 the board for critical food assistance programs for
19 FY24. Many of the students we serve come from
20 families that are still struggling to make ends meet
21 and our partners in the field are subsequently seeing
22 an unprecedented demand for emergency food
23 assistance. With the national economic recession
24 looming, we foresee a prolonged increase demand on
25 emergency food providers and community food programs,

1
2 particularly for low-income communities across the
3 City that dedicate a disproportionate amount of their
4 income to household essentials like rent and
5 utilities. As members of our city's educational
6 community, we take our responsibility to provide New
7 York City students with access to everything they
8 need to learn, thrive, and build foundations for
9 future success very seriously. Our work give us
10 firsthand experience of the impact that access to
11 quality food and nutrition education can have on
12 students, their families, and their communities.
13 Schools are already food hubs. The FY24 City Budget
14 represents a unique opportunity for government and
15 community to work together to amplify the impact of
16 schools as central food access and nutrition
17 education points. As such, we respectfully request
18 your support for the inclusion of the following
19 recommendations in the FY24 New York City Budget to
20 implement quality food and nutrition education for
21 all students. I have copies of my testimony that
22 I've submitted which include additional details about
23 each of our recommendations and requests for your
24 consideration, but they include \$37 million dollars
25 for flexible food and nutrition education funding for

1
2 all New York City schools, \$3.5 million dollars to
3 develop standards-based, culturally-responsive and
4 developmentally appropriate food and nutrition
5 education standards and practices to be sequenced
6 into the Pre-K through 12th grade public schools
7 curriculum, renewal of \$500,000 in City Council
8 discretionary funding for the Food Ed Hub, and \$3.5
9 million dollars to increase compensation and head
10 count at OFNS. Thank you, Chair, Speaker, and
11 Committee Members for your time.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Regina
13 Marte?

14 REGINA MARTE: Good afternoon Chair
15 Joseph and Council Members. My name is Regina Marte,
16 and I'm currently a senior at Edward R. Murrow High
17 School. I am here today as a youth food advocate to
18 discuss cafeteria enhancements. In 2017, my school's
19 cafeteria was remodeled. It was one of the first
20 high schools to obtain an enhanced cafeteria.
21 Although I wasn't a high school student before the
22 remodeling, I remember laying my eyes upon the
23 cafeteria for the first time as freshman in awe and
24 wonder thinking wow, this is different, and it was
25 different in the best possible way. Not only was the

1 cafeteria design more welcoming to students, the
2 remodeled cafeteria promoted efficiency with the
3 self-serve line. I remember hearing older students
4 who were around the old cafeteria talk about how they
5 ate lunch almost every day in the new cafeteria in
6 comparison to before. Furthermore, according to the
7 school's participation data, my school's lunch
8 participation increased by almost 20 percent after
9 the cafeteria was enhanced, suggesting that enhanced
10 cafeterias do increase lunch participation and are
11 worth it. Although my school's lunch participation
12 has increased since the cafeteria's enhancement,
13 we've run into another issue: overpopulation. Due to
14 overpopulation, not all students are able to use the
15 enhanced cafeteria located on the first floor.
16 Instead, almost half of the student population are
17 assigned to each lunch in a suite on the second
18 floor. This is not just. Why should some students
19 enjoy the enhanced cafeteria and not others? Why
20 should all students be at school for seven or more
21 hours and not be able to have lunch in a place that
22 is welcoming to them. as a youth food advocate, I
23 urge you to commit to \$200 million dollars for
24 cafeteria remodeling and updates so that all middle
25

1
2 and high school students may enjoy an enhanced
3 cafeteria. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Anthony
5 Wary?

6 ANTHONY WARY: Good afternoon, Council
7 Members. My name is Anthony. I'm currently a
8 sophomore at Hunter Science at the MLK Campus and I
9 live in District One. With about 20 percent of my
10 community in poverty, I understand the importance of
11 school food for students in these households. Nearly
12 1.5 million New Yorkers face food insecurity,
13 including one in four children, according to a 2021
14 analysis by Feeding America. This is not to mention
15 the pandemic's effect on parents and guardians' life
16 savings and jobs. While it is not a secret that
17 school food has not been the best regarded food, it
18 is what students eat every day. Either due to a lack
19 of variety, presentation of food, or simply the taste
20 of school food, more and more students are opting out
21 the system. The result of this is kids go hungry for
22 the entire day and perform worse at school. School
23 food is the only food I have access to during the
24 school day. I understand the impact of school food
25 on students and how it feels to go hungry for an

1
2 entire academic day. My community relies on this
3 food provided by schools. Many of my friends go to
4 school saying, "Man, I didn't have breakfast this
5 morning," or "Damn, I wish I woke up earlier today so
6 I could eat something." While there are different
7 reasons for why they miss breakfast, the end result
8 is the same. If they miss breakfast, they will not
9 eat until after school. Why is that the case? They
10 either didn't bring their own lunch or they will not
11 eat a school lunch either. Enhanced cafeterias will
12 not only improve the visual appeal to students, they
13 also have the merit of making lines shorter. In my
14 campus with a small school of only 300 students, some
15 days the lunch line can be long as 35 to 45 minutes
16 in a period with only five to 10 minutes left to eat.
17 I want to request more funding to renovate all
18 cafeterias and place further emphasis on the
19 students' experience. Thank you for your time.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Joshua?

21 JOSHUA FIN: Good afternoon City Council
22 Members. My name is Joshua Fin and I am a junior
23 attending Flushing High School in Queens. I am a
24 Youth Food Advocacy member, and I'm gather support
25 for our cause to increase funding for enhanced

1
2 cafeterias in schools within the City. We would like
3 your support to increase the implementation of
4 enhanced cafeterias throughout schools in the city in
5 [inaudible]. The school food system for all students
6 to encourage more students across the city to
7 participate in school lunch, as well as provide
8 healthier and better food options to students. Food
9 insecurity is a very common issue in the City. An
10 improved school food system will ensure that children
11 will come from families that are struggling with food
12 insecurity receive nutritious meals to prevent hunger
13 throughout the school day. I believe that the
14 implementation of enhanced cafeterias will be an
15 essential investment into the future of the City as
16 every young mind deserves a healthy and nutritious
17 meal to help nourish their developing minds. To add
18 on to this, two weeks ago my own school cafeteria
19 that is merged with three other schools finished
20 undergoing the in-house cafeteria updates, and I have
21 noticed at my school lunch participation is much
22 higher and students receive much more variety at
23 lunch. I have heard a lot of positive feedback from
24 students across the school about the enhanced
25 cafeterias and the school lunch. Many students that

1
2 used to have to skip lunch because of various issues
3 such as dietary restrictions have begun to be able to
4 each lunch daily. Because of this, I would like to
5 ask for your support to fully fund the renovation of
6 all middle schools and high schools throughout the
7 City and to enhance cafeterias in order to meet the
8 nutritional needs of young and developing minds and
9 to ensure that we all grow up healthier and are able
10 to uphold the future of the world. Thank you for
11 your time and for giving young minds a voice in their
12 own schools.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Joshua.
14 Yusin Liu [sp?]?

15 YUSIN LIU: Good afternoon Chair Joseph
16 and Council Members. My name is Yusin Liu and I live
17 in Queens and attend the East-West School of
18 International Studies. I am a junior and I
19 appreciate you listening to all of students today and
20 appreciate your support. The main issue in our
21 school lunches is my school lunch participation rate
22 is only around 60 percent which means around 40
23 percent of the students are either eating junk,
24 spending money, or going hungry. This is not what I
25 want to see and must not be the case when we have

1 free school-- sorry, free school meals. This also
2 means that around 40 percent of the students cannot
3 be in their most-efficient condition to learn. This
4 defeats the purpose of creating Universal Free School
5 Lunch. Some of you might be thinking, why do I care
6 about this? Well, it's because I am part of my
7 school and my community. I have the responsibility
8 to promote a better environment for my friends and my
9 neighbors to live in. With your support, the
10 students in New York City will have better
11 performance in school and a better future which will
12 also benefit the-- sorry-- which will also benefit New
13 York City in the future. The students who are in
14 school now will be in your position in the future and
15 create a community that everyone wants to see. We
16 need your help to make this real, and you have a
17 chance to make this better now, not only for students
18 today, but also for your kids, your grandsons and
19 granddaughters. We need a better participation rate
20 in school meals. The way you can help to improve
21 participation now is to help create a more-attractive
22 meal and a better eating environment. We need more
23 welcoming eating conditions and not plain rectangular
24 tables. We need more diverse food that is welcoming
25

1
2 to all kinds of students that are from all kinds of
3 backgrounds. Thank you for your time.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, and I
5 will be working for the future generation. You will
6 be the one sitting here and having this hearing.
7 Tisch Center, can you share you finding on the
8 quality of current school food option available to
9 students and its impact on their health and
10 wellbeing?

11 ANDREW BARRETT: Wow, that's a great
12 question. I would generally defer to our Executive
13 Director Jen-- Doctor Jen Cadenhead for questions
14 like that. I would just say, you know, we know OFNS
15 is working incredibly hard to improve the, you know,
16 scratch cook options, plant-based options and other
17 options for students to have, you know, again,
18 culturally-responsive-- you know, I-- before joining
19 Tisch, I used to serve schools directly in programs
20 with the City and in other ways over the last decade
21 or so. you know, the improvements that we've seen,
22 the engagement that we've seen and the partnership
23 that we've seen in OFNS is something we're really--
24 I've been really impressed by and proud of, so
25 there's always room to do better. I would say, you

1
2 know, with the Chef's Council with the new recipes
3 that they're coming out with, like all these things
4 are tremendous positive steps forward.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Edible
6 Schoolyard, you mentioned the creation of food and
7 nutrition curriculum in your research. What is the
8 current education students receive on the benefits of
9 healthy nutrition?

10 ALLISON MARINO: So, currently from--

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Speak
12 into the mic.

13 ALLISON MARINO: From my understanding
14 there is not one, you know, uniform or universal set
15 of curriculum that New York City public school
16 students receive on food and nutrition education.
17 However, there has been, you know, a loose commitment
18 to forming and implementing food and nutrition
19 education for all New York City public school
20 students. The \$3.5 million dollars that we are
21 requesting would specifically be to develop those
22 standards based in culturally-responsive,
23 developmentally-appropriate curriculum standards, and
24 we-- it would be-- make the initial investment to
25 kind of figure out exactly what you're asking. Where

1
2 are we at now? What gaps need to be filled? And
3 have people like Edible schoolyard, the Tisch Food
4 Center, other leaders work directly with DOE leaders
5 to figure out where we're at, where we need to go and
6 get us over the initial phase of what does planning
7 look like, to answer the question you're asking, and
8 then we could come back to you with an additional ask
9 to tell you what it would cost to get us where we
10 need to go to have curriculum.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I want to
12 take a quick moment to recognize Council Member Hanif
13 and Council Member Restler. Youth Food Advocates, I
14 understand how important enhanced cafeterias are to
15 you, and once mentioned that if students miss
16 breakfast, they cannot eat until after lunch. In
17 such cases, are your classmates allowed to go up to
18 the main office or a counselor and ask for food?
19 Just want to be sure there's food available to
20 students if they are hungry during the daytime.
21 Anyone, if you can answer?

22 ANTHONY WARY: Why there are food
23 available, it's nowhere near as nutritious as the
24 food served in cafeterias. For my personal case, I
25 know my school offers small snacks like popcorn or

1
2 protein bars throughout the day if you need or if you
3 don't have breakfast or school lunch.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, go ahead.

5 YUSIN LIU: I want to add onto Anthony.
6 We also have after-bell breakfast after breakfast is
7 officially done for the day, but I barely see any
8 students actually going down to the cafeteria and go
9 get those kind of bags with foods. It's probably
10 because we have class on the fourth floor and it's
11 pretty time consuming for us to get breakfast and go
12 up and eat. So it would kind of take around 10 to 15
13 minutes of school class time. That might be the
14 reason. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You wanted to add
16 onto it?

17 JOSHUA FIN: And I also believe that like
18 one of the problems with that is many students do not
19 actually know about after-bell breakfast. Any many,
20 like-- there just is not enough awareness that is
21 raised about these kind of things that they can like
22 take and there just needs to be like more awareness,
23 more like posters or something like that to like
24 inform students that these types of opportunities are
25 available to them.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, wonderful.

ANTHONY WARY: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to everyone on the panel. Our next panel: Gregory Brender, Brian Birkeland, Rebecca Charles, Dante Bravo, Kate McDonough, Paulette Healey, and Damien Andrade. Please make your way to the table in the front. On deck: Nadia Narcisse [sp?], Faith Jones [sp?], Wesley Wu [sp?], Ashley Yang [sp?], Armine Kahn [sp?], Yasmin Bonilla [sp?]. Gregory, you may begin your testimony.

GREGORY BRENDER: Thank you so much, Chair Joseph, Council Members Restler and Hanif, and all the Council Members who have been working on this issue for the opportunity to testify and for fighting for equity in education, particularly for our youngest learners. My name's Gregory Brender and I'm here on behalf of the Day Care Council of New York. We are the membership organization of New York City's early care and education provider organizations. Our members, most of whom work with DOE contracts-- I'll get used to saying NYC Schools one day-- provide childcare to over 200 sites and employ over 4,000 New

1
2 Yorkers, mostly black and brown women. We deeply
3 appreciate the City Council's leadership on this
4 issue and we strongly support the seven proposals
5 advanced in the letter from the Black, Latino, Asian
6 Caucus on February 28th, including immediately
7 addressing the crisis of late payment, releasing an
8 RFP that emphasizes access to extended day, funding
9 and new labor contracts that brings workers to
10 parity, developing a two-pronged enrollment system
11 that uses the power of community-based organizations,
12 addressing the needs of high-need communities and
13 service [inaudible], launching a multi-media, multi-
14 cultural, multi-lingual enrollment campaign, and
15 ensuring home-based providers have access to the
16 market rate. The City can take action right now on
17 these important items. As Chancellor Banks noted
18 this morning, he doesn't want child care providers to
19 be spending their time doing invoices. They are doing
20 incredibly important work of providing care and
21 education at the most crucial time in a child's
22 development, and we agree with him that that's what
23 they need to be working on. And in order to advance
24 that, we propose that the City and know that the City
25 can right now without waiting for the budget to be

1
2 adopted increase advances to at least 75 percent of
3 contract value, which is the amount that was
4 guaranteed in the both the birth to five and Early
5 Head Start/ Head Start RFPs. The Administration can
6 also now before the Executive Budget reverse the
7 proposed cuts to 3K and release an RFP that allows
8 providers, the organizations who are experts on what
9 their neighborhood needs, to apply for the services
10 that they know their communities need, whether that's
11 to expand more extended day programs to move some
12 seats to serve infants and toddlers. They can work
13 with providers to change enrollment procedures.
14 Right now through the centralized enrollment system,
15 a family has to fill out a form, work with DOE to
16 receive an offer letter sometimes months later. Many
17 families have deep connections with the community-
18 based organizations they work with, and they want
19 their kids in those organizations, and they feel safe
20 going to a trusted neighborhood organization. So we
21 want them to be able to go into those organizations,
22 and if their child qualifies, make sure that they
23 have a spot there. And most importantly, in this
24 budget, the City can and must continue the work of
25 salary parity by funding a labor contract that

1 addresses all the entire Early Childhood workforce.
2 This is providers, directors, teachers, support
3 staff, and includes longevity, because while we did
4 move towards parity for starting salaries in 2019,
5 there continue to be huge disparities for teachers
6 who have long tenures in the community-based
7 organizations. What Early Childhood staff,
8 providers, and directors do more and more is being
9 recognized for what it truly is. It is essential
10 work, yet, too many are leaving because they're
11 underpaid or because they're even waiting to be paid
12 because they're-- because their organizations have
13 received late payments or are waiting on late
14 payments from the City. Now is the time for action
15 to stabilize New York City's childcare providers and
16 fairly pay the Early Childhood workforce. Thank you
17 so much for your fighting gin this and for the
18 opportunity to testify, and we really look forward to
19 working with you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Brian
22 Birkeland?

23 BRIAN BIRKELAND: Thank you. Peace and
24 love one and all. My name's Brian Birkeland. I
25 represent Eastside House Settlement. I'm here to

1 talk about the Learning to Work Program. Learning to
2 Work, we serve over-aged, under-credited high school
3 students. I've been involved in many different
4 aspects of Learning to Work since the year 2015. I
5 represent students in the South Bronx, who according
6 to some is the poorest congressional district in the
7 country. The question I have is what is the plan for
8 these students if LTW funding is discontinued for the
9 nearly 20,000 young legal adults the rest of the City
10 has given up on that we serve. How will they get
11 the services that they need? Student needs a
12 therapist, we provide that. Students need a paid
13 internship, at LTW we provide that. Students need
14 tutoring, we provide that as well. Our students
15 graduate with a diploma in one hand and a
16 certification to a skilled job track in the other.
17 In less than a month I'm taking 25 of our best
18 scholars from the South Bronx to Spain, Italy, and
19 France as an exposure opportunity, all made possible
20 through LTW. Where will these young people go to get
21 the support they need? It's very convenient that the
22 same time that the LTW funds are set to sunset the
23 doors will be opening our newly-built borough-based
24 prisons just down the street from some of our
25

1
2 transfer schools. Is that the plan? I don't need
3 the two degrees that I've earned to see the writing
4 on the wall. This program is vital to the youth that
5 are most at risk of being trapped into the prison
6 industrial complex, so we ask that you do the right
7 thing and restore Learning to Work Programs. Thank
8 you for the opportunity to speak today.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Rebecca
10 Charles?

11 UNIDENTIFIED: Rebecca Charles I think is
12 on Zoom.

13 REBECCA CHARLES: Hi. Thank you Dante,
14 and thank you to Chair Joseph and the entire New York
15 City Council Education Committee for holding today's
16 important Preliminary Budget hearing. My name is
17 Rebecca Charles and I'm a Policy and Advocacy
18 Associate at the Citizen's Committee for Children of
19 New York. The following testimony includes the
20 budget recommendations we put forth to ensure an
21 equitable education for all students across New York
22 City. We echo the many priorities of the Campaign
23 for Children mentioned repeatedly throughout today's
24 hearing. Most importantly, we want to stress the
25 importance of restoring the Preliminary Budget cuts

1
2 to 3K and funding current levels to keep the City on
3 track for reaching universality as well as
4 prioritizing converting unfilled school days, school
5 year seats to full day, year round seats for 3K, as
6 well as infant and toddler care. We also ask the
7 City to continue funding the Promise NYC program that
8 provides childcare to undocumented families by
9 baselining \$20 million dollars. In the K through 12
10 space, we ask that the City invest an additional \$200
11 million for continued cafeteria redesign for middle
12 and high schoolers, enhancing the school meal
13 experience and increasing lunch participation, fund
14 \$3.3 million to secure 25 shelter-based DOE community
15 coordinators that are currently being paid with City
16 dollars, continue to redirect funding from school
17 policing to restorative programs and hiring
18 supportive professionals, provide transportation for
19 students in foster care as the DOE is legally
20 mandated to do by investing \$5 million to ensure they
21 receive transportation, and among our school-based
22 mental health priorities, we urge you to baseline \$5
23 million to fully implement and sustain the mental
24 health continuum. Thank you again for this
25 opportunity to testify. We will be submitting

1
2 writing testimony with a full and elaborate list of
3 our city budget priorities. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Dante?

5 DANTE BRAVO: Can you folks hear me?
6 Fantastic. Thank you Chair Joseph and members of the
7 New York City Council for the opportunity to testify.
8 My name is Dante Bravo and I'm the Youth Policy
9 Analyst over United Neighborhood Houses. UN nation
10 [sic] particular sits on the steering committee for
11 the Learning to Work Coalition and supports their ask
12 of \$42.1 million dollars to be baselined for their
13 budget which is currently made up of temporary
14 stimulus dollars, as well as the Coalition for
15 Community Schools Excellence, at which \$60.3 million
16 dollars is being used through ARPA funds and we are
17 asking for the City to baseline those funds in
18 addition to \$9.1 million that impacts campus model
19 schools that provide wrap-around services for young
20 people from all over New York City and represents a
21 reinvestment in many communities that have
22 historically been divested from in New York City. in
23 addition to that, we are-- I just want to point out
24 personally that the New York City Department of
25 Education has a budget higher than the GDP of my home

1 country, so my hope is that there is more than enough
2 money for all of these programs and then some,
3 especially when ultimately all of these programs
4 exist on a continuum of care, and to pit any of these
5 programs against each other as some rhetoric may
6 suggest is simply pitting different community members
7 against each other as well. In addition, one thing
8 that we would also like to point out is that in
9 February 2023 DYCD messaged out to youth services
10 providers that Summer 2023 would be Summer Rising,
11 and one thing that we wanted to speak to were the
12 three priorities that UNH has to make sure that
13 Summer Rising 2023 is successful for all parties
14 which includes coordination from the Department of
15 Education or New York City Public School System. In
16 particular, we are calling for CBOs to have control
17 over participant registration, especially for
18 families who need additional digital and language
19 support to apply for their programming. we are
20 calling for CBOs to be able to maintain their own
21 rosters so that if young people-- there are young
22 people who cannot attend the CBOs programming, CBOs
23 then have the power to un-enroll that youth and give
24 that slot over to a young person who does indeed want
25

1 that slot. We are also asking for choice in
2 particular for families and their youth to choose
3 whether or not they want to attend the DOE morning
4 portion, or if they also want to attend PE Camp
5 portion or both, and allow CBOs the chance to record
6 how many young people choose which service. In
7 addition, Summer Rising 2023 can only be set up for
8 success if there's an increased and coordinated
9 support for students with disabilities, to make sure
10 that CBOs have the resources that they need to
11 properly serve these young people. Our CBOs are more
12 than excited to get started with serving these young
13 people especially after historically not being given
14 the opportunities that their able-bodied peers have
15 been given, and we simply need the resources and
16 tools to make that possible. Thank you so much.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Kate
19 McDonough?

20 KATE MCDONOUGH: Hi, my name's Kate
21 McDonough. I'm the Director of Dignity in Schools
22 Campaign New York, a New York Citywide coalition of
23 students, parents, educators, and advocates. I
24 wasn't planning on testifying today since we have so
25 many wonderful coalition members speaking. However,

1 I did feel the need to offer clarifying information
2 on the record after hearing Chancellor Banks testify
3 about restorative justice and repeat time and time
4 again that he was committed to it. Just for context,
5 Dignity in Schools has been fighting for restorative
6 justice for at least a decade, and therefore, as
7 funding has been won, we do meet with the Office of
8 Safety and Youth Development around the
9 implementation. We have learned that there are about
10 900 schools that fall under the DOE's restorative
11 justice work, but only approximately 13 restorative
12 justice coordinators offering out of DOE central are
13 there to support those schools. Also, OSED [sic] is
14 not allowed to hire additional staff due to
15 restrictions placed on them by the Adams
16 Administration, specifically for restorative justice.
17 In short, it is not my experience that this
18 Administration is committed to restorative justice.
19 We also should uplift that they were planning on
20 decimating this budget from about \$21 million dollars
21 to under a million dollars over the summer.
22 Advocates learned about the plans before they went
23 public, and due to us and of course your efforts
24 Chair Joseph, we were able to prevent that. I also
25

1 want to uplift that at the end of the day restorative
2 justice has never been fully-funded. The top-down
3 model that currently exists within the DOE definitely
4 falls short, which is why our coalition is calling
5 for investment on the school level. So we do need
6 \$75 million dollars for school-based restorative
7 justice coordinators as well as \$10 million dollars
8 to go directly to schools to access ongoing
9 restorative justice training curriculum, etcetera.
10 Just lastly, you know, this is personal for me, too.
11 I grew up in the Bronx. I'm a New York City public
12 school alumni. I was a young person when Zero
13 Tolerance policy was introduced. I was an eighth
14 grader when the NYPD took over school safety in an
15 under-resourced school in the Bronx without windows.
16 I really don't have words what it means to be working
17 with young people who weren't even born when these
18 policies were put in place, and yet, are feeling the
19 impacts of that horrible decision. It also hurts my
20 heart to fight so hard to simply maintain minimal
21 gains. So I do believe, though, that in partnership
22 with the Council we can finally fund restorative
23 justice. We can give our young people the schools
24 that they deserve. Thank you.
25

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Paulette
3 Healey?

4 PAULETTE HEALEY: Esteemed Council
5 Members, I just want to start off by thanking Chair
6 Joseph for always amplifying the needs of our D75
7 community. We're often an afterthought, and not only
8 do the parents appreciate but our children will grow
9 because of your advocacy. I also just want to put on
10 record that I actually look forward to Council Member
11 Restler's spicy commentary. So I kind of missed it
12 this particular hearing. So, let me start off by
13 saying my name is Paulette Healey. I am the Co-
14 President of the Citywide Council on Special
15 Education, and we represent and support over 200,000
16 families with students with IEPs, including over
17 24,000 students in District 75. I also want to
18 reiterate and support all of the database demands my
19 colleagues at AQE, Advocates for Children, CACF, and
20 Food Advocates, along with all of the youth advocates
21 that showed up today, because everything that they
22 said was evidence-based, and they need to be taken
23 seriously. I just also want to give a quick shout
24 out to my friend Natasha Capers at CEJ for
25 illustrating that the DOE's approach to our children

1 right now looks like raw meat on a garbage can lid.
2 I couldn't have said it better. Earlier this year
3 when Mayor Adams defunded schools across the City, it
4 resulted in administrators struggling to hold on to
5 their music programs. Related service providers had
6 their caseloads doubled which resulted in only
7 partial implementation of services and the massive
8 furlough of Early Education facilitators which forced
9 families to scramble for alternate assessments.
10 Alternate placement and much-needed afterschool
11 supports were delayed since there was not enough
12 funds to staff them. The proposed budgets that are
13 better on the table now will only make things worse.
14 As lived experience, my Co-President on the CCSE is a
15 small business owner struggling to keep her CBO
16 afloat due to the delay in payment for her services
17 in her Early Intervention Center that she provides in
18 District Five, a very marginalized district and where
19 early intervention services are hard to come by. I
20 ask that you support the lit-- I ask how can we
21 support the literacy initiative if we cut funding to
22 CUNY which feeds into our public schools with
23 teachers, literacy coaches and related service
24 providers? How can we pass bills to provide
25

1 universal childcare if our local CBOs are forced to
2 close their doors because it's taken over a year for
3 them to be paid for services rendered. My plea to
4 the Council Members is not only to prioritize fully
5 funding our public schools, but to make sure that the
6 funding goes directly to our schools and not
7 unnecessary consulting contracts or bloated
8 bureaucracy machines like OPT. Don't cut 3K. Don't
9 cut CUNY funding. Fund our initiative to reintegrate
10 D75 students back into our community. And I also
11 have some suggestions that won't cost us anything.
12 Pass a bill to require all teachers, administrators,
13 support staff, and bus staff to take Therapeutic
14 Crisis Intervention, TCI, training before being
15 allowed to teach or interact with any of our
16 children. TCI allows for anyone who works with
17 children the ability to recognize crisis, diffuse a
18 situation quickly, and provide a restorative approach
19 to behavior. It is crucial to managing an effective
20 classroom, and it's not a mandatory training right
21 now, and it needs to be. Pass a bill to include
22 first aid for epilepsy and seizure disorders as part
23 of the mandatory first aid training required by all
24 DOE staff. we heard from Urban Assembly how
25

1
2 important their CPR program is, and this is a very
3 easy lift, and this is a population that's growing
4 within our disability community, and we all know how
5 traumatic that can be, and if we don't have the
6 knowledge to intervene that it could lead to much
7 bigger harm. And lastly, just to represent all the
8 parents out there. We've always had to make a dollar
9 out of 15 cents. We've always had to figure out how
10 to spread a loaf of bread to make it last a month.
11 And we have actually come up with solutions for the
12 DOE to implement for students with disabilities from
13 Early Childhood to high school. We want our children
14 to have pathways to success. We want them to be seen
15 as individuals that can do more than just sorting and
16 filing. Today, I actually visited a work site today
17 to implement an apprenticeship program for D75
18 students so that they can learn how to be a mechanic,
19 become a shop steward, and actually have, you know,
20 union representation as a D75 student, as a student
21 with an alternate assessment who would not be
22 eligible for this otherwise, and we need more of
23 that. And there's tons of parents across the City
24 doing this, but Chancellor Banks will pat on us the
25 head and say good job and move on. And lastly, I

1
2 just wanted to thank Council Member Hanif. Last week
3 there was an incident in your district regarding an
4 asylum family that was in a hotel with no heat and no
5 running water, and your responsiveness was greatly
6 appreciated, but it does make me worry about whether
7 our asylum-seeking families are getting the
8 assessments that they need, knowing that we have
9 deficits in bilingual speech therapists and school
10 psychologists. So when advocates is asking for \$50
11 million dollars to put towards, you know, related
12 service providers, please prioritize the hiring of
13 bilingual and multi-lingual providers so that way
14 these families that are just coming into our city
15 right now don't get lost in the system. Thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Damien?

17 DAMIEN ANDRADE: Yes, good evening. I
18 might be a day late for yesterday's hearing. But my
19 name is Damian. I would like to say thank you Chair
20 Joseph and all the Council Members. My name is
21 Damien Andrade. I'm a CUNY students at Brooklyn
22 College, and I'm here today because I'm very
23 disappointed with the Adams Administration for trying
24 to include budget cuts for his upcoming budget that
25 will include about \$14 million dollars cut to CUNY.

1
2 New York City should be a leading city in the country
3 with higher education. Making cuts doesn't lead
4 students and the economy of the state in the right
5 direction. Having a fully-funded CUNY and even
6 public schools will allow students to obtain degrees
7 at a much faster rate and also allow us to hire more
8 fulltime professors. This will also allow New York
9 State's economy to grow since having more students
10 obtaining degrees will drive them straight into the
11 workforce, making our economy of the state and
12 country grow. Having cuts to CUNY on the city level
13 while also having a governor who's trying to increase
14 tuition for all CUNY schools doesn't encourage youth
15 students fresh out of high school to even bother
16 going to college. Why would students want to go to a
17 poor-funded school that will take them twice the
18 amount of time to obtain a degree than a full-funded
19 school that will let them get the right education
20 they deserve? This could also be said with the same
21 with public schools. Last year, the Mayor included
22 more than \$20 million in cuts and this year he's
23 doing the same again. I encourage all members of the
24 City Council to vote no on any budget that includes
25 cuts to CUNY and education, period. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Greg, Greg Brender,
3 this question is for you. You shared burdens of the
4 Early Childhood providers have in the absence of pay
5 parity. Can you share what the retention rates are,
6 attrition is like for childcare workers due to pay
7 parity issues?

8 GREGORY BRENDER: We definitely have high
9 vacancies throughout the system and it's really
10 increased with the late payments over the last year
11 and a half. I don't have particular numbers on
12 attrition rates, but we have membership meetings
13 regularly with our members and having people either
14 leaving their jobs or feeling like they need to leave
15 their jobs is a constant issue.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, thank you.
17 And we heard that across the board [inaudible].
18 United Neighborhood Houses, can you share with us the
19 work of the shelter-based coordinators and why are
20 they essential to students in temporary housing?

21 DANTE BRAVO: Sure. In many ways, when
22 folks are finding their ways into the city,
23 especially with the asylum-seekers that are now
24 entering into the City, but even well before then
25 with folks who simply are housing insecure,

1 especially thanks to skyrocketing rates of rent and
2 the cost of living, shelter-coordinated services then
3 allows for an actual liaison that's connected
4 directly to the DOE to fund-- or not to fund, excuse
5 me-- to funnel services to those families to make
6 sure that there's not a gap in that young person's
7 educational attainment. This is especially critical
8 for families with multiple children and with young
9 children at that who are at a critical level. There
10 was a previous conversation earlier today about how
11 the minute we miss third graders being able to read,
12 that that's a window that gets closed, this is
13 exactly the kind of work that shelter-based
14 coordinators are doing day-in and day-out. There's
15 an additional need to make sure that these
16 coordinators are not only well-funded, but to also
17 make sure that they are bilingual, that they are
18 well-supported in their work, and that ultimately if
19 we are interested in using schools as an engine of
20 opportunity, as an engine of equality in this city,
21 then we need to make sure that every child regardless
22 of their zip code, regardless of their housing
23 stability, then has equal access to all of these
24 incredible services.
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. On the
3 topic of restorative justice, you know it's a very
4 important topic that's personal to me and many
5 Council Members as you heard this morning. Thank you
6 for sharing your personal experience and learning to
7 work. What can we do?

8 UNIDENTIFIED: I'd say definitely we need
9 the Council's support in advocating for restorative
10 justice within this upcoming city budget, but just my
11 experience and watching what happened over the
12 summer, that this Administration will act if there is
13 pressure, but we need your support. And I think also
14 working directly with young people, educators, and
15 parents on really identifying how best to use those
16 funds. As I mentioned before, the top down model
17 that currently exists in the DOE where we have like
18 citywide restorative justice coordinators, some
19 borough-wide and then some restorative justice
20 coordinators working with a whole bunch of schools.
21 Our members have been practicing restorative justice
22 for a while. They know that at the school level is
23 really where you see that change happen. So I think
24 in addition to that advocacy is really making sure
25 that the schools get that money, and that students,

1
2 educators, and parents are the ones that are
3 implementing it.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Learning
5 to work.

6 UNIDENTIFIED: Yeah, absolutely. We look
7 forward to it.

8 BRIAN BIRKELAND: I mean, I've been in
9 school-- I think you said about top down makes a lot
10 of sense. I've been in schools where a few staff
11 members are trained in restorative justice and tried
12 to implement it, but if the whole school
13 administrative staff down to the school aids aren't
14 on board, it's not effective. And so then it's like,
15 oh, well this doesn't work. Well, it doesn't work if
16 everyone isn't trained in understanding how it works.
17 So that top down approach that everyone is going to
18 get this training and we're going to implement it as
19 a school community I think is the right way to go.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You're never--
21 Damien, you're never late. Your voice is heard and
22 thank you for advocating for CUNY students. Thank
23 you.

24 [applause]

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to
3 this panel. Our next panel will be Phylisa Wisdom,
4 Beatrice Weber, Nadia Narcisse, Faith Jones, Wesley
5 Wu [sp?], Ashley Yang [sp?], Armine Kahn [sp?], and
6 Yasmine Bonilla [sp?]. On deck: Albania Jimenez,
7 Rachel Payne, Andre Eaton, Emily Marchez [sp?],
8 Emmanuel Novy. Also, please note to all of our
9 virtual panelists that we have about 30 more in-
10 person panelists before we will move to virtual
11 testimony. Phylisa Wisdom, you may begin your
12 testimony when you are ready. Beatrice Weber, you may
13 begin.

14 BEATRICE WEBER: Hi, good evening, Chair
15 Joseph and the rest of the Committee. I'm Beatrice
16 Weber, the Executive Director of YAFFED. I come here
17 to speak on behalf of over 50,000 New York City
18 students. I represent the We Work as an organization
19 to improve secular education for Hasidic children.
20 As you have known and heard over the last few years,
21 it's become very public that this is an issue
22 effecting all of these children, and at the current
23 time is a huge issue. I personally am-- grew up in
24 the Hasidic community. I'm a mother of 10 children,
25 all of whom currently attend or have attended these

1
2 type of schools. These are schools where children
3 are learning a minimal, minimal amount. Now, the
4 state has passed regulations that make it very clear
5 as to what the local school districts need to do to
6 enforce this. These students are not exempt from the
7 basic standards that's required of all students
8 across the City. These schools are going to need a
9 tremendous amount of help. Over the next few months
10 there are requirements put on the non-public school
11 office to make sure that change has happened in these
12 schools. There is a pathway for these schools to
13 become better, to become up to par, to provide more
14 than the few hours that they're teaching a week. I
15 have older children in their 20's without high school
16 diplomas that find it impossible to get a job. I
17 have a 21-year-old son that told me that once he
18 finishes his yeshiva he's going to go to get his high
19 school equivalency, and it was impossible for him to
20 even take the course because his background was so,
21 so minimal. There are children who are in their
22 teens who can barely speak English who can barely
23 fill out a registration form at their doctor's
24 office. These are New York children here in this
25 very city who are bound by the same laws. We're very

1
2 grateful that the state has provided guidance and
3 guidelines and timeline for what the City needs to do
4 to ensure compliance with these regulations.

5 However, we have seen that the Office of Non-public
6 School Budget has been cut instead of being enlarged,
7 instead of additional staff being put towards this
8 work. The staff has been decreased. This is
9 incredibly concerning. It is heart-breaking for me
10 to see not only my own children, but these tens of
11 thousands of children who continue to be deprived,
12 and no action is being taken to help these children.
13 I want you to know and to see these are children just
14 like any other children. These are children that
15 deserve the same education that every other children
16 deserves, and I hope that you will stick up for them
17 and make sure that they get what they need.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Phylisa?

19 PHYLISA WISDOM: Yes, thank you. Chair
20 Joseph, members of the Committee, Committee and
21 Counsel Staff, thank you for the opportunity to
22 testify this evening. My name is Phylisa Wisdom and
23 I'm the Director of Development and Government
24 Affairs also at YAFFED. I'm here to talk specifically
25 about the Office of Non-public Schools Budget Code

1
2 2145. New York State Education Law 3204 requires
3 every non-public school in the state to provide a
4 substantially equivalent education as is administered
5 by the local school district. The State Education
6 Department this past fall enacted the Commissioner's
7 Regulation Part 130 which interprets State Law 3204
8 and gives responsibility of assessing, cataloging,
9 and reporting the compliance of every non-public
10 school within its jurisdiction to the local school
11 authority. In the case of New York City where the
12 majority of Hasidic yeshivas are, this is the New
13 York City Department of Education. State Law
14 requires a new body of work starting this coming year
15 and the DOE budget and previous comments from the
16 Mayor and Chancellor leave us concerned that no
17 preparation is being done. The most recent school
18 data that is available from the State Department
19 reflects statistics from last year. That data lists
20 833 non-public schools in New York City with a
21 combined enrollment of 241,558. That is larger than
22 most public school districts, including Buffalo,
23 Syracuse, and Boston public schools combined. The
24 office overseeing their education is tiny. For years,
25 the Office of Non-public Schools has primarily

1
2 assisted private schools with obtaining certificates
3 of occupancy, accessing public funding, providing
4 assistance. It has not been tasked with conducting
5 school reviews, cataloging non-public schools, or
6 assisting with meeting state mandates. The Office of
7 Non-public Schools Budget Code 2145 was previously
8 resourced with three admin positions and two
9 pedagogical staff at \$178,955 dollars. The FY24
10 Preliminary Budget reduces pedagogical staff
11 allocation for Budget Code 2145 by \$134,424 dollars.
12 The remaining pedagogical staff budget allocation is
13 just \$44,531. That is not even a full-time
14 pedagogue. The Chancellor spoke hours ago about the
15 challenges of meeting state mandates with the
16 challenges New York City public schools are facing,
17 but as Beatrice mentioned, these children and these
18 schools are also the DOE's responsibility. It will
19 be impossible to catalog all non-public schools with
20 this team by December as is required, and even less
21 possible to support those that need remediation and
22 turn-around plans. This work requires an
23 independent, competent, fully-resourced staff, and a
24 real organizational commitment to carry out this
25 work. According to experts in school turn-around

1
2 work, this staff must include subject area experts,
3 pedagogical experts, ideally Yiddish-speaking
4 investigators. Most of the instruction is happening
5 in Yiddish, so proficiency in Yiddish will be
6 important. Really quick, NYSED [sic] added a
7 headcount last year to support their non-public
8 schools team specifically related to this regulation.
9 The dire state of secular education in many Hasidic
10 yeshivas has been widely reported and the state
11 finally took action this year to begin the work of
12 turning the sector around. We urge the City to take
13 its mandated responsibility for the education of
14 Hasidic children seriously and follow suit. Thank
15 you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Nadia?

17 NADIA NARCISSE: Good afternoon Chair
18 Joseph and Council Members. My name is Nadia
19 Narcisse. I attend Tottenville High School and I'm a
20 senior. I have been on the track team and cross
21 country team since freshman year. This summer, I
22 joined the Youth for Advocates [inaudible] School
23 Food Justice in my school and schools throughout New
24 York City. Like many students, my day is pretty
25 long, ending at around 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. In order to

1
2 have a successful day, I rely on the school lunch and
3 breakfast to keep me fueled for both track and for my
4 academics. At my school we are very fortunate to
5 have two cafeterias who serve over 3,000 students,
6 but even so, our school lunch numbers are just not
7 adding up. I'm sorry, if our school lunch
8 participation is low at approximately 7.3 percent for
9 2021 to 2022 for every 3,000 students. The numbers
10 are not adding up. In 2017 school lunch was made
11 free for all students in New York City in hopes to
12 break the stigma and increase participation in
13 schools which was effective, but not the only root of
14 the problem. What I hear most of my peers as to why
15 they don't eat lunch is usually the lack of options,
16 the environment, or they would just rather take from
17 the vending machines, or they don't want to be seen
18 eating the school lunch. The enhancing of cafeterias
19 would counteract all these issues. Food is fueling
20 and a necessary part of learning. School food is
21 important for students who have sports after school.
22 Students who do not have an access to full meals at
23 home, students who have a full schedule of classes.
24 Enhancing cafeterias mimics the style of a buffet
25 where students can pick out which foods they do want

1
2 and lessens the amount of food waste that goes on
3 when students are just handed a meal. The updates
4 will promote school food that is enjoyable, food that
5 is fueling. This will create a more positive
6 environment, increase test scores, and increase
7 students' physical and mental wellbeing. So let's
8 create a place where students are motivated to eat
9 every day. As Youth Food Advocates, we are here
10 again with new and old members to promote an issue we
11 are all still equally passionate about and to
12 emphasize the need of enhancing cafeterias in middle
13 and high schools. So we need \$200 million dollars to
14 put these ideas into action. Thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Faith?

16 FAITH JONES: Good evening Council
17 Members. I am Faith Jones and I'm currently a
18 sophomore at Brooklyn Technical High School and a
19 member of Youth Food Advocates. I'm here today to
20 ask for your support to bring cafeteria enhancements
21 to all NYC middle and high schools. Currently, NYC
22 students face the issue of inaccessibility when it
23 comes to school food. This might be surprising
24 because free lunch has been available to students
25 since 2017. However, outdated cafeterias, inefficient

1 lunch lines, and lack of choice can make school food
2 inaccessible. At times, receiving school meals can
3 be such a draining process that it deters students
4 from getting lunch. This is detrimental as school
5 food can give relief students and their families to
6 not have to invest money into making their lunch, or
7 it can provide a student with the only meal that
8 they've had for the day. School food allows students
9 to be at their best academically and is known to
10 improve mental health. By improving all school
11 cafeterias, you will encourage a level playing field
12 for all students. School food is an important part
13 of our education. When a student sees new cafeteria
14 enhancements at their school, it can encourage
15 curiosity and interest [sic] to the action and work
16 that went into their new festive cafeteria. In
17 addition, when realizing that the students of NYC
18 were able to advocate for the new changes to the
19 cafeteria, students can be inspired to take part in
20 policy-making and efforts to contribute to their own
21 communities. It is imperative that you grant the \$200
22 million dollars in funding for cafeteria
23 enhancements, as this is an issue of equity in NYC
24 schools and should be attended to now, rather than
25

1
2 allowing the opportunity gaps between schools and
3 students to grow. Thank you for your time.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Albania?

5 UNIDENTIFIED: [off mic] [inaudible]

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, so we'll have
7 you hold until the next-- or their panel. Rachel?
8 Andre as well? Emily? Emanuel? Okay. Alright,
9 we'll open it up to questioning now.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

11 Phylisa, which schools will need review once the
12 cataloging is done?

13 PHYLISA WISDOM: thank you for that
14 question. So we don't know yet. The first step is
15 that per the regulations, in September, district
16 leadership or LSA leadership needs to have a list of
17 all the schools and then by December to determine
18 which of the pathways they'll use to determine if the
19 school is substantially equivalent. So, essentially
20 we need a list of all the nonpublic schools from the
21 DOE in September, and then by December what they're
22 doing to prove that they're substantially equivalent.
23 In many cases they will need school reviews and
24 that's when that process will begin.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What is the timeline
3 for those reviews? When should they start?

4 PHYLISA WISDOM: They should start in
5 December and then in the 2024-2025 school year.
6 Hundreds of those schools will need those reviews.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, thank you so
8 much. Beatrice, are parents in these schools
9 organizing to help with the turnaround?

10 BEATRICE WEBER: So, unfortunately there
11 is great stigma and it's almost impossible for
12 parents to speak up about this issue. We constantly
13 receive messages, many of them anonymous from
14 parents, letters, thanking us for our work, you know,
15 encouraging us to continue to do this, but
16 unfortunately I know personally I paid a heavy, heavy
17 price for speaking up about this issue. There isn't
18 the idea of, you know, internally asking for change
19 and wanting change. I know as a mother that used to
20 be very much part of the community, we always
21 complained about this issue, but never felt that we
22 had the agency to speak up. So, unfortunately, it's
23 going to require a lot of outside support and
24 intervention.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Are
3 other parents speaking to school leaders and city
4 leadership about this?

5 PHYLISA WISDOM: Again, we know that
6 there's some change. I know somebody wrote a whole
7 book, you know, in Yiddish that he sells on Amazon
8 talking about this issue, but nobody knows who the
9 author is. He's completely anonymous. So there's a
10 tremendous amount of fear of speaking up and coming
11 out public if you do want change, but we know and we
12 estimate over 60-70 percent of the families do want
13 change.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: They do want change
15 but they're just afraid to come out and speak up.

16 PHYLISA WISDOM: Yeah. It's-- I
17 personally, you know, I lost my job. I was stalked. I
18 had to move apartments because I was being stalked. I
19 mean, there's real repercussions for speaking up
20 about any problems.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Faith,
22 Armine [sp?], and Yasmin [sp?] thank you for your
23 testimony. I'm impressed for your advocacy for the
24 advanced cafeterias. How many others did not
25

1
2 testify? Okay. We're going to allow you testify
3 now. I want to hear your voice.

4 ARMINE: Good afternoon Chair Joseph and
5 Council Members. My name is Armine [sp?] and I'm a
6 Youth Food Advocates member and I'm currently a
7 sophomore at the Brooklyn Latin School. I currently
8 live in District 28 and have been in public schools
9 my entire life. School is supposed to be a place
10 where students feel affirmed and valued academically
11 and socially, and school food accessibility is also a
12 factor. School food isn't easily accessible to most
13 students either due to lack of variety or due to
14 their schedule. At Brooklyn Latin we share the lunch
15 room with another school. This means that many lunch
16 periods have to be scheduled. The lunch periods
17 begin way too early and end very late in the day. So
18 many students sharing a cafeteria leads to long
19 lines. School food is a fuel for students to get by
20 for the day and support their education, but the long
21 lines cause students to rush through lunch or skip it
22 altogether. This impacts the physical state of many
23 students in my school while learning. These students
24 lose focus and don't have the energy to learn. From
25 my personal experience I can say that these long gaps

1
2 between meals have made me lethargic throughout the
3 day, and then nearing the end of the day students are
4 drained waiting for lunch. It is for these reasons
5 that I am asking the Chancellor to fund enhanced
6 cafeterias for all high schools and middle schools.
7 Just this week, my school got the enhanced cafeterias
8 and the lunch lines have never been faster. The
9 environment and atmosphere at the lunch room is
10 completely different and all the students are excited
11 to eat at school. I got to see for myself how the
12 lunch room is completely changed different and
13 students are excited to eat at school. I got to see
14 the changes we bring-- I got to see for myself how
15 the changes we bring now will change the future for a
16 better experience for all students. I'm asking you
17 to support the funding for all middle and high
18 schools to receive enhanced cafeteria model updates.
19 With your support for these changes, students like me
20 could feel affirmed and valued and know that we are
21 the focus as of why we are all here today. We need
22 your support in bringing big change across the City
23 this year. Thank you.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Ashley?
25

1
2 ASHLEY YANG: Hello Chair Joseph and
3 Council Members. I am Ashley Yang, a member of the
4 Youth Food Advocates. I'm a junior at Stuyvesant
5 High School and reside in District One. I'm here
6 asking for your support to fund cafeteria enhancement
7 in all New York City middle and high schools. This
8 will allow all New York City public schools students
9 to have access to updated cafeterias which will
10 increase lunch participation by reducing stigma, as
11 well as improve the lunch and cafeteria experience.
12 School food is an integral part of students' lives,
13 whether a student relies on the food provided or not.
14 Alongside the meals, the cafeteria plays an
15 instrumental role in the school food experience and
16 school food participation. For me, the cafeteria is
17 a place where I can both meet new people and build
18 friendships. The pandemic has impacted both student
19 nutrition and comfort in social environments. It is
20 urgent for the City to invest in school food now
21 because of how much student life is centered around
22 this. Lunch is both a time for socialization, as it
23 is the time to get the proper essential nutrients for
24 the rest of the school day. It is a time when
25 academics take a pause and the human side of school

1
2 is awakened. Investing in school food will support
3 students' physical health and performance at school
4 as well as their mental health, allowing
5 relationships to be built over a hot meal. I learned
6 firsthand about the ability and power the cafeteria
7 setting holds and how it can help grow friendships.
8 Given that my school cafeteria is fairly new, it has
9 many group tables that foster conversations and
10 meeting new people. It has allowed me to develop
11 friendships, friends navigating high school with
12 different backgrounds and grades. I found mentorship
13 with older friends and navigating high school and
14 been able to do the same for those younger than me.
15 Enhanced cafeterias encourage positive social
16 reinforcement as well as increase lunch
17 participation. Thank you for your time.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Yasmine?

19 YASMINE BONILLA: Good evening Chair
20 Joseph and Council Members and thank you for allowing
21 me the opportunity to speak with you. My name is
22 Yasmin Bonilla [sp?] and I'm a senior at Francis
23 Lewis High School, the largest public school in
24 District 26. As a Youth Food Advocate, I believe one
25 of the most prominent issues with school food is

1
2 outdated cafeterias which contribute to the stigma
3 surrounding school food. In my economics class my
4 teacher asked the class how we could save money on
5 food. When one of the fellow classmates suggested
6 that we eat school food, the class quickly burst into
7 a fit of ew's and no's. This reaction from my peers
8 is one that I and many other New York City students
9 are familiar with. Unfortunately, there seems to be
10 a collective experience among us students where the
11 mere thought of school food brings forth images of
12 unappetizing and imaginative food lacking flavor and
13 visual appeal. This is a major issue because this
14 collective and pervasive culture among students
15 discourages many from participating in this
16 incredible free breakfast and lunch program which has
17 the capacity to improve children's health and
18 education by guaranteeing two daily hot meals for all
19 students. Instead, many of us opt to purchase less
20 healthy snacks from vending machines or from local
21 fast food restaurants. At the start of the school
22 year at Francis Lewis High School, an enhanced
23 serving line was installed. The new serving lines
24 feature modernized displays that mimic a deli-style
25 experience, this makes the food seem more visually

1
2 appealing and makes the cafeteria environment a more
3 welcoming and inviting one. By displaying food in a
4 manner that students are familiar with and love, the
5 cafeteria feels less institutional and more
6 attractive. You don't feel like you're going to the
7 school cafeteria to eat school food. You simply feel
8 like you're getting food. Enhanced cafeterias
9 improved the school food experience by prioritizing
10 student choice, fast service and socialization among
11 students. In fact, at my school the updates have
12 resulted in about a 33 percent increase in daily
13 school lunch participation. I urge you to prioritize
14 revamping all cafeterias across New York City so that
15 we can dismantle the stigma that continues to pervade
16 school food and promise a brighter future for New
17 York City youth. Thank you for your time.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much
20 for your advocacy, and I did have the privilege of
21 having lunch in one of those cafeteria enhancement,
22 and this council supports cafeteria enhancement.
23 Thank you for your advocacy. I started at a young
24 age myself, and I was 19. So thank you for advocacy.
25 We see you and we hear you.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Our next
3 panel, Albania Jimenez, Rachael Payne, Andre Eaton,
4 Emily Marchez [sp?], Emmanuel Novy. On deck: Anari
5 Coleman, Alyssa Figueroa, Nyl Gum [sp?], Helene Friez
6 [sp?], and Nile Borja. Albania Jimenez, you may
7 begin your testimony.

8 ALBANIA JIMENEZ: Hello. I'm-- thank you
9 for the opportunity [inaudible] to the committee. My
10 name is Albania Jimenez. I am here on behalf of
11 LINC. LINC is a City First Readers Partner since
12 2014. So I know that any member of this committee
13 already understand there is an intersection of
14 poverty and race. That intersection creates fewer
15 possibilities for young children to experience the
16 stimulation that can prepare them for the school.
17 This is a well-documented problem that has challenged
18 our education system for generations. When children
19 fail to change from learning to read to reading to
20 learn, they struggle in school. I'm talking today
21 about ELL [sic] literacy is a social justice issue.
22 So, overall, 22 percent of children who have lived in
23 poverty do not graduate from high school, compared to
24 only six percent of those who have never been poor.
25 ELL literacy programming is the most effective tool

1 we have to improve overall educational achievement
2 and develop equity. So now is the time to priority--
3 to have ELL [inaudible] as a priority. The council
4 should take credit for creating City's First Readers
5 in 2014. So congratulations for this initiative.
6 But now is the Mayor's Office of Childcare and Early
7 Childhood-- this is a great opportunity to work
8 together just as the City's First Readers Partners
9 are doing right now. Working together will make a
10 difference to thousands of children. Like my
11 organization works not just with families but with
12 the entire neighborhood to empower parents to have
13 the confidence to support reading. Our programs
14 transform families, but our families transform
15 communities. We make reading visible and value. We
16 connect families with resources that are already in
17 their communities. We go where families gather to
18 provide our programs. Education is the key to social
19 justice. Reading is the key to education. And I
20 want to add, today's a reader, tomorrow a leader just
21 like you. So thank you for your support of City's
22 First Readers and Early Childhood.

23
24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank You. Andre?
25

1
2 ANDRE EATON: Good evening Chair Joseph,
3 City Council Members and also all the staff. It's
4 certainly a privilege and an honor to testify before
5 you today. My name is Andre Eaton and I am the New
6 York State Director for ParentChild+. ParentChild+ is
7 just one partner within the City's First Readers
8 initiative which really focuses on Early Literacy
9 citywide, but ParentChild+'s unique focus is to
10 provide the parents with the skills, knowledge and
11 materials they need to support school readiness in
12 the home and build home learning environments that
13 support children's language, literacy, numeracy,
14 cognitive, and social/emotional skills. We believe
15 that parents are the first teachers of a child
16 starting in the home. Doing this work, we are also
17 helping parents learn what to look for in a childcare
18 setting, how to identify and access the children's
19 next educational steps, and how to support their
20 children's continued academic progress. Our partners
21 in this work in New York City and elsewhere in the
22 state include school districts, public libraries,
23 social service agencies, literacy programs, community
24 health centers, immigrant aid organizations and other
25 community-based organizations. Prior to entering 3K,

1
2 Pre-K or Kindergarten, many of the children living
3 furthest from opportunity and children from families
4 with home languages other than English are being
5 cared for by family members or in-home informal
6 settings. These are the families least likely to
7 have access to the information, materials, activities
8 to build the children's social school readiness
9 skills and ensure they have the language literacy and
10 social/emotional skills needed once they enter into a
11 classroom. ParentChild+, along with our City's First
12 Readers Partners, provides critical learning tools,
13 books and other educational interaction stimulating
14 materials to families with-- we start as young as 16
15 months up to age three and four, and this is an age
16 group that often has very limited access to literacy
17 supports. The program helps families build literacy-
18 rich environments in their homes by providing the
19 books necessary with the essential library that
20 already starts before they enter into Pre-K.
21 ParentChild+ continues to be so honored to be a part
22 of City's First Readers initiative. Working our
23 partners in this initiative we were able to provide
24 intensive early literacy support to over 150
25 additional families in our communities challenged by

1
2 poverty, isolation, and language illiteracy barriers
3 in communities across the City. We were also able to
4 connect ParentChild+ families with a continuum [sic]
5 of other school readiness services and activities in
6 the communities. Working with our City's First
7 Readers Partners, we connect families who might
8 otherwise have access-- who may not otherwise have
9 access to literacy and early education supports and
10 can base programming offered by organizations like
11 LINC including story times, parent workshops, school
12 registration information sessions, and book
13 distribution events. Let me also focus-- also state
14 too that our book are also brought to the families in
15 the native languages of the families. Culture is
16 very important. Their ethnicity is important. Not
17 just to celebrate a month, but embedded in our
18 curriculum year round. So with the support from City
19 First Readers initiative, ParentChild+ has been able
20 to expand to nine communities reaching families in
21 South Jamaica, Far Rockaway, Woodside, Astoria,
22 Queens, Sunset Park, Brownsville, Brooklyn, and also
23 in the Bronx. As I finish and conclude, we look
24 forward to working with the City Council to expand
25 this critical continuum of services for young

1 children and their families and we want to thank you
2 so much for allowing me this time to present
3 ParentChild+'s critical school readiness program to
4 all of you. Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Emily?

7 EMMANUEL NOVY: Unfortunately, Emily had
8 to leave for a family emergency.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Emmanuel?

10 EMMANUEL NOVY: Thank you for your
11 commitment to New York City and for the chance to
12 testify today. The DOE sets 3K as their starting
13 point for their mandate, yet we know children start
14 learning from the moment they are born and need
15 access to specific early learning experiences to
16 support their brain development. Since 2014, the
17 City Council has taken the lead in recognizing the
18 importance of Early Childhood programming, it's Early
19 Literacy initiative, City's First Readers. My name
20 is Emmanuel Novy. I'm here today with my three
21 colleagues. Together, today, we will explain-- we
22 have explained how important this initiative is, how
23 it works, and ask that you advocate for early
24 literacy in your response to the Mayor's Preliminary
25 Budget and continue your advocacy for this critically

1 important investment in children. When children do
2 not experience the stimulation of playing, singing,
3 drawing, or reading with trusted adults, they do not
4 absorb the joyful lessons that prepare them to be
5 ready for formal instruction. Their opportunity gap
6 puts them behind their more economically secured
7 classmates from the first day of school. City's
8 First Readers Partners worked in every council
9 district to thwart this opportunity gap from becoming
10 an achievement gap. With most collective impact
11 initiatives, funding is allocated to organizations
12 with expertise in the same service area who continue
13 to provide their respective programs. With City's
14 First Readers, in addition to programs, there is a
15 unique degree of cooperation among the 17 partners.
16 Partners meet quarterly. We brainstorm around
17 collective goals. We develop committees to address
18 specific objectives. We collaborate on program
19 delivery. We are assessed by an independent
20 evaluator to determine outcomes and impact. We
21 maintain an interactive website that directs parents
22 and caregivers to programs in their neighborhood
23 refined by age and interest. We develop public
24 education messaging to raise awareness of the need
25

1
2 for early literacy programming as well as the
3 consequences of not providing it. This year, the 17
4 CFR partners are requesting an enhancement of one
5 million dollars over Fiscal Year 23's \$5.5 to \$6.5.
6 Increasing funding can allow us to incorporate our
7 RSS fee technology to support partners in making
8 their program calendars automatically available on
9 CFR websites without having to duplicate entering
10 events. Enhancements will support increased
11 availability to distribute culturally appropriate
12 books and print materials in multiple languages.
13 Booklets, coloring books and age-appropriate books
14 allow for an encourage children to explore and engage
15 independently with reading. Even if that means
16 simply turning pages, looking at pictures, or even
17 chewing on a short book-- a board book. The
18 magnitude of newly-arrived immigrant families with
19 young children potentially affects every CFR partners
20 and challenges our advocacy and collective capacity
21 to provide them with the resources, services and
22 support they need. Increased funding will allow our
23 organizations to adapt programming and better support
24 newly-arrived refugees and immigrants. And finally,
25 increased funding prioritized-- excuse me. Our final

1
2 rationale for increased funding is to prioritize
3 funding for newer CFR Partners to begin to establish
4 parity with longstanding partners without reducing
5 the range of impact of those established CFR
6 Partners. Literacy Inc., or LINC as we're more
7 commonly known, is proud to facilitate this effort.
8 Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Rachel?

10 RACHEL PAYNE: Greetings. My name is
11 Rachel Payne, Coordinator of Early Childhood Services
12 at Brooklyn Public Library, and I'm pleased to
13 represent the three library systems of New York City
14 founding City's First Readers Partners. I would like
15 to thank Committee Chair Joseph and the members of
16 the committee for the opportunity to testify on the
17 Mayor's Fiscal Year 2024 Preliminary Budget. We are
18 truly grateful for the Council's support of City's
19 First Readers allowing us to prioritize early
20 literacy since 2014. Attendance at NYC library
21 programs for young children surpassed 300,000 last
22 year, and we are on track to build back our pre-
23 pandemic attendance of over 600,000. Here are some
24 highlights of the work each library system engages in
25 with City's First Readers resources. Brooklyn Public

1
2 Library offers in-person early literacy programs in
3 10 languages, including Ready Set Kindergarten,
4 school readiness story time. Last year we added
5 Story Teen, an internship for high school students to
6 learn about story time and early learning careers.
7 New York Public Library returned to in-person early
8 literacy programming, distributed 10,000 English,
9 Spanish, Chinese early literacy outreach kits,
10 launched multi-lingual and multicultural performer
11 and resident series, and offered robust staff
12 development. Queens Public Library reached families
13 through in-person and virtual programming in nine
14 languages, provided early learning take-home kits,
15 and resumed Kickoff to Kindergarten and Toddler
16 Learning Center programs promoting early literacy and
17 parenting skills. City's First Readers has allowed
18 libraries to collaborate with initiative partners in
19 unique ways. Literacy Inc teamed up with libraries
20 to provide story times in low-resourced communities.
21 Reach Out and Read at New York [sic] Public Library
22 created literacy-rich waiting areas in pediatric
23 clinics. JCCA and BPL offered library cards and
24 story times to foster families, and La Fuerza de
25 Familias Latinas and Queens Library offer workshops

1
2 for Spanish-speaking families on early intervention
3 services. We are proud of all the ways we have
4 accomplished through City's First Readers, including
5 serving 2.2 million families and distributing over
6 one million books over the last three fiscal years.
7 We are deeply appreciative of the Council and the
8 Mayor's support, but there is more work to do in
9 addressing learning loss due to the pandemic. We
10 urge the City Council to authorize funding for Fiscal
11 Year 2024 for the City's First Readers Initiative so
12 this vitally important work can continue to grow and
13 expand in New York City's libraries and beyond.
14 Unfortunately, our work is threatened by the \$36.2
15 million dollar in proposed cuts to the libraries
16 operating budget which if enacted will negatively
17 impact our ability to deliver library services. We
18 implore the council to help us serve those who need
19 us most by rejecting cuts to libraries and continuing
20 to fund City's First Readers. Our libraries are one
21 of the first social and educational experiences many
22 young families have, and we want it to be truly
23 literacy-rich. Thank you for the opportunity to
24 submit testimony today.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much,
3 and we know how important libraries are. They're a
4 lifeline to communities. Thank you for that. Andre,
5 you mentioned your program equips parents with skills
6 to help their children become better readers. How do
7 you help parents whose first language is not English?

8 ANDRE EATON: Sure. Well, we also have
9 our books that are also in their native languages.
10 The other thing I did not mention, but it should be
11 in the testimony, is that we also hire from the
12 community, those with the same ethnic background,
13 cultural background, and linguistic background, and
14 actually becomes what we call their Early Learn
15 Specialist. That is the home visit that actually
16 goes in a home who speaks the same language as they
17 do inside the home as they present the material to
18 the family. What we're promoting is really parent
19 engagement and that's what we really want. We
20 introduced a book initially and then we watch the
21 parent take over and what we call the dyad between
22 the child and the parent to actually utilize their
23 book inside their home.

24

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Yeah, I was
3 just wondering what the process was. And you train
4 the parents to become the readers.

5 ANDRE EATON: Yes. So we actually are--
6 we call ourselves coaches towards them as well. So,
7 we all know this. I mean, we know this as a fact
8 that children, if they don't learn to read, then they
9 can't read to learn, and we have created a pipeline
10 to prison by the third grade reading test scores, and
11 so we're very aware of this. I'm preaching to the
12 choir in this whole room. The earlier that you start
13 with children, the greater their chances of success.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely. Thank
15 you so much.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to everyone
17 on the panel. Our next panel: Anari Coleman, Alyssa
18 Figueroa, Nyl Gum [sp?], Alan [sp?], and Nile Borja.
19 On deck: Daniel Guindo [sp?], Marcos Sclander [sp?],
20 Faith Begum [sp?], Jennifer Choi, Karen Simmons,
21 Kathleen Dennin. Anari, you may begin.

22 ANARI COLEMAN: Good evening. My name is
23 Anari Coleman. I live in Staten Island, and I'm in
24 the 10th grade, and I'm a Youth Leader at Make the
25 Road New York in the Urban Youth Collaborative. I

1
2 often hear that my generation is the future of this
3 city. However, New York City is not investing in us.
4 It is a shame that after a long day at school I have
5 to be here fighting for my education to be funded. I
6 am here testifying today because after years of us
7 campaigning for reinvesting money from the school
8 cops into our schools, we have not seen what we
9 wanted. It is upsetting to learn that Mayor Adams
10 insist on investing in the police while defunding our
11 schools. The recent murder of Tyre Nicholls as well
12 as countless others have made it clear that the
13 police are a danger to young people of color like
14 myself. Just two months ago in Staten Island we saw
15 the NYPD's assault on a 14-year-old black girl
16 outside of her school, not far from my school. Cases
17 like these make me feel upset and honestly I'm tired
18 of hearing stories like this. It feels like we have
19 normalized the attacks on black people, but no, it
20 should not be normalized. Black people like myself
21 deserve to feel safe in their communities and in our
22 schools. We get treated as the problem, but we
23 aren't the problem. Racist policies are the problem.
24 It is more frustrating that school police constantly
25 watch us black and brown students and are ready to

1
2 punish us for any minor mistake we make. In mostly
3 white schools where there are fewer school police,
4 students are not constantly surveilled and any
5 mistakes that are seen are treated as opportunities
6 to learn from, not reasons to be punished for.
7 Seeing police in our school make us feel less, not
8 more safe. As a black teenager, I want to be
9 welcomed in a school building that prioritizes
10 students' needs, wellbeing's, and that does not
11 criminalize just because of their skin color. A
12 month ago, my school opened a peer mediation center,
13 something that was highly needed. This is a safe
14 place to build relationship and student mediators who
15 will support students in resolving conflict. I'm
16 happy for my school and this is why I would like to
17 see restorative justice fully funded not just in my
18 school but in all schools. Every student, including
19 all five of my younger siblings should be able to
20 feel safe and heard. I will never get tired of
21 saying our school needs to be fully equipped with
22 resources we need like enough guidance counselors
23 available when students need them. Every time I go
24 to see my guidance counselor during my lunch time,
25 her office is closed and the only time I can see her

1
2 is while I'm in class. I know I'm not the only
3 student that has trouble seeing the guidance
4 counselors, and that is why we need more counselors,
5 not cops. Today we are here to call on you-- we call
6 on you to include the following in your budget
7 response. Secure a hiring freeze on the school cops,
8 cut the funding for the 600 vacant school cop
9 positions in the Mayor's budget and invest the money
10 from those disinvestments into restorative justice,
11 mental health, and our futures. Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Alyssa?

13 ALYSSA FIGUEROA: Hey, okay. Hey, my
14 name is Alyssa Figueroa. I'm the Coalition
15 Coordinator of the Urban Youth Collaborative Student
16 Coalition of New York City, youth organizing groups
17 to end the school to prison and deportation pipeline
18 and transform schools into supportive environments
19 for all students. First, I want to say that students
20 are most impacted by the education budget. I really
21 would love for these hearings to be more accessible
22 to youth. You know, in the PEP students are
23 prioritized, their comments go first. We would be
24 great to make this more accessible for youth. We do
25 thank you, Chair Joseph, though for being here to

1
2 listen to students who are again are most impacted by
3 this budget. So, Mayor Adams and his Administration
4 has made it clear that they want to further
5 militarize our schools through their commitment to
6 hiring new school cops, their commitment to
7 increasing Youth Coordination Officers which are
8 armed police in schools. There's \$78 million dollar
9 plans to fund video surveillance and locks in schools
10 and more. Do not be fooled by the IBO report that
11 came out yesterday that states that the Mayor is
12 reducing the authorized headcount for school cops.
13 What matters most is the actual headcounts, and the
14 Mayor's Prelim Budget allows for the hiring of 600+
15 school cops. That's a 16 percent increase. That
16 amounts to one new cop for every high school. We
17 also heard from the Chancellor this morning himself
18 who said he plans to hire 560 new school cops. And
19 we know school policing doesn't work. New York City
20 already has the largest school police force in the
21 country and schools aren't any safer for it. New
22 York City funds more school cops than counselors,
23 social workers or restorative justice coordinators,
24 positions that are actually proven to enhance safety.
25 Data shows that school policing does not prevent

1 violence, but rather criminalizes students of color
2 year after year. Nearly 90 percent of all school
3 policing incidents in NYC target black and Latinx
4 students despite them being only 66 percent of the
5 population. That is why we're calling on the Council
6 to include the following demands in your budget
7 response put out on April 1st: Secure a hiring freeze
8 on school cops for Fiscal Year 24. This hiring
9 freeze shall not allow the City to fill for
10 attrition. Cut funding for the 600+ vacant school
11 cop positions in the FY24 Preliminary Budget. Use
12 the funding from both these divestments to baseline
13 support staff such as restorative justice
14 coordinators, counselors, social workers and other
15 evidence-based positions and practices that truly
16 prevent violence, keep schools safe and allow
17 students to thrive. Additionally, we request that you
18 use your leverage to stop the Mayor's recent increase
19 of Youth Coordination Officers, armed police in our
20 schools, as well as the \$78 million dollar plan to
21 install locks and video surveillance in our schools.
22 We all know that the safest schools have the most
23 resources not the most police. Thank you.
24
25

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Alyssa.

Nyl [sp?]?

NYL GUMS: Good afternoon everyone. My name Nyl Gums [sp?] I live in Council District 14 and I'm a junior in a high school in the Bronx. I'm also a youth leader with Sistas and Brothas United and the Urban Youth Collaborative, and today I'm here to call on the City Council to align themselves with us and our vision which would fund our future and put an end to over-funding of police in our schools. As a junior who is almost a senior, I want to make sure my school has the most resources for students like me getting ready for college. We want to have more counselors, more college access support programs, and more job opportunities for students like myself. Our parents expect my peers, my younger siblings and I to have the best educational experience possible. We all know many of us lost a lot of academic time because of the pandemic and we're trying to make up for that time which means more now than ever we need additional support systems, not just academic, but mental as well. We need our schools to feel welcoming and receive-- we need our schools to feel welcoming and supportive, yet it seems for our call

1
2 for resources shows more policing in our schools,
3 police that continue to criminalize black and brown
4 youth just like me. New York City's budget continues
5 to fund cops inside and outside of our schools. I
6 see them patrolling our every school entrance, every
7 corner, and every part of my neighborhood when in
8 reality that's not what we need. Right now, Mayor
9 Adams' budget continues to fund 600 vacant school cop
10 positions, positions which have a high turnover rate.
11 This means that the fundings are going to waste. I'm
12 sure you have-- you've heard or will hear many areas
13 in our schools need those funds, and it's time that
14 the City Council make the decision to stop funding
15 new school cops and fund resources that will
16 ultimately fund our futures. Our schools deserve
17 better and I deserve better. I want to enter my
18 senior year knowing that all hands will be on deck
19 ready to help me graduate and the pathway to college.
20 When I say fund our future, I don't just mean my
21 individual future, but NYC youth's future as well,
22 because we are the future. You can start by releasing
23 a budget response that freezes the hiring of all
24 school cops, eliminates all 600 vacant school police
25 positions and reinvest those funds towards

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2 counselors, social workers, mental health services,
3 restorative justice and so much more. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Nyl. Eileen
5 Friaz [sp?]?

6 EILEEN FRIAZ: Good evening everyone. My
7 name is Eileen Friaz. I am a Youth Leader with Urban
8 Youth Collaborative and Future of Tomorrow and a
9 freshman at Franklin K. Lane High School in Brooklyn.
10 I'm here to call on you to stop hiring more school
11 cops and invest the money in us students. My parents
12 immigrated here to give me and my siblings more
13 opportunities, but what we've been getting is very
14 far from what we need. Each day students are being
15 harmed by cops and metal detectors to the point that
16 education feels like imprisonment, and we need to do
17 something to correct this ASAP. Every day I go to
18 school with a dozen school cops and three metal
19 detector checkpoints where I often get stopped and
20 searched, resulting in me being late to class. Every
21 day I fear of doing something that will jeopardize my
22 freedom and end up in prison. I fear my little
23 sister will go to a school system that's under-
24 invested and unsafe because the police don't keep us
25 safe. Going to school with cops being yelled at

1 every time you take an extra minute in the bathroom
2 or if you just need a mental health break to take
3 care of yourself. Yet, Mayor Adams wants to hire 560
4 more school cops. NYC already has the largest school
5 police force in the country. What our schools, my
6 peers, and I need is investment, meaning more
7 counselors, social workers, and restorative justice
8 practices to keep us safer, because a safe
9 environment is not one with police and surveillance
10 but one with resources. We need to have the same
11 opportunities as our white peers. I have to wait a
12 long time to even see my counselors, and sometimes
13 the counselor has to meet with many students at a
14 time which makes it really hard for them to help me
15 with what I need personally. This isn't right. You
16 must take-- you must make sure our wellbeing is cared
17 for and that education is treated the way that it is,
18 a sanctuary. The Mayor keeps on investing in the
19 police while defunding our schools and expecting it
20 will produce a different result. That's why we call
21 on you to include the following in the budget
22 response: Reduce-- secure a hiring freeze on school
23 cops, cut funding, for the 560 vacant school cop
24 positions in the Mayor's budget and invest the money
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2 from those dis-investments and to restorative
3 justice, mental health, and our futures. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Nile?

5 NILE BORJA: Hello and good afternoon.

6 My name is Nile Borja. My pronouns are he/him, and
7 I'm a Youth leader with Make the Road New York and
8 Urban Youth Collaborative. I'm here because I'm sick
9 and tired of being told there is no funding for
10 students and seeing what little resources we have
11 left continue to be cut. That same story can't be
12 said regarding our city and its commitment to funding
13 policing. It seems that there's always more money to
14 be found for the policing and the surveillance of New
15 York City students. That's something I've
16 unfortunately grown accustomed to every morning. The
17 first couple of things suddenly pushed in front of my
18 face when I walk into the buildings each day at
19 school are cops and metal detectors, as if I were
20 already being seen as a criminal when I first step
21 through those doors. When it's my turn to walk
22 through the metal detectors, all the times I have in
23 my bag must be removed determine if I make it to
24 class on time. This frustrating experience is
25 something I never truly understood. Schools in low

1
2 income communities of color always suffer the
3 inconveniences of metal detectors, whereas schools in
4 wealthier, whiter neighborhoods do not. Last year,
5 when I was going through scanning they found
6 something in my bag, something I forgot I had even
7 left there, because of how insignificant I thought it
8 was. However, that item caused me to be pulled aside
9 and questioned as if I were be interrogated for doing
10 something terrible. I was taken into a different
11 room where the school cops operate on the campus.
12 From there I was searched even more and continued to
13 be questioned, and even my mother was called. The
14 item that they found was my laser pointer that I
15 often use to play with my cat at home. I went
16 through that entire unnecessary process that any
17 student including your children could have gone
18 through that left me missing class with nothing but
19 confusion over something as insignificant as a laser
20 pointer, and that's precisely what my mother told the
21 school when they called her. During swim season in
22 2022 I felt my mental health slowly declining, deeply
23 lowering my motivation to go to school and how well I
24 do in my classes. I was able to go to therapy with
25 the support of the counselor who was only on our

1 school campus because my school is a community
2 school. It took some time, but I was able to slowly
3 rebuild my grades, confidence, and most of my-- most
4 of all my motivation to continue to go to school to
5 make something out of myself in the future.
6 Counselors at my school as well as the Student
7 Success Center helped with several things I
8 desperately needed, including a class that we take
9 every Wednesday getting straight to college business.
10 That means learning how to apply for college,
11 learning about scholarships and setting us up with a
12 plan for navigating life after high school. While
13 there are some great things happening at my school,
14 if we stop funding school cops that harm us, we can
15 use that money to make things even better. My school
16 in Bushwick has been around for quite a long time and
17 its appearance reflects that. Students feel like the
18 drinking water isn't safe. The bathrooms are so run-
19 down that we are ashamed to be using them. There
20 aren't enough social workers for the amount of
21 students who attend the school and need them. There
22 are beaten down laptops that won't even turn on, and
23 we have internet connection that often leaves us
24 worrying whether it'll be long enough for us to
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2 complete our work. That's why we're calling on the
3 Council to include the following in your budget
4 response: securing a hiring freeze on school cops,
5 cut funding for the 600 vacant school cop positions
6 in the Mayor's budget, and invest the money from
7 those divestments into restorative justice, mental
8 health, community schools like mine. Fund our
9 futures, and thank you so much.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. How are
11 you feeling now? How are you feeling? You said were
12 not feeling good? How you feeling mentally?

13 NILE BORJA: Mentally I feel like school
14 counseling and therapy has really pushed me a lot
15 further in a more positive direction. I feel like I
16 have done a lot better in class-- in the classroom
17 environment. I've now been inducted into the
18 National Honor Society and it put me far--

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing]
20 Congratulations.

21 [applause]

22 NILE BORJA: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That's what I'm
24 talking about.

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2 NILE BORJA: And you know, I feel a lot
3 more accomplished now that I was able to swim season
4 strong. I'm a breaststroker and I've been able to put
5 all of my passion and hard work into the things that
6 I love.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Wow. You are-- you
8 guys are the reason why I do this work. Invite me to
9 your school. I'd love to visit and see how we can
10 support and making sure inside and outside of your
11 schools, you feel comfortable, you want to come to
12 school every day. I have a few questions. How many
13 guidance counselors do you have in your school?

14 NILE BORJA: In--

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] You can
16 guess.

17 NILE BORJA: I think-- well, we have
18 college guidance counselors. We only have two. They
19 have their own office where juniors and seniors, also
20 freshman and sophomore, that can, you know, peek
21 their heads in and come in. But in my school
22 personally there's really only two.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How long does it
24 take for you to get to see a counselor if you need to
25 see one right away?

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2 NILE BORJA: Oftentimes the office is
3 closed, and when they are open they're usually
4 dealing with other students. Since there's only two
5 of them and there's only a limited space we have in
6 our school, and especially in their office. they can
7 only take oen or two people at a time and they're
8 constantly, you know, ensuring that everyone has a
9 life after high school, whether it's them going to
10 college, trade school, or whatever they-- it's
11 basically just them like setting up a plan for
12 students to be successful later on in life.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you have safe
14 space in your schools to talk? Any one of you can
15 answer, that's fine.

16 NYL GUMS: I go to a campus where there
17 are seven other schools, and I'm grateful enough that
18 our campus provides-- it's like this thing with New
19 York Presbyterian where since a lot of the other
20 schools unfortunately don't have enough counselors,
21 you can talk to the counselors in the clinic that
22 they have. There's around maybe three or four, but
23 you know, it's better than nothing.

24

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: But how much-- what
3 would be the ideal number to have in your school for
4 you to feel safe?

5 NYL GUMS: I would say there's around at
6 least 5,000+ kids in my campus. I would say at
7 least, you know, more than 10. You know--

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] To meet
9 the ratio of students.

10 NYL GUMS: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Well my
12 colleague Jen Gutiérrez couldn't be here, but she
13 said she wanted to hear from you about the
14 restorative justice practitioners in your school if
15 you know of any. Can you share how much time they
16 are allowed to dedicate to this curriculum practice,
17 and how often are they called on to serve as
18 practitioners with their peers? Is that related to
19 you? Do you guys have RJ in your school?

20 NYL GUMS: I would say no. At my school
21 personally, restorative justice is not used as much.
22 They're very quick to suspend students. I personally
23 have been going through a very rough time at home and
24 with school as well, and unfortunately I have been
25 like missing classes, and I've been talked about, you

1
2 know, missing those classes and I've been told that
3 if I continue-- instead of, you know, trying to help
4 me, that I would be suspended from the class.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What support do you
6 need for you to get back to where you were?

7 NYL GUMS: I feel like there should be
8 some sort of area, some sort of time where students
9 where if they're struggling with school, they should
10 be able to be put in these places, and you know,
11 given time and space and, you know, help from
12 teachers, whichever. Its counselors, deans, APs, to
13 just help them with this type of work, because you
14 know-- a lot of students have been struggling ever
15 since the pandemic. You know, it's been over but
16 we're still feeling the effects. I know a lot of
17 students, freshman, they didn't get to deal with
18 middle school. They've come into school and they,
19 you know, they don't have the type of mental, you
20 know, to deal with high school.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for that.
22 So, you should have a safe space to make sure you're
23 supported. If any of the-- lastly, if any of you
24 have community schools, how vital do you think this
25

1
2 model would be across the City? Don't be shy. This
3 is your chance.

4 NILE BORJA: I'm sorry, can you restate
5 the question one more time?

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Community schools,
7 if any of you are in community schools, how
8 important, how vital you think that model would be
9 throughout the City?

10 NILE BORJA: Well, I-- yeah, I am
11 involved in a community school, and I feel like
12 getting the message across the City is very important
13 to, you know, offer a safe space to all students to
14 be in for all students to feel like they're welcomed
15 to be in the school so where they are not put down
16 for any serious consequences such as, you know,
17 suspension or being expelled from a school setting.
18 It almost diminishes someone's future and career if
19 something is put on their permanent record, for
20 example.

21 NYL GUMS: I have a-- Even though I don't
22 go to a community school, I would like to add on that
23 this like-- stepping into a school where immediately
24 you're greeted with police, it's not a welcoming
25 setting, and I see that throughout the City that if

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2 students are able to walk into school without having
3 to deal with if they're having, you know, metal on
4 them, fi they have to worry about whether something
5 in their bag is good or not, that it would just feel-
6 - I feel like more students would want to come to
7 school and realize and notice that a lot of students
8 having to go through the scanning and having to deal
9 with the police, it's not-- not for say difficult,
10 but very annoying in a sense that you're just coming
11 to school to learn and learning can be hard and
12 having to deal with that is, you know, another
13 struggle with--

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Does
15 that raise your anxiety level?

16 NYL GUMS: It generally does. Not that I
17 have really bad anxiety, but I do fear the police
18 I've never had like a bad experience but I've seen
19 the stuff that can happen, and to potentially think
20 that that can happen to me or anyone else is
21 terrifying.

22 NILE BORJA: On this, I can even speak on
23 my personal experience. Around the beginning of
24 every school year for my school we have around a half
25 a block line of students waiting to enter the

1 building, just to enter the building. Often times we
2 would end up missing almost half of all of first
3 period class. We'd be cutting into our second period
4 classes still trying to get in the building. And
5 this is more prevalent with the freshman at my
6 school. A lot of students aren't used to scanning.
7 They're not used to putting their bags through
8 scanning every day or having to walk through a metal
9 detector without a belt, their keys around their
10 neck, or without a phone in their pocket. So, you
11 know, over time they begin to learn, obviously, and
12 you know, they begin to understand like oh, I have to
13 take my computer out before I enter the building or I
14 need to you know take so and so things out of my bag
15 and my pockets just to, you know, get inside the
16 building. But it really takes away a lot of time
17 from our classes, and it serves as a very big
18 inconvenience for us students, especially those of us
19 who might have long commutes. They're already
20 exhausted, and you know, walking into a school
21 building everyday greeted by police officers along
22 with airport level security almost is kind of scary
23 as a freshman, especially someone like me who didn't
24 really come from-- who didn't come from a low-income
25

1
2 middle school-- who didn't come from a low-income
3 middle school and there were no metal detectors
4 overall.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I meet some students
6 who say they are necessary sometimes. What would you
7 say to something like that?

8 NILE BORJA: Can you repeat that, please?

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The metal detectors.
10 I visit schools as the Chair of Education a lot, and
11 that's one of the things I hear. I do question--
12 that's the very first thing I ask. How do you feel
13 about the scanners? I have certain students say we
14 need them.

15 NILE BORJA: I have never heard of a
16 student actually say we need them. I've never heard
17 of a teacher. I never heard of-- anyone from
18 Administration, or even a-- an officer themselves.

19 NYL GUMS: I would also like to say what
20 he's also that, I-- even deans themselves who are
21 like in the head first when it comes to physical
22 altercations, I've never heard them say, oh we really
23 need these scanners and these metal detectors. I
24 often hear them say, you know, it's a waste of time
25 because they're the ones who are up there trying to

1
2 get students quickly trying to get them to class, and
3 you know, often having them be late.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Alright. And next
5 time we arrange properly, our students can testify
6 first. Be the other way around, that's how I did my
7 last hearing if y'all were paying attention.

8 Impacted folks went first, and then the DOE had to
9 listen. So thank you for your advocacy, and I
10 appreciate your work, and I see you. I see you.
11 Thank you young people. I see you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to
13 everyone on the panel. Our next panel, Danielle
14 Guindo [sp?], Marco Sklander [sp?], Faith Bahum
15 [sp?], Jennifer Choi, Karen Simmons, Kathleen Dennin.
16 On deck: Lisala Beatty, Tamia Blackman-Santana,
17 Anthony Guerrero, Tory Kaso, Rakaya Hasan [sp?],
18 Elizabeth Sumpter. Danielle, you may begin your
19 testimony when you are ready. Anyone Danielle? How
20 about Marcos? Faith? Jennifer? You may begin.

21 JENNIFER CHOI: Hello. Sorry. Thank
22 you. My name is Jennifer Choi. I am a Queens's
23 parent of two students with IEPs, and I am a Special
24 Education Advocate at Special Support Services. I'm
25 also the founder of an 800-member group of parents

1
2 called New York City Parents of Teens with
3 Disabilities. I'm so grateful to you today Chair
4 Joseph and the Education Committee for talking about
5 the \$1 billion dollar problem that we have in Special
6 Education payments. And on that point, I brought a
7 few points to share and for you to consider. Did you
8 know-- I think you know, but you know, for the rest
9 of the committee members, did you know that a school
10 is paid for providing Special Education teacher
11 services in groups of eight the same as they're paid
12 for groups of one. So, even if you have a group of
13 two and even though that requires more teachers, the
14 payment is the same. Did you know that there is
15 almost no school in New York City that provides
16 integrated co-teaching services or self-contained
17 classes in career technical education courses? And
18 these are courses that lead to ready-to-use technical
19 skill certification programs upon graduation. Did
20 you know that there is almost no school in the City
21 that offers Special Education services for students
22 learning a world language even though that is
23 required for graduation? And did you know that a
24 certain class-- if a certain class in a school had
25 only three students that needed ICT, that the funding

1
2 that came with each student who needed it would not
3 amount to a teacher salary? Teachers don't come in
4 pieces, but the current funding formula treats them
5 like they do. So the reason is clear. It's the Fair
6 Student Funding formula that does not allow a school
7 to have more money to hire more teachers when
8 students need these services. Yet, the Department of
9 Education is installing-- yes, I'm sorry. Yes, the
10 DOE is installing more programs, but the one billion
11 dollars is due to schools not being able to give the
12 students what they really need. At IEP meetings
13 parents are told that the school does not have the
14 resources to provide what the parents are asking for.
15 This is absolutely illegal, but in truth that answer
16 is better than the answer that parents usually get
17 which is they're told that the inappropriate progress
18 that their child is making is just fine. At some
19 point, you have to wonder if it's the formula that is
20 preventing an accessible education to students with
21 disabilities or is this the pervasive bias that views
22 our students as not capable of doing more? So what
23 do families do? Double-income families become
24 single-income families so that a parent could-- I'm
25 almost done-- a parent could compensate for the lack

1 of quality education and advocate for better
2 services. Parents with means will hire tutors and
3 lawyers, but parents without means cannot. That is
4 inequity within the world of Special Education in New
5 York City. Therefore, I ask the Education Committee
6 today, please use your budgetary, your legislative,
7 your community leadership powers and abilities to
8 help our most vulnerable New Yorkers contribute to
9 their families, their community, and our city's
10 economy. I have attached evidence from actual DOE
11 schools that demonstrates the pattern that I'm
12 discussing today, as well as an example of a DOE
13 school that treats their students with dignity, and I
14 just got a message from the school that opens their--
15 they are greeting you and welcoming you to their
16 school, Townsend Harris High School, with open arms.
17 They would love for you to visit. Thank you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Karen?

19 KAREN SIMMONS: Thank you. Good evening.
20 Thank you Chair and all your committee members. My
21 name is Karen Simmons, and I'm the Executive Director
22 of the Children's Law Center. And I just love what I
23 just heard, because we see the struggle from the
24 other side. The Children's Law Center is a 25-year-

1
2 old not-for-profit law firm that represented so far
3 over 130,000 children in legal proceedings in New
4 York City's Family Courts and the State Supreme
5 Courts and the Integrated Domestic Violence Courts.

6 I thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to
7 testify, and it's just been so enlightening today to
8 hear all the young people and all the issues that are
9 going on that we all have to fight for, and I thank
10 you for your energy on this. I want to highlight CLC
11 saw this need and representing children in Family
12 Court and being there all day and all the delays that
13 we face, but what we saw is that a lot of times the
14 gravamen of what was driving the case and what was
15 impacting our clients, the children and their
16 families who could not partner as parents to make
17 decisions, was education. And we created this
18 Children's Law Center, CLC, Securing Seamless
19 Education Service Project which provided critical
20 education advocacy on behalf of the Family Court-
21 involved children. We partner with the parents, but
22 we advocate for our client. Although we are
23 primarily a direct legal services organization, we
24 represent the whole child and recognize that a
25 significant need outside the courtroom will clearly

1 impact what's happening in the court room. In
2 response, we established-- we call it success, SSCS.
3 We've served so far about a thousand children ranging
4 from the age of babies to 21 years old, and almost
5 all are low-income children of color, and all of whom
6 are either the subject of custody visitation or
7 domestic violence or child protective proceedings.
8 Our SSCS advocates have engaged in a wide variety of
9 activities to ensure that our client's access to
10 academic services, school placements, and their needs
11 are met and ensured, and that their caretakers know
12 how to and which educational supports they're
13 entitled to. For example, we have helped with
14 developmental delays and diagnoses obtained IEPs and
15 proper school placement and represented young people
16 in suspension hearings. My written testimony details
17 a lot of our crucial selfless [sic] advocacy that
18 we've done, but just one quick example of securing
19 \$1,000 for a young person in foster care who was--
20 who had gone through Special Ed., who made it through
21 high school, who was making it in a state college,
22 and foster care because she found an apartment and
23 dint' want to live on campus basically cut her off,
24 and she was a few years-- I mean, a few months from
25

1
2 21 and was almost ready to graduate and would have
3 had to stop everything. In sum, I'd like to thank
4 the Council. Thank you, Chair, for your commitment
5 to ensuring that New York City children have the
6 access to quality education and necessary education
7 supports. CLC is respectfully requesting support for
8 our program, and we look forward to building a
9 relationship and partnership with this committee.
10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Kathleen
13 Dennin.

14 KATHLEEN DENNIN: Thank you. Good
15 evening Chair Joseph and other committee members.
16 Thank you for listening to me today. I'm a Staff
17 Attorney at Legal Services NYC, and happy to have
18 this opportunity to speak to the Education Budget
19 Committee. We are asking the City Council to join us
20 in partnership with a grant for the Education
21 Advocacy Project which is part of Legal Services NYC.
22 I'm going to start just by sharing one story that's
23 an example of how we help students very similar to
24 the students who have spoken today so eloquently. DM
25 was a student who was 18 years old struggling in a

1 charter school. Remote learning was very difficult
2 for him, the loss of family during COVID times
3 created a lot of anxiety and in addition he had a
4 learning disability. It was with the help of our
5 organization that he was able to get tutoring which
6 helped him get back on track with school to get
7 counseling at school and social work support that
8 helped him find a school that actually allowed him to
9 graduate with a Regent's Diploma this December and to
10 attend a community college. This is the type of work
11 that we support and try to do in our organization.
12 The Education Rights Project assists hundreds of New
13 York City school children and their families to
14 ensure access to education. We're a small, but very
15 experienced and dedicated unit. We strive to provide
16 a holistic model of legal representations which
17 acknowledges and addresses so many types of losses
18 that affected people, especially in these past three
19 years. We represent parents citywide in
20 administrative hearings, suspension hearings, and
21 federal courts, but we also understand that our
22 presence and advocacy is needed in all realms of
23 school life. So we work with students in all areas
24 to secure a safe, nurturing, and culturally-

1
2 responsive environment. These are the goals that
3 we've incorporated into our Healing-centered School
4 Project which was initiated in 2018 and has become a
5 major force in the efforts in the Bronx to partner
6 with educators, administrators, parents and students
7 to transform schools to places where children can
8 feel confident in their ability to learn and grow and
9 save [sic]. We hope with the funds we can obtain
10 from the Council to continue to further extend this
11 work and to ensure it remains a permanent part of the
12 city's efforts to address mental health concerns in
13 the school. With the money we are requesting from
14 the Council we'll be able to reach more students with
15 disabilities, as well as support and nurture more of
16 our community in education and healing-centered
17 school's efforts. Thank you so much for your time.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Faith
19 Behum [sp?]? Danielle Guindo? Could you say your
20 name for the record, please?

21 ELIZABETH SUMPTER: Elizabeth Sumpter.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, you can begin
23 your testimony.

24 ELIZABETH SUMPTER: Thank you. Good
25 evening Madam Chair and thank you to the Education

1
2 Committee for this opportunity to discuss how City
3 Council can invest in pathways for New York City
4 public schools students to become tech innovators for
5 the future. My name is Elizabeth Sumpter and I'm the
6 Development Director at Mouse, the provider of
7 computer science curriculum training programming to
8 New York City's K through 12 public schools students,
9 teachers, and also including D75 schools. Mouse is
10 the key to our city's technology and education goals.
11 Our in-school afterschool program known as Design
12 League started in the height of the pandemic in 2020
13 with just 17 schools. We grew to 42 schools last
14 year, and in response to the demand from the school
15 community and the DOE, we now provide computer
16 science programming at 72 schools, serving at least
17 4,500 students in all five boroughs including the
18 Redwood Middle School in District 28 and the High
19 School for Youth and Community Development at Erasmus
20 in District 40. Design League is a full-semester
21 program in which students identify problems in their
22 community and use human-centered design processes to
23 brainstorm how technology can help them. Students
24 then prototype a mobile app to address the problem.
25 Through Mouse Design League, students this year will

1 learn core computer science skills such as
2 collaboration, problem-solving skills, UXUI design
3 and more. The importance of Design League is that it
4 introduces students to STEM career pathways and
5 possibilities, give students the competence in agency
6 in their learning, and helps them build real world
7 skills needed for post-secondary success. I assure
8 you Mouse is committed to student achievement and
9 student success. Design League really helps create a
10 cycle of success that empowers students to grow,
11 succeed, work, and thrive right here in New York
12 City. This year, Mouse plans to expect to facilitate
13 high-quality computer science training for 147 public
14 schools teachers. Design League students have
15 triumphed because of the collaboration of Mouse
16 educators, and of course, the support of the City
17 Council. On behalf of Mouse we appreciate the
18 support each Council Member provides on a local
19 level. To meet the citywide demand from our school
20 communities, Mouse respectfully asks the City Council
21 to restore Mouse's citywide funding of \$275,000 in
22 which we last received in 2021. Since then, Mouse
23 has expanded by 71 percent of schools, and we only
24 want it to continue to grow and prosper even more. I
25

1
2 thank you for this opportunity, and thank you for
3 continuing to support computer science education in
4 our city.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Jennifer, could you
6 describe some of the ways that you've tried to get
7 children with disability equal access, and what
8 happened afterwards?

9 JENNIFER CHOI: Thank you so much for
10 your question. So, you know, my work with
11 individual families is I'll take them to IEP
12 meetings, and so just this past year, I had a student
13 in a self-contained class and he's on track to
14 graduate. He's on standardized assessment, but his
15 reading level is very low and it's been that way.
16 So, you know, he should get SETS [sic], you know?
17 But like I've never seen a student in a 12 to one
18 class or at Horizon, eight to one. Nobody will get
19 SETS [sic]. It's like I don't know what happened.
20 They just-- it doesn't work. It's like repellent
21 from-- you know, so that's like something, you know?
22 You can all the evidence up to here, but apparently
23 he's still okay. That's always what you hear, and
24 then the song comes like, but you can get an
25 impartial hearing as if it's that easy for any parent

1
2 to do. You know, the other day a couple of weeks--
3 oh, no, maybe it was last week. You know, literally
4 like someone said to me, to my client like, you know,
5 that having 13 IEP goals was highly, highly, highly
6 unusual. You know? And this is for somebody in a
7 self-contained class. You're needing related
8 services. I don't know why 13 goals is so highly
9 unusual that-- you know, it was a declarative
10 statement. You know, so like people are used to
11 this. They're just use to it. Like, everybody does
12 that. They'll say that. And like, you know, in the
13 evidence that I shared with you, they'll talk about
14 how CTE is not in the ICT program, as if ICT is the
15 place and CTE is the service. It's the other way
16 around. And you know, so there is no rule against
17 having-- I mean, like, most of these career technical
18 education schools have like more students with IEPs
19 in these schools, and I don't know how it's like--
20 it's just a given that you don't get it. You don't
21 get a language other than English exemption. You
22 don't get Special Education and language as a-- even
23 if you're dyslexic which is like a language-based
24 learning disability, and yet they'll give you the
25 exemption to graduate after you failed a course or

1
2 two, ruining your GPA. It's just the whole-- I can
3 go on, but I won't. I'm sorry.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much
5 for that. Children's Law Center, could you speak a
6 little bit more about your services to foster care
7 children? They are normally the most vulnerable
8 students.

9 KAREN SIMMONS: Sure, Chair. We
10 represent children in foster care from birth to 21,
11 and our services are prolific. We have an
12 interdisciplinary trauma-informed practice, and we
13 seek to ensure that they're in stable prospering,
14 thriving environments, and to see hopefully they can
15 achieve permanency if they can't return back home.
16 And when it comes to education, we're right in there
17 trying to make sure that they have an education
18 advocate with them throughout that process, because a
19 lot of times they get moved from multiple homes, and
20 they sometimes have foster parents who are
21 overwhelmed because they've got multiple children in
22 there, and they're also dealing with their own lives,
23 and we want to make sure that we're that advocacy
24 service to support our clients as we're advocating
25 for them in court.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Do you
3 connect them to Fair Futures? This is something the
4 Council funds--

5 KAREN SIMMONS: [interposing] We have. We
6 have.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: heavy, and we
8 believe in that. Thank you. What re-- Elizabeth,
9 Mouse, thank you. What result have you seen from
10 these services? Have you been able to monitor
11 programs' progress over the year, and what have you
12 noticed?

13 ELIZABETH SUMPTER: Yeah, thank you for
14 the question. So over the course of time we've
15 realized that students have developed even more
16 through their SEL skills, and as we continue to
17 progress over time, we have worked with an evaluator
18 called Hello Insight in order to survey the students
19 and the teachers and how they are gaining, you know,
20 the support within the program and continuously
21 getting reports on how we can advance furthermore.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to this
24 panel. Our next panel, Lisala Beatty, Tamia Blackman
25 Santana, Anthony Guerrero, Tory Kaso, Rakaya Hasan

1 [sp?]. And on deck, we have Chloe Pashman [sp?],
2 Nikos Papageorgiou, and Washik Da [sp?]. If you did
3 not hear your name called yet and you would still
4 like to testify today in person, please make sure
5 that you see the Sergeant at Arms and submit a
6 witness slip. Lisala Beatty, you may begin your
7 testimony.
8

9 LISALA BEATTY: Thank you so much. First
10 of all, thank you so much to Chair Joseph and to the
11 entire Education Committee and Staff. Thank you for
12 attentiveness. This is the first time I've been to
13 one of these, and it's amazing the many, many
14 concerns. So appreciate your time today, or tonight.
15 I'm Lisala Beatty. I'm the Director of Music and the
16 Brain, a program of the nonprofit Building for the
17 Arts. I'm here to outline a funding request for our
18 program which brings school day music education
19 resources and piano instruction to each kindergarten
20 through eighth grade student in more than 140 New
21 York City schools completely free of charge.
22 Students often struggle to focus, to develop critical
23 thinking, fine motors, social and emotional skills.
24 Research shows that learning to read music and play
25 an instrument like the piano is a full-body workout

1
2 for the brain. Students benefit from musical
3 training, but it's cost prohibitive for many New York
4 City families. It certainly was for mine growing up.
5 For more than 25 years, Music and the Brain has
6 improved school and life skills for more than 55,000
7 New York City students annually in hundreds of public
8 schools across the five boroughs. We provide a
9 sequential music curriculum with a culturally-
10 responsive repertoire, a 16-station piano keyboard
11 lab, a web platform with a virtual piano that
12 students can access at home, and ongoing support for
13 our music teachers including professional development
14 workshops and we visit the schools all the time.
15 Columbia University shows a correlation between
16 school partnership with Music and the Brain and
17 higher scores on third grade standardized tests, ELA
18 and Math tests, including ELL students. For the
19 first time, Building for the Arts New York has
20 applied for \$50,000 of City Council support to
21 maintain and expand Music and the Brain through three
22 citywide initiatives: the Educational Programs for
23 Students, the Speaker's Initiative, and Support for
24 Arts Instruction. I'm a proud product of New York
25 City public schools and a vocalist who's traveled the

1
2 world because of music. Music and the Brain opens
3 doors for our students and reaches our under-
4 resourced communities. I just want to also quickly
5 say that New York City has benchmarks for music
6 teachers for the skills they should be teaching their
7 students, but they do not provide a curriculum, and
8 so music teachers have to search. And we are one of
9 the only programs that provides a sequential multi-
10 year curriculum for music teachers. So thank you so
11 much for your time and consideration.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Tamia?

13 TAMIA BLACKMAN-SANTANA: Hi. Thank you so
14 much. My name is Tamia Blackman-Santana. I'm the
15 Chief Officer of Engagement and Inclusion at Ballet
16 Hispanico. I'm also born and raised in Brooklyn. I
17 just want to get that out there, because there's only
18 a few of us left. So, hello. Ballet Hispanico is the
19 largest Latinx/Latina cultural institution in
20 America, and we celebrate the Latinx African Diaspora
21 lifting narratives and voices throughout the country.
22 I want to thank Chairman Joseph and members of the
23 Education Committee on behalf of our founder Tina
24 Ramirez and our CEO Eduardo Vilaro for the
25 opportunity to speak to you today. I advocate for the

1
2 City Council's expanded support for the cultural
3 organizations in Fiscal Year 2024, particularly
4 BIPOC-led organizations like Ballet Hispanico which
5 amplifies and uplifts historically under-represented
6 black and brown voices bringing joy and the arts to
7 those wonderful kids who were speaking today. We all
8 know that in 2022 41.1 percent of all children in the
9 Department of Education identified as Latinx/Latina.
10 The next demographic is 24.4 which is African-
11 American. More alarming, the highest dropout rate is
12 still Latinx children. Unfortunately, there's been a
13 lot research due to lack of representation and
14 cultural reflection in curriculum. There's also a
15 dismal drop with teachers and professors in higher
16 education as why places like Columbia University are
17 pointing to the problem and the high drop-out rate.
18 California and Connecticut are the only states that
19 require Latinx curriculum as of right now. So I
20 champion with Ballet Hispanico to one day have a New
21 York City that has Latinx curriculum, and that'll be
22 another meeting and I'll be here again to talk to you
23 about that. But in the meantime, we have a codified
24 partnership with our curriculum as with Columbia
25 University's Teachers College. It has the DOE

1 requirements, and we go into New York City public
2 schools-- we're in 45 schools-- to share as much of
3 this information as possible. We go in through the
4 arts, but we talk about historical relevancy and ask
5 the children to bring their stories in because the
6 reality is that we all are from somewhere. So we
7 start with the Latinx African Diaspora narrative, but
8 we all are immigrants to America, whether by choice
9 or by force. This is a child-centered approach. And
10 we need your help in continuing to grow this
11 initiative. We serve over 75 percent of Title I
12 schools, but together I believe we can one day change
13 New York City to have required curriculum for all
14 students that it serves. I think the time is now for
15 our students to learn about their history and that
16 it's relevant, and that it's important, and that
17 their heritage and culture helped shape this country
18 even before its inception. Thank you.

19
20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thanks, Tamia. Next,
21 Anthony Guerrero.

22 ANTHONY GUERRERO: Sorry about that.
23 Thank you to Chair Joseph and thank you to members of
24 the committee for allowing me the time to speak on
25 this important topic today. My name's Anthony

1
2 Guerrero and I've been a member of Local 28 Sheet
3 Metal Workers Union nearly 29 years. I'm part of
4 nearly 3,000 journeypersons and apprentices who work
5 all over the five boroughs. We are the ones who keep
6 New York City breathing. Our primary work is heat
7 and ventilation and air conditioning. It's what we
8 do. And we-- I'm here today to urge you to support
9 the Carbon Free and Healthy Schools Initiative in
10 this year's budget. We have a great opportunity to
11 invest in our schools and we must take advantage of
12 it. There is historic federal funding available
13 through the Inflation Reduction Act that can help New
14 York City fund green retrofits of our public schools,
15 especially concerning our old out-of-date air
16 conditioning systems which affect our students' air
17 quality. Our public schools are old and have old
18 HVAC systems, if they have any at all. Most of the
19 times, those classrooms will open the window and let
20 fresh air in or have a fan to push the air around,
21 but opening a window is a dangerous thing as we all
22 know, and having a fan push air around you now know
23 and what our unions has known for years is a horrible
24 idea when we think of COVID and all the other
25 airborne contaminants we have out there. Studies

1
2 have shown that the air quality in our schools affect
3 our children's studies. Poor air exchange rates or
4 having more carbon dioxide than oxygen leads to
5 drowsy students, which leads to short span of
6 attention, which leads to poor grades or disruptive
7 behavior. And of course you know that most of these
8 schools are in our communities of color. My union is
9 urging our local law makers to immediately take
10 advantage of federal funding made available through
11 the Inflation Reduction Act as well as other federal
12 and state funding initiatives for energy efficiency,
13 retrofits, and solar panels on schools. New York
14 City schools can save up to \$275 million dollars a
15 year in energy costs, money that can be reinvested
16 into our schools, and as we could see, we need that
17 desperately. At the same time, we could create
18 thousands of good union jobs across many of the
19 trades. The benefit of your actions can make for
20 healthier students, healthier teachers and thousands
21 of other occupants in our public school buildings.
22 We could have thousands of people employed with good
23 union jobs with good wages and benefits. Imagine,
24 money saved, money earned for thousands of our
25 residents. It's a win/win solution for all New York

1
2 City. I strongly urge you to support the Carbon Free
3 and Healthy Schools incident in this year's budget.
4 Thank you for your time and your consideration.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
6 testimony. Tori Kaso?

7 TORI KASO: Thank you very much and thank
8 you to the Chair for allowing all of us to speak
9 today. My name Tori Kaso and I am the Campaign
10 Director for Carbon Free and Healthy Schools
11 initiative with Climate Jobs New York which is a
12 coalition of unions here in New York that represents
13 2.6 million workers throughout the state. The Carbon
14 Free and Healthy schools coalition is calling for the
15 acceleration of solar installation to 150 schools per
16 year, along with a commitment to completing deep
17 energy efficiency retrofits on all of New York City's
18 existing public schools buildings by 2030,
19 prioritizing schools in environmental justice areas
20 and with good labor standards, and is asking for the
21 City Council's support in this year's budget. The
22 time is now for this investment. Climate science
23 demands urgency and we have found ourselves presented
24 with a historic funding opportunity to invest at the
25 scale needed to make a lasting environmental and

1
2 economic impact. Last year's passage of the
3 Inflation Reduction Act has provided a previously
4 unavailable source of federal funding that the City
5 can access to meet these commitments through the
6 income tax credit direct pay provision. However, if
7 we delay any longer, we could miss out on the chance
8 to make a lasting impact for the City and our
9 communities. By directly investing in solar and
10 becoming a zero-energy school system, this work would
11 save \$8.25 billion dollars in energy expenditures
12 over 30 years. This is money that can be reinvested
13 towards school programming, continued maintenance, or
14 the hiring of additional staff and teachers. The IRA
15 has made this initiative more fiscally sensible than
16 ever before, and I will touch on a couple of the
17 other benefits of this program. It would obviously
18 produce significant energy cost savings, but also
19 significant emissions reductions for our communities
20 and for our schools. It's also a Green Jobs
21 Initiative that will create 45,000 good union jobs
22 for New York City across a number of trades, and this
23 initiative is not just an investment in the physical
24 structures of schools. It is also an investment in
25 economic and racial equity, helping historically

1
2 marginalized communities access careers that provide
3 good wages, benefits, job security, and dignity. And
4 this investment is a physical representation of the
5 City's commitment to the success of our students no
6 matter where they're from that will have a lasting
7 impact for generations to come. Recently, a majority
8 of City Council Members including the Chair signed on
9 to a letter of support expressing commitment to this
10 initiative, and we are deeply grateful and greatly
11 encouraged by your support and asking that you stand
12 by that commitment. And I will just wrap up by
13 saying that a lot of the testimony today touched on
14 the fact that a lot of the funding is coming from
15 federal stimulus dollars which are sun-setting in a
16 couple of years, and that this is a initiative that
17 will not only have lasting benefits on the
18 environment, on our communities for physical
19 structures, but also it can save money that can also
20 be reinvested into schools.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Rakaya
22 Hasan [sp?]?

23 RAKAYA HASAN: Good evening. My name is
24 Rakaya Hasan. I am a student organizer at YA-YA
25 Network and a sophomore at Tottenville High school on

1 Staten Island. I'm here to urge you to allocate
2 funding towards mental health and restorative justice
3 resources in schools that will stimulate a safe and
4 supportive environment that will allow schools to
5 thrive. I attend a high school with 4,000 students
6 that has heavy security but little guidance, with
7 more cops than counselors. These cops foster a
8 hostile school environment, and a hostile school
9 environment cannot possibly provide the emotional,
10 social and mental support that will allow true
11 student development. Schools need restorative
12 justice programs and mental health resources that are
13 supported by research and are proven to work.
14 Restorative justice programs teach students to
15 respond to conflict with empathy and solution-based
16 approaches as opposed to the aggressive and
17 antagonizing approach they are usually met with by
18 supposed school safety implements. Further, students'
19 behavior is proven to be vastly improved through the
20 allocation of mental health resources in school.
21 Students need someone they can turn to in crisis and
22 someone who can guide them through difficult time.
23 Having this guidance allows professionals to detect
24 and prevent misbehavior as well as conflict in
25

1
2 schools. This will virtually eliminate the problems
3 that police in schools are supposedly there to solve.
4 Struggles with mental health have also proven to
5 hinder student performance in schools. Clearly, the
6 hostile approach that has been tried for years is not
7 what students need, but rather it is necessary to
8 encourage a supportive school environment that
9 students will flourish in. For these reasons, I ask
10 that as you negotiate the budget you do everything in
11 your power to get 10 million dollars directly to
12 schools so they can access restorative justice
13 training and curriculums, fund programs that give
14 broader access to restorative justice including clubs
15 and electives and school and work-based opportunities
16 so students can lead in restorative justice. Also,
17 to get \$5 million dollars in funding for the mental
18 health continuum that will address students' true
19 needs. Thank you for your time.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You came with your
21 own cheerleaders. I love it. Lisala, have you based
22 this program off a learning model? If so, what's the
23 name of it? Can you describe it?

24 LISALA BEATTY: Thank you for that
25 question. Actually, Music and the Brain started 25

1
2 years ago by my high school music teacher, and I've
3 been with the program for 20 years. We really just
4 created the curriculum by finding repertoire that we
5 thought would work in the classroom and watching
6 teachers teach it. We started with two schools and
7 have added each year and now have partnered with
8 hundreds of the schools. So what I would describe
9 Music and the Brain as is a curriculum. First of
10 all, it's not scripted, but it gives music teachers
11 literally thousands of options of audio and video and
12 other physical materials that they can use in the
13 classroom. But the approaches to learn a piece of
14 music and not just go to the piano to play, but to
15 learn about where it's from. Some of the songs are
16 classical music, others folk music. It's very
17 diverse and it gives children the sense that they're
18 on a journey and that they're learning social
19 studies, they're learning literacy, they're learning
20 many, many different types of major skills and
21 concepts that they need to learn through the lens of
22 music, and then they get to go to the piano and play
23 it. So it's so much fun for them in the process, but
24 it's a cross-curricular approach for sure, and we
25 work closely with music teaches to give them the best

1
2 approaches that we've seen for 25 years with the
3 program.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for that,
5 because I noticed you're in my school.

6 LISALA BEATTY: yeah.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: My old alma mater,
8 PS139--

9 LISALA BEATTY: [interposing] Oh, did you
10 go there? Oh, that's amazing.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: which is named after
12 my music teacher [inaudible] Fenty [sic].

13 LISALA BEATTY: Oh, amazing. Okay.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So.

15 LISALA BEATTY: That's so cool. Great.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Just a little fun
17 fact. Ballet Hispanico, does it run as an
18 afterschool program or a Saturday program? Can you
19 briefly-- briefly, can you describe how you teach
20 Afro-Latinx history to students? How has it helped
21 students understand their racial identity?

22 TAMIA BLACKMAN-SANTANA: That's a great
23 question. Yes, so we're in school with residencies.
24 We partner with principals, and so we have classes
25 during the day, and then we have our CASA funding

1
2 which is really-- those are after school programs and
3 our Saturday programs that are funded by City Council
4 Members. And so we spend a lot of time talking to
5 them and thanking them and just continuing to share
6 this journey. Afro-Latin culture and curriculum,
7 right? So, Ballet Hispanico is really on the leading
8 edge of what we're calling Afro-Latinidad [sic]. So
9 as we begin to understand and meet each child where
10 they are, depending on their emotional development,
11 but talking about-- during the transatlantic slave
12 trade, 14 million African families were brought to
13 Latin America as we know it. An estimated 450,000
14 African families were brought to North Carolina. So
15 that gives us the real understanding of how much of
16 the African diaspora is in Latin culture and Latin
17 America as we know it, and that Latin America as we
18 know it is made up of beautiful indigenous families
19 that were already living there, African families that
20 were brought over there, and European colonizers.
21 Mixed together, that's what makes Latinx culture.
22 And so it's really important for us to understand
23 that Latinx culture is American culture and how much
24 has had an influence on all of us and on America.
25 And so we come in through the joy of dance, but if we

1
2 are talking about a salsa class and we're talking
3 about Cuba, we'll talk about Celia Cruz, we'll talk
4 about food, we'll talk about culture, we'll talk
5 about if they're old enough, why she left, and maybe
6 why some families have immigrated to America. What's
7 your story? Why are you here? There's a methodology
8 that's been researched now. I mean, part of the
9 problem is that a lot of our culture hasn't been
10 researched and it hasn't been codified. So it's now
11 starting to happen and with our partnership with
12 Columbia University, it's great, but there's
13 something-- there's a methodology called familismo
14 [sic] methodology, which is family first, and it's
15 child-centered. Latinx families have been doing this
16 for hundreds of years. EDU now calls it Progressive
17 Education. But we bring that methodology into the
18 class, and we are on the leading edge of talking
19 about those statistics and what the real history is,
20 and that it's only when we came to America when a
21 supremacist had to make us decide. Are you black?
22 Are you Latin? Are you white? Because we needed to
23 get put into different categories. So, opening that
24 back up. We don't need to go to that approach as
25 we're talking now as adults, but letting them know

1
2 about their history and about their culture and Gen-Z
3 is so amazing. I've met a lot of people that I'm
4 convinced they're here to save us. We arrive at the
5 same destination together when we tell them about
6 their culture and we turn the lights on about who
7 they are.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: thank you. You had
9 me put on my Ms. Joseph hat for a second. There's a
10 monument called the Arch of Return [sic] which is the
11 first transatlantic slave trade memorial. It's at
12 the United Nations. So if you ever have a chance,
13 take your students to go visit so they can make a
14 connection.

15 TAMIA BLACKMAN-SANTANA: Yes. Yeah,
16 thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Anthony, what do you
18 do during summer school? What methods do you have to
19 find relief from heat? And have you tried to remedy
20 these issues in your school?

21 ANTHONY GUERRERO: I have a loud voice.
22 I'm on the building trade's side of it, so we're in
23 construction. We've been having a lot of issues on
24 that. The schools-- so I'll look at it from a worker
25 standpoint right? With the climate change, we're

1
2 changing. There's a lot of humidity in New York
3 City. We're topping over 90 degrees inside a school
4 that needs to be renovated. And someone spoke
5 earlier about working down usually cafeteria where
6 the kitchen equipment is what we do, it's hot down
7 there. You can have 110-degree weather down there.
8 So, you know, to answer your question about
9 recruiting to try to get people into our program, so
10 we do work with other pre-apprenticeship programs
11 throughout the City, Construction Skills New York
12 City, Helmets to Hard Hats, Nontraditional Employment
13 for Women where we do reach out to most of these
14 groups to bring into our trade. Listen, our trade,
15 along with other building trades, we have great
16 benefits. We have pensions. We have annuity, things
17 that are not like seen in employment right now, and
18 we-- our population right now, just amongst the
19 apprentices is 78 percent minority. So we are going
20 into the communities. We are bringing them out to
21 give them the opportunity to work in the City in
22 programs. [inaudible] schools that we-- there's a
23 lot of work for the SCA that we do out there. But
24 again, to get-- we'd love to see the climate jobs
25 initiative, to get that funding to help out, because

1
2 it means a lot to the students. Again, just with the
3 quality of air. We've known it for over the years
4 how bad the quality of air is at a school. I went--
5 I was a public schools student. I'm proud to say I
6 am also a Queens-- a little bit more, thank you-- and
7 I remember how it was in the schools. It was hot,
8 and this was before we were allowed to wear shorts.
9 Before-- in my time we weren't allowed to wear
10 shorts. We had to wear just jeans, so it was hot in
11 that school, and we're talking about April, May,
12 June. So now you're talking about 30 years later, 40
13 years later since I left the schools. We have kids
14 who are in summer school. It is a lot hotter right
15 now. Kids deserve better air conditioning systems in
16 there. We have the finances. We have the funded. We
17 have good labor language that's attached to it. It's
18 a win for everybody. It gives people who did not go
19 to college for whatever reasons-- I went to college
20 and I still ended up working with the tools. I wanted
21 better secure job security, better pension. That's
22 why I chose it. But it's a win for everybody and I
23 hope you have [sic]. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you very much.
25 Carbon Free School Initiative, can you describe what

1
2 it means by prioritizing schools in environmental
3 justice areas? What specific areas are you talking
4 about?

5 TORY KASO: Yeah, so for the most part,
6 low-income minority communities, but we also-- our
7 research partners, the Cornell Institute, Labor
8 Leading on Climate Institute, also now the Climate
9 Jobs Institute within that has-- we have data that
10 we've overlaid with for example youth asthma,
11 hospitalizations, and we know that disproportionately
12 impacts black and brown youth, so those particular
13 communities. We have also recommended 100 schools as
14 priority for the first ones that get retrofits and
15 solar installation. Many of those schools are in
16 Brooklyn-- I can't off the top of my head go through
17 every single community, but a number of them are in
18 Brooklyn, upper Manhattan, the Bronx, obviously, and
19 a number throughout Queens, and also a few in Staten
20 Island in the Northshore area.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Wonderful. Thank
22 you. For my student, what does true student
23 development look like to you?

24 RAKAYA HASAN: I think true student
25 development means that students are in an environment

1
2 where they feel open, they feel safe to talk to
3 people. They feel like they have someone to turn to
4 when they're struggling, and with that students'
5 performance in schools improves, behavior is
6 improved, and students are excited to go to school.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank
8 you so much.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to
10 everybody on the panel. Our final in-person panel,
11 Chloe Pashman [sp?], Nikos Papageorgiou, Quashik Da
12 [sp?], Elizabeth Wassib [sp?], and Tina Zeng [sp?],
13 and if there's any-- if there's anyone else in the
14 building that would like to testify in-person, please
15 see the Sergeant at Arms to submit a witness slip.
16 Please state your name for the record, and then you
17 can begin your testimony.

18 TINA ZENG: Oh, hi, good evening. Thank
19 you very much for listening to us all.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sorry, could you
21 please state your name for the record first?

22 TINA ZENG: Tina Zeng.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Tina.

24 TINA ZENG: Thank you, again. Sorry. I
25 just want to say listening to you, Chair Joseph, I

1
2 just-- I'm really grateful that you're here as the
3 Committee Chair to champion our student rights and
4 just being so attentive and engaged throughout this
5 entire time. Thank you. I'm here to discuss--
6 sorry. So, I am Tina Zeng and I'm a high school
7 student member with Ya-Ya Network to amplify the
8 Dignity for Schools Campaign. In my testimony I will
9 discuss our need for a \$10 million dollar investment
10 in restorative justice initiatives in New York City
11 schools as facilitated by students and for students.
12 First, hiring 500 more cops in the schools to further
13 expose young people to the criminal legal system as
14 proposed by Mayor Adams-- and while he's under
15 delivering for our support staff such as guidance
16 counselors and other support staff. And as a
17 previous speaker questioned, where is the data for
18 the 500 guidance counselors as promised by the DOE.
19 More police instead of support staff is not conducive
20 for us to learn our best as police presence makes
21 many of us students uneasy and tense, especially for
22 black and brown students. Indeed, I want to see more
23 school-led restorative justice models as the way to
24 navigate challenges in schools that allow us to
25 develop lifelong skills in resolving conflicts,

1 because school is more than a space for academic
2 learning. School sets us up for the future.
3 Currently, systems of inequity in our schools cause
4 students and staff to experience harm while with
5 little opportunity to confront the issues that
6 negatively impact our school experience. But
7 restorative justice practices that are led by and for
8 students through peer mediation and student justice
9 panels contribute to a positive school climate. My
10 school offered a series of restorative justice
11 trainings last spring funded through the top down
12 model by the Office for Safety and Youth Development,
13 as mentioned by Kate who spoke previously for Dignity
14 in Schools. Meaning, my school had to apply for it.
15 My friend who is a leader of an Affinity Club at my
16 school participated in the training of other students
17 to address the incident that happened at our school.
18 While I commend my school for taking that initiative,
19 it's important to enable restorative justice on the
20 school-level instead of from the top down. Hence, we
21 need to invest in more school-based opportunities for
22 restorative justice. Just as our funding-- as our
23 funding for restorative justice is bolstered [sic] by
24 COVID-related federal aid, as it wanes in the coming
25

1
2 years, we're calling for a \$10 million dollar
3 investment from the city to continue developing
4 restorative justice trainings and curriculum in
5 schools all across the City. Council Member, take a
6 stand with young people to make us feel safe,
7 supported, empowered, and valued by continuing to
8 fund restorative justice. Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much.
10 Is it Elizabeth Wassib [sp?]?

11 ELIZABETH WASSIB: Yes. Hello Chair
12 Joseph and the Education Committee. My name is
13 Elizabeth and I am a student activist at the Ya-Ya
14 Network. I demand a just budget that allocates \$75
15 million dollars to hire 500 support staff in schools,
16 including counselors. Students lack school
17 environments that are safe, comfortable and
18 supportive. School should be a place for learning
19 and growing. However, police presence in schools
20 communicates a message to students that they are seen
21 as potential criminals, creating a hostile and
22 negative learning environment. I demand an education
23 that does not insinuate I am a dangerous person and
24 needs to be watched over. I'm at school for a large
25 portion of my life, not to have my curiosity and

1 excitement to learn be scrubbed away and replaced by
2 fear and anxiety caused by police officers. I want
3 to have more counselors who use inclusive and
4 accessible restorative justice practices that
5 acknowledge the importance of support, empowerment,
6 culturally-responsive teaching, and empathy.
7 Students perform better when they feel safe.
8 Reforming our school policy that disproportionately
9 impacts black and brown people is important to create
10 equitable and positive environment for students
11 regardless of their identity. School social workers
12 have the skills to build relationships with students
13 and understand their needs which can help them to
14 resolve and de-escalate tension or conflict using
15 peaceful strategies. In contrast, school police
16 officers are tied to law enforcement and are trained
17 to interact with criminals and not the youth,
18 therefore are less equipped to support students when
19 there is conflict, and more likely to subject
20 students to overly punitive charges for minor
21 offenses. Often times, officers abuse their position
22 of power to intimidate and harass students. With
23 about \$400 million dollars going toward the police
24 each year, I demand a system that is not lazy, scary,

1
2 racist, and criminalizing to keep more safe at
3 school. Shift funding towards school counselors that
4 support access and equity for students. Thank you
5 for your time.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Tina, the
7 neighborhood around your school, has there ever been
8 a reason for police intervention?

9 TINA ZENG: Oh, so at my school we have
10 like seven safety agents in our school and we have a
11 metal detector. We actually go to the same school.
12 And I think our school has maybe a contentious
13 history, perhaps. It shares the campus with three
14 other schools, and most of the other schools their
15 student population is predominantly black and brown,
16 while our school is a lot of white and Asian
17 students. And I guess, I just wonder like if we have
18 all these metal detectors and safety-- school safety
19 agents, is it-- has that been something that has
20 happened in the past-- or just by the fact that the
21 other schools have students who may be perceived as
22 more misbehaving or something that necessitates these
23 safety agents to watch us. I just think that like,
24 it's just-- yeah, earlier when someone was-- one of
25 the student members here, they were speaking about

1
2 the metal detectors in their school, and it's true,
3 nobody wants the metal detectors. We don't feel much
4 safer, and they were saying how the Dean is rushing
5 us to get into school. so our school set a-- like a
6 five-minute grace period just getting into the
7 period, but usually the line gets so congested in the
8 morning that, like, students might be over the five
9 minutes, and then we can't go out for lunch. And the
10 other students were speaking about how like, oh,
11 there's lower school lunch participation because the
12 school food isn't very appetizing or-- so, I guess,
13 when you can't go out to buy lunch, we just go hungry
14 if we don't eat the school lunch. So I guess all of
15 this plays into why we-- I guess we need more student
16 voices share these experiences so that, you know, we
17 can shape the budget so that it allows us to thrive
18 at our schools.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: thank you. That's
20 why you're here, and I made the time to make sure I
21 listened to you. It's important. Elizabeth, can you
22 describe what you mean by overly-punitive charges?

23 ELIZABETH WASSIB: Yes. I believe that
24 often times in cases of school misbehavior, let's
25 say, if students were to not behave how they're

1
2 supposed to behave, whether that be something more so
3 minor, like skipping a class, or even so being late
4 to a class because of, like Tina has mentioned, metal
5 detectors. I think that often times these situations
6 are addressed in using systems that are oppressive,
7 specifically towards people of color, and these
8 methods of tailoring to these systems aren't always
9 productive, because they don't actually address the
10 situation at-hand. If students are misbehaving or if
11 they're doing anything that really requires these
12 punitive offenses, it means that something bigger is
13 at-hand, and that means that we need these social
14 workers to be able to talk to the students and
15 understand where they're coming from, what might be
16 the root of these issues, and that doesn't mean that
17 you just put a police officer in the situation
18 instead, and make them more likely to put students--
19 closer to the school to prison, into the school to
20 prison pipeline. And I think that what I mean-- when
21 I say punitive offenses, I mean that there are harsh
22 offenses towards people of color that should be
23 addressed in different ways, especially because it's
24 not addressing the main issue at-hand.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much
3 for that.

4 ELIZABETH WASSIB: Good luck with the
5 rest of the virtual testimonies.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will
7 now move on to virtual testimony. Our first panel
8 will consist of Christie Balka, Sharon McLennon,
9 Amber from Special Support Services, and Rachel
10 Gazdick. And also Marisol Castenda Salgado [sp?].
11 Christie Balka, you may begin your testimony.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

13 CHRISTIE BALKA: Good evening Chair
14 Joseph and Members of Council. My name is Christie
15 Balk and I'm Vice President of Policy with All Our
16 Kin, a nonprofit that trains, supports, and sustains
17 family childcare educators in New York City. Family
18 Childcare or licensed care that occurs in the
19 educator's own home plays an essential role educating
20 our city's youngest children. Parents choose it for
21 a number of reasons that I elaborate on in my written
22 testimony. Suffice it to say that 73 percent of
23 licensed childcare are family or group family
24 childcare programs who have the capacity to care for
25 almost 84,000 children. Majority of the City's

1
2 infants and toddlers who receive publicly supported
3 care are enrolled in family childcare. Now, anyone
4 who picks up a newspaper lately or speaks to a parent
5 of a young child knows that our childcare system
6 isn't working. Decades of underinvestment have
7 created long smoldering fire, and today when parents
8 are lucky enough to find care that meets the needs of
9 their families, they can barely afford to pay for it.
10 At the same time, family childcare educators can
11 barely afford to offer childcare these days. With
12 compensation hovering near minimum wage, the City is
13 seeing an unprecedented closure of family childcare
14 programs, which further narrows parent's options. The
15 pandemic has only added fuel to the fire. Since it
16 began, the City has lost nearly 500 family childcare
17 programs. To slow this downward spiral, All Our Kin
18 urges City Council to make significant investments to
19 improve family's access to childcare, including
20 family childcare and to invest in the family
21 childcare workforce. We're heartened by the DOE's
22 intent to align childcare supply and demand across
23 the City, and we hope this effort regard to family
24 childcare is a true asset to neighborhoods and
25 includes family childcare providers in the analysis

1
2 and action plans. In addition, we urge council to
3 use its leverage to ensure that family childcare
4 providers can participate in all city-funded
5 childcare and early learning initiatives including
6 Pre-K, 3K, and Early Learn. Opportunities for family
7 childcare providers to participate in these programs
8 are currently extremely limited, and my written
9 testimony goes into more detail and recommendations
10 about how to address this. We also urge Council to
11 invest a minimum of \$10 million dollars to extend the
12 Promise New York City Voucher Program so that
13 undocumented children can have access to childcare,
14 be family childcare educators--

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time has
16 expired, thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You can continue.

18 CHRISTIE BALK: Alright.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You can continue.

20 CHRISTIE BALK: Oh, okay. Thank you.

21 Because family childcare educators serve a large
22 share of the City's undocumented children, All Our
23 Kin advocated for this initiative last year and has
24 been impressed by the rollout since January. Council
25 and the Mayor should continue to support this beyond

1
2 its first six months so that undocumented children
3 can continue to access high-quality care that sets
4 them up for success while enabling their parents to
5 pursue activities that lead to self-sufficiency in
6 their new city. To support the family childcare
7 workforce, we urge the City to end its two, or as we
8 heard today, three-tiered system of childcare and
9 early learning. Ninety-four percent of family
10 childcare educators in the City are women, 75 percent
11 are women of color who serve children from similar
12 backgrounds. High-quality early learning occurs in
13 all settings, and depends on the educator's skills
14 and experience not on the modality of care.
15 Regardless, family childcare educators, owners and
16 directors earn an average of \$17.06 an hour in New
17 York City, and assistants earn an average of \$9.34 an
18 hour regardless of their skills. They are not
19 included in the City's historic wage parity agreement
20 that has boosted childcare compensation for center-
21 based Pre-K educators. And while we support the
22 early request to achieve the full promise of wage
23 parity for center-based educators, All Our Kin urges
24 City Council to work toward the inclusion of family
25 childcare in these agreements over the long-term. In

1
2 the short-term we hope you'll make investments to
3 improve the equity and civility of the family
4 childcare workforce by offsetting family childcare
5 educator's health insurance premiums and retirement
6 benefits, and my written testimony provides more
7 detailed recommendations about how other cities are
8 doing this. In addition to these requests, All Our
9 Kin supports Bill 941 introduced by Council Members
10 Gutiérrez and Riley--

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: [interposing] Please
12 wrap it up.

13 CHRISTIE BALKKA: and others. And thank
14 you for your time today and your attention,
15 compassion, and stamina.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Sharon
17 McLennon?

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sharon McLennon?

20 SHARON MCLENNON-WIER: I'm here. I'm
21 sorry. Good evening. My name is Doctor Sharon
22 McLennon-Wier. I'm the Executive Director for Center
23 for Independence of the Disabled New York, CIDNY. I'm
24 also a totally blind person, and I'm also an advocate
25 for people with disabilities. I'm here tonight to

1
2 advocate for people with disabilities so they have
3 equity with regards to education and employment.
4 People with disabilities have a very high
5 unemployment rate, and this is due to stigma,
6 prejudice, and also being not prepared for the labor
7 force. People with disabilities have different types
8 of needs, specifically with assistive technology
9 needs that could help them in acquiring the skills
10 that's needed for employment. There are assistive
11 technologies such as screen-reading devices,
12 magnification devices, as well as screen reading
13 programs like JAWS for Windows or Kurzweil 1000 or
14 3000 that can help people with disabilities with
15 employment activities. In order to achieve equity
16 within employment and also be able to earn a wage,
17 it's important that our students are actually taught
18 assistive technology skills in addition to computer
19 skills so that they can acquire the necessary
20 activities with regards to employment. It is
21 important to understand that students with
22 disabilities want to learn and want to work; however,
23 they need to be prepared so that they can acquire
24 employment. I am asking today for the New York City
25 Council to invest \$2 million dollars to CIDNY so that

1 we can acquire an assistive technology center to
2 properly train students with disabilities in the
3 proper skills that they would need. In addition, I'm
4 requesting for mental health services for students
5 with disabilities. As you listened to previous
6 testimony, it's imperative during this pandemic that
7 students with disabilities were very much short-
8 changed. They missed out on the necessary related
9 services such as occupational therapy, speech and
10 language therapy, physical therapy, as well as other
11 counseling skills that could help in addressing their
12 disability limitations. These services were never
13 made up, and these services were missed out.
14 Unfortunately, these students have gone without the
15 necessary education and skills that would help them
16 catch up in their development. It's time for them to
17 get the skills and the necessary training that's
18 needed so that they can compete with other students.
19 It's important for us to recognize it's not just
20 going to school and just being there and not really
21 learning. What matters is when they graduate and
22 what happens after that. So again, we're asking that
23 these students get the assistive technology--
24
25

1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
3 expired.

4 SHARON MCLENNON-WIER: comprehensive
5 counseling skills that's needed.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please wrap up.

7 SHARON MCLENNON-WIER: And we also want
8 for them to be able to get necessary testing
9 accommodations so when they are going to higher
10 education they actually have a documented
11 accommodation list of accommodations that can be used
12 in the higher education setting. Thank you very
13 much.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Amber
15 Decker?

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Amber Decker?

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next we'll move to
20 Rachel Gazdick.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

22 BETH: Hi, my name is Beth [inaudible]
23 I'm speaking for Rachel Gazdick. I'm a member of the
24 Senior Leadership Team at New York Edge. I'm here
25 today to ask you to prioritize New York Edge's Fiscal

1
2 Year 24 citywide funding requests. We're seeking
3 \$1.2 million dollars under the Council's afterschool
4 enrichment initiative as an increase of \$200,000 over
5 last year. This would be our first increase in 15
6 years. We're also seeking for the first time
7 \$250,000 under the Council's Social and Emotional
8 Supports for Students Initiative. New York Edge is
9 the largest provider for school-based afterschool and
10 summer programming in New York City, serving 30,000
11 students in over 100 schools throughout the five
12 boroughs. Our mission is to help bridge the
13 opportunity gap amongst students in under-invested
14 communities, and as our name implies, we strive to
15 provide ever student in our programs with the edge
16 that they need to succeed in the classroom and life.
17 Academic instruction now counts for over 50 percent
18 of our programming with SEL being integrated into
19 every element. Core components of our programming
20 include STEM education, social/emotional learning and
21 leadership, visual and performing arts, sports,
22 health and wellness, academics, and college and
23 career readiness in summer programs. We are, as
24 identified by Mosaic by ACT, the largest afterschool
25 provider in the nation offering SEL supports. We're

1
2 also one of the City's largest providers of College
3 Access Programs. Our student population is 90
4 percent or more African-American or Hispanic, serving
5 males and females equally. More than 85 percent of
6 our students come from low-income households.

7 Council citywide funding has enabled to enrich and
8 expand our school year and summer programs and has
9 allowed us to develop and implement new, unique, and
10 engaging programs such as our student-led podcast,
11 Formative, our student book publishing initiative,
12 and our Heart for Art program, a partnership with Van
13 Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. New York Edge's students
14 and families are extremely grateful for the Councils
15 30+ years of support. We are now looking to you to
16 meet the needs of the next generation of young people
17 by supporting our Fiscal Year 24 funding request.

18 Thank you so much for your time today.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
20 testimony. Going to turn again to Amber Decker.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

22 AMBER DECKER: Hi, my name is Amber
23 Decker. I'm a Brooklyn parent of a high school
24 student with an IEP. I'm a Special Education Advocate
25 at Special Support Services. Thank you for inviting

1
2 me today. I hope you can all hear me. I just want to
3 mention the report on the fiscal 2024 preliminary
4 plan and the Fiscal 2023 Mayor's Management Report.
5 Many of the Council initiatives like the Substance
6 Abuse Prevention and Intervention Specialist, aka
7 SAPIS workers, and social emotional supports for
8 students, those initiatives have the right idea and
9 they don't cut the mustard. And I know from
10 firsthand experience from working with hundreds of
11 families that they don't. I for one have never met a
12 SAPIS worker in any K-12 school. Have any of you? I
13 mean, do they keep records for attendance encounters?
14 Are they working directly with students, parents,
15 teachers? I want to give you one example that
16 puzzles me. Abraham Lincoln High School in Brooklyn
17 currently has a budget over 90,000 for a Substance
18 Abuse Prevention Program with just one hired position.
19 So what does this person do for \$90,000 per year?
20 This is a high school with over 1,000 students. How
21 is this money allocated, and how do you check for
22 program effectiveness? How can this work for
23 students who need counseling, family needs
24 assessment, resource referrals, and school teacher
25 and administrator supports? Unfortunately, while we

1
2 heard incredibly amazing testimony from youth today
3 about a variety of important issues, we're very
4 unlikely to hear from a student who needs a substance
5 abuse specialist at their school. Still their voices
6 need to be heard. We don't have enough social
7 workers in schools. Imagine the shortage of
8 substance abuse counseling. This initiative, as well
9 as other Fiscal 2023 Council initiatives and one-time
10 funding projects, are being distributed and have been
11 distributed in the past. However, they have yet to
12 be reviewed for success or effectiveness. The
13 initiative for students needing mental health and
14 substance abuse counseling needs more expansion and
15 improvement. Similarly, there continues to be zero
16 programs for school refusal and absenteeism for
17 students with disabilities, as if COVID never
18 happened. The City needs to create initiatives and
19 programs that addresses ongoing issues without
20 penalizing and stigmatizing families and students.
21 And thank you, Chair Joseph, for all the questions
22 you asked about [inaudible] today.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to
24 our panel. Our next panel: Christine Serdjenian,
25 Jeannie Ferrari, Jaclyn Valane, Mark House, Crystal

1
2 Rodriguez. And on deck we will have: Martin Urbach,
3 Jennifer Finn, Emmaia Gelman, and Alex Kirkman-
4 Palmer. Christine Serdjenian, you may begin your
5 testimony.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

7 CHRISTINE SERDJENIAN YEARWOOD: Hi, good
8 evening. My name Christine Serdjenian Yearwood, and
9 I'm an Education Justice Taskforce Member and New
10 York Representative for the Armenian American Action
11 Network. We are also part of the CACF Coalition and
12 I'm a public school parent of three, including one 3k
13 students who-- and I'm very grateful for the program.
14 Armenian American Action Network is a proud member of
15 the 18 Percent and Growing Campaign, a critical and
16 diverse citywide campaign uniting over 90 AAPI-led
17 and serving organizations across New York City to
18 fight for a fair and equitable budget that protects
19 the needs of New York-- of our most vulnerable
20 community members. We advocate in solidarity as a
21 collective to hold New York City accountable in
22 providing necessary resources to serve and empower
23 the diverse needs of all AAPI New Yorkers and other
24 communities of color as we are building a community
25 too powerful to ignore. Armenian American Action

1
2 Network is a community advocacy and research
3 organization fighting anti-Armenian racism in United
4 States, teaching Armenian American history and
5 forwarding civil, immigrant, and refugee rights for
6 all our communities. Our communities urge you today
7 to support the AAPI Community Support Initiative and
8 to the initiatives to address ongoing gaps and
9 persistent marginalization and inequality in order to
10 truly build futures of dignity and freedom for all in
11 New York City. As a public school parent and a
12 leader at AAAN, I want my children to grow up in a
13 place that not only values their identity and sees
14 their experiences reflected back to them in all
15 aspects of social life, including political
16 representation, education, health, and language
17 access, but actively advances a commitment to equity
18 through tangible steps like the ones our AAPI
19 Coalition is asking for today. Armenian American
20 Action Network urges the New York City Council to
21 uplift the collective priorities of the 18 Percent
22 and Growing Campaign to include expanding the AAPI
23 Community Support Initiative to \$7.5 million dollars,
24 communities of color nonprofit stabilization fund to
25 \$7.5 million dollars, and the Access Health

1 Initiative to \$4 million dollars among other key
2 citywide initiatives to take further steps and not
3 simply envisioning but truly creating a more
4 inclusive, safe, healthy, and sustainable society for
5 our diverse diaspora. Thank you very much for your
6 time.
7

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Jeannie
9 Ferrari?

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

11 JEANNIE FERRARI: Hello, thank you,
12 Chair Joseph. OH, sorry. Thank you Chair Joseph and
13 City Council for allowing me to testify and thank you
14 so much for your strong advocacy for and support of
15 New York City Public Schools. My name is Jeannie
16 Ferrari. I'm the Principal of Humanities Preparatory
17 Academy. I'm in my 11th year. This is a New York's
18 Performance Standards Consortium School. It's
19 located in Manhattan, and we serve around 265
20 students. We've been around since 1996. We serve a
21 combination of traditional high school students and
22 also students who have transferred from other DOE
23 schools. I've been informed recently that the new
24 DOE budget for 2023/2024 plans to cut and eventually
25 phase out all funding to the Affinity Partner Support

1
2 Organizations. These organizations have been
3 critical to the success of so many schools across the
4 City and have been funded through contracts with the
5 Department of Education since 2014. Nearly one-third
6 of New York City's public high schools are affiliated
7 with these partner school organizations-- sorry,
8 partner support organizations, which include the New
9 York State Performance Standards Consortium, which
10 we're a part of. These organizations have been
11 instrumental in creating successful models of bottom-
12 up innovation that sets New York City apart from
13 school districts across the country. Affinity high
14 schools outperform non-Affinity high schools in
15 nearly all measures of school quality that are
16 published by the DOE. We understand that you are
17 concerned about wasting money in contracts, and I'm
18 here to tell you that by cutting these contracts, the
19 DOE is proposing to do away with the successful
20 program that has been supporting the success of
21 students in my school and other schools for nearly a
22 decade. As a school affiliated with the New York
23 State Performance Standards Consortium, we receive
24 professional development and coaching that's critical
25 to the success and sustainability of our school model

1 which offers unique student-centered inquiry-based
2 learning model as an alternative to Regents
3 Examinations and Regents-based instruction. The
4 Consortium also provides assistance with curriculum
5 development and crucially supported accountability in
6 our performance-based assessment system, which is
7 moderated across the state-wide network of 38
8 schools. Consortium schools have a track record of
9 higher graduation rates, collect acceptance and
10 retention rates when compared to traditional New York
11 City public schools, despite having many more English
12 language learners and students with disabilities than
13 the average high school. If funding to these
14 organizations is cut, I fear that families will soon
15 have fewer high school alternatives to choose from
16 that address the unique individual needs of their
17 child. I'm also at a loss as to how my school will be
18 supported without the guidance of the consortium. If
19 the Department's plan is to require schools to pay
20 for this directly, it should be properly understood
21 as a budget cut to the schools. I strongly urge you-
22 - sorry. I strongly urge you to ensure that Affinity
23 contracts are maintained in the upcoming budget. This
24
25

1
2 is a contract that works, and I'm happy to answer any
3 questions that you may have. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
5 testimony. Jaclyn Valane?

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

7 JACLYN VALANE: Good evening. Thank you
8 Chair Joseph, Committee Members and Council Members
9 for your time and creating this space for the
10 community. My name is Jaclyn Valane and I have been
11 the Principal at International High School at
12 LaGuardia Community College for the past nine years.
13 We are a high school in Queens that serves students
14 who recently arrived to the United States. All of
15 our students are learning English as a new language,
16 which they learn across all classes through content
17 and student-centered projects. Over the past 30+
18 years we have been able to develop into a successful
19 high school due in part to the support that we've
20 received from the DOE which has been supplemented by
21 our three partner organizations, the Internationals
22 Network for Public Schools, New York Performance
23 Standards Consortium, and the CUNY Early College
24 Initiative. Since 2007, one of the many ways that
25 New York City has supported schools has been through

1
2 partnering with effective nonprofit organizations
3 like the three that I just mentioned. Since 2014,
4 one-third of all New York City public schools have
5 been supported by one or more of these partner
6 support organization contracts through a structure
7 called Affinity. Since that time, the DOE has funded
8 this cost for the Affinity PSO's in their central
9 budget, therefore opening space in our school level
10 budget for other important supports for our students.
11 As a result of these contracts, our school and a
12 large number of schools across New York City have
13 greatly benefitted. This structure is successful.
14 Last year, for example, Affinity High Schools had a
15 graduation rate of 91 percent, above the City's
16 average. Affinity students enter high school with
17 higher risk factors than their non-Affinity peers and
18 the Affinity schools consistently outperform non-
19 Affinity schools on almost every metric tracked in
20 the DOE's School Quality Report. As a school leader,
21 the PSOs that we partner with through these city
22 contracts, allow me to support new teachers with
23 instructional coaches, have all teachers workshop and
24 co-plan curriculum and more. It is thanks to the
25 City's contracts with Affinity's PSOs that I am able

1
2 to rely on the support from members of my school
3 community so that we can ultimately serve our
4 students best. This structure has been invaluable in
5 the lives of the many students who are part of our
6 school communities. I would like to see New York
7 City continue their commitment of partnering with
8 these nonprofits in order to serve our students best.
9 Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
11 testimony. Mark House?

12 MARK HOUSE: Good evening. I probably
13 won't be as articulate as Principal Ferrari or
14 Valane, but I'm also here to speak in support of the
15 Affinity network. I work as a Principal of public
16 school in the Bronx, Bronx Engineering and Technology
17 Academy. I'm also the parent of a seventh grader who
18 attends a New Visions Public School in Harlem, so I
19 speak as both tonight, a parent and a principal. I
20 think our councilperson Dinowitz hit it on the head
21 earlier when he asked CSA President Rubio if all the
22 funding going towards improving things actually leads
23 to proper educational outcomes, useful outcomes, and
24 I think he got the answer h was looking for when he
25 said "not really." What I'm here to say this evening

1
2 is that the Affinity Network works. If you take a
3 look at the numbers, if you take a look at the money
4 spent, it's certainly allowed me to turn around two
5 separate schools in New York City and take them from
6 a 60 percent graduation rate to almost 90, using the
7 tools that they've created. For us, we use their
8 ever-evolving curriculum. We use their teacher
9 coaching. We use their leadership coaching. We use
10 all the SEL work that they've helped us develop for
11 our students, and they developed a data tool that we
12 rely on daily. So there isn't a day that goes by
13 during the school year that New Visions, and broadly
14 the Affinity network doesn't actually have an impact
15 on what we're doing in our school. I think if I told
16 somebody randomly that they could invest \$3 million
17 dollars and see a 92 percent average graduation rate
18 across 71 schools, they'd assume that's a pretty good
19 investment compared to some of the numbers that are
20 being used today for some other programs. I should
21 probably leave that alone though. It represents for
22 us about 343 dollars per students, and if we take a
23 look at the City average, there's an 81 percent
24 graduation rate, or the state as an 86 percent
25 graduation rate. I think Affinity Networks show

1
2 their value in terms of student achievement. I
3 really think it makes a profound difference for me in
4 running our schools to see that the Affinity Network
5 stays funded, and that they're there for us to
6 continue for us to do the work that we're doing.
7 Thank you. Have a good night.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
9 testimony. Crystal Rodriguez?

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

11 CRYSTAL RODRIGUEZ: Good evening
12 everyone. Please forgive me for my inability to turn
13 on my camera right now. As you all know, it's kind
14 of late. My name is Crystal Rodriguez. I'm a
15 mother of five from the Bronx, New York. I have four
16 children spread across district seven, eight, and
17 nine, and a toddler who will start 3K in September.
18 I'm here on behalf of the Bronx Healing-Centered
19 Schools Working Group and I am representing all
20 Family Healing Ambassadors around our city. We
21 Ambassadors have undergone several extensive
22 trainings since 2021 to help us help families, as
23 well as DOE staff to recognize and understand
24 childhood trauma. The Family Healing Ambassador
25 Pilot Program was launched in hopes of decreasing the

1
2 number of suspensions, expulsions, the number of
3 students taken to psychiatric wards, or being
4 detained. Many times, the children being labeled as
5 bad, troubled, lost, etcetera have a story behind the
6 behavior. In the words of Ms. Annette Barue [sp?],
7 the stories behind the misbehavior won't make you
8 angry, it will break your heart. Our Ambassadors
9 have not only learned how to help other families with
10 trauma and coping with it, they have implemented the
11 work into their homes. Ambassadors educate the
12 community on trauma and healing as well as facilitate
13 workshops and events uplifting physical health,
14 nutritional health, social/emotional health, plus so
15 much more. It has been proven that things like
16 depression, anxiety, and ADHD hinder our children as
17 well as adults to properly function. There is proof
18 that these things can stem from or be enhanced by
19 trauma. This is why we need healing-centered
20 schools. Might I remind you, this program was
21 launched as a pilot, and the pilot ended, but the
22 Healing Ambassadors are still doing the work. We
23 need the DOE support and funding to keep this Healing
24 Ambassador work going. I ask the Council to learn
25 more about this family Healing Ambassador movement

1
2 and advocate on our behalf to the DOE to incorporate
3 this in their mental health initiative, because this
4 work must be done as a collective to include school
5 staff, students, community members, and parents.

6 Please help support this Family Healing Ambassador
7 Program. Thank you and good night.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for
9 your testimony. Our next panel will consist of
10 Martin Urbach, Jennifer Finn, Amaya Gillman [sp?],
11 Alexis Kirkman-Palmer, Doctor Jennifer Cadenhead. On
12 deck, Nancie Katz, Sara Catalinotto, Deshandy Combs
13 [sp?], Lupe Hernandez [sp?], Sheree Gibson. Martin
14 Urbach, you may begin your testimony.

15 MARTIN URBACH: good evening Chair
16 Joseph. Good evening Committee Members, everybody
17 else today. I want to give a special shout-out to the
18 youth. Y'all it's late. And all my educators, all
19 my parents, all my restorative justice coordinators,
20 all my principals, all my City Council Members,
21 everybody-- I want to speak first and foremost about
22 the blessings that I have being a restorative justice
23 coordinator and youth organizer over at Harvest
24 Collegiate High School in District Two. Y'all,
25 you're not going-- it would be impossible to believe

1
2 until you see it, but I have seen young people work
3 it out with their words, work it out, sit down across
4 from each other and face the music and talk to each
5 other and say, "You know, yo, I was out-of-pocket. I
6 was out of line when I hit you. When I said what I
7 said, I didn't really mean to." And I've seen the
8 power of work and the power of comradery that can
9 rise up from the opportunity that restorative justice
10 brings to make a wrong right. Right? A lot of
11 people say that restorative justice doesn't work. I
12 say that that's completely wrong. What we're talking
13 about is the opportunity for young people to solve
14 their own problems by using their communication
15 skills, by getting support from the restorative
16 justice coordinators, from their deans, from the
17 social workers, from their guidance counselors. So I
18 am here today to testify to-- asking City Council to
19 please, please, please give \$75 million dollars
20 directly to the 500 high schools to hire more
21 positions like mine, high school restorative justice
22 coordinators and practitioners. I hear-- I'm asking
23 to use those \$75 million dollars, please, to direct
24 them to hire 500 more community members and to
25 supporting schools. We need parent advocates. We

1
2 need youth advocates. We need paraprofessionals, yo.
3 We got counselors. At my school we have more cops
4 than counselors. We don't even have a librarian,
5 right, and staff to greet the students, right? I am
6 here to ask the City Council to please reject the
7 Mayor's proposal to cut 1,180 jobs from the city
8 public schools. This is terrorism, y'all. Cutting
9 the money and cutting jobs from New York City public
10 schools is terrorism. This mayor's budget proposal
11 is terror. I am here imploring you to please do not
12 accept this mayor's budget proposal. We need all the
13 money we can get for restorative justice
14 practitioners. I am happy to announce I trained a
15 youth group of about 30 kids, 30 students from ninth
16 to 12th grade. It's called Circle Keepers, and they
17 not only train other students from our schools, but
18 they're training students all over the City. They're
19 training teachers all over the country. we just came
20 out to South by Southwest Edu [sic] where the
21 students did a session on restorative justice for
22 people from all over the world to about a sold-out
23 session, and I am here to let you know, if you have
24 any reservations-- [inaudible] reservations about
25

1 restorative justice, hit us up. Come watch the work.
2
3 Come talk to the kids--

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank
5 you. Time has expired.

6 MARTIN URBACH: [inaudible] students
7 about to testify for us. Thank you, and everybody
8 good evening.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
10 testimony. Jennifer Finn?

11 JENNIFER FINN: Hello. Hi. Thank you.
12 I hope everyone has been able to have snacks this
13 long day for you. My name's Jennifer Finn. I'm an
14 elementary school teacher in the Lower East Side and
15 I'm a member of Teachers Unite. I'm here today to
16 urge you to move money away from policing young
17 people and towards the staff, resources and
18 restorative practices that make our schools safe and
19 support our students. Last year, City Council spoke
20 out to protect restorative justice funding against
21 the Mayor's attacks. We're counting on your
22 leadership again. We're demanding a just budget that
23 provides funding for ongoing RJ training and
24 curriculum as well advisories, electives, and other
25 opportunities for youth to build and practice these

1 skills. I teach in a 12 to one self-contained
2 Special Education classroom. In 12 to one, kids are
3 disproportionately black and brown boys, many of whom
4 have been labeled as defiant or emotionally disturbed
5 language that's already steeped in violence. These
6 students are disproportionately impacted by punitive
7 discipline and surveillance and typically have
8 negative experiences at school. Over the past three
9 years, I've had the opportunity to follow my kids
10 from third grade to fourth grade and now fifth grade.
11 So because of COVID, we've looped together as a full
12 unit for three years which is-- I mean, it happens,
13 but it hadn't happened for me before. And while
14 there's been challenges, it's something that I'll
15 never take for granted and it's been really
16 wonderful. We began our journey fully remote where
17 despite their historical school experiences, the kids
18 began to thrive. Not only were they safe at home, but
19 they were also free of the heavy surveillance and
20 punitive measures that are already so prevalent in
21 schools, including police. We laughed. We shared
22 stories. We created art. We learned a lot. All this
23 was possible without police or punitive discipline.
24 Since then, we've returned back to the physical
25

1 classroom, to a room that we've spent cultivating for
2 the past two years together. And while the setting
3 has changed, our relationships have not and our
4 collective values have not. So understandably kids
5 have conflicts. Conflicts is part of life, but when
6 there are conflicts in our classroom they're resolved
7 restoratively. These kids have strong bonds and
8 deeply care about each other despite perceived flaws
9 and challenges, which is something that most adults
10 aren't even capable of. But our community did not
11 happen by chance. I'm grateful to work at a school
12 that values restorative justice that promotes
13 opportunities, restorative staff trainings, and
14 partnerships with outside counselors and social
15 workers. So I've attended countless trainings often
16 outside the DOE. My students I have prioritize time
17 to navigate conflict and were supported by multiple
18 social workers and support staff, but without
19 funding, without training, without curriculum,
20 without advisories and opportunities for the kids,
21 none of this is possible. We've seen the
22 alternative. We know it exists, and now we need to
23 fund it. So we're demanding \$10 million go directly
24 to schools to one, access ongoing restorative justice
25

1
2 training and curriculum. Two, fund restorative
3 justice electives, clubs, advisories--

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank
5 you. Time has expired.

6 JENNIFER FINN: [inaudible] school-based
7 opportunities and workspace learning, students'
8 restorative justice. Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
10 testimony. Emmaia Gelman?

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

12 EMMAIA GELMAN: Hi, thank you. My name
13 is Emmaia Gelman. I was recently a parent at
14 Humanities Prep and currently a parent at Beacon High
15 School and at Hamilton Grange Middle School, and I'm
16 a member of Teachers Unite and I'm also an educator.
17 I am calling on you urgently to move money out of
18 policing and into community supports in schools,
19 including 500 community positions like youth
20 advocates and community outreach coordinators,
21 restorative justice coordinators, and after school
22 programs that do not involve police. New York City
23 schools are incredibly unequal, as you know, and
24 school with outside resources that are usually funded
25 by wealthy parents and PTA's are largely police-free

1
2 already. They're already able to provide what the
3 Teachers Unite budget items call for. So our
4 elementary schools, for instance, parents funded
5 every classroom to have at least two adults. so, as
6 a result when a kid had a crisis for which in another
7 school a cop might have been called, we had adults
8 trained to help them calm down and to find out what
9 they needed and how to get support. Funding 500
10 supportive staff positions would make that available
11 to more students, but if you fund 500 cops, you
12 condemn those kids to contact with the criminal legal
13 system instead. After school is also a place where
14 kids' problems were addressed with community
15 resources, and that was especially important since
16 many families who needed afterschool were
17 undocumented. Afterschool staff often identified and
18 met the needs of kids who had been labeled problems
19 by other adults. These caring life-changing
20 interventions are what makes schools work for kids.
21 Cops can't do that, nor should police be substituted
22 to community support workers. We experience police
23 as threatening or violent in the street, so when they
24 show up in our schools it's hard to imagine turning
25 to them for services, especially for instance the

1
2 undocumented families who served so essentially by
3 our afterschool. There's no reason that schools with
4 wealthy parents should have non-police supports while
5 everyone else gets stuck with police. Please take a
6 meaningful step to make schools more equal. Reject
7 the Mayor's plans to hire new school cops and to cut
8 1,180 positions from school, and please redirect \$475
9 million dollars from school policing to school staff
10 that really support students. Thank you so much.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for
12 your testimony. Next up, Alexis Kirkman-Palmer.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

14 ALEXIS KIRKMAN-PALMER: Good evening
15 Chair Joseph, community members, and everyone else
16 here today. My name's Alexis Kirkman and I'm a
17 student Circle Keeper as well as a RJ representative
18 at Harvest Collegiate High School and a member of
19 Teachers Unite. I'm here to say we need more
20 counselors, social workers, and less police. I want
21 to urge you to find more useful things that would
22 actually help young people in schools, especially
23 low-income schools which always get the short end of
24 the stick. Doing practices like restorative justice
25 helps support students and helps us thrive. It urges

1 students to build a stronger more powerful community
2 with each other by listening to what they have to
3 say. A big part of restorative justice involves the
4 youth and restorative justice empowers youth to use
5 their voices to make a better change for themselves
6 and for others. My experience in past schools were
7 not the best. They would use-- they would practice
8 punitive punishments which means they would give out
9 harsh and harmful punishments for bad behavior. This
10 led students down a more different road in their
11 life. Using punitive justice disturbs not only their
12 learning, but minor problems would stay with them
13 forever and follow them for the rest of their lives.
14 These types of students that faced nonstop punitive
15 justice are more likely to end up not coming to
16 school or worse, go down a long path of negative
17 behavior. The problems these students faced most
18 likely could have been prevented if they just had
19 someone to talk to instead of being punished for a
20 minor mistake they did or said. When students go to
21 school they are-- they are in a different
22 environment. They would come and expect to arrive to
23 a welcome and safe community, but instead are faced
24 with schools who are-- who use punitive practices,
25

1 and the first thing they see are cops. Even when the
2 individual cops are nice, it is still the first thing
3 they see, rather than a counselor, a restorative
4 justice leader or even a family member. Coming into
5 a community like this is very harmful. It creates an
6 unbalanced and unsafe environment, especially for
7 certain students whose home might also use punitive
8 practices. I want more anything. I want more today
9 is to urge you to pass a budget that moves away money
10 from [inaudible] people and towards restorative
11 justice practices, which means funding money to hire
12 school-based restorative justice counselors. This
13 includes youth activism, parent counselors--

14
15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
16 expired.

17 ALEXIS KIRKMAN-PALMER: counselors and
18 social workers. This brings huge support and it
19 engages students to build a safe and welcoming
20 community and acknowledge that's they deserve.
21 Giving students the chance they deserve by hiring
22 more RJ coordinators and using restorative practices
23 in schools would help students continue to grow and
24 create fair ways to reduce problems they have with
25 each other. It would also combat poor attendance and

1
2 prevent bullying. This makes a strong and healthy
3 and safe environment. As a result of students
4 learning restorative practices, students will learn
5 how to deal with problems in a more positive and
6 upright way. This way of learning will stay with the
7 students in a long way and will grow with them as
8 they grow. Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
10 testimony. Next up, Doctor Jennifer Cadenhead.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

12 JENNIFER CADENHEAD: Can you hear me?

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

14 JENNIFER CADENHEAD: Okay. Chair Joseph,
15 members of the City Council Education Committee, and
16 my Council Member Abreu, and your staff, thank you
17 for your service. I'm Doctor Jen Cadenhead, a
18 Research Assistant Professor at the Program of
19 Nutrition at Teacher's College Columbia University
20 and Executive Director of the Laurie M. Tisch Center
21 for Food Education and Policy, and I'm here today
22 because our food system is broken. On any given day
23 in New York City children are bombarded with food
24 marketing and are much more likely to eat junk food
25 than a single serving of fruit and vegetables. They

1
2 are often completely disconnected from real food.
3 Food and nutrition educators have told me that it's
4 not unusual to have students who have no idea that
5 carrots grow in soil and tomatoes grow on a vine, and
6 on average children in New York City are more likely
7 to develop obesity than children in the rest of the
8 United States. I urge you to choose to support food
9 and nutrition education, because the CDC supports it.
10 Most recently obesity guidelines in the American
11 Academy of Pediatrics included it, and we've known
12 for a long time that food and nutrition education is
13 one of the few things that can work to help prevent
14 the learning [sic] rise in childhood obesity as well
15 as the jaw-dropping rate of increases in other diet-
16 related diseases, including Type II diabetes, high
17 blood pressure, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease,
18 anxiety, depression, and these are the same
19 underlying conditions that left children at increased
20 risk of death from COVID. As a Registered Dietician
21 Nutritionist and researcher who studies behavioral
22 nutrition, I know one of the best times to reach
23 people is when they're young. It's even been written
24 in ancient texts, "Train up a child in the way that
25 he needs to go, and when he's old he will not depart

1 from it." We know that children develop their food
2 preferences early in their lives. At the Tisch Food
3 Center, our Food Ed Hub serves as a hub for food and
4 nutrition educators providing them inclusive,
5 evidence-based resources that celebrate New York
6 City's children's' culture, a space for those
7 educators to work through policy issues, a place to
8 advocate for their needs and much more. I've heard a
9 few people brining up cafeteria enhancement. That's
10 some of our research. And we're asking now for
11 schools to enact flexible food and nutrition
12 education programming as well as continued
13 discretionary funding for the Food Ed Hub, and we
14 hope that the City Council more broadly provides
15 additional funds for kitchen ACs which has been
16 mentioned, as well as additional school food
17 employees, pay parity for supervisors, and continue
18 cafeteria enhancements to improve the school meal
19 experience with students. In addition, if New York
20 City Public Schools Administration chooses to expand
21 food and nutrition education curriculum, which we
22 wholeheartedly endorse and can be embedded in
23 reading, science, social studies, and even math, we
24 hope that the Council provide adequate funding to
25

1
2 allow for community stakeholders to participate in
3 the initial stages of development to create
4 culturally-inclusive and responsive curriculum. It
5 can literally--

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
7 expired. Thank you.

8 JENNIFER CADENHEAD: save children's
9 lives [inaudible]. I'm done.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to
11 everyone on the panel. Moving on to our next panel:
12 Nancie Katz, Sara Catalinotto, Deshandy Colmes [sp?],
13 Lupe Hernandez [sp?], Sheree Gibson. On deck: Jean
14 Hahn, Tanesha Grant, Rasha Daba Kaplan [sp?],
15 Kimberly Olsen, Ariel Herrera. Nancie Katz, you may
16 begin your testimony.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

18 NANCIE KATZ: Okay, thank you. Thank
19 you, Council Member Joseph and all of your team
20 there. I know it's been a long day, and it's striking
21 to follow Doctor Cadenhead, because I-- I'm Director
22 of Seeds in the Middle which is a community-based
23 organization in central Brooklyn's low-income, food-
24 insecure neighborhoods. We were named by fourth
25 graders in 2010 just as First Lady Michelle Obama

1 began tilling the soil for her organic garden. At
2 that time in central Brooklyn no one was paying
3 attention to health or nutrition really. It was as
4 shock to PS91 Principal Solomon Long [sp?] that his
5 neighborhood was at the center of the obesity
6 epidemic, but he did know, as your educators did, the
7 negative impact of junk and unhealthy foods on his
8 underserved students, and thus began our journey. A
9 decade later, Seeds in the Middle's post-pandemic
10 focus has been to create student-run farm stands, Hip
11 to be Healthy Café's in the highest-need
12 neighborhoods in partnership with very brave
13 principals who recognized that nutrition and healthy
14 food can vastly improve the quality of life and the
15 academic achievement of their students. I echo many
16 of my colleagues, particularly the Tisch Ed for us
17 today and the people in the nutrition space today,
18 but despite all these good intentions school leaders
19 just don't put food first as a key to success of our
20 most struggling students. And even back in 2009 we
21 started, there was a study that showed that the
22 children who are healthy and get fit score 36 percent
23 higher in test scores. So we know that providing
24 education to low-income students on why to eat fresh
25

1
2 can change the obesity, diabetes, and heart disease
3 epidemic plaguing their communities. And we're
4 deeply grateful to Council Member Joseph and Louis
5 and Council Member Hudson and all of the members who
6 have kindly funded us because we're so small, so that
7 the students themselves can really change and address
8 the shameful food inequity that leads to such high
9 rates of these preventable diseases in our city's
10 black and brown neighborhoods. So we train student
11 Hip to be Healthy Ambassadors as young as seven years
12 old how to run a farm market at their schools, and
13 Hip to be Healthy Cafes where our fresh orange juice
14 is only 50 cents in neighborhoods that have really
15 been systemically cut off from farm-fresh foods and
16 vegetables. It's creative solution powered by
17 willing principles to address endemic food insecurity
18 and health disparities. So, as you may know, there
19 are next to zero farmer's markets year-round in any
20 black or brown neighborhood in the City. We're
21 talking about central Brooklyn, Harlem and the Bronx.
22 The schools with willing local farmers are changing
23 this food health inequity. It's simply injustice and
24 it's simply unfair that it is so inequitable that one
25 side of the city gets everything and the other does

1
2 not. So our vision is to teach the kids food justice
3 and to create a ring of school-run farm stands that
4 effectively erase the food desserts that plague the
5 minority neighborhoods, and we offer this as a model
6 for other cities faced with the same challenges.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired. Thank
8 you.

9 NANCIE KATZ: We have more than 20
10 schools that want us and we're asking for, you know,
11 your support as the Brooklyn delegation across [sic]
12 to provide us with funding so that we can expand
13 these farm stand schools. So thank you very much.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
15 testimony. Next up, Sara Catalinotto?

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

17 SARA CATALINOTTO: Good evening. Parents
18 to Improve School Transportation joins the call for
19 Care not Cuts. We support budget proposals
20 [inaudible] for school bus rights such as \$5 million
21 for foster students, retaining shelter staff who help
22 with metro cards and busing, and electrification so
23 school bus riders, workers, and communities near the
24 depots can breathe. We also want all buses, not just
25 most, in use on the first day of school. But the

1
2 above will not succeed without fully staffed bus
3 routes. Driver shortages due mainly to wage cuts
4 leave kids with double-up routes that make them late
5 and even absent as [inaudible]. We hope you all
6 support Fair Labor contracts to recruit and retain
7 drivers, mechanics, and monitors. The pattern can be
8 set by Nice [sic] Bus, the one nonprofit which used
9 city funds to buy a fleet and is now bargaining with
10 ATU 1181. Likewise, we need more bus paras and
11 nurses. Their contract is directly between the City
12 and UFT. Since pupil transportation mostly uses for-
13 profit vendors, a big cut goes to these owners rather
14 than to service. Resolutions by Manhattan Community
15 Boards Two and Four and several Parent Councils call
16 for expanding the nonprofit model among other things.
17 We want the transportation aspect of the budget
18 analyzed instead of the same cost being replicated
19 yearly with outcomes harmful to education and civil
20 rights. Stop throwing good money after bad. Instead
21 of the overpriced [inaudible] contract for GPS, we
22 could be using the prototype that Nice Bus piloted
23 with Bronx School Moms and staff to generate a text
24 message when bus is five blocks away. Our written
25 statement names other ways to cut waste by creating

1 local inclusive jobs. On the travel training program
2 which we support, last week a travel training student
3 was targeted for his blackness and his autism and
4 assaulted on the subway by other students. This has
5 made some families of IDD youth scared to even apply
6 for the program. In order for Travel Training to
7 reach its potential of building independence and
8 trimming the need for busing, schools must negate the
9 hate. We need all the youth development,
10 social/emotional learning, counseling, and Mosaic we
11 can get. Fully fund basic needs like health and
12 housing until no child is so de-based that they
13 resort to stepping on another to feel powerful. To
14 model respect for students with disabilities, schools
15 can give space to District 75 not to try to change
16 who push our kids away. New York can have treatment
17 and literacy programs--

18
19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
20 expired. Thank you.

21 SARA CATALINOTTO: instead of locking
22 people up who need both. To sum up, good busing is
23 needed now for education, the environment, and public
24 safety. Thank you for inviting us. Good night.

25

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
3 testimony. Lupe Hernandez?

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

5 LUPE HERNANDEZ: Good evening, Chair
6 Joseph. It's Lupe Hernandez. I'm actually going to
7 submit my written testimony, but I will thank you for
8 still being here and listening, and I just want to
9 uplift all the student voices that we heard today.
10 That was extremely powerful and more cultural
11 response to sustaining education. Healing-Centered
12 Schools, I think they brought up the reasons why we
13 need to fully fund our public schools. Thank you so
14 much.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
16 testimony. Next we'll hear from Sheree Gibson.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

18 SHEREE GIBSON: Good evening Chair
19 Joseph, any remaining members of the City Council and
20 your staff. I am Sheree Gibson a very proud Queens
21 parent and education advocate. Most relevant to
22 today's topic, currently serving as a member of DOE's
23 Panel of Education Policy, also known as PEP, but
24 speaking as a parent and advocate now. Thank you for
25 holding this hearing. It is vitally important to the

1
2 process for you and the public to hear from the DOE
3 and SCA for a better understanding of the decisions
4 being made around public education in New York City.
5 Listening to the Chancellor and his cabinet members
6 testify earlier today, it is clear they are
7 entrenched in a scarcity mindset in which we must
8 make trade-offs on programs, curriculum, initiatives
9 even when they are requested, proven, popular, and
10 funded. Chancellor Banks said, "Everything is on the
11 table," when discussing what to fund and what not to.
12 However, everything should not be on the table if we
13 are a system valuing equity. Everything should not
14 be on the table if we are listening to our children,
15 families, and educators who are the primary consumers
16 of this service that should be New York City public
17 schools. We've heard their needs previously, and
18 today, resoundingly and clearly. One curriculum that
19 reflects them, challenges, and expands their
20 knowledge, inclusive of the arts, physical education,
21 and sports opportunity as core to the curriculum, not
22 elective. They've experienced electives getting
23 abolished when funding is cut. Two, teachers, staff,
24 and administrators that look like them. We know
25 representation matters and has a rippling effect that

1
2 impacts more than just learning. Three, services
3 fully funded, effective to meet and surpass the needs
4 of our most special and vulnerable populations.
5 Fourth, school buildings, environmentally sustaining
6 and fully accessible that completely holistically
7 embrace them physically, socially, and emotionally.
8 Five, environmentally sound and modern transportation
9 system, school-based and public that carries them
10 safety, efficiently, respectfully to and from their
11 community and schools. Six, opportunities to explore
12 pathways for college, career, and life in general.
13 Seven, Early Childhood Education openings to provide
14 our youngest minds with space for growth and
15 development. These are broad category needs that
16 allow for plenty of bandwidth and creativity in
17 solving and providing for them. Funding these
18 reflects our values. As a parent, I ask you to
19 reject the scarcity mindset and embrace the abundance
20 of possibilities when we make decisions valuing our
21 children--

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
23 expired.

24 SHEREE GIBSON: and giving them what they
25 need to expand themselves. Thank you.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
3 testimony. Jean Hahn?

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

5 JEAN HAHN: Hi, can you hear me?

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

7 JEAN HAHN: Sorry, I meant to turn my
8 video on, sorry. Okay, hello, Chair Joseph and
9 Committee Members. Thank you for providing this
10 opportunity to speak. My name is Jean Hahn and I'm a
11 public school parent in Queens of a former gifted and
12 talented child with ADHD. I'm also the Co-Founder of
13 a parent advocacy group called Queens Parents United
14 with over 900 members in our Facebook group, and am a
15 Co-Vice President of Place NYC which advocates for
16 accelerated learning. But I'm here today to speak on
17 behalf of my child. She is what is known as twice
18 exceptional. Twice exceptional students, also known
19 as 2E, are commonly among the most under-identified
20 in under-served population in schools because their
21 gifts and disabilities often mask one another. Why
22 this matters is because on a national level the
23 National Education Association states that at least
24 six to seven percent of all students are gifted, and
25 a significant number of these students are 2E. These

1 students can languish academically and skills
2 overlooked if they are not properly supported. They
3 are also at high risk of dropping out of school,
4 having higher factors of suicide, and low self-
5 esteem. Basic organization skills can be a daily
6 struggle. IEP and 504 accommodations are
7 underserviced or not met adding to frustrations. The
8 City's prolonged return to normalcy after COVID has
9 greatly impacted children like mine, the anxieties
10 have worsened, and test scores and grades have
11 flopped, in addition to exacerbated to executive
12 function issues. While the DOE has brought back the
13 Gifted and Talented Program, the program never really
14 satisfactorily addressed the needs of the school. So
15 I would urge Council Members to work with the DOE to
16 better understand the needs of 2E students. Some
17 areas that I believe more supports could be increased
18 are expanded seats for Gifted and Talented Programs
19 that also consider creating a variety of classroom
20 options throughout the boroughs that can better
21 accommodate these students such as increasing the
22 number of GNT ICT classrooms. We need resources and
23 a better way for identifying not only gifted
24 students, but also screen early on for other
25

1
2 exception such as dyslexia, ADHD, autism, etcetera so
3 they are caught early before it is too late.

4 Ideally, screening would be universal and
5 administered to all students. Objective assessments
6 are also critical with this cohort who are often
7 discriminated against for behavioral issues or
8 inattentiveness. We need more resources put towards
9 assisting with informing parents like myself about
10 programs in schools that are better equipped to
11 assist unique needs 2E students may need, rather than
12 having to depend solely on social media networks,
13 which may not always be inclusive of low-income
14 families and those with language barriers. There
15 needs to be more GNT programs at the middle and high
16 school level. 2E students may not always outgrow
17 poor executive functions as their brains develop and
18 thus should not be short-changed along their journey
19 towards college. While honors classes--

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
21 expired. Thank you.

22 JEAN HAHN: are good for [inaudible]
23 instruction, typically those students may not be
24 properly trained, thus a GNT setting would be more
25 conducive for 2E students to thrive. Allocate

1
2 resources towards STEM and STEAM-focused programs as
3 part of the Summer Rising Program and access to high-
4 impact tutoring for all students at all levels in all
5 schools. As a leader in education, New York City
6 should be setting an example and demonstrate that the
7 DOE is serious about supporting all our student
8 populations, including these high-potential students
9 that are not always high-performing. In today's
10 world more than ever, this generation will need
11 strong leaders. Please help these students by
12 providing them with all the support that they can
13 get. Thank you so much.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for
15 your testimony. We will now move on to our next
16 panel: Tanesha Grant, Rasha Dalba Kaplan [sp?],
17 Kimberly Olsen, Ariel Herrera, Shoshana Brown. On
18 deck: Rebecca Park [sp?], Ursula Jung [sp?], Ken Mai
19 Ung [sp?], Akila Thomlison [sp?], Jeremy Kaplan
20 [sp?]. Tanesha Grant, you may begin your testimony.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

22 TANESHA GRANT: Good evening all. Thank
23 you, Chair Joseph, for holding this Preliminary
24 Budget meeting. We really appreciate you. I want to
25 talk as one of the CEJ parent members who worked

1
2 really hard on curriculum education. I want to talk
3 about the things that we are demanding be fully
4 funded in our budget. We need school transportation
5 fully funded. We need social workers, mental
6 healthcare services, school counselors, and
7 psychotherapy fully funded. We need Special
8 Education and all of its services fully funded. We
9 want police out of our schools. Instead, we want
10 Healing-Centered school practices. We want trauma-
11 informed learning and care, not cops. We want fully-
12 - we fully support all of our asylum-seeking
13 children, and we want them to be fully supported
14 entering the public school system. These things and
15 more we are demanding the City Council and Mayor
16 fully fund. Fully fund our children's education. For
17 too long we have come to these meetings and we have
18 testified and we have listened to the Department of
19 Education totally lie and gaslight us and then not
20 even be respectable enough to hear our testimony, the
21 public, on how we feel, but yet they tell us that
22 they work with community-based organizations. As the
23 Executive Director of Parents Supporting Parents New
24 York that fill in these gaps every day to take care
25 of our school community, I can tell you that that is

1
2 a lie. I can tell you that I have been told about
3 Project Pivot a couple of times, but yet I have never
4 been contacted. So again, when they talk about that
5 they work with the community, that is totally untrue,
6 because I was one of the founding parents of
7 Culturally-responsive Education. I am an expert in
8 score cards. I know how culturally destructive all
9 of this curriculum is. So when we talk about
10 comprehension and we talk about our children not
11 reading, it's because they are not seeing what they--
12 who they are and their culture reflected in what they
13 are reading. So comprehension is a big part of the
14 reason that our children are failing at reading, and
15 that is on the Department of Education. That is on
16 the teachers. That is on the Administration, and
17 that is on City Council. As a constituent, as a
18 hard-working black mother of this city, as someone
19 who fights for our children every day, I am simply
20 asking that the City Council and the Mayor fully fund
21 our public schools and fight just as hard as every
22 parent does that stayed on this call until 9:35 and
23 beyond to testify and get their voice on record,
24 because this is how important it is to our school
25 community and to our families. Thank you for

1 listening to me, and I look forward to working with
2 you to make sure that our schools get the funding
3 that they deserve, that they have been denied for too
4 many decades. There is-- it is time to fully fund our
5 children and it is time to stop giving--

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
8 expired.

9 TANESHA GRANT: [inaudible] excuses.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Tanesha.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
12 testimony. Next up, Kimberly Olsen.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

14 KIMBERLY OLSEN: First, a huge thank you
15 to Chair Joseph, fellow Committee Members, as well as
16 to the Council staff. We are so grateful for your
17 passion, your leadership, and also your support of
18 arts in our schools. My name is Kimberly Olsen, and
19 I am the Executive Director of the New York City Arts
20 in Education Roundtable. We work with thousands of
21 arts educators and cultural organizations to support
22 culturally-responsive, trauma-informed arts education
23 across the five boroughs. Transforming our city
24 schools starts with the arts. Arts instruction and
25 afterschool arts programming provide evidence-based

1 solutions for engaging our students in learning,
2 increasing parent involvement, improving academic
3 outcomes, supporting student mental health, and
4 promoting wellbeing. Chancellor Banks noted this
5 morning that 90 percent of the money, roughly \$450
6 million dollars that the New York City public schools
7 spend on arts education comes from individual school
8 budgets. This shows there's some investment in arts
9 education, that it's happening, but it's inconsistent
10 across our system and there are still hundreds of
11 schools that are out of compliance with state-
12 mandated arts learning requirements. As of December
13 2021, 66 percent of middle schoolers aren't meeting
14 these New York State arts requirements, a recurring
15 statistic, 17 percent of schools still lack a
16 certified arts teacher altogether, and almost 30
17 percent of schools no longer partner with an arts and
18 cultural organization. I'll note we're also still
19 waiting for updated data on our most recent school
20 year to learn about the state of the arts in our
21 schools as we eagerly await the delayed release of
22 our city's annual reporting tool, the Arts in Schools
23 Report. We want inviting, colorful, vibrant,
24 thriving school communities, and that starts with the
25

1 arts. The Roundtable recommends that the City makes
2 sure that all schools can provide required arts
3 instruction to all students by guaranteeing that the
4 per-capita funding intended for arts education goes
5 to arts education, ensuring that all schools have at
6 least one certified arts teacher, and bringing back
7 the successful supplementary certification pilot
8 program which enabled cluster teachers to earn their
9 arts content certification, continuing and increasing
10 funding to \$6 million dollars for the Supports for
11 Arts Instruction Initiative established this year by
12 the City Council, restore the baseline funding of \$24
13 million dollars for arts services that was cut during
14 the pandemic. And lastly, improve data transparency
15 by releasing this year's Arts in Schools Report and
16 the accompanying school-to-school data breakdown. As
17 New York City public schools recover from the
18 pandemic and reimagine the student experience, the
19 City should establish realistic, equitable foundation
20 for arts instruction in every school to support
21 pathways to a bright, bold future for all. Thank you
22 so much for your time and consideration.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much,
25 Kimberly.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next up, Ariel
3 Herrera.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

5 ARIEL HERRERA: Thank you for the
6 opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Ariel
7 Herrera and I am the Research and Advocacy Manager
8 for Dance NYC, a service organization advancing the
9 interest of the dance industry in the metropolitan
10 New York City area through action-oriented research
11 and advocacy. Dance NYC joins in calling advocates
12 and thanking you for your leadership and calling on
13 you to ensure adequate funding and support for arts
14 and dance education in our schools. We request the
15 following: continue and increase the Fiscal Year
16 2023 citywide supports for Arts Instruction
17 Initiative funding from \$3 million dollars to \$6
18 million dollars Fiscal Year 2024. Allocate \$30
19 million dollars in funding to ensure that every
20 school has at least one certified arts teacher in
21 compliance with state requirements. Restore baseline
22 funding of \$24 million dollars for arts services that
23 has been cut at the onset of the pandemic. And last
24 but not least, ensure that schools spend funding
25 intended for arts education in arts education and

1 that schools comply with state-mandated arts learning
2 standards. As our colleagues at the New York City
3 Arts in Education Roundtable like to remind us, it
4 starts with the arts. Arts education is the
5 foundation for success in school and life and should
6 be an essential part of every child's education.
7 Arts education not only improve academic performance
8 of students, but also supports their social and
9 emotional wellbeing while fostering creativity and
10 critical thinking. Dance therapy in particular is
11 used to promote emotional, cognitive, and physical
12 integration, and has been found to be especially
13 beneficial to people with chronic diseases. Arts
14 education is key to producing future generations of
15 cultural leaders, artists, and passionate supporters
16 with key knowledge and appreciation of the arts. New
17 York City is an arts and culture capital in the
18 world, and the creative industry is a major economic
19 engine contributing as much as 30 percent of New York
20 City's economic output with dance contributing over
21 \$300 million dollars annually. There's no dance
22 industry without dance education. There's no
23 Broadway without dance education. The city
24 government must invest back its fair share in arts
25

1
2 education to more equitably reflect the arts and
3 culture sector role in the City's economy and impact
4 on the quality of life for all New Yorkers. Thank
5 you and good night.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for
7 your testimony. Shoshana Brown [sp?]?

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

9 SHOSHANA BROWN: Good evening Committee
10 Chair Joseph. My name is Shoshana Brown and I'm a
11 New Yorker residing in the Bronx who supports Care
12 Not Cuts and a People's Budget. I'm really grateful
13 for your time and attention today. I've also been
14 with you here since 9:00 a.m. So I've been on Zoom.
15 So I appreciate you being in the chambers and
16 sticking it out to hear this important testimony.
17 I've been opposed to the deep cuts and lack of
18 investment proposed by Mayor Adams in this budget and
19 previous budgets. I want to share that I'm a school
20 social worker, and I was working the Bronx, my home
21 borough in District 8, one of the poorest
22 neighborhoods in this country, and also the
23 neighborhood with the worst health outcomes in the
24 state. I was working as a restorative justice dean
25 and social worker. We've talked a lot about

1
2 restorative justice tonight, and the Commissioner
3 asked us to highlight what's working. Well,
4 restorative justice deaning [sic] and restorative
5 justice coordinators, as a social worker filling that
6 role, that was working until the first cuts in
7 education came in 2020 and found me exsessed from the
8 school. Not two years later, Mayor Adams' exsessed
9 me again from yet another school, twice exsessed.
10 Budget cuts forced principals to choose between
11 Special Education teachers and social workers like me
12 and other terrible choices, binding them into
13 generating a hierarchy of need wherein the most
14 vulnerable of our students will always lose. The
15 system of principals having a final say how they
16 allocate funding and distribute budget cuts allowed
17 the leadership of this Administration who we heard
18 from today to absolve themselves of guilt,
19 particularly since the small school movement which
20 powered this process moved the power from the DOE
21 central to the principal, and this was all designed
22 in part by First Deputy Chancellor Dan Weisberg.
23 These cuts further traumatize young people without
24 stability, since oftentimes school relationships can
25 be some of the most stable and reliable relationships

1
2 young people have. Not only was it traumatic for
3 students to necessarily shift their service provider,
4 it was traumatic for me as a worker. Never being
5 sure if my job was secure meant that for the last few
6 years I was hesitant to invest in a school community,
7 fearing I would just be discarded again and cause
8 more irreparable harm to the young people. This is
9 all despite having tenure and job security. It means
10 that I wasn't afforded time to invest in building
11 community to properly provide social work services.
12 This turmoil has ultimately led to me resigning from
13 the DOE because of the instability and uncertainty
14 year after year of being--

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
16 expired.

17 SHOSHANA BROWN: [inaudible] as a worker.
18 I refuse to keep being a pawn and blamed when
19 students experience trauma and do not trust their
20 service providers. So I beg for you to continue
21 pushing, and I really appreciate how you held them to
22 the fire, and we all saw how they didn't actually
23 answer your questions. They didn't come prepared to
24 actually engage with the Council and what we're
25

1
2 demanding as the people. Thank you so much for
3 hearing me.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank
5 you for hanging in there with me.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to
7 everyone on the panel. Our next and final panel:
8 Rebecca Park, Ursula Jung [sp?], Khin Mai Aung, Akyla
9 Tomlinson, Jeremy Kaplan [sp?]. Rebecca Park, you
10 may begin your testimony.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

12 REBECCA PARK: Good evening Chair Joseph
13 and Committee Members. My name is Rebecca Park. I'm
14 a New Yorker from Brooklyn who supports Care Not Cuts
15 and the People's Budget. I'm also a seventh-year
16 public schools teacher who cares deeply about my
17 students. I'm strongly opposed to another \$600
18 million of cuts on top of the cuts from last year,
19 and it is unconscionable that-- I mean incredible
20 students and educators and family members all day
21 have had to spend time defending our schools from
22 cuts. One of the places the DOE is proposing cutting
23 money is from partnership organizations like
24 principals discussed earlier. I want to echo their
25 ideas that those kinds of organizations are what

1 makes schools like mine thrive. I work at Leaders
2 High School and with the partnership of the
3 Performance Center's Consortium. We have [inaudible]
4 in training to support students in pursuing their own
5 interests, developing passions, and showing their
6 learning in an authentic college and career-ready
7 way. The consortium supports teachers in using our
8 creativity and expertise to develop engaging
9 curriculum. With a partnership of New York City
10 Outward Bound Schools we have a strong advisory
11 system that supports student belonging which is so
12 crucial during this time, gives them opportunities to
13 learn outside of the classroom that broadens
14 students' perspectives and enables them to build a
15 community together. For teachers and administrators,
16 we're part of a network for professional development
17 and shared best practices. Cuts to these
18 organizations are forcing our schools to have to pay
19 for them themselves would devastate our community and
20 our ability to serve our students. I am so proud of
21 my students and my colleagues. We work hard every
22 day and are doing amazing things with the already
23 reduced resources we have, and we are all aware of
24 what could be possible if we had the resources we
25

1
2 deserved rather than short-sided cruel cuts. One of
3 the most insidious impacts of the continued
4 divestment is on our students' sense of self-worth. I
5 teach 12th graders and they see and feel what our
6 schools provide less. They internalize it. They
7 think they're not getting these resources because
8 they're not smart enough, because they're not rich,
9 and as a government teacher I am outraged and
10 concerned by the way we are teaching them not to have
11 faith in their government and public institutions to
12 serve them or listen to them. my colleagues and I
13 are doing everything we can to make up for two years
14 of disrupted learning and disrupted community, but we
15 need our schools to be able to hire counselors and
16 social workers, Special Education teachers and
17 English language learner teachers, arts teachers, and
18 restorative justice coordinators, all the things that
19 we've been hearing all day and I've seen firsthand
20 improves student achievement, long-term success,
21 mental health, and belonging. During quarantine we
22 were called heroes, and now the city is turning their
23 backs on us and their students. The idea that our
24 schools could improve and do more with less resource
25 does not make sense. If you care about our students,

1
2 our communities, and our city's future, the Mayor and
3 the Council with neither propose nor approve cuts to
4 our schools. Parents and educators are paying
5 attention and we are here to fight these cuts. Thank
6 you so much.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
8 testimony. Next up, Ursula Jung [sp?].

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

10 URSULA JUNG: Thank you for having me
11 Chair Joseph and the lovely lady next to you who
12 stayed here going strong at 13 hours 48 minutes.
13 Thank you for giving me the chance to speak at what
14 is arguably the most important committee in town,
15 given that it deals with the DOE which has the
16 largest share of the budget of the City that has the
17 largest budget in the country. My name is Ursula
18 Jung, and I'm here speaking merely as a parent in New
19 York City [inaudible]-- I'm adding the merely because
20 there was a long list of very distinguished speakers
21 that have gone before me all day. And a lot of the
22 focus today has been on how much money is being cut
23 and the programs that are being cut, and while that
24 is true, I would like to flip the focus at the end of
25 the day and spend my two minutes on pointing out how

1
2 many programs the DOE pays for that could be cut, and
3 how many are in fact stopped midway, losing a lot of
4 taxpayer dollars with none of the anticipated gains.
5 Council Member Dinowitz spoke about the DESSA
6 assessment for example which was implemented
7 haphazardly. It was bought by the DOE for over \$18
8 million dollars, not to mention the cost of training
9 the teachers to administer it. The Mosaic curriculum
10 which was also referenced earlier today cost over
11 \$200 million dollars and was scrapped halfway through
12 implementation. As frightening as wasting dollars
13 are, I would also like to draw your attention to the
14 fact that none of these programs discuss or are used
15 to address real learning loss and dropping academic
16 standards in our students. We need objective
17 measures of progress for all students, including the
18 ones that are getting left behind, maybe especially
19 the ones that are getting left behind, but ironically
20 objective tests are considered more flawed than
21 subjective assessments. We have principals that
22 openly discourage families not to take state tests.
23 We have talk of moving away from Regents in New York
24 City or grading them within schools where there is
25 clear evidence that this results in inaccurate

1 scores. Screens, that's considered a bad word.
2 We're teaching kids that taking tests is inherently
3 wrong in some way, when in fact, what we should be
4 focusing on is preparing them for these situations.
5 Tests only shine the light on the magnitude of the
6 problem, and if we refuse to address the problem, how
7 can we work towards finding a solution? Last year,
8 in 2022, 86.9 percent of black students who took the
9 New York State test for math were not proficient.
10 This is a travesty. What is going to take to start
11 talking about that? Thank you.
12

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much
14 for your testimony. Duly noted on all your
15 recommendations. Thank you. And thank you for
16 hanging with me, too.

17 URSULA JUNG: I can't believe you're
18 still here.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Our next panelist
20 will be Khin Mai Aung.

21 KHIN MAI AUNG: Thank you so much Chair
22 Joseph, Education Committee staff, and other
23 committee members for your stamina and attention to
24 all of these rich issues we've heard today. I'm Khin
25 Mai Aung, the Executive Director of Generation

1
2 Citizen New York. We have an Action Civic curriculum
3 in which secondary students apply social studies
4 learning to the real world by studying and advocating
5 on issues of importance in their school and
6 communities. Generation Citizen is very thankful for
7 the Council's \$500,000 investment this year in our
8 programming and civic education through the Civics
9 Education in New York City Schools Initiative. In
10 Fiscal Year 24 we're seeking an increase of \$100,000
11 for a grant of \$600,000 to support our significant
12 and continued expansion throughout New York City over
13 the past few years. Over the past two years we've
14 experienced tremendous demand for our programming,
15 allowing us to expand from 70 classes in Fiscal Year
16 21 to almost 150 classes in Fiscal Year 22, and over
17 230 classes in the current Fiscal Year 23. This
18 constitutes currently about 5,750 students throughout
19 all five boroughs. Our project-based learning
20 curriculum allows students to connect with each other
21 and their communities supporting middle and high
22 schoolers, social/emotional learning, and culturally-
23 responsive and sustaining education. Interest in our
24 programming has boomed as students seek to support--
25 schools seek to support students social and emotional

1
2 learn [sic] and community needs, as we graduate and
3 emerge from the pandemic and transition gradually
4 back to "normal" in-person programming for the last
5 few years. And we achieved this unprecedented
6 through systemic partnerships with school districts
7 and networks, in particular District 24 in Queens,
8 the Harlem Renaissance Education pipeline, the Urban
9 Assembly School Network, the New Visions for Public
10 Schools Network, and CUNY Medgar Evers, and through
11 these partnerships we're creating communities of
12 practice that can collaborate across networks for
13 mutual support. And in order to sustain and expand
14 these partnerships, we hope to have sufficient funds
15 and capacity to do so. this year, our students
16 advocated on a wide range of issues, including
17 school-based campaigns like ensuring equitable
18 allocation of space in collocated schools and other
19 collocation issues, as well as advocating for school
20 lunch options, healthier school lunch options,
21 including last year we were so happy to be able to
22 work with Education Committee for some of our middle
23 school students in Queens to be able to advocate on
24 their advocacy for Halal school food options, which
25 has now become a reality thanks in small part to the

1
2 work of this Committee and you, Chair Joseph. Other
3 campaigns this year have focused on community
4 concerns like increasing protections for low-wage
5 workers, the lack of affordable housing in our city,
6 the need to curb litter on our streets, controlling
7 crime in our subways, and addressing racism and
8 discrimination against Asian Americans. We thank you
9 for your continued support. We thank you for your
10 attention and stamina today to hear about all of
11 these rich issues that I've actually also enjoyed
12 learning about what fellow advocates are working on.
13 So, keep up the good work.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, and thank
15 you for your partnership. One of my favorite orgs.
16 Thank you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
18 testimony. Next up Akyla Tomlinson.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

20 AKYLA TOMLINSON: Hi. Can you guys hear
21 me and see me? Okay, I think you can--

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: [interposing] Yes.

23 AKYLA TOMLINSON: see me, because I can
24 see myself. Okay. Thank you guys for your patience
25 and also for your stamina and just remaining on here.

1
2 You guys are going at what, 13 hours I think someone
3 said, and that's pretty impressive because my brain
4 like taps out at eight hours. But anyways, my name
5 is Akyla Tomlinson and thank you for having me here
6 today. I am a member of Freedom Agenda and the
7 Campaign to Close Rikers. Today I want to emphasize
8 the importance of investing in our New York City
9 public schools, especially those in communities of
10 color and low-income communities. Educational
11 achievement and college completion are critical to
12 ending cycles of divestment and incarceration
13 disproportionately impacting our communities. In
14 order for students to succeed, it is our job to give
15 students the tools necessary to do so. For example,
16 the City needs to increase the ratio of social
17 workers to students, implement transformative and
18 restorative justice initiatives to replace punitive
19 justice, and allocate increased funding to support
20 extended hours programming which include access to
21 libraries, art programs, financial literacy, and
22 sports. As someone who was diagnosed with ADHD in
23 the fourth grade, I understand the importance of
24 attending school equipped with the necessary
25 resources to help succeed. There are many children

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2 that have either diagnosed or undiagnosed learning
3 disabilities who are currently having a difficult
4 time productively learning in a classroom. Our
5 public schools with the resources they have cannot
6 currently give students the individualized attention
7 and range of activities they need. For too many New
8 York City students, their families cannot afford the
9 extra support. A department that received the most
10 bloated funding is the Department of Corrections. In
11 2021, New York City spent almost three times more per
12 incarcerated person in the second-most expensive jail
13 system in the country. More than \$556,000 per
14 incarcerated person per year, yet people in DOC
15 custody are subjected to some of the worst jail
16 conditions in the nation. We propose that the City
17 decrease funding, the aforementioned DOC budget, and
18 invest more in education in schools. Now more than
19 ever our public schools need additional funding.
20 Failure to reinvest in education in schools result in
21 continued harm to those students growing up in
22 marginalized communities. Community investments will
23 help the City close Rikers by resourcing New Yorkers
24 and their communities with adequate educational
25 resources before they interact with the criminal

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2 legal system. We need you to urge the Mayor to
3 reinvest in the communities that need the investments
4 the most and make our communities and city truly
5 safer and equitable. Thank you for your time.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
7 testimony. Next up, Jeremy Kaplan.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

9 JEREMY KAPLAN: Hi, how are you doing? I
10 guess I'm the last person for tonight. Is that
11 correct?

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: No, but you may
13 begin.

14 JEREMY KAPLAN: Great. Hi, I'm Jeremy
15 Kaplan. I'm a parent in Sunset Park. I have a child
16 in 4K, and yeah, I'm here-- first of all I want to
17 say that this panel has had some incredible youth
18 speak out, and I want to highlight that and highlight
19 the fact that we should be listening to them and
20 uplifting that they're talking about, you know, \$5
21 million dollars, \$200 million dollars for food, and
22 just it demonstrates the need for us to really fund
23 this and that, you know, seeing teenagers coming out
24 of their day and waiting hours to just talk about,
25 you know, food necessities or getting a ride for

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2 foster care children. It just shows the need to
3 fully fund this, to fight as much as hard as
4 possible, and not have the same sort of budget issues
5 like last year. And I know-- I trust, you know,
6 Chair Joseph, and I know some of my other Council
7 Members in the Progressive Caucus are fighting
8 against these cuts, and I hope we don't have what
9 happened last year. I'm here to talk about-- to
10 uplift the 941, Jennifer Gutiérrez's new bill for
11 childcare. I think this is incredibly essential.
12 Childcare is providing a shot in the arm for parents
13 where the City is getting inexp-- so expensive that
14 people can't live here anymore, and the thought of,
15 you know, having even one kid is daunting for people,
16 having multiple kids is impossible. And you know,
17 we see basically the loops and hoops that people are
18 jumping through just to pay for childcare, and so I
19 think this has to be essential. This has to be a
20 part of the budget this year. This has to be a goal
21 that we fight for. It was one of the best legacies
22 that the deBlasio mayorship had was that, you know,
23 rolling out the first 3k. We can do better. There's
24 gaps in it. The pay parity, you know, the issues
25 with payments have been keep coming up. Those need

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2 to be fixed. But this is really a great program. I
3 think everybody knows that. I think we need to put
4 the money towards it. We need to make sure that
5 Mayor Eric Adams knows that. If he wants to get
6 stuff done, this is the thing to get done. And I'm
7 tired of sort of hearing about how we have so much
8 money for developers, so much money to subsidize a
9 lot of people who don't really need it, and everyone
10 talks about caring for the youth, and at the end of
11 the day, put the money towards the youth. Start with
12 childcare. Get a solid foundation. And also, this
13 is childcare that're really setting up people to love
14 education. My kid who's in 4K right now loves
15 school. We're getting kids to love school from the
16 get-go so that school is not seen as a place that's
17 just sort of, you know, that you have to check in,
18 that you know,--

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
20 expired.

21 JEREMY KAPLAN: you're there but it's
22 actually something that they desperately love. They
23 love to be there with their friends. It just sets
24 them off so well, you know, to start with
25 kindergarten and to get into school and see school

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2 and learning s this joyful thing, as this place where
3 you really have experiences of dance, art, all this
4 creative stuff. So, yeah, I just feel like we have
5 to push as much as we can for 941, and also just, you
6 know, want to uplift everyone who has said some
7 beautiful stuff around what we should be funding and
8 that we should not be cutting anything. And thank
9 you so much. This is such a long hearing. I
10 appreciate you, Chair Joseph, for constantly, you
11 know, asking questions and being a part of everything
12 and listening and hearing everybody out. And yeah, I
13 hope you get the work done. Fight against these cuts
14 and get a budget that, you know, the future can be
15 proud of that our kids are in good hands. So I
16 appreciate it, and let's fight for that future.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for
19 your testimony, and thank you to everyone on the
20 panel. Will the person logged on Zoom with the 917
21 phone number please come off mute and state your
22 name? Please state your name.

23 CARLENE: Yes, hello. Thank you very
24 much. My name is Carlene [inaudible]. Thank you so
25 much for giving me the opportunity--

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: [interposing] Sorry,
3 could you state your name? Sorry, could you state
4 your name again?

5 CARLENE: surely. My first name is
6 Carlene and my last name is Rapier Green [sic].

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin your
8 testimony.

9 CARLENE: Thank you. Thank you so much.
10 Again, my name is Carlene Rapier [inaudible]. I live
11 in Brooklyn in District 18. I'm a single mom to my
12 four-year-old son Aiden. I'm here today to ask that
13 you make sure that the budget includes increased
14 funding for preschool special education evaluation
15 and services. The preschool years is just such a
16 crucial time for learning and it sets the foundation
17 for the academic success, and preschoolers like my
18 son shouldn't have to wait for the services that they
19 so desperately need. My son attends a Department of
20 Ed Pre-K program. Per his IEP he's mandated to
21 receive a [inaudible] he gets special education
22 teachers 10 hours a week, occupational therapy, and
23 speech therapy. Although the Department of Ed
24 promised teachers to work with him at the start of
25 the year, the teachers stopped working in February,

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2 and the Department of Ed has not been able to find a
3 replacement. I'm very concerned about my son's
4 academic progress without the support of a special
5 education teacher. He relies on the special
6 education teacher to help him things like such as
7 integrating the general education classrooms that
8 reinforces skills that are taught and developing
9 relationships with his peers. Since the [inaudible]
10 has left, I've seen him struggling the last few weeks
11 without the support of that teacher. Unfortunately,
12 I know my son's story is not unique. I've heard
13 according to the Department of Ed data that there's
14 one in four children with IEPs in 3K and Pre-K that
15 do not receive their full mandated services by the
16 end of 2020 to 2021, at the end of that school year.
17 In other words, like Aiden there are thousands of
18 preschoolers who are waiting for the services that
19 they need and are not receiving it, and hence, in
20 violation of their legal rights. In summary, I
21 joined the Advocates for Children in asking that you
22 ensure that the budget also adds at least \$50 million
23 dollars to provide preschoolers with the necessary
24 evaluations and mandated preschool special education
25 services that so that young children such as my son

1 Aiden get the services that they need to learn and
2 prepare them for kindergarten and beyond. Thank you.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: thank you so much for
4 your testimony. Next up, Rasheedah Brown Harris.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

6 RASHEEDAH BROWN HARRIS: Thank you. Hey,
7 y'all. Please and blessing. Rasheedah Brown Harris,
8 my pronouns are she/her/hers. Chair Joseph, thank
9 you, all the Council Members here. As the Chair of
10 the Education Committee, I thought that I'd share
11 with you and all the other Council Members what a
12 Parent Healing Ambassador is. A Parent Healing
13 Ambassador is a title that a Parent Leader got-- it
14 was launched through a program post-COVID, COVID-19
15 pandemic, and rolled out as a pilot in the DOE. A
16 Parent Healing Ambassador, first of all, is someone
17 who understands the importance of getting on their
18 own healing journey, someone who will lead healing
19 sessions within their school community, find ways to
20 support, champion, and advance trauma-responsive
21 education practices, and trauma-informed care within
22 their household, communities and schools, someone who
23 approaches Healing Centered practices and provide
24 resources within their school community with true
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2 fidelity and support, someone who learns and
3 understands and shares with their community what it
4 means to practice and prioritize mindfulness moments,
5 restorative justice, and healing-centered practices,
6 someone who supports their school community knowing
7 that community is exactly that, community, building
8 and/or rebuilding relationships, supporting the
9 school environment where the school staff, all the
10 school staff, sees and hears our students, the
11 parents, as well as each other, where the school
12 staff-- all the school staff members-- listens, talks
13 to, respects and protects our students and the
14 parents and each other. Someone who creates space
15 where their fellow parent can connect and build
16 community, can share stories, support and resources.
17 Someone who advocates for culturally-responsive
18 sustaining education, anti-bias, and anti-racist work
19 and language justice, diversity, and inclusion and
20 equity in our schools. Someone who is constantly
21 getting a deeper dive in training to gain the
22 knowledge and understanding of ways to support mental
23 health wellness, crisis intervention tactics, and
24 social/emotional wellness mechanisms. A Parent
25 Healing Ambassador and the Healing-Centered Schools

1 supports and advocates for whole school change, which
2 is a true healing transformation in our schools.

3 Everyone is talking about restorative justice and
4 mental health wellness-- we cannot do this work in

5 silos. We cannot get training, professional

6 development and resources for school staff only and

7 not include the parents and caregivers in this

8 process. We talk about parent engagement. We talk

9 about violence and bullying and respect for all in

10 our schools, but we aren't collectively discussing

11 what that truly means in our school with everyone at

12 the table, and everyone means school staff, students,

13 parents, and community members. The only way we can

14 all heal together is to do it together. The Healing-

15 Centered Schools Working Group has a community road

16 map which is a step-by-step guide on how to transform

17 your school to a Healing-Centered School. As a

18 parent I see and I know this work works, and how it

19 must be a collective. Chancellor Banks wants to

20 reimagine schools. We need Healing-Centered Schools.

21 It's a nontraditional holistic way to remedy what has

22 failed us and our babies for all so long. We need

23 Healing-Centered Schools now--

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time has expired.

RASHEEDAH BROWN HARRIS: Peace and blessings. Thank y'all so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for your testimony. Now, per protocol, I will be naming every person that testified that hasn't showed up. If you hear your name and you wish to testify, please use the raise hand function in Zoom, and we will unmute you. Starting with Vidal Valentine [sp?], Wesley, Emily Marchese [sp?], Faith Bayhum [sp?], Danielle Guindo [sp?], Marcus Clander [sp?], Nikos Papageorgiou, Kashik Dask [sp?] or Kush [sp?], and Chloe Pashman [sp?] for in-person. Do we have any hands raised? I will now call on people who registered to testify virtually: Karen Alferd [sp?], Michael Day, Elise Golden [sp?], Laney Hamson [sp?], Michael Vrans [sp?], Rebecca Charles, Lesley Armstrong [sp?], Linda Mochet [sp?], Brian Cohen [sp?], Andrea Alejandra Ortiz [sp?], Stara Green [sp?], Annie Minguez Garcia [sp?], Maria Ramos Esparanza [sp?], Chauncy T. Young [sp?], Derwin Green [sp?], Elizabeth Bird [sp?], Marisol Casenera Salgado [sp?], Naomi Chow [sp?], Denise K. Harper Richardson

1 [sp?], Kiery Saurus [sp?], Kristin Cahill [sp?],
2 Shaun Rice [sp?], Mary Pendergast [sp?], Natasha
3 Capers, Ayla Malik [sp?], Tamara Dawson [sp?],
4 Deshandy Combs [sp?], Mark Gonsolvas [sp?], Kush Das
5 [sp?], Shian Quoc [sp?], Greg Morris, Rasha Dalba
6 Kaplan [sp?], Danny J. Rivera, Ashley Palagucci
7 [sp?], Yuan Carlos Tacero [sp?], Lucy Sexton, Jocelyn
8 Veneo DeFritas [sp?], Nicholas Shearman [sp?], Yao
9 Ling [sp?] Michael Lee, Madeline Alfenbein [sp?],
10 Gavin Healey [sp?], Elise Benusa [sp?], Tory Kaso,
11 Courtney Epton [sp?], Juan Calcutta [sp?], and Alex
12 Stein. If you have registered to testify or
13 interested in testifying and you have not been called
14 on, please use the raise hand function in Zoom and we
15 will unmute you. Seeing no hands, I will turn it
16 back to Chair Joseph.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for
19 everyone that testified, and this closes out our
20 hearing. Thank you.

21 [gavel]

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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 April 15, 2023