

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION, jointly with the  
COMMITTEE ON MENTAL HEALTH, DISABILITIES, AND  
ADDICTION

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CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION, jointly with the  
COMMITTEE ON MENTAL HEALTH, DISABILITIES, AND  
ADDICTION

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16<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR

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HONORABLE LINDA LEE,  
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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

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Dr. Carrie Shockley  
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Gutman Community College, CUNY

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

Christopher Skylar

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SERGEANT PATUVI: This is a microphone check for the Committee of Higher Education jointly with Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction, recorded by Natalie Patuvi (SP?) on November 2, 2022.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon, and welcome to today's New York City Council Hearing for the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction jointly with Higher Education. If you wish to submit testimony, you may at [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). At this time, please silence all electronic devices. Chairs, we are ready to begin.

[GAVEL]

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Council Member Eric Dinowitz, Chair of the Committee on Higher Education. Welcome to our joint hearing with the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction, Chaired by my friend, Chair, Council, Chair Linda Lee.

Today's oversight hearing is titled accommodations for, for college students with disabilities and we'll be focusing a lot of our attention on college students at the City University of New York since that's the jurisdiction of, of my

Committee. However, a bill that I've introduced recently, and that we'll be discussing in the hearing, uh, Intro 660, would require the Mayor's Office of People with Disabilities to establish a program to help high school students with disabilities who are graduating in the current school year to obtain accommodations at institutions of higher education, not just at CUNY.

As part of such a program, uh, the Mayor's Office of People with Disabilities would develop and implement a system of shared information with institution about students' special education services and would also provide students with student advocates for related supports. Uh, we're fortunate today to be joined by the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction and MOPD to discuss this bill and its impact on young New Yorkers and on New York City institutions.

Uh, those of you who know me, uh, won't be surprised by my bill which comes from my heart and, and my experience. Um, if you know me, you know I spent almost 14 years as a public-school special education teacher in our high schools. Um, and, you

know, everything I always said is I would bring their stories and their experiences with me, uh, to City Hall. That's 14 years of experiences with students with disabilities in our high schools.

Uh, and that's exactly what I'm doing with this bill. This bill puts in place the assistance that many of them need to transition smoothly into institutions of higher education and will now help future students get the accommodations and support services they need to excel in college courses and in college life.

Unlike K-12 students with disabilities, college students are expected to advocate for themselves, to work with college staff and Offices of Disability Services to explain what would help them to, to succeed and to find and submit all of the documentation that's required for getting those services.

Making the transition to college is hard enough as it is for students, and making that specific transition, um, is a tall order for a lot of our high school seniors, uh, who need, who need, very much need the support and I, I want to make sure that all

of our high school seniors with disabilities in New York City have some help in doing that from now on.

We look forward to this hearing to learning more about CUNY's programs for meeting the needs of students with disabilities. We will learn about CUNY's outreach procedures for identifying and assisting perspective and newly enrolled students who might be available for accommodations. We'll learn about the kinds of accommodations and other services that CUNY students are provided including through special programs like CUNY LEADS, CUNY Unlimited, uh, and Project REACH.

Uh, we want to make sure that CUNY's programs are serving all populations of CUNY students equitably, especially students of color, English language learners, and low-income students. Uh, we want to hear about the success rates for CUNY students with disabilities, retention, graduation, employment, and finally, we want to identify any gaps in the accommodations and other services available to college students with disabilities in New York City and learn how the Council could better support efforts to close those gaps.



Um, and what's especially important in this hearing, is to explicitly state that not all disabilities are visible. And many times, people from the outside looking into populations of people with disabilities think wheelchair. But it's so much more comprehensive than a physical disability. Many disabilities are invisible. In my career, I dealt with many students with learning and emotional challenges, speech-language, speech, speech needs, other OT needs, other things that are not apparent directly to people who are trying to provide the services in the first place. And it's very important that as we go through this hearing, um, that we talk about those comprehensively and with the understanding that we cannot always see or know right away from an outside perspective, who has a disability, who needs an accommodation, and who needs other supports, uh, and, and the other conversations about universal design and all that.

And now, um, I want to turn it over to, uh, I want to turn it over to Chair Lee, uh, to give her opening, to give her opening statement.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Thank you, Chair Dinowitz. Um, and I will keep it brief cause a lot of what he said is what I wanted to say as well. Um, but, uh, as he mentioned, my name's Linda Lee, uh, Chair of the Mental Health, Disabilities and Addictions Committee, so I'm very proud to be co-chairing, um, today's hearing, um, with my colleague, as well as, uh, being a co-sponsor for Intro 60, oo, 660, my bad.

Um, I also want to recognize, we have, uh, joining with us today, our colleagues Council Member Bottcher as well as Council Member Abreu, um, who have joined us and so, thank you both for being here as well. Um, and so, as we know a lot of times, um, you know, the, the students that, that have, uh, with disabilities are eligible to receive accommodations and services tailored to their needs, um, according to federal law. But I think, um, the reason why we're here today is because we want to understand, um, what the gaps are as well as what the challenges are from the transition from when they're in, um, grade school growing up into high school and then transitioning into college.

Um, and I think one of the biggest challenges and, um, changes in terms of my understanding is that they have to request the accommodations on their own and, um, it's on the students' responsibilities and on their shoulders to request the accommodations and advocate for themselves. And seeing that we have an amazing institution in our City as, such as CUNY, um, and as Chair, um, as Chair Dinowitz had mentioned, CUNY LEADS, Project REACH, CUNY Unlimited, these are all really great resources and how do we ensure that the students, number one, are aware of the resources and then also, how do we help, uh, MOPD and other City Agencies to plug these students in, um, since they're sort of the mediating, uh, body that deals with this.

And so, um, that's why we're here today to hear about the bill to help transition, um, and to be honest, I think for me personally, coming from the nonprofit sector and as a social worker myself, one of the things that I'm really curious to hear about is, you know, honestly speaking from MOPD as well as from CUNY, you know, what are the challenges? Um, what are the gaps? Because I, I think oftentimes as

Council Members, yes, it's our role to legislate, but well, how do we legislate in a way that has the most impact for students with disabilities and I'd be really, really curious today to hear all of your thoughts on that and any recommendations that you have because, um, at the end of the day, we don't want to put policies out there that don't necessarily make sense, which is why we're here today because it makes, you know, we want to hear from you all in terms of what the needs are, whether it be funding or whether it be different policy changes, um, and, and to just really hear your thoughts on that.

So, I really want to thank all of you for being here. Um, um, and also, uh, recognizing all the folks that are here from CUNY. I know you have a whole team here, which we will be, you will be introducing yourselves shortly, um, as well as Deputy Commissioner. Am I right? Okay. Uh, and General Counsel, my bad. Um, and from my understanding, I know you guys do a lot with very, uh, little in terms of the staffing and everything else, so I really appreciate all the work you guys are doing. So, thank

you for that. Um, and without further ado, I will hand it back over to Chair Dinowitz.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, Chair Lee. It's good we do these hearings and we call each other Chair.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Um, uh, so, thank you, Chair Lee. Uh, I also want to acknowledge and like to thank Adam Staropoli, my Legislative Director, uh, Jenna Klaus, my, my Chief of Staff, Regina Paul, the Committee's Policy Analyst and Mia (SP?) Hyatt, the Committee's Senior Finance Analyst.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Well, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Cause now you're making me look bad. So, now, I got to.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I, I couldn't, if I tried, I couldn't do that.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: No, my staff yell at me cause they're like, "You don't have to recognize us," but I do think they deserve recognition. So, yeah, she's shaking her head, Amanda Vazquez, who's my Chief of

Staff, as well as John Wani, who's not here, but he is our Policy Legislative Director.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for embarrassing your staff. Uh, um, so, as a reminder, uh, anyone who wishes to testify in person must fill out a witness slip, which is located on the desk at the, of the Sergeant at Arms near the entrance of this room. Please fill out this slip even if you have already registered in advance that you will be testifying in person today. To allow as many people as possible to testify, testimony will be limited to three minutes per person, whether you are testifying on Zoom or in person. I'm also going to ask my colleagues to limit their questions and comments.

It's all good. It's like a movie, you know, it's, uh. Okay. For those of you watching at home, the lights were going and it was turning lights out and on. Um, so, my colleagues limit their questions to five minutes. And please note, uh, that witnesses who are here in person will testify before those who are signed into the Zoom webinar.

Um, for our first panel, I would now like to call up from CUNY, Dr. Denise Maybank, Vice Chancellor of

Student Affairs, Dr. Carrie Shockley, CUNY Director of Disability Services, and Raymond Perez, Director of Accessibility Resource Center at Hostos Community College, and Emily Sweet, from the Mayor's Office of People with Disabilities, which I guess we'll be calling MOPD from now on. Uh, the Deputy Commissioner/General Counsel. Both titles?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Two salaries? I tried, um. Alright. Please raise, and now in accordance with the rules of the Council, I will administer the affirmation to witnesses from the City University of New York and the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. Please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this Committee and to respond honestly to the Council Members' questions?

Thank you. And as a reminder, to all of our witnesses, please state your name prior to the testimony for the record. You may begin.

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Is that better? Yes. Okay. Good afternoon. I'm Denise Maybank. You'll hear

that again in just a moment. Chairperson Eric Dinowitz, Chairperson Linda Lee, and Members of the Committee on Higher Education and the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony before you regarding services for students with disabilities at the City University of New York. My name is Denise Maybank, and I am honored to serve as the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs for the City University of New York, best position on earth.

I value the Committees' interest in and focus on the services and care for CUNY students. Your attention to how needs beyond the classroom are addressed is laudable and we are always appreciative of your partnership that provides support for the amazing students of CUNY.

I am accompanied today by two of our University Student Disability Services experts, those best positioned to respond to your interests and questions. Joining me today are Carrie Shockley, University Director for Disability Programs and for the campus perspective, Raymond Perez, Director of the Hostos Accessibility Resource Center. You will



hear from them regarding specific programs and services made available to our students and the impact of some of those supports on the ultimate success of students with disabilities.

At the largest, as the largest University in the nation, urban university in the nation, the City University of New York is described as a transformative engine of social mobility that is a critical component of the lifeblood of New York City, and integral part of the University's mission is the provision of services necessary to support the accomplishment of the academic goals of each student. CUNY students deserve optimal circumstances in which to attain their goals, and we position to support them in having meaningful and fulfilling experiences. We are committed to our students not merely surviving, but to them thriving through the CUNY experience.

During the '21-'22 academic year, nearly 10,000 students, to be exact, 9,843, registered with the Offices of Disability Services across the University. Each campus has either an office or a staff member designated to assist students seeking services or

accommodations to support their successful navigation of the CUNY experience. The top three most frequent identified disabilities are one of those less visible, learning disabilities at 34%, mental health also less visible, at 21%, and the physical including mobility-related disabilities at 16.6%.

To whet your appetite, I'll highlight for you a few of the ways in which CUNY engages with and on behalf of our students with disabilities.

Representation and advocacy. Staff and students across the City University of New York actively serve as advocates for students with disabilities, for disability services, and for disability rights. Among those specifically focused on these issues are the CUNY Coalition of Students with Disabilities, known as CCSD. We only use acronyms. And CUNY's Council on Student Disability Issues, or COSDI.

CCSD is one of the most active and visible student organizations representing students across CUNY. This is an amazing group of student leaders supporting their peers and educating our learning community about not only the needs of students with disabilities, but more importantly, they educate us

about the contributions and strengths of our students with disabilities. Shout out to CCSD.

COSDI is comprised of representatives from each of the campuses. COSDI publishes a faculty guide to teaching college students with disabilities, to assist faculty in successfully carrying out their central role in relation to the University's commitment to providing access to students with disabilities. In the guide, faculty will find the latest information about various types of disabilities, the functional limitations of students with the, these disabilities, recommended accommodations, and helpful suggestions on how to successfully meet students' needs in the classroom and other college settings. COSDI also supports CUNY Assistive Technology Services, CATS, that team of assistive technology specialists who provide a wide range of support services and tools to CUNY campuses ensuring consistent and state of the art assistive technology throughout the University.

Inclusive and Adaptive Sports. Established in 2017, Inclusive, Inclusive and Adaptive Sports provides opportunity for students with disabilities

to compete in inter-collegiate sports. The men's and women's wheelchair basketball teams have competed in the National Wheelchair Basketball Association Championships. This expanded opportunity attracts students to CUNY, offering beyond the classroom experiences that round out the total college experience for those with disabilities. Maybe a less considered opportunity, but certainly one that attracts the attention of students with disabilities.

Work in Neurodiversity. As part of CUNY's leading role in the, in the movement to provide expanded access and services to neurodiverse students on the college campus, the Central Office of Student Affairs Disability Programs hosts the annual CUNY Neurodiversity Conference each year in March. CUNY's two signature neurodiversity initiatives that you'll hear more about, Project REACH, and CUNY Unlimited, engage stakeholders to share promising practices for supporting students while they are in college and during transitions to and from campus. The conference attracts an international audience, and throughout the pandemic, had 400 plus virtual participants.

In conclusion, our work in disability and accessibility services is not merely about compliance and verification. Our work is about enhancing the lives of students with disabilities academically, personally, and professionally. Our work is about advancing the knowledge and tools that matter for students with disabilities. Our work is about advocating for the policies, practices, and resources that ultimately allow students with disabilities to thrive while attending CUNY and into the future. We believe you can, can and will partner with us in the work as we go forward and as CUNY helps lift New York, and we together keep the possibilities possible for students with disabilities. Now, on to the tangible picture for those in the, from those in the know.

CHAIPERSON DINOWITZ: Either microphone is fine.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: Thank you. Carrie Shockley. Again, I'll say that again. Good afternoon, Chair Dinowitz and Chair Lee and Members of the New York City Council Joint Committee on Higher Education and Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction. Thank you so much for inviting us to testify at this

afternoon's hearing on accommodations for students with disabilities at CUNY.

I'm Carrie Shockley, CUNY's Director for Disability Programs and Director of the John F. Kennedy Jr. Institute. I am proud to testify along with CUNY's Student Center Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Denise Maybank, and my colleague, Raymond Perez, Director of Accessibility, of the Accessibility Resource Center at Hostos Community College whose portfolio includes students with disabilities, veterans, and support for CUNY's co-located wheelchair basketball team.

We deeply appreciate the opportunity to discuss how students are informed of the accommodations process at CUNY as well as other initiatives we provide to support them academically, engage them socially, and help them prepare for post-graduation.

To connect with people who are considering CUNY. We conduct presentations on programming and services available to students with disabilities several times throughout the year. These presentations are done in collaboration with the CUNY Central Office of Admissions and with external partners that host

college fairs specifically focused on people with disabilities.

Campus based Disability or Accessibility offices also present on behalf of their campus and the University. These information sessions highlight the importance of connecting with the Disability Services Office, how to connect with resources at the campus level, describe differences between an IEP and an accommodation plan, as well as other resources available to students with disabilities. Once on the campus, in orientations across the University, new students are provided with information for the Office of Disability and Accessibility and again encouraged to register.

From the academic side, it is best practice for faculty to include a statement on their syllabus and course sites regarding how to receive reasonable accommodations from the Disability and Accessibility Office and how to communicate their plan. Additionally, when faculty observe that a student may need support, they are asked to connect that student with the Disability Office.

As a form of self-advocacy and a right to self-disclose, students initiate contact with the Disability Office. Currently, there are nearly 10,000 students who have self-identified and are registered with our Disability Offices. For those who are registered, demographically speaking CUNY students with disabilities are 40% male, 60% female, 33% white, 28% Hispanic, 27% black, 12% Asian.

In fall 2021, students with disabilities, 84% were majoring in liberal arts and sciences, health professions and related programs, business management, marketing, and related support services, psychology, visual and performing arts, computer and information sciences and support services, social sciences, public administration and social services professions, education, homeland security, law enforcement, firefighting, and related protective services, biological and biomedical sciences, and physical sciences. Most frequently registered disability group repeating, learning disabilities 34%, mental health 21%, physical including mobility 16.6%.



Students with disabilities access note taking, extended time for examinations, quiet room for test taking, sign language interpreting, captioning, and assistive technology which includes screen readers and reading and writing software among other accommodations. CUNY has several initiatives that can support all learners including those with disabilities. Campus resources such as tutoring and writing centers provide essential supports for all students, CUNY Start, Math Start, and ASAP are models which provide much-needed wrap around support for students, faculty training in universal design and learning principles, and technology that evaluates course sites for accessibility, helps support faculty in meeting students' needs.

There are several programs that are designed to foster inclusion in campus membership. Project REACH, an acronym for Resources and Education on Autism as CUNY's Hallmark, is a grant-based initiative funded by the FAR Fund. REACH is located at eight campuses and provides no-cost additional layers of support to autistic students to assist them with transition to college life. Programming may include peer mentoring,

group and/or individual, transition to college support, coaching services, workshops, and student interest groups. In addition, the Project REACH team hosts its annual neurodiversity conference where promising practice are shared by faculty, staff, students, and partners internal and external to CUNY.

Through a model called CUNY Unlimited in partnership with the nonprofit AHRCNYC and our colleagues at the New York City Department of Education's District 75, CUNY has developed an inclusive higher education program that allows students with intellectual disabilities, ID, to benefit equitably from our University's historic role as an engine of social mobility and independence for New York families.

CUNY Unlimited will offer students with ID the opportunity to earn a USDOE certified, certified meaningful credential, which mean, which verifies to employers that these students have achieved core competencies in basic literacy, civic engagement, independent living, and career readiness through their experiences at CUNY. The data indicate that CUNY Unlimited participants are employed at a rate

20% higher within three years of graduation than similarly situated individuals with ID who do not participate in inclusive higher ed.

And lastly, to prepare for employment, since 2008, CUNY LEADS, Linking Employment Academic and Disability Services, has helped CUNY students with disabilities gain the confidence and skills to achieve successful academic and career outcomes both during and after graduation, during college and after graduation. LEADS advisors are located on each undergraduate campus, CUNY campus, to provide individualized career guidance and resources for students preparing to enter the workforce.

In addition to employment readiness support, there is a monthly online learning community in which partnering employers including nonprofit organizations, private companies, and public agencies, share employment opportunities and pathways to employment. Guest speakers and invited guests present initiatives focused on hiring people with disabilities. There are also LEADS job developers who recruit employers and communicate opportunities to students. We recently implemented a career, a student

career management system and we'll have more data on internship and job types, interview, and placement in the coming months.

To support the current student population with more comprehensive services, there are a number of obstacles which is, which must be overcome. For students with physical disabilities, many are challenged by inaccessible spaces. More upgraded campus spaces are necessary to meet all the students' needs academically, socially, and physically.

Disability Services Offices across the University report that they are under-resourced.

We often encounter adult learners who have never received an evaluation or have documents that are quite out of date and cannot afford a new one. An investment in professionals possibly at CUNY, who could provide low-cost, or no-cost services would be one way to address this.

Project REACH has been grant funded for more than 10 years. Over the past four years, our neurodiverse population has increased by at least 50%. As our neurodiverse population increases steadily, we are unable to take the support model to scale across the

University. An additional \$100,000 would fund an additional three to five microprojects and increase program capacity by 75%.

CUNY Unlimited has four unfunded DOE D75 models, which leaves these programs in a delicate position on the partnering campuses. To expand CUNY Unlimited programs for our students with intellectual disabilities in all five Boroughs, the cost of the CUNY, this CUNY DOE initiative would be less than \$1 million annually. A pilot project at two campuses for \$250,000 would formalize the credential and open opportunities for academic social and vocational experiences.

We are grateful to New York State for providing designated resources for students with disabilities. Additional assistance from our City partners would be greatly appreciated and help us provide more services to our students. For the campus perspective, I would like to introduce my colleague Raymond Perez, Director of Accessibility Resource Center at Hostos Community College. Thank you for your commitment to excess, to access and opportunity for CUNY students with disabilities.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you very much. Uh, I'd also like to note that we've been joined by Council Member Cabán.

DIRECTOR PEREZ: Uh, Raymond Perez. Uh, good afternoon, Chair. Alright. I'm Raymond Perez. Good afternoon, Chair Dinowitz, Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee of Higher Education and Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction. My name is Raymond Perez and I have worked at CUNY for 17 years where disability service has always been part of my portfolio. I personally have the honor of serving as the Director of Disability Services at Hostos Community College for the past eight years where I provide accommodations for over 600 students with disabilities on a given academic year.

Students with disabilities represent 10 to 12% of the overall enrollment at Hostos. This wasn't always the case. I am here today to share what Hostos and CUNY have done to become a prime destination for students with disabilities seeking to begin their college careers, and how they are made aware of services we provide at CUNY. The formula I will

describe has led an increase in enrollment of 287% at its first year of implementation at Hostos.

The journey begins with creating a marketing and recruiting plan specifically to recruit students with disabilities. The National Center for Education Statistics, NCES, estimates that 30% of students on college campuses have some form of disability yet only five to 10% are registered at Offices of Disability Services. Most college students are unaware of services specifically offered in the area of reasonable accommodations and the responsibility is placed solely on them to register and activate their afforded accommodation, much different from the experience of a recent high school graduate whose Individual Education Plan, IEP, has followed them through their academic career.

According to NCES, less than half of the universities nationwide mention campus disability services in their general material. Moreover, only 39% of the schools provide information regarding reasonable accommodations as part of their recruitment package. There's a great need for marketing strategy to address recruiting students

with disabilities in post-secondary education. Hostos and many of my colleagues throughout the Disability Service Offices at CUNY took on that challenge to close the gap and establish CUNY as a leader in higher education and the provider of world class accommodations.

We created a marketing outline. We established an office brand, name, logo, identity. We receive national, we, we review national trends emerging with disability identification. We develop focus groups of faculty, staff, student leaders, to understand students' accommodation needs and universal design best practices. We created accessible marketing material. We established a target audience for our faculty, staff, students, parents, high schools, high school transitional counselors, access VR, commission for the blind, community-based organization. We created a marketing package, flyers, brochures, handbooks, digital versions of informational packets and promotional items.

We developed a formal marketing strategy. We created a marketing script to represent services we have to offer. We revisited all informational



materials available for accuracy, pertinent information, and accessibility, updated the website to follow national best practices and established a calendar of events to promote services on and off campuses. These are just a few examples of Hostos taking an active role in recruiting students with disabilities that will lead to degree attainment and successful transition to employment.

My team and I at Hostos begin our student relationships pre-enrollment. We visit high schools virtually and in person to talk about the college experience, academic programs, career goals, extracurricular activities, how to pay for college, supportive services available, and accessing accommodations on college campuses. We do not do this, we do this in partnership with students so student leaders always accompany my team.

I am proud to serve as one of the faculty advisors for the CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities, CCSD. CCSD's mission is to serve and represent students with disabilities that are enrolled at the City University of New York. They are dedicated in improving inclusion, access, leadership

development, social and civic engagement opportunities, and fostering community among CUNY's nearly 10,000 students with disabilities.

I am honored to be part of such a fantastic group of student leaders. Some of these student leaders helped us create the Universal Design, Learning, and Leadership Initiative, UDL<sup>2</sup>. The project is housed out of Hostos Community College Office of Disability Services and is in partnership with CUNY's Central Office of Student Inclusion Initiatives. It is operated by a diverse group of paid student colleagues who are given the opportunity to elevate. And it is operated, sorry. To elevate their leadership skills while promoting positive University-wide awareness around disability empowerment.

Students engage in disability leadership throughout the institution are encouraged to reach out to UDL<sup>2</sup> team for hands-on support, advisement, promotion, and sponsorship for any project or initiative aimed to making gain for the disability community at CUNY.

But recruiting is just the tip of the iceberg, and retention and graduation are where accommodation and transitioning successfully from high school to college become essential in achieving student academic success. At Hostos, we have created a strategic plan that looks at the following, customizing individual accommodation plans to meet students' learning style, introducing students to the concept of teaching styles that is really picking, picking, picking the right professor, reviewing previous accommodation plans to identify strategies that worked and did not, introducing them to assistive technology based on the limitation of their disability, lending them the hardware and software needed.

We create a community by getting them involved in Office events and campus disability awareness campaigns. On day one, we introduce career development and the importance of choosing a major based on career goals and series of workshops leading to obtaining and retaining employment. We can, we connect students to mentors, clubs, student government, and student supportive services to meet

their needs virtual or in person. The accommodation process is all done in partnership with faculty, students, and the Office of Disability Services.

The last three years have helped the way we deliver academic curriculum. It opened the doors to distance learning and services we had never seen before. Although the pandemic was challenging in many ways, it forced a creativity and a vision for the University that supported students with disabilities and those who developed chronic illnesses because of COVID-19.

We now have the mechanisms that allow us to review accommodations requests for virtual options to in person courses and present opportunities to students who may not be able to come on campus. CUNY continues to broaden accommodations for students with chronic medical conditions with various learning modalities, fully remote, hi-flex classes spaces, and hybrid courses. Reasonable accommodation for many also changed.

Disability Offices at CUNY have established protocols and procedures to deliver mandated services to students with disabilities through virtual

measures. The staff has access to Microsoft Teams, individual work emails, virtual walking sessions, Zoom, Starfish, Blackboard, and any other online platform to communicate with students to ensure that CUNY complies with the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and CUNY's guidelines for accessibility

I am proud of the work that we have done at Hostos and throughout the University for a very diverse constituency. However, I know that we could do even more with City support. I thank the administrative leadership at CUNY and at Hostos for their support to helping to make the University a prime destination for disabled students in pursuit of access to higher education. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Uh, I want to, I want to thank you for highlighting some of the things. I was taking notes during the testimony. I almost said, "Maybe we should be switching spots." You highlighted a number of important things, um, that I think don't always get addressed, but I, I would hope in the legislation, uh, do get addressed.

And one of the big things is that this 10% number, and as you recognized, that's probably low,

right? and that's, anyone who's worked in a school can probably guess that that 10% number only represents. I'm sorry, the 10,000 students only represents 10% when it's more like 10% of students in our DOE schools have IEPs and that's not to mention the work that you're doing with, uh, Unlimited, that's with the District 75 schools.

So, is that CUNY Unlimited, is that on every single campus? On which campuses does that exist?

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: Um, presently, it's at, uh, five campuses officially, uh, so, Hostos Community College, Queens College, College of Staten Island, Kings Borough, and.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Get into every Borough.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: The MCC, Borough of Manhattan Community College. There we go.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: And then, informally, we also have three other DOE programs at Lehman College, Brooklyn, and Medgar Evers.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And how many students participate in this CUNY Unlimited program?

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: So, generally they're small programs, about 20 students per campus.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And in these programs, it's, uh, did, did students in District 75, uh, are they all students with intellectual disability?

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Is that the? And then, then the nonprofit you mentioned works with them and with CUNY to ensure that they receive whatever accommodations they require?

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: So, they're two different models, one with the DOE where teachers from DOE provide most of the accommodations on campus, um, with support from the campus Disability Offices. And then, the.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And that's, I'm sorry. And that's outside their?

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: They're considered dually enrolled, so they spend all of their time at the campus, even though they're.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Oh, so District 7, the students in District 75 are enrolled at CUNY and DOE so, okay. So, it's like early college.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: Sort of.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: Yes. They're auditing generally.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: It's like. Okay.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: Yeah, yeah. And then the AHRC model, um, the AHRC provides the wrap around supports for, for campuses and we're adding a fifth campus in Queens Borough Community College next fall.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay. I, I do want to mention that we've joined by Council Member Barron as well. Um, and so, is, is, I, I missed the part about the AH, what's called AHRC.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: AHRC.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: AHRC.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: So, they provide.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: All, all the acronyms, you did warn me. You did warn me about all the acronyms.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: Yeah, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I thought I was warning you with MOPD, but you, you, you hire a fulltime staff just to come up with acronyms? No. Um, so the AHRC model is transitioning from high school to, uh?



DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: They're generally, um, out of school.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: And so, then they're fully supported by AHRC.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And so, there's a whole nonprofit whose job it is to, to support them but also help with the transition if they had services, whatever they were, in high school, and they are ideally getting services in college. But that takes a whole, um, I guess, nonprofit transition team.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Um, is there a mechanism that they use at all to have a school directly share, let's say the IEP with, uh, with the college as a form of documentation to show that accommodations are necessary, or, uh, would benefit the student and are necessary?

DIRECTOR PEREZ: So, Chair Dinowitz, when we're looking at it from the CUNY Unlimited perspective, um, the answer is yes, right. So, we, we are able to review documentation. Uh, when we look at it from students matriculated on a college campus, uh, as you

know, it's, the responsibility is on the student to be able to disclose and that's bringing their documentation, uh, as well. I think that if there was a mechanism in place to be able to share that, that would definitely help Disability Service Offices, uh, be able to connect with, with students.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And.

DIRECTOR PEREZ: Currently, it does not exist.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And identify the, identify our students with disabilities, right, because where, you know, as, as, as, was mentioned, it's 10% identified as students with disabilities. Um, so this, similarly, this would help you identify those students in the first place?

DIRECTOR PEREZ: And be able to use a marketing plan like Hostos' to be able to do outreach, so even if they didn't self-identify, reach out to them.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. We've also, we've just been joined by Council Member Hanif. Welcome. Um, so, I, I, I really like what you laid out in the, in the marketing plan. Um, and, oh, and we've also been joined by Council Member Mealy. Hello. I got it. Oh, got two shout outs. Council

Member Barron is, is still here. He gets two shout outs, cool. And, uh, and Bottcher's still here. We'll shout him out too. And Chair, Chair Lee is still here.

Um, but, but I think the marketing's the most, one of the most interesting aspects to me, because that gets to, to some of the problems even before the students are receiving accommodations, um. And given some of the hearings we have, um, you know, I, I, I, I know the students who benefit from these, um, accommodations are being served well.

But part of what I'm talking about now is getting there in first place. So, you've laid out a whole marketing strategy and I actually looked on, uh, have you heard of YouTube? It's this website with all these videos. Um, and there was a video posted by one of your offices four years ago and it has not even 10,000 views. And it explains in there, for three minutes, and I think, 26 seconds, about, for students with disabilities, how they can receive accommodation. And I think it's a great tool.

And we talk about this marketing all the time, we spoke about it last time with Workforce Development.

We spoke about it two hearings ago with remote, uh, education and how there's marketing. And it seems that there's no centralized marketing plan. This YouTube video was posted four years ago, had, like I said, less than 10,000, uh, views. And it's one of these marketing strategies which, uh, you know, could go out. But is not being done.

And so, what, centrally, what marketing strategies exist centrally so that outside of any systemic, you know, uh, sharing of data, that students and parents and faculty and advocacy organizations, whoever works with that student to transition to college, is fully aware of what's available to them and is encouraged to visit the Office for Students with Disabilities?

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: Presently, I would say, we marketed, we, um, co-market with outside agencies that specifically address the needs of people with disabilities. So, generally, they're hosting an event and CUNY is participating in that event to market CUNY, and then the Offices.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: When you say, do you pay them?

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: No.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, good. No, seriously, because if, if only 10% of the students are identifying, that's, they're doing a bad job. But partnering with agencies already doing, you know, we have, uh, uh, resource fairs all the time. Um, but my concern is that, is that sort of reaching at. I'm concerned again, centrally, so, so it doesn't appear as though there's a proactive centrally marketing plan, um, or supports.

I did find something online which I think is great, and CUNY has this sort of great, um, best practices. It's going to take me a second to find, best practices for, um, creating pdf and Microsoft Office documents, for example. And one of the things you say there, is, I say you as if you sat there and typed it, but, you know, the collective you. Um, that in a pdf and Microsoft Word document, use 12 point or larger font. That's one example of I think, a best practice for people with disabilities.

My concern is that when looking online, I found a few examples of that's just straight up not being done. And I, and I don't want to, and the point here

isn't to shout out any particular college. The point is to, is to do better, so I'm not going to say the name of the college, but I'm looking at one college's checklists. And the checklist is great. I think that's a great tool for students, people with and without disabilities alike, but I, you know, you can't see it from here. That's kind of the point, you can't see it from here. But the font is very small. This almost looks like eight- or 10-point type on this checklist, which is again, a great tool and idea.

Um, I'm looking at another one here. It's a student handbook which is like 61, at least 61 pages long. The table of contents is in eight-point type and in the very section which talks about disability services, is 10-point type. And so, what directive from Central is provided to your individual campuses to make sure that the, the marketing and the resources that they're putting out in the first place, not to even mention marketing and bringing people in. But what directives from Central CUNY are being given to our individual campuses to ensure that the resources being provided are actually according

to your own guidelines, you know, accessible to everyone, the very people who need the services?

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: I'll take it. So, the opportunity is made available. The directive may not be as clear. So, I'm just going to own that in the way that we need to.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can, so can, and I don't mean to interrupt. But, I mean, can you?

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Well, that, that's the thing is, I think we need to.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can you just do it?

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: We need to be more directive in offering access to the tools because the tools exist. You, all you have to do is upload and stop me when I start going wrong here, you, you need to upload the information in a way that then allows it to be. You get information back that says this is not accessible. And this is what you need to do to make it accessible. So, the tool is there, but we need to drive the faculty to it, the staff to it, in a more directive manner so that we ensure that it happens. Because yes, that is the expectation.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, I want to, I want to make, so, we've also been joined by Council Member Williams and those other Council Members are still here. Um, I want to make sure, I'm, I'm kind of being clear in my concern. Um, what I'm, what I am concerned with is the direction being, "Hey, faculty, professors, um, here is more work for you to do," that really can and should be coming, what I believe is, is Central. Whether it's an audit of, of and I'm talking about the handbook. I'm not, I'm not talking about the course syllabus. I'm, I'm not talking about the PowerPoints that are provided. I'm specifically right now, talking about the checklists, which are good, the handbook, which is, which is a good thing to, to have. I'm specifically talking about the directions from Central CUNY and the resources and support or an audit done of those materials to the individual campuses?

Right, because Disability Services are provided by the campus. There, it's not an individual professor deciding, "I'm going to find a note taker for this student. I'm going, I'm going independently find an ASL interpreter." Right. So, what can be done



centrally to ensure that the materials in the first place exist for the students who need them the most?

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: So, one of the things that I (INAUDIBLE) show you and I'll, I'll leave it to the experts to talk about the details on this, is if a student, a particular student, needs that accommodation, that is going to be provided. They are going to get the information in a format that is aligned with their need.

But I hear what you're saying. You're saying the information is out there. Someone could go looking for it, but then it's not accessible for them because it's not done in the format that we say is most critical. So, I fully hear you and I understand the need for an audit in that. But you, either of you want to comment on that?

DIRECTOR PEREZ: So, Chair Dinowitz, um, I think we have become spoiled on the campus because, I, I want to say within the last 10 years, assistive technology has become a game changer. So, although that document, um, seems not accessible, when accompanied with assistive technology that students are provided, it does become accessible.

I think you bring up an important point, not every student who potentially is looking, say, at the Office of Disability Service are coming to Hostos, right, will have that technology. Our potential, our, our, our student that, um, you know, might just be a potential student and making sure that the documentation and the, the services that we provide is accessible to them. So, I think from the continuing student on campus, every, every accommodation plan is accompanied by assistive technology training. And I think that, um, from that perspective, uh, it does.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah. I, I don't, by the way, I don't doubt that the services are given. I don't doubt that any of you care, but, you know, if I'm a student with a reading disability or a vision impairment, and it's, and I know. Let's even say I know, some disability office but I'm, my student handbook is eight-point type so I can't even access it in the first place. And I'm someone who, and, and now we're just talking about a student who self-identifies. That's that 10%, which is probably off by 100% as we, my guess, which is off by, you know, it's

off by half. Um, half this, whatever, math. Um, but if it's, if it's the same number of 19% with IEPs, if that number translates to the same 19%, we're getting half the students, if that's not clear.

Um, so, even in the first place for students who struggle with a disability, struggle to even like own it, right, because it's, it's an emotional skill, the self-advocacy. It's, there's a lot of layers to it. And they say, "Alright. Fine, I'm going to do. Let me find the Office of, uh. Eight-point type, ugh. Ten-point type." And I had difficulty honestly, finding it for some of the colleges on the website to begin, on their respective websites to begin with.

So, now again, I'm just talking about access and resources. And so, again, what I'm hoping is, I, I, I guess you can't really give like a full yes, let's do it, but what I am asking is that you go back and for each college, audit and say, "Let's make the resources according to our own best practices comply," and I'll put that in quotation marks, but, but using the best practices to provide the resources to begin with. And just make it as easy as possible

for students to find it. Um, you know, then do, then we'll get into the marketing. Okay?

Um, uh, I want to turn, you know, I have a, I have a bunch more, but I want to turn it over to Chair Lee and then some of my colleagues to, uh, ask questions. Okay. Uh, and turn it over to, to, to, to Chair Lee and then to two of my, to at least two of my colleagues. Uh, and then I have some more follow up questions. Have fun. She's asking a very tough question. So, she's building suspense, making you wait.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Sorry.

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: No problem.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. And just bear me cause I, I took notes on all the testimony. So, I have a lot of papers here, so forgive me. Um, really quick question, cause, um, so Carrie, cause in your testimony, you had said, uh, one of the bullet points that struck me was, "We often encounter adult learners who have never received an evaluation or have documents that are quite out of date and cannot afford a new one."

So, just out of curiosity, what's the biggest barrier to that? Is it the cost? Like, how much does it cost? Is it funding? Is it just access to getting an evaluation? Or what's the biggest, um, challenge there? And how difficult would it be to get them an updated evaluation?

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: I would say primarily cost. And then second, um, providers who.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: So, the providers who can administrate, do the administrative, administration.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: Right.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Sorry. Of the evaluation.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: Correct. We, we have a resource list, but generally the waiting list to get an appointment is long for low-cost providers.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: What is the wait list, if you don't mind me asking?

DIRECTOR PEREZ: At times, it could be six months. uh, and the cost can be from a sliding of \$300 to \$3,000 for a full, uh, psychoeducation evaluation.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. And I would imagine that that would also be one of the barriers to why the numbers are low, right? So, in other words, if we

actually had updated, um, numbers and evaluations, then that probably would contribute to having more data and numbers that accurately reflect the student body? Okay.

Um, the other question I had was, um, so, Project REACH. Uh, it's increased by at least 50%, you mentioned. Um, an additional \$100,000 would fund an additional three to five micro projects and increase program capacity to 75%. So, can you go a little bit more into detail into what the \$100,000, like what, what would those three to five microprojects look like?

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: So, currently, the grants that we administer through, um, the, the grant that we receive, so, we do microgrants to the campuses. And so, they have projects that range in cost between \$10,000 and \$25,000.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Got it. So, okay. So, it could potentially even do more than, okay. Got it. Okay. And then also, just for clarification, um, in the last bullet point, when you were saying a pilot project, this is interesting for, for me, uh, at two campuses for \$250,000 would formalize the credential.

Do you mean with (INAUDIBLE)? Or what kind of credentialing are you, are you talking about?

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: So, this is, um, leading into the meaningful credential that's recognized by the USDOE.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Got it. Okay. So, without that, it's going to be really difficult to be able to have these types of services, you're saying?

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: Right.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: So, generally, what it would do, is it would help formalize those campus, um, programs.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: And move the students into, uh, more of the CUNY structure.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Um, and then, my other question was, um, and this is just coming from my experience on the nonprofit sector side, where, um, you know, I worked with a population that, uh, had extremely limited English, and then on top of that, there's tons of stigma around both disabilities as well as mental health, which is why, um, I wanted to

start up a mental health clinic that was culturally, linguistically sensitive. And I know, just from working on the ground, that the, the numbers in a lot of those communities, especially immigrant, um, where English is not the primary language, a lot of those numbers are underreported, if not reported at all.

And so, um, I guess my question is, um, what are your efforts, and I know it's difficult, but, uh, what are the efforts to reach out to those students or to seek out accommodations for them? And are there, like I can just think of also, for myself, if you're willing to, there's a couple nonprofits that I know in the community that work with more language specific communities. And so, I'm wondering if there are relationships there that could be built upon, because this a very difficult community to reach into. Um, and, and, oftentimes, the data is not collected at all. So, I'm just wondering how we can, you know, how we can help support those efforts.

And, and also currently, if you could describe a little bit what CUNY does do in terms of the, the, the language barriers?



DIRECTOR PEREZ: I, I can give you the perspective from, from Hostos, which we have a large number of students that English is their second language. Uh, we, we build relationships. We go into the classroom. We make sure that we, we present the classes, making sure that even if, in your native tongue, if you struggled, right, there are resources here, uh, at the campus to be able to help them. Uh, the other big obstacle that we faced, is finding providers that are able to also test, uh, in their native language.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Yeah.

DIRECTOR PEREZ: Because of what we see, is that there's a huge, um, discrepancy in being able to get accurate scores and levels to see where they're at and to create those accommodation plans based on those language barriers. So, um, Dr. Shockley had mentioned we have a list of providers that we provide to our Disability Service Directors, uh, and in those, in that list, we also look at providers that are of, um, also provide services in multiple languages so that our colleagues know who to reference and connect that student with to get adequate documentation.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Yeah.

DIRECTOR PEREZ: So that we can then provide accurate, adequate support.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Yeah. And, and on the, on the workforce side, like you mentioned, it's really hard to find folks that are, speak the dual languages that have the proper certification to provide the services.

And then going along that same vein, um, how has it been on all the campuses generally speaking, in terms of, I guess this is shifting more to the mental health side because I've been hearing across a lot of the different school, universities, that, you know, students are still really struggling, um, post pandemic. And so, I'm just wondering, um, I know across the board, the workforce issue is probably the number one issue that we're seeing in the mental health side. And so, I just wanted to get a sense on the CUNY campuses? Is that similar? How are you all staffed in terms of, um, you know, the social workers are other mental health professionals on campuses? Is there enough? Is there a need?

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: There's always going to be a need.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Yeah.

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Because we can't meet the demand and that's, that's national. But we are much better than we were with the, uh, additional support from the State that allowed us to have additional staff. Um, we're not where we need to be, but we're better than we were, and students have been able to access, in person, um, opportunities as well as tele-mental health and other alternative ways of meeting that need. And so, we've had to be more creative about that. Um, but we're closer in terms of the standards that are set by the Counseling Center, um, organizations and so forth. We're closer to that number.

Again, once the stimulus money, is no, no more, we will be in a position where those positions are not going to be funded. And we need to find ways to keep that staff available to our students because that, as I said, that demand is not going to decline. And when you started your previous question, um, Chairperson Lee, you talked about stigma.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Yeah.

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: And I wanted to make sure I addressed that as well because when we start talking about that adult population of learners, they're coming from a different point in time. I think some of our, um, younger students, uh, maybe in a better position to say, "I'm standing up for my rights. I'm going to advocate for myself. I'm going to get what I need." And that's the nature of CCSD and I give them credit, all credit for that. If they let me hang out with them, I'm with them all the time.

But what I will tell you is that for our adult learners and returners, it is likely the stigma associated with learning-related disabilities and things that separate you from being able to get the education you need, it's like, "I'm not supposed to need. I'm not supposed to appear as though I need help from anyone for anything. I'm coming back. I'm going to make this happen." And I think that there's a piece of that marketing that Chairperson Dinowitz keeps referencing and wanting us to pay attention to, um, a piece of that has to be about de-stigmatizing.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Yeah.

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: The services, destigmatizing the offerings and helping those who need the service understand we're here for you. This is about you. You belong here and we are going to support your success. So, both things are important.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay.

DIRECTOR PEREZ: Chair Lee, just to add to VC Maybank's comments, the silver lining from the last three years was being able to provide virtual services specifically in counseling. And when we talk about stigma, just being able to get close to that office, right, sometimes was just a burden within itself. But being able to now use these virtual telehealth services, definitely, uh, helped many of our students where stigma was preventing them from, from seeking services.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Yeah. No, definitely. Um, can I, can I ask questions to MOPD? I feel like. I'm like, we need to get you engaged in the conversation, too. Um, okay. So, so, just really quickly, um, is there a tracking mechanism within MOPD that, that is able to keep track of how many students with disabilities,

uh, you're able to assist in connecting to the Office of Disability Services at CUNY specifically?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: So, um, we don't currently. Emily Sweet, um, General Counsel and Deputy Commissioner at MOPD. Um, so MOPD is currently not, um, engaged in this issue. And we appreciate that that Council is, is, um, looking at that issue. Um but it's not something that we have expertise in, and so, the answer is no, we don't. we don't have a tracking mechanism.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. So that sort of, I guess, leads me into my next question, which is um, I was just curious to know thoughts and opinions on Intro 660. And then also, uh, what would it take to be able to, uh, have capacity within MOPD to, to implement something like this?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: Um, so, I think that, you know, um, it would take a lot of resources, obviously.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Yeah.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: It's not something we currently do. We don't operate, um, any program like this, um, currently. Um, so I think, we would need to

take a, I don't want to just talk off the cuff, so, I think we would need to take a much closer look at it, um, and we'd be very happy to discuss with, um, the Council, uh, at a, at a later date.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: And included in that, um, I would love to hear, uh, yours, uh, or, you know, the Department's thoughts on any specific suggestions you have on how the bill can be improved because obviously if we want this to work, it has to be something that you have capacity to be able to implement.

And so, I'd be curious to hear if it's dollars, how many dollars, right? If it's, uh, uh, another resource like the tracking system, you know, um, you know, those, those lists of things that would be required, I guess, for you all to, to be able to potentially do something like this or implement. I'd be curious to hear all those, like, laundry list, I guess, of suggestions from you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: Sure. We'd be absolutely happy to, to speak, um, with the Committee

at a, at a later date. Um, so, and, we also want to say we're not sure in the first instance it would, MOPD would be the appropriate entity to do that.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Um, this actually, so, so, my, I'll, I'll ask one more question and then hand it off to other folks cause I know, I want to let others be able to ask questions as well. But, um, in the last hearing that we had with MOPD, um, one of the things that we had talked about, one of the things that we had talked about is, um, I know nationally, on a federal level, uh, they had this, uh, goal of having 7% requirement for federal agencies to hire folks that have various, varying, um, disabilities and hire people from the disabilities community. And they actually exceeded that goal. And it's over 8%, I believe.

So, I'm curious, because it almost seems like the CUNY LEAD program, I'm sorry, is that the correct one, with the workforce? CUNY LEADS, um, could also be a natural sort of, uh, continuum or feeder into something like, you know, providing workforce and



jobs within City Agencies. And so, I wonder if that's a partnership, you know, cause there's already existing resources and it's just about connecting the two. And so, I wonder if that's also something that MOPD would be willing or interested in having conversations with?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: So, MOPD does currently have employment.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Yes, yeah.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: Employment programs that work within CUNY that, um, that Carrie can, um, testify about. She's um, has more expertise in that than, than I would, actually.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: And can you actually give us more data and details on that, then? Cause I remember this came up also in the last, uh, hearing and we were just curious to find out more information on, on the, on the workforce piece and how we can up it.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: Sure, in a general sense, um, MOPD, um, visits our LEADS meetings, um, and shares work opportunities and has helped, uh, filter

internship opportunities for, for students. Um, I'd have to get more information on the data, um, for how many students per year, but we would be really interested in an opportunity to help connect those students with, um, City jobs.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: Um, we do also provide, uh, training related to, um, other types of exemptions for City employment that would apply to people with disabilities. So, that's included as part of the LEADS, um, portfolio and, and conversation each year. Um, but we would definitely be interested in, you know, doing something. And the other piece of that is in what ways can we do capacity building within City Agencies.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Yes.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: To be good places to work for people to work with disabilities.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Right. And it just me that, it just may be that both of you are just sort of the, the center in which you sort of deploy folks out into other City Agencies. Cause I know that, you know, not all City Agencies are consistent when it comes to

that, um, the hiring process of, of, of people with disabilities, and so, I'd be curious to see how we can work with various City Agencies more so to do that, so. Thank you.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank, thank you. I just, two, two points I want to make. One is do you have the data on the number of students who, uh, who are older or who, who come to the Office of People with Disabilities but don't get services? And if, for whatever reason. And if that's disaggregated by, um, you know, you don't, you don't have the services because you don't have any documentation and those who have documentation, but it's just not, uh, enough. If you don't have that, if you can get that over to us.

And the last thing I would, I would just urge you and then I'm going to turn it over to a couple of my colleagues, um, the Council, uh, just invested, uh, in the recent budget \$4.4 million in CUNY Reconnect. The purpose of CUNY Reconnect is to bring back the, I think, 10,000 students who, for whatever reason, left the system and it's integral and as you're building

that program and, and reaching out, if explicitly Disability Services, destigmatizing it and making explicit the options available to them. Because I have a sneaking suspicion it, it is perhaps the case that some dropped out because, because of a disability, uh, visible or invisible, and you have the opportunity here to make something available explicitly and support, uh, support this, people with disabilities who are, who are coming back in the system.

Um, so I'm going to urge you do that. And I will now turn it. Oh, we've been joined by Council Member Brewer. Hello. Uh, I will now turn it over to Council Member Mealy.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Hi. I want to thank you for this hearing. Um, Intro number 660, I was just wondering, it's the Family Education Right and Privacy Act is a federal law that protects the privacy of public school students as well as giving the parents current, um, students, and any student turning 18, um, years old, the right to access their records upon request. Will this bill be overturned

because of this federal law? We just looked it up.  
That's all. It won't be overturned?

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: I don't know. I don't  
know.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: We don't know.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay. Alright. Um, I only  
have, uh, one other question, two questions. Um, I  
heard you say that when the stimulus money disappear,  
what is your plan B? will you have to lay people off  
or do you have another contingency plan?

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: So, the people who were hired  
with the stimulus funds are, have a contract that  
ends at a certain point. So, I don't know that you.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: But wouldn't you need that.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: We still need the people. I'm  
not going to deny that. Um, but we don't have a clear  
way to fund those positions at this point. And as I  
said, you know, some of the positions were supported  
with the resources we received from the State  
funding. That money will continue, and those  
positions will remain. But there were others as well  
that, um, you know, we, we had this opportunity, and  
we knew we had a need. And so, we then have to just

figure out if there are other ways that we partner with, uh, private, uh, initiatives or that we leverage with our relationship with the Council and with other legislators to figure out how we make certain that we are providing the resources necessary to support students and in the mental health as well as in the disability services contexts.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Good to hear. Um, how many students with disability, um, receive the I, IEP, or the 504, students in high school before enrolling in CUNY?

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: We don't have any data on that.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: So, there's no. Should we have, have to put in legislation to start tracking it? Huh?

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: We should be able to.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Should, cause this is so important that we have to know how many people are utilizing it or not utilizing it. Maybe that's where more funding could come in also, if we did have the data.

DIRECTOR PEREZ: I can speak from Hostos.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Go ahead, please.

DIRECTOR PEREZ: And so, it, it's about 58% of our students who register (INAUDIBLE) our office, uh, submit an IEP as a form of their documentation. The other students can be any other medical documentation. So, at least from Hostos' perspective, at least 59% of our students are, are, have an IEP.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: So, it could be more, but we don't know?

DIRECTOR PEREZ: That's correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay.

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: That is what I, that was what I was going to share. It's like the students who come to us from the public school system and who have an IEP, or have 504, you know, (INAUDIBLE) 504, they can share that information with us but we don't know. And so, you know, there may be a way to say to New York City Public Schools, how many students exiting at a certain point in time did have these documents, these credentials, this understanding, and this evaluation? But in terms of us having it specifically, only if it's disclosed to us. We, we don't have it another way.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, Council Member.  
Uh, Council Member Hanif?

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you so much. First, I just want to share my gratitude with, um, our Chairs for hosting this hearing. Um, and I wonder if a hearing like this was hosted when I was a student at Brooklyn College, uh, integrated with the Center for Student Disability Services.

I had just, um, been diagnosed with lupus in my senior year of high school and there was a potential that I wouldn't be able to go to any school of choice because of my condition. It had led me to be, um, either hospital-ridden, or home, home-bound, for months on end. And I was able to get through my senior year of high school getting home schooled at a time when really, that was not the norm. And, and then, friends, community helped me apply for CUNY and I decided to go to Brooklyn College because of the abundance of services, but also, um, because the B11 bus took me straight to my (INAUDIBLE). And, I had to, and every student with disability has to consider their transportation options because, um, Access-A-



Ride, at the time, when I applied, I got, I had gotten rejected and was waiting out a one-year provision, uh, to be able to reapply again.

So, I'm personally very grateful for the Center for Student Disability Services at the Brooklyn College Campus, alongside the village of services that really supported me. I was part of the Scholar's Program. I was part of the Women's Center and countless faculty really, really, um, provided support to ensure that I, I made it. Um, but, you know, I was new to the realm of understanding disability. I was new to the realm of, uh, receiving health accommodations not just from school but as I was seeking out internships or even navigating the hospital system.

Um, I was quite shy and introverted around being, around really understanding that I needed to be my advocate, as I, because the onus is on the student, um, to seek out these services, to inform professors and other people, as we're navigating all of these, uh, institutions. Um, and so, I'd like to know how faculty is informed, trained, and at what frequency, um, to avoid this burden, um, uh, of, of students

feeling insecure or judged as they're sharing like. I've got, I'm going to need extra time for exams. Or here are the accommodations I will need in order to succeed in this class.

Um, so that's one question that I have that I'd like to learn a little bit more about. My disabilities, um, and I'm gratefully in remission now, but still continue to, uh, navigate, um, disabilities that are not visible anymore. Um, it forced me out of pre-med and pushed me into women's studies. And I landed, I've turned out fine. Um, it worked out well for me.

Um, but what are we doing to really provide the one-on-one support as students determine what they want to major in, what they want to study, um, and ensure that the, they're not being forced out of, um, fields that they are interested in?

Um, and, and then, third, can you share how these students are connecting with social workers? I'm really grateful to Council Member Lee, um, uh, for really emphasizing that piece. Um, you know, that was a missing link for me at the time because so much of my condition was so medically oriented that the, uh,

mental health piece was just a sort of like, I need to figure that out, but didn't get to until I hit my, you know, late 20s, um, and, you know, became a Council Member. Now, I have a therapist, but I'd like to know at that level, when students are connecting with these services, is there an approach where they're also immediately by default, connecting with the mental health services that exist, too? Thank you.

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Before I let the experts the specifics of your question, I just have to acknowledge you made a good choice in going to Brooklyn College.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Oh yeah, I love.

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Alum.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: It's the best.

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: I'm glad to hear you're in remission as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER MAYBANK: Thank you, thank you.

DIRECTOR PEREZ: So, uh, as also a, a person who received two degrees from Brooklyn College, it is, it's always going to be near and dear to, to my heart. Uh, I also, begin. I began my, my CUNY career

at Brooklyn College at the Office of Disability Services and I often say the, you know, the professions found, found me.

But we spent a lot of time on now only educating faculty during orientation, but we were also part of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, right, uh, portfolio and initiative and we added accessibility to that. Uh, faculty had more one to one, um, facetime with students than any office on campus and we knew had to be able to provide faculty with the understanding in how to refer students for services to our office without the stigma surrounding it.

So, um, we spent a lot of time being able to train faculty, not only on just the human touch of how do you refer a student, but what it takes to create accessible course content. So, uh, we also, we also collaborate with, um, Education Technology and the Centers for Teaching and Learning on campus that are given the responsibility to train faculty on the, uh, assistive technology.

And we're also having conversations about major and career goal from day one, uh, and how does the limitation of the disability play in or does not. I

remember specifically at Brooklyn College, I had a student who was deaf and who wanted to be an audiologist. And someone told them that was impossible. And I remember, I went on google and I started researching and it absolutely was possible. And I found 10 people that were audiologists and who were deaf. And we were able to connect the student to one of them who that person became their mentor.

The end of that story is the student did become an audiologist and at the time, probably about six years later, they were number 11 in that group. So, uh, it's, it's important, you know, um, yes, what's the question, you know, make sure that you're doing your research, uh, and don't assume. I think is extremely important, don't assume.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And can you to speak to the connecting with, um, social workers or mental health providers?

DIRECTOR PEREZ: So, at least from, from the disability service perspective, uh, we look at students holistically. So, we want to make sure not only are we looking at a diagnosis, which I, I can speak for myself, I, I do not really care about it.

It's those limitations and how I'm going to help that student be able to connect. At times, we realize what the student might think is holding them back might not really, truly be that, that, that obstacle and linking them to wrap around services like the counseling center, like the women's center, like athletics. Sometimes, it's just, "Hey, I got to get into the gym." And, and, and get active.

We also found out that community was extremely important for students with disabilities in linking them to extracurricular activities that were truly accessible. We found out that many of the extracurricular activities were not, and we had to make sure that, that, that they were. But making sure that each and every student, we were creating that individual accommodation plan, but not only looking at what that student was going to need to be academically successful, looking at the wrap around services and building those relationships on our college campus, that when we refer that student there, we refer them to a name, somebody that was going to take that student and follow, and follow up. And we did it as, as a community.

If not, I'll be honest, usually the student would not get to that next office. You literally had to take a student-centered approach to be able to hand it over to the next person. So, I know Brooklyn College has done that, and, and will continue to do that. Uh, and my colleagues, um, at the other CUNY campuses.

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: One of the things that I often say is that people think universities are about the knowledge only. But we don't invite students to our campuses, chop their heads off, put their heads in chairs, open them up and fill them with knowledge. That's not what we do. We invite whole people.

And so, we must respond to whole people, whatever it is that they bring with them, we have to be ready to be responsive to the totality of what it takes for their success. And in order to do that, we have to have social workers, and we have to have, um, audiologists, and we, you know, we need people from, from a multitude of perspectives to think about we assure the success of our students. And it is not only about the knowledge given, but it is about the

context of the person and community is critical for this population of students.

And that is why I love CCSD so much because they build community, and they recognize the importance of having activity and engagement and relationship. And so, all of those things become a part of it so that someone can say, "I know how to get you to a social worker to help with those issues."

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Yeah, I think that's wonderful. I mean, you know, given that the CUNY system is a CUNY, a commuter school, um, ecosystem, it really created isolation very quickly. And so, you know, as I was navigating getting surgeries and, uh, frequent hospital visits and treatment, um, I did rely on the campus's support systems in addition to the Center for Student Disability Services for a strong community. And, you know, I, I can't say enough good things.

Um, but I remember really the early days of wanting hybrid or remote classes, and being a part of the activism also, which, you know, CUNY is so, um, famous for. Um, that student activism and recognizing, um, disability justice champions on



campus and like how much of a fight we had to put in addition to receiving already available services, was also, um, crucial.

And so, thank you for your work and, um, listening to us, and really looking forward to continuing to work together to ensure that CUNY is accessible and, um, that we're leading with disability justice values at the forefront.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, Council Member Hanif. And I, I also want to publicly thank you. I think you here, here and anywhere we go that there is still stigma surrounding disability, so and I think you speaking so openly about it really goes a long way and, and I think showing people that it is okay and important and valuable to self-identify to get, uh, the services and support they need, and just how incredibly successful, uh, one can be when they, um, you know, when they embrace, you know, who they are, their disability, and, and be part of that disability community. So, I want to thank you for that.

Um, next we have, uh, Council Member Williams.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Hello. Um, I used to have a similar, not similar story, but just another

personal story and I know we've been focused a lot on like the transition from high school to college, um, but a few years ago, I actually had no idea that Disability Services were available. I'm in the CUNY Grad Center, um, and one of my cohort members I was talking to her about some of the things I was struggling with. It was a mental disability. It was actually ADHD and how I wasn't able to like really focus and get anything done.

And she was like, "Well, this is what you need to do to get services and accommodations." And I'm like, "What? You, you have like services and accommodations? You're like setting up with the Disability Office?" And she's like, "Yeah." And she walked me through the whole process and I'm sharing that to say, I, if I did not open up to her and just share some of the struggles that I was having, I would not know that there was accommodations for me as I was trying to matriculate, um, in my PhD program.

And so, um, I know you've gotten riddled with a lot of questions around like promotions. But just to the CUNY system, in addition to undergrad students, I

think grad students, especially grad students that are doing intensive programs that are extremely critical and totally like mess with your mental and emotional state, that we're providing support for those students as well. And promoting that the service is available because I knew nothing about, um, the service.

So, are you doing anything to assist grad students that do have various disabilities?

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: So, I'm just going to tell you that I heard the cheers coming from 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue when just as you said that. I just want you to know that.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yes, I, that, yes. That building, the library, stressful, yeah.

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: They're excited that you're advocating.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: Yeah, so, in short, yes, there is a Disability Services Office at the Graduate Center, um, and across the, the graduate portfolio, um, with our various schools', um, graduate programs.

DIRECTOR PEREZ: And before I was at Hostos, I spent some time at the Baruch college and at

Brooklyn, where we had graduate students. Um, many students there were in the Grad Center, right, doing some off, off site work, uh, at our campuses. And I think it was really getting into the classrooms, talking to faculty once again and department chairs about accommodations.

Sometimes, uh, talk about stigma, there's also this misassumption that accommodations have to do with failing or passing. No, it's about maximizing on your academic potential. So, if you're an A- student and you should be an A student, you would have to be able to utilize your afforded accommodations. And that was, having those conversations, um, and also students. I know VC Maybank has referenced CCSD but having student ambassadors. There's no better way to get information out as you noticed, as another student saying, "Hey, there's services out there."

Uh, and this is how you're able to get it done. So, we continue to present new student orientation, our faculty orientation, uh, and making sure that department chairs know, this is definitely not about failing or passing. It's about academic potential and

how do we, you know, and help that student to get there.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah, I was going to actually ask if you, um, provided this information during orientations because that would be a really good place. But I don't remember receiving the information at my orientation when I entered into my program.

Um, and also, maybe a suggestion or a question. You can feel free to comment on it, is, is to, in addition to informing folks of the services, to also have this nuanced conversation about, you know, dismantling stigma. Because I think it's, it's important to have those conversations in tandem, because, to your point, my colleague did that for me, by saying like, "No, like, you need this accommodation. You are struggling. It is okay."

Um, because it, I, I was a little like, hesitant to even go into the office to even apply for that accommodation because, and especially black and brown students, which I want to specifically talk about, that stigma is even greater because of the communities we come from. And, and especially if the

disability isn't a physical disability. If you're having some type of mental disability, that stigma is even greater.

And so, me, like overachiever, I'm like, "No, I don't want to go get an accommodation and ask for extra time to like submit a paper." But she kind of walked me through the process and made me comfortable and, um, sort of, confident that I was doing the right thing. So, just adding, when you go to promote the services, I think it's also important to just talk about this issue that seems to be a current theme as well.

Um, okay, I'll turn to some of my questions to the actual just process. Um, so, for CUNY, do, do you ever need to, oh, my time. Can I have extra time? Okay, thank you. Um, thank you. Accommodations in action.

Um, so, um, when you need to verify the disability of incoming or a new student, does part of the verification process include contacting the high school to see if they need special accommodation? So, is there any direct work with the high school or is the, and I, I think I'm hearing the onus is on the

student, but just wanted to know if there is any collaboration with the high school?

DIRECTOR PEREZ: So, outside of being able to assist the students to make that connection, especially if they weren't able to, uh, receive their IEP as they left, uh, the high school, making that connection, finding out who that individual is that they need to speak to, uh, in getting that student the information. And literally walking them through the process of getting that documentation, we do not have a relationship where we can just request the IEP from the high school. We still have to either go through the student, right, or wait for them to then get additional documentation.

I also want to state that documentation is not always the deciding factor on whether an accommodation is going to be given. Uh, the ADA and the latest addendum, allows Disability Services Directors, to make a, uh, professional decision based on aural, right, just being able to meet with the student and hear some of the limitations, uh, of the disability. So, um, you know, even if the student is having trouble with the IEP, we're still able to make

that connection, uh. And as that student is waiting to be able to get further documentation, still be able to serve the student.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. Um, and have you had a situation of the reverse? Have any like, high school administrators or, I know there's always like college counselors, proactively reached out to a college in advance of one of their students coming into your school, um, to, to just sort of give you a heads up if someone has a special need?

DIRECTOR PEREZ: Yeah, so we work very, I mean, I can speak from the Hostos perspective. We, we, we work very closely with our neighboring high schools in, in, Metropolitan high schools in, in general, to be able to create those relationships with the transitional counselors. And we have group days where the counselor comes with the students. We have pizza. We talk about the campus. They get a tour. And we help them through the accommodations, uh, process.

So, we, we have built those relationships. We also, uh, pre-pandemic, used to have College is Possible events where we used to collaborate with NYC and Include. We used to bring parents, caregivers,



uh, students together to just walk them through the, the, the college process and, and to let them know it might be easier to get an A than work the bureaucracy of being able to get through the, the, the college acceptance and application process. So, we, we do work closely with DOE.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you. Just one more question on the bill. And just for the record, I hope CUNY is duplicating what you are doing, cause it seems like to guys are doing a great job, but I'm sure all CUNY Colleges are not doing the same thing. So, I hope if overall CUNY administrators in here are duplicating the effort.

Um, so just on the bill, and I think it just falls on the Mayor's Office of People with Disabilities, what challenges do you forecast in implementing the bill?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: Um, Emily Sweet, MOPD. Um, so certainly, um, as I stated before, we, this is not currently, um, an issue that we've engaged in so we would have to educate ourselves about that. But, um, assuming we, um, were to do this, um, obviously there would be a resource issue. Um, so I think we,

um, welcome the opportunity to speak with, um,  
Committee Members, um, at a later date and delve more  
deeply into these issues. Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thanks, Chairs, for your  
graciousness.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That was, that was time and  
a half. It was perfect. Um.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: And thank you very  
much.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah. Um, Council Member  
Barron?

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Uh, thank you. This is a  
very timely issue. Uh, in our communities outside of  
CUNY, uh, mental health challenges have been, I mean,  
devastating our communities. So, this is great that  
there is a path for those who have those challenges  
that they can, uh, pursue higher education. Um, my  
colleagues often ask a lot of questions around micro  
things that are important but also cost money.

I just want to encourage my colleagues, when we  
get to the budget, and it's \$101 billion, and we look  
at mental health services and we see the pitiful, low  
amount of money allocated for it. And when we look at

CUNY, when I was in the State Assembly, we always fought for CUNY to make sure CUNY had adequate money. And you're right, the state did give some, but not enough. They had a \$220 billion budget.

See, we get to these hearings and say all of these things. Dinowitz, you going to do this? You going to do that? It's 10,000 students. How many officers do you have on each college campus? Or do you just have some staff member, you know, assigned? Or do you have a whole, full office that can provide full services? Remember that at budget time. When we get to the budget, and we pass a budget that cuts, uh, over, uh, hundreds of, uh, millions of dollars from education. And when we get to \$101 billion budget that says you can't hire nobody else, that puts a freeze on it and 3% from every Agency is cut. I just want us to remember that. Cause when we get to these hearings, we get to the micro, and we say things that cost money. And the City has plenty of it. As we speak right now, there's \$8.3 billion in a rainy-day fund. Well, it's raining today so we need to take a little bit out of that.

Having said all of that, um, I want to also say that I always have to do this because I don't think black students are adequately represented when we come to these hearings. We have Hostos here, last hearing on, on, um, employment or job development, we had LaGuardia and Hostos. Where is Medgar Evers? Where is the black colleges? And I'm going to always mention black students, because when it comes to black students, and we have the figure here, 27%, but I want to see either York has a lot of black students, Medgar Evers College has a lot of black students.

One of them should have been sitting up here just like Hostos, explaining to all of the challenges they have. We need to hear it from black students' perspective from these colleges, because oftentimes, we are left out of things. So, I have to always mention black, and there he goes again, absolutely. Every time it's neglected, I'm going to mention the importance of black students being represented.

Having said that, I think the CUNY LEADS program and the Project REACH, I think it is, and CUNY Unlimited, um, how is the funding for those programs,

and what would be the funding need to make them adequate and which colleges have a staff person and which ones have an actual office?

And I want to also consider, I don't what political correctness is nowadays, but I don't think people, students are disabled. I think they are able, and they're challenged, they're emotionally challenged. They are physically challenged. What disables the students is a, a, a lack of budget priorities to help them meet their challenges in a higher learning institution. So, I'm not crazy about the disabled label. You know, I understand, and I've used it in the past. But we need to move towards, you know, these, uh, the emotionally, mentally, physically challenged. And they will not be disabled if we enable them with proper funding so they can have access to higher learning.

DIRECTOR SHOCKLEY: Thank you, Council Member Barron. Um, in thinking about the funding for Project REACH, it's funded by way of a grant through the FAR fund. Um, that's, at this point, most of the funding that goes toward the eight projects that we have. Um, CUNY Unlimited is funded by way of, for campuses that

are participating, as comprehensive transition post-secondary programs. It's a federal designation. Those students are able to draw down PELL funds for their, um, education. Um, Hostos was the first campus that received that approval. Um, and we have three others that are, that'll launch next fall.

Um, the DOE version of that, the, um, through their college inclusion Program, is currently unfunded. Um, and CUNY LEADS, um, each campus has a position where there's a LEADS advisor. There are, um, one job developer per Borough. Um, and then a neurodiversity job developer that's, um, in process of being hired. So, it's an open position that's state funded. Um, and, um, this past year, the state also in, included an additional resource for CUNY LEADS, um, that was a, we're hoping, you know, something that we'll see again at \$165,000.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right. Oh, come on now. Look at that. \$165,000, really? I mean, that's, I think they spend more on lunch money during the course of the year. But this, this is a real problem. You know, this is a real challenge cause this is a serious issue. You know, when we talk about crime in

our community, it's not more police. It's, it's not more jails. It's more jobs, more workforce development, more anti-poverty programs and more mental health services in our public schools, and you mentioned the wrap around services.

This is why I think you're doing a wonderful job with meager resources. And it really needs to be, it's on us, you know, I mean, we could always get better. Nobody's perfect. You know, everybody can get better than what you're doing. But unless we really fund it appropriately, \$165,000? And I've seen in our budget \$1.1 million for work, \$1.1 million for workforce development out of \$101 billion. Took care of the police, but they didn't take care of us.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, Council Member Barron.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I know he was going to end to end that. (CROSSTALK)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I see why you, you, your run on sentences and your stream of consciousness.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I have to, I have to cause I say to the other, "Oh, have plenty of time, Council

Member Williams. Yeah, go ahead." But generous to me? He can't wait till I stop.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Those were questions. What do you want? Uh, Council Member Brewer would like to ask some questions?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Would you like to continue, Council Member Barron?

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Uh, no thanks, Council Member Brewer. I, I appreciate your generosity, but I fulfilled my mission.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Sorry. Two things. One, uh, we've been joined by Deputy Speaker Ayala and, uh, it's Professor Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Oh, please. I teach at Hunter, but one of the questions, though, is, cause in the past, we have a new room to teach in now, the previous room would not have been able to accommodate a wheelchair. So, my question is, uh, maybe you discussed this. I'm sorry, I was at another meeting, but are there campuses that still need, and I know you talked about this a little bit, ADA for those who do use wheelchairs or other kinds of support? Cause it does seem at Hunter, maybe there, there are



elevators in some of them, but there are classrooms that are really small. I don't know if this is an issue. I just, I do have a lot of friends in wheelchairs, a lot of students in wheelchairs, et cetera, so, I was just wondering if this is an issue, or maybe it's not.

DIRECTOR PEREZ: So, um, space is always an issue, um, when it comes to, uh, college campuses, and pre-pandemic we, we packed in chairs and tables and things of that nature. And it, it could affect a student with a disability, especially if they were using some form of mobility device. Uh, students who do use some form of mobility device does check in with the disability service office. Uh, we do place accessible furniture in the classroom and we, and we remove preexisting furniture to kind of give space. Looking at it from a universal design perspective, we would love for the request not to even happen.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah.

DIRECTOR PEREZ: It's just there, uh, and, and hopefully we will get there, uh, at some point. But, um, we're there to accommodate the student, uh, and

sometimes that even means moving the class in its entirety to locate it to a class with more space.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. So, it's a burden on the students. That's a challenge that you're trying to avoid and we're trying to avoid, for sure.

DIRECTOR PEREZ: Correct.

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: And the age of our, the age of our buildings is, is what it is and so, retrofitting some of those spaces is really difficult. But we do as much as possible with the resources that are provided to do that. But it's not going to be easy getting.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, that's my experience. Uh, second is, I call it John Megaloose (SP?) Goose, uh, professional, uh, school, obviously, been there many times and so I call it his school. Many things are his school. But the question is, how, if you know, has the, obviously that's a virtual opportunity, do more students who have in some cases disabilities or, uh, differently abled is another way that I like to put it, um, using that as an opportunity for college? Or that is not something that comes up in your discussions?

Because obviously, if it's hard to move around, sometimes just getting to campus is a challenge not to mention. My friends, I have a lot of friends in wheelchairs. Their biggest issue is transportation. That is much more challenging than CUNY or any other work opportunity. It's getting to the place. So, if you can do it virtually, they love it. So, is that something that comes up often, not at all? Or are people just doing that application on their own? IS there some, do you suggest that to people? How does that work? How does that play in, uh, the, the world that you're in?

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: I think, once again, um, that peer to peer experience has really paid off for students. So, I had a meeting, um, I think it was two semesters ago now with a set of students who had various disabilities and so forth. And it was, we were still remote for the pandemic piece, and they were talking about the fact that if it were not for online classes, they, because they were immunocompromised, many of them, they would not have been able to come back anyway.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right.

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: And so, I think as we move forward in building our online portfolio, we are responding to the reality of students needing more of those opportunities. You know, the pandemic did a lot to us, but it taught us a lot.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right.

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: It forced us to pay attention to what we do and how we do it differently. And I believe that we are in a position of trying to make certain that we're responsive to what we now know. So, yes, SPS did start off as the foundation for our online program development. That is now in the Office of the Provost, in the, uh, Office of Academic Affairs, and I think you just had my whole set of colleagues here to talk about what was going on online. Um, and so, that effort, I believe, is going to make a difference for students with disabilities as much as anyone else.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It's just my experience because the campuses are older, the classrooms are older, that the setup for online, if you're not at SPS or maybe Baruch, which is, I don't know, newer, some of the newer campuses, good luck. Um, if the

guy's not there at 8:00 in the morning when I teach, uh, the IT is not working, the, you know, it's not happening.

So, I'm just saying, if we're thinking about incorporating IT and online for students in general, but particularly those who are differently abled, then, there's a lot of work to be done. So, I keep going back to the infrastructure, because it's, I know it's expensive, but that's where a lot of challenges are for this community. I mean, I, it would not work where I teach, I can tell you that right now because half the time the IT, I got to call somebody, and he's not there.

DIRECTOR PEREZ: You're absolutely correct and I think that March of 2019, not, it really changed the game for higher education and being able to provide, you know, virtual instruction and services. And we turned to SPS, uh, and our colleagues there.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Turned to John. That's what you.

DIRECTOR PEREZ: To lead the way.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah.

DIRECTORY PEREZ: Because they were doing it for, for so long. But, uh, we have been able to adapt, and I think the last three years, we've been able to create opportunities that pre-pandemic would never be able to provide.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: No, I agree. I just, because of the infrastructure being what it is, there's just a lot more work to be done.

DIRECTOR PEREZ: Correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, Professor. It's not an inaccurate title, is it?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: 35 years I've been doing it.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Alright. So, super professor, I guess is more appropriate. I want to go back to something related, I think it was Council Member Williams was asking about sharing information from the high school to the college, which is the crux of my bill, which is sharing the data. And you made mention of not sharing that information.

But I, I kind of want to dig a little deeper. There is information that is shared between the

Department of Education and CUNY, uh. There, there is a working relationship, not just with these programs, but I have the freshman application worksheet, for example. And you ask for the student's OSIS number. And the OSIS number is a student, an NYCDOE student's identification number. What information is shared between the DOE, the Department of Education K-12 and CUNY by a student providing that OSIS number?

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: I don't know that I'm going to be able to answer that off the top, um, but we certainly can get that for you. But, yes, there is a data feed. I'm not going to deny that.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay.

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Um.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, there's a data feed, so there is data shared. And in this bill, the goal would be to say if a student and their family so desires, because there are privacy, FERPA issues, those exist and that's why we're relying on MOPD to help us work through that. If the student so desires, and the family, maybe an advocacy organization that they work with, that data can also be shared.

And if it is shared, can CUNY, would CUNY be able to commit to providing outreach to the students that they receive who say, "Oh, this student has an IEP or a 504, uh, well, an IEP," cause a 504 would carry with them, then an IEP. We have the capacity to do outreach or to send them a very specific mailer or phone call so that, so that they're not relying like Council Member Williams and, and Hanif are relying on just their friends who happen to know something about the way something works. Is that a commitment that CUNY Central would be able to, to make and to work with the colleges to do? Say yes.

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Feed me my lines.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I just.

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Um, you know, it, it's a matter of being certain that, first off, we take care of those privacy issues because the IEP.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, let's, let's just go on the assumption on that they're taken care of and that's part of the work.

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm going, I'm going to get to you in a sec. I know you've been just very patient



listening, but I, I have a question for you that addresses this, too.

VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: Development of a communication that can pushed, yeah, those are things that are doable. I mean, we do that for different populations now, so there's no reason why we couldn't do that. Is that sufficient? Becomes my question. Because there's so much, there's so much information flowing at any given moment when you are preparing to go to college. Stuff comes to you in so many ways, but we need to find ways to, to have the personal touch and that's bandwidth. That's positions. That's people. That's resources. That's different.

And so, yeah, we can send a communication that says make sure you check this resource. Make sure you click on this link. Send an email to those students who are identified because we've gotten over those other hurdles. But is that sufficient, in, with the population would be?

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right. well, I, I would think obviously, the personal touch. Any of us who do, uh, campaigns know, it's always that, that personal touch, whether it's the individual college,

or again, CUNY Central and, and to my, what I've observed in these past few hearings we've done, is it, it, there's a lot of resources at CUNY Central, which I don't think are being leveraged to, and this is my perspective, in the, in the proper way, um, to ensure that the individual campuses are either getting the resources or the support that they need.

And I think the example, look, you brought, you brought Hostos, uh, Hostos here, uh, who appears to have a great marketing campaign, marketing team, uh, appears to be doing that outreach. How are you leveraging that to make sure that the other colleges who, I don't want to hold it up again, but had eight-point type in their student handbook.

Another college I was looking at, I don't have, I didn't print it out, they have like a many hundred page something handbook. And the only thing it mentions about disabilities is nondiscrimination. That doesn't speak to the heart of, you know, really what students need. It's, it's, nondiscrimination is different than providing resources.

And so, I believe that CUNY really needs to be providing more resources to have (INAUDIBLE) more

coordination between campuses cause look, if Hostos, again, you obviously brought the best one here.

Hostos is doing something, you're not going to bring the worst. If Hostos is doing something right, let's make sure those resources are, are, um, available.

If data sharing exists, I, I want to, now, I want to talk about the data sharing for, for, for a second. The DOE, uh, currently uses a program called CCIS and I know that, any teach, especially a teacher watching a teacher who's watching this or reading the transcript is rolling their eyes cause CCIS. I have to like use my words carefully. It isn't great. And it's being reworked. I believe the DOE is in contract, um, with another company. Experis? Someone will correct me. It's a Milwaukee-based company. I don't know why they can't use a New York City based company, but that's a, not my thing.

They're developing a new program, and the DOE is, it's going to be pre-K through 12, but you know, the work we do as a City and the focus of this Committee, for example, has been recognizing CUNY isn't just CUNY. CUNY is what happens before, during, and after. That's what we're talking about, uh, workforce

development. That's why we're talking about how we're integrating with high schools. It's why we're talking about all these things.

And so, that's a really important role for, uh, MOPD to be involved in, right, because the DOE is going to be focused on DOE. But you're sort of a, you're, you're Mayor's Office for the people, right, not just students but people with disabilities. Have, has the Mayor's, has MOPD, had any involvement with the Department of, of, uh, Education and their development and purchase of the new system designed for students with IEPs in, in pre-K through 12?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: No, I'm not aware of any.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Wait. Time out. Microphone.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: Emily Sweet, MOPD. I'm not aware of any involvement. But we could find out and I can't confirm that. But I'm not aware of any involvement with that.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Council Member Brewer said she's sure the answer is no. and for the record, I agree with her. So, now my second question is, can you? And again, this is the importance of the bill

because the IEP isn't, is just for, for, you know, K through 12, but can be used for students at CUNY, uh, as documentation for accommodations?

So, can the, can, can MOPD work with DOE in the development of the system? And I'll speak to something specifically. One of the things they're looking at, and this is one of the challenges of students coming and getting, uh, that documentation, is they don't have access to their own IEPs unless it's printed out for them and handed or mailed to them. It's the same with parents.

But there's going to be a parent-facing component. And as this is being development, can, is your Office able to say, "You know what, maybe after the approval of the students and the parent, perhaps there is a, a nonprofit, perhaps. There's the one that works with the District 75 schools." Perhaps CUNY, through the student and parents' approval also maybe have access to the IEP so that it, so that the outreach, not only can the outreach happen, but that when the student has that conversation, has that personal touch, they don't have to go through extra steps to get a document that belongs to them to begin

with and speaks to their personal needs, that that can be transmitted directly in, in whatever form the student chooses, can be transmitted directly to CUNY, so we don't, so they don't have to go through this whole process and they can just get what they need. Is the something that your Office can commit to coordinating? As this, before even the legislation go, gets through, this software is being developed now. Can we, can we do that?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: So, I can't commit to that at this time, but certainly any, um, policy that, that makes sense and is going to, and is in the control of a City Agency, um, you know, we would, we would advocate for that as the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, so, it makes sense. So, can you just say yes?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: Uh, I think, I, I, honestly, I'm not completely following it exactly all the details but it's something that we can look at and, um, you know, we do advocate for policies, um, to be followed by City Agencies that, that, that help people with disabilities.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, I think what I'm saying is your Office is for all people and I think you would, people with disabilities rather, no matter the age. And I would think your Office, your Agency specifically, would have a vested interest in making the lives of students with disabilities easier and recognizing that they're disability doesn't end at 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

And you have an incredible opportunity as a system is being built from the ground up to get in on the ground floor and ensure that the students are supported beyond 12<sup>th</sup> grade, that you're doing everything you can to provide that coordination, which is what this bill, bill speaks to.

And I understand you're, uh, unable to answer, but I, I do think it's, I, I would hope that you'd, uh, bring that back to, to the, as an Agency of the City that's, I think responsible for, for advocating for all people with disabilities, that you talk to Agencies like the Department of Education and like CUNY, um, to help students with disabilities.

And I, I have no doubt that you're going to see the students requesting, or eligible for

accommodations increase, no doubt that you're going to see an increase in, in retention and graduation rates for students with disabilities, and especially, you're, you're going to find fewer students saying, "Thank god I have a friend who walked me through the process," and more students saying, "Thank god I have a City that works for me."

I know there are questions about resources. And I have one other question, I think it's one other question, is, are federal funds available or do you apply for federal funds, um, to help pay for or reimburse you, whether it's Medicaid reimbursements or anything like that, um, for the accommodations that you provide and are legally required to provide and, you know, morally should provide? Federal fund, federal reimbursement, is any of that available to CUNY?

DIRECTOR PEREZ: I can't speak on CUNY but being on the campus, there's no federal funds that we receive specifically or reimbursed or bill for. We, uh, state funds, when we talk about readers aid, and things of that nature, but that's state, not federal.



VICE CHANCELLOR MAYBANK: I'm not aware of any.  
We'll check, but I'm not aware of any.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay. And because I think.

DIRECTOR PEREZ: That say, everything that we've,  
we, we, are able to bill for, it's state or, or  
request funding, it's state.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay. And there's no, okay.  
Uh, I'll, I'll leave it there, but I know you'll get  
back to me. It is something that I've certainly need  
to be brought up with the Chancellor. I know that  
he's looking into it, but I guess individual  
campuses, but each, would definitely love.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Mr. Chair, can they bill  
Medicaid?

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, that was sort of,  
sort of my question, but it, they don't. but I'm  
asking if you could look into that because our public  
schools, K-12, uh, we do get Medicaid reimbursements  
as a centralized system. And I'm, it's, it's unclear  
to me why CUNY can't, especially as we're, we're,  
we're talking about funding and we're, and it sounds  
like you're talking about \$100,000 for a program that  
really deeply and positively impacts students as an

example. And I love that you laid out the bullet points for. You, do you want to? You're welcome to.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: No, I was just going to say, we all know that the health centers, I mean, I don't need, in the DOE, bill Medicaid, blah, blah, blah. In other words, if sometimes the parents don't want to do it, that's a different story. But if, if.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But it's available there, and.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Absolutely. I've been to every health center in Manhattan in a school and they bill. And, you know, doesn't solve all their problems. There are certain things that aren't eligible, but they bill. It would seem to me, thanks to the Chair, they would be eligible to do so.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Try it, see what happens. Uh, I want to turn it, uh, apologies. I want to turn it over to Chair Lee.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Sorry, just two real quick questions. Um, so we talked about obviously, um, the engagement with students and, you know, I think Council Member Williams, uh, illustrated it really well about the peer to peer but then also, um, you

know, the suggestion of maybe including something or emphasizing it more so during orientation. But, just out of curiosity, what has the, um, uh, engagement been, if at all, with I guess the parents or the guardians before they come into the schools, because oftentimes, you know, the parents or guardians, may, um, you know, help in, in the forms and the financials and all of that. And so, how, how has the engagement been on that, that side of things?

DIRECTORY SHOCKLEY: So, regularly, um parents or, um, transition coordinators, will reach out and ask specifically about programs that we have, um, and, you know, we connect them to the campuses. You know, generally, we try to start with the conversation around a, a student major interest, um, and then direct accordingly. And then help them connect with the accommodations office at that campus. But I would say, you know, regularly, we receive inquiries via email and via phone, um, where people are trying to figure out what's the right fit for their, their person.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Got it. Okay. Yeah, cause I was just thinking in the case of, um, you know, certain

students who, like Council Member Hanif mentioned, you know, may be a bit more on the shy side in advocating for themselves, you know, especially parents, hopefully they would, uh, advocate and get involved in well. Um, also, for, um, Deputy Commissioner, just out of curiosity, do you know by any chance, how the, the MOPD Commissioner's opinions is on the bill for Intro 660?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: I think that, um, as I said this is, this is not an issue that we've been engaged in, so we really are not in a position at this time to comment on the actual program design. Um, but it's, you know, we are, we are being educated today on, on this. Um, and the Commissioner herself, is, would be happy to speak with, um, the Committee at a later date.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Uh, just quick check. Is Callie (SP?) Wilkerson (?) here? Okay. And is Michael, I don't have a last name, just Michael? Okay. So, if anybody here who wants to testify before we go to

Zoom, please fill out a slip, uh, at the desk in the front.

Um, I want to say one other about the bill and it's, it's, and, and, to, you know, to appreciate the, um, relationship you've built with counselors, with teachers, with, with different schools, uh, around, around your campus or around the City and that's always important. And I don't want to take away from that work. Um, but I also know having, um, done this work that transition, there, there are transition coordinators and counselors who are, you know, thrown into this position without, in the high schools, without any time, without any extra compensation. Time is really the big one. Um, and are not given the support.

And I just think, uh, that the teachers are given the support they need and a lot of times the counselors aren't, um, and it's, it's not a you thing. But I'm just explaining that the students miss out. The students lose out and I just think we have an opportunity here to, you know, take a, a little bit, a little bit, off of the, off of the, off of the workload of the teachers and the social workers who

are already like overburdened with, with jobs they, they never thought they'd have to do.

You know, we didn't talk about any of the other challenges our CUNY students and high school students face, but we all know them. We've heard them from hearing to hearing, way outside the classroom. Um, and this is, again, this bill's really an opportunity to provide more for more of our students without, without continuing to overburden our educators, who, particularly during the pandemic, have, have done so much for our students going through what is probably the hardest time in their life and maybe the hardest time, um, they'll ever have to go through.

Um, I'd like to, uh, do, any, any other Council Members have, uh, any last questions before I close out the panel? Um, I would like to thank you all, uh, for coming. I, I look forward to, uh, talking more and working more on behalf of students with disabilities, and working more on this legislation to make sure that they have every opportunity to succeed, and that you have the information that you need to provide them with what, what they deserve. Thank you, CUNY, and thank you, uh, MOPD.

PANELISTS: Thank you, thank you, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I will now call up the first in person panel. It's, uh, Callie Wilkerson. I apologize, Callie Wilkerson. Hi, Callie. Uh, you have three minutes to testify, and you may begin when you're ready.

MS. WILKERSON: Okay. Hi.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Hi.

MS. WILKERSON: Um, so, I'm actually a college student attending Borough of Manhattan Community College. I'm actually 20, so, this is like my first year in person, um. Online didn't work out for me so I did take a gap year and that was actually very hard for me considering the fact that, um, early on in my childhood, I was diagnosed with ADHD.

And I've been like trying to work out how to deal with having ADHD in college, because apparently, I didn't know that it does not follow me from, you know, early on in childhood to college. And nobody actually told me that during orientation. And I wish they did because, um, then I would have ended up, you know, getting my accommodations I was supposed to, but nobody told me.

And, um, that's pretty much all I have to say but I do wish that somebody would kind of like also advocate for the students as well, kind of just like meet us halfway here because there are some kids like me, I don't know. I don't even know where is the office in the school. And, um, I don't think there is really much marketing and advertisement for, uh, the mental disabilities and stuff. So, I kind of wish that we had some sort of meeting halfway point there for, between the staff and the students.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I've, Callie, thank you so much. I first want to say the same thing as, uh, I said to my colleagues. I think you just coming up here, um, and expressing that you have, ADHD, you said, is incredibly powerful and I, I think is incredibly impactful to, you know, some of your colleagues, friends, peers, um, who may, who may in a position where, you know, they don't want to, they don't want to share. And they're now going to be more comfortable because you're, you're sharing.

Um, so let me ask you. If your, let's pretend that there were a system where CUNY knew from your high school that you had, and I assume it was IEP?



MS. WILKERSON: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That you had an IEP, and they reached out to you, you know, during orientation, during whether, when maybe you were doing CUNY Start or Math Start, or maybe just first day of classes. Do you think you have been helped by that?

MS. WILKERSON: I do definitely think I would have been helped if somebody also approached me and said, "Hey, we also have these accommodations. If you need these sort of accommodations, we can help you with that. If not, then that's fine, too."

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah. See? She agrees. Um, uh, do other Council, before I go on, do other Council Members have, uh, any questions?

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: No.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Council Member Williams?

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: No, just saying that I understand cause I was in the same boat and I was diagnosed when I was younger. Um, just something that I struggle with as an adult, ADHD. And I didn't really know how it impacted my ability to really like focus and accomplish my tasks. So, just wanted to

share my solidarity with you as you are trying to further your education and not really having resources to support you in your education, and not knowing where to go, which is even more frustrating for a college student. So, thank you for sharing and testifying with us today.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Have you since gone to the Office of People with Disabilities?

MS. WILKERSON: No. I don't know where that is. I'm, I'm sure it's in the main building, but I don't know where that is.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, it's different, you said, BMCC?

MS. WILKERSON: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, it's even a different school, but I think that kind of speaks to the point that I was speaking about and, um, I know you're not on the panel anymore, but I'm addressing, uh, CUNY, which is that, the important role of Central, I mean, right here, this is. I thank you so much for testifying. This is exactly what I'm talking about. It is, it is not easy to find it. And Central has a role and an opportunity to provide directions and

directives, rather, and best practices to each individual, uh, campus.

So, it's right there so people can, can find it easily. And of course, as, as, as, as Callie mentioned, like that, that outreach. Um, so, I am positive that these very fine people from CUNY will help you locate the Office, um, so you can the, the support that you need. Uh, one other I question I have that I'm interested in. You said that you took a gap year because of online learning?

MS WILKERSON: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah. I, I, I also, I think a lot of people especially with ADHD find online learning very challenging. And I would imagine it's kind of hard for a professor to notice what you look like in the virtual classroom, meaning notice, I guess, if you're in the classroom, um, and you appear to be struggling, if you're physically there, it may be easier for, for a professor to notice. But on Zoom, I, I imagine, like, you could just easily turn your camera off if you don't want to be seen. Is that, was that kind of your experience in?

MS. WILKERSON: Um, so, my experience was, I actually had night classes, so that was also very rough for me since that was like the only thing that was available for me. And I just needed to get like that class, and I needed that credit. So, there were times where I would be, just turn off my camera, and I would just kind of like be somewhere else. Or I'd be on my phone, or I'd just so happen to fall asleep in class.

But me being in person, there's the opportunity where I'm sitting in front of the class and I'm learning and I'm, like, talking face to face with my professor. And I'm not falling asleep in class or I'm actually engaging because it's better for me. And I feel like that's the best way that I'm able to learn.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah. Or if you are struggling in class, the professor can, you know, he or she will see you on their, on your phone, or see you falling asleep. And I just, and I kind of want to make sure CUNY hears that as much as we celebrate the online learning, and the things it can do for people with, uh, autoimmune diseases and, and, um, the physical disabilities that can't get physically to a

place, there are also the other limitations especially with those, uh, again, those, those invisible disabilities that, that we don't always talk about. Um, but I think, again CUNY Central's role in recognizing that is vital here. Um, Callie, is there anything else you'd like to share with us?

MS. WILKERSON: Um, no, but I would definitely love to learn about like what my accommodations would be, because back in high school, I was getting like extra time on quizzes and stuff like that. And I do also believe that, cause I recently took a midterm and it was a timed midterm. It was three hours, and I had late classes that night, and I didn't start my quiz until 8:00 at night.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah.

MS. WILKERSON: So, I did not get to finish. I did not answer all the questions. And somehow, I made it and got a 75.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Alright. Well, Callie, you are a, a, I, I can't tell you how much I appreciate you coming here, waiting through the hearing and then testifying, really like baring your soul here and, and your, and your needs. I think it's really

powerful, uh, and I am, like I said, as soon as you get up, you go right, right to the top. Alright. No one else has questions? Callie, thank you so much. Really appreciate it. Go see CUNY.

MS. WILKERSON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: They're going to help you right now. We will now move to the remote testimony.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yeah. Um, unless there's anyone in the room who has submitted a witness slip or has not, please do now. Okay. Thank you. We will now move to the remote testimony. You will have three minutes to testify each. As a reminder, once your name is called, a member of our staff will unmute, and you may begin once the Sergeant at Arms sets the clock and cues you.

Our first panel will be Giovanni Love, Juliette Eisenstein, Kaylah Williams, and Christopher Skylar. Giovanni, you may begin when the Sergeant cues you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has begun.

MR. LOVE: Uh, yeah. First of all, I'm, uh, letting you know that I have two superpowers. Um, I have ADHD and I am also autistic. Um, I didn't go to college, uh, because of insert sad childhood story

here. Uh, so I started in August of 2020. Um, and when I transferred to BMCC, um, I had such a difficult time and I actually had paperwork, uh, with my disabilities on it, that I happened to get because of a scholarship I was given to get extensive testing. Um, one of the main things that I would advocate for is the lack of testing. Um, I come from a poor background and, uh, without that scholarship, I wouldn't have gotten my testing done, and wouldn't have received, um, help.

And, uh, when I was applying to BMCC, it was so difficult that I nearly gave up, including dropping out of the winter semester that I was enrolled in 2021 because I was just freefalling. And that doesn't work for me. Um, Daphne, I want to give a shout out to her, because without her literally calling me on the phone and talking me out of quitting, um, I would have.

And I'm an adult. And that left me just horrified about what kids are doing because I at least have some ability to speak up for myself. But I know like even being in online classes, kids don't even have

that ability to speak up for themselves because of all the insecurity that goes with being young.

And, uh, right now, I'm grateful for the online classes because I'm actually in Nevada taking care of my mother who is mentally ill, which is a whole nother challenge because, uh, being autistic, uh, you know, I have a hard time functioning in the world sometimes. And so, uh, I'm grateful for those online classes.

Um, I still don't think I'm getting the full spectrum of what I could be getting from services at BMCC, and I plan to transfer to John J with the hope of eventually getting into law school. I was actually missing my pre-law, uh, society group today to attend this event through my political science class. And I'm so glad I did because I have to agree 100% with Council Member Charles Barron, who said, none of this means anything unless you fund it. And everybody loves kids.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

MR. LOVE: Sorry.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You can take, you can take another few seconds to finish that thought.



MR. LOVE: Thank you. They, they talk about the future, and mental health care, and how important all of this is until it comes time to allocate the funds. That's all I have to say. We need those funds.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you again for, oh. Um, uh, you know, I want to thank you for, for, for testifying. I, I can also say, uh, I'm glad you didn't give up either, cause I think your testimony is very powerful. And again, anyone watching this, you know, you mentioned, kids may be a little apprehensive about, you know, self-identifying with a disability. But, you know, the more and more people who speak up and speak out in forums like this, and say I have a disability, and I'm doing great. I'm getting help where I need more help is really powerful, um, and going to help a lot of, a lot of kids and a lot of people. So, thank you. Um, our next speaker.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: No, I was just going to say thank you again so much for sharing and, and the funding part is something that we're always advocating, cause one of the things I would get frustrated about all the time, uh, when I was a

nonprofit executive was that, you know, we had to always, uh, we were, there was more demanded of us, but with not, no funding to, to actually, um, implement a lot of things that we needed. So, I appreciate your comments on that, too. And we'll definitely try to fight for that as well. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Our next panelist will be Juliette Eisenstein. You may begin when the Sergeant cues you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has begun.

STAFF ATTORNEY EISENSTEIN: Thank you for the chance to testify today. My name is Juliette Eisenstein, and I am a staff attorney on advocates for children of New York's post-secondary readiness project. we're here today to testify in support of Intro 660, which would establish a program to provide transition services for students with disabilities entering higher education.

Students with disabilities, that many have already said, often face obstacles to getting the accommodations and supports they need in college. While in high school, IEP teams are required to meet annually at a minimum to create appropriate

programming for students with disabilities. In college, the burden of responsibility shifts to the student to disclose that they have a disability and request accommodations. Often, students must advocate for the supports they need.

I have seen first-hand how difficult this transition can be for students with disabilities even the strongest of self-advocates, many of whom we've heard from today, can struggle to figure out who to turn to in order to get the accommodations they need to succeed in college.

I recently worked with a student who had special education in, supports in place throughout high school and when she started college, those accommodations abruptly ended, and she didn't know where to turn to for help. The program established by Intro 660 would help such students enter institutions of higher education with the necessary accommodations already in place. It would help ensure students know how to obtain their accommodations and would allow them to consent to having the DOE share their disability status with the college they'll be attending.

We're also encouraged by the incorporation of student advocates in this bill which allows students with disabilities entering college to see and feel that they have student allies that they can turn to as they navigate new and often difficult experiences.

While we support Intro 660, we want to ensure that the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, which would be tasked with implementation, takes full advantage of existing infrastructures. In the past several years, the New York City Department of Education has opened Transition and College Access Centers or TCACs in each Borough, which are specifically tasked with helping students with disabilities in New York City transition into post-secondary life.

These centers which have relationships with high schools across the City and conduct outreach to high school students with disabilities and their families, are not widely known by the general public. And yet, given their access to information and their staff's knowledge of special education, they can play an integral role in facilitating students with

disabilities' transitions from high school to college.

While the bill tasks the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities to consult with the DOE, we recommend that the bill specify the need for consultation and collaboration with TCACs to get the initiatives proposed in Intro 660 up and running. In addition, we recommend that the website and other outreach strategies required by the bill, specifically include information about the services provided by the TCACs.

We look forward to working with you to ensure students with disabilities have the support they need to thrive after they leave high school. Uh, thank you for the opportunity to testify and if you have any questions, I'm happy to answer them.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can you repeat the transition centers, the name of it?

STAFF ATTORNEY EISENSTEIN: Yeah. Yes, they're called Transition and College Access Centers or TCACs. So, T-C-A-C-s is how they're usually referred to by the DOE.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. You know, we, we love acronyms here in the City, so that's.

STAFF ATTORNEY EISENSTEIN: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I thought after CUNY and MOPD left we were done with acronyms, but I guess not.

STAFF ATTORNEY EISENSTEIN: No.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can we call, thank you very much. Um, can we call the next witness please?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Our next witness will be Kaylah Williams. You may begin when the Sergeant cues you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has begun.

MS. WILLIAMS: Uh, good afternoon. My name is Kaylah Williams. I am a sophomore at Gutman Community College and an alum of (INAUDIBLE) young advocacy program. Uh, Young Advocates is a national, nonprofit organization committed to amplifying the voices of young adults, ages 18 to 34, and expanding economic opportunity for generations.

Um, I just want to take a moment to thank the Council for hearing me today. Um, first of all, the disability that I have is cerebral palsy. Um, it

makes things difficult with my motor systems. It's directed on my right side, and I've gotten all types of therapy, physical therapy, occupation therapy, speech therapy.

Um, the help sort of died when I transferred to higher education and the most thing that I'm probably concerned about is, um, being penalized for being late to class. That's something that I really struggled with in my first year because the MTA system isn't really always reliable. But, um, when I had told the Office of Accessibility at my school, they kind of just gave me an Access-A-Ride application, but it wasn't really helpful. I was wondering if the Office of Accessibilities could be more open minded and give more accommodations to people with physical disabilities, not just extra time and cater to more of with learning disabilities.

Um, having access to the elevator is nice, but I would like to also have windows of (INAUDIBLE) time, so if I'm late for class, I won't be penalized. Or if I'm going to my next class, I'd have like a five-minute slot of getting there earlier (INAUDIBLE)

class. SO, that's what I'm most concerned about,  
transportation.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Can you remind  
us what school you said you go to?

MS. WILLIAMS: Gutman Community college.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Um, thank you so much, Kayla,  
for sharing. I just wanted to say, uh, I really  
appreciate you staying on to testify, um, and waiting  
this long. So, thank you very much. And, um, coming  
from a neighborhood in Queens where it is a transit  
desert, um, I hear from families all the time, how  
much of a struggle it is to get to and from, uh,  
school for their children. And it impacts the whole  
family. Um, so, I, I appreciate, uh, everything that  
you shared and just wanted to say thank you.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I want to say thank you as  
well. And for those who are watching, uh, at home,  
CUNY Central is still here taking notes. And so,  
they, they are hearing your story and when they're  
hearing your story, you represent thousands and  
thousands of students who, who aren't here. Um, so  
it's very powerful and I thank you for, for coming



out and testifying today. Can we call the next, uh, witness please?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Our last panelist will be Christopher Skylar. You may begin when the Sergeant cues you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has begun.

SENIOR STAFF ATTORNEY SKYLAR: Good afternoon, uh, Chair Dinowitz and Chair Lee, uh, Council Members. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today. Um, I am, um, I have a, my name is Christopher Skylar. I am senior staff attorney with the Disability Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. Um, and I am a person who stutters, um, which is, which is one of the invisible disabilities that we've heard from, or heard about today. Um, and in many cases, and I have benefited, I had, um, had I had more resources and knowledge of what accommodations were available to me, uh, when I was in school.

So, this bill is very, um, is very relevant to me and very important. Um, but my organization, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, um, is, um, is very kind of keyed into education access issues. Uh, we've

helped, uh, helped college students, um, in securing accommodations, um, and going through appeals, appeals processes for when they've been denied. We're also quite active in, um, in higher education licensing exams, um, accommodations. So, we, so, we definitely care about this bill quite a bit.

Um, so, we ultimately are in support of the bill. Um, and we think it's a great idea, uh, for MOPD to, uh, to establish a system of sharing between colleges, um, the students' information. It's also set up student advocates and the annual report. Uh, we like all of that. And, uh, you know, we, you know, as the Committee points out that college students who, with disabilities are kind of largely left on their own to seek accommodations. Um, and so, this is, uh, these are very important changes. It can be very dizzying, um, for college students, submitting all the paperwork, and the appointments, and the follow ups. Um, and then god forbid, they are denied. They have to go through appeals processes. And it's also extremely stressful. Um, and very high stakes.

So, we recently, um, helped a student appeal a denial, uh, where she had, um, had medical reasons

for needing to continue remote work and her school did deny her request initially. Um, and after an appeals process, that was kind of long and drawn out, uh, the school granted it. But they need to be granted more quickly and more easily.

Um, and so, you know, more students with disabilities in the classroom are important for increased diversity. Uh, the disability is a diversity metric that's often sort of underrepresented, underappreciated. Um, you know, more diversity in the classroom will.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Expired.

SENIOR STAFF ATTORNEY SKYLAR: Uh, will also, uh, maybe I could have another moment to finish up.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, please continue. Please continue.

SENIOR STAFF ATTORNEY SKYLAR: Thank you. Um, just people with disabilities are traditionally underrepresented in higher education and later in the workplace and so, having more, having more people with disabilities, um, actually in school, will increase diversity and representation both in classrooms and later on, including and maybe

especially for people with disabilities also belong to minority groups.

So, we, just a couple suggestions to finish up, um, is that MOPD, um, should push schools to simplify requests processes and remove any barriers, clarify their handbooks, um, and clarify their appeals processes. Um, MOPD should meet regularly with stakeholders and disability advocates like my organization. Um, the annual reports should include information about denials. Of course, while maintaining anonymity. MOPD should interface with state protection and advocacy offices to benefit from their experiences. Um, and with respect to COVID related accommodations, um, including remote schooling, requests should be more freely granted when needed. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for your testimony.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: No. I just wanted to say I'm a big fan of NYLFBI so, thanks for all that you do. Another acronym, NYLFBI, sorry.

SENIOR STAFF ATTORNEY SKYLAR: There you go.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: We have a scorecard in the back, how many acronyms have been said today.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

SENIOR STAFF ATTORNEY SKYLAR: I'm glad to have the last (INAUDIBLE) on acronyms.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll move to our next panel which will be Amema (SP?) Wassim (SP?) and Ellen McCue (SP?), if they are on Zoom. Looks like they're not, so, if there is anyone present in the room or on Zoom that has not had the opportunity to testify, they can raise their hand. Thank you.

Seeing no one else, I would like to note that written testimony which will be reviewed in full by Committee Staff, may be submitted to the record up to 72 hours after the close of this hearing by emailing it to [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). Um, Chair Lee and Chair Dinowitz, we have concluded public testimony for this hearing.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. SO, I guess I'll go first. Closing statement?

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Please.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Oh, okay. Um, no, I'll, I'll be, I'll be very brief. Um, no, I just wanted to really

say thank you, especially, um, you know, as Chair Dinowitz said, I don't know if you guys can see on the Zoom, but, um, the CUNY staff are still here, uh, which I think is to their credit.

And I really appreciate the fact that you guys stuck around to listen to the testimonies, um, and for those of you who are on Zoom or are hearing this testimony afterwards, I really would encourage folks even who weren't able to attend, um, to submit their testimonies cause, um, getting as much feedback as possible will help us to, um, improve and better the bill as well as any accommodations or systems that need to be, changes that need to be made.

So, um, just want to say thank you. Um, and then also especially to our, um, Committee Staff, uh, who have very, very, uh, related experience in this area, which I sincerely appreciate cause it makes for a stronger, um, Committee hearing. So, I just wanted to thank Sarah Suture (SP?), who's sitting right here, as well as Christy (SP?) Dwyer, who's over there in the corner. But, um, their expertise also that they bring to the table is, is amazing and so, I just wanted to thank them.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'd also like to thank Regina, to my left. That's my Policy Analyst. Um, so I, I, I want to, I want to thank CUNY and MOPD and especially the, the students who testified or have or will submit written testimony. Um, you know, it's, it's clear that there are good intentions CUNY has and there are programs that exist and that good things are happening. Uh, but it's also clear that not enough is being done, uh, that students don't know where to turn, um, or even when sometimes when they do turn there, they're not getting the services that, that, that, they deserve.

So, there is work for CUNY Central to do to provide more resources and directives directly to the campuses that are the ones providing, uh, the services, or should be providing the services to students. Now, we've heard some examples, or I shared some examples today what that looks like. You heard, uh, some examples from students of what is and is not being done. And you have an incredible opportunity to really provide for the very students who probably need the most help in our system.

And I also want to reiterate the importance of bill 660, of Introduction 660, that we have an opportunity here for our government to actually work for our students with disabilities and to recognize that DOE is not in a silo. CUNY is not in a silo. And once they graduate CUNY, they are going off into the world and we can work together to make sure that information is shared so that CUNY has the information, the resources to reach out to our students who they already know have disabilities, and already will ideally have the documentation so that those accommodation and those supports can be provided before those students even step on campus.

I want to thank everyone again, every one of my colleagues, Chair Lee, everyone on staff, uh, and this Committee, this hearing is adjourned.

[GAVEL]



C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date November 15, 2022