

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

-----X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND HEALTH

-----X

November 20, 2008

Start: 2:40pm

Recess: 4:53pm

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E:
ROBERT JACKSON
JOEL RIVERA
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Maria del Carmen Arroyo
Bill de Blasio
Gale A. Brewer
Inez E. Dickens
Simcha Felder
Lewis A. Fidler
Daniel R. Garodnick
Letitia James
G. Oliver Koppell
Jessica S. Lappin

A P P E A R A N C E S

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

John C. Liu
Rosie Mendez
Kendall Stewart
Domenic M. Recchia, Jr.
James Vacca
Peter F. Vallone, Jr.
Albert Vann
David Yassky

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

David Berkowitz
Executive Director
Office of SchoolFood, DOE

Rima Cohen on behalf of Ben Thomases
Director of Health and Social Services
Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs'

Vincent Clark
Chief Executive Officer, Integrated Services Center
Department of Education

Karen Alford
Vice President of Elementary Schools
United Federation of Teachers

Santos Crespos on behalf of Veronica Montgomery-Costa
Executive Vice President
Local 372 of District Council 37

Madeleine Levin
Senior Policy Analyst
Food Research and Action Center, FRAC

Joel Berg
Executive Director
New York City Coalition Against Hunger

Kristen Mancinelli
Manager of Program Development and Policy
City Harvest

Kathy Goldman
Food Bank of NYC

Casey Dinkin
Manager of Communications and Advocacy
Nutrition Consortium of New York State

1

2

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Good

3

afternoon. Can you please take all conversations

4

outside the Committee room, we're ready to begin?

5

Have a seat please. Thank you.

6

Good afternoon and welcome to

7

today's joint oversight hearing of the Education

8

and Health committees on breakfast in New York

9

City's public schools. Let me introduce all of

10

our colleagues that are present. Co-chairing this

11

hearing today is my colleague Joe Rivera, the

12

majority leader from the Bronx as the chair of the

13

Health Committee. And over to our far left is

14

Maria del Carmen Arroyo of the Bronx and Dan

15

Garodnick from Manhattan and Jessica Lappin of

16

Manhattan. And over to my right is our colleague

17

all the way over to our right is Rosie Mendez of

18

Manhattan, Lou Fidler of Brooklyn and Letitia

19

James of Brooklyn.

20

At today's hearing we will

21

primarily be examining the low level of student

22

participation in the school breakfast program and

23

efforts by the Department of Education to increase

24

participation. Within the Department of

25

Education, the entity that oversees SchoolFood

1
2 service programs is the Office of SchoolFood and
3 Nutrition Services, now known as SchoolFood.

4 According to its web site SchoolFood served over
5 180,000 breakfasts to students daily. However,
6 this represents less than one-fifth of the total
7 student population and is far less than the number
8 of school lunches served, which exceeds 600,000
9 per day.

10 The number of breakfasts that are
11 served in New York City schools used to be even
12 lower. But at the start of the 2003 school year,
13 the Department of Education initiated its
14 Universal Free Breakfast program enabling all
15 children to get a nutritious breakfast in school
16 at no charge, regardless of their income.
17 Although participation has increased since
18 inception of the city's Universal Free Breakfast
19 program from 14% to student in 2003 to
20 approximately 20% by the school year 2006-2007,
21 advocates in the field urge the Department of
22 Education to do more to boost student
23 participation.

24 Siting a study of the Food Research
25 and Action Center, FRAC, showing that the New York

1
2 City school breakfast participation rate was
3 second to last out of 23 urban districts in the
4 United States of America. Advocates called on the
5 Department of Education to serve breakfast in
6 classrooms in an August 2007 press conference. To
7 their credit, the Department of Education listened
8 to the advocates and last year the Department of
9 Education began to pilot a breakfast in the
10 classroom program in a small number of schools.

11 Unfortunately I can't state how
12 many schools were involved in this pilot program
13 or how many classes in each school or the total
14 number of students involved or any other details
15 about this program. That's because there is no
16 information about it on its web site of the
17 Department of Education or SchoolFood or the DOE
18 did not respond to inquiries from Committee staff
19 about the program. And that's not good. However,
20 the Department of Education had no problem getting
21 information to the New York Times about the
22 program. So what little information we have comes
23 from an article coincidentally published earlier
24 this week in the New York Times.

25 The article focuses on the

1
2 breakfast in the classroom program in P.S. 70 in
3 Queens, where apparently it is a hit at least
4 among the third graders who participate there.
5 According to the article, the program is offered
6 at 48 schools this year and there are plans to
7 expand it to 299 across the city over the next two
8 months.

9 While advocates would like to see
10 the pilot breakfast in the classroom program
11 expanded to all students in all schools, there are
12 some concerns primarily on the part of the
13 custodians union. Union officials there claim
14 that the breakfast in the classroom increases the
15 workload for custodial staff who must clean
16 classrooms and take out staff. However the
17 custodial budget has been cut, as we all know,
18 several times in the past few years, resulting in
19 a reduction in custodial staffing especially with
20 respects to school cleaners.

21 Custodians have also expressed
22 concern that the breakfast in the classroom
23 program may increase the number of rodent, roaches
24 and other pests in schools. Hopefully the
25 Department of Education will shed further light on

1
2 this breakfast in the classroom program today.
3 The Department of Education has also taken other
4 steps to improve their school breakfast and lunch
5 programs.

6 In May of 2004 the Department of
7 Education hired an executive chef to over haul the
8 school meals to reduce costs, improve the
9 nutritional quality and to make them so tasty that
10 the number of meals served actually soars. The
11 new chef began to introduce new recipes and to re-
12 formulate popular menu items to make them
13 healthier as well as appealing to the students.
14 For example, one of the newer breakfast menu items
15 apparently is a sausage roll made of unbleached
16 flour and turkey and I wish I had one now.

17 Today, we want to hear from the
18 Department of Education about these and other
19 efforts to increase the number of students taking
20 advantage of free breakfast in schools. We also
21 hope to hear recommendations for improvements from
22 advocates and other stakeholders. We all know hoe
23 important a good breakfast is to be able to
24 function well throughout the day. My breakfast is
25 a cup of black coffee, a banana and a bagel with

1
2 peanut butter. I hope that's a healthy breakfast
3 Mr. Chef.

4 It's especially critical for all
5 children to have a nutritious breakfast to enable
6 them to learn in school. And too many don't start
7 their day with a good breakfast at home. As you
8 know, sometimes I see kids going to school and
9 they are walking eating Cheetos and chips and
10 stuff like that. I say oh my gosh. I would now
11 like to turn to my colleague, the majority leader
12 Joel Rivera, the Chair of the Health Committee for
13 his opening statement. Majority leader Joel
14 Rivera.

15 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you very
16 much Chair Jackson. Good afternoon gentlemen and
17 ladies, my name is Joel Rivera. I'm the Chair of
18 the City Council's Health Committee. I want to
19 thank my colleague, Robert Jackson, for holding
20 this joint hearing in school breakfast in New York
21 City, our public schools. A school breakfast is
22 of even greater importance in these difficult
23 fiscal times where families need to ensure that
24 every dollar goes even further.

25 Mayor Bloomberg recently announced

1
2 18 initiatives to help New Yorkers face these
3 tough economic challenges, including the expansion
4 of school breakfast. Fortunately, in New York
5 City the Department of Education offers free
6 universal breakfast to all students funded by the
7 federal government.

8 As the age old expression goes,
9 breakfast is the most important meal of the day.
10 Studies have shown that students who eat a well
11 balanced breakfast are healthier and some have
12 even found that they concentrate better in class
13 and have better attendance, a true testament to
14 the value of this program. But the childhood
15 obesity epidemic that we have encountered in our
16 country, it is crucial that students receive
17 nutritious and well balanced meals. Breakfast
18 served in schools conform to the strict USDA
19 guidelines. Proper diet and nutrition combined
20 with exercise and physical activity will result in
21 healthier school children.

22 The Department has been looking at
23 innovative ways to ensure more children
24 participate in the school breakfast program.
25 While all 1.1 million children are eligible for

1
2 the program, the number of children who eat school
3 breakfast is estimated to be 180,000. This number
4 represents less than one out of five students. It
5 is because of this low participation rate that the
6 Department needs to examine other service delivery
7 models that will include a greater number of
8 students.

9 We have turned our neighbors in
10 Newark who have implemented a very successful
11 school breakfast program, which all children
12 participate because they eat breakfast in their
13 classroom. Yet more must be done to improve
14 participation in the school breakfast program. We
15 in the Council can partner with the Department of
16 Education and play an instrumental role of raising
17 awareness of this program throughout all of our
18 communities.

19 Today we will explore the
20 Department of Education's school breakfast program
21 and their new pilot program. I would like to
22 thank the staff of both committees for their hard
23 work. Before we begin, I would like to
24 acknowledge our colleagues who are here with us
25 today that have not been introduced. We have

1
2 Council Member Al Vann, Council Member Bill de
3 Blasio, Council Member Dominic Recchia and Lou
4 Fidler I believe just entered the room and Council
5 Member Ken Stewart. At this point in time we'll
6 introduce the first panel.

7 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Before you
8 read your testimony, if these are all Department
9 of Education people why don't we just all
10 introduce--

11 FEMALE VOICE: [interposing] We're
12 not all DOE.

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Why don't we
14 just introduce who is at the table first so we
15 have an acknowledgement of who is at the table.
16 And then whoever wants to begin their testimony
17 first you may do so.

18 RIMA COHEN: Good afternoon. My
19 name is Rima Cohen, I'm the Director of Health and
20 Social Services in Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs'
21 office. I'm actually testifying on behalf of Ben
22 Thomases who is the Food Policy Coordinator for
23 the city. He very much wanted to be here but
24 because of the time change had another commitment.

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: He's the

1

2 coordinator of food services for New York City?

3 MS. COHEN: Exactly. His title is
4 Food Policy Coordinator for New York City and he
5 works directly for Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs.

6 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Excellent.
7 Okay.

8 DAVID BERKOWITZ: Good afternoon.
9 My name is David Berkowitz, Executive Director of
10 SchoolFood.

11 VINCENT CLARK: Good afternoon. My
12 name is Vincent Clark. I'm the Chief Executive
13 Officer of Integrated Service Center and I also
14 work with David with SchoolFood.

15 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: As Integrated
16 Service Center, you're the chief what?

17 MR. CLARK: Executive Officer.

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. What
19 does that mean? I'm sorry. I'm serious, I'm not
20 joking.

21 MR. CLARK: What it means is that
22 the five centers that we have located throughout
23 the city that supports schools in many activities,
24 I'm ultimately responsible for what they do.

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: All of the

1

2 service centers in the City of New York?

3 MR. CLARK: That's right.

4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. Very
5 good. Thank you, I appreciate that. Whoever
6 wants to begin, you may begin.

7 MR. BERKOWITZ: Good afternoon
8 again. One, I very much apologize for not giving
9 that information to this office. Very, very sorry
10 about that and that won't happen again.

11 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Let me say to
12 you, you may be new at this. I don't accept your
13 apology and I'm very serious and let me tell you
14 why. Because over the course of my tenure as the
15 Chair of the Education Committee, I have received
16 apologies from the Department of Education about
17 not getting us the information. And your
18 Government Affairs Director is here. Your apology
19 on behalf of the Department of Education is not
20 accepted by me as the Chair of the Education
21 Committee. Even though my colleague Joel Rivera
22 and others may accept it, I don't. And especially
23 when we have to read information in the New York
24 Times, that's not collaborative working together.
25 Okay? So you can continue. I'm not upset with

1
2 you, not unless you were responsible for not
3 giving us the information. Do you understand
4 where I'm coming from?

5 MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes, sir.

6 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. So
7 your apology on behalf of the Department is not
8 accepted by my colleagues because we didn't have
9 the information that we wanted in order to prepare
10 today. So I'm going to be asking you a lot of
11 questions and I hope you have some answers.

12 MR. BERKOWITZ: Okay. Good
13 afternoon, again, Chair Jackson, Chair Rivera,
14 members of the Education and Health Committees.
15 Again, my name is David Berkowitz, Executive
16 Director of SchoolFood. I'm very pleased to be
17 with you this afternoon. Thank you for giving us
18 the opportunity to speak with you today on this
19 very important subject, critical to school
20 nutrition specifically about our innovative
21 program to encourage more of our school children
22 to eat a healthy breakfast every school day.

23 Before I discuss the Department's
24 breakfast program, allow me to give you some
25 context. Nationwide breakfast consumption has

1
2 decreased in recent decades. Those more likely to
3 miss breakfast are minorities and from low income
4 households. Breakfast should be part of every
5 child's day and studies have clearly shown, as
6 some of you have already mentioned, the positive
7 impact on academics, functioning, mental health
8 and certainly assisting with the huge problem of
9 obesity.

10 Federal meal programs including
11 breakfast and lunch programs are administrated
12 nationwide. The meals served in these programs
13 must meet stringent nutritional requirements from
14 the United States Department of Agriculture.
15 Participating schools receive subsidies from the
16 Department of Agriculture in varying amounts
17 depending on the category, whether they are free,
18 reduced or paid.

19 Here in New York City SchoolFood
20 serves over 860,000 meals a day including about
21 200 breakfasts each morning at public, charter and
22 non-public schools. These meals meet or exceed
23 USDA guidelines and we continue to work hard to
24 raise our nutritional standards and lead the
25 nation in many way with the work we're doing in

1

2

nutrition.

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

Since 2003-04 we have had a citywide universal free breakfast program, as the Chairman mentioned earlier, which has made a very significant contribution. We serve breakfast at all of our schools throughout the city at no charge. This program is entirely financed through federal and state reimbursements and city tax dollars. It follows a traditional service model providing breakfast in the cafeteria before the start of the school day.

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

We do have lower breakfast participation rates than we would like to see. We are at about 21% or 22%, as again the Chair said earlier, this has climbed substantially over the last number of years but we want to see it continue to improve. Getting breakfast under the traditional service model; serving it in the cafeteria, requires students getting to school early. One of the challenges facing them is the time classes start, parents want to get prepared for work. They have to prepare other children in the household and so forth, that makes it challenging.

1
2 And also in spite of continuing
3 efforts to eradicate it, we still have a stigma.
4 Some students may perceive a stigma attached with
5 eating breakfast in the cafeteria. When all
6 children eat together, it does help in eliminating
7 that. They see it sometimes as only the poor kids
8 eating the school breakfast, which is not a good
9 thing and it's not seen as being cool and, again,
10 that's where breakfast in the classroom does help.

11 School breakfast must compete with
12 the convenience of some of the fast food chains,
13 which obviously serve high calorie, high fat
14 selections. So we believe we are approaching and
15 reached the limits of the growth in the current
16 program. Even though we continue to grow every
17 year but we think we need this new program to make
18 significant progress. So the service model we are
19 proposing is breakfast in the classroom. Under
20 this program, meals are served in the classrooms
21 at the start, not before but at the start, of each
22 school day. While their teachers are taking
23 attendance, which increases participation and it
24 removes the barriers that I spoke about a moment
25 ago of the stigma when all of the children are

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

eating together.

Meal components are similar to those on regular cafeteria program other than the cold selections. Fruit, dairy, grain or bread selections are all served in a packaged bag. The meals are delivered to the classroom by SchoolFood personnel or collected from the cafeteria in insulated transportation bags. They are then served during the first 15 minutes allowing traditional time for teachers to take their attendance, to read aloud. Many teachers are handling this in different formats but it works very, very smoothly. At the end of the meal each child's garbage is placed in a paper bag and placed back into that transportation bag that came up to the classroom. What we're trying to do is minimize any additional work for custodians and aids.

This program, already successfully implemented across the river at Newark and other major cities pointed out in the FRAC report that was eluded to earlier and many major cities throughout the country. And we're doing a select number of classrooms or the entire school. So

1
2 basically kids like the food, they like the social
3 awareness, the social exchange of eating with the
4 other students. Teachers are pleased because
5 we're seeing less tardiness, less lateness, the
6 kids are more alert. And we're also hearing from
7 the nurses fewer health complaints, which is a
8 great thing. And parents are very pleased that
9 they have more time at home. They don't have to
10 worry about preparing the meal. We know the
11 children will get a healthy, nutritious meal,
12 frankly better than what they're going to receive
13 in a local store.

14 We're also watching this very
15 closely, we're not seeing any increased pest
16 control issues. Obviously very sensitive in all
17 of our schools so we try to watch that very
18 closely. I also want to take a minute just to
19 thank the Heksher Foundation, which has been very
20 helpful in supporting this pilot program in terms
21 of breakfast in the classroom and also frankly in
22 supporting our summer initiatives. So thank you
23 to the Heksher Foundation for Children.

24 In the wake of the successful
25 pilot, we expanded the program now to 48 schools

1
2 from 21 as I said last year. Mayor Bloomberg
3 announced last month as part of his initiative to
4 weather the economic crisis that we were going to
5 focus on 300 additional schools and target them
6 for potential expansion with participation at the
7 option of each school's principal. The target
8 population at these schools are in high need.
9 These are schools with high free and reduced
10 populations that need it the most. Expansion to
11 these schools can be accomplished without
12 additional net funding from the city budget. They
13 will be financed by the additional reimbursements
14 from the federal and the state for the breakfast
15 program.

16 In conclusion, I'd like to thank
17 you again very much for the opportunity to discuss
18 this breakfast in the classroom program and how we
19 can expand it. I want to thank very much the
20 Mayor, Speaker Quinn, Deputy Mayor Walcott and
21 Deputy Mayor Gibbs and the Chancellor Kline for
22 their continuing support of this important
23 initiative. Everyone is very excited about the
24 opportunity of expanding this.

25 I think we can all agree, a healthy

1
2 breakfast for every child, every day would make an
3 important contribution to all of our children
4 realizing their potential at school. The
5 breakfast in the classroom program will permit us
6 to make dramatic strides in increasing breakfast
7 participation without requiring additional
8 resources from elsewhere in the budget. I look
9 forward to answering your questions after my
10 associate here. I think they have some opening
11 remarks as well.

12 MS. COHEN: Thank you. Good
13 afternoon. Good afternoon Chairperson Rivera,
14 Chairperson Jackson and members of the health and
15 Education Committees. As I mentioned, my name is
16 Rima Cohen, I'm the Director of Health and Social
17 Services in Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs office. Ben
18 Thomases, who is the city's food policy
19 coordinator was supposed to be here this
20 afternoon. But because of the change in time he
21 was unable to make it so at the last minute he
22 asked if I would be able to read his testimony.
23 So I'm going to do that.

24 Ben Thomases, as I mentioned, is
25 the city's food policy coordinator. He is in the

1

2 office of Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs as well.

3 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: To continue,
4 do we have copies of that testimony?

5 MS. COHEN: Yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Sergeant of
7 arms. Who's the Sergeant, Yvette, please. And we
8 also have been joined by majority Inez Dickens to
9 our right of Manhattan and Gale Brewer of
10 Manhattan and Jimmy Vacca of the Bronx and Simcha
11 Felder of Brooklyn and John Lui of Queens. I just
12 wanted to get the testimony so we can follow along
13 with you and make some notations as to the million
14 questions that I have of you representing Ben
15 Thomas

16 MS. COHEN: Which I'll defer to my
17 colleague. I apologize. I forgot to pass out the
18 testimony.

19 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: That's okay.

20 MS. COHEN: Would you like me to
21 wait a second while everyone?

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Yeah. If you
23 don't mind.

24 MS. COHEN: Sure.

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: We're hands

1

2 on people. You can continue now.

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

MS. COHEN: I will read Ben Thomases testimony. First let me thank Speaker Quinn, her staff and these committees for drawing attention to this important work and for supporting this project from the outset. I would also like to thank David Berkowitz and the staff of the Office of SchoolFood for their initiative in developing and implementing this project.

Two years ago Mayor Bloomberg and Speaker Quinn joined together to create the position of Food Policy Coordinator and they created the Food Policy Task Force for New York City. Working within the context of the Center for Economic Opportunity, which is overseen by Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs, our efforts connect the city's food policy initiatives with the Mayor's broader, innovative anti-poverty efforts.

There are two main issues that we seek to address, the growing obesity epidemic and the continued struggle of many families to afford the food they need. Breakfast in the classroom, the initiative we're here to discuss today, is an important response to both of those problems. In

1
2 October, Mayor Bloomberg announced an 18 point
3 plan to help New Yorkers facing new challenges in
4 the current economic climate. This plan will
5 promote job creation and support the city's
6 homeowners and small businesses. It will also
7 provide relief to families who are struggling to
8 make ends meet. And expanding our efforts to
9 serve breakfast in the classroom by working with
10 principals in an additional 300 schools, is an
11 important aspect of that plan.

12 Increasing access to federally
13 funded food support programs is one of the most
14 efficient ways that the city can help families
15 stretch their food budgets. And the school
16 breakfast program is one of the most under
17 utilized food support programs in the city. While
18 roughly 70% of students in our schools participate
19 in the school lunch program, just over 20% eat
20 breakfast in school even though breakfast is free
21 for all students and lunch is not. So finding a
22 way to increase participation in the school
23 breakfast program is one of the most important
24 things the city can do to ensure that our young
25 people have enough food to eat.

1
2 This effort is especially important
3 in these tough economic times because it would
4 enable us to draw down federal money to provide
5 students in need with a nutritious meal.

6 Increasing breakfast participating will also
7 promote healthy eating, and is an important
8 response to the epidemic of childhood obesity.

9 The Department of Education's
10 Office of SchoolFood has been a leader among city
11 agencies in providing healthy meals. It has made
12 dramatic improvements during the last seven years,
13 switching to low fat milk, reducing the fat
14 content in the meals overall, increasing servings
15 of whole grains and fruits and vegetables. In
16 September, the Food Policy Task Force created city
17 food standards that require all city agencies to
18 meet strict nutritional requirements for the more
19 than 225 million meals and snacks served by these
20 agencies and their contractors. As a result we
21 can expect further improvements in the school food
22 including reductions in the sodium content and
23 increased fiber in meals.

24 Simply put, the school breakfast is
25 a healthy breakfast. It builds healthy eating

1
2 habits for the students and leaves them satisfied
3 with a well balanced meal. Students are then less
4 likely to rely on unhealthy snacking during the
5 school day. Furthermore, serving breakfast in the
6 classroom has proven to increase participation in
7 the school breakfast program. Low participation
8 in the school breakfast program is a challenge for
9 urban school districts nationwide.

10 A report from the Food Research and
11 Action Center released in August of 2007 detailed
12 both the barriers to breakfast to participation
13 and the most promising approaches to overcoming
14 these barriers. Portland, Oregon and Newark, New
15 Jersey were the highest performing districts
16 according to the study, achieving participation
17 rates in the breakfast program nearly as high as
18 participation rates in the lunch program. Both of
19 these districts have made serving breakfast in the
20 classroom the centerpiece of their strategies to
21 promote breakfast participation.

22 Here in New York City, we have
23 tested breakfast in the classroom in more than 20
24 schools during the last year before committing to
25 a more ambitious expansion of the program. These

1
2 schools included a mix of elementary, middle and
3 high schools as well as schools in all five
4 boroughs. The results of the pilot were uniformly
5 positive. Principals, teachers and students were
6 enthusiastic about the program, noting that in
7 addition to meeting a real need for healthy meals
8 among the student body, it helped create a
9 supportive learning environment.

10 In short, serving breakfast in the
11 classroom has many benefits. It helps families
12 afford the food they need, promotes healthy eating
13 and creates a supportive learning environment.
14 The expansion of this initiative will secure these
15 benefits for thousands of school children and
16 provide needed assistance in these difficult
17 economic times. Thank you again for the
18 opportunity to testify.

19 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.
20 Thank you both and Mr. Clark do you have any
21 testimony?

22 MR. CLARK: No, I do not.

23 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: You're just a
24 money man?

25 MR. CLARK: I'm here to support

1

2

David.

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. We have been joined by Peter Vallone, Jr. of Queens to our right and all of the staff involved we have Asia Shomberg who is the counsel to the Education Committee, Jan Abwah, policy analyst, Regina Peter-Ryan, finance analyst for the Education Committee and Anthony Hugglebee, our press officer, Adierra Simon is the counsel for Joel Rivera and the Health Committee, Joseph Mancino is the policy analyst and Rocco D'Angelo, finance policy analyst and Shirley LaMange is the press officer. These are the staff of all of the Committees. With that, I will turn to our colleague Joel Rivera, the majority leader, for questions.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you very much. I just have a couple of questions that I wanted to get more information on. The breakfast in the classroom program, what is the start up costs for this program per school?

MR. BERKOWITZ: The good news is that the program is self sustaining the way we're implementing it with high free and reduced. Where we have high free and reduced students in need, we

1
2 get higher reimbursements. So for every breakfast
3 we serve, we receive this higher reimbursement.
4 The great news is it really is neutral or could be
5 somewhat beneficial.

6 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: When it first
7 started, it started as a pilot program so how
8 would the schools determine which schools would
9 receive this pilot program?

10 MR. BERKOWITZ: When we first began
11 the program we reached out to principals
12 throughout the city. We started with those
13 principals that thought it may work for that
14 school. We tried to be very flexible; letting
15 schools start with two or three classrooms so that
16 they could work with their custodians and their
17 teachers and see how it fit. We were convinced
18 once they had it in a couple of classrooms, they
19 would want to expand it. Fortunately that's what
20 we're seeing.

21 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: How long
22 before we have full saturation?

23 MR. BERKOWITZ: Right now we're up
24 to about 48 schools. We're currently targeting
25 these 300 schools, which we're in the process of

1
2 doing right now. It will be based on, again, if
3 the principal feels the timing is right, how many
4 classrooms they want to start and how quickly they
5 want to start. So we're outreaching very
6 aggressively now and I'm hoping to see more come
7 on every month.

8 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Perfect. Is
9 this similar to the second chance breakfast?

10 MR. BERKOWITZ: No, well the second
11 chance breakfast some school districts are using
12 as a vehicle to improve breakfast. This one, I
13 think, is the most ideal. In other words having
14 every classroom serve breakfast as we talked about
15 to eliminate the stigma and to really reach the
16 most children possible. The second chance
17 breakfast, and different schools do it
18 differently, you would get those students that
19 want to come to the specific area or to the dining
20 room to get another breakfast. This one I think
21 gives us the most assurity that we can feed more
22 children more quickly.

23 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Okay. On a
24 different note, when it comes to food allergies,
25 how are we dealing with the children who may have

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

food allergies?

MR. BERKOWITZ: Basically what our approach is we work very closely with the DOH on this. But basically parents work with their local school, go in and talk to the nurse on the particular needs of the student and the principal. There are different policies in different schools depending on how sensitive the allergies are. One school may have a number of sensitive children that can not eat peanuts. If it's very sensitive a principal may choose to have a separate room for those children so that they're not exposed. It really is up to the principal and the nurse in the individual school.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Are they sharing any information between the nurse's office and your division?

MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes. We do provide information on the different products.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Has there ever been any incident of food allergy difficulties under the breakfast program?

MR. BERKOWITZ: No, nothing new associated with the breakfast program.

1

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Perfect.

2

That's my line of questioning.

3

4

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Following up on Chair Rivera's, in the pilot program are any of the schools in the pilot program implementing the second chance breakfast program or do they only have the breakfast in classrooms?

5

6

7

8

9

MR. BERKOWITZ: Actually we have a couple of models. We have a grab and go, we have a particular school for instance--

10

11

12

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]

13

Can you explain that to those that are not knowledgeable of what the grab and go is.

14

15

MR. BERKOWITZ: For instance in Queens at Hillcrest High School what we have is what's called a grab and go. So that students coming in to the school can stop in the lobby. We have these breakfasts available so they can pick up a breakfast and then bring it up to the classroom. That's another model that is available to schools.

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

We can also set up a separate area so we're trying to be very flexible. It's all around the principals, the teachers and the

24

25

1
2 custodians. We don't want to do anything that's
3 going to take away from teaching and learning
4 because that's so critical. So if a principal
5 would like to set up a separate room, we have done
6 that where students can go and eat breakfast.
7 Really I'd say the program is very flexible and
8 customized to the needs of the particular school.

9 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: But you said
10 there were several programs. What programs are
11 there? You have the school breakfast in the
12 classroom, which was part of the experiment. And
13 then you're saying that at one school, at least,
14 they had the grab and go.

15 MR. BERKOWITZ: Correct.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Were there
17 any other aspects of the program besides those two
18 that were part of the pilot program?

19 MR. BERKOWITZ: Actually the third
20 one, the one you just mentioned, we did have a
21 couple of schools that a principal set up a
22 separate area, in one case in the auditorium,
23 where children again can go pick up their
24 breakfast and sit in the auditorium and eat the
25 breakfast.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: But that was
3 during the breakfast time and that was not as
4 describe that has been used in Newark and other
5 places as a second chance breakfast. Is that
6 correct?

7 MR. BERKOWITZ: Right.

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: It's not the
9 same, is that correct?

10 MR. BERKOWITZ: That's right.

11 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So no schools
12 to your knowledge have utilized the second chance
13 program?

14 MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes, that's
15 correct.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I assume that
17 you have a list of all of the pilots and
18 everything. Are they listed in this thing here or
19 are they listed on your web site? Is it listed
20 anywhere so we can look at all of the schools in
21 the pilot program?

22 MR. BERKOWITZ: We will make copies
23 and get that to you very quickly. We do have
24 copies here today, we'll make copies.

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. How

1

2 many pages is it?

3

4 MR. BERKOWITZ: Not that many
pages, two pages.

5

6 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Is it listed
anywhere so anyone could look at it?

7

8 MR. BERKOWITZ: Not at this time
but we will.

9

10 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So you're
going to put it on your web site, is that what
11 you're telling me?

12

MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes, sir.

13

14 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. I
heard you loud and clear. But if you could
15 provide us with a copy of that so the Sergeant of
16 arms can make some copies because quite frankly
17 I'd rather have it now than later. I'm hungry.
18 I'm hungry for the information and knowledge. I
19 have additional question s but I'm going to turn
20 to my colleagues but I don't want to be greedy and
21 eat all of the food. I'm trying to have a sense
22 of humor, too. Council Member Letitia James of
23 Brooklyn.

24

25 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Let me
apologize for his intensity and let me commend the

1
2 Department of Education for addressing the
3 nutritional needs of the children of New York.
4 You have expanded this pilot to 48 schools and
5 it's my understanding that you're going to provide
6 that information to all the members of the City
7 Council. Are all of these schools Title I
8 schools?

9 MR. BERKOWITZ: No.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: They are
11 not. So those schools that are not part of the
12 pilot program, they continue to have a breakfast
13 program?

14 MR. BERKOWITZ: Absolutely.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: There are
16 some schools in the city of New York, as you know,
17 where there are three and four schools all in one
18 building. How does the staff address providing
19 serving breakfast to all of these different
20 schools? How is it done?

21 MR. BERKOWITZ: What we do is talk
22 to each individual principal. Each school, as you
23 know, has different goals, different schedules.
24 So sometimes we may have a principal in a school
25 that it works perfectly fine for and they want to

1

2 do a few classrooms. Another principal in that
3 same school will find that it will not work.
4 Again, it's all up to the principal and what works
5 for their schedule.

6

7

8

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So it's
primarily the principal's decision, it's
discretionary?

9

10

11

12

13

MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes, the Chancellor
has sent out a letter really encouraging each
principal in each school to really look at this
and the many benefits of the program. But it does
have to fit the principal's...correct.

14

15

16

17

18

19

MR. CLARK: I'd just like to
clarify. The breakfast in the classroom program
is what's discretionary. As far as universal
breakfast that's served in the cafeteria to all
students regardless of the school that they're
attending.

20

21

22

23

24

25

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Given the
pilot program, is it too early to look at the
correlation between or the participation in the
lunch program versus the pilot program or is it
just too early? I'd like to see what the numbers
are and whether or not there is a--

1
2 MR. BERKOWITZ: [interposing] Still
3 a little early. What we're seeing. As an
4 example, P.S. 68 in the South Bronx where we used
5 to feed before we started this program 150
6 students in our traditional breakfast program.
7 And with the implementation of breakfast in the
8 classroom we're now serving probably 98%, 750
9 students. So we're seeing that climb in each
10 school but I think shortly we'll have more
11 statistics on it.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Again, I
13 commend you. When this was first introduced, when
14 the City Council engaged in a campaign to
15 advertise the free breakfast program I went to a
16 number of schools in my district. What I heard
17 from parents was that they had to manage their
18 affairs and it was difficult getting the children
19 to the breakfast program on time. So I'm glad
20 that you're taking the breakfast to where the
21 children are in the classroom where they report to
22 school. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you
24 Council Member. Council Member Lou Fidler of
25 Brooklyn.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Thank you
3 Mr. Chairman. I don't apologize for your
4 intensity. I appreciate your intensity. Just a
5 couple of questions, first I do appreciate the
6 innovative thought that you've given this. I
7 think that you've looked at some of the reasons
8 why breakfast wasn't succeeding and I think you've
9 attacked that problem. First, has the pilot
10 program been offered to any schools where the
11 principal in their discretion has rejected it?

12 MR. BERKOWITZ: If a principal has
13 rejected, you're asking have we put the program
14 in?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: No, no.
16 Have you offered it any place where the principal
17 said no thanks, don't want it here.

18 MR. BERKOWITZ: Sure, that happens.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: And what
20 reasons have they offered?

21 MR. BERKOWITZ: They're concerned
22 about the amount of time teachers have in doing
23 their lessons. They're concerned about losing
24 some of the teaching time, which again we're
25 trying to address to be sure no time is lost. Or

1
2 they're concerned that the custodian is very busy
3 and how are they going to handle some of the clean
4 up or pest control. Or they may have pest control
5 concerns.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Let me
7 understand the classroom program a little bit
8 better. So when a child brings breakfast in a bag
9 into the classroom, does teaching go on while the
10 child is eating breakfast?

11 MR. BERKOWITZ: Normally what
12 happens is we bring up a transporter bag, an
13 insulated bag up to the classroom. Then when the
14 kids are in the classroom they go to the
15 transporter bag and they take out a bag of
16 breakfast. They sit and have their breakfast.
17 During those ten minutes normally the teacher is
18 taking attendance and other routine kinds of
19 things or they may be discussing some nutrition
20 around the breakfast.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Right. So
22 why would a principal feel that that would cut
23 into teaching time?

24 MR. BERKOWITZ: That's some of the
25 feedback we get. Again, principals I know have a

1
2 lot on their plate in terms of meeting all their
3 goals.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: It sounds
5 to me as if the reality that you're projecting is
6 not what some principals are perceiving. So
7 either your reality is not accurate or you have to
8 do a better job of correcting the perceptions of
9 the principals who are turning it down or have.

10 MR. BERKOWITZ: I think that's fair
11 and we're trying to address questions and provide
12 information so that they feel more comfortable.
13 And be very flexible as I said so if a principal
14 has a concern we'd let them start with two
15 classrooms so that they can see how smoothly it
16 goes. And that's why we're being so flexible
17 because we feel once they try it, even on a small
18 scale, they're going to see that it does not take
19 away from teaching and learning.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: I hope that
21 more principals do agree to give it a try. I
22 believe that when you have a problem it's
23 important to understand why you have the problem.
24 You are having an issue with the breakfast and in
25 your testimony you said - let me see if I can find

1
2 it. The children more likely to miss breakfast,
3 the minorities and from low income households.
4 Frankly I can intellectualize why children from
5 low income households might fall into that
6 category. Do you have any data to say why
7 minority children are more likely not to have
8 breakfast?

9 MR. BERKOWITZ: We have some
10 information on that. We could provide that to
11 you.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: It's not
13 something that you...

14 MR. BERKOWITZ: I don't have it at
15 my fingertips.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: You don't
17 care to speculate either do you?

18 MR. BERKOWITZ: No.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Well that
20 would go to low income neighborhoods. This was
21 minority and from and I was just curious whether
22 or not you were suggesting there was a causal
23 relationship or just a correlation. Because
24 otherwise the minority issue is really not the
25 issue, it's the low income households. I'm just

1
2 kind of curious as to whether there was something
3 I was missing.

4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Is that sited
5 in the national statistics? Is that why you're
6 siting it?

7 MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes, it's in the
8 report but I don't have it available today.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: I'd be
10 interested in knowing the answer. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: If you could
12 find out that information and supply it to the
13 Education and Health Committees, we'd appreciate
14 that. Did you have a quick follow up Tish James
15 before I move to our next colleague?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: I would
17 imagine the reason why you mention the "minority"
18 is because the vast majority of people in "low
19 income" are people of color and that's why there
20 is a correlation between race and class. I would
21 argue that for the most part it's related to class
22 distinctions and a significant number of people
23 who are low income are single female headed
24 households and they have a difficult time with all
25 the challenges in their life. As someone who

1
2 represents a significant amount of them and who
3 have talked to them, understand the challenges.
4 But I thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: But also it's
6 my understanding that about 84% of the student
7 population in New York City out of the 1.1 million
8 are minority children. Isn't that true?

9 MR. BERKOWITZ: Mm-hmm.

10 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. I'm
11 just trying to understand. Gale Brewer of
12 Manhattan.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you
14 very much. One question I have is what is the,
15 particularly at the high school or even middle
16 school, what's the student input to any change in
17 programming. I'm sure you're doing great things
18 in terms of food programs but how do the students
19 get involved?

20 MR. BERKOWITZ: What we do is have
21 all of our managers meet with parents, students,
22 principals, APs. We ask them to meet with them
23 and have what we call partnership meetings so that
24 they can discuss menu options, the environment,
25 service, any issues they may have. We want to

1
2 make sure we're addressing it. Every school,
3 every community is different and even though we do
4 produce a citywide menu both for breakfast and
5 lunch, we're very flexible in terms of customizing
6 it to the particular school.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So you keep
8 track in some kind of a com stat way about student
9 input? I understand the parents, I understand the
10 administration but are students really involved?

11 MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes, we do ask our
12 students to get involved in these partnership
13 meetings.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.
15 Second question is Robert Troler does a great job
16 as head of the custodians. How are the custodians
17 involved? Because I'm all for eating in the
18 classroom but having been in the school recently
19 when I watched the things moving around, I'm just
20 wondering about how much more challenging it is
21 for them. I guess they're recycling in the
22 classroom. How do they deal with the challenges
23 of having food everywhere?

24 MR. BERKOWITZ: What we've tried is
25 to be very sensitive to that issue. We realize

1
2 that the custodian has a lot going on in school, a
3 lot of things that have to be done in a typical
4 day. So what we've done is also just put together
5 a couple of different models. We do have a model
6 where custodial aid can come and pick up the
7 garbage off of each floor. But we've also come up
8 with a simplified model.

9 What that is, is simply this: we
10 bring the transporter meals up to the particular
11 classroom. Then what we do is have the children
12 take the bag of waste, when they're done and put
13 it all back into this blue transporter bag. Then
14 when a SchoolFood person comes up to the floor,
15 they pick up these transporter bags which they
16 need to bring back to the kitchen. So in this way
17 there's absolutely no involvement of the custodian
18 whatsoever. So we're trying to be very sensitive
19 to their workload and do this in a way that
20 doesn't create more work.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. That
22 makes sense. Finally, you have an increase in
23 young people participating in the program in terms
24 of in the classroom. I don't like low fat milk.
25 I don't like anything that's healthy. Do the kids

1

2 eat it even though it's so healthy?

3 MR. BERKOWITZ: Absolutely.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Are you
5 sure?

6 MR. BERKOWITZ: We're seeing the
7 kids really enjoy these meals. We try again to
8 customize the menu to be sure the kids are eating
9 it. We have sliced apples in the bag, we have
10 fresh non fat yogurt. We have a lot of new
11 selections of things. And low fat cheeses that
12 the children like.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It gets
14 worse and worse.

15 MR. BERKOWITZ: Again, part of our
16 goal is really, and we've worked very hard to
17 really push the envelope on nutritional standards
18 and children are moving in that direction. They
19 are eating the food. They like the cereals.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I won't
21 belabor the point but I just hope that there's
22 student input so it is something they can eat.
23 Thank you very much.

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you
25 Council Member Brewer. Council Member Maria del

1

2

Carmen Arroyo of the Bronx.

3

COUNCIL MEMBER CARMEN DEL ARROYO:

4

Thank you Mr. Chair. Thank you for your

5

testimony. I apologize if you've answered the

6

question or provided the information but Simcha

7

was misbehaving and I just couldn't pay attention.

8

It was so much fun though. It provided a great

9

deal of entertainment. Thank you Simcha.

10

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: You're

11

lying in front of [off mic]. It's all right. You

12

can say whatever you want to.

13

COUNCIL MEMBER CARMEN DEL ARROYO:

14

Breakfast in the classroom is provided by the

15

school or the Department?

16

MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes. SchoolFood

17

provides it in every school.

18

COUNCIL MEMBER CARMEN DEL ARROYO:

19

Just one question, how much do we know about how

20

many families are just not able to participate

21

because logistically it's just not possible for

22

them to get to school in time for breakfast.

23

MR. BERKOWITZ: That's exactly the

24

argument for breakfast in the classroom because

25

there are some children. It's very difficult for

1
2 the parents to get a couple of children going to
3 different schools or going to the same school to
4 do everything they have to do in the household and
5 then get to school in time to have the breakfast.
6 So that's exactly why this model works so well
7 because children just get there in time for their
8 classroom and then the breakfast is brought up to
9 that particular classroom.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CARMEN DEL ARROYO:

11 Since I wasn't paying attention and I know that
12 Council Member Fidler asked a question. Does the
13 class start at the regular time and breakfast is
14 served?

15 MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CARMEN DEL ARROYO:

17 And instruction is going on at the same time?

18 MR. BERKOWITZ: Exactly. The
19 teacher may be taking attendance, getting the
20 books ready.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CARMEN DEL ARROYO:

22 And how much time do they have to do the
23 breakfast.

24 MR. BERKOWITZ: It normally takes
25 about 10 or 12 minutes. It doesn't take very

1

2 long.

3

COUNCIL MEMBER CARMEN DEL ARROYO:

4

Thank you. Thank you Simcha for the

5

entertainment.

6

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Letitia

7

James, our colleague from Brooklyn has follow up

8

questions.

9

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: One last

10

question, I was looking at the list and thank you

11

for providing it. But I noticed that where there

12

is a concentrated poverty it tends to be primarily

13

in public housing. In Brooklyn, most of the

14

schools are not in and around public housing. IN

15

my district for instance, the schools that serve

16

Ingersol, Whitman and Faragutt, all downtown

17

Brooklyn where there is 60% unemployment and the

18

poverty rate exceeds that of the national level,

19

287, P.S. 67, 307, Erin knows all of the schools.

20

MR. BERKOWITZ: You're saying

21

they're not on here now?

22

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: They're not

23

on here now and those children need breakfast more

24

than most.

25

MR. BERKOWITZ: This list obviously

1

2 doesn't affect the targeted schools. I think we
3 can provide that so we can show you what schools
4 in these areas are going to be targeted.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Again, my
6 good friend Erin knows all the schools that I just
7 spoke about. I call it my little educational
8 campus.

9 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Who's Erin.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: She's in the
11 back.

12 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Who is that?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: She's
14 Government Relations Director, Chief Officer.

15 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: What's her
16 name?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Erin.

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Erin what?

19 MR. BERKOWITZ: Stevens.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Erin the
21 boss. All those schools in downtown Brooklyn, if
22 she could focus on them.

23 MR. BERKOWITZ: Sure.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: You see that

1
2 we do some of us or all of us have a sense of
3 humor, which is good. In this business you need
4 to. You can't be upset all the time. We have
5 heard from parents and advocates that one reason
6 that participation is so low in that breakfast is
7 served too early for most kids to participate.

8 The New York Times article
9 described the program at P.S. 70 as starting at
10 7:45 am. School buses don't usually arrive until
11 about 8:00 and many students can't get to the
12 school that early. Comment, response relating to
13 that.

14 MR. BERKOWITZ: I think, again, the
15 bussing is a huge enterprise throughout the city.
16 And that's not my expertise so I really can't tell
17 you how that runs and so on. But I think it's
18 another reason why that's just one of the
19 challenges for parents. Like I said, there's a
20 lot of things they have to do before they get the
21 kids to school. So if we bring breakfast to the
22 classroom it makes it easier for the parents, it's
23 more convenient, the kids are getting a healthy
24 meal. It's just a win-win all the way around.

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: If this is

1
2 sited in the New York Times article and you didn't
3 give them that information but they got it from
4 parents, from the school, don't you think it's
5 appropriate to follow up with the parents of that
6 school to find out how the program is working?

7 MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes, absolutely.

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Are you?

9 MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: You are?

11 Okay. Because the next time you're in front of me
12 I'm going to ask you.

13 MR. BERKOWITZ: Okay.

14 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: But my
15 question is you talked about this is a voluntary
16 program where principals decide whether or not the
17 classroom breakfast program is adopted. My
18 understanding, is that a decision of the principal
19 or that is a decision of the school leadership
20 teams? Do you have any knowledge, direct
21 knowledge of that? You do or you don't.

22 MR. BERKOWITZ: Again as we said
23 earlier, every school serves breakfast but the
24 breakfast in the classroom, it's the principal's
25 decision. I would assume--

1

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]

2

Not a school leadership team decision.

3

4

MR. BERKOWITZ: I would assume they

5

get--

6

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]

7

Well I don't want to assume. You know what

8

happens when you assume right? I'm joking but I'm

9

serious. I don't want to--

10

MR. BERKOWITZ: [interposing] All I

11

was going to say is they get help and assistance

12

fro the integrated service centers that provide

13

guidance--

14

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]

15

No, no, no. Sorry. I'm talking about the school

16

leadership teams and of course you know what that

17

is. Is that correct?

18

MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes.

19

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I'm not

20

trying to be funny. Believe me, I'm not. But I'm

21

talking about the school leadership teams because

22

that's a governing body of the school which is

23

comprised of parents, teachers, representatives,

24

union representatives, principal representatives,

25

etc. All of these type of decisions concerning

1
2 the school is supposed to be made in consensus
3 decision making proceed in the school leadership
4 team. Do you know whether any of the schools that
5 voluntarily participated in it, was discussed by
6 the school leadership team and agreed to by the
7 school leadership team prior to implementation.

8 MR. BERKOWITZ: That I really can't
9 address. I don't know.

10 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: As a parent
11 advocate who came out of a parents association, I
12 would like to know how many schools discuss this
13 in the school leadership team and reached
14 consensus before implementation in the pilot
15 program. My second question on that is you
16 indicated that when this program was offered I
17 guess maybe some questions were asked and then
18 some principals did not want the program for one
19 reason or another. Do you know how many schools
20 were offered? Because everyone was offered but
21 only some individual schools, 48 schools
22 participated in it. How many basically were
23 initially interested and say thank you but no,
24 thank you.

25 MR. BERKOWITZ: I don't have all

1
2 the statistics on that. What we did is to get
3 interest in the pilot we spoke to many, many
4 principals and we took those. Because it was a
5 pilot and it was starting small we wanted to get a
6 couple of dozen. We took those that were most
7 interested to make sure it was working smoothly,
8 effectively so that we can build on it.

9 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. And
10 now you're building up on 300 schools.

11 MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Which is
13 about one-fifth of all of the schools in the
14 system, is that correct?

15 MR. BERKOWITZ: That's our goal,
16 yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: That's your
18 goal.

19 MR. BERKOWITZ: That's what we're
20 targeting. We're targeting the 300 schools.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And where are
22 those schools going to be located at, do you know?
23 Or is it the same format that you're using?
24 You're going to put it out there and hopefully 300
25 schools will volunteer. How do you plan on

1

2 implementing that>

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

MR. BERKOWITZ: No, we have a targeted list which we can provide, showing as I said in my testimony what we looked at are schools with high free and reduced. We went through all of the schools and picked out these 300 schools that we now are targeting.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Basically communicating with them, showing them the materials and hopefully they'll be a buy in into that process.

MR. BERKOWITZ: Exactly. That is correct.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: If you could share that information... Have you communicated this program to the CEC's, the Community Education Councils, as the governing body of the districts?

MR. BERKOWITZ: We're working through the ISCs and we have to get to all the CEC.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So a CEC is not aware of this already.

MR. BERKOWITZ: I think they probably are..

1

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: How?

2

3

MR. BERKOWITZ: ...but I think we need to be sure there's a formal.

4

5

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: You think they probably are and you know I'm going to ask you why do you think that? Give me some foundation for your answer.

6

7

8

9

MR. BERKOWITZ: We need to give a formal letter to the CECs.

10

11

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: If this program has been an excellent program in Newark, New Jersey, it's my understanding that New Jersey has been cited in the material and by you as a model breakfast in the classroom program. Obviously your pilot program of 48 has worked very well, basically what I'm hearing. So you're ramping up to now to basically one-fifth of all the schools in the city. When do you anticipate because the assumption is that it will go well overall and the percentage of participants will rise from 22 to hopefully that school in the Bronx to 98%, approximately 750 students like you indicated. Why don't we just ramp up full speed if in fact it's so successful and if in fact a

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1
2 quality breakfast is the foundation for a child's
3 success from a nutritional point of view and as
4 far as⁴ them learning in the classroom all day
5 long.

6 MR. BERKOWITZ: The 300 schools
7 that we've targeted have met certain criteria that
8 we spoke to earlier in terms of the high free and
9 reduces. When we have a high free and reduced our
10 federal reimbursements are much higher so that we
11 can offset the costs of the additional food,
12 labor, supplies, the related costs of the program.
13 And that's where I had mentioned that it fits
14 within our--with these tough economic times it
15 will not cost us any additional money to do these
16 and that's why this is a good first step.

17 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Would that be
18 for example when you talk about those 300 schools,
19 I assume--let me take that word back.

20 MR. BERKOWITZ: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Based on the
22 information that you cited, the 300 schools, are
23 they Title I schools, all of them. To be Title I
24 eligible, 65% must be at a certain income level,
25 is that correct?

1
2 MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes. I would say
3 probably inmost of them are. I would have to go
4 back to give you an exact number but I would say
5 high probability most of them are.

6 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Can you tell
7 me how are you going to be communicating? What's
8 your program? What's your game plan? If I'm a
9 principal in one of the 300 schools, what's your
10 game plan to get me on board and when are you
11 going to do it?

12 MR. BERKOWITZ: What we've done for
13 these 300 targeted schools, the Chancellor wrote a
14 letter which we very much appreciate, encouraging
15 principals to take a close look at this program.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Can you share
17 that letter with us when you get a time?

18 MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes, of course.
19 Then we're also sending out Frequently Asked
20 Questions, some of the questions. You asked about
21 this earlier Councilman, in terms of some of the
22 question principals are asking about how much time
23 it takes and how is it done and how does it affect
24 teaching and learning and how does it affect pest
25 control and so on. We have these Frequently Asked

1

2 Questions that we're providing as well. We will
3 give you that as well.

4

5 Then we're also following up with
6 our managers and supervisors also going to visit
7 the principal. We're bringing every one of these
8 principals, right after Thanksgiving we'll get a
9 number of four or five breakfasts to see a sample
10 of what it looks like. Then we're also following
11 up with phone calls and visits to answer any
12 additional questions they have. We're already
13 starting to get some response and questions from
14 principals that want to learn more about it and
15 seem very excited about the opportunity.

16

17 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Based on that,
18 the Chancellor sent out a letter to the 400
19 schools in the city. How many schools?

20

21 MR. BERKOWITZ: To 300 targeted
22 schools.

23

24 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Are you
25 prepared to implement the program in all 300
simultaneously?

26

27 MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes. I will say
28 that some will want a few classrooms. If a
29 schools says I want to do the whole school, we

1

2 would do that probably over the course of two to
3 three weeks to gear up and have a smooth
4 transition.

5

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Where did the
6 number 300 come from? Can we go north beyond
7 that? It is an interesting starting point.

8

MR. BERKOWITZ: I think for this
9 first phase trying to live within the budget we
10 have and not increase expenditures, that's how we
11 came up with the 300, they met the criteria.

12

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: I thought it
13 was course neutral implementing this program.

14

MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes.

15

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: What do you
16 mean by criteria?

17

MR. BERKOWITZ: I'm sorry. It's
18 course neutral with the criteria of high free and
19 reduced students.

20

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Got you.
21 Okay.

22

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Is it
23 possible, based on the number from Council Member
24 Fidler, those principals who refuse the program,
25 is it possible to notify the local members of the

1

2 City Council? Is that possible?

3 MR. BERKOWITZ: I'd have to--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:

5 [interposing] I'd like to be notified if any
6 principal in my district refuses this program.

7 MR. BERKOWITZ: I will check.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: The second
9 question I have is does your program attempt to
10 minimize the impact on destruction to instruction
11 or its impact on educational instruction? Does'
12 your program come to do that?

13 MR. BERKOWITZ: Absolutely. That's
14 critical. We know how important it is, the time
15 spent on education so we certainly are very
16 sensitive to that. Principals are very concerned
17 about increasing academics so that is a key part
18 of our objective.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Again, let
20 me just emphasize focusing on those schools where
21 there is concentrated degrees of poverty in the
22 City of New York. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Council
24 Member Fidler.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: I'm still a

1
2 little bit trying to get my hands around any
3 principal would turn you down. After all, a
4 healthy breakfast is the key to learning, right?
5 It's your own mantra. Is there any cost
6 whatsoever to the school budget for participating
7 in this program?

8 MR. BERKOWITZ: No.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: None. You
10 bear the entire costs at central some place?

11 MR. BERKOWITZ: Right. Other than
12 if they see, again in the principal's mind, that
13 the custodian may have more work, if they see it
14 that way. We're trying to explain why it would
15 not be but it's possible that they might look at
16 that, the responsibilities of the custodian and
17 feel that they don't have the time. I can't get
18 to every--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER:

20 [interposing] I thought you said there is no work
21 for the custodian because lunches are being
22 brought--

23 MR. BERKOWITZ: [interposing] Yes.
24 As I explained I think we have a plan that really
25 minimizes it. But again, different people see

1

2 things differently.

3

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Then I
5 would take Council Member James' request one step
6 further and ask you to provide a list of the
7 schools that you offered this to who turned it
8 down. Because obviously, either the principals
9 have an entirely mistaken view of what is involved
10 in this program or you're not telling us their
11 side of the story accurately. No reason that
12 you've offered for turning this down makes any
13 sense to me other than naivety or ignorance of the
14 program, which is an unacceptable answer coming
15 from the principal. So perhaps there is a reason
16 that's not being articulated. I don't see and
17 maybe you don't even see it, well you're certainly
18 not articulating it. So I would ask for that list
19 so that the Committee could investigate directly
20 with those principals as to why they are turning
21 these programs down.

21

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I had a note
23 here, school leadership teams and we discussed
24 that already. Also an additional note we had that
25 every school is mandate to have a school nutrition
committee where the meals and everything is

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

supposed to be discussed. Obviously depending on what areas of the city as far as from a cultural point of view, so forth and so on. Do you know whether or not this is being discussed in these schools, a school nutrition committee?

MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes it is, sir. I refer to those partnership meetings. We require our managers and supervisors meeting with students, principals, parents talking about the menu. As I said, even though we do produce a citywide menu we're very flexible in terms of listening to parents and students because our main goal is to feed more children. If we can make adjustments in the menu so that children are happier and want those particular selections, we're more than happy to do so. So we do do that on an ongoing basis.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I was looking at our briefing document and I guess some of the other information in the reports that we have here and maybe that you may have submitted as to the custodial union. The issues and concerns they had and I do know that the cuts that they had along with everybody else but the custodian union. What

1
2 about in the 48 pilot programs, what type of
3 feedback have you received from the custodians
4 union or the other unions that represent the
5 workers regarding additional work and/or some of
6 the concerns that were raised earlier, possible
7 rodents and roaches and all that type of stuff?

8 MR. BERKOWITZ: I know our labor
9 relations department has reached out to the
10 custodian unions and had discussions with them.
11 In terms of our discussions, we work with the
12 principals and the custodians. And in these
13 particular schools everything is working pretty
14 smoothly so we're not hearing of any difficulties
15 that the custodian specifically is having.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So you've had
17 the dialogue with the custodial and the workers
18 union, the cleaning staff union? Because you have
19 the custodians, which are the operating engineers.
20 And then it's my understanding you have a local of
21 SCIU representing the cleaners and what have you.
22 Isn't that correct?

23 MR. BERKOWITZ: Right. But just to
24 be clear, what I had indicated was our labor
25 relations department has had conversations with

1
2 the unions; I personally did not. I have had
3 conversations with our managers and supervisors
4 and principals and some custodians but I
5 personally did not have discussions with the
6 union.

7 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. And
8 you say your labor relations department is that
9 labor relations within the Department of Education
10 or New York City labor--

11 MR. BERKOWITZ: [interposing]
12 Department of Education labor relations.

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. So the
14 bottom line is in the pilot schools, there hasn't
15 been a problem as far as the custodial or cleaners
16 union whatsoever in the experiment.

17 MR. BERKOWITZ: No because a lot of
18 times the reason this came about is because the
19 principal is working very closely with the
20 custodian, they discussed it, they feel it can
21 work.

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: You talked
23 about targeting the 300 schools with the highest
24 number of children based on Title I eligibility
25 and so forth. You didn't say Title I, I'm saying

1

2

that.

3

4

MR. BERKOWITZ: I said free and reduced, again there are certain things that are--

5

6

7

8

9

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]
But in order to access more federal dollars, how much more federal dollars are you looking to access as a result of the implementation to these 300 schools? What's your guesstimate?

10

11

12

13

MR. BERKOWITZ: I'm not sure what the number would be but basically for every student we serve we get additional dollars that offset the cost of our staff, labor and supplies.

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So for example in the school that you cited in the South Bronx that is up to 98% of about 725 or 750 students. In essence now because more students are participating in the free breakfast program and I assume that the percentage of lunch program may have gone up also, even though citywide the lunch program is about 70%. I'm just various as to how much more money was accessed by New York City or that school if you breaking it down to a school, that they received or the Department of Education receive as a result of implementing it.

1
2 MR. BERKOWITZ: That wouldn't be
3 difficult. I don't have that with me but that
4 would not be difficult for us to provide that on a
5 particular school.

6 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I would just
7 like to know that overall. For example, if it's
8 an additional \$0.75 per student then we know that
9 if we increase it to 22% and now there's 50%, we
10 can put a dollar figure on that. Right now, based
11 on what you said I can't put a dollar figure on
12 it. You know what I mean?

13 MR. BERKOWITZ: Sure, we can
14 provide that.

15 MR. CLARK: Can I?

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Go ahead,
17 sir.

18 MR. CLARK: Also, as our
19 reimbursement goes up, if the reimbursement goes
20 up that means our expenses have also gone up.
21 What I'm saying is as you increase the number of
22 students that are eating, the expenses associated
23 with it are going up because we're also buying
24 more food--

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]

1
2 Buying more food, you need people to serve the
3 food.

4 MR. CLARK: The staff.

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So that means
6 more employees are working too, right?

7 MR. BERKOWITZ: Many times it does
8 add hours, yes. When we're serving more students-
9 -

10 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]
11 That's good. In these hard economic times we need
12 jobs. You have a job for me? No, I'm joking.
13 But seriously I can understand your point that
14 your expenses goes up because in essence you're
15 serving more food, more plastic ware and all of
16 that stuff. And even maybe additional workers to
17 handle the increased service of food. Is that
18 correct?

19 MR. CLARK: Correct.

20 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Let me ask a
21 question. What is the Department of Education's
22 response to concerns of parents and other people
23 that food is wasted, too much food is wasted and
24 has to be, some people say, thrown away. It's
25 like, oh my gosh. There's people out there that

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

really want this food and can eat it.

MR. BERKOWITZ: Good question and frankly a question we get quite often. Part of it is the nature of the program. The federal program requires for breakfast we service four components. It could be a bread, a protein, a juice, a milk. For lunch it means we have to serve five components. There's a term called offer versus serve and basically what that means is we have to offer all of those components. So let's say for lunch five. Children must take at least three. Many times we'll have teachers or parents ask us why do they have to take three? Why can't they just go up and get a sandwich and they don't want the milk or they don't want the fruit. It's going in the garbage or they're taking the vegetable and not eating. I fully understand that but we're required to serve those number of options.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: They're required to take at least three because that is regulations or what?

MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes. That is the federal--

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]

1

2 If I don't want three, all I want is a sandwich
3 you're going to force me to take two additional
4 things.

5 MR. BERKOWITZ: Doesn't that sound
6 very frustrating?

7 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Of course it
8 does.

9 MR. BERKOWITZ: But that is the way
10 the federal government works. If we provide one
11 and not three and then when we're audited we can
12 have liability on the whole program.

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: One this is
14 providing five but if in fact it's all out there
15 and students are coming through, is there someone
16 that must put it on their tray or I can take as I
17 wish?

18 MR. BERKOWITZ: We have both
19 instances. In elementary schools we have some
20 very young children and they're all coming in at
21 once. The principal may have an aid that are
22 assisting the students and putting many items on
23 the tray and not always enough time to ask each
24 student, do you want this, do you want that? One
25 because a lot of kids are coming in all at once so

1

2 sometimes that happens. Older children can make
3 their own choices and only take the three. But
4 the rules are very, very strict.

5

6 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Is someone
7 watching me to make sure I take at least three?

7

8 MR. BERKOWITZ: Yes.

8

9 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: You said yes
10 and people in back are saying uh huh. They're
11 shaking their heads yes.

11

12 MR. BERKOWITZ: We're required by
13 the state and federal government to make sure we
14 meet the requirements of the program.

14

15 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: All right.
16 Let me thank you and Mr. Clark for coming in and
17 giving testimony. I can ask a million more
18 questions but they're forcing me to move on. So
19 thank you very much and I look forward to you
20 getting the answers to the respective committees
21 in response to the questions that we put forward
22 to you.

22

23

24 MR. BERKOWITZ: Thank you very
25 much.

24

25

26 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.
27 Next we're going to hear from Karen Alford, Vice

1
2 President of Elementary Schools for the United
3 Federation of Teachers and Santos Crespos from
4 Local 372 of DC 37, two unions that represent
5 school employees. Karen Alford, Vice President of
6 Elementary for UFT. Please introduce yourself and
7 your title then you may begin.

8 KAREN ALFORD: Good afternoon. My
9 name is Karen Alford and I am the United
10 Federation of Teachers Vice President of
11 Elementary Schools.

12 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Go ahead.

13 MS. ALFORD: I thank both Chairman
14 Jackson, Chairman Rivera and the members of both
15 committees for the opportunity to share our views
16 on the breakfast in the classroom initiative.
17 Today we want to express our support for the
18 expansion of this important pilot program. We are
19 pleased that the Department of Education plans to
20 extend the pilot from the current 48 schools to
21 300 schools this academic year.

22 This program designed to address
23 our students' critical need for a well balanced
24 diet and a healthy start to their learning day is
25 addressing a critical need and it is certainly the

1
2 right thing to do. The UFT firmly believes we
3 need flexibility in school breakfast solutions
4 with protocols that enable educators,
5 administrators, kitchen and custodial staff to
6 seamlessly offer breakfast in a clean, safe and
7 healthy environment.

8 Everyone can agree that all
9 children need a healthy and nutritious breakfast.
10 We know not enough children receive a nutritious
11 meal at home. Breakfast improves student
12 performance. Overall students with in classroom
13 breakfast programs reported reduced tardiness,
14 improved attendance and increase student
15 attentiveness throughout the school day.

16 According to the Food and Research
17 Action Center's child nutrition fact sheet,
18 children who arrive at school without a proper
19 breakfast exhibit impaired learning ability. They
20 are less able to distinguish among similar images,
21 show increased errors and have slower recall.
22 Alternately, children receiving nutritious
23 breakfasts before starting class demonstrate
24 increased performance, they perform better on
25 standardized tests, improve speed and memory in

1
2 cognitive tests and do a better job handling
3 demanding mental tasks.

4 Additionally, well rounded meals
5 served in class can improve a child's eating
6 habits overall by introducing recommended vitamins
7 and minerals often missing from lower income
8 children's diets and potentially reducing their
9 risk for obesity.

10 Full participation should be the
11 goal of the program, especially for the neediest
12 students. We are concerned that low income
13 students often shy away from in school meals and
14 feel stigmatized. Our research indicates that
15 students associate free school meals, especially
16 breakfast, with being poor. A significant value
17 of the all inclusive in classroom breakfast model
18 is that there is no delineation between students
19 and their families ability to pay. The same holds
20 true for those schools with all inclusive
21 breakfast programs served in the cafeteria.

22 Expanding the program to include
23 all income groups removes the stigma so low income
24 students will not feel isolated and inferior to
25 their peers. Ultimately the result is a classroom

1
2 filled with nourished students who are fueled,
3 more mentally focused and poised for learning.

4 We applaud the Mayor and the DOE's
5 decision to expand this initiative, in part as a
6 response to the worsening economy. Increasing the
7 classroom breakfast program participation to 300
8 schools is a commendable goal. In fact, the New
9 York City Coalition Against Hunger logs DOE's
10 program. We too endorse this expansion and would
11 recommend the following approach to best position
12 the breakfast in the classroom program for
13 citywide success.

14 Our recommendations, number one,
15 initially expand the breakfast program to schools
16 in some of the lowest income district then broaden
17 the offering for breakfast to all students
18 regardless of ability to pay. Number two,
19 determine the best practices among the schools
20 participating in the pilot, expressly well
21 supervised, hygienic and punctual and replicate
22 them citywide. Number three, parents, teachers
23 and the DOE should collaborate on breakfast
24 initiatives to ensure wide student participation,
25 parent engagement and program excellence.

1
2 We recognize that every school
3 environment is different and some procedures at
4 specific schools are unique to that situation.
5 Determining the best practices among the pilot
6 schools, particularly those schools distinguished
7 as well supervised and hygienic and where the
8 school day perceive orderly and on time, should be
9 a high priority for the program's expansion. In
10 our view, we should replicate the best practice
11 city wide.

12 As the Committee well knows the UFT
13 champions collaboration between the DOE, parents,
14 teachers and the community. All programs in
15 schools have a higher efficacy when collaboration
16 and transparency co-exist. Over this past
17 summer, DOE with the SchoolFood citywide staff
18 engaged in a couple of breakfast distribution
19 collaborations geared to improve nutrition among
20 the city's children. Success for these programs
21 was due in large part to a coordinated Feed the
22 Mind marketing campaign targeted to parents and
23 the community. This effort reinforced
24 communications with parents and the community
25 around the schools. Parents became engaged and

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

child participation increased.

I want to close by again expressing my appreciation for the opportunity to weigh in on this innovative breakfast initiative. New York City school children deserve a quality education and their teachers need to commence the school day with a class filled with well fed students ready to meet the challenges of the day. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

And next we have Santos Crespos, representing the president of Local 372, Veronica Montgomery-Costa.

SANTOS CRESPOS: Thank you Chairman Rivera, Chairman Jackson and Committee members. Local 372 thanks you for this opportunity to comment up on the breakfast program in the New York City public schools. Local 372 supports the universal breakfast program, which provides nutritious and healthily breakfast to all city school students, free of charge without the stigma of being singled out as a free lunch student.

It is essential that this program expands with the breakfast in the classroom model and logistics become more complex. We do not sacrifice quality of service and oversight for

1
2 expediency. Remember the Mayor's famous deal to
3 place Snapple in school's we can see the DOE's
4 temptation to simplify its commitment to universal
5 breakfast by contracting out for one choice fits
6 all pre-packaged meal loaded with sugar, salt and
7 preservatives.

8 It is critical that our school
9 lunch teams continue to plan and monitor the
10 universal breakfast, whether served in the
11 cafeterias or in the classrooms. The full
12 participation at each school site will ensure
13 freshness and safety of all menu items as well as
14 to protect the students from potentially life
15 threatening allergies from ingredients such as
16 nuts and gluten.

17 Given the fact that so many New
18 York City school buildings are over 100 years old
19 and are five story walk ups, implementation of a
20 breakfast in the classroom program present
21 numerous logistical challenges. At each school
22 site, the input of our Local 372 school lunch team
23 is essential to the success of these efforts.

24 We have consistently taken the
25 position that school lunch personnel must be

1 represented on every school planning team.
2 Likewise, Local 372 input would be practical and
3 helpful to the DOE in the planning of the expanded
4 universal breakfast program. We have the
5 responsibility to make sure that the meals we
6 serve contain the best possible ingredients to
7 give them the nutrition and stamina to remain
8 alert and ready to learn throughout the school
9 day.
10

11 No one cares more about the health
12 and nutrition of our city students than the Local
13 372 school lunch workers and school aids, whose
14 mission is to serve them fresh, good tasting
15 nutritional meals. For many of our students,
16 their school's Local 372 school lunch team are
17 neighborhood parents or guardians or classmates
18 and family, friends within the community.

19 In the DOE current universal
20 breakfast program, Local 372 school lunch
21 employees plan and distribute the meals. Local
22 372 school lunch aids continue to maintain
23 required forms to record the distribution of meals
24 to facilitate the essential federal reimbursement
25 dollars. Together they form an invaluable school

1
2 lunch team. As was in the case in other cities,
3 which piloted the universal breakfast program, we
4 can expect lateness to be reduced, attendance to
5 be improved in our schools particularly in the
6 early grades.

7 The Local 372 school lunch team,
8 like their brothers and sisters who provide
9 critical school life support services within the
10 schools live by the credo, children are our life's
11 work. As a union we strive to help make our job
12 sites a home away from home fro the city's 1.1
13 million school children. Local 372 recognizes
14 that the effort of our school lunch team will
15 ensure that the breakfast in the classroom will
16 have positive impact on attendance by offering the
17 kind of welcoming nourishment and comfort that
18 will help attract our children to come to school.

19 In the current economic crisis,
20 parents who are paying more for less in breakfast
21 and lunch items will be more motivated to have
22 their children participate in the school lunch
23 feeding programs. I'm hoping, because there were
24 some comments that were made by the Office of
25 SchoolFood services that I would like to clarify

1
2 because they are questionable from our
3 perspective.

4 That is that nutritional committee
5 that each school should have is one of those
6 secretive non-informational entities. Some of the
7 schools do have nutritional programs but very,
8 very few of them in fact do not. We have always
9 seen the nutritional committee as the asset to be
10 able to get the kids to eat more. If the food is
11 palpable, if the food that is prepared is
12 something that they are accustomed to.

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Culturally
14 sensitive.

15 MR. CRESPOS: Culturally sensitive,
16 they will do that. I have found when I was in the
17 field, resistance, many times from the Office of
18 SchoolFood service managers to have such
19 committees which in fact creates the problem
20 because then the school count in terms of feeding
21 does go down. The fact that the Department of Ed
22 hired these so-called chefs has not in fact when
23 you take a look at the numbers, increased school
24 lunch eating. As a matter of fact many of the
25 kids are disappointed, do not like what has been

1
2 prepared and they wind up as many parents have
3 indicated, in the garbage cans. So at over
4 \$100,000 a pop for these school chefs it was money
5 spent very, very foolishly.

6 Also, it was mentioned that there
7 are more hours and that there would be more
8 manpower in order to make this program work. Well
9 this program is still in the project state but I
10 can tell you that just in the regular feeding
11 programs we have not seen hours increase for our
12 workers. As a matter of fact, they always want
13 more for less so that in the course of a day where
14 they only may have four or five hours to prepare a
15 full meal for over 1,000 students. Trying to get
16 them to pay them out the overtime or grant them
17 the overtime to get this done correctly with
18 quality does not happen.

19 In terms of the federal guidelines,
20 Mr. Berkowitz was correct regarding those
21 guidelines. However, again, if the food is
22 prepared tasteful with nutrition there won't be a
23 problem with meeting the required guidelines from
24 the federal government.

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Let me thank

1
2 both you representing DC 37 and Ms. Alford from
3 UFT coming in and representing the union
4 perspective. Now, let's talk about the 48 schools
5 that are part of the pilot program. Do either one
6 of you have any information as to how successful
7 it was and so forth and so on? Was there any sort
8 of evaluation of the pilot program by either a
9 school nutrition committee or school leadership
10 team or just the principal talking to you as a
11 chapter leader? What's the title of your chapter,
12 leader also or what do you have?

13 MR. CRESPOS: Executive Vice
14 President of the Local.

15 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: But I'm
16 talking about at the school level you have a shop
17 steward.

18 MR. CRESPOS: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: If you know,
20 from the school to the leadership of your various
21 unions since both teachers and the school aids,
22 the cafeteria workers and everything are
23 represented by DC 37. Any feedback, if you know.

24 MR. CRESPOS: Some of the feedback
25 we got in relationship to your questions, we're

1
2 still attempting to get that information. Because
3 it is a project program, there's nothing yet
4 conclusive. However, some of the concerns that
5 our workers do have however, which was mentioned
6 in my statement, is the fact that they have to go
7 a long distance from the cafeteria to a floor,
8 which requires more time. Which then sets their
9 regular work schedule, again, behind the time so
10 that becomes an issue in terms of allowing
11 additional time in order to be able to do that.

12 MS. ALFORD: Regarding the UFT, we
13 surveyed 21 of the 48 schools so far to find out
14 how the program is working. Naturally in schools
15 where there is collaboration, it works well. We
16 found that of the 21 schools most have started
17 small; 16 have started with less than five
18 classrooms. So I guess they will grow over time.
19 We still have to survey the rest of the schools.

20 Where there have been problems, we
21 have brought in our health and safety folks. As
22 long as there is collaboration we have seen that
23 the program does work.

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Ms. Alford,
25 you cited several times in your testimony about, I

1
2 think, collaboration and you talked about
3 cleanliness, that's not the word you used -
4 hygienic. And it was sited several times. Is
5 that based on any feedback you receiving from the
6 field in those 48?

7 MS. ALFORD: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Did, for
9 example, some of them site it was not hygienic or
10 it was dirty or there were rodents? Or it was
11 very clean and everything was very successful?

12 MS. ALFORD: In the few cases where
13 there were rodents, it couldn't necessarily be
14 attributed to the program.

15 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: It could or
16 could not?

17 MS. ALFORD: Could not be
18 necessarily attributed to the program because
19 unfortunately some of our schools do have pests
20 and in which case we do bring out our health and
21 safety team. So we don't know if the rodents were
22 solely because of the in classroom breakfast
23 program.

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Are both
25 unions, UFT and DC 37, what is your opinion about

1
2 moving to the next level of 300 schools within the
3 five boroughs? Do you have an opinion?

4 MR. CRESPOS: Yes. Anything that
5 can get and maybe I'm using the wrong word but get
6 children to eat that first important meal of the
7 day is a plus. Our concern has always been that
8 it remain that the quality of the food and that it
9 be nutritious and fall within the guidelines as
10 required by the federal government, has to be
11 adhered to. We've yet to see, again, because it
12 is a pilot program what the long range effect.
13 But based upon my colleague from the UFT stating
14 that there appears to be some increases in terms
15 of the number of kids that are eating so far, we
16 will probably attribute that they will probably do
17 much better academically, so on and so forth. So
18 yes, we will favor very strongly universal feeding
19 program.

20 MS. ALFORD: We too are in favor of
21 the expansion. When we feed our kids then they
22 can start their day and they're more attentive,
23 they're ready to learn and teachers are able to
24 pull so much more out of them when they are well
25 fed and attentive. So we are certainly, certainly

1
2 in favor of expanding. But we just want to make
3 sure that protocols are in place so there are best
4 practices throughout the city.

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I agree with
6 you, duplicating the best practices is extremely
7 important to have a successful program. What
8 about any feedback from any of you chapter leaders
9 or shop stewards? Any discussion on this at the
10 school leadership teams before implementation? Do
11 you know what I mean?

12 MS. ALFORD: I think because it
13 started on such a small level in so many schools
14 with as few as one classroom.

15 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: In some
16 schools one classroom.

17 MS. ALFORD: In some schools one
18 classroom.

19 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: But you said
20 you had a couple of citations where there were
21 five classrooms. What grade level? I assume that
22 you're talking about--let me not assume. I just
23 used that word again. At what level of the school
24 system, at the elementary, intermediate or high
25 schools? If you have any information on that of

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

the 21.

MS. ALFORD: All three. And on all three levels, on elementary as well as middle, as well as high school, there are some schools where they are only doing this in one particular class.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I'm more curious as to the schools where they have five classrooms because that seems as though the number that you cited, that had the highest number of classrooms participating in the program.

MS. ALFORD: Also a range on the three levels between elementary, middle and high school.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Let me thank you both for coming in and representing your respective unions. We appreciate any additional information. Please give it to us.

MR. CRESPOS: Thank you.

MS. ALFORD: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you. We have two panels left so we are going to hear from these three individuals then we have one panel after this. Okay? Madeleine Levin from FRAC, it stands for what again? She will let us

1
2 know. Joel Berg from the New York Coalition
3 against Hunger and Kristen Mancinelli of City
4 Harvest. Please come forward. And FRAC is the
5 Food Research Action Center. I believe you were
6 called first. If you're ready you may begin.
7 Just introduce yourself, your title and you may
8 begin.

9 MADELEINE LEVIN: Good afternoon
10 Chairman and member of the Committee, its staff.
11 My name is Madeleine Levin, I'm a senior policy
12 analyst at the Food Research and Action Center in
13 Washington, D.C., commonly known as FRAC. We're
14 the leading non-profit organization working to
15 improve public policies and public/private
16 partnerships to eradicate hunger and under-
17 nutrition in the United States. Thank you for
18 convening this hearing and inviting me to
19 participate.

20 I'm going to be very, very brief.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Oh great.

22 MS. LEVIN: In the interest of time
23 and because I'm happy to say that our
24 organization's work has already been quoted by a
25 number of previous speakers so I can skip my whole

1

2 part of my testimony about--

3 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]

4 But you submitted it as part of the record.

5 MS. LEVIN: But I've submitted it
6 about how important breakfast is. I'll just kind
7 of cut to the chase that we know that we have low
8 participation here in New York City that's
9 persistent despite going to a universal free
10 program. And that in New York City it's more an
11 issue of time as we've discussed and that's why
12 the classroom breakfast program is so important.

13 I know Mr. Chairman you were also
14 interested in the question about whether race was
15 a factor in kids missing breakfast. I just
16 thought you'd be interest in the statistic that
17 nationally only 35% of parents of children ages 6
18 - 11 report eating breakfast each day with their
19 children. That's according to the U.S. Census
20 Bureau and that cuts across all income levels and
21 races.

22 Basically no one has time to eat
23 breakfast at home with their kids. It's pretty
24 consistent across the whole United States so we
25 applaud the Mayor for expanding the breakfast in

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

the classroom program to 300 schools. And hope that it will eventually be expanded to all of New York City schools. Based on our research which has been cited already, we did find that the larger urban school districts that have implemented breakfast in the classroom where breakfast is eaten at the beginning of the school day, after the bell if you will, that that is the most effective way to increase participation in the program.

Also as I think you've gotten from previous testimony, not just the children benefit but actually the bottom line of the SchoolFood program and hopefully more jobs and hours can be had from it as well because it does bring a lot of revenue in. You were looking for a number. By our figures, if the program doubles the number of students eating school breakfast each day then there would be an additional amount of federal revenue of \$50 million coming into SchoolFood.

That's just the revenue side. As Mr. Berkowitz or maybe it was his colleague, Mr. Clark. There are expenses so I'm not saying they're going to make \$50 million. I'm saying

1
2 that's just the federal revenue that comes in, the
3 additional revenue. There's also an additional
4 state revenue, which is much smaller, somewhere
5 around \$25,000 that would come in to support that
6 effort.

7 So you have almost all the elements
8 needed here for success. You've got the universal
9 free breakfast, you've got strong partnerships as
10 you've seen from the unions. You've seen all of
11 the anti-hunger organizations, community
12 organizations that are represented here. You've
13 got this mandate from the Mayor. Really the piece
14 that's lacking is the strong administrative
15 support and leadership that's needed to implement
16 the classroom breakfast programs at the individual
17 school level.

18 This is not only a problem here in
19 New York City. In other cities where I am
20 supporting similar efforts, the issue of getting
21 principals to take on this program is a tough one
22 everywhere. It's not just here in New York City.
23 So what do we need to do to convince principals
24 has been asked already? Indeed our research shows
25 that superintendents that put their full support

1
2 behind this program are the ones that are most
3 successful.

4 As you've heard in Newark, New
5 Jersey where they have classroom breakfast in all
6 of their schools, that was because of a mandate by
7 the superintendent. Yes, that superintendent told
8 the principals you are going to do this. Also
9 when it's happened in Portland, Oregon, that was
10 also based on the superintendent mandate, where
11 they came out and said we need to do this because
12 of financial reasons, health reasons, it's the
13 right thing to do. And you are going to do it and
14 you are going to participate in it and it happened
15 in all of those schools.

16 We think that you here at this
17 Committee and this City Council can do a lot to
18 urge Chancellor Kline to do more. I'd love to see
19 a copy of this letter too. It's great that he's
20 written a letter but I think we need to do more.
21 I know that my colleagues from other organizations
22 here have great ideas about how, short of a
23 mandate, there are other steps that we can take
24 perhaps to convince principals to jump on the
25 bandwagon. But when you're cutting into what they

1
2 see as their time, and their territory it's hard
3 to convince them to make these changes even though
4 they are modest in the school day. But we need to
5 move forward with that and I'm sure that we can do
6 it with your help and with all of the others here
7 that are assembled today. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

9 Next.

10 JOEL BERG: Hello. I'm Joel Berg,
11 Executive Director of the New York City Coalition
12 Against Hunger. It is rare that someone doesn't
13 hear me. I have submitted extensive testimony for
14 the record so I'll summarize it and respond to
15 some of the things brought up since, since it is
16 late in the day.

17 For those of you that have heard me
18 testify before the Council before, I usually have
19 some pretty harsh things about what the city isn't
20 doing on poverty, food stamps and on a wide
21 variety of issues. I am absolutely thrilled to be
22 able to say we agree whole heartedly with
23 something the city is doing. And this I one area
24 where they actually do deserve a national
25 reputation for being pioneering and groundbreaking

1
2 and visionary and all that. It feels a lot better
3 to give good news than bad news.

4 In the next few days we're going to
5 be releasing our annual hunger survey and it's
6 going to show records number of people coming to
7 pantries and kitchens. Pantry and kitchen
8 funding, as the Council very well knows is not an
9 endless federal entitlement. Most of the money is
10 state and city. The only reason city funding
11 hasn't been cut in the past is because the Council
12 has objected to the Mayor's cuts. But when the
13 money runs out, the money runs out.

14 This is entitlement federal funding
15 that if we move from 20% of the eligible kids
16 getting funding to 98% of the eligible kids
17 getting funding our federal tax dollars will pay
18 for that. They will just have to print more money
19 or God forbid tax the billionaires to pay for it
20 but it will get paid. So this is working.

21 I must say, David Berkowitz who I
22 have worked with very cooperatively and many
23 people here, has just been a pleasure to work
24 with. He's been extraordinarily responsive.
25 This, beyond just the substance of it, the way the

1
2 process has worked at least form our end has been
3 how it's supposed to work. We've gone to the
4 unions, we've gone to the city, we've gone to
5 fellow advocates. We jointly went and visited
6 Newark together. They had us visit some of the
7 schools where this is working. I'm again,
8 thrilled to say it's government working the way
9 it's supposed to be, just a win-win.

10 I have visited P.S. 68 in the Bronx
11 twice and where they have this in every classroom.
12 The principal there is just evangelical about
13 this. One way you can get more information, I'm
14 sure they will welcome the Council members
15 visiting. Even if they wouldn't they would allow
16 you to visit. This principal told me that she
17 used to have 50 kids a day coming to school late
18 on average. She assigned extra staff to
19 collecting the late slips and now it's an average
20 of five, which by my bad math is 900% decrease in
21 tardiness. All the things we advocates said would
22 happen if you had in classroom breakfast has
23 happened: less tardiness, more kids paying
24 attention in the afternoon.

25 By the way, I saw when they were

1
2 serving it. I don't think it cuts into
3 instruction time. They're just getting there.
4 The kids are getting their earlier. The cutting
5 into instruction time is when all the kids are
6 coming late. Some of the teachers are actually
7 using it as a way to teach nutrition, teach math.
8 I must say I and some of my colleagues here had
9 conversations with recalcitrant principals. I
10 must say I don't think it's DOE's fault.

11 Sometimes people just have false
12 perceptions. There are some people who, when you
13 came forward with the Polio vaccine say oh no it's
14 too much work. I think really it's just a
15 resistance to change, a resistance to progress and
16 doing something new. I saw very little in the
17 problem with rodents.

18 A lot of kids that can afford it
19 bring food on their own into the school so the
20 idea that this is introducing food. That's a
21 whole other story. The best teachers actually
22 feed their own kids when they don't have this. So
23 to have a program that's paid for by Uncle Sam,
24 that 80% of kids aren't using. To have this
25 alternative where you're really going to move up

1
2 to 98% is quintessentially a win-win. I just want
3 to make one point.

4 Last point, first of all I'm
5 absolutely thrilled that the unions are on board.
6 When we went to DOE years ago, different
7 leadership they said oh we can't do it, the
8 rodents, the buildings are too high, the unions
9 will never go for it. When we approached the
10 unions, hey we want to do this. Sometimes
11 misconceptions rule over the reality that everyone
12 sees this as a good idea.

13 This year the federal government is
14 taking up re-authorization of the Child Nutrition
15 Bill, the bills that actually authorize this
16 funding. Some of you know president-elect Obama,
17 we're a non-partisan group but I can't help but
18 say I like saying that. President-elect Obama has
19 actually promised to end child hunger in America
20 by 2015. Senator Clinton has previously been on
21 record for that goal. The Child Nutrition Bill,
22 at least in the House, doesn't go through the
23 conservative mid-West Ad committee. It goes
24 through the liberal, progressive, urban dominated
25 Education and Labor Committee. Congresswoman

1
2 Clark from Brooklyn is actually on that committee
3 so we can have a very progressive bill this year.

4 Our hope is that you heard that DOE
5 may not want to go up belong the 300 schools
6 because at some point they'll start losing money.
7 Our hope is that Congress and the new President
8 actually pass a bill that makes this cost
9 effective in each and every public school
10 classroom in America.

11 Agnes Mollnar from Food Bank Food
12 Change wanted me to make one correction because
13 she knows this stuff down cold even more than me
14 that I have one technical problem in my testimony
15 that I want to correct. Even though the school
16 provides breakfast free of charge to every kid,
17 they still do collect the forms. We're hoping
18 that we get a new federal law that no forms are
19 necessary. That the federal government
20 understands they will save more money if we don't
21 have to a waste it on this bureaucracy of
22 collecting forms. Every kid in America should get
23 a free modern textbook as an educational tool. We
24 believe getting a free nutritious breakfast is the
25 same thing and that's where modern America should

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

and will eventually go. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.
Kristen Mancinelli from City.

KRISTEN MANCINELLI: Thank you for
getting it right actually.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: That's
because your handwriting is pretty clear.

MS. MANCINELLI: I'm the Manager of
Program Development and Policy at City Harvest.
Thank you for convening this hearing. I just have
a few things to add. It's hard to comprehend that
one in five children in this city is hungry right
now. As we've heard 80% of the kids in this city
don't participate in the school breakfast program.
So when hungry children fail to meet meals that
are offered to them for free as part of the normal
school day we need to ask what's wrong and how we
can fix it.

We commend this city for expanding
breakfast in the classroom to 300 schools. While
we figure out how to scale up the program to all
schools we'd like to encourage other measures that
can stimulate participation. For example, we
heard a lot today about principal participation in

1
2 this program. Principals are currently evaluated
3 on a number of indicators. I'm sure you know much
4 better than I do, such as test scores, attendance
5 and other things. I recently read a press release
6 about performance bonuses of up to \$25,000 for
7 principals for success of their students. If
8 principals were evaluated on student participation
9 on the school meals as well they might do a lot
10 more on promoting the programs and encouraging
11 participation.

12 We'd also like to encourage the
13 Department of Education to do as much information
14 sharing as possible. I had a similar experience
15 to yourself, Chairman Jackson. I called the press
16 office that released this press release on
17 expanding breakfast in the classroom to get some
18 more information and give that list of schools out
19 to our emergency food providers. My calls were
20 not returned. So whether it's through 3-1-1, the
21 city information system or local newspapers or
22 community centers, it would be really great to
23 advertise which schools are doing this pilot so we
24 can encourage participation.

25 Not only does the city face a

1
2 significant childhood hunger problem but we're in
3 the midst of financial woes and the Department of
4 Ed is among the hardest hit. As we've heard a
5 little bit today, increasing participation in the
6 school meals is a revenue generator. SchoolFood
7 gets reimbursements for each meal. For a child
8 who is eligible for free meal for breakfast they
9 get \$1.40, for reduced price they get \$1.10 and
10 for paid breakfast they get \$0.25. Now it is
11 offered free to all students but these are the
12 eligibility requirements. We calculated that if
13 we were to increase participation by 10% across
14 this city, we would get another \$22 million in
15 revenue. So that's revenue again not taking into
16 account the extra costs.

17 There are 400,000 children in this
18 city who live in households that access emergency
19 food. And half of those do not participate in the
20 school breakfast program. So if you were to get
21 those 200,000 children participating in the school
22 breakfast program, that would bring \$50 million
23 into the city every year.

24 Finally, as Joel Berg mentioned, we
25 have this Child Nutrition re-authorization coming

1
2 up in fiscal year 09 so we would strongly urge the
3 Department of Education to take an active role in
4 this process by participating. As the nation's
5 largest and one of the most progressive school
6 districts our experiences and recommendations for
7 needed change carry a lot of weight. So perhaps
8 the Department of Education can be a working group
9 of members of the advocacy committee, its
10 legislative affairs body and other appropriate
11 persons to collaboratively develop a needs
12 statement for New York City schools program.

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I assume your
14 advocates are going to ask DOE to do that.

15 MR. BERG: I would also
16 respectfully ask that the Council communicate with
17 President-elect Obama and the new Congress and
18 perhaps consider even passing a resolution in
19 support a strong Child Nutrition re-authorization
20 bill that would make sure New York City doesn't at
21 least lose money on doing the right thing.

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I take note
23 of that and we'll move forward on a resolution
24 sponsored by Joel Rivera and myself. We'll move
25 on that quickly. That's next year is that correct

1

2 Dave, we're dealing with that subject next year?

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

MR. BERG: Next year is a few weeks away. This Committee and the House has to take up Child Left Behind which didn't pass last year. But these provisions can go into any bill that goes through that committee so it is possible.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: The sooner, the better.

MR. BERG: Absolutely and we may have a new administration that actually cares about this.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Now, you've heard my questions regarding school leaderships teams, school nutrition committees. With respects to mandating this program, especially with the experience of Newark, New Jersey and other municipalities throughout the country do you think it would be wise if they mandated it as part of a program that has to be mandated? What would the effect be on that? I'm just asking if you have an opinion. If you don't, you don't have to say.

MS. LEVIN: I can say for FRAC that we do think it's would be very effective to mandate it.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: In 1,400 or
3 1,500 schools? That's a huge jump from 48.

4 MS. LEVIN: This can be done
5 reasonably in a time frame. I'm not saying that
6 we'd expect SchoolFood to turn around tomorrow and
7 have it done everywhere. But I think to have a
8 mandate that it get implemented...I know Newark is
9 much smaller but they were able to implement it
10 district wide over the course of one school year
11 so I think it can be done.

12 The other excellent suggestion that
13 Kristen made about including it in evaluation of
14 principals, just though you'd be interested that a
15 name that might be familiar to you, Superintendent
16 Rudy Crew during his tenure in Miami Dade. When
17 they implemented universal breakfast in their
18 city, he did include it as a piece of the
19 principal evaluation. Their participation went up
20 25% when they implemented universal breakfast as
21 opposed to here in New York City, when they
22 implemented it, it went up about it's debated
23 about 7% or 8%.

24 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: 7% or 8%,
25 yes.

1
2 MS. LEVIN: So the Food Service
3 Director there told me that she had principals
4 calling her saying how are my numbers, how are my
5 numbers. I'm sure that didn't happen here without
6 that.

7 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I'm curious
8 if you know especially if you have a national
9 perspective. If it became part of the evaluation
10 for principals under Rudy Crew in Miami Dade
11 County, what were some of the ratings that
12 principals receive on that since it only went up
13 25%. I don't know what the base line was. Was it
14 already at 50% and went up to 80%?

15 MS. LEVIN: I didn't get to see the
16 actual wording on those evaluations but I can try
17 to get that for you.

18 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I'm curious.
19 For example, if their ratings were a numerical
20 five being the highest or was it an A or B or was
21 it a numerical rating.

22 MS. LEVIN: I think it was
23 something pretty general like your participation
24 increased by some reasonable percent or maybe that
25 it just increases. It wasn't a huge numerical--

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]

If you look at what everyone talks about, the positive aspects from a nutritional point of view for the children as far as their academic performance, it doesn't hurt them; it improves their academic performance. Fighting childhood obesity because it's a healthy meal and less money comes out of the kids and parents pockets for junk food and what have you. Not that all kids buy junk food; I'm not saying that. All you have to do is look. There are candy stores all near the school.

Also, with the increased number of federal dollars that we're pulling down, it's a win-win situation. I guess if I was the Chancellor I would mandate it. It wouldn't be any ands, ifs or buts. I'm not vying for the job.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: If we got to vote, you got it.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I'm an elected public official.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: I just want to briefly respond. I agree wholeheartedly that it should be in every public school in New York City.

1
2 This Committee has been in the forefront in
3 pointing out but on occasion this administration
4 has been sort of autocratic when it comes to
5 schools. When the Mayor wants something he
6 doesn't ask an opinion poll of his principals, he
7 gets it done--

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]

9 Or even no smoking in restaurants and bars. Even
10 though there was a lot of controversy, it went
11 through one, two, three.

12 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: In my opinion
13 is if something is a priority, leaders make it
14 happen especially one that makes sense. I will
15 say having served in the federal government for
16 eight years in the previous administration, I
17 always point out that what is in someone's formal
18 evaluation matter. So I would wholeheartedly
19 suggest that among the list of things that
20 principals be evaluated for is the level of
21 serving children.

22 This is a broader problem and why I
23 come back to the need for a federal bill.

24 SchoolFood service is the only part of school
25 that's supposed to make money, as if it is some

1
2 side thing that really isn't part of the
3 educational process and that's why they're freaked
4 out about any expansion that could lose a penny.
5 We got to get to the thinking that this is a
6 critical educational tool and like everything else
7 in society maybe we're not going to make money off
8 our schools.

9 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I have
10 another panel. Let me thank all of you for your
11 advocacy on behalf of all of the children that we
12 represent. Our last panel, so everybody listen to
13 these two individuals; they are important too.
14 Kathy Goldman from Food Bank NYC and Casey Dinkin,
15 Nutrition Consortium of New York State. Please
16 come forward. Anyone else wants to testify? So
17 we'll hear from this last panel. Kathy, you go
18 first. Press the button please.

19 KATHY GOLDMAN: It's still a
20 pleasure to see you. But I did want to tell you
21 that your district 6.

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I'm district
23 5 and 6. When I was on the school board I was
24 president of district 6, school board 6.

25 MS. GOLDMAN: That's what I'm

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

talking about, your school district is 6.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I'm bigger than that now. No, not really. I represent schools in district 5 and 6 but it's not listed there.

MS. GOLDMAN: The numbers in district 6 in terms of participation in school breakfast in general, you have 18% of the registered kids are eating.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: In district 6?

MS. GOLDMAN: And what about district 5, do you have the numbers, too?

MS. GOLDMAN: 23%.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: We don't have that sheet.

MS. GOLDMAN: We're going to send you all kinds of stuff. It's so late and it's just ridiculous to keep... I don't know how you can stand it after all these hours.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: It's an interesting subject, food. If you said that there was food here to be given out, you'd have a line all the way around City Hall and you know it

1

2 because the need is great. Go ahead. I'm sorry.

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

MS. GOLDMAN: I just want to make a couple of points. You have the written testimony and I believe me, am not going to read it. First of all, we want to make sure that there is an understanding that every single school in the City of New York serves breakfast. And to mandate only in classroom breakfast would really be, in our view, a mistake.

11

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Tell us why.

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

MS. GOLDMAN: Because you can't have a hot breakfast in the classroom, you can only have a cold breakfast. It just doesn't work out; it's impossible and it's wonderful. But in the lunch room the kids can get a hot breakfast. So why not do simple things like rotating. I was telling people that there's a school in the Bronx for example, I forgot the number of it.

20

21

22

23

24

25

The principal's name is Orzo so I remember that because it's a food. He figured the kids in fifth grade could not get to the lunch room for lunch before 1:00 because it was crowded. So he mandated that the fifth grade had to eat breakfast so at least they weren't falling asleep

1

2 by 11:00; it was just impossible. There are lots
3 of solutions.

4

5 There are schools that have one
6 grade eats breakfast in the lunchroom on Monday
7 and everybody else gets lunch in the classroom.
8 There are a million ways of doing this.

9

10 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: That was my
11 boss who said I have to get out of here. I told
12 him five minutes. I'm joking.

13

14 MS. GOLDMAN: The point really is
15 that we want to make sure that many more children
16 eat breakfast in all possible ways, whether it's
17 grab and go, in the classroom. So what should be
18 mandated is a significant program to get more kids
19 eating. I don't know if you have gone shopping
20 lately but buying cereal, buying milk, the prices
21 have gone up. It's impossible and we have a lot
22 of people in our schools and the parents can not
23 afford to give breakfast to the kids. As you've
24 heard, there's all this federal money sitting out
25 there that nobody is taking advantage of. I don't
26 want to...

27

28 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: I don't
29 really buy cereal anymore because my kids are all

1

2 adults. Even though we still have some cereal in
3 the house but it's expensive.

4

5

MS. GOLDMAN: It's very expensive
and the milk is very expensive.

6

7

8

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: The boxes are
the same size, but the quantity has gone down.
The milk is also about \$4 something a gallon.

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

MS. GOLDMAN: It's really tough.
It's wonderful that the city is even doing
anything on this. It's really great so for once
in my life I can say that the city is doing
something right. But how they do it...it can be
done, the money is there, the staff is there, they
will hire more workers. What can be better.

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Let me ask
this question. Kathy, some advocates would
disagree with you that it should not be mandated.
Some advocates feel that it should be mandated.
The percentage of children participating will go
up dramatically and the nutritional value, etc,
etc. Let me ask the question, your position that
it should not be mandated. Is that the position
of Food Bank of NYC or is that your individual
position?

1
2 MS. GOLDMAN: I have to admit that
3 it's my individual position and it is not that we
4 wouldn't want to see breakfast mandated but not
5 only in the classroom. We're saying there should
6 be many options.

7 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. I hear
8 you, flexibility.

9 MS. GOLDMAN: Yes, absolutely.

10 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: You said if
11 you have it in the classroom you're not really
12 getting hot meals.

13 MS. GOLDMAN: You can't; it's
14 impossible.

15 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Not unless
16 it's one of those microwave meals where you put it
17 in.

18 MS. GOLDMAN: I don't think it's
19 going to work.

20 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: All right.
21 I'll leave that to the advocates and the experts.
22 I'm a legislator so I'll do the resolution.

23 MS. GOLDMAN: One other slight
24 comment, somebody had mentioned before which is
25 quite true there is food of all kinds in every

1
2 school. The only thing they're worried about is
3 the nutritious meals that are served.

4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.
5 Last but not least, Dinkins. Go ahead.

6 CASEY DINKIN: My name is Casey
7 Dinkin and I'm here representing the Nutrition
8 Consortium of New York State. The Nutrition
9 Consortium of New York State is a statewide anti
10 hunger organization. We are based in Albany. Our
11 mission is alleviating hunger in our state through
12 increasing access to and participation in federal
13 nutrition assistance programs. The three programs
14 that we focus the majority of our efforts on are
15 the food stamp program, the summer school service
16 program and the school breakfast program.

17 To start off we commend David
18 Berkowitz and SchoolFood for implementing
19 classroom breakfast. We commend the Mayor for
20 making this a citywide initiative and we commend
21 the City Council for taking this up and offering
22 this hearing. We agree with many of the things
23 that the other advocates have said today.

24 Students don't eat breakfast because there are
25 persistent barriers, buses, short breakfast

1
2 periods, pressure to go directly to class and
3 stigma. All of these barriers are present in the
4 traditional model of school breakfast service
5 where breakfast is only available in the cafeteria
6 before the school day begins.

7 Schools across the nation, as has
8 been said, are finding that the only successful
9 way to eliminate these access barriers is by
10 serving breakfast in the classroom. We applaud
11 New York City for implementing this approach. The
12 Nutrition Consortium, several years back,
13 administered a project where breakfast in the
14 classroom programs were piloted in 20 schools in
15 upstate New York. This was done through funding
16 through the New York State Attorney General.
17 These schools were urban, suburban and rural.
18 They were of varying sizes and they included high
19 poverty and low poverty schools.

20 Data was collected from these
21 schools on the school breakfast participation and
22 a variety of other academic indicators. The
23 results were analyzed by researchers at Harvard
24 Medical School. A final report was published and
25 I brought copies of this, which I hope you'll take

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

from me so I don't have to take it back to Albany.

In all of these schools, school breakfast participation more than doubled. Participation by low income students increased from 38% to 58%. There was also great improvement on other academic indicators. Tardiness and absenteeism decreased. There were fewer disciplinary office referrals and visits to the school nurse. An overwhelming majority of teachers and principals who were surveyed agreed classroom breakfast made an important contribution to the educational process.

A lot has been talked about today about resistance from principals, faculty and staff. As Madeleine from FRAC noted, this is fairly common; it's not specific to New York City. And this was very true in our experience with this pilot in upstate New York. Initially teachers were concerned about the time and clean up from the classroom breakfast. 58% of the teachers surveyed were hesitant about the program in the beginning of the year. By the end of the year 85% of the teachers surveyed felt that classroom breakfast made a positive impact.

1
2 Custodial staff were also reluctant
3 about switching to classroom breakfast, 50%. By
4 the end of the year 77% of custodial staff were
5 supporters of the classroom breakfast program.
6 These findings are consistent with other studies
7 that have been done. In our experience, it is
8 possible to serve both hot and cold meals in the
9 classroom. There is definitely a lot of different
10 methods. Some schools in our pilot program did
11 only cold, some did a mix of hot and cold.

12 So we've talked about the academic
13 impact. Obviously there is a significant
14 financial impact for the city if this universal
15 classroom breakfast is expanded. But I just
16 wanted to share a compelling example from a school
17 in upstate New York that started a universal in
18 classroom breakfast program this year.

19 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Where? Where
20 in upstate? Don't say upstate, give me? Is it
21 Albany? Is it Buffalo?

22 MS. DINKIN: Actually this was the
23 Carthage school district, which is in St. Laurens
24 County. They're about--

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]

1

2 What city? What town?

3 MS. DINKIN: Carthage.

4 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Cartilage.

5 MS. DINKIN: Carthage.

6 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay.

7 MS. DINKIN: They're at about 50%

8 of students with free and reduced price school

9 meal applications on file. The food service

10 director told me that, this was this past year,

11 here was some resistance to switching to the

12 classroom breakfast model from the teachers. Then

13 one day she received a note from one of these

14 initially resistant teachers. I'm paraphrasing

15 because I don't have this note. But what the note

16 said was thank you for this program. At first I

17 didn't think it was necessary. I was concerned

18 about the time it would take away from teaching.

19 This Monday I had a student come up to me after

20 breakfast and say I'm so glad I got to eat

21 breakfast today. I didn't have anything to eat

22 all weekend.

23 The teacher continued, I now

24 understand how very crucial the classroom

25 breakfast program is to my students. I never

1
2 would have realized that this student and not
3 getting fed at home. I am sure that there are so
4 many others out there that are just like him.

5 So in conclusion, we know that
6 there are so many students that are not receiving
7 adequate nutrition at home. We need to make sure
8 these students are receiving all of the nutrition
9 available to them through the federally funded
10 meal programs. Moving breakfast to the classrooms
11 is absolutely the best way to accomplish this.

12 The Nutrition Consortium of New
13 York State commends New York City for taking the
14 lead on implementing and expanding classroom
15 breakfast programs throughout the city. We
16 encourage the city to continue to expand the
17 program with the goal of making classroom
18 breakfast available to every child.

19 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Let me thank
20 you for coming in from I guess New York state
21 especially. And when you were concluding I asked
22 myself do you have any input on the private
23 schools? Has any private schools implemented this
24 universal program because they get money also, is
25 that correct? The federal dollars, I'm asking a

1

2 question. I don't know.

3

4

5

MS. DINKIN: Yes. Private schools can participate in the federally funded school meals programs.

6

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Do they?

7

MS. DINKIN: Yes.

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: They do. Has any school mandated it to your knowledge for the entire school in New York City? Anyone have any knowledge on that? Okay. All right. Let me thank you. So overall in New York City they're implementing it. What does the New York State Consortium have about having New York City mandate it to all of the schools? Do you have any opinion on that?

MS. DINKIN: We would be supportive of that?

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Of it being mandated in all the schools.

MS. DINKIN: Definitely.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Do you think it could take within one year or do they need a two year gearing up program?

MS. DINKIN: I think that the city

1
2 would have to continue doing what they're doing,
3 working collaboratively and finding out best
4 practices, making sure that the transition is--

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [interposing]

6 Yeah, but how long would it take? I don't want
7 the program to take four or five years. I just
8 think that's too long because that means for four
9 or five years 100% of the children are missing
10 out. Not 100% but many of the children are
11 missing out. So I would say within two school
12 years it should be fully implemented. I don't
13 think that that's unreasonable.

14 MS. DINKIN: We would definitely
15 like to see it implemented as soon as possible.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: You're a
17 diplomat. You know that? As soon as possible.
18 Let me thank all of you for coming in. As a
19 legislator I've learned a lot about this subject
20 today from the Department of Education officials
21 and from all of the advocates and all of the staff
22 that have prepared all of the briefing documents
23 and questions and everything for us. Sergeant of
24 arms, can you please take the handouts and give
25 them to us please? Thank you.

1
2 So with that, I thank you all for
3 coming in. It is now 4:53 and this hearing on
4 oversight breakfast in New York City public
5 schools, a joint Committee of Education and Health
6 is hereby adjourned.

7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Amber Gibson, certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature Amber Gibson

Date December 10, 2008