

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29, 2023

Start: 1:13 P.M.

Recess: 3:23 P.M.

HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Hon. Rita Joseph, Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

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

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
A P P E A R A N C E S

Glenn Risbrook
Senior Executive Director of Student
Transportation at New York City Public Schools

Flavia Puello Perdomo
Chief of Schools for Community Supports and
Wellness within the Division of School Leadership

Ricardo Duran
Chief of Schools for Finance and Human Resources
within the Division of School Leadership

Shona Gibson
Executive Director of the District 75 Citywide
Office within the Special Education Office in the
Division of Teaching and Learning

Tracy Caldron
Assistant Commissioner for COMPASS at DYCD

Yael Kalban
Executive Director of Strategy and Operations,
Office of District Planning at NYC Department of
Education

Daniel Guillen
Deputy Director of Operations at DYCD

Michael Cohen
Eastern Director at Simon Wiesenthal Center

Kyle Satterfield
American Jewish Committee

Elizabeth Venditto,
Director of Institutional Giving of The Museum of
Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the
Holocaust

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Avi Posnick
Northeast Director for StandWithUs

Christopher Leon Johnson
Testifying in support of Resolution 153

Paolo Alberghini-Pastor
Director of Development for The Center for
Educational Innovation

Lori Podvesker
Director Disability and Education Policy at
NCLUDEnyc

Paullette Healy
Co-President at Citywide Council on Special
Education

Leona Teten -
Senior at the Bronx High School of Science; Bronx
Community Board 8 Member; StandWithUs Intern;
President of The Jewish Student Union

Ellen McHugh
City Wide Council of Special Education

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2 SERGEANT BRADLEY: Test, test, test, this is a
3 test, today's date is March 29, 2023. This is a for
4 The Committee on Education, and this is being
5 recorded by Sakeem(sp?)Bradley.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Good afternoon, and welcome
7 to The Education Committee... (CROSS-TALK)

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: One second, Chair... (CROSS-
9 TALK)

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH:

11 [GAVEL SOUND]

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: One... one second, let me do
13 the opening.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon, and welcome to
16 today's New York City Council Hearing on Education.
17 At this time please place all electronic devices to
18 vibrate or silent mode.

19 Thank you, Chair, we may begin.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay.

21 Welcome to the Education Hearing on legislation.

22 [GAVELING IN] [GAVEL SOUND]

23 Good afternoon, and welcome to today's hearing.

24 I am Council Member Rita Joseph, Chair of The
25 Committee on Education.

1
2 Thank you for joining us today for this hearing
3 on legislation.

4 We will hear five pieces of legislation
5 including:

6 Introduction 0566, sponsored by Council Member
7 Oswald Feliz, A Local Law to in relation to requiring
8 all children with an individualized education program
9 (IEP) to be transported in buses with air-
10 conditioning.

11 Extreme heat during the summer months have
12 particular detrimental impacts on students with
13 certain disabilities. And this is an important step
14 towards ensuring that they are provided with safe and
15 comfortable transportation to and from school.

16 Next you will hear Introduction 644, sponsored by
17 Council Member Nantasha Williams, a local law
18 relating to requiring the New York City Department Of
19 Education (DOE) to provide information on
20 establishing afterschool programs. Providing such
21 information in an organized and transparent manner
22 may encourage the creation of more afterschool
23 programming as well as help to ensure that all such
24 programming is established safely and successfully.

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2 Next you will hear Introduction 725, sponsored by
3 Council Member Linda Lee, a local law relating to
4 requiring the Department of Education to create a
5 website for schools to list surplus school supplies
6 to be claimed for use by other schools. The creation
7 of such a website would reduce waste as an efficient
8 and cost-effective way to facilitate the exchange of
9 supplies between schools.

10 Next you will hear Introduction 868, sponsored by
11 Council Member Althea Stevens, a local law relating
12 to requiring The Department of Education to report
13 on the number of District 75 students and the
14 criteria used to determine the location of District
15 75 schools. D 75 schools are meant to provide highly
16 specialized instructional support for students with
17 significant challenges such as autism spectrum
18 disorder, significant cognitive delays, emotional
19 disturbance, sensory impairment, or multiple
20 disabilities. Such a report would provide valuable
21 data on how the City can better serve students with
22 disabilities.

23 Lastly, we will hear Resolution 153, sponsored by
24 Council Member Shaun Abreu, a Resolution calling on
25 the Department of Education to create a Jewish

1
2 Heritage Day in New York City public schools. This
3 would affirm that New York City is an inclusive city,
4 especially in light of the recent uptick in
5 antisemitism across both the country and New York.

6 Thank you to the advocates and members of the
7 public who are joining us today. And thank you to
8 the representatives from the Administration for
9 joining us.

10 I would like to thank the Education Committee
11 staff: Nadia Jean-François, Jan Atwell, Chloë Rivera,
12 Elizabeth Hoffman, Monica Saladi, and Nia Hyatt.

13 And I would like to acknowledge my colleagues:
14 Council Member Louis, Council Member De La Rosa,
15 Council Member Ayala, Council Member Feliz, Council
16 Member Stevens, and Council Member Lee.

17 I would like to remind everyone who wishes to
18 testify in-person today that you must fill out a
19 witness slip, which is located on the desk of
20 Sergeant At Arms near the entrance of this room.
21 Please remember to indicate on the witness slip
22 whether you are here to testify in favor or in
23 opposition to a bill or multiple bills.

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2 I also would like to point out that we will not
3 be voting on any legislation today in order to allow
4 as many people as possible to testify.

5 Testimony will be limited to three minutes per
6 person, whether you are testifying on Zoom or in-
7 person.

8 I am also going to ask my colleagues to limit
9 their questions and comments to five minutes.

10 Now, I would like to turn the floor over to my
11 colleague, Council Member Feliz, for his remarks on
12 Introduction 566.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Thank you, thank you so
14 much.

15 Good afternoon everyone, I am New York City
16 Member Oswald Feliz. I want to thank you, Chair, for
17 this hearing and for doing such a great job leading
18 on any and every, single [BACKGROUND NOISE]
19 [INAUDIBLE] related to education. And I also want to
20 congratulate my colleagues who have bills before this
21 committee including Council Member Abreu, Council
22 Member Williams, my neighboring council member here
23 but also in the district, Council Member Stevens, and
24 also Council Member Linda Lee.

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2 My bill, will require that students who have
3 IEPs, also known as Individualized Education Program,
4 be transported in school buses that have air-
5 conditioning.

6 These are some of the neediest students, and they
7 have a lot of needs due to reasons beyond their
8 control. And what we are requiring is very simple:
9 Require that when it is 100 degrees outside, when we
10 have extreme temperatures, when the temperature is at
11 triple digits, that they be transported in school
12 buses in air-conditioning. It will require air-
13 conditioning so that the extreme temperatures do not
14 exacerbate their needs.

15 This is something very simple. Unfortunately,
16 these students and parents have had to fight for
17 this, if I am correct, for over ten years now. And I
18 look forward to working with all of you to finally
19 make this a reality in the city of New York. Thank
20 you so much.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council Member
22 Feliz.

23 Now, we will now move onto Council Member
24 Williams for her remarks on Introduction 644. But,
25 Council Member Stevens?

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I will read Council
3 Member Williams' remarks.

4 On behalf of Council Member Williams, I am happy
5 to have my bill 644 be heard today under the
6 leadership of Chair Joseph. My apologies for not
7 being here in-person, but my staff is actively
8 present and, as always, we can be reached at our
9 office if you have any questions.

10 Introduction 644 would require the New York City
11 Department of Education to provide the information
12 and guidelines necessary to establish afterschool
13 programs.

14 As we all know, many of those afterschool
15 programs are critical for early childhood development
16 and provide long lasting positive experiences and
17 learning for our youth -- while also enabling parents
18 to support their children while they are working.
19 Therefore, it is important to have the information
20 readily available in order to be transparent and
21 efficient, thank you.

22 And Happy Birthday to Council Member Nantasha
23 Williams.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council Member
25 Williams/Stevens!

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2 We will now turn to Council Member Lee for her
3 remarks on Introduction 725.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Good afternoon, Chair Joseph
5 and colleagues. Thank you for having me here today
6 to speak about Introduction 725, which would create a
7 platform for DOE schools to post their surplus
8 supplies and facilitate to school to school
9 exchanges.

10 So, this bill actually originated at the grass
11 roots level where we learned from a constituent and a
12 school teacher in District 23 about her concerns
13 around waste. These discussions made clear the need
14 for a system that school administrators could use to
15 communicate and coordinate with one another about
16 their inventories and resources to save precious tax
17 payer dollars. Given the sometimes pessimistic
18 fiscal predictions, legislation that promotes
19 efficiency and reduces waste is badly needed. And I
20 just wanted to thank all of you and hope that you
21 support this bill. I would especially like to also
22 congratulate my fellow colleagues whose bills are
23 being heard today. And as Chair of the Mental Health
24 Disabilities, and Addictions Committee, I especially
25 want to thank Council Member Stevens and others on

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2 the D 75 -- and IEP students -- thank you so much for
3 your legislation. Thank you so much.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council Member
5 Lee. And I will now turn it over to Council Member
6 Stevens for remarks on her Introduction 868.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Hi, I am Council Member
8 Althea Stevens. Intro 868, a Local Law to amend the
9 administrative code of the city of New York, in
10 relation to requiring The Department of Education to
11 report on the number of District 75 students and the
12 criteria used to determine the location of District
13 75 schools in partnership with Bronx Borough
14 President, Vanessa Gibson.

15 As we continue to work on reimagining the
16 education system to ensure that all of the students
17 have a productive and safe learning space. It starts
18 with accurate data. That is why it is my pleasure
19 today to introduce 868. The annual report would
20 create transparency and oversight and will better
21 assist in making sure that the City has enough
22 information to ensure that the students of District
23 75, on the autism spectrum or who have significant
24 cognitive delays or are significant emotional
25 challenges have tailored services equipped for

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2 opportunity for the educational experience. I look
3 forward to having dialogue with the administration on
4 how we can best serve our young people by
5 implementing this new local law, thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council Member
7 Stevens.

8 I would like to acknowledge Council Member
9 Avilés.

10 Now, I will turn it over, finally we will hear
11 from Council Member Abreu on Resolution 153.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Good afternoon, and thank
13 you, Chair Joseph for allowing me to speak on
14 Resolution 153 a Resolution calling upon the
15 Department of Education to create a Jewish Heritage
16 Day in New York City public schools.

17 Over the last several years, we have seen a
18 disturbing uptick in hate crimes in our city. We
19 know that a majority of religious bigotry is
20 antisemitism. But, we also know that our schools
21 play a crucial role in educating our students about
22 the danger of bias and harmful rhetoric against
23 marginalized groups. We can help combat stereotypes
24 from an early age by raising awareness, and I believe
25 that this resolution is a great step in doing so. In

1
2 the most diverse city in the world, our schools much
3 teach students to celebrate all kinds of diversity.

4 It is time for our schools to celebrate the
5 contributions and achievements of Jewish Americans as
6 they are an important part of the fabric of this
7 country.

8 I want to thank the advocates for their support,
9 some of whom we have here today: American Jewish
10 Committee, StandWithUs, Simon Wiesenthal Center, and
11 The Museum of Jewish Heritage who are testifying
12 today as well.

13 And I would also like thank Council Member
14 Dinowitz, Chair of the Jewish Caucus, for his support
15 as well as the members of the caucus for their
16 support on this resolution. Thank you again, Madam
17 Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council Member
19 Abreu.

20 I would like to recognize Council Member Menin.

21 And now I will turn it over to committee counsel
22 to administer the oath.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good afternoon, please raise
24 your hand... and I will also be swearing in... okay
25 great...

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Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth,
and nothing but the truth, before this committee, and
to respond honestly to council member questions?

Glenn Risbrook?

GLENN RISBROOK: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Shona Gibson?

SHONA GIBSON: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ricardo Duran?

RICARDO DURAN: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Flavia Puello?

FLAVIA PUELLO PERDOMO: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yael Kalban?

Yael Kalban: [NOT MIC'D] [INAUDIBLE]

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Tracy Caldron?

TRACY CALDRON: [NOT MIC'D] [INAUDIBLE]

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Daniel Guillen?

DANIEL GUILLEN: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

You may begin your testimony.

GLENN RISBROOK: Good afternoon, Chair Joseph and
members of The Committee on Education.

My name is Glenn Risbrook and I am the Senior
Executive Director of Student Transportation for New
York City Public Schools. Thank you for the

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2 opportunity to testify today. Thank you also for your
3 continued partnership in supporting our students,
4 families, and schools as we discuss Intro number 566,
5 which requires all children With An Individualized
6 Education Program [IEP] to be transported in buses
7 with air-conditioning.

8 New York City Public Schools is committed to
9 ensuring that every student, particularly our most
10 vulnerable, has access to safe, reliable, and
11 efficient transportation that meets their individual
12 needs.

13 Every student mandated to receive a climate
14 controlled environment while traveling per their IEP
15 is provided with a bus equipped to provide air-
16 conditioning.

17 With our latest contractual agreement with our
18 bus vendors, our type A and type B smaller buses used
19 to transport students whose IEPs mandate
20 transportation, are required to be equipped with dual
21 air-conditioning by June 30, 2023 and we expect all
22 of these buses to meet this deadline.

23 Type C buses, which are our large standard buses,
24 are also used to transport students with IEPs that
25 mandate transportation, are not contractually

1 obligated to require air-conditioning. Our
2 approximate 5,500 special education bus fleet, which
3 provides transportation to approximately 57,000
4 students, currently includes 869 Type C large buses
5 across all vendors, which account for 14% of our
6 routes on the road servicing 16,000 students daily
7 throughout the City. Of the 869 Type C large buses,
8 400 buses are equipped with air conditioning. This
9 leaves 469 buses -- or 8% -- of our bus fleet
10 servicing students with IEPs unequipped with air-
11 conditioning. This affects 17% of our curb to school
12 student busing population or approximately 10,000
13 students citywide. To retrofit the remaining 469
14 buses to ensure dual air-conditioning would cost an
15 estimated \$7 million.

17 The New York City Law Department has expressed
18 concerns with this proposal to the extent it may
19 impact the New York City's Public Schools' ability to
20 comply with federal law by limiting transportation
21 options for students with disabilities.

22 New York City Public Schools supports the goal of
23 Intro 566 to ensure that students with IEPs mandate
24 busing are on buses with air-conditioning. We would
25 like to work with the Council on implementation

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2 timeline as meeting this goal will need to be
3 addressed in our 2025-2026 bus vendor contract
4 negotiations. Thank you

5 [TIMER CHIMES]

6 FLAVIA PUELLO PERDOMO: Good afternoon, Chair
7 Joseph and members of the Council. My name is Flavia
8 Puello Perdomo, and I am currently The Chief of
9 Schools for Community Supports and Wellness within
10 The Division of Leadership.

11 I am happy to be here to talk about Introduction
12 644 concerning afterschool programming. I want to
13 emphasize that the importance of this essential would
14 not be possible without the leadership and dedication
15 of our partner agency, The Department of Youth and
16 Community Development (DYCD). Together we recognize
17 the powerful impact that afterschool academics,
18 enrichment, art, athletics, and wellness programming
19 can have on our students, especially our most
20 vulnerable student populations.

21 Before I discuss the proposed legislation, I want
22 to provide a landscape of what after school currently
23 looks like today for the New York City Department of
24 Education.

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2 There are three main types of afterschool
3 programming options available to our students and
4 families:

5 DYCD funded programs, which is the largest number
6 of programs available in our schools; DOE funded
7 programs, and individual programs run between schools
8 and their CBO partners.

9 Our CBO partners offer a variety of targeted
10 services to our schools and tailor support based on
11 community needs and the leadership and guidance of
12 principals. These services can range from
13 instructional support to enrichment activities and
14 can have physical activity and recreational
15 components as well.

16 A current look at the current data -- and,
17 again, I am going to emphasize that this is specific
18 to centrally funded programs, highlights that we have
19 947 schools that offer centrally funded programs --
20 compromising, as I mentioned, the different types of
21 programs.

22 We also know that we have roughly around 598
23 schools without centrally funded programs
24 specifically.

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2 Now, turning to Intro 644, which will require New
3 York City Public Schools to provide information and
4 establishing afterschool programs, New York City
5 Public Schools school supports the intent of this
6 bill. We look forward to working with the Council on
7 creating meaningful resources that bring clarity to
8 the process of establishing afterschool programs.
9 Thank you again for your time, for your commitment,
10 and I am here to answer additional questions
11 regarding this bill.

12 RICARDO DURAN: Good afternoon, Chair Joseph and
13 members of The Committee on Education. My name is
14 Ricardo Duran, and I am Chief of Schools for Finance
15 and Human Resources within the Division of School
16 Leadership.

17 New York City Public Schools is committed to
18 supporting schools and ensuring they each have access
19 to resources and the school supplies they need for
20 their students and staff.

21 Currently, principals broadly have discretion to
22 procure supplies for their school community as they
23 see fit, and we encourage schools to make prudent
24 financial decisions buying school supplies as the
25 needs of their school dictates.

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2 We support the goals of Intro 725 and look
3 forward to working with the Council on creating a
4 formal process by which schools on the occasion they
5 may have an excess of supplies, are able to share
6 those with other schools that may need them. Thank
7 you.

8 SHONA GIBSON: Good afternoon Chair Joseph and
9 members of The Committee on Education. My name is
10 Shona Gibson, and I am Executive Director of the
11 District 75 Citywide Office within the Special
12 Education Office in The Division of Teaching and
13 Learning. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss
14 Introduction 868, which would require New York City
15 Public Schools to report on a range of items related
16 to District 75. We greatly appreciate your continued
17 partnership in supporting our students, families, and
18 schools in District 75.

19 District 75 provides highly specialized
20 instructional support for students with significant
21 disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder,
22 significant cognitive delays, emotional disabilities,
23 sensory impairment, and multiple disabilities --
24 26,959 students, ages 3 to 21, receive instruction
25 and support services in general education classrooms,

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2 special classes in community school buildings,
3 special classes in specialized schools, agencies,
4 hospitals, homes, and community based vocational
5 training sites. There are 385 total sites, 334 which
6 are co-located and 45 which standalone sites across
7 the five boroughs -- we also have a site in Syosset.

8 District 75's mission is to provide quality and
9 rigorous individualized educational programs to
10 students with significant disabilities and diverse
11 learning styles in a variety of settings that nurture
12 independence, ensure dignity, and support integration
13 into their community. To this end, NYC Public Schools
14 aims to open new District 75 programs each year that
15 provide opportunities to meet students' needs as
16 close to home as possible.

17 New District 75 sites are opened in both new and
18 existing buildings that are designed flexibly to
19 accommodate a variety of District 75 program types to
20 align with demand and student need.

21 Turning specifically to the legislation, we
22 support the goals of this legislation and look
23 forward to working with the Council on transparent
24 reporting requirements that will give a comprehensive
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2 look at District 75. Thank you, and we look forward
3 to taking your questions.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

5 I would also like recognize Council Member Hanks.
6 On Intro 566, how many or what percentage of
7 Yellow School Bus currently have working air-
8 conditioning?

9 GLENN RISBROOK: Thank you for the question, Chair
10 Joseph.

11 On our current to school routes, which are the
12 routes that primarily traverse our students with IEPs
13 mandating transportation, 5,122 of the buses have
14 dual air-conditioning -- which is about 91% of all
15 the buses that service curb to school.

16 For our stop to school population, which
17 generally traverse students in general education, 568
18 of those buses have dual air-conditioning, which is
19 about 19% of the buses that service those students.

20 Overall, there are 5,690 buses that have dual
21 air-conditioning, which is about 66% of all the buses
22 that service the total universe of transportation for
23 New York City Public Schools.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.
25

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2 Is New York City Public Schools aware of specific
3 companies or even areas of the five boroughs that
4 lack of air-conditioning on school buses in
5 particular?

6 GLENN RISBROOK: Thank you again for the question,
7 Chair.

8 We receive sporadic complaints through different
9 boroughs through different vendors. Nothing is
10 specific to one vendor or one borough. But, we do
11 receive specific complaints that go across all the
12 boroughs and all of the vendors.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [BACKGROUND NOISE] Are there
14 any plans to install air-conditioning in the
15 remaining buses?

16 GLENN RISBROOK: Excuse me, uh, Chair, could you
17 repeat that, I'm sorry?

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you plan on retrofitting
19 the buses to have air-conditioning?

20 GLENN RISBROOK: Yes we do. We plan on including
21 that in the upcoming vendor contract negotiations for
22 2024 and 2025.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.
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2 How much, if any, additional funding would be
3 required to install air-conditioning on all school
4 buses that lack it?

5 GLENN RISBROOK: Thank you for the question,
6 Chair.

7 If we are talking about all of the buses that
8 traverse our children, we are talking about \$45
9 million to retrofit all of the buses that currently
10 do not have air-conditioning.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Wow. Does New York City
12 Public Schools believe that it is your responsibility
13 for the cost, installation, maintenance? And what is
14 the timeline for buses to all have air-conditioning?

15 GLENN RISBROOK: Okay, well, if we begin
16 retrofitting buses under the current contract, New
17 York City Public Schools would probably bear the
18 majority or all the costs for installation of the
19 air-conditioning units. However, maintenance would
20 be the responsibility of the vendors. It is
21 uncertain at this point how long it would take to
22 retrofit -- which would be nearer, if we count
23 general education, around 2,500 buses. I just want
24 to point at that there are supply chain issues that
25 we have to concern ourselves with as well as the

1 negotiations with the contracts. So, we are doing an
2 internal assessment as this point about what that
3 would be. But, it is uncertain what the timeframe
4 would be.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And once you do it
7 internally, you will make sure to update the Council?

8 GLENN RISBROOK: Absolutely.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

10 How many or what percentage of students with
11 disabilities currently have requirements for air-
12 condition bus transportation on their IEP?

13 GLENN RISBROOK: Thank you for the question,
14 Chair.

15 There are 4,000 who have the requirement in their
16 IEP, which amounts to about 8% of the students that
17 use curb to school transportation.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, how many students are
19 currently getting air-conditioning?

20 GLENN RISBROOK: How many students are currently
21 getting it? All of them. All of the students who
22 require air-conditioning in their IEPs are assigned a
23 bus that has that requirement.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.
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2 What is the percentage of students who currently
3 do not have air-conditioned buses to transport them
4 to and from school?

5 GLENN RISBROOK: Chair, do you mean the ones that
6 are mandated to have air-conditioning? (CROSS-TALK)

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Mm-hmm

8 GLENN RISBROOK: All of the students that are
9 mandated to have air-conditioning are provided a bus
10 that has it... (CROSS-TALK)

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay.

12 GLENN RISBROOK: So, the answer to that question
13 would be zero.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: When do you expect that you
15 will be able to comply with... so far everyone who
16 is mandated to have one has one? Is that what you
17 are saying?

18 GLENN RISBROOK: Yes, we are currently in
19 compliance now, Chair.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, thank you.

21 What is the protocol for assisting students who
22 are experiencing heat stroke or any other heat
23 related issues on the school bus?

24 GLENN RISBROOK: Our school bus drivers and
25 attendants are trained to respond by calling

1
2 emergency services if they see any student who is in
3 crisis. So, they would call 9-1-1 in a case like
4 that.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How do you track such
6 incidents? Do you keep a log? Is there data?

7 GLENN RISBROOK: We keep track of students'
8 illnesses on buses; however, we don't have anything
9 specific to heat related incidents. But we do keep
10 track of all illnesses.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

12 I am going to have some questions around Intro
13 644.

14 How many or what percentage of schools currently
15 have afterschool programs? Can you break it down in
16 terms of elementary, middle, and high school?

17 FLAVIA PUELLO PERDOMO: Yes, absolutely, I can
18 share that with you, Chair Joseph.

19 So, we currently have 947 schools that have
20 centrally funded programs. And I keep emphasizing
21 "centrally funded," because there are other means --
22 including through funding that is provided to schools
23 through central [INAUDIBLE], uh, school member at
24 another location or also at the discretion of
25 principals to create an afterschool program. And in

1
2 terms of the breakdown of where those programs are,
3 as an example, elementary schools have 506, junior
4 high schools have 355, K through 8 - 163, secondary
5 schools - 103, high schools - 153, and K through 12,
6 which we do have some K through 12 schools, uh, four
7 of them have these programs.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, if we would put a number
9 to the students, how many students are participating
10 in afterschool programs?

11 FLAVIA PUELLO PERDOMO: So, in there, it is
12 really... I have to align that to available seats.
13 So, as an example, for the COMPASS Program, which is
14 through our DYCD partnership, we have available seats
15 to service a little over 80,000 students. When we do
16 the combination of all of the available seats,
17 thorough centrally funded programs, we are looking at
18 roughly a little over 145,000 seats.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, 145,000 seats. Wow, we
20 have a lot of work to do.

21 So, what... can you give me a breakdown of
22 your... you said some of them are centrally funded,
23 New York City Public Schools, DYCD, and what other
24 entities do you have? And could you give me a
25 breakdown?

1
2 FLAVIA PUELLO PERDOMO: Yes, so, as an example,
3 through community schools, one of the components of
4 community schools is ensuring that you have extended
5 learning opportunities, which often happen after
6 school, that is 411. Beacon and COMPASS, which are
7 through our DYCD partnership, uh, Beacon is 92
8 programs, COMPASS 626 respectively, Empire and 21st
9 Century -- Empire we have 81 programs, and 21st
10 Century, through 21st Century Grants, we have 76.
11 But, a school can have the opportunity to partner
12 independently with a CBO that they contract to run
13 some of those programs after school through their
14 budget that they have. In some instances, it is
15 combination of their own partnership with CBOs in the
16 community also coupled with supplemental academic
17 enrichment, which might be through hiring their own
18 teachers per session during after school hours.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Wonderful, thank you.

20 So, what is the range cost to open a new
21 afterschool program and to operate it annually?

22 FLAVIA PUELLO PERDOMO: So, I am going to share
23 some new ones there and also ask my colleague from
24 DYCD to add on here.

1
2 And I want to begin just by emphasizing that the
3 costs on after school program looks like is really
4 unique to that school community and what the needs of
5 the school communities are. Right? So as a former
6 high school principal, what my afterschool programs
7 looked like is probably very different than the
8 afterschool program that my son attends, who is also
9 an elementary school DOE student, who is actually in
10 a DYCD program.

11 But, at New York City Department of Education at
12 the state level, for the 21st Century community
13 school programs, uh, the base that they ask us to
14 fund is \$2,100 per child. But, again, you have to
15 really account for, like, what the combination of all
16 the different experiences that you want to have for
17 the children in that community are and what the
18 principal in the school community believes that they
19 need. Did you want to add some more nuances here?

20 TRACY CALDRON: Just to add that when we fund
21 programs that are school-based, we work with the DOE
22 to... (CROSS-TALK)

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Can you please identify
24 yourself? Good afternoon.

1
2 TRACY CALDRON: Good afternoon, I am... (CROSS-
3 TALK)

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And your name...

5 TRACY CALDRON: Sorry, good afternoon, Chair, my
6 name is Tracy Caldron, I am the Assistant
7 Commissioner for COMPASS at DYCD.

8 So, I would just add that when we fund school
9 based programs, we work with the Department of
10 Education to absorb the expenses for opening the
11 programs. And those would include such things as
12 space fees, cleaning fees, maintenance, and classroom
13 usage.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, uh, I am going to
15 turn over now to Intro 725.

16 And I would like to acknowledge that we have been
17 joined by Council Member Hanif who is online.

18 What if any current efforts are there to
19 facilitate an exchange of supplies and materials
20 amongst schools?

21 RICARDO DURAN: Thank you for the question, Chair.

22 Currently, schools can advertise and share
23 obsolete and excess items via our DOE info hub web
24 page.

25 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, you have a page?

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RICARDO DURAN: We do.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: It's on your website?

RICARDO DURAN: It's on the info hub website,
yes.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The website is not friendly.

RICARDO DURAN: [INAUDIBLE]... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: it's not a friendly... It's
not. I taught for 22 years in the system. It's not
a friendly website. So, I suggested that many times
to the First Deputy Chancellor and also to the
Chancellor himself in-person. So, maybe that's...
you can talk to DoITT IT. You guys could make it a
friendly user website.

Have any schools in the district asked to create
a system for exchanging supplies or materials?

RICARDO DURAN: Thank you.

I have not received any requests for schools to
participate in that program.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, uhm, maybe that is
something we could send out to the... through the
Principals Weekly Digest newsletter and let other
schools know. That... they do have a weekly
newsletter that goes out.

1
2 I would also like to recognize Council Member
3 Ung. Thank you for being here.

4 Uhm, I am going to just jump ahead. Introduction
5 868, how many District 75 schools are there
6 currently? I know you said it, but can you say it
7 again for me on the record?

8 SHONA GIBSON: I can, thank you for the question.
9 There are 59 unique DBNs in District 75, excluding
10 our hospital schools and home instruction programs.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

12 What percentage of the D 75 schools are fully
13 accessible?

14 SHONA GIBSON: Uh, 77% of the buildings are
15 partially accessible. Of our DOE owned buildings, 43
16 are fully accessible...

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Mm-hmm?

18 SHONA GIBSON: 34 are partially accessible, and
19 23% are not accessible.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: When you say partially,
21 could you explain what partially accessible means?

22 SHONA GIBSON: It means that there is perhaps an
23 elevator for the students, but not all of the
24 bathrooms are accessible. I can provide a more
25 detailed description... (CROSS-TALK)

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2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Or no elevator at all. I've
3 been to sites with no elevators. Is that correct?

4 SHONA GIBSON: That's correct. So, it is not a
5 100% accessible. There are... (CROSS-TALK)

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, we've got work to do on
7 accessibility... (CROSS-TALK)

8 SHONA GIBSON: We do... we do... (CROSS-TALK)

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: for our students in D 75.

10 I've visited D 75 schools. My son attends one.

11 There is no elevator, and they have five floors. And

12 I visit another school, they have a ramp, but then

13 they have stairs. It makes no sense. So, I don't

14 know who is building these, but we have to do better

15 to make sure that our students have access to these

16 buildings. This is the one place they love going, it

17 is going to school. Same thing I told Mr. Risbrook

18 on the transportation. We have to make sure students

19 are getting to school on time -- not spending three

20 hours on the buses before they get to school.

21 Please describe the issues that students with

22 disabilities are facing in D 75 schools that are not

23 fully accessible. Could you give us examples as to

24 what's... what one of our students can encounter?

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2 SHONA GIBSON: Could you repeat the question,
3 please, Chair Joseph?

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Can you describe a student
5 in D 75 that attends a school that is not fully
6 accessible? What are some of the struggles that they
7 face?

8 SHONA GIBSON: The.. well, first of all, I'd like
9 to say, thank you for the question.

10 If a student needs a certain accommodation and
11 the school is not able to provide it -- if it is a
12 mobility issue, then we will place the student...
13 offer the family a placement in a school where there
14 is accessibility that would meet the student's needs.
15 If it is a different kind of accessibility issue,
16 then we will make an accommodation for the student
17 and figure out how to make sure that the student is
18 integrated into the school program.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

20 Now, I am going to pass it on to my colleagues,
21 first person will be Council Member Stevens.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Hello, good afternoon.

23 I am going to start with the questions that I
24 have for my bill that we are hearing today.

1
2 Can you talk to me a little bit about how new
3 sites are considered for D 75 students? How do you
4 develop a new site?

5 SHONA GIBSON: Yes, thank you for the question.

6 This is something that is of great importance to
7 us. We take a look at where our students are
8 throughout the City... and I just want to remind
9 everybody, the overarching principle is that students
10 have the least restrictive environment, which
11 includes being as close to their home and with their
12 peers as possible.

13 So, when we are looking at sites in terms of
14 developing new sites or expanding sites in current
15 schools, we look to see where our students are. We
16 look to see where their homes are, what kind of
17 travel distance they are going through, and we work
18 with our partners in Office of District Planning, uh,
19 School Construction Authority and its base facilities
20 to build out space that serves the needs of the
21 community and is available for District 75 students.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Do you have a breakdown
23 by borough of the D 75 schools?

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2 SHONA GIBSON: I do. I can share that with you,
3 uh, I can share that with the Council.... (CROSS-
4 TALK)

5 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Do you have that now?
6 Could you just tell us? Thank you.

7 SHONA GIBSON: I am going to ask a clarifying
8 question. When you say a breakdown on the schools,
9 do you mean the individual DBNs or where the
10 different sites are?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yes, just by borough,
12 where the different sites are. So, just trying to
13 get a count of, like, what the number is in each
14 borough.

15 SHONA GIBSON: Great, I am going to actually ask
16 my colleague Yael to support that.

17 YAEL KALBAN: Good afternoon, My name is Yael
18 Kalban, I am the Executive Director of Strategy and
19 Operations, Office of District Planning at NYC
20 Department of Education.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Closer...

22 YAEL KALBAN: Thank you. So, currently, across
23 sort of all intake types, we have 76 sites in
24 Manhattan for District 75, 102 sites in the Bronx,

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2 125 sites in Brooklyn, 132 sites in Queens, and 47 in
3 Staten Island.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: 47? Okay.

5 Uhm, DOE will open new sites in existing D 75
6 schools co-located inside another district school
7 building, why is there a preference for creating
8 multiple satellite sites rather than creating
9 entirely new D 75 schools?

10 SHONA GIBSON: That is such a great question,
11 thank you for asking it.

12 As I mentioned earlier, federal and state law
13 mandates that students should be in their least
14 restrictive environment -- which we use the acronym
15 LRE -- and included in that is that students are...
16 what that means is that at the maximum extent,
17 students are included in the schools that they would
18 go to if they did not have a disability, and they are
19 educated along with their typically developing peers.

20 So, our preference, to the extent that we can,
21 given how space is New York City, is to co-locate our
22 District 75 students so that they are attending
23 school with their own family and with their own
24 communities.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, uh, that definitely
3 make sense, but I think Chair Joseph did speak to the
4 issue around accessibility. And a lot of these
5 schools are not accessible, and we are not putting
6 the capital in to make them accessible for students
7 who need to be there. So, thinking... making sure
8 we have that in the plan, but I do understand that
9 and that does make sense -- so young people don't
10 have to travel distances and things like that.

11 So, I just have another question for Intro 644.

12 So, one, I just want to say that we know one of
13 the things every time we go into a school, especially
14 a school that does not have, uhm, afterschool
15 programs, the number one question is, how does my
16 school get one? So, I am really excited about this
17 bill.

18 But, the question that I have is more around,
19 like, there are a number of schools that have
20 multiple programs in them. When was the last time an
21 evaluation was done to kind of see the landscape of
22 the after school programs throughout the City to
23 ensure equity and making sure we are looking at that?
24 Because, like I said, I have been to multiple schools
25 where they would have... they are community schools,

1 they have a DYCD after school program, they have an
2 Empire, and then I got to another school and they
3 have none. So, how often and when was the last time
4 there was an evaluation to kind of look at the
5 landscape and really do an assessment to say --
6 especially with the RFP hopefully coming out soon --
7 DYCD [INAUDIBLE] back -- that we would be... no, I
8 wasn't calling, I was just saying that I wanted them
9 to hear that our RFP is coming out soon. Right?
10 Because the concept paper is coming out soon -- that
11 we are looking at equity, so that when that RFP comes
12 out, we can be targeting areas that don't have
13 afterschool programs.

15 FLAVIA PUELLO PERDOMO: So, I really appreciate
16 the question, and I will begin by saying to the
17 question of equity and landscape -- as an example,
18 the newly funded community school over the last
19 couple of years [TIMER CHIMES] which I know were, uh,
20 very supported by council. In particular we targeted
21 high COVID zip codes, so we were looking at
22 communities who were impacted by COVID, in some
23 instances many that they did have prior afterschool
24 programs. We also looked at communities with a high
25 rate of chronic absenteeism, communities who had a

1
2 particular number of students who were living in
3 shelters or were impacted by homelessness, in
4 addition to also looking at the economic index.

5 So, just to give you some thoughts in the recent
6 years for how we have tackled the sense of equity
7 that you are highlighting, uh in terms of program
8 evaluation, I will begin highlighting some of the
9 evaluations that we conduct through community schools
10 and the work that we do through our office. And I
11 welcome our colleagues from DYCD to speak more
12 broadly about COMPASS and some of their programs.

13 But, in the case of community schools, as an
14 example, 21st Century grant funded programs require
15 that all schools have an independent evaluation. It
16 is part of the New York City requirements for us to
17 even have those grants. And in the case of community
18 schools, we do a mid-year and end of year assessment
19 of any of the federal mandate for annual performance.
20 And, also, part of the strategy for community schools
21 and how CBOs are funded, is that we certainly look at
22 evaluations to look at effectiveness and impact. But
23 I appreciate the question, and I know that as we
24 continue to partner with DYCD, as they look to, uh,
25 open the RFP, that we have to be intentional around

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2 the opportunities that we take to look at communities
3 that demonstrate needs and where we have gaps. But we
4 do have some of those examples where you might be a
5 community school, you have a great program that's
6 running, but as a principal, you recognize that you
7 have such a high degree of need and you have
8 additional funding where you might do something else
9 extra for the students.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I don't have any more
11 questions. I am just going, like, in all
12 seriousness, I think that we should be looking at
13 doing a citywide evaluation to look at where we
14 already have these programs, because even some of
15 those criteria that you said around, like, even with
16 high COVID areas and high numbers of students living
17 in shelters and all of those are great, too, but then
18 we also leave out a sub [INAUDIBLE] of schools that
19 might not fit that criteria. And one of the things
20 that I do hear is that a lot of the principals who
21 have high test scores or whatever, they feel like
22 they are being punished and don't have access to
23 those things. And, so, then, those kids don't get
24 access to the afterschool programs and things like
25 that. And, like I said, there have been times where

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2 I have gone to school, and they have a community
3 school, a DYCD program, they have an Empire, and they
4 have all of these things, and it's like, well, that
5 doesn't make sense, why don't we just move one of
6 these programs to a school that doesn't have it. So,
7 really thinking about, uhm, making sure we are
8 working with DYCD and DOE coming together to kind of
9 do some type of assessment and evaluation, so that we
10 can have a better landscape of the afterschool, uhm,
11 field. Thank you

12 FLAVIA PUELLO PERDOMO: Yes, thank you so much.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council Member
14 Stevens.

15 I would like to acknowledge Council Member
16 Narcisse.

17 Council Member Hanif, if you have a question,
18 please raise your hand.

19 All right, next person, Council Member Feliz?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Thank you, Chair.

21 Some of this information has already been
22 provided, but I am still going to ask the questions
23 just for general context.

24 How many school buses do we currently have as
25 part of the education system?

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2 GLENN RISBROOK: Thank you for the question,
3 Council Member Feliz.

4 We, on the road each and every day, we have about
5 9,000 buses on the road.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: So, 9,000 school buses.
7 And how many of these 9,000 school buses serve
8 students with IEPs?

9 GLENN RISBROOK: Approximately, uh, I will say
10 about 5,500 buses service our kids with IEPs --
11 5,500.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Okay, so, a little over
13 half?

14 GLENN RISBROOK: Yeah, a little over half, yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Okay, so, a little over
16 half. How many students with an IEP rely on these
17 buses?

18 GLENN RISBROOK: We traverse... well, I think I
19 am going to ask a clarifying question, it has to be
20 IEP mandated for transportation or just IEPs in
21 general?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: IEP in general.

23 GLENN RISBROOK: All right, well, I can give you
24 the answer for all students... well, actually, just
25 give me one moment... (CROSS-TALK)

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: I think rough numbers are
3 fine if you don't have the specific numbers.

4 GLENN RISBROOK: Right, for the students that are
5 mandated transportation, we have 50,000 students that
6 are currently using our service. Altogether how many
7 students are using it? I will get back to you with
8 that altogether.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Okay. So, out of the
10 5,500 buses, how many of these have air-conditioning?

11 GLENN RISBROOK: 50,122 buses.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Oh, okay, so about 400, uh,
13 the 469 number that you mentioned?

14 GLENN RISBROOK: Yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Is there a reason why that
16 some of these buses don't have air-conditioning?

17 GLENN RISBROOK: Thank you for the question,
18 Council Member.

19 Yes, uh, under the 1979 contract negotiation, we
20 are living under that now. And, then, also, the
21 contract negotiations for, uh, 2013 and 14, there was
22 no mandate for Type C, large buses, to have air-
23 conditioning. So, we currently are working
24 underneath the constraints at this point. However,
25 we did put pressure on some of these bus companies

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2 anyway to do what they can do to put air-conditioning
3 on these buses. Thus, the 869 buses that is
4 universal for our curb to school, we have gotten 400
5 of those buses retrofitted for air-conditioning, but
6 there is no obligation contractually for the
7 remaining 469 or the 2,500 that are in general ed
8 busing.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Okay. And I see that you
10 mentioned earlier that it will cost \$7 million to
11 fully install air-conditioning on all the buses?

12 GLENN RISBROOK: Uh, excuse me, Council Member,
13 that \$7 million references the curb to school buses -
14 - the 400 buses that are left over to be retrofitted.
15 The \$7 million is for that particular service.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Okay, so, \$7 million for
17 the 469?

18 GLENN RISBROOK: Yes, for the 469 buses that are
19 remaining, yes.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Okay, and who does DOE
21 think is responsible for that \$7 million? Is it the
22 DOE? Is it the bus companies who are private?

23 GLENN RISBROOK: Thank you again for the question.
24 Under the current contract, if we started the
25 retrofitting now, before we negotiated the new

1 contract, New York City Public Schools would bear the
2 majority of that cost. If we implemented this during
3 the contract, then we should be able to shift most of
4 that cost over to the vendors. However, I am sure
5 that they would try to recoup in the bid for the new
6 contract.

7
8 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Okay. So, it will cost \$7
9 million for 469 buses to have air-conditioning?

10 GLENN RISBROOK: Mm-hmm

11 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Uh, do we know how much it
12 will cost per bus?

13 GLENN RISBROOK: About \$15,000 per bus.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Yup, that sounds correct,
15 because I just did the math. \$7 million divided by
16 [INAUDIBLE]...

17 GLENN RISBROOK: (LAUGHING) No one told me there
18 was going to be math!

19 [LAUGHTER IN CHAMBERS]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: So, \$15,000 to install air-
21 conditioning on a bus, that sounds like a lot of
22 money. I'm not an expert, I'm not a mechanic, I'm
23 not an expert on cost, but that sounds like a lot of
24 money.

25 GLENN RISBROOK: Extremely...

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: \$15,000 to install air-
3 conditioning on one bus. Do we know why it's so
4 expensive?

5 GLENN RISBROOK: I couldn't give you the reason
6 why it's that much. I think it might have to do
7 with, I guess the availability of it as well. I just
8 wanted to, uh, maybe a illuminate a little bit more
9 with what the circumstances are that. Uh, there are
10 two major vendors that supply whole units for air-
11 conditioning for busing. And there are little
12 companies that do it as well. But, there are two
13 main companies that provide the whole unit. One of
14 those companies, in November of 2022, filed for
15 Chapter 7 bankruptcy. They are currently liquidating
16 all of their assets, and now it leaves us with one
17 major company with a lot of little companies
18 underneath. So, that is the challenge. It may have
19 something to do with the cost. I believe two years
20 ago it was \$12,000. So, I would assume that is has
21 something to do with the availability of it as well.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Yeah, okay. And I know all
23 of you are still, I guess, negotiating the future
24 things. So, I hope we ,you know, make an effort to
25 negotiate those prices, [TIMER CHIMES] because that

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2 sounds like a lot of money. I would think that you
3 could almost buy a new bus. I mean, not buy a new
4 bus, but you will get close to at least buying one
5 rather than \$15,000 only for air-conditioning.

6 GLENN RISBROOK: Thank you, again, if only. Some
7 buses cost like way over a \$100,000. But, I will say
8 that I do appreciate this bill. This is very, very
9 important. I do receive, on occasion, complaints
10 about air-conditioning. And it is very impactful,
11 what some of our children are going to through who
12 are not mandated for air-conditioning, but do wind up
13 on some of these buses that don't have it. So, this
14 is very important to us, and I thank you for raising
15 the bill.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Yep! Really appreciated. I
17 see my time is up, but if I can just ask one final
18 question.

19 And, yes, same point for the buses as well. I
20 hope we can do a better job or try to ,you know, get
21 better prices, because that does sound like a lot of
22 money -- \$100,000. Obviously we need them, but we
23 don't... we want to make sure that we are not over
24 paying for things that we could get at a... (CROSS-
25 TALK)

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UNKNOWN: [INAUDIBLE]

[LAUGHTER IN CHAMBERS]

COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Uh, final question, is The Department of Education aware of any specific companies or areas in the City that are egregious on the issue of lack air-conditioning?

GLENN RISBROOK: We get... thank you, again, for the question, Council Member.

We get sporadic complaints across all the five boroughs and through all the vendors. So, there is nothing specific to one vendor, but we do get it across the board on occasion, sporadically.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Well, thank you, thank you so much.

GLENN RISBROOK: You're welcome.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council Member.

I would like to recognize Council Member Krishnan, welcome.

Yeah, we were just saying that, that is very expensive bus (sic). Can it stop traffic? Can it float? It's ,you know? This this a lot of money for buses. We were just saying that! Wow.

GLENN RISBROOK: I agree.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And, Council Member Avilés?

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you, Chair, and
3 thank you all for being here.

4 I have a couple of questions across multiple
5 issues. But, since we are on buses, I would love to
6 know how many of these buses have been electrified?

7 GLENN RISBROOK: Thank you for the question.

8 Currently we have, well, let's start with this,
9 we receive 51 buses from the EPA Grant now. And just
10 to further illuminate the air-conditioning issue,
11 uhm, 25 of those buses are the Type A, the smaller
12 buses, and they came retrofitted with air-
13 conditioning. The remainder of those buses did not,
14 even though they did come from the EPA, they did not
15 have air-conditioning. So, they are currently in the
16 process of being retrofitted. And, then, we have
17 about approximately, I would say, about six other
18 buses that we previously had. So, I think the number
19 is somewhat in around 55 to 57 buses right now.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: So, in terms of these 55
21 buses, these would be buses that would be servicing D
22 75 children or these are large... across?

23 GLENN RISBROOK: They could be across the gambit
24 of transportation.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: And, has the, uhm, has...
3 has your agency pursued further grants to electrify
4 the rest of the fleet either federal or state?

5 GLENN RISBROOK: Right, what we do is we assist
6 the bus companies to do so. They do not work for us,
7 so they are independent companies, so they have to
8 apply for these grants. So, we assist them in doing
9 that. The last grant that we had, had other
10 components to it that had to do with, uh, geography.
11 It also had to do with the students and where they
12 lived and things like that. So, the bus companies
13 had to prove that they service a certain number of
14 the low-income families across the city of New York,
15 and then they were awarded the grant. So, they don't
16 work for us directly, but we do assist them in
17 applying for those grants and authorizing what we
18 need to authorize for them to do so.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Yeah, no, I get that, thank
20 you. And we want to continue to encourage that. We
21 should have a fully electrified fleet.

22 In terms of, I guess, uh, just to quickly shift
23 to actually space with the D 75 schools. It often
24 feels like these schools that are so important to our
25 communities are squeezed into buildings -- into

1
2 places ,you know, that are kind of nondescript on the
3 side. And the administration is often left to
4 negotiate individual space needs. Right? So, it's
5 this huge discrepancy around the needs and how they
6 are met in every building, and how principals
7 negotiate with each other.

8 Could you talk to us a little bit about how you
9 ensure that the D 75 children that are co-located in
10 these buildings have sufficient space? And when that
11 seems to not be the case, how are you helping to
12 negotiate? Because, we have seen this happen in our
13 districts, which two principals are at odds. There
14 is a clear need for the space, and a very arbitrary
15 process around how that gets decided.

16 Yael Kalban: Thank you.

17 So, when we site new District 75 programs in our
18 existing buildings where they are going to co-located
19 with another school, that goes through our formal A-
20 190 process. And through that process, we create an
21 Educational Impact Statement that allows, in
22 substantial detail, how much space each school that
23 will be in the building will be entitled to have, per
24 the instructional footprint, and that applies to
25 District 75 as well. And, so, once those proposals

1
2 are approved, our colleagues in The Office of Space
3 Planning visit the building, work with those
4 principals, including the existing principals in the
5 building and the incoming District 75 principal to
6 come up with the space allocation that both ensures
7 each school has what it needs to run its program per
8 the footprint. And this creates sort of separable
9 and distinct spaces within the building so that each
10 school can create its own identity and have its own
11 defined space. And once they are in place, we do
12 continue to stay engaged with those schools. If
13 there are challenges that come up at a building
14 council that the principals cannot resolve within the
15 building council structure, they can reach out to our
16 office, to the District 75 team, as well as to The
17 Office of Campus Governance, and The Office of Space
18 Planning who can come in and help negotiate those
19 changes that may be necessary. We also revisit
20 existing sites year over year. If there are
21 additional sections that are needed to accommodate
22 demand for the upcoming school year, we do sometimes
23 go back to existing sites, and we see where we can
24 have additional space available in the building to

1
2 reallocate that space to District 75, so they can
3 grow and serve more students.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great, I would love to
5 talk to you about particular instances [TIMER CHIMES]
6 in my district.

7 In terms of, uhm... in terms of how the data...
8 could you talk to me a little bit about how the DOE
9 looks at the ecosystem of D 75 schools? And, just
10 for context, my district ,you know, after years of
11 advocacy has, not in abundance, but more D 75 seats
12 for younger children, and then nothing for middle
13 school children, and then nothing for high school
14 children.

15 So, can you tell us about how you look at that
16 ecosystem and ensure that community... that children
17 are not traveling so far? We have had a new D 75
18 school come in that we advocated for, and it is
19 wholly too far from the communities. So, please talk
20 to us about that.

21 YAEL KALBAN: Yes, absolutely. So, every year,
22 The Office of District Planning partners closely with
23 the District 75 team to understand their projections
24 around how many new sections, new sites, will be
25 needed to accommodate both existing students and

1
2 projected incoming students in accordance with their
3 IEPs. We get that data in District Planning on a
4 borough basis. And we then look across the districts
5 in the given borough to kind of triangulate that data
6 with where we have available space, where we have new
7 buildings coming on line, and where we see the gaps
8 like you just described. So, we look at the number
9 of available District 75 seats in every district at a
10 given grade level and compare that to the number of
11 students who reside in that district at that grade
12 level and need District 75. And we also in recent
13 years have begun to gather data around travel
14 distance. So, we are looking at, on average, where
15 students are having to travel very far to get to
16 their District 75 program. So, we do our best within
17 sort of the constraints that we have to fill those
18 gaps when we are opening new programs. So, I think a
19 couple of examples of that, that will be opening this
20 upcoming school year in District 18 in Brooklyn, uhm,
21 we noticed that they have both significant travel
22 distances at the high school level, and gap of
23 approximately 80 high school seats. Meaning there
24 are 80 more high school age District 75 residents who
25 live in the district than there are seats available.

1
2 We knew that there was a need for additional high
3 school capacity in Brooklyn for the upcoming school
4 year, and were able to identify space at the Tilden
5 campus, uh, K 415, to open a new program that was
6 recently approved by the path and will open this
7 September.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: And what are the
9 projections of D 75 seats that DOE is projecting
10 moving forward?

11 YAEL KALBAN: I don't know if I have the total
12 projected number. But, I know that we... across all
13 of the new programs that we have proposed as well as
14 expansions of existing sites, uh, we are able to
15 fully meet and exceed the projected number of new
16 seats as requested by the District 75 placement team.

17 SHONA GIBSON: And if I could interject,
18 projecting District 75 students for the next year is
19 a little complicated at this time of the year,
20 because we are in the process of evaluating our
21 children who are coming into kindergarten -- the
22 turning five process. So, we will have a better idea
23 of what to expect. Also, there is a lot of fluidity
24 of students moving in and out District 75, but we
25 have planned for up to 1,700 new seats across the

1
2 City for District 75 students in the 23-24 school
3 year.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council Member.
5 Council Member Lee?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hi, thank you, Chair Joseph.
7 Uh, quick question on Intro 644, so for the
8 afterschool programs that you have listed, does this
9 also include the community based organizations
10 through DYCD that also partner with schools?

11 FLAVIA PUELLO PERDOMO: Yes, that is correct. For
12 the numbers that I provided, DYCD COMPASS program as
13 an example, has a high number of the afterschool
14 programs that we support.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, and do you know if the
16 requirement in the RFP process was taken out where it
17 requires the principals to sign on to an agreement
18 with the nonprofit organizations?

19 FLAVIA PUELLO PERDOMO: I would really defer to
20 DYCD colleagues who are here who can speak
21 specifically about their RFP process, so they can
22 join and share more details.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

24 TRACY CALDRON: So, uh, good afternoon again,
25 Tracy Caldron, just to [INAUDIBLE] for COMPASS, so

1
2 the current RFP does have that requirement where a
3 school partnership was required to apply for funding.
4 We haven't released a current one, so we have to get
5 back... You know, once we release it, we will let you
6 know whether or not that's in there... will be in
7 there.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay...

9 TRACY CALDRON: So you like that answer...

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: So, the reason why I am
11 asking is because, uhm, I ran a CBO for a very, very
12 long time, and we tried applying for a lot of these
13 Beacon and COMPASS programs and partnering with the
14 schools, but... and we have a community facility, we
15 had ,you know, that we owned property, all that
16 stuff. And we wanted to partner, but I think because
17 the principals already had their sort of designated
18 groups that they were working with, they didn't want
19 to go beyond that. And, so, we tried building
20 relationships with the principals over the years, but
21 we still never had that agreement in place. And, so,
22 I guess my question is that if there is a group that
23 has a space in a facility that is willing to partner
24 with the school, is there some sort of list you could
25 provide for the principals, saying, hey, these are

1
2 like DYCD funded programs already. Right? Like, we
3 had contracts with DYCD already. So, is there a way
4 to some sort of linkage or education around that
5 process so that we can actually provide more
6 afterschool seats -- also and include the community
7 based organizations?

8 TRACY CALDRON: So, in our RFP we do allow for
9 multiple partners. So, the principal can sign...

10 (CROSS-TALK)

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right.

12 TRACY CALDRON: with multiple partners. And, at
13 that time, everybody is reapplying. So, it is kind
14 of open to anybody who is interested and wants to
15 partner together.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, any outreach you can do
17 to the principals... because, my understanding at
18 that time, was that there was no set limit in terms
19 of the community based organizations they could
20 partner with. And, I understand, obviously,
21 proximity and all of that to the school is important
22 as well, which is why we only reached out to the ones
23 near our CBO. But, it would be great if there could
24 be some assistance to the CBO executive directors to

1
2 make some sort of introductions with the principals
3 as well.

4 FLAVIA PUELLO PERDOMO: Council Member Lee, we
5 hear you and understand what you are flagging. I
6 know that when they provide their concept paper,
7 there will be an opportunity to add feedback. But,
8 most importantly, within the current role that I
9 have, I also belong to The Division of Leadership
10 which supports superintendents, so we can work in
11 collaboration between the superintendents, and DYCD,
12 and our principals to ensure that we really expand
13 their knowledge and awareness of all of the different
14 programs that exist within their community -- and
15 they can partner. And that is an example of the kind
16 of work that we have started to do by having ongoing
17 engagement, even as we speak now, with our
18 superintendents and DYCD, and beginning by
19 strengthening the current partnerships that have we
20 right now and maximizing all that we can offer to our
21 students.

22 So, we hear you and appreciate your feedback.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yes, that would be great,
24 because we also had an Article 31, where we saw folks

1
2 programs is like the holy grail. Right? As a former
3 PTA President, who actually ran an afterschool
4 program after my day job until three o'clock in the
5 morning, because we could not access City funds very
6 much because of almost what Council Member Stevens
7 said, a school that seems be performing well is ,you
8 know, the, uhm, still kind of a Title I school, seems
9 to be left out of centrally funded programming. One
10 thing I have heard and experienced is that obviously
11 there are limitations with a resource, but schools
12 are often told you're in a queue, and never... and
13 we will call DYCD and say where are we in the queue
14 for this program? And, they will just say, you're in
15 a 'queue'. I would love to understand, like, what is
16 the protocol, and there is... there should be a
17 better way of communicating with schools so that they
18 understand what that means. Does that mean they are
19 going to be on a list forever? Does it mean they
20 have to do something? How are schools being engaged
21 in that conversation?

22 FLAVIA PUELLO PERDOMO: I will begin. Thank you,
23 Council Member Avilés. And I appreciate your framing
24 around the work that you did for afterschool.

25

1
2 So, the first thing is, during the recent months,
3 as I have engaged with this work, the first thing
4 that I do when there is a school that connects with
5 central or reaches out highlighting the need for
6 supports for afterschool. We thoroughly work with our
7 DYCD partners, but we also loop the superintendent
8 into the conversation. One that allows to really
9 understand what the needs on the ground are on for
10 the school communities that allow us to have
11 conversations with the superintendent around funding
12 availability and other supports that may exist ,you
13 know, to begin the work. And then one of the things
14 that we also are trying to be thoughtful and
15 creative, is when we look at current DYCD seats
16 within a proximate that are still available and are
17 on tap. Right? Which I know is not always a perfect
18 solution, but I think it is something that we should
19 be assessing as you're mentioning. In terms of the,
20 I think the bench or the wait time that you are
21 referring to, is the connection with the RFP that our
22 colleagues from DYCD are releasing. So, might have a
23 school that might be a perfect fit to ,you know,
24 eventually get one of these newer DYCD programs, but
25 until the RFP is not released (sic), they would not

1
2 be able to be added. But ,you know, my colleague
3 here can speak a little bit more nuanced in terms of
4 their timeline. I would encourage principals who
5 right now are trying to figure this out, understand
6 the recourses and the supports that exist to work
7 with their superintendent, who I know will, like,
8 from the DOE side, reach out to me or reach out to
9 people from the community school team to offer
10 support.

11 And here I want to ,you know, just emphasize and
12 echo, that there might be the case where a particular
13 school community that has more than one program, but
14 it not how we centrally designed that. Centrally, we
15 really look to have a breadth and a range of more and
16 more schools having those opportunities. And some of
17 that is dictated by the funding type on where it
18 should go. There are some instances where there are
19 schools that are under, like, New York State targeted
20 assisted who get money. And part of the requirement
21 is to open an afterschool program. But, our
22 colleagues have shared that they are looking to
23 release this RFP soon, which they can share some
24 colors to that. And that would allow is to ensure
25 that that we have more schools that can take

1
2 advantage of that. And I look forward when that
3 process gets going to partner with City Council to
4 ensure that we are being intentional of targeting
5 communities that need these programs and currently do
6 not have them. I don't know if you want to add
7 anything else?

8 TRACY CALDRON: Yes, just a little bit more.

9 So, uh, yes, we are planning to release a concept
10 paper this year, and then followed by an RFP. But we
11 do want to hear from principals where there is
12 interest. Because, prior to a release of an RFP,
13 because sometimes we may have additional funding or
14 we may need to relocate a program, we also connect
15 them with non-school-based programs, because there
16 are other resources within the community that they
17 could be taken advantage of so we do that. And we
18 also connect them with, uh, CBOs that are in their
19 catchment area, because they may also be applying for
20 funding, and we connect them so that they are, uh,
21 aware of each other's needs in the process for
22 applying for the different funding as well.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Yeah, thank you for that.

24 Uh, [TIMER CHIMES] I guess, I would say, uh, they are
25 often certainly on the lookout for new RFPs, and it

1
2 really has been this kind of endless queue and no
3 understanding how you move through the queue and what
4 the criteria is. That has been part of the
5 frustrating engagement of trying to pull it all
6 together.

7 And, also, you know, where this need seems to be
8 most acute, obviously, from my perspective, is on the
9 elementary school level. Right? Working parents
10 cannot go to work if there is no appropriate care.
11 And PTAs that are highly under resourced and cannot
12 sell enough cupcakes to run an afterschool program.
13 Right? It is still a huge need, including one other
14 element of having a nonprofit provider who is doing
15 [INAUDIBLE] work, but doesn't have the capacity to
16 serve the 40 schools -- elementary schools in my
17 district. And, so, we need added capacity from
18 outside. So, we appreciate that. And, you know, I
19 cannot speak... huge supporter of universal after
20 school -- our families need it, they deserve it, and
21 our city should be funding it. Why we started in
22 middle school was an interesting... most middle
23 school kids don't want to spend five more minutes in
24 their school building. Why we started there is an
25 [INAUDIBLE], but this is something that we should

1
2 really rigorously pursue, and it would help thousands
3 of families.

4 I guess, with that, Chair, one more little
5 question about the buses?

6 Uh, we mentioned, uhm, half of the buses in terms
7 of the electrified busses you noted were purchased,
8 the other half are being retrofitted? Is that what
9 you...

10 GLENN RISBROOK: Uh, thank you for the question,
11 Council Member.

12 Uh, the 51 buses that we received for the... in
13 the EPA, half of those, 25 of them, are with the
14 smaller Type A/B buses that did have air-conditioning
15 already onboard. The others, from my understanding,
16 did not have those, and they are currently being
17 retrofitted for them... (CROSS-TALK)

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: And what is the timeline
19 on that retrofitting... (CROSS-TALK)

20 GLENN RISBROOK: Have to... (CROSS-TALK)

21 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: when can we expect them to
22 be operating...

23 GLENN RISBROOK: I will have to get back to you
24 about that... (CROSS-TALK)

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great, thank you. Thank
3 you, Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

5 Council Member Feliz?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Thank you, Chair.

7 Uh, quick question just to follow up on Council
8 Member Avilés' question, do we have a super rough
9 timeline for retrofitting the buses that don't have
10 air-conditioning? Are we talking about, like six
11 months, a year? Do we have any rough timeline?

12 GLENN RISBROOK: Uh, thank you once again for the
13 question.

14 I wish I could sit in front of you and tell you
15 exactly, uh, I can't. Because of the... there are
16 other concerns. There is the contract negotiations.
17 There is the supply chain issues and the availability
18 of the units. So, I can't... and if I say anything
19 speculating it wouldn't even be close... (CROSS-
20 TALK)

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Yep.

22 GLENN RISBROOK: So, as soon as we get a better
23 number or a better timeframe, I will certainly let
24 you know.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Yeah, and speaking about,
3 uh, speculation, I have some more questions on that
4 same note.

5 Uhm, touching on one of the earlier topics, how
6 much would it cost to electrify the entire fleet --
7 every single school bus? I know we have to
8 speculate, but super roughly, do have any type of
9 [INAUDIBLE]... (CROSS-TALK)

10 GLENN RISBROOK: At that... I would have to get
11 back to you about that also. I think I will have
12 that information before this hearing is over. But, I
13 will get back to you.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Yeah, do we have any buses
15 that are fully electric?

16 GLENN RISBROOK: Yes, we do. Thank you for the
17 question again. Right now, and I want to correct for
18 you, Council Member, I used 57, but it is actually
19 77. So, 77 buses, is what we are in the process of
20 receiving from the EPA. And we do have at least a
21 dozen or so that are on the road at this moment.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Sorry, so 77 buses that
23 are electric?

24 GLENN RISBROOK: That will be fully electric.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: That will be okay.

1
2 Are there any plans to convert the remaining
3 buses?

4 GLENN RISBROOK: Well, the bus companies have...
5 Well, there is a law that they have to meet. As of
6 2027, they can longer purchase any combustion buses
7 at all. And the fleet has to be totally electrified
8 by 2035. So, where they get there, is however they
9 get there, either by requiring new busing or
10 retrofitting the buses that they do have. So, some
11 of our bus companies have already started some
12 retrofitting, and, then, there are other buses, uh,
13 other companies also trying to acquire busing either
14 through grants or trying to acquire them themselves.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Perfect, thank you.

16 GLENN RISBROOK: Mm-hmm

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, I would like to
18 recognize Council Member Gutiérrez and Council Member
19 Restler.

20 Council Member Restler?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you very much, it
22 is great to be with you all, thank you for joining us
23 today.

24 I wanted to just ask in particular about
25 requiring the... I think Intro 566 is a great bill

1
2 in requiring that all children with IEPs be
3 transported on buses with air-conditioning seems like
4 an absolutely essential thing for us to do. I was
5 wondering how you compare the performance of NICE
6 Bus, uh, a model that I am really excited about and
7 intrigued by, with the remainder of the school
8 busing.. the other school bus operators, particularly
9 in this area of providing air-conditioning and other
10 performance metrics as well?

11 GLENN RISBROOK: Thank you for the question,
12 Council Member.

13 NICE Bus pretty much has mainly the smaller Type
14 A/B buses. So, they don't have the same air-
15 conditioning problems that some of the other vendors
16 have with the larger buses.

17 We are currently doing an assessment of NICE
18 Bus's performance along with the other bus companies.
19 They do excel in a lot of areas ,you know, as far as
20 working closer with us on... on the service that they
21 deliver. And we are working with them on some other
22 areas. So, uh, I will have to.. Once we finish that
23 analysis... (CROSS-TALK)

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Well, do you have a
25 timeline for that analysis?

1
2 GLENN RISBROOK: It should be shortly, because we
3 are working on that for other efforts as well. So,
4 hopefully, I will be able to get something to you
5 within the next say two or three weeks.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Really? Great! I would
7 like to follow up with you on that, and would really
8 welcome the opportunity to review that.

9 At this point, I realize it's a new model, but do
10 you think that it has promise for broader utilization
11 for more students?

12 GLENN RISBROOK: Thank you again for the question.

13 I will temper it by saying, yes, I do, uh,
14 because, the working relationship that they do have
15 with the city of New York. They're not owned, they
16 are a subsidiary, they don't work for the city of New
17 York City, but they work closely with us. They're
18 not for profit for the city of New York. So, we do
19 have some discussions with them about the service
20 delivery. We have a clearer insight on some of the
21 operations that we don't have so much with the other
22 bus companies. And, then, we can model... The other
23 bus companies will be modeling their performance
24 based on... or their services, based on what NICE
25 Bus delivers. So, in that vein, they're very

1
2 valuable to us. Just to extend that a little bit
3 further, because we are still dealing with the bus
4 driver shortages, you know, NICE Bus leaned into,
5 uhm, some recruitment methods to try to get more
6 drivers on. They were successful in some areas, and
7 then I think some of the other bus companies followed
8 suit. So, I think they are an example, but, again,
9 when we start aggregating the data, I will get back
10 to you.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: I really appreciate that.
12 I am very interested in the data and the analysis
13 that you call conduct.

14 I just have to say, if there is one thing that
15 every member of The City Council can tell you, we
16 hear a lot about our complaints from constituents,
17 from families who struggle on school bus
18 transportation issues, and I have to say, there has
19 been an extraordinary amount of just shadiness among
20 school bus operators for decades. These are
21 companies that I think have taken advantage of the
22 City, that have not done a good job enough job in
23 providing high quality rigorous services for our
24 students. We need to continue to consider legislation
25 such as the one today on air-conditioning, because

1
2 these companies are not doing enough. And a
3 nonprofit model, with real accountability, led by
4 folks who have deep expertise in complex city
5 operations, this is, I believe, how we can ensure
6 better, safer outcomes -- more reliable outcomes,
7 better communication for our families in our school
8 busing system. And, so, I am eager to see if your
9 findings match up with my hopes. But, I think that
10 the model is spot on, and is a really promising thing
11 that you all are pursuing. And, so, I hope that OPT
12 really seizes this opportunity to expand the NICE Bus
13 model much more broadly, as quickly as possible. And
14 anything that I can do to be helpful or supportive,
15 please let us know. Uh, but I know that on worker
16 justice issues, on environmental issues, on
17 communication with parents, across the board when I
18 have gone out to the bus depots in my district that
19 NICE Bus operates, I have been deeply impressed.
20 And, so, I really... I don't... This is one of
21 those kind of dark corners of city government that
22 has badly needed some fresh thinking and ideas, and I
23 think NICE Bus is that. And, so, I really hope that
24 it is an area where we can work together to deliver
25 better outcomes for our young people. And I

1 appreciate your analysis and work on that front.

2 [TIMER CHIMES]

3
4 GLENN RISBROOK: Thank you again, and I do welcome
5 your partnership in this area. Thank you very much.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to DOE for your
8 testimony. We will now turn to public testimony.

9 We will be limiting public testimony today to
10 three minutes each. For in-person panelists, please
11 come up to the table once your name has been called.

12 For virtual panelist, once your name is called, a
13 member of our staff will unmute you, and the Sergeant
14 At Arms will set the timer and give you the go ahead
15 to begin. Please wait for the sergeant to announce
16 that you may begin before delivering your testimony.

17 Our first in-person will consist of Michael
18 Cohen, Elizabeth Venditto, Kyle Satterfield, and Avi
19 Posnick. Please make your way to the front table.

20 Michael Cohen, you may begin.

21 MICHAEL COHEN: Thank you. And thank you, Chair,
22 and thank you to the committee for holding this
23 hearing.

24 Good afternoon, My name is Michael Cohen, and I
25 am the Eastern Director of The Simon Wiesenthal

1
2 Center, a global Jewish human rights NGO, and home to
3 our renowned Museum of Tolerance. The Simon
4 Wiesenthal Center combats antisemitism and bigotry
5 and defends the rights and dignity of Jews worldwide.

6 The Simon Wiesenthal Center has some 150,000
7 member in the New York Metropolitan area alone. I am
8 here today on behalf of The Simon Wiesenthal Center
9 to support Resolution 153, calling upon the
10 Department of Education to create a Jewish Heritage
11 Day in New York City public schools.

12 We highly commend both the resolution's prime-
13 sponsor, Council Member Abreu, as well as the many
14 sponsors who have recognized the need to introduce
15 into our city's amazingly diverse student population,
16 the history of their Jewish neighbors, the core
17 Judaic values that inspire and motivate our people,
18 and our love of the ancient Hebrew language and the
19 land of Israel. Tragically, many young people in our
20 city have been influenced by antisemites who have
21 been hyperactive on social media. As we all know,
22 the best antiseptic against lies and discrimination
23 is learning the truth.

24 This resolution contains detailed statistics
25 about the surging antisemitic hate crimes across our

1 great city over the last few weeks and years. In
2 fact, NYPD's Hate Crimes Taskforce has had to be
3 expanded in order to deal with the incredibly
4 dangerous situation on the ground. Indeed, The Simon
5 Wiesenthal Center has been very proud to partner with
6 The City Council for the last several years in
7 bringing our renowned Combat Hate Workshops to New
8 York City's public middle and high schools across the
9 city. Just this year alone, with the Council's
10 support, and only with the Council's support, we are
11 training close to 25,000 students about their social
12 responsibility in being part of the solution to
13 combat the growing levels of hate that directly lead
14 to the increased level hate-based crimes and the
15 dramatic effect of hate on social media driving and
16 influencing our children. The Simon Wiesenthal
17 Center is willing, able, and eager to work with all
18 the distinguished members of the Council represented
19 here to create an appropriate curriculum about the
20 Jewish people that would be relevant to all of our
21 children. It is a necessary task, as the vast
22 majority of our current public school students have
23 no background on our history and know precious little
24 about the Nazi Holocaust, which resulted in the six
25

1
2 million Jews who were mass-murdered some eight
3 decades ago.

4 Beyond statistics of past suffering, emerges a
5 legacy of hope and overcoming discrimination and
6 tragedy. That is a crucial part of the legacy of the
7 Jewish immigration story to New York. It is our
8 fervent hope that such a unit will encourage our next
9 generation to help defend their Jewish neighbors when
10 they are being singled out for harassment and
11 bullying.

12 On behalf of The Simon Wiesenthal Center, I want
13 to thank this council for once again taking such a
14 leading role in the fight against antisemitism. New
15 York's Jewish community, as you know, is the largest
16 in the world outside of Israel. And your actions
17 today take us one major step closer to curbing and
18 thwarting that dreadful hate. For this, we really
19 thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for your
21 testimony.

22 Next up, Kyle Satterfield?

23 KYLE SATTERFIELD: Thank you, Chair Joseph and
24 members of this committee for the opportunity to
25 testify today in support of this important resolution

1
2 calling upon the Department of Education to establish
3 a Jewish Heritage Day in New York City public
4 schools.

5 My name is Kyle Satterfield, and I am testifying
6 today both as a resident of District 4 and on behalf
7 of The American Jewish Committee, or AJC, a global,
8 nonpartisan advocacy organization that was
9 established 117 years ago here in New York City.

10 As we have all heard, antisemitism is on the rise
11 both on the national level and locally in our city.

12 A few weeks ago, AJC released a its State of
13 Antisemitism in America Report 2022, the most
14 comprehensive survey of its kind. AJC's report found
15 that over four in 10 American Jews 41% feel their
16 status less secure than it was just a year ago.

17 Those feelings of lack of security are even greater
18 among young Jewish adults -- 19%, roughly one in five
19 young American Jews between the ages of 18 and 29,

20 say that they were personally targeted by an
21 antisemitic remark or posts online or on social media
22 in the past 12 months. Taking together with those who
23 are personally targeted, fully 85% of young American
24 Jews were the target of antisemitism online or have
25 seen it online at least once in the past 12 months.

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2 That is compared with 64% of American Jews age 30 or
3 older.

4 And as a result of the rise in antisemitism, a
5 significant number of American Jews have altered how
6 they conduct their day to day lives -- and even
7 whether they publicly identify as Jewish. Nearly
8 four in 10 American Jews -- 38% -- reported changing
9 their behavior at least once out of fear of
10 antisemitism. This is the daily reality for American
11 Jews, including Jews here New York City, home to the
12 largest Jewish community in the world outside of the
13 state of Israel.

14 To prevent antisemitism from becoming further
15 normalized, we must take action. This resolution
16 calling for the establishment of a Jewish Heritage
17 Day in our city's public schools is an important step
18 forward. And, critically, this resolution changes
19 the narrative by sending the message at an early age
20 to the students in our school system, that Jews are
21 an important part of the rich tapestry of American
22 society; that the Jewish story is an American story;
23 that their Jewish classmates and neighbors are an
24 integral part what makes this country great and this
25 city the greatest city in the world. And in the face

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2 of all too frequent reports of New York [INAUDIBLE]
3 of antisemitic incidents in our city, Jewish Heritage
4 Day will send a message to our Jewish students, our
5 young people, that they are seen, they are valued,
6 and theirs is a story worth being proud of.

7 Finally, I note one best practice in combatting
8 antisemitism, is when those of other backgrounds do
9 the speaking. I can think of no better messengers
10 than our city's diverse core of educators for whom I
11 have the deepest respect. And I say that as a proud
12 son-in-law of an educator of over 30 years. [TIMER
13 CHIMES] Thank you again for the opportunity to
14 testify today. I, on behalf of myself and the
15 American Jewish Committee, thank Council Member Abreu
16 and his co-sponsors for sponsoring this resolution,
17 and I sincerely thank the members of this committee
18 for your consideration of the resolution, and I urge
19 you to support it. The diversity of our city is a
20 part of what makes it such a beautiful place to live,
21 and we should take every opportunity to celebrate it.

22 Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for testimony.

24 Elizabeth Venditto?

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2 ELIZABETH VENDITTO: Thank you, Chair Joseph,
3 Council Member Abreu, and members of The Committee on
4 Education for hosting today's hearing.

5 My name is Elizabeth Venditto, and I serve as
6 Director of Institutional Giving at The Museum of
7 Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial To The Holocaust.

8 I am honored to testify today in support of
9 Resolution 153, which calls upon The Department of
10 Education to create a Jewish Heritage Day in New York
11 City public schools.

12 The Museum of Jewish Heritage educates diverse
13 visitors about Jewish life before, during, and after
14 the Holocaust. Our mission is to teach about what
15 unchecked hate and bigotry can do. Our exhibitions
16 and public programs examine the richness of Jewish
17 cultures and history.

18 Our work builds bridges between the city's
19 communities and creates mutual respect and
20 understanding. We are deeply troubled by the
21 persistent increase in antisemitic rhetoric and
22 violence in the City. The museum was the target of
23 such an act on January 7, 2021. A confederate flag
24 was tied to the museum's front doors -- and act that
25 was later attributed to the Proud Boys.

1
2 The museum is an essential resource for
3 combatting bigotry and antisemitism in New York City.
4 We have a longstanding relationship with the DOE and
5 local schools that would support the goals of this
6 resolution.

7 We provide free museum admission for New York
8 City public schools. Our Holocaust curriculum,
9 developed with DOE support and partnership, is a free
10 and trustworthy resource for teachers. Over 2,000
11 teachers attend our professional development
12 workshops each year.

13 In January 2020, we partnered with former Mayor
14 de Blasio and the DOE to schedule museum visits for
15 14,000 students from communities with the greatest
16 rise in antisemitic acts. Though COVID interrupted
17 these visits, the need for such a partnership is
18 greater than ever. Next fall, we will expand our
19 work to elementary schools by opening our first
20 exhibition that is designed for students in grades 3
21 through 6th.

22 We thank The City Council for recognizing the
23 importance of teaching public school students about
24 Jewish heritage. And we look forward to partnering
25 with you in this effort, thank you.

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.
Avi Posnick?

AVI POSNICK: Good afternoon, My name is Avi Posnick, and I am the Northeast Director for StandWithUs, an education organization which educates and empowers students to fight antisemitism and hate.

Thank you, Chair Joseph for holding this hearing and to Council Member Abreu for sponsoring this resolution.

We have all seen the numbers showing the shocking rise in antisemitic hate crimes here in New York City and across the country. As an organization focused on education, StandWithUs believes that education is the road to peace. We believe that by learning about one another and getting to know someone, it makes it harder to hate that person. By learning more about the Jewish community, and especially its contributions towards the betterment of New York City, we can combat stereotypes and misconceptions about the Jewish people.

Since 2006, the president of the United States and the congress have declared May as National Jewish American Heritage Month. New York City is home to the largest Jewish population in the world outside of

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2 Israel. However, this is not formally celebrated or
3 recognized in New York City schools. And this is
4 something that can and we believe should be changed,
5 and we are grateful to Council Member Abreu for
6 putting forth this resolution -- and the almost half
7 of the members of the Council who have officially
8 signed on as sponsors.

9 At StandWithUs with have resources and
10 presentations on the subject that are developed for
11 high school and middle school students, and we will
12 be making them available to any and all New York City
13 schools.

14 Thank you for the opportunity to testify this
15 afternoon, and I urge all members to vote in favor of
16 this resolution, thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I was going to
18 ask if the curriculum would be available. Is it by
19 request or is it automatically sent out to schools?

20 AVI POSNICK: So, it can... Right now it is going
21 to be by request, but we are happy to partner with
22 the members of the Council in different districts to
23 make it available to all schools.

24

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, and is it just focusing
3 on the Holocaust, or is it going to focus on Jewish
4 heritage, culture, music, language... (CROSS-TALK)

5 AVI POSNICK: Jewish heritage, and especially the
6 contributions that the Jewish community has made to
7 New York City.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely, that's what
9 [INAUDIBLE]... (CROSS-TALK)

10 AVI POSNICK: And to this country as a whole.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: As a whole, because you have
12 a lot to celebrate, not just the Holocaust, thank
13 you... Give them the happy stuff, too.

14 AVI POSNICK: It is much more... The Jewish
15 experience in this country and the world is much more
16 than just the unfortunate incidents of the
17 Holocaust... (CROSS-TALK)

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes, when I studied abroad in
19 Czech Republic, I visited a Jewish museum. And,
20 then, when I went to Vienna, I studied there as a
21 student as well. There is a tree dedicated to the
22 Holocaust with the silver leaves, and each of the
23 victims were on there. And my professor, we visited
24 his orphanage from when he was, uhm, a child, where
25 he was placed during the Holocaust. So, there is a

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2 connection as an educator, as a forever educator, to
3 the Jewish community as well -- as an educator.

4 Any questions?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Thank you, Chair. I just
6 wanted to thank the panel for your powerful testimony
7 today. And we look forward to taking it through the
8 finish line. Thank you again, Chair, for holding a
9 hearing on this bill. And, thank you, of course, to
10 the chair of the Jewish Caucus, Council Member Eric
11 Dinowitz, who has been a strong, strong partner.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council Member.

13 I would also like recognize Council Member
14 Sanchez and Council Member Dinowitz.

15 And Council Member Lee has a question.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Thank you, no, I just wanted
17 to take the time to just recognize all of you here
18 today, and thank you so much for the work that you
19 are doing in the community. I actually, this past
20 Sunday, we had a... Simon Wiesenthal, Michael Cohen,
21 you guys hosted an event in my district, which was
22 very, very powerful. So, the work that you are all
23 doing around combatting hate in general of all kinds
24 towards every community, is greatly appreciated.

1
2 So, I just want to thank you for that work.
3 And, of course Avi Posnick and all of the other
4 leaders that are here, I just wanted to say thank
5 you, and thank you so much, Council Member Abreu, for
6 this resolution today. And, I am happy to be a co-
7 sponsor on it. So, just... Things like this and
8 this is why we did... we wanted to do Lunar New Year
9 and other cultural... Putting other days for other
10 communities on the calendars, because I really think
11 education in our schools is really important for
12 helping us to understand each other and our cultures,
13 and where we are coming from. So, thank you so much.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council Member
15 Lee.

16 Council Member Restler?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so much, Chair
18 Joseph, as always, I am enormously appreciate your
19 leadership.

20 And I just want to recognize my colleague,
21 Council Member Abreu, who I feel like, as an Upper
22 West Side representative, whose mom worked at Zabars,
23 we are going to have to think about allowing him in
24 to the Jewish Caucus.

25 [LAUGHTER IN CHAMBERS]

1
2 But, in all seriousness, I appreciate your
3 leadership on this. And we were just having a Jewish
4 Caucus meeting last week, and Chair Dinowitz was ,you
5 know, underscoring just how powerful the curriculum
6 that the Simon Wiesenthal Center provides in our
7 schools. And he was really encountering me and
8 others on the call who had not yet taken advantage of
9 the opportunities for partnership to do so.

10 We have had major upticks in antisemitic violence
11 in our community, and have been working together with
12 diverse community based organizations and our
13 superintendent in District 14, to develop new
14 curriculum actually with CCHR, that we will be
15 providing in middle schools beginning later this
16 spring semester. And I just really want underscore
17 the importance of creating the space in our schools
18 to educate against hate. And we have to acknowledge
19 the very troubling trends that we are experiencing
20 around antisemitism in particular, but also anti-
21 Asian hate, anti LGBTQ+ issues, anti-Blackness, and
22 we need to make sure that our schools are places
23 where we are building deep solidarity. And I just
24 really want to thank this panel. And I welcome this
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2 resolution that I think moves very much in the right
3 direction. So, thank you, Shaun.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much... Oh...

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Go ahead.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I just want to take a
7 moment to thank my colleague, Council Member Abreu,
8 for this important resolution and all of you for
9 testifying. It cannot be understated how important I
10 feel this is -- and the Jewish community.

11 And I know in the resolution, I know in some of
12 the testimony we talk about the hate crimes that are
13 on the rise, uhm, and the troubling statistics, and
14 the feelings in the Jewish community. But, something
15 I value about ,you know, Chair Joseph's question
16 about the curriculum, is that being Jewish is about
17 so much more than being a victim. Just before this
18 hearing, I was in Queens at a Model Seder for
19 Holocaust survivors. And one might think that is
20 ,you know, being Holocaust survivor is the ultimate
21 symbol of victimhood, but what did I see when I got
22 there? People sitting around a table, eating
23 together, enjoying time together, enjoying the
24 traditions that are thousands of years old. We even
25 got some songs from a 90-somewhat-year-old opera

1 singer, which was very nice. And being Jewish is
2 about pride, and about joy, and about a shared
3 history, a shared people of community. And that is
4 the sense that I think I am eager to share with
5 everyone in New York City and will all of my
6 colleagues -- that sense of community.

7
8 And again, I want to thank Council Member Abreu
9 for his work and Chair for hearing this resolution.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to everyone
11 on this panel.

12 Our next panel will be Christopher Leon Johnson,
13 Paolo Alberghini, and Lori Podvesker.

14 Please make your way to the front table, thank
15 you.

16 Christopher Leon Johnson?

17 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, I'm up.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin your testimony.

19 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Good afternoon, Chair,
20 my name is Christopher Leon Johnson, I am here to
21 show my support for Intro 153. I don't know why this
22 is even a bill. This should have been made a law
23 already. I am solely support the Jewish people. I am
24 solely against antisemitism. This needed to be a
25 day... I don't know why there are only 25 members

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2 who are sponsoring this bill. I think that all the
3 members should be sponsoring this bill, and if they
4 don't, I think we should vote them out. That is my
5 opinion. I believe that there should be more
6 Holocaust education in all of the districts,
7 especially the more minority districts. And with the
8 hate crimes, you need to strengthen these laws when
9 it comes to the Jewish people. There should not be
10 these lax laws that are basically in the whole state
11 of New York, especially the city of New York --
12 especially where the DA is trying to be lenient with
13 these crimes against Jewish people. And, basically,
14 that's it. Thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.

16 Paolo Alberghini?

17 PAOLO ALBERGHINI-PASTOR: Good afternoon, Chair
18 Joseph and members of the Education Committee, and
19 guest. My name is Paolo Alberghini-Pastor, I am the
20 Director of Development for The Center for
21 Educational Innovation. I am here in support of
22 Introduction 644.

23 The Center for Educational Innovation, Project
24 BOOST, was founded more than 20 years ago in New York
25 City to expose students to new experiences like live

1
2 theater and museum trips, academic support and
3 tutoring to assist all students in accessing the NYC
4 high school of their choice.

5 With an eye on equity and innovation, in this
6 post-pandemic world, the council has been expanded to
7 help reengage our students with enrichment programs
8 designed to engage students, nurture student talents
9 in interests, and help identify college and career
10 pathways, with careers in technical and vocational
11 opportunities intended to ultimately improve the
12 economic status of our students and their families.

13 Project BOOST, which stands for Building Options
14 and Opportunities for Students, is currently
15 delivered to many public schools thanks to the
16 generous support from elective officials like you --
17 which includes members of the New York State Senate,
18 New York State Assembly, and New York City Council.
19 This support is crucial to allow us to continue to
20 deliver and expand this program in Fiscal Year 2024,
21 so that, together, we can help fill the gaps and
22 meets the needs of every child.

23 Our programming includes: Art education, in which
24 children can express solutions to problems effecting
25 their communities through art; STEM Education, which

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2 includes both coding and robotics programs for
3 students and families, and ensures every child's
4 first experience with this discipline serves as a
5 positive learning experience; ESPORTS, which is the
6 only college to career enrichment program that opens
7 up opportunities to students to [INAUDIBLE] and
8 participate with the fast paced growing ESPORTS
9 industry; high impact tutoring, which is necessary
10 now more than ever, to support accelerated learning
11 necessary to mitigate the post-pandemic learning
12 loss.

13 Project BOOST programs cover a wide range of
14 academic disciplines including the arts, science,
15 technology, engineering, mathematics, academic
16 tutoring, and support for social-emotional learning,
17 and skill development.

18 Our social-action arts and music programs allows
19 children to express themselves, communicate messages
20 reacting to social issues, encouraging discourse and
21 collaborative problem-solving.

22 Coding and robotics programs for students and
23 families, ensuring their first experience with
24 [INAUDIBLE] programs are engaging and inspirational.

25

1 Adding to the myriad of programming enjoyed by
2 Project BOOST students, The Center for Educational
3 Innovation's Project BOOST continues its long
4 traditional established by our Early Stages programs
5 and brings thousands of students to enjoy the rich
6 cultural offerings of their city through a guided
7 cultural enrichment experience including live
8 Broadway performances, and visits to museums,
9 galleries, and orchestra concerts.
10

11 Whenever possible, our Center for Educational
12 Innovation, in partnership with the local community
13 based organizations, brings additional cultural and
14 relevant opportunities [TIMER CHIMES] to students.

15 Thank you so much, and we feel that this
16 introduction is very important to continue to
17 strengthen afterschool programming, which is what we
18 really want all children to enjoy, thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for your
20 testimony.

21 Lori Podvesker?

22 LORI PODVESKER: Good afternoon, everybody.

23 Thank you, Chair Joseph and this committee for
24 holding this important hearing on the proposed
25 education bills.

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2 My name is Lori Podvesker, and I am the Director
3 of Disability and Education Policy at INCLUDEnyc. For
4 the last 40 years, INCLUDEnyc has helped hundreds of
5 thousands of New York City families navigate the
6 complex special education service and support
7 systems.

8 I am also a parent of a beautiful 20-year-old
9 developmentally disabled son who attends a District
10 75 program on the Lower East Side.

11 We testify today in favor for this entire
12 legislation package, as all proposed bills, if
13 adopted, will lead to more transparency and
14 accountability. But we especially urge the Council to
15 adopt Introduction bill 868, as this proposed bill
16 regarding District 75 programs will ultimately lead
17 to better outcomes and equity for hundreds of
18 thousands of students with disabilities and a more
19 inclusive city for all New Yorkers.

20 According to the most recent data from the City,
21 including the November 2022 Local Law 27 Report from
22 The Department of Education and the January 2023
23 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report, there are
24 nearly 300,000 students with an IEP in New York City
25 who are receiving special education support and

1
2 services. This includes nearly 100,000 students with
3 disabilities who take a school bus to and from school
4 each day and 26,000+ students attending District 75
5 programs throughout the City.

6 District 75 students have long been invisible
7 within our public school system and communities. The
8 majority of students attending District 75
9 specialized programs have developmental disabilities
10 or are educationally classified as having emotional
11 disabilities. In addition, over 90% of District 75
12 students identify as Black, Hispanic, or Asian.

13 Due to the rigidity of the ways the system
14 underutilizes the special education continuum, which
15 is the place where services are delivered, the
16 majority of District 75 students spend their entire
17 school days in segregated settings and academically,
18 socially, or programmatically, do not interact with
19 general education students, despite almost all 360+
20 District 75 programs being co-located in school
21 buildings with other schools. And almost all District
22 75 students are bused out of their neighborhoods,
23 home school districts, and sometimes even their home
24 boroughs to attend an appropriate school, due to lack
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2 of adequate seats and programming options closer to
3 the residence.

4 This is not my testimony, but I think it really
5 important in response to some of the things that the
6 Department of Education said earlier, which is the
7 placement process for District 75 students,
8 contradicts what the federal Special Education Law
9 mandates, which is that kids with disabilities get
10 educated as close to their home as possible to the
11 greatest extent. And how it works is once a student
12 is recommended by the IEP team for District 75
13 placement, it goes to a borough enrollment officer,
14 as opposed to [TIMER CHIMES] the school district.
15 And, therefore, the borough enrollment officer looks
16 within that borough to see where there are open
17 seats. And that is kind of antithetical to what the
18 law says. And, so, I encourage this committee to
19 press on the DOE to talk about that process. And it
20 actually mirrors the old placement process before the
21 special education reform when a student was
22 recommended for a specialized program or a more
23 restrictive setting such as a self-contained class.
24 Prior to 2010, schools were able to say that they
25 couldn't educate a kid and they would get bused out

1
2 elsewhere. And that was done by a borough enrollment
3 officer, but the DOE left in place the borough
4 enrollment officers for District 75. So I am just
5 putting that out there.

6 Also ,you know, I think it is really important as
7 District 75 programs expand, uh, and I will say
8 within the past five years, uh, the number of
9 students recommended for District 75 has gone up
10 exponentially, and also for this committee to look at
11 that. I think less than five years ago, there were
12 22,000 children, now there are close to 30,000 and
13 they spoke about a projected 1,700 additional seats
14 next year.

15 Also, sorry, I am going off the record here, but
16 it is response to what they said, because I think it
17 is important for you all to hear, which is that I
18 suspect that there is a correlation between the
19 percentage of students who get bussed out of their
20 home school districts with the number of charter
21 schools. And, also, with pre-Ks and 3Ks, and how
22 these... Listen, it's never to pit one group up
23 against another, and that is not what I am doing, and
24 I want to be clear about that -- However, I do feel
25 that it is important for those relationships to be

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2 looked at, because also what we are not talking about
3 is the correlation between poverty and developmental
4 disabilities. And the community school districts
5 where there is a high percentage of charter schools,
6 where there also are kids with disabilities are
7 getting bused out, that relationship plays out in
8 real life. And it is just something to look at.

9 I will go back to my testimony, thank you.

10 Uh, while a new report on District 75 programs
11 will not immediately solve these blatant acts of the
12 City not meeting the civil and educational rights of
13 these students, we do believe a new report outlining
14 where existing District 75 programs exist, coupled
15 with the criteria for the DOE uses to determine where
16 it locates new District 75 programs, will naturally
17 help the City more appropriately educate District 75
18 students. The adoption of this bill will allow more
19 District 75 students to attend schools closer to
20 where they are living, to the greatest extent
21 possible, and as required of them per special
22 education law. Furthermore, it increases the
23 possibilities of some students spending less time on
24 buses, including sitting on idling bus is due to

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2 multiple schools on one school bus route, leading to
3 better individual health and bus safety outcomes.

4 As a result, more District 75 students will have
5 opportunities for community integration, leading to
6 more independent living, educational progress, and
7 employment after high school. And equally, as
8 important -- which I feel the system needs to address
9 more -- is that more District 75 students attending
10 programs, closer to their homes and within their
11 local community schools and buildings, will benefit
12 non disabled students; they will be seen and heard,
13 and the longer that we continue for District 75
14 students to not be seen and heard, the more that they
15 will continue to not be valued in the same way as
16 other groups.

17 And, you know, I say this every time I get a
18 chance, which is it would be an amazing thing if
19 there were just signs outside of buildings where
20 District 75 programs exist. People don't even know
21 that our kids are there. And that's my kid. And
22 with the pandemic, things have worsened, because now
23 with the teacher and school staffing shortages, the
24 segregation that is going on is criminal. And ,you
25 know, where my guy goes to school, because of

1
2 staffing issues and capacity, they are still
3 practicing COVID policies where they eat lunch in
4 their classroom; they don't have gym, and they don't
5 go out on field trips, because they don't have enough
6 staff; there aren't enough nurses. So, basically, my
7 guy has been in his class all day with no
8 integration. And ,you know, he is in an eight one to
9 one, and I just heard at a parent teacher conference
10 less than two weeks ago, at times there are 15 kids
11 in a classroom. And ,you know, this is the best of
12 the worst as I say. And I think it speaks a lot ,you
13 know?

14 I really appreciate you guys and all that you
15 are doing. And, Chair Joseph, I cannot say enough to
16 thank you from my heart for bringing District 75 in
17 to the light so that people can see us. Because,
18 historically, we have not even had the time of day,
19 and there is a function just getting us even to this
20 level, thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for your
22 testimony.

23 Paullette Healy?

24 PAULLETTE HEALY: It is very difficult to follow
25 Lori Podvesker. So I am very glad she brought all of

1
2 the data and the numbers, because I am actually going
3 to talk about my son as well, who has had the
4 wonderful opportunity to testify before you and
5 considers you one of his friends, Chair Joseph. He
6 wishes he were here today, but he is in afterschool
7 actually in a community service afterschool program
8 that actually gives back to the homeless and
9 participates in local soup kitchens. And he would
10 not be able to do that if he had to be bused to his
11 school. We were lucky enough that he qualified for
12 the inclusion program at telecommunications, which is
13 within walking distance of our home. And because of
14 that, he is able to participate in a plethora of
15 wonderful afterschool activities, including the
16 community service afterschool club that he is in
17 right now, including the theater enrichment program
18 that he is going to be in tomorrow, and including the
19 dance program so he can shine up his moves and dance
20 and your fundraiser. But, we know that he is the
21 minority when it comes to District 75 students. And
22 as much as I appreciate the bills that are being
23 introduced today, I am going to talk specifically
24 about 0566, 0644, and 0868. Because these are the
25 bills that advocates like me and our whole council of

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2 the Citywide Council of Special Education have been
3 fighting for -- for over a decade.

4 In terms of the air-conditioning for the school
5 buses, we reported as recently as last summer about
6 the hot buses that our children were going back and
7 forth in -- especially exacerbated in the Bronx, when
8 there was that horrible accident that caused 38 of
9 our bus attendees and bus matrons to be out of work,
10 because they were just in the hospital -- and the
11 ineptitude of the OPT to actually make sure that
12 these kids had busing in place the next day. Thirty
13 children had to stay home during summer, uh, their
14 summer session, because OPT did not act quickly
15 enough, and that is with the relentless support and
16 advocacy that parent advocates like me, [INAUDIBLE]
17 and Sara Catalano (sp?) from PIST, tried to leverage
18 through our connections through ,you know, the bus
19 union and bus advocacy. So, those of us community
20 advocates should not have to work so hard in order to
21 make sure our kids get to school when there is a huge
22 bureaucracy that is getting billions of dollars to do
23 so who can't pull it together ,you know, even with
24 our advocacy. We do appreciate this bill, but we
25 want to make sure that there is increased oversight

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2 to make sure buses are serviced prior to Summer
3 Rising summer session and all of the different summer
4 programs that are available, so that there is not a
5 lapse in service to getting these children to their
6 programs -- many of which are 12-month programs that
7 are mandated by law. And, unfortunately, you know,
8 [TIMER CHIMES] when we have a system that is
9 continually busing our children out of their
10 communities, we cannot guarantee that they will get
11 there in time.

12 As for the last bill, which is the reporting on
13 District 75 services and programs, I pulled that data
14 together, and I will make sure that to you in my
15 testimony, so that you can see for yourself the
16 District 75 deserts who are continually shipping
17 their children out of the community in spite of the
18 fact that there are no District 75 programs within
19 their district -- District 18, District 7, District
20 29, these are all disenfranchised communities with
21 high populations of people living under the economic
22 index and are high populations of people of color.

23 So ,you know, instead of waiting for this bill to
24 be enacted, I will send you the data now, because I
25 pulled it together myself, because I had to.

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2 That being said, I do appreciate having this
3 opportunity to testify on behalf of my community, I
4 really greatly appreciate your leadership -- And as
5 Lori had so wonderfully said, you know, really shed
6 the light on our District 75 programs and our
7 students, because they have been left in the shadows
8 for way too long. And if we are really talking about
9 true integration and not just moving bodies from one
10 school to another, and really thinking about how that
11 school community looks like for our students, as well
12 as how that community can support the welcoming back
13 of our students, that is part of the conversation.
14 We need to be able to identify now where those
15 deserts are, where we can put them in effective as of
16 September, and make sure that the community and the
17 school are ready to embrace them. So, thank you so
18 much for this time.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Of course, thank you. We
20 wanted to find out, on the record, in which school
21 districts are you seeing the lack of District 75
22 programs?

23 PAULLETTE HEALY: Right now, we have identified
24 District 7, District 5, District 18, and District 29.
25 And that is not to say that is not, uh, one

1 particular... You know, like in District 18, there
2 are 82 seats for elementary, but 542 children who
3 actually live in that district who need these seats.
4 Same thing for District 5, we have 311 District 75
5 high school students with not a single high school
6 program there. So, this is how district planning has
7 kind of gotten around ,you know, identifying as,
8 like, there is no deficiencies in District 75 seats,
9 because there may be an abundance of middle school
10 seats, but that doesn't negate the fact that there is
11 no high school there. So, having this data that...
12 I had to open five different Special Education
13 Reports and Excel spreadsheets to compile in to one,
14 was able to identify geographically where all of the
15 deficits are. And that is by district, by borough,
16 from elementary, middle, and high school. And also
17 the breakdown of where the charter schools are in
18 conjunction to where the deficits are, too. So, I am
19 happy to share all of that information with you in my
20 testimony.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We would love that. Uhm,
23 that was one of the things that we talked about in
24 our last hearing. Not only transportation, but after
25 school was very important. Our students with special

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2 needs don't get to participate in those programs. I
3 complained about the fact that a student should not
4 have to spend three hours on a bus to get to the very
5 thing that they love -- it's school. And that is the
6 only thing that we are doing. So, it is an honor and
7 a pleasure to make sure we continue to shed the
8 light, ring the alarm on our District 75 students.
9 Accessibility has also been an issue. And if you
10 hear me, I talked about that... She said what? That
11 77% of the buildings are accessible? So, what are
12 you doing with my child? How are the students
13 entering and leaving these buildings? So, that is
14 another thing we are also looking at. There is a lot
15 of work to do, but I am here for it in partnership
16 and to make sure that we continue to do oversight on
17 this issue of District 75 students. If we talk about
18 being inclusive, that means all of New York City
19 students.

20 PAULLETTE HEALY: And if I could just highlight
21 one more thing, Chair Joseph, the NYCSCA recently
22 appeared in front of you in terms of their proposal
23 and their school construction plan for the next four
24 years. We have been fighting with School
25 Construction Authority to make sure that all of the

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2 new buildings that are being built are going to allow
3 a District 75 program within it. Because we have
4 been struggling for years to make sure that our
5 children with mobility issues are prioritized when it
6 comes to these fully accessible buildings -- which is
7 a requirement of being a new building being built in
8 New York City. And, unfortunately, it is a constant
9 fight to try to get a District 75 placement in those
10 buildings even though they are fully equipped to
11 support all children with various, different
12 disabilities.

13 So, if we can urge you to please join us in our
14 advocacy to hold NYCSCA accountable in terms of
15 making sure that programming is in place -- even
16 before Enrollment gets their hands on it -- I think
17 that that would help us really incorporate our
18 neighborhood children into these schools that are
19 being built for capacity sake.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Lori, I noticed that you
21 mentioned something about partnerships in terms of
22 post-secondary training in partnerships, and what
23 does that look like for you? Give me an idea.

24 LORI PODVESKER: I don't know, I think there is a
25 lot of opportunities that don't cost money and low

1 hanging fruit. And ,you know, it goes back to
2 schools being adequately staffed including transition
3 counselors, which are required. But ,you know, they
4 are among the last group of professionals to be
5 spoken about. And I get why; however, as a parent of
6 an almost 21-year-old, with the last few years being
7 home, and the lack of adequate ,you know, staff,
8 there are no more internships happening. And there
9 are no more field trips like I was saying. And those
10 field trips were in the community. They were to the
11 community garden. They were to the supermarket ,you
12 know, to learn how to shop and learn about money.
13 They were at the libraries. But ,you know, equally
14 valuable in those experiences are the soft skills
15 that my guy would have access to, and these are
16 things that the majority of us don't even realize,
17 but for him having a better quality of life, because
18 he can be part of the fabric of the City. So, that
19 could mean just interacting with other people --
20 knowing when to speak and not to speak, knowing when
21 move to the right to let other people by, knowing
22 when to stick his hand out to say hello. These are
23 such important skills, but if he doesn't have access
24 to those opportunities, they don't get developed.
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2 And ,you know, it goes back to this bill that we are
3 introducing -- well, I'm not, but you guys are -- but
4 ,you know, and it goes back to the things like the
5 signage, but even more so, and you have heard me talk
6 about my experience when we were turned away from
7 using the front door of the building, is that by
8 District 75 students using separate doors, they don't
9 get those opportunities for those soft skills that
10 lead to better outcomes after high school. Post-
11 secondary is just a fancy word for after high school.
12 And so it is the word "transition" that we use in the
13 Special Education space, but we need opportunities.
14 And we are not there, sadly.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to everyone
16 on this panel.

17 If there is anyone else in the room who wishes to
18 testify, please make your way to the Sergeant At Arms
19 desk in the back. So, that it is for our in-person
20 testimony today.

21 We will now move onto our virtual panel. Our
22 first panel will consist of Leona Teten and Ellen
23 McHugh.

24 Leona Teten, you may begin.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

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2 LEONA TETEN: Hi, good afternoon, Chair Joseph and
3 to the Education Committee, thank you so much for
4 bringing this resolution forth and for letting me
5 testify.

6 My name is Leona Teten. I'm a member of Bronx
7 Community Board 8 and a senior at the Bronx High
8 School of Science, where I am a StandWithUs intern
9 for Mr. Posnick, and the president of our Jewish
10 Student Union.

11 I'm here today to testify in support of
12 Resolution Number 153, calling on the Department of
13 Education to create a Jewish Heritage Day in New York
14 City public schools.

15 I think that further education about the Jewish
16 community will reduce bias and misconceptions about
17 who Jews are and what they do -- thus reducing the
18 antisemitism that Jews, including New York City
19 students, including my friends, face daily.

20 In a class that I am taking, which is meant to
21 focus on minorities and their experiences in this
22 country, the only mention of the Jewish community was
23 in reference to Jim Crown and the Holocaust, and how
24 Hitler admired the policies of discrimination in this
25 country against the Black community and used it as a

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2 model for the Nuremberg Laws. While this is
3 important to know, the story of the Jewish people in
4 this country is much more than the Holocaust, and it
5 all needs to be told.

6 Many of my peers instinctively associate Jews
7 with the Holocaust, and that is the only thing we are
8 taught in history class. They don't know about the
9 resilience and rebuilding that occurred afterwards,
10 or what the Jewish people are up to today.

11 As president of the Jewish Student Union, I have
12 run my own educational programs for club members
13 about antisemitism and Jewish history. It is clear to
14 me that the Department of Education should take
15 responsibility for educating New York City Students.
16 I am wholeheartedly in favor of calling on the DOE to
17 do so by establishing a Jewish Heritage Day in New
18 York City public schools, and I urge all of the
19 members of the committee to vote in favor of this
20 resolution, thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.

23 I would like to recognize Council Member
24 Schulman, thank you for joining us.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next up, we will hear from
3 Ellen McHugh. Ellen?

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts now.

5 ELLEN MCHUGH: Hi, good afternoon, it is a
6 pleasure to be here even though it is sunnier outside
7 than in.

8 I am here to talk about the issue on the District
9 75 schools and the coordination and cooperation
10 between and among agencies that serve students with
11 disabilities.

12 During the height of the pandemic, summer school
13 or summer access was opened, and DYCD, with the best
14 of intentions, I do believe, was put in charge of the
15 summer programming. Unfortunately, they had no
16 understanding of the fact that individuals with
17 disabilities would be attending those programs and
18 were totally unprepared. And rather than reaching
19 out to ask for help in preparing or even having
20 schools provide extra services through their Special
21 Education divisions, DYCD refused to serve students
22 with special needs.

23 This is not an unusual situation. For those of
24 us who are parents of students with special needs or
25 more profound disabilities, we have become accustomed

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2 to being shuffled about. Any school that offers an
3 afterschool program where a District 75 school might
4 be co-located, has no obligation to serve the
5 District 75 student in that co-located building,
6 because they are not on roster in the general
7 education building.

8 Any principal of a general education building, as
9 harsh as this may sound, can say that he or she no
10 longer has room for individuals who satisfy the
11 District 75 description. This happened not too long
12 ago at PS 104 in District 20, where families were
13 told that a District 75 school that had existed in
14 that building for years and years, was being moved.
15 Not because it wasn't in demand, but, because, at
16 that time, that principal felt that he or she needed
17 the room for somebody else.

18 This is where we come against the brute fact of
19 discrimination in this city or country however you
20 want to describe it. People look at individuals with
21 disabilities with, as they say on the streets, a
22 hairy eyeball: "Do these people actually contribute
23 to our society?" "Will these people work?" "Are
24 they a drain on our system?" This becomes the
25 question, not, "What can we do to assist you in

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2 making your life as measurably important as possible
3 as we do our typically developing students?" But,
4 instead, "Where can we put you?" So, that [TIMER
5 CHIMES] in theory, if not in fact, you get a service.
6 And how... (CROSS-TALK)

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

8 ELLEN MCHUGH: And using the word "service" when
9 we talk about education for students, is not only
10 disrespectful, but it belittles the fact that our
11 students do learn and they learn well. They learn
12 from their peers. They also learn from their
13 community. And their ability to be open and
14 welcoming to those that are different is an example
15 to all of us who have decided that difference is what
16 divides us.

17 Thank you for the time. And I am sure that there
18 will be more opportunities to talk.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.
20 And thank you to everyone on the panel.

21 If there is anybody left online who would like to
22 testify, please use the Zoom Raise Hand Function?

23 Not seeing any hands, that concludes our public
24 testimony for today's hearing.

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I am adjourning the
meeting, thank you.

[GAVEL SOUND] [GAVELING OUT]

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date April 22, 2023