

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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June 18, 2024

Start: 1:17 p.m.

Recess: 5:11 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Rita Joseph,  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Public Advocate William  
Eric Dinowitz  
James F. Gennaro  
Jennifer Gutiérrez  
Shahana K. Hanif  
Kamillah Hanks  
Shekar Krishnan  
Linda Lee  
Farah N. Louis  
Mercedes Narcisse  
Pierina Ana Sanchez  
Lynn C. Schulman  
Althea V. Stevens

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

Kalima McKenzie Simms  
LGBTQ programs

Jolan Nagi  
City Commission on Human Rights

Adam Scheier  
Career and Technical Education of the Office of  
Student Pathways

John Shea  
Division of School Facilities at the New York  
City Public Schools

Elaine Lindsey  
Chief of School Support for High Schools for New  
York City Public Schools

George Patterson  
Senior Executive Director for Community Schools

Kleber Palma  
Executive Director for the New York City Public  
Schools Office of Language Access

Robin Davson  
Executive Director of School Culture and Climate  
within the Office of Safety and Youth  
Development

Aaqib Gondal  
Junior at the Bronx High School of Science

Salma Baksh  
Senior at Forest Hills High School

Camila Sosa  
Junior at Uncommon Collegiate High School

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

Liza Greenberg  
Junior at the Bronx Science

Derry Oliver  
Senior at Cobble Hill High School

Sophie Mode  
Graduate of Millennium Brooklyn High School

Alaina Daniels  
the Co-Founder and Executive Director of Trans  
formative Schools

Eman Gad  
Policy Coordinator here at GGE

Raky Sy  
Reading on behalf of Rayna Young

Husein Yatabarry

Sunita Viswanath  
Sikh Coalition

Mark Fowler  
CEO of the Tanenbaum Center

Yyra Takat  
Student at the Bronx High School of Science

Harmeet Kamboj  
Senior State Policy Manager at the Sikh  
Coalition

Henry Goldschmidt  
Director of Programs at the Interfaith Center of  
New York

AjiFanta Marenah  
Advocacy Program Manager at Muslim Community  
Network

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

Kulsoom Tapal  
Coalition for Asian American Children and  
Families

Japreet Singh  
Sikh Community

Layla Hay  
Policy and Advocacy Intern at AAF

Amanda Martinez  
Testimony on behalf of student Natalie Henry

Quadira Coles  
Director of Policy at Girls for Gender Equity

Jasmina Salimova  
Girls for Gender Equity

Isabelle Chow  
Hunter College

Sarah Part  
Advocates for Children of New York

Megan Johannesen  
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

Nelson Mar  
Education Rights Project at Legal Services NYC

Foron Sharif  
Graduate of Baruch College

Samira Tasoom  
Junior at the Young Women's Leadership School

Rita Taleb  
Muslim Community Network

1  
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: This is a microphone check for  
3 the Committee on Education. Today's date is June 18,  
4 2024. We are located in the Chambers; recording is  
5 done by Rocco Macedi (SP?).

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon and welcome to  
7 the New York City Council Hearing of the Committee on  
8 Education. At this time, can everybody please  
9 silence your cell phones. If you wish to testify,  
10 please go up to the Sergeant at Arms desk to fill out  
11 a testimony slip. Written testimony can be emailed  
12 to [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). Again, that is  
13 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).

14 At this time and going forward, no one is to  
15 approach the dais. I repeat, no one is to approach  
16 the dais. Chair, we are ready to begin.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [GAVEL] Good afternoon.  
18 I'm Council Member Rita Joseph of the Committee on  
19 Education. Thank you for joining us today for this  
20 hearing on legislation. We will hear 11 pieces of  
21 legislation, including Intro. 118 sponsored by Deputy  
22 Speaker Ayala. A local law in relations to reporting  
23 on dress code policies in New York City Public  
24 Schools. Intro. 266 sponsored by myself, a local law  
25 in relation to establishing a bullying prevention

1  
2 taskforce. Intro. 399, sponsored by Public Advocate  
3 Williams. A Local Law in relation to requiring the  
4 Department of Education to provide information  
5 requiring schools compliance with the Americans with  
6 Disabilities Act. Intro. 432, sponsored by Council  
7 Member Sanchez. A local law in relation to  
8 distributing information about after school  
9 programming.

10 Intro. number 577, sponsored by Council Member  
11 Dinowitz. A local law in relation to requiring the  
12 Department of Education to conduct a study on  
13 feasibility of installing green roofs on schools.

14 Intro. 733, sponsored by Council Member Stevens. A  
15 Local Law in relation to requiring the New York City  
16 Public School - New York City Department of Education  
17 to report information on career and technical  
18 education program in New York City Public Schools.

19 Intro. number 771, sponsored by Council Member Lee.  
20 A Local Law in relation to requiring distribution of  
21 information regarding phone interpretation services.

22 Intro. 797, sponsored by Council Member Stevens.  
23 A Local Law in relations to reporting on student  
24 clubs and organizations. Resolution 95, sponsored by  
25 Council Member Hanif. A Resolution calling upon the

1  
2 New York City Department of Education to consult with  
3 faith based organizations to develop and provide all  
4 grade levels with the curriculum that focuses on  
5 religious diversity to provide professional  
6 development focused on religious diversity for  
7 teachers, staff and administrators. To ensure  
8 accurate classification of hate crimes and annual  
9 school reports immediate notification and full  
10 disclosure to parents of hate crime statistics and to  
11 ensure that schools take actions to condemn bullying,  
12 harassment based on religious clothing, food  
13 requirement, and need for prayer space and time year  
14 around.

15 Resolution 292, sponsored by Council Member  
16 Stevens. A Resolution calling on the New York City  
17 Public Schools to create an inclusive school dress  
18 code that complies with Title IX, a federal education  
19 amendment act and account for diverse cultures,  
20 gender expression, and body diversity. Lastly, we  
21 will hear in Number 372, sponsored by myself, a  
22 Resolution calling on the New York City Public  
23 Schools to provide student support for student  
24 newspaper at every high school.

1  
2 Thank you to the advocates and members of the  
3 public for joining us today and thank you to the  
4 representative from the Administration for joining  
5 us. I would like to thank the Education Committee  
6 staff as well as my own staff for all of the work  
7 they put in today.

8 I'd like to remind everyone who wishes to testify  
9 in person today, that you must fill out a witness  
10 slip, which is located on the desk of the Sergeant at  
11 Arms near the entrance of this room even if you  
12 already registered in advance. Please indicate on  
13 the witness slip whether you're here to testify in  
14 favor or in opposition to bill or multiple bills. I  
15 also want to point out that we will not be voting on  
16 any of this legislation today to allow as many people  
17 as possible to testify. Testimony will be limited to  
18 three minutes per person whether you're testifying on  
19 Zoom or in person.

20 I'm also going to ask my colleagues to limit  
21 their question and comments to five minutes. Please  
22 note that witnesses who are here in person will  
23 testify before those on Zoom. Now, I'd like to turn  
24 the floor over to; she's not here. Next, I'd like to  
25 turn the floor over to Public Advocate Williams.



1 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you Madam Chair.  
2  
3 Good afternoon. My name is Jumaane Williams and I'm  
4 Public Advocate for the City of New York. I'd like  
5 to thank Chair Joseph and the members of the  
6 Committee on Education for holding this important  
7 hearing.

8 In August of last year, Advocates for Children  
9 found that only 31.1 percent of New York City schools  
10 are fully accessible for people with disabilities.  
11 The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that  
12 governments ensure people with disabilities have  
13 equal access to public programs and services,  
14 including public education. However, many students  
15 with disabilities are barred from attending their  
16 neighborhood schools because of inaccessible  
17 infrastructure. This not only means that these  
18 students are unable to fully access their communities  
19 but that they must travel to an accessible school,  
20 which may mean hours on a bus every day, cutting into  
21 their learning time.

22 Students are also prohibited from participating  
23 in after-school programs, unless there is someone to  
24 provide transportation home after, because the school  
25 buses will not bring them home. This lack of

1  
2 accessibility also means that students' family and  
3 community members with accessibility needs are unable  
4 to attend events and meetings at these schools.

5 Advocates for Children has called for \$1.25 billion  
6 to be allocated for improving school accessibility to  
7 bring another 150 to 200 school buildings to full  
8 accessibility by 2029. However, in the proposed FY25  
9 budget, the School Construction Authority has only  
10 designated \$800,000 for improving accessibility, only  
11 .064 percent of advocates requested funding.

12 Every year that we do not meaningfully prioritize  
13 making school buildings accessible is another year  
14 that students cannot attend the schools of their  
15 choice or spend valuable instructional time traveling  
16 to a school that can accommodate them. Today, one of  
17 the bills we're hearing is my bill, Intro 399, which  
18 would require the Department of Education to report  
19 annually on the degree to which indoor and outdoor  
20 school facilities comply with the Americans with  
21 Disabilities Act.

22 Additionally, this bill would make public the  
23 contact information for school's ADA coordinator, the  
24 protocol for requesting an accommodation, and  
25 information regarding the extent to which zoned

1 schools have the capacity to accommodate students and  
2 employees with disabilities. It has been more than  
3 thirty years since the ADA was signed into law, yet  
4 New Yorkers with disabilities are still barred from  
5 entering and attending many of our schools.  
6

7 I want to thank the Chair for holding this  
8 hearing and including my bill in it. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Public Advocate  
10 Williams. I'd like to acknowledge the following  
11 Council Members: Council Member Narcisse, Council  
12 Member Dinowitz, Lee, Stevens, Public Advocate  
13 Williams and Hanif.

14 Next, I'd like to turn it over to Council Member  
15 Sanchez for her remarks on Intro. 432. She's not  
16 here? Okay, next we'll turn to Council Member  
17 Dinowitz for your remarks.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you Madam Chair.  
19 Thank you for hearing this bill Intro. 577, a Local  
20 Law related to requiring the Department of Education  
21 to conduct a study on the feasibility of installing  
22 green roofs in schools. I think many of us know  
23 green roofs have a host of environmental benefits  
24 absorbing massive amounts of rain water and reducing  
25 the urban heat island effects. These green roofs are

1  
2 critically important to expanding green space,  
3 particularly in the Bronx. We have some of the  
4 highest heat indices and some of poorest air quality  
5 and combined sewage overflow that is causing flooding  
6 all over, all over the Bronx, all over the city in  
7 fact. And there are also potential educational  
8 benefits to installing green roofs. I myself have  
9 seen in the classroom the benefits of having green  
10 spaces in our school. I had the benefit of teaching  
11 at a school that had a school garden and there's  
12 nothing better than bringing kids to the garden to  
13 teach them about the environment. And this is  
14 another way we could provide green space and  
15 opportunities to our children to learn about their  
16 environment, about where they live and I think  
17 leveraging the space that we have in our public  
18 schools, both for our surrounding community and for  
19 the students who go to school in the building, is  
20 really critical and important.

21 So, this bill would require a study about the  
22 feasibility of installing green roofs in at least two  
23 schools in each community school district. Both  
24 benefiting the students in the schools and the entire  
25 surrounding community. Thank you Chair.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'd like now to turn over to  
3 Council Member Stevens, her remarks on Intro. 733,  
4 797 and Reso. 292.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Good afternoon Chair and  
6 Council Members and the Administration. Thank you  
7 Chair Joseph for the opportunity to have my bills  
8 heard today, which are meant to improve the quality  
9 of education for our students and families in the  
10 city.

11 The first bill is Intro. 733, a Local Law that  
12 would amend the Administrative Code in New York City  
13 in relation to requiring the New York City Department  
14 of Education to report information on career  
15 technical education programs in New York City Public  
16 Schools. At a time when we should be reimagining the  
17 workforce for young people, we need to look and make  
18 sure we're reviewing all opportunities and things  
19 like CTE. They're the place where we need to start  
20 to ensure that young people are granted the  
21 opportunities to have a good career path. This bill  
22 is important because it allows for a better oversight  
23 in administrative and effectiveness of program career  
24 preparation for our students.

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2       The next bill is Intro. 797, a Local Law that  
3 would require the Department of Education to report  
4 on an annual basis the number of students in clubs  
5 and organizations at each school. The report would  
6 also require the Department to report on types of  
7 faculty for each club or organization for example  
8 where the advisors or teacher or paraprofessional.

9       Finally, the Department will be required to  
10 report of any student clubs or organizations  
11 authorized to conduct activities off school grounds.  
12 Students and organizations are known to have a  
13 positive impact on our students if legislation would  
14 allow the city to gain more insight and therefore the  
15 opportunity to reflect on the educational outcomes  
16 this form of extracurricular activities provide.  
17 This will lead to policy development and generate  
18 well informed budget allocations. This Local Law  
19 would also enhance community engagement with students  
20 as more data can encourage such involvement.

21       The final bill will be introduced is Reso. 292, a  
22 Resolution calling on New York Department of  
23 Education to create an inclusive dress code policy  
24 that compiles Title IX of the Federal Education  
25 Amendment Act and accounts for diverse culture,

1  
2 gender expression and body diversity. This  
3 Resolution will promote equity and inclusion that  
4 allow students to dress in a way that is respectful  
5 to their ethnic background and cultures and gender  
6 identity. An inclusive dress code would ensure the  
7 Department of Education meets this requirement by  
8 steering away from discriminating girls as well as  
9 transgender and gender nonconforming youth of color  
10 who are disproportionately disciplined for dress code  
11 violations. I would like to - I look forward to  
12 hearing feedback from the Administration and working  
13 collaboratively to get all three bills passed. Thank  
14 you.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Council Member  
16 Stevens. We will now turn over to Council Member Lee  
17 for her remarks on Intro. 771.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Thank you Madam Chair. Good  
19 afternoon everyone. New York City is home to an  
20 incredible 700 languages. Three million of our  
21 residents are foreign borne hailing from over 200  
22 countries and almost half of our city speaks a  
23 language other than English. Simply put, the success  
24 of our education system depends on being able to  
25 communicate with parents and students in the

1  
2 languages that they're most familiar with and our  
3 city does have the resources to address each families  
4 linguistic needs. The Department of Education  
5 provides written translations of documents in nine  
6 languages but interpretation over the phone is also  
7 available for another 240 languages.

8 With Intro. 771, the City Council will ensure  
9 that the DOE more proactively distributes information  
10 regarding the city's phone interpretation services to  
11 schools and their parents and student bodies. I  
12 appreciate your support as we pursue more language  
13 access across our city's schools. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Council Member  
15 Lee. We will now turn it over to Council Member  
16 Hanif for her remarks on Reso. 95.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you to Chair Joseph  
18 for holding today's important hearing and including  
19 my Resolution 95 on the agenda. This Resolution  
20 calls on the Department of Education to consult with  
21 faith based organizations to develop and provide all  
22 grade levels the curriculum that focuses on religious  
23 diversity.

24 I'm proud that with 27 members sponsoring this  
25 resolution, we now have a majority of the Council in



1 support. In my new capacity as Co-Chair of the  
2 Council's Taskforce to Combat Hate, I've heard from  
3 students of different backgrounds about the lack of  
4 understanding that many students have about the  
5 religious experiences of their peers. This creates  
6 an environment where students are more vulnerable to  
7 bullying or bias based incidents, which can range  
8 from settled microaggressions to violent hate crimes.  
9 It has been eye opening to learn about the ways in  
10 which students have been made to feel either  
11 ostracized or unsafe due to the religion that they  
12 practice. Our schools must be nurturing places where  
13 our young New Yorkers are able to express their full  
14 selves without fear. In order to meet this  
15 imperative, we must bring a universal religious  
16 diversity curriculum to our classrooms.

17  
18 By teaching students about the gorgeous mosaic of  
19 religions that makes New York City such a culturally  
20 rich and vibrant place, we can foster a mutual  
21 understanding, respect and exchange amongst our next  
22 generation.

23 I am grateful for the Interfaith Coalition of  
24 supporters of this Resolutions, including Muslim  
25 Community Network, the Tanenbaum Center, the

1 Interfaith Center of New York and the Sikh Coalition.  
2 The diversity of this coalition and the effort they  
3 have consistently dedicated to this fight over the  
4 last few years underscores how critical this  
5 Resolution is. I encourage all of my colleagues to  
6 sponsor Reso. 95 and urge for it to be swiftly  
7 brought to the board for a vote. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Council Member  
10 Hanif. Finally, I'd like to say a few words about my  
11 legislation Intro. 266 would establish a bullying  
12 prevention taskforce despite efforts to combat  
13 bullying include the Respect for All Initiative 2007  
14 death report, reported an increase in discrimination,  
15 harassment, and bullying incidents at New York City  
16 Public Schools with more than 18,000 such incidents  
17 during the 21 and 22 school year because bullying can  
18 have serious and lasting effects on victims, bullies  
19 and bystanders alike. It is critically important  
20 that we take additional steps to maintain a safe and  
21 supportive learning environment for all students.

22 Intro. 266 would establish a bullying prevention  
23 taskforce composed of public officials, DOE employees  
24 experts in conflict resolution, bullying prevention,  
25 mental health school safety, and educators, which

1  
2 would develop and submit a plan to the mayor and the  
3 Council Speaker including proposals to prevent and  
4 address bullying in schools.

5 I'm also pleased to sponsor Reso. 372 calling on  
6 New York Public Schools to provide support for a  
7 student newspaper in every high school. I was  
8 shocked to learn that a 2022 report by Baruch college  
9 that just over 25 percent of New York City Public  
10 Schools have a student newspaper. Worse, among the  
11 100 public schools with the highest poverty rate,  
12 only 7 percent have a newspaper, while 62 percent of  
13 the high schools with the lowest poverty rates have  
14 newspapers. Additionally, schools with a high  
15 percentage of Black and Hispanic Students are less  
16 likely to have a student newspaper than schools with  
17 low rates of poverty and higher percentage of White  
18 and Asian students.

19 In addition to helping students to develop  
20 writing skills, school newspapers provide students  
21 with a platform to express their ideas and  
22 creativity. While also helping to develop critical  
23 thinking skills and building school community.  
24 Student newspapers can also serve as a pipeline for  
25

1  
2 more racially and socioeconomically representative  
3 professional journalists.

4 I'd like to thank the Youth Journalism Coalition  
5 for bringing this critical issue to my attention. I  
6 am pleased to note that we expect to have some  
7 student journalists here today to testify on this  
8 resolution.

9 I would like to acknowledge Council Member  
10 Gutiérrez that have joined. And now, without  
11 anything further, I'd like to turn over to our first  
12 witness panel. I will now turn to Committee Counsel  
13 Nadia Jean-François to administer the oath.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good afternoon. I will call  
15 on each of you individually for a response. Please  
16 raise your right hand.

17 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth  
18 and nothing but the truth before this Committee and  
19 to respond honestly to Council Member questions?  
20 Kimberly Ramone, Deborah Wollenberg, Kalina McKenzie-  
21 Simms, Trevonda Kelly, Jolan Nagi, Jay Ping, Adam  
22 Scheier, John Shea, Elaine Lindsey, George Patterson,  
23 Kleber Palma, and Robin Davson. Thank you so much,  
24 you may begin your testimony.

1  
2 ROBIN DAVSON: Good afternoon Chair Joseph and  
3 members of the Committee on Education. My name is  
4 Dr. Robin Davson and I am the Executive Director of  
5 School Culture and Climate within the Office of  
6 Safety and Youth Development, known as OSYD for the  
7 New York City Public Schools. Thank you for the  
8 opportunity to testify today. Thank you also for  
9 your continued partnership in supporting our  
10 students, families and schools as we discuss Intro.  
11 118, which calls for a report on schools with dress  
12 code policies, and Intro. 266, which calls for the  
13 creation of a bullying prevention taskforce. The  
14 value of your critical partnership and sustaining  
15 preventive work, especially around restorative  
16 justice practice is immeasurable. On behalf of our  
17 school communities, I thank Chair Joseph and the  
18 members of this Committee for your unwavering  
19 advocacy and support.

20 New York City Public Schools is committed to  
21 ensuring that schools are places where all students  
22 are safe, valued and supported. OSYD has been deeply  
23 invested in this work and we have made significant  
24 investments and progress in this area over the years.  
25 Three years ago, in 2021, New York City Public

1  
2 Schools issued the current dress code guidelines,  
3 which set forth New York City Public Schools policy  
4 for schools dress codes. Dress codes are decided at  
5 the individual school level and must be consistent  
6 with these guidelines.

7 Dress code guidelines require that schools  
8 examine their reasoning and justification for their  
9 respective policies, and that they consider evolving  
10 generational cultural and social identity norms.  
11 Under no circumstances can dress codes prohibit a  
12 student from wearing clothing consistent with their  
13 needs based on their protected identities. In  
14 addition, dress codes must be gender neutral and  
15 cannot prohibit certain types of clothing that are  
16 stereotypically associated with one gender. Dress  
17 codes must be implemented equally and in a  
18 nondiscriminatory manner. Schools have also been  
19 advised that before developing a new dress code or  
20 reexamining an existing one, they should consult with  
21 their school leadership team, which consists of  
22 parents and students to ensure that different  
23 perspectives and identities are considered and  
24 respected.

1  
2 For example, dress codes may not require students  
3 who identify as a specific gender from wearing attire  
4 that is stereotypically associated with a different  
5 gender. For example, requiring only students who  
6 identify as female to wear dresses at graduation.  
7 Specifically prohibits many skirts, which are  
8 predominantly worn by students who identify as female  
9 or prohibit head wear worn for religious observations  
10 or head gear styles or hair accessories that are  
11 closely associated with protected categories.

12 Schools must ensure that all staff, students and  
13 parents are advised in writing of the dress code.  
14 Students rights with respect to the attire and  
15 consequences for students wearing clothing that  
16 violates the dress code.

17 New York City Public Schools has been intentional  
18 in ensuring multiple entry points of access to the  
19 dress code guidelines on New York City Public School  
20 webpages, i.e., it is located under LGBTQ Supports  
21 and Guidelines on Gender, as well as other spaces on  
22 New York City Public School's website.

23 Students who do not adhere to the dress code may  
24 be provided with appropriate support interventions or  
25 disciplinary responses consistent with the citywide

1 behavior expectations to support student learning.  
2 Supports and interventions may include adjustments  
3 such as asking a student to turn a shirt inside out,  
4 counseling supports, meeting with staff or parent  
5 notification. Instances of dress code infractions  
6 are reported by schools and made available in our  
7 system. New York City Public Schools had made many  
8 strides to ensure students can express themselves  
9 through their clothing in ways that are respectful.  
10 Not just to themselves but to others.

12 While we agree with the core intent of this bill,  
13 which we understand to ensure that dress codes do not  
14 perpetuate gender stereotypes and are implemented in  
15 an equitable manner, New York City Public Schools  
16 have adopted and implemented such policies through  
17 its dress code guidelines. We have reservations  
18 about the extensive record keeping and disclosure  
19 requirements in the bill when our dress code  
20 guidelines already require dress codes to respect  
21 student gender identities.

22 I would now like to turn to Intro. 266, the New  
23 York City Public Schools' Respect for All initiative  
24 aims to prevent and address discrimination,  
25 harassment, intimidation and bullying. This



1 initiative builds the capacity of staff and students  
2 to sustain an inclusive environment where everyone  
3 feels valued, respected and safe. As part of Respect  
4 for All, all schools are required to train staff and  
5 students on bullying policies, preventing and  
6 reporting procedures annually by October 31<sup>st</sup>.

8 Schools are also mandated to include strategies  
9 for addressing bullying and harassment and their  
10 consolidated plans and Respect for All programs and  
11 to instruction and student support services. These  
12 plans are then reviewed annually ongoing and  
13 periodically by superintendent teams prior to  
14 certification. Additionally, schools must provide  
15 procedures for reporting bullying, including contact  
16 information at the superintendents office for  
17 additional support. Each school appoints a  
18 respectful liaison who is trained centrally and  
19 serves as a resource for bullying, reporting  
20 procedures, training school staff and to whom reports  
21 can be made. Also, offers year around training and  
22 social, emotional learning supports and restorative  
23 practices for all respectful liaisons, teachers and  
24 staff to ensure that they have tools to support  
25 schools with all bullying incidents.

1  
2 New York City Public Schools have taken several  
3 actions this year to prevent incidents of bullying,  
4 which includes: We have facilitator refresher  
5 courses for all respectful liaisons emphasizing by a  
6 space bullying and discrimination. We have partnered  
7 with external organizations to train school in  
8 incidents of bullying.

9 We have posted citywide retraining's of all  
10 principals and district office teams on applying a  
11 discipline code to address incidents appropriately  
12 while providing opportunities to educate and  
13 remediate behavior in ways to help students grow.  
14 We've worked with the division of FACE, a family  
15 community institute to update trainings for parents  
16 and guardians with clear information on reporting  
17 pathways and how to expedite resolutions.

18 Additionally, we meet monthly with students,  
19 families and advocates, to hear their concerns and  
20 provide them with immediate support. We meet with  
21 student advisory council's to discuss young peoples  
22 concern around bullying as well. We have leveraged  
23 New York City Public Survey to address the results to  
24 address the perceptions of bullying and the concerns  
25 of multiple stakeholders around safety, trust and

1  
2 bullying. We have also partnered with community  
3 based organizations who have helped us revise our  
4 Respect for All training for all schools. We support  
5 the intent of this bill and commit to create a safer  
6 environment for our students and look forward to  
7 conversations and working with Council on this bill.  
8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: George Patterson is next.

10 GEORGE PATTERSON: Good afternoon Chair Joseph  
11 and members of the Committee on Education. My name  
12 is George Patterson and I serve as the Senior  
13 Executive Director for Community Schools, part of the  
14 Office of Community Supports and Wellness within the  
15 division of school leadership. I'm happy to be here  
16 to talk about Intro. Number 432, concerning after  
17 school programming. For my time as a middle school  
18 principal, I deeply believe in the importance of  
19 after school programs and want to emphasize that this  
20 important essential work would not be possible  
21 without the leadership and dedication of our partner  
22 agency, the Department of Youth and Community  
23 Development, DYCD.

24 Together, we recognize the powerful impact that  
25 after school academic and enrichment programming can

1  
2 have on our students, especially our most socially  
3 and academically vulnerable student populations.

4 Before I discuss the proposed legislation, I wanted  
5 to provide a landscape of what after school looks  
6 like today of course, New York City Public Schools.

7 We provided a similar update at this time last year.

8 There are three main types of after school

9 programming options available to our students and

10 families. DYCD funded programs, which is the largest

11 number of programs in our schools, DOE funded

12 programs and individual programs that run between

13 schools and CBO's. Our CBO partners offer a variety

14 of targeted services to our schools and tailored

15 supports based on school and community needs. These

16 services can range from instructional supports to

17 enrichment activities that can have physical,

18 recreational components. A look at our data shows

19 956 schools with at least 1 centrally funded after

20 school program. 580 of the 956 serve middle and high

21 school students. There are 654 schools, 351 serving

22 middle and high school students that do not have a

23 centrally funded after school program.

24 Turning to Intro. 432, which would require New

25 York City Public Schools serving middle and high

1  
2 school students to provide families with information  
3 on after school programs in their schools, New York  
4 City Public Schools supports the intent of this bill.

5 Currently information about after school programs  
6 is communicated in a myriad of ways. The families  
7 such as school websites, the DYCD website, and so on.  
8 We're looking forward to working with the Council on  
9 providing guidance to schools, for sharing this  
10 information more consistently with families. I thank  
11 you again for your time today.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next up, you may begin.

13 JOHN SHEA: Okay, good afternoon Chair Joseph,  
14 members of the Council and the Public Advocate.  
15 Thank you for allowing me to address the Committee  
16 today regarding the proposed bill requiring New York  
17 City agencies to conduct green roof feasibility  
18 studies. My name is John Shea and I am the Chief  
19 Executive Officer for the Division of School  
20 Facilities at the New York City public schools. We  
21 at New York City Public Schools are deeply committed  
22 to advancing environmental sustainable practices  
23 within our educational system and we share in the  
24 enthusiasm for the benefits that green roofs offer to  
25 our buildings, school communities and to the

1 environment. However, I express reservations  
2 regarding the feasibility of this bill and would not  
3 support it in its current form. The lack of clarity  
4 regarding the definition for a green roof presents a  
5 significant challenge. We have observed a wide  
6 spectrum of green roof implementations across our  
7 schools ranging from comprehensive installations,  
8 like the one at PS41 in Manhattan funded by Reso. A  
9 and PTA dollars, to smaller scaled green roof  
10 projects mandated through Local Laws 92 and 94 of  
11 2019.  
12

13 Without clear guidelines, determining which  
14 structures qualify as green roofs would be ambiguous  
15 and problematic for compliance with the bill.  
16 Additionally, the establishment of a means to fund  
17 the operations of these green roofs is paramount.  
18 Without proper maintenance, the sustainability and  
19 effectiveness of these installations will lead to  
20 safety liabilities and the need for unnecessary  
21 capital expenditures.

22 It is essential to recognize that while green  
23 roofs hold promises of sustainable infrastructure  
24 solution, our office currently engaged in other  
25 initiatives that are ready for implementation

1  
2 immediately. For instance, in partnership with DCAS,  
3 our solar Photovoltaic or PV program has made  
4 significant strides in installing rooftop solar PV  
5 systems across our school buildings. Currently, we  
6 have successfully completed 90 installations with a  
7 total electrical capacity of 19.7 megawatts,  
8 constituting 80 percent of all of the solar  
9 electrical capacity on all New York City owned  
10 municipal buildings. This program not only reduces  
11 our carbon footprint but also contributes to our long  
12 term energy independence and resilience.

13 In conclusion, while we applaud the intent behind  
14 the proposed bill and remain enthusiastic about the  
15 potential of green roofs, we suggest the need to work  
16 with the Committee on the language of the bill to  
17 ensure its feasibility. We stand ready to  
18 collaborate and contribute our expertise towards the  
19 development of a more viable and effective  
20 sustainability initiatives for the benefit of our  
21 schools and the broader New York City community.

22 Now, I'd like to turn to Intro. 399, which would  
23 require New York City Public Schools to report  
24 annually on the degree to which indoor and outdoor  
25 facilities comply with the Americans for Disabilities

1 Act or ADA. New York City Public Schools is  
2 committed to ensuring that its programs, services and  
3 activities are accessible to staff, members of the  
4 school community, and family members with  
5 disabilities. As part of Local Law 12 of 2023, we  
6 have posted our five year accessibility plan on our  
7 website. The Accessibility plan details the role of  
8 our accessibility subcommittee in partnership with  
9 the School Construction Authority to discuss  
10 strategic planning on all issues regarding  
11 accessibility within school buildings. The plan also  
12 includes details for improving digital content to  
13 ensure accessibility standards are met.  
14 Accessibility is not seen as a legislated mandate for  
15 compliance for our agency but as a basic human right.  
16

17 The five year capital plan for Fiscal Year 2025  
18 to 2029 increased the funding levels for  
19 accessibility allocating \$800 million for its making  
20 our building accessible for our school communities.  
21 An increase of \$50 million from the previous 2024  
22 capital plan. That plan with our continued focus on  
23 citywide equity funded 56 accessibility projects in  
24 historically underserved districts. We are grateful  
25 for the support and the advocacy of our partners to



1  
2 accomplish this important work for our students and  
3 families.

4 As we only recently received the bill, we are  
5 still reviewing it and we look forward to engaging  
6 with the Council. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Deputy Executive Director  
8 for Career and Technical Education.

9 ADAM SCHEIER: Good afternoon Chair Joseph,  
10 members of the Committee on Education and Public  
11 Advocate Williams. My name is Adam Scheier and I am  
12 the Deputy Executive Director of Career and Technical  
13 Education of the Office of Student Pathways. Career  
14 Connected Learning is a top priority for the  
15 Chancellor and sits at the center of his bold vision  
16 to reimagine the student experience so that every New  
17 York City Public School student graduates on a path  
18 to a rewarding career aligned with their passion and  
19 purpose and offering long term economic security and  
20 a choice filled life. Strengthening and equitably  
21 growing market-aligned high quality Career and  
22 Technical Education, CTE is a core element of this  
23 strategy.

24 The New York City Public Schools career connected  
25 learning portfolio, led by the Office of Student

1  
2 Pathways OSP, supports and oversees a portfolio of  
3 over 296 CTE programs operating in over 130 schools.  
4 This includes 46 CTE dedicated schools and 85  
5 comprehensive schools with CTE programs, including  
6 the Brooklyn Navy Yard Steam Center. CTE presently  
7 serves over 60,000 students across the five boroughs.  
8 We would like to recognize the leadership of this  
9 Council and thank you for your continuous  
10 collaboration and dedicated support.

11 The proposed legislation, Into. Number 733 will  
12 revive and amend the Sunset Local Law 174 requiring  
13 the New York City Public Schools to report on the  
14 career and technical education programs in New York  
15 City Public Schools. This legislation will provide  
16 greater transparency through new data reporting  
17 requirements that will serve to inform New York City  
18 Public Schools, school communities, elected officials  
19 and stakeholders. We are in support of this  
20 legislation and look forward to working with City  
21 Council to ensure that the reporting requirements  
22 named in this bill align to high quality CTE program  
23 implementation and to the extent possible what we  
24 track in our data systems.

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Does that conclude  
3 Administration testimony? Go ahead.

4 KLEBER PALMA: Alright, good afternoon Council  
5 Members. My name is Kelber Palma, I am the Executive  
6 Director for the New York City Public Schools Office  
7 of Language Access, otherwise known as OLA. Thank  
8 you for the opportunity to discuss Intro. 771  
9 regarding the distribution of information on New York  
10 City Public Schools over the phone interpretation  
11 services.

12 New York City Public Schools is committed to  
13 ensuring that school staff and families are aware of  
14 and have access to all available language assistant  
15 services. To that end, we take various steps every  
16 year to support our school staff and families. To  
17 begin, school staff receive information about the  
18 available language assistance services via the  
19 Language Access Kit, which schools receive every  
20 September. This kit includes several language access  
21 resources including the telephone to access over the  
22 phone interpretation and multilingual signage to post  
23 at public entrances.

24 School staff are also notified about how and when  
25 to access the phone services via electronic

1  
2 communications throughout the year, such as via the  
3 P-digest OLA's monthly newsletter for schools,  
4 periodic email blast, and periodic email blast to  
5 school based Language Access Coordinators. School  
6 staff also receive information during language access  
7 training sessions, which cover best practices for  
8 using over the phone interpretation service.

9       Additionally, staff can refer to OLA's online  
10 paid internet page for details on access the service.  
11 Lastly, the over the phone interpretation services  
12 also available to agents behind our parent support  
13 line, 718-935-2009 to access when a language need is  
14 identified.

15       Families also receive information in the New York  
16 City Public Schools nine covered languages on the  
17 available language assistance services on the New  
18 York City Public Schools website during public  
19 awareness campaigns at parent events throughout the  
20 city via an E-campaign which includes emails, texts,  
21 and robocalls to families and on an annual mailed  
22 post card to households and at schools that make use  
23 of the signage available within the language access  
24 kit or other OLA provided resources, such as language  
25

1  
2 access displays or brochures that are meant for  
3 families.

4 In closing, we support the goals of this  
5 legislation and look forward to working with the  
6 Council to ensure access to this valuable service  
7 that is accessible to all. Thank you and we welcome  
8 your questions.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and Elaine Lindsey.

10 ELAINE LINDSEY: Good afternoon Chair Joseph and  
11 members of the Committee on Education. My name is  
12 Elaine Lindsey and I am the Chief of School Support  
13 for High Schools for New York City Public Schools. I  
14 am here to express my support for Intro. Number 797,  
15 which aims to enhance transparency and accountability  
16 regarding student clubs and organizations in our  
17 public schools.

18 Student clubs and organizations play a vital role  
19 in the holistic development of our students, offering  
20 them opportunities to explore interest, develop  
21 leadership skills and build community. Currently,  
22 principals collect information and verify this  
23 information through a survey, which is then publicly  
24 displayed on myschools.nyc, our school search tool.  
25 By formalizing this process and requiring annual

1  
2 reports, Intro. Number 797 ensures that we can  
3 monitor and support these essential extracurricular  
4 activities effectively. This transparency will help  
5 identify schools that make these opportunities and  
6 direct resources to ensure that all students have  
7 access to a diverse range of activities.

8 Moreover, including details such as the type of  
9 faculty advisor and authorization for off campus  
10 activities provides valuable insights into these  
11 clubs operational aspects. This information can help  
12 in assessing the adequacy of support provided to  
13 these student groups and ensure compliance of  
14 relevant regulations while safeguarding student  
15 privacy and safety.

16 I fully support Intro. Number 797. Thank you for  
17 your consideration. Thank you for the opportunity to  
18 testify today. We are happy to address any questions  
19 or concerns you may have.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I would like to recognize  
21 Council Member Shekar and Council Member Louis.  
22 Thank you for your testimony. Can you provide an  
23 overview of the current measures and policies DOE has  
24 in place to prevent and address bullying including  
25 cyber bullying within schools?

1  
2 ROBIN DAVSON: Sure, under our respectful  
3 policies, we one, we - all schools must train their  
4 staff by October 31<sup>st</sup> and principals and or the  
5 liaisons must train their schools by October 31<sup>st</sup>.  
6 Annually, we have Respect for All the liaisons. They  
7 also serve as a resource for school and staff. They  
8 too also must be trained. They as designees in their  
9 schools for whom reports, they are the liaisons for  
10 schools and for schools and for students. They are  
11 the designees that students can report any bullying  
12 to and for parents, teachers, staff as well.  
13 Additionally, schools must also distribute and make  
14 electronically any written materials and information  
15 on reporting for families.

16 We also provide citywide training for staff and  
17 uhm, I'm sorry, we distribute and make electronically  
18 any written material for families at the beginning of  
19 the school year on bullying reporting, so families  
20 can have access and know all of the multiple ways in  
21 which bullying can be reported. We also provide  
22 citywide training year around on restorative  
23 practices and social, emotional learning for Respect  
24 for All liaisons and also for all citywide staff.

1  
2       Additionally, we have expanded bullying codes,  
3 infraction codes from 22 to 44 codes. So, those are  
4 all of the measures that has been put in place.

5       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The liaison and the Respect  
6 for All liaison, are they embedded in the school or  
7 is it out in the office that you represent?

8       ROBIN DAVSON: They are all in schools.

9       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: They are all in school. How  
10 often are they trained, once a year or?

11       ROBIN DAVSON: Correct and this year, we've also  
12 implemented refresher courses for liaisons.

13       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Superintendents are also  
14 trained?

15       ROBIN DAVSON: This year, we've trained  
16 Superintendent teams and we've also extended the  
17 training for family facing members of superintendent  
18 teams, which are the FSC's and FCL's.

19       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And the restorative practice  
20 training that you provide, is that for all staffers  
21 as well?

22       ROBIN DAVSON: Correct.

23       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Uhm, when you train your  
24 staff, how do they - when you train them, how do they  
25 know to identify bullying? How do they find it?



1  
2 ROBIN DAVSON: So, we have a deck that we provide  
3 principals and principal designees and the deck that  
4 we give them teaches them how to identify bullying.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how about cyber  
6 bullying? How is it handled?

7 ROBIN DAVSON: That is included in the deck, in  
8 the training.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And parents are also trained  
10 to look out for what bullying could look like?  
11 Because kids are good at covering it up.

12 ROBIN DAVSON: Yeah, so this year, we've also  
13 trained a family leadership and we partner with FACE  
14 as well. And so, they've been trained as well.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And language access is also  
16 provided for our parents who do not speak English?

17 ROBIN DAVSON: So, this year, we have uhm - this  
18 is our resources for our Respect for All resources.  
19 We have translated this in all languages and we  
20 actually have them here. You have them Jolan? And  
21 Ninia(SP?) has them. This is our Respect for All  
22 resources. We were very intentional in translating  
23 them in all languages and we have copies for you. We  
24 also have our Respect for All cards, which also  
25 indicates for families. They can carry them in their

1  
2 back pockets. Not just for families but for students  
3 as well on how to report bullying, intimidation and  
4 harassment.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is there a video component to  
6 this training for parents as well?

7 ROBIN DAVSON: Actually this year, we created a  
8 tool kit for families. And the tool kit can be  
9 accessed on our New York City Public Schools website.  
10 It's a video. It's uhm, these resources and it's  
11 these cards. And we also have step by step, uhm step  
12 by step access on how you can report bullying.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And you said there's a video  
14 this time around, good. Uhm, how do you currently  
15 handle reports of bullying incidents? We talked  
16 about that. What procedures are place to ensure  
17 timely and appropriate response and how are these  
18 incidents tracked? How do you track them and you  
19 document them?

20 ROBIN DAVSON: So, all uhm incidents of bullying  
21 are reported in our OR system and that is the only -  
22 that's the state recognized system. The only state  
23 recognized system and- OR sends out uh I'm sorry, OR  
24 sends out - I'm sorry, they send out reminder  
25 notices. So, at the five day mark, that is the time

1  
2 in which the report has to be completed and by the  
3 ten day mark, parents have to be notified that the  
4 investigation is completed. So, OR's has a system in  
5 which it reminds schools that by the five day mark  
6 and the ten day mark, those - the investigation has  
7 to be completed and once it is completed, all who  
8 have been involved, whether all students involved  
9 have to receive intervention supports and services.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And if the child doesn't  
11 feel safe, what are the procedures to seek safety?  
12 Let's say I want to leave the school as a child and  
13 no longer wants to be there? Because bullying is,  
14 it's a tough thing and to see my - I know we try to  
15 do restorative justice to you know to make sure they  
16 understand that but what if I -I'm not that kind that  
17 can accept it. What are the steps in place if I want  
18 to leave the school?

19 ROBIN DAVSON: So, the goal is to keep students  
20 in their schools right uhm, and in those unfortunate  
21 cases if a student does want to leave the school, we  
22 try to find the best option for the student. But we,  
23 the goal is to keep the student in the school and we  
24 try to exercise all options to make sure that the  
25 student does feel safe. So, we make sure that

1  
2 there's trust in adults in the school. In the  
3 school, the student also has the respectful liaison  
4 to - that there's the designated person in the school  
5 who is equipment is resourced to make sure that the  
6 student has that person to lean on but we - thank  
7 you. Uhm, but we want to make sure the kid - that  
8 the student is safe in his or her own school  
9 community, but we do have other avenues if the  
10 student doesn't feel safe and they can exercise a  
11 safety transfer.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Uhm, what other  
13 trends are you seeing the frequency of reporting a  
14 bullying incidents in recent years? How are the  
15 numbers looking?

16 ROBIN DAVSON: So, we've observed that 35 percent  
17 of bullying reported are occurring in middle schools.  
18 23 percent in high schools and 17 in elementary  
19 schools and we are also seeing the most prevalent  
20 biased based race the second is sexual orientation  
21 and the third is weight. So, those are the most  
22 prevalent trends.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how do you deal with the  
24 race?

25

1  
2           ROBIN DAVSON: Yeah, so based on the trends, what  
3 we usually do is myself and our team, we sit down and  
4 based on - we look at these trends and we create  
5 training. We sit down at the Committee. We take the  
6 feedback from our student groups and our advocacy  
7 groups and we revise our training as such and we sit  
8 down with our CBO's and we come up with the best  
9 resources and we revise our training so that we  
10 address these issues and concerns that come up based  
11 on the trends.

12           CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Based on your data analysts,  
13 right? You analyze your data. You use that to make  
14 informed decisions right? What type of resources do  
15 you place where you see the most is happening?

16           ROBIN DAVSON: So, we as of lately been uhm,  
17 partnering up with different community based  
18 organizations. We've been exercising what we've been  
19 leveraging our restorative practice partnerships.  
20 We've been you know looking at our SCL team and our  
21 partnerships with our restorative team and we've been  
22 shifting our trainings a bit. We've been looking at  
23 our current trainings and we've been just leveraging  
24 the data to shift the trainings that we've had so  
25 more recently you know this summer, based on the

1 trends that we've seen, we had to revise the  
2 offerings for this summer to ensure that we're  
3 addressing the needs based on the data. So, we've  
4 seen - we're seeing issues more so around you know  
5 that is uhm hitting our middle schools and high  
6 schools and so, those are the teams that we're now  
7 we're approaching right? We are spending more time  
8 with our middle schools and high schools. We - we  
9 last year - you know I met with my RFA team and it  
10 was a lot of you know we had some trainings on peer  
11 mediation and so, we had to shift it and look more  
12 around our professional development that talks more  
13 around bias based incidents that talks more around  
14 racial you know, racial issues to address the need  
15 right now. And so, we want to make sure that we  
16 leverage our data to make the most informed  
17 decisions.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Our restorative justice  
20 budget took a hit. How do we continue practice  
21 restorative justice if the need is increasing but our  
22 budget is decreasing?

23 ROBIN DAVSON: Chair Joseph, we're committed to  
24 make it work. We're going to make it work. We are  
25 going to make it work. We took a hit but we planned

1  
2 ahead. We planned ahead. We're going to use human  
3 capital. Our team has been planning ahead in case of  
4 the hit. We sat down last year. We did a lot of  
5 work last year around our school based restorative  
6 practice team. We have some school based - we have  
7 school based restorative coordinators that we trained  
8 last year. We have our teams that we put into place  
9 on the school base level and they are ready and we've  
10 put a lot of work and resource in our school  
11 communities and we're going to do the same this year  
12 with the funding that we receive. We're very  
13 grateful for the funding and so we're going to move  
14 forward powerfully with the funds that we have.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, I'm going to leave it  
16 right there. I'm going to leave it right there.

17 ROBIN DAVSON: We can always use more funding but  
18 we are going to make it work.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, how do you currently  
20 coordinate with other city agencies such as  
21 Commission on Human Rights, Department of Health,  
22 Mental Hygiene, and NYPD to address and prevent  
23 bullying?

24 ROBIN DAVSON: Sure, I'll let my partner take the  
25 question.

1  
2 JOLAN NAGI: Good afternoon honorable Rita  
3 Joseph, City Council Members. Thank you for having  
4 us today. So, we do collaborate with the New York  
5 City Commission on Human Rights. We offer their  
6 training to schools. We also train superintendent  
7 teams on combating different types of discrimination,  
8 bias, harassment, and learning more about New York  
9 City Human Right laws and the intention of that  
10 training is that superintendents could now take that  
11 training and offer to their schools in their  
12 districts based on the data that we see specific to  
13 type of biases. We also work with the New York City  
14 Police Department, the NYPD, cadets that are school  
15 safety agents that are graduating going into schools.  
16 We have numerous days of trainings under our Chief  
17 Mark Rampersant who oversees that work specifically.

18 In that aspect, where future cadets are being  
19 taught about bullying, bullying prevention, being  
20 taught about autism, BRT's and so forth. And the  
21 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, we have  
22 colleagues that work very closely with them, meet  
23 monthly and they discuss suicide prevention, mental  
24 health, depression and how to support our students.



1  
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, how much of the 988  
3 are now in schools for mental health support? That  
4 was a bill the Council passed to make sure that 988  
5 is available to New York City public students.

6 JOLAN NAGI: My colleague who oversees that work  
7 could get back to you on that but I know that the  
8 website was updated to reflect that but my colleagues  
9 and I and Director of Crisis and we'll get that  
10 answer for you.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What are some of the  
12 challenges you face when you do a lot of work with  
13 interagency collaborations?

14 JOLAN NAGI: Yeah, it's always turnover and sadly  
15 you know when you work with like New York City  
16 Commission on Human Rights, sometimes they lose  
17 people and there's always human capital, always  
18 capacity but we're very grateful for them.

19 Phenomenal work. They have a sister agency and so we  
20 rely on each other. They came out to us. Chief,  
21 sorry City Council Member Hanif, Sikh Coalition, we  
22 work with them, issues in District 30. So, we're  
23 very, we're very interconnected. You know there's no  
24 ambiguity when it comes to the same messaging. Human  
25 rights applies across the City of New York.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I'm going to ask  
3 two more questions and then I'm going to pass it over  
4 to Council Member Stevens. Uhm, so how do you engage  
5 students, parent, educators, CBO's in developing and  
6 implementing bullying prevention strategies? How can  
7 I take that same technique and bring it home or bring  
8 it to the larger community?

9 ROBIN DAVSON: We meet monthly with student  
10 groups, so we have several student groups under  
11 restorative practices that we meet with monthly. We  
12 also have a Student Advisory Council SAC that meet  
13 monthly with one of our team members and we receive  
14 feedback from both student groups. I myself meet  
15 monthly with an education Council, an education group  
16 of advocates that give me tons of feedback around my  
17 portfolio around bullying prevention, suspensions and  
18 hearings etc., and I receive their feedback  
19 additionally and I leverage New York City Public  
20 School Survey. So, the survey, there's two types of  
21 survey. There's one survey that we use and there's  
22 another student perception survey that specifically  
23 talks about trust and it talks about perceptions on  
24 bullying and safety. So, we leveraged all of that  
25 information and we use that information to build our

1  
2 trainings to set goals. We use that training in our  
3 cross functional teams of how we're going to have  
4 division wide strategies. So, all of that  
5 information is used.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Could you give  
7 me quick data on the number of incidents for the  
8 school year of 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024 to date?

9 ROBIN DAVSON: Yes. So, as reported in Local Law  
10 in 2022-2023, complaints increased by 17 percent and  
11 material incidents increased by 22 percent compared  
12 to 2021-2022.

13 So, in 2021-2022, 58 percent of complaints were  
14 deemed to be material incidents and 2022-2023, 60  
15 percent of complaints were deemed to be material  
16 incidents. This was an increase from the prior year.  
17 So, for the first half of the school year, 2023-2024,  
18 we see a 10.5 percent increase in complaints and an  
19 increase of 12.8 percent material incidents.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you have the numbers  
21 instead of percentage, can I get a number?

22 ROBIN DAVSON: I do not have that but I can get  
23 it to you.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely. And how are you  
25 using these numbers to reduce? See right if we're

1 capturing data, there's a reason why we capture data.

2 We don't just capture numbers to capture numbers.

3 So, what are you doing with that data to reduce  
4 incidents of bullying in schools?  
5

6 ROBIN DAVSON: Well we, I mean the data drives  
7 everything that we do.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely.

9 ROBIN DAVSON: We are, we are certainly  
10 continuing what we're doing and we're putting it on -  
11 we're doing it on steroids. We're using this  
12 information in our cabinet meeting to set our goals.  
13 We are leveraging this information as we meet with  
14 principals and superintendent teams. We're setting  
15 uhm, we're using this as we train. All new  
16 information. When we train our respectful liaisons,  
17 as we update our trainings for schools, we put this  
18 information, all new information in our training. As  
19 I shared earlier, all the information bias based  
20 incidents, all of the new information that we've  
21 leveraged this year around middle schools and high  
22 schools, all of the information around - that we've  
23 learned around race and that we've learned around  
24 wait. All of this information is used and included  
25 in our trainings and as new information becomes

1  
2 available, all of this information is used in our  
3 trainings in a shift. We uhm, we have in our cabinet  
4 meetings, when we set our goals and we work as cross  
5 functional teams internally, we leverage this  
6 information as we meet cross functionally with our  
7 guidance counselors, social workers outside of my  
8 particular portfolio. When we meet with our  
9 superintendent teams in our school communities, so  
10 that this is one central message and we're chipping  
11 away at bullying and harassment, intimidation and  
12 we're meeting our goals centrally. Because we  
13 certainly have you know the needs of our children at  
14 the forefront and you know we are in a really  
15 precarious place right now in the world and there's a  
16 lot happening and we're doing everything we can to  
17 make sure that our children are safe and all, each  
18 and every effort and all of our effort is in this  
19 space where we're taking every effort into  
20 consideration to make sure we're doing all we can to  
21 keep our kids safe.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'm always going to ask  
23 this, how much - you said you meet with students but  
24 are students really centered as you're building this  
25 model, it's about students and Chair Stevens and I,

1  
2 we always say that. We make decisions for young  
3 people but not with young people so I want to know  
4 how much of the young people are at the table as  
5 you're making these decisions.

6 ROBIN DAVSON: Oh, Chair Joseph, I'm glad you  
7 said that. Children for me are always centered.  
8 Actually my dissertation was on student voice. So, I  
9 strongly believe that you have to make decisions with  
10 children centered and when we - I strongly believe  
11 you have to make decisions with children at the  
12 center and so, when we had our youth conference,  
13 students were in the center making decisions  
14 alongside us. I know you all had a hearing on that  
15 days schedule because you all were invited to attend  
16 youth conference and be there with us but you all had  
17 a hearing scheduled on that day and you would have  
18 seen that our children were centered in making  
19 decisions alongside us about just this. Like how do  
20 we combat bullying? Like, how do we make decisions -

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: But ongoing, not just one  
22 event. The conversation has to be ongoing.

23 ROBIN DAVSON: Correct, no absolutely,  
24 absolutely, monthly and as I said earlier, we have  
25 like we have student groups with restorative

1  
2 practices. We have student groups such as our  
3 Chancellor Advisory who we meet with monthly and we  
4 gauge these topics with them, right? You know we  
5 have multiple; we meet with students monthly around  
6 these topics and get their idea around like what's  
7 happening in your school communities? How do we  
8 change this? What are we not seeing right? What are  
9 the gaps as adults don't see that's missing? So,  
10 absolutely, we take their perspectives into  
11 consideration as we're making these decisions.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Well, thank you for that.  
13 When you collect your data, uhm do you have a  
14 breakdown on demographic on the students that are  
15 reporting the incidents? If so, what are the trends  
16 you're seeing in terms of demographic in the students  
17 that are experience bullying?

18 ROBIN DAVSON: Yes. So, by demographic, in 2022-  
19 2023, number of a queue students, 45 were female and  
20 94 were male, which was a total of 139 students. And  
21 just this year, it evened out 75 were female and 80  
22 were male, a total of 155, which was 11.5 percent  
23 change.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Alright, I'm going to pass  
25 it on to Council Member Stevens.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Thank you Chair Joseph.  
3 I really appreciate it. I just have a couple  
4 questions and I'm going to start with Intro. 733 and  
5 one of the reasons this bill came about is uhm, you  
6 know especially with CT schools, I think it's an  
7 important pathway for young people to start them in  
8 their career journeys but I often saw when I was in  
9 the education system how a lot of these schools; once  
10 the certified teacher left, there was no program and  
11 young people were signing up to go to these schools  
12 and not being able to get certified. So, I guess my  
13 first question is ho many full time and part-time  
14 certified CTE instructors does DOE currently employ?  
15 And how does DOE ensure that CTE instructors are  
16 certified and receive relevant professional  
17 development and what are the current challenges in  
18 maintaining a sufficient number of certified  
19 instructors and how would the proposed legislation  
20 support the improvement of instructor certification  
21 trainings?

22 ADAM SCHEIER: Thank you for that question. So,  
23 currently, the sum of active full time CTE  
24 instructors throughout the city citywide is 893.  
25 That breaks down into 576 within the OSP portfolio



1  
2 and of course schools are free to hire CTE licensed  
3 teachers for their programs that aren't in our  
4 portfolio, 317.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: But I've heard in the  
6 past that it's really hard for schools to even find  
7 CTE students - I mean CTE teachers and even the  
8 certification, getting it from the state has been  
9 like really hard. So, can you talk about some of  
10 those challenges as well?

11 ADAM SCHEIER: Yes, yes. So, we're committed to  
12 ensuring that all of our CTE programs are staffed  
13 with certified CTE teachers in accordance with state  
14 law through Future Ready NYC and our partnership with  
15 CUNY and SUNY, we're working on scaling and  
16 diversifying our teacher pipeline programs from high  
17 school. All schools offering CTE programs are  
18 provided with professional development from the  
19 Office of Student Pathways throughout the school  
20 year.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And I hear you around  
22 the teacher and all that stuff, trying to get more  
23 teachers but like even with CTE, that becomes a  
24 little bit difficult because you need to have a  
25 special skill. So, what are you guys doing for that

1  
2 right? So, like let's say like I know uhm what is  
3 it, Bronx Construction right? Like they need  
4 certified teachers who can teach them specific  
5 skills. So, how are you guys working to ensure that  
6 you have instructors for those types of things  
7 because that seems more general in a sense of like,  
8 yes, we know we need to cultivate more teachers and  
9 things like that but how are we getting teachers with  
10 those special skill sets in these roles?

11 ADAM SCHEIER: So, we have a couple of specific  
12 programs that are aimed toward addressing that very  
13 specific issue. The success via apprenticeship  
14 program, the SVA program takes students through a  
15 rigorous application process who are CTE students and  
16 want to become CTE teachers and they enter into a  
17 program that is an apprenticeship model where five  
18 years of in the field working and college education,  
19 they are licensed as CTE teachers. Apart from that,  
20 we are also working with TRQ to run a targeted  
21 marketing and advertising campaign to ensure that  
22 career changers out there are aware that this is an  
23 opportunity that they could become CTE teachers.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, I like that a lot.  
25 Could you talk to me a little bit about what the

1 relationships are with like unions and things like  
2 that because I think especially how do we, when  
3 you're looking at these different timelines and  
4 things like that, I think that would be a great way  
5 to make sure we're recruiting and working in  
6 partnership with them as well.

8 ADAM SCHEIER: Well, the SVA program is  
9 effectively in partnership with the UFT. There are -

10 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Oh, not just the UFT,  
11 I'm talking about unions in general right, especially  
12 with like special trades and like I know like the  
13 aviation like all those groups specifically have  
14 unions. How are you working with those groups to  
15 help with the pipeline for certification for teachers  
16 and also to get students in those programs when they  
17 are graduating from the CT programs?

18 ADAM SCHEIER: So, I don't have information about  
19 specific unions and our partnerships with them  
20 individually. I will share that our industry  
21 commissions do include post-secondary and industry  
22 partners that meet with schools. Not individually  
23 but they meet and schools are invited to join those  
24 meetings and they inform our teachers about labor  
25 market alignment, what needs to happen within schools

1  
2 to make sure that their instruction is aligned with  
3 the market place and that should and could be feeding  
4 into students who want to become teachers and  
5 therefore feeding into the SBA pipeline.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And I know I have  
7 limited time but if you can get back to us with like  
8 the partnerships around some of the bigger unions  
9 that the CTE schools are partnering with and ensuring  
10 that young people you know if they are certified, if  
11 they are getting into units and I would love to hear  
12 more and if you could follow up with Committee staff  
13 after but I just, because of limited time, I want to  
14 move onto 797. The laws around the student - sorry  
15 Chair, just a couple minutes. This law is Local Law  
16 regarding reporting on school clubs and organizations  
17 and one of the issues I have found, especially when  
18 visiting a lot of schools, they are terrible at  
19 marketing and they'll be doing a host of things in  
20 the school and it's not being marketed at all.  
21 Parents don't know and I know you said even in your  
22 opening that you know it's on school websites and  
23 things like that but it is not being placed in a way  
24 that we are putting these things that are going on in  
25 schools in a real way that I think could actually

1  
2 attract more people to public schools. And so, that  
3 is some of the reason why this came about in addition  
4 to I just truly believe in after school and I think  
5 it's extremely important but could you talk to me  
6 currently like how does DOE currently monitor and  
7 track the existing status of student clubs and  
8 organizations and also how do you partner with DYCD  
9 on that because the bulk of the afterschool programs  
10 are through DYCD. And so, how are you guys working  
11 together to kind of track that, monitor that and then  
12 also make this accessible and available to the  
13 parents, so that they know this is an attractive part  
14 to some of the schools that we have.

15       GEORGE PATTERSON: Sure so we meet with DYCD  
16 biweekly. We meet with DYCD monthly. We partnership  
17 with DYCD. A matter of fact there was an afterschool  
18 guide that we created in collaboration with DYCD  
19 that's going to be released this upcoming school year  
20 and that's going to show -

21       COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: It's closed June, so you  
22 mean next year? Because the school year is over.

23       GEORGE PATTERSON: Yeah, the upcoming school  
24 year.

25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Okay, I just want to  
3 make sure.

4 GEORGE PATTERSON: Yeah, so what that guide is  
5 going to do, it's going to walk administrators  
6 through how to set up, how to create, how to sustain  
7 effective afterschool programs. I've been a  
8 principal for 16 years; afterschool programs are  
9 almost at the heart of our schools. Why? Because  
10 they provide safety for students. We don't know what  
11 the students do when they leave or on their way to  
12 school but we know why they're in our - while we have  
13 them, that they're going to remain safe. We know  
14 that those programs lead to the culture and climate  
15 of schools. When students stay after school, they  
16 become part of the community and then of course, the  
17 academic component of it. I mean principals live and  
18 die by you know unfortunately the way student perform  
19 and so much of that is handled after school. So, in  
20 terms of marketing and you're a million percent  
21 correct, there's so much going on in schools and I  
22 can say that principals market in like a plethora of  
23 ways but just to understand that most principals are  
24 instructional leaders. They're not like business  
25 leaders right?

1  
2           So, they're going to do what comes natural.  
3 They're going to market at PTA meetings. They're  
4 going to market through backpack home, through the  
5 school website. DYCD has a website. The DOE has an  
6 email address if there are any issues that you can  
7 put that down and we'll get back to you. Community  
8 liaisons and as such. They're going to do what's in  
9 their, kind of what's in their internal capacity to  
10 do and that is uh -

11           COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah but that ain't  
12 working because you go to Charter School and they're  
13 hoping like we have afterschool and I'm like, so does  
14 the school right now. Like what are we talking  
15 about? So, I hear you and I understand yes, that is  
16 a wheelhouse but we got to expand what that looks  
17 like but I do have limited time and thank you so much  
18 and I look forward to continue to work like I said to  
19 get this bill passed because it is so important and I  
20 think it, you know like you said, afterschool is the  
21 heart of a lot of these schools and how do we  
22 continue to work together collaboratively. Thank  
23 you.

24           CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I have a question on CTE.  
25 How do you track one, how do you track the number of

1 students you have? Where are they? Do you track?  
2  
3 And in terms of equipment, I visited a school  
4 recently and I'm not going to name the school. They  
5 are a CTE program but they're still waiting on their  
6 equipment. We'll talk offline and the program is  
7 kind of on pause because they haven't received the  
8 equipment to do the programming. How long does it  
9 take to support the infrastructure of CTE  
10 programming?

11 ADAM SCHEIER: Well, if you have a question about  
12 a specific school, we can certainly look into that  
13 and provide you with information you know afterward.  
14 But generally speaking, there are a number of funding  
15 streams that CTE programs receive, some are city  
16 based. Some are based in the Perkins grant. So,  
17 schools receive that money and they are able to then  
18 use that to purchase equipment. The different  
19 contracts that are had with different vendors, those  
20 are very specific and depending on -

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, that could be why  
22 there's a delay in receiving the equipment for the  
23 students to actually be in their CTE program.

24 ADAM SCHEIER: Yeah, that would be very  
25 individualistic and again if you have information



1  
2 about a specific program, we're happy to look into  
3 that and get back to you.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Overall, how many CTE  
5 programs you have across the city?

6 ADAM SCHEIER: There are I believe 290 some odd  
7 programs.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Hmm, hmm and what - again,  
9 is it to employment once you go through the CTE  
10 program? I know some of them have an employment  
11 right after they leave the schools. What is the  
12 success rate? How do we track? How do we track  
13 success from this right? The whole idea of CTE  
14 programming is to create a career pathway. How are  
15 we tracking that career pathway?

16 ADAM SCHEIER: Thank you for that. New York City  
17 Public Schools does not conduct official research or  
18 reporting on internships. The proposed legislation,  
19 however, would enhance opportunities for researchers  
20 to study the outcomes of internships and whether they  
21 are related to industry certification and employment.

22 We don't have the tracking data as to what  
23 students are doing exactly after they have graduated.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We need that because right,  
25 uhm, I was an educator right two decades and data

1 drives my instruction every day in the classroom, so  
2 I don't understand why New York City Public School is  
3 not using that data to drive their policy or to stay  
4 informed on what are the trends? What are the kids  
5 looking? What are the career pathways? I don't  
6 understand. Maybe we'll introduce that bill and  
7 we'll probably have to strengthen that bill to even  
8 to give us even more meat so we know what we're doing  
9 because like Council Member Stevens says, Charter  
10 school does this all day long. Before I go to sleep  
11 every night there's this cute little boy that comes  
12 on. He's so adorable. He tells you exactly what  
13 he's doing in his Charter school every single day.

14 So and I've called on New York City Public  
15 Schools to step up their game in terms of their  
16 marketing. There's some amazing things happening in  
17 New York City Public Schools but no one knows.  
18 Council Member Hanif, you have the floor sister.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you so much Chair  
20 Joseph. So, I wanted to go back to uhm my colleagues  
21 first line of questioning about Respect for All.  
22 Does every school have a Respect for All liaison?  
23

24 ROBIN DAVSON: Yes.  
25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Understood and then uhm  
3 so, while restorative justice practices are  
4 integrated in some schools, what teaching takes place  
5 around accountability for when there's a peer to peer  
6 exchange that was bullying or a microaggression or a  
7 hate incident? How do both students know that  
8 something of disrespect occurred and they should  
9 understand?

10 ROBIN DAVSON: Yeah, so the expectation is that  
11 happens through social emotional learning, teaching,  
12 and also through restorative practices, so.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Does that happen between  
14 peer to peer? Could you like give me an example of  
15 how two students or even a group of students, I mean  
16 and I'm surprised you mentioned middle school because  
17 that was also some of my worst years. And you know  
18 first generation Bangladesh and Muslim, wearing our  
19 traditional attire would get bullied. My youngest  
20 sister got bullied for her weight and at that time,  
21 there was like absolutely - there was a less  
22 sophisticated I will say, less sophisticated approach  
23 to addressing those issues and sometimes even just  
24 out right not in schools. Schools did not want to  
25 deal with it. Uhm, but I want to just understand how

1  
2 are students exchanging conversation and dialogue  
3 with one another to better understand one another and  
4 apologize and move forward?

5 ROBIN DAVSON: So, if there's an incident of  
6 bullying, harassment, intimidation in the school,  
7 there's different actions that can be taken on a  
8 school level. So, and it's also dependent on -

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: But respectfully because  
10 of my time, could you just share if there is -

11 ROBIN DAVSON: Well, it depends. If a student is  
12 being bullied and don't want to - it's also the  
13 student choice if they want to confront the bully,  
14 right? Because if a student does not want to  
15 confront a bully than that's the student choice,  
16 right, so that's why but if they do - if a student  
17 wants to make up and then there can be a guidance  
18 intervention, right? So that can happen. There also  
19 can be something called a restorative circle, where a  
20 designee in school can bring the students together  
21 and they can come up with a plan and have a  
22 restorative action taking place, right? So, there's  
23 different types of supports and interventions that's  
24 listed in a discipline code that can happen on the  
25 school level. And that can happen through on the

1 school level. That can happen with a CBO partner.  
2 That can happen with a teacher. So, there's several  
3 interventions that can take place.  
4

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it and then I want to  
6 get to my Resolution, which I understand you all  
7 can't really share feedback to but the DOE issues a  
8 report on student to student bullying, harassment  
9 intimidation and discrimination twice a year. Over  
10 the last four reports, the number of religious based  
11 incidences have steady increased from 92 to 132 to  
12 162 to 205. So, how are you measuring the  
13 relationship of restorative justice programs being  
14 integrated in schools or the various other facets  
15 that you just described to the goal of reducing  
16 incidences? How are you evaluating?

17 ROBIN DAVSON: Can you - you said religious  
18 based?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: I just took it from the  
20 DOE report which outlines race, religion, sexual  
21 orientation, it has all of the various protected  
22 categories.

23 ROBIN DAVSON: So, when we implement restorative  
24 justice practices, all incidence, restorative is  
25 about restoring, healing period. So, any incidence

1  
2 whether it be religious based, whether it be bias  
3 based, whether it be incidents around race, students  
4 are in circles and they're talking about it and  
5 they're expressing their feelings. So, restorative  
6 practices is about healing.

7 So, we have implemented restorative practices in  
8 many, many schools and the goal is for that healing  
9 to take place under restorative practices. So, we  
10 have been doing that successfully, especially in the  
11 last six months and so, that has been our goal.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: No, I understand that.  
13 Incidents that have been happening around religious  
14 based. I'm just surprised that there's incidents. A  
15 dramatic jump from the numbers that are on the DOE's  
16 website, the number of incidences. And so, I would  
17 like to understand one, what's causing or how do you  
18 account for this dramatic jump and while healing is  
19 taking place, how are we also recognizing the need to  
20 reduce these incidences?

21 And then just want to wrap up my final questions.  
22 What curriculum guidance or training does the DOE  
23 provide to schools and teachers regarding religious  
24 diversity education specifically?  
25

1  
2 ROBIN DAVSON: So, we have partnered with Facing  
3 History and I guess we can talk a little bit about  
4 that, so the office of - my office, we have partnered  
5 with FACE and History, which is an organization and  
6 they have partnered with our social studies  
7 department and they are launching - you want to talk  
8 a little bit more about that?

9 ELAINE LINDSEY: Thank you for the question.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Of course.

11 ELAINE LINDSEY: So, the new curriculum was  
12 introduced earlier this year and we are working with  
13 our Department of Teaching and Learning to role out  
14 facing history to support our social studies teachers  
15 and support our schools with the implementation of  
16 the curriculum, providing them with the professional  
17 learning and all supports that they will need to  
18 provide the learning around Facing History that  
19 addresses all of the concerns that you just spoke  
20 about.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So, this is specifically  
22 geared towards social studies?

23 ELAINE LINDSEY: No, no, no because of the topic  
24 itself, it would be in like a history class yes but  
25 all teachers would have access to this. It's not

1  
2 just necessarily going to be a history class but  
3 providing that support for those teachers and  
4 definitely looking at it out of a social studies  
5 class but it could be across all disciplines.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And then uhm, which other  
7 groups are you all working with and particularly over  
8 the last eight months? Which organizations have been  
9 brought to the school as their incidents is spiking?  
10 I hear from students on a regular. I hear from  
11 parents on the regular about the uptick in  
12 antisemitic attacks, anti-Muslim, anti-Arab attacks.  
13 Can you just talk about whether Facing History is the  
14 group that is providing these modules? Which other  
15 groups are you bringing in?

16 ROBIN DAVSON: This spring we announced that we  
17 are developing hidden voices curriculum resources on  
18 both the Muslim and Jewish American communities to  
19 celebrate the religious diversity of our city and  
20 uplift the culture and contribution of these two  
21 groups. The Mayor's Office for the Prevention of  
22 Hate Crimes released a hate crime curriculum this  
23 year as another resource for our schools. As part of  
24 our meet in the moment work, we are heavily focused  
25 on education including expanding partnership with



1  
2 Facing History and ourselves and workshops from a  
3 variety of community organizations and museums  
4 focused specifically on Islamophobia and  
5 antisemitism.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Can you just list out some  
7 of the organizations.

8 ROBIN DAVSON: Sure. We have the Museum of  
9 Muslim heritage.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Which is where?

11 ROBIN DAVSON: I'm sorry, Museum of Jewish  
12 Heritage, I apologize. The Museum of Jewish Heritage  
13 and Jewish Children's Museum. We also have the  
14 Mayor's Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes. We  
15 have Muslim and Jewish American Communities but that  
16 doesn't look like it's an organization. We have the  
17 history of Islamic World.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: That's an organization?  
19 Or is that a chapter in the module?

20 ROBIN DAVSON: Oh, that looks like, that's the  
21 curriculum.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Well, I appreciate it.  
23 I'm going to be reaching back out.

24 ROBIN DAVSON: Okay.  
25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: I think what's evident  
3 here is that our schools and the DOE in particular is  
4 not reaching out to community based organizations and  
5 particularly those that are lead by our faith leaders  
6 and there are an abundant of them and also taking  
7 into account the multitude of our faith practices,  
8 we're not homogenous. And so, I'd just like a  
9 comprehensive list and this is why Resolution 95 is  
10 critical, so that we're not just -

11 ROBIN DAVSON: So, I can talk specifically about  
12 sorry- I just have some of the organizations Chair  
13 Hanif and I apologize. We have uhm, Muslem Community  
14 Network and Museum of Jewish Heritage, just those two  
15 but I also want to go back to just your question  
16 around restorative practices. I just want to say  
17 whenever we receive any incidents around islamophobia  
18 or antisemitism and in any of our school communities,  
19 my restorative justice team has been first  
20 responders. We have been in school communities  
21 healing harm. I have to say that. We have been  
22 there conducting listening circles, conducting  
23 healing circles from elementary schools to middle  
24 schools to high schools. The team has been working  
25 extremely hard in restoring communities since October

1  
2 7. So, I have to say that they've been in  
3 partnership with their communities, with  
4 organizations who have been providing professional  
5 development to schools and we have been in community  
6 with schools ensuring that we are healing and  
7 restoring those communities so that they can move  
8 forward and so that they can continue to function day  
9 to day with all that has been happening in their  
10 school communities. So, I just wanted to answer that  
11 question.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: No, I appreciate that and  
13 I have no doubt that you all have been working hard  
14 to really uhm, make sure that as students are leaving  
15 their homes or their community that they are safe in  
16 their school building and that there is an  
17 infrastructure in school when issues arise. That  
18 they can go to someone.

19 Over the last several months and thank you Chair  
20 Joseph for giving me a few more minutes. Over the  
21 last few months as the Co-Chair of the Taskforce to  
22 Combat Hate, we have brought, myself and Chair Eric  
23 Dinowitz have brought together students or Arab  
24 American Heritage Month, Jewish American Heritage  
25 Month, we're hosting two more for Asian American

1  
2 Heritage Month and Pride and these are young people  
3 from all across our city who are showing up and what  
4 we've learned resoundingly is that students don't  
5 know who to reach out to when there are issues. They  
6 are less likely to actually go to an adult because  
7 they feel that there will not be adequate steps taken  
8 for them to feel like something, that the issue has  
9 been resolved or that there was clarity. So, I mean  
10 there's a lot of need and I appreciate and commend  
11 the work that you all have been doing already.

12 I'd like to continue to partner because this is  
13 an issue that is tremendously important for my  
14 district. I represent a diverse Jewish and Muslim  
15 constituency and hearing from parents too and I know  
16 that parents don't have an outlet of their own to be  
17 able to be in discussion about some of these issues.  
18 So, thank you so much and I'll be reaching back out  
19 but please count me as a partner for this work as a  
20 kid of public school system. This is especially,  
21 especially important. Thank you.

22 ROBIN DAVSON: Well, we're happy to work with you  
23 on this, please.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you Chair.

25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Council Member  
3 Hanif. Recognizing Council Member Sanchez and  
4 Gennaro. Council Member Narcisse, go with your  
5 questions.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Good afternoon and  
7 thank you Chair. Kudos to all the educators  
8 including the Chair being a former teacher. I want  
9 to say thank you to all of you for the work you're  
10 doing in New York City. I do believe in public  
11 school system and having said that, people should  
12 have choices and options but for me, coming from a  
13 country and coming here and well received in the  
14 public school system. So, that's the reason that I  
15 believe we are always trying to push and the Chair  
16 been pushing to make sure the inequities in our  
17 school system is being addressed. I see one of the  
18 principals that I used to have conversations with.  
19 Thank you for being here Mr. Patterson and all of  
20 you, so thank you.

21 Lately, career and technical education being a  
22 big deal for our city and it should because we have  
23 to make sure that our kids are competitive to not  
24 only the United States but the world in general, so  
25 I'm very much interested in that. How does the

1  
2 turnover rate for CTE teachers compared to teachers  
3 in other subjects and what impact does this have on  
4 CTE programs?

5 ADAM SCHEIER: Thank you for that question. I do  
6 not have that information but we will get that and  
7 get it back to you.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Alright, so thank you  
9 for that. What partnerships or collaborations exist  
10 between New York City Schools and industry  
11 organization to help address the shortage of CTE  
12 teachers?

13 ADAM SCHEIER: So, we do have the Commissions  
14 that I spoke about briefly earlier and these  
15 commissions are based on career clusters. These  
16 commissions consist of post-secondary partners as  
17 well as industry partners. Their role is to make  
18 sure that the people in the schools, the teachers,  
19 the AP's, the Principals are prepared with feedback  
20 from industry to make sure that their programs are  
21 labor market aligned and that they're keeping up with  
22 industry changes and they're also giving advise on  
23 how to potentially recruit new teachers.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you for that.  
25 Uh, Mr. Patterson, probably that one is going to be

1  
2 for you. For the afterschool program, I understand  
3 that we have a lot of needs throughout our district  
4 and you came from a district on East Flatbush. So,  
5 now, I'm wondering, what are you doing in your  
6 position to make sure the programs are being placed  
7 in the school where actually there is inequities.

8       GEORGE PATTERSON: With our afterschool programs,  
9 they are funded centrally. They are funded in two  
10 ways. They're funded by DYCD, then they're funded by  
11 New York City Public Schools. Once these schools  
12 receive the funding, they partnership with the CBO's.  
13 We have full - we give autonomy through the  
14 superintendents to the principals. That the  
15 principals are then going to know what their needs  
16 are because the principals are the ones that get  
17 rated on student performance. They're the ones -  
18 it's been like a shift under this Chancellor,  
19 Chancellor Banks from you know this instructional  
20 model to this community model. So, how do we serve  
21 not only children but serve families? How do we  
22 serve communities? How does the school become a  
23 central hub in the community? How do superintendents  
24 become not just instructional leaders but community  
25 leaders? And if you notice there's been a big shift

1  
2 from central and getting employees to go back into  
3 district offices closer to the community. So, as the  
4 funding is provided, the system then goes into  
5 effect, giving the autonomy to superintendents and  
6 giving the autonomy to principals to partnership with  
7 community based organizations. We have some major  
8 ones out there. That come in and service our  
9 students.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you. With the  
11 increase of migrant in the City of New York, uhm, I  
12 find that it is a challenging time, don't get me  
13 wrong. It's very difficult but at the same token,  
14 during the summer, I'm very concerned for those kids  
15 that just arrive. What are we doing? Anybody  
16 because you're the great thinker here. I have all of  
17 you here, so I want to know if any plan to make sure  
18 the things the - because one thing I have learned as  
19 a parent, as a mother of four when kids are bored,  
20 they cause trouble. So, are we making any strategy  
21 to address the increased flock of migrants that we  
22 have in the City of New York during the summer time  
23 especially? I know school closed, soon actually.

24

25



1  
2           GEORGE PATTERSON: Well, you know what I will say  
3 is we have again partner shipped with DYCD. There is  
4 Summer Rising.

5           COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I know that but not  
6 enough space.

7           GEORGE PATTERSON: Well, we should be listen, we  
8 have schools throughout right? We have programs that  
9 are throughout. Uhm, we should be able to  
10 accommodate. I'll tell you and if there are pockets,  
11 we're going to work with DYCD to identify the pockets  
12 and if need be, if other schools need to be opened up  
13 then we'll get them open. Our concern is always  
14 students first. You know we understand that - we  
15 understand that communities are in crisis and our  
16 families are struggling and we understand that if we  
17 don't provide this access to opportunity for our most  
18 vulnerable population that their future is at risk.  
19 So, under the leadership of Chancellor Bank, I think  
20 that's what he's been all about.

21           So, I'm one that feels very confident that we  
22 definitely have the infrastructure to accommodate the  
23 students that we're receiving.

24           COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you so much.  
25 Keeping on thinking because the children are in our

1  
2 hands in the City of New York, all of us, our  
3 responsibility.

4 GEORGE PATTERSON: Absolutely.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: So, thank you. Thank  
6 you Chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You're welcome. Thank you.  
8 Uhm, Council Member Sanchez.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank you so  
10 much Chair and good afternoon. So, I'm today happy  
11 to see on the agenda, to have on the agenda, thank  
12 you Chair Intro. 432, which would require New York  
13 City Public Schools to provide families with  
14 information on afterschool programs, which I'm happy  
15 to read that you support the intent of. So, I  
16 apologize if this question was answered earlier but  
17 could you share the number of children in New York  
18 City Schools and in the entire school system that are  
19 currently served by afterschool programs?

20 GEORGE PATTERSON: So, I do have the information  
21 on our middle school and high school.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay.

23 GEORGE PATTERSON: Students and it's  
24 approximately 200 - I have the exact number if you  
25

1  
2 give me a minute. 190,000, I was going to say  
3 200,000 but it is 190,000 students.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: 190,000 students and how  
5 many middle school and high school students do we  
6 have? What's our denominator?

7 GEORGE PATTERSON: I'm sorry.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Out of the total, what  
9 is the total number of middle and high school  
10 students?

11 GEORGE PATTERSON: That is the total number of  
12 middle school and high school students.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay and how many are  
14 served by afterschool programs?

15 GEORGE PATTERSON: I'm sorry, I'm just getting  
16 some clarity on the question. Okay, so we're serving  
17 60 percent of them overall. In terms of exact  
18 numbers, I'll have to get back to you on that.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay and more  
20 importantly given the district that I represent, uhm,  
21 how many - if you have the numbers today, how many  
22 middle school and high school students are receiving  
23 or eligible for a free school lunch and how many of  
24 those that are eligible for free school lunch are  
25 also receiving - are having afterschool programs?

1  
2           GEORGE PATTERSON: So, correct me if I'm wrong,  
3 uh, New York City I believe the vast majority, I  
4 think we're - and again, please correct me if I'm  
5 wrong, I believe almost all of our students in New  
6 York City are eligible for free lunch. We are a free  
7 city. We offer this for the vast majority of our  
8 students, if not all of our students. Uhm, and in  
9 terms of the second part of your question, how many  
10 of those students are attending afterschool programs?  
11 That number I would have to get back you also in  
12 terms of how many - and again, just for clarity, how  
13 many students who receive free lunch attend  
14 afterschool programs?

15           COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Yeah and just to be very  
16 clear, my intention is to understand how many low  
17 income students from Black and Brown neighborhoods  
18 which I represent, how many of those are receiving  
19 afterschool services? Because the last statistic  
20 that I remember was at 16 percent of students that  
21 receive free or eligible for free school lunch, right  
22 by the federal definition of who is eligible to  
23 receive them. I understand New York City is generous  
24 but the federal definition, only 16 percent of these  
25 students are receiving afterschool enrichment

1  
2 programs. So, I wanted to - that's a 2017 number and  
3 I wanted to get the updated number from the New York  
4 City Department of Education. 432 is an information  
5 bill. It's about distributing information to  
6 families but of course, the broader question here and  
7 the intent is to understand, to get what is available  
8 out there to those who need it but also to move  
9 toward a system where we have universal afterschool  
10 one day and there's legislation for that for another  
11 day, another discussion but I just want to get the  
12 updated information from the Department of Education  
13 on what that access looks like for low income  
14 students.

15 GEORGE PATTERSON: You represent the same  
16 community I do, so 100 percent. We will get that  
17 information to you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Excellent, thank you.  
19 Thank you so much, really appreciate it. Thank you  
20 Chair.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Council Member.  
22 Quick question, just a quick follow up. How do you  
23 collaborate with DYCD to develop and provide  
24 information about afterschool programming?  
25

1  
2           GEORGE PATTERSON: Right, so I answered that  
3 earlier, with DYCD we meet biweekly and we meet  
4 monthly. We've come up with an afterschool guide.  
5 That's the guide that's going to be released in  
6 September for this school year, which is going to  
7 provide guidance on how to market, how to start, how  
8 to maintain effective afterschool programs. DYCD  
9 also has a website that has information about all of  
10 their afterschool programs as well as a community  
11 connect hotline which is available in over 180  
12 languages. In addition, New York City Public Schools  
13 has an afterschool, at [schools@nyc.gov](mailto:schools@nyc.gov) email. So, if  
14 anyone is having any issues, any questions, any  
15 concerns, any problems, they email us and we'll get  
16 back to them immediately with direct next steps in  
17 terms of the afterschool.

18           CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'm a parent who lives in  
19 District 40 where 25 percent of my families do not  
20 have access to internet. So, tell me how I'm a low  
21 income family who doesn't have access to internet.  
22 How am I going to get that information into my hands?

23           GEORGE PATTERSON: Absolutely. So again, we have  
24 that community connect hotline. That's available in  
25 over 180 languages and what I would tell parents if

1  
2 there's issues with phone service also, is to go up  
3 to the school. Speak to the school personnel. There  
4 will always be someone in every school to help you as  
5 well as at the school, in terms of afterschool,  
6 principals backpack letters hold, that's like a very  
7 foundational effort in multiple languages. So, I  
8 would advise if someone doesn't have internet right?  
9 Which is an issue and we know it's an issue,  
10 hopefully they could call the Community Connect  
11 hotline, which is again available in over 180  
12 languages. Hopefully they could go up to the school  
13 and they could get support from the parent  
14 coordinator, community liaison or the school  
15 administrator or a teacher and then hopefully the  
16 school backpacks letters home. I also did it as a  
17 principal. I always made sure that for our entire  
18 population that we made sure that letters that went  
19 home were printed out in multiple languages.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for that. So,  
21 what challenges are you going to face to distribute  
22 and publish materials to students at the start of  
23 each school year? You said you're going to start in  
24 the fall where you going to have a comprehensive list  
25 for afterschool programming.

1  
2           GEORGE PATTERSON: Well, a guide but I'm sorry,  
3 are you asking about challenges?

4           CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, to make sure that it  
5 is delivered on time. Make sure that parents know  
6 that.

7           GEORGE PATTERSON: Absolutely, so I think the  
8 challenge that we may have may go towards like if  
9 there's changes in programs right? Afterschool  
10 programming, that normally happens at the beginning  
11 of the year. So, it's imperative that we're meeting  
12 with our partners and we're finding out if there was  
13 any change that happened with the programming, so  
14 that we can then take that information, update our  
15 list. If we have a list of all afterschool programs,  
16 right? Who is eligible? How the application process  
17 works, so that we could update our list, in turn key  
18 that information to our superintendent teams who can  
19 get that information out to the principals.

20           CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how do you plan on  
21 monitoring that to see how effective and if you need  
22 to tweak along the way.

23           GEORGE PATTERSON: Yeah, I think uhm  
24 communication with our partners is something that is  
25 crucial. I think working with our district officers



1 to ensure the timely dissemination of the material.

2 I think those are some areas that we have to be very  
3 vigilant about that.

4  
5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. We hope get  
6 comprehensive - we've heard from some schools; I know  
7 I personally have heard from schools who do not have  
8 afterschool programming. Since some of them are  
9 funded through DYCD and New York City Public Schools,  
10 how do schools who don't have afterschool programming  
11 get one?

12 GEORGE PATTERSON: Okay, so the guide that we are  
13 releasing has all of the information for school  
14 leaders who do not have afterschool programs on how  
15 to get the funding for those services. I would also  
16 like to add that uhm there are a number of schools, a  
17 healthy number and I can send my notes here who are  
18 not centrally funded.

19 So, you do have schools that, hundreds of schools  
20 that receive their funding either through grants,  
21 state grant so on and so forth that are not centrally  
22 funded.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Uhm, this one is  
24 around dress code policy.

1  
2 GEORGE PATTERSON: And I'm sorry, I'm sorry, the  
3 guide has been posted so it available.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: As of when?

5 GEORGE PATTERSON: January but we'll get the  
6 exact date and the link to you for the guide.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I will look forward to it.  
8 Uhm can you provide an overview of how many schools  
9 currently have dress code policies?

10 ROBIN DAVSON: Yes, hi. Thank you. Thank you  
11 for that question. So, schools currently - dress  
12 codes policies are not mandated. It's not required.  
13 Schools uhm if they want to adopt the dress code  
14 policy, they do it in consultation with their school  
15 leadership teams.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many?

17 ROBIN DAVSON: Central does not track that  
18 number.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You all don't track a lot of  
20 stuff. I'm going to be getting a lot of reporting  
21 bills. How many of these policies are readily  
22 accessible to students, parents, through school  
23 websites?

24 ROBIN DAVSON: So, some schools does list this on  
25 their schools website but it is not something again

1  
2 that is tracked because it's not mandated or  
3 required.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How does the Department of  
5 Education ensure that schools are complying with  
6 DOE's guidelines, dress code particularly relating to  
7 prohibits of generalization, generally national,  
8 cultural, social and identity biases?

9 ROBIN DAVSON: So, I have an LGBTQ director  
10 Kalima, who you know. She has reviewed the dress  
11 code guidelines with a cross functional team a couple  
12 years ago and helped create the gender guidelines.  
13 They were very essential in creating these guidelines  
14 to ensure that these guidelines does not impose any  
15 expectations based on gender identity and I can have  
16 her come up and talk a little bit about that.

17 KALIMA MCKENZIE-SIMMS: Good afternoon Chair  
18 Joseph. I'm Kalima McKenzie-Simms. I am the Manager  
19 of LGBTQ programs. So, when I started a couple years  
20 ago, one of the first projects, one of the first  
21 initiatives that I was brought onto was to review,  
22 revise dress code guidelines for schools that made  
23 sure that they were inclusive of gender identity.  
24 That it does not make assumptions on a persons body.  
25 Like, instead of saying uh, a shirt shouldn't show

1  
2 cleavage, it should say no low cut shirts for  
3 example. And so, we liaised with community  
4 organizations like Girls for Gender Equity, P-Flag  
5 NYC so they can cross review these guidelines to make  
6 sure that they are equitable for students who are  
7 LGBTQ transgender, students who are Black, White, and  
8 have natural hair who like you know making sure the  
9 language was appropriate for those groups as well, so  
10 yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How does DOE handle  
12 instances where student attire is unfairly targeted  
13 under the dress code? Is there a pathway that  
14 student can take if they feel unfairly dress code  
15 based on their identity?

16 ROBIN DAVSON: So, there's many pathways that  
17 students can take. Any reports can be again to their  
18 respectful liaisons. It can be reported to  
19 Superintendent offices. It can be reported directly  
20 to us, the Office of Safety and Youth Development.  
21 It can be reported to general counsel Title IX  
22 coordinators to the Office of Equal Opportunity.  
23 Just multiple pathways of reporting for students and  
24 any trusted adult in their school community as well.

25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What is the current process  
3 for tracking and reporting disciplinary actions  
4 related to dress code violations?

5 ROBIN DAVSON: It's reported in ORs, again the  
6 only system that statement data system, state  
7 recognized system in New York City Public Schools.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And have you engaged with  
9 students, parents, educators when developing or  
10 revising dress code policies?

11 ROBIN DAVSON: Yes and Chair Joseph, if I can  
12 just say that uhm in ORs, that there are two codes in  
13 which it can fall under and these particular codes,  
14 it's an 88 for elementary school and a B9 in their  
15 low level infractions and I just wanted to report to  
16 Council that in 2023 there was a grand total of 121  
17 in both for elementary and middle and in 2023-2024  
18 was a total of 244 total, okay? So I just wanted to  
19 report that. And the change was pretty much last  
20 year there was uh well - there was a change of about  
21 100 and that was because there was these new ski  
22 masks that came out last year and approximately 60  
23 percent was because of that. So, I want Council to  
24 know why that large shift happened. So, I'm sorry to  
25 cut you off from your next question.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: No, not at all. That was  
3 very important because my next question is going to  
4 follow up to that and what specific restorative  
5 practice if any is you know of are in place within  
6 schools you know to discuss self-expression through  
7 dress and relations to school. Dress code policies  
8 and handling of reports of noncompliance.

9 ROBIN DAVSON: Yes, it's uhm, uniform dress codes  
10 are - dress codes is a low level infraction, so  
11 students cannot be suspended for not adhering to the  
12 dress code policy. What the discipline code allows  
13 is guidance and counseling or parents could be called  
14 or you know it's a conversation with the principal  
15 but students cannot be suspended. The highest level  
16 of disciplinary action is a classroom removal and  
17 that only happens if they violate it several times,  
18 like multiple times. So, it's very rare. It's a low  
19 level infraction.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I've seen schools have  
21 extra, for example, elementary they would have extra  
22 uniforms on hand.

23 ROBIN DAVSON: Absolutely, like that's the goal.  
24 If it's you know you would, we want students to feel  
25 comfortable. If they are out of dress code, like if

1  
2 they are doing something against the policy, if  
3 schools have extra clothes on deck, that's the goal  
4 to make sure that students are comfortable to you  
5 know offer them another set of clothing. To say, oh,  
6 turn your shirt inside out. Just to make sure that  
7 the students feel comfortable in their clothing.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, mine forgot his tie at  
9 home and he was able to get a new tie.

10 ROBIN DAVSON: Exactly, like that's the goal.  
11 That's the goal. Not to make them feel uncomfortable  
12 or to call them out, just to make sure that they feel  
13 comfortable.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I told him when he start  
15 working on Wall Street, there won't be no extra tie  
16 in Wall Street.

17 Alright, I'm going to make my - have my group of  
18 students here, so make them happy. So, how does New  
19 York City Public Schools currently allocate resource  
20 to ensure equitable access to extra-curricular  
21 programs across all high schools? Hi.

22 ELAINE LINDSEY: Hi, thank you for that question.  
23 So, just for clarity, are we referring to clubs in  
24 particular?

25 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Clubs, newspapers, you know.

1  
2 ELAINE LINDSEY: I know newspaper is your  
3 passion.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes.

5 ELAINE LINDSEY: I love newspapers as well.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Young people have to tell  
7 their stories. We keep telling them, let's create  
8 space for them and give them the power. They're  
9 here, they are back there. See them waving. They  
10 were here. They advocated for themselves. They are  
11 the inspiration for this Reso.

12 ELAINE LINDSEY: So, clubs and extra-curricular  
13 activities are school based and funding is directly  
14 into the schools budget. So, so I want to just speak  
15 in regards to how clubs come about. They are student  
16 generated based on student voice, students wants,  
17 desires, those are actually the students say that  
18 they want a club. They are guided by Chancellors  
19 regulations. They will present their I guess their  
20 desire for a club to their principal and unless there  
21 is some reason that it does not meet Chancellors  
22 regs, which is governed. Those clubs are governed by  
23 regs, Chancellors regs, those clubs are to be  
24 recognized. So, a student interest, meeting with the  
25 principal, it's also, there's also a pedagogue that



1  
2 also oversees the actual club. Usually students  
3 generate interest from their peers and then from  
4 there, they work to implement the club within the  
5 school system.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, how do uhm, how do you  
7 support teachers administrating and implementing  
8 programs such as a newspaper?

9 ELAINE LINDSEY: So, newspapers I'm just, I'm  
10 going to put on a principal hat and just think about  
11 my interactions with schools who have newspapers.  
12 Just in seeing some of our schools who absolutely had  
13 interest, I've seen schools who actually have courses  
14 that actually are aligned to having journalism within  
15 their school system. So, we support principals just  
16 in having those conversations and actually when we go  
17 in and have our supervisory meetings, we also meet  
18 with our students just to get their input to see  
19 what's happening in the schools, what are some of  
20 your interests. Speak indefinitely about how student  
21 voice is generated. How do you get your voice out?  
22 We have speak with regards to what's happening in our  
23 literature classes. How we can also expand on  
24 getting our student voice out and definitely looking  
25 at how we can have ways to expand just the

1  
2 opportunities and access for our students to across  
3 the city to engage in that process of being  
4 journalists.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, what measures are in  
6 place to facilitate introduction of new literacy and  
7 journalism training program for teachers and  
8 students? Is that a Chancellor question?

9 ELAINE LINDSEY: That would be a Chancellor - I  
10 will take that to her.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, how can New York City  
12 Public School ensure all high school regardless of  
13 their location or student demographic have  
14 infrastructure at least to support students to start  
15 and sustain a newspaper?

16 ELAINE LINDSEY: I would say at the least that  
17 you have to have the pedagogues to support just the  
18 students.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I have him. He's in the  
20 back.

21 ELAINE LINDSEY: Okay, so and again also, when I  
22 think anything that has anything to do with students,  
23 it's about the interest and just ensuring that we're  
24 providing our students to access to anything that  
25 they're interested in because we want to have our

1  
2 well rounded students and we want to make sure that  
3 when we send them out into the world, that they have  
4 engaged in every possible activity that's going to  
5 support their development.

6       So, I would say just in our district offices and  
7 having the conversations with our superintendents and  
8 just in surveying the schools to see if they have the  
9 actual resources and to determine what the resources  
10 are to support them in actually implementing and  
11 putting new school papers in place. Also, to connect  
12 them with schools who have newspapers to just hear  
13 about some of those best practices and to help them  
14 support them in the actual implementation and the  
15 rollout. So, there's a myriad of things that can be  
16 done to support them but absolutely when we look at  
17 and we think about what's happening with New York  
18 City newspapers, it's right up there and support with  
19 our high school and middle school students in  
20 alignment with New York City Reads.

21       CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And this is in connection  
22 with New York City Reads and our writing skills. If  
23 we want to bring it up, this is one way right here.

24       ELAINE LINDSEY: I'm going to take that back to.  
25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Take that back to the  
3 Chancellor.

4 ELAINE LINDSEY: Absolutely.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Shout out to the Chancellor  
6 in hearing all of my New York City Public Schools  
7 newspaper. It would be ideal I think as an educator  
8 to have kids start telling their stories, right.  
9 They read it every day in other people's stories but  
10 if students can tell their point of view, carry their  
11 opinions it would be amazing. They're an amazing  
12 bunch of students that I met who lobbied us. Here we  
13 are, I'm so proud of them. They're back there.  
14 Wave, wave.

15 ELAINE LINDSEY: We love students.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, absolutely. They are  
17 the reason why I do this work.

18 ELAINE LINDSEY: I love them.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: This is why I do this work  
20 and that's why I fight so hard for them. It's never  
21 personal, it's really about the children.

22 ELAINE LINDSEY: Absolutely.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: About the young people.  
24 Uhm, so, thank you New York City Public Schools.  
25

1  
2 [02:02:27] - [02:04:55] Can I go now? I'll go now.  
3 Alright.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Folks if we could take the  
5 conversations outside, we're getting ready to  
6 continue. Once again, if we could settle down and  
7 find a seat, we are getting ready to continue.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I now open the  
9 hearing for public testimony. I remind the public  
10 that this is a formal government proceeding. That  
11 decorum shall be observed at all times.

12 As such, members of the public shall remain  
13 silent at all times. The witness table is reserved  
14 for people who wish to testify. No video recording  
15 or photography is allowed from the witness table.  
16 Further, members of the public may not present audio  
17 or video recording as testimony but may submit  
18 transcript of such recording to the Sergeant of Arms  
19 for inclusion in the hearing records.

20 If you wish to speak today, please fill out an  
21 appearance card with Sergeant at Arms, wait to be  
22 recognized. When recognized, you'll have two minutes  
23 to speak today on hearing topic Intro.'s 118, 266,  
24 399, 432, 577, 733, 771, and 797 and Resolution 95,  
25 Resolution 292, and 372. If you have a written

1 statement or additional written testimony you wish to  
2 submit for the record, please provide a copy of that  
3 testimony to the Sergeant at Arms. You may also  
4 email written testimony to [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov)  
5 within 72 hours of this hearing. Audio and video  
6 recordings will not be accepted.  
7

8 The first panel, if I misspeak or mispronounce  
9 your name, please give me grace. Aaqib Gondal, Salma  
10 Baksh, Lisa Greenberg, Camila Sosa, Derry Oliver, and  
11 Sophie Mode(SP?). [02:07:10] - [02:07:24].

12 SOPHIE MODE: My name is Sophie - Oh, thank you  
13 so much, sorry. My name is Sophie Mode and I am a  
14 graduate of Millennium Brooklyn High School and a  
15 college fellow with the New York City Youth  
16 Journalism Coalition. I'm here today to introduce  
17 some of the amazing student leaders of the coalition  
18 who are here today to testify in support of  
19 Resolution 372. Now that we're here today, we also  
20 would like to note our full support for Council  
21 Member Stevens Introduction 797. It's encouraging to  
22 hear that the DOE supports sharing data on clubs and  
23 organizations and we will follow up directly to  
24 ensure journalism, clubs and organizations are  
25 counted and published. This is critical in bridging

1  
2 the gap in access and has long been one of our  
3 priority asks of the Department of Education. Thank  
4 you so much for your time today.

5 AAQIB GONDAL: Good morning. My name is Aaqib  
6 Gondal and I am a junior at the Bronx High School of  
7 Science and I am a leader with the New York City  
8 Youth Journalism Coalition. Since my sophomore year,  
9 I've been a writer for The Science Survey, The Bronx  
10 High School of Science's student newspaper. The  
11 stories I've covered and the perspective I've gained  
12 from my time as a staff reporter are invaluable to  
13 me, and I feel that it is an absolute injustice that  
14 so many teens in New York City high schools with the  
15 desire to inform the public about what they feel is  
16 worth understanding are unable to do so.

17 It was through my articles and the topics that I  
18 latched onto that my interests in art history and  
19 urban studies began to blossom, providing me with  
20 insight as to what I want to focus on going forward  
21 both in college and in my personal life. It seems  
22 that everything I write about sticks with me long  
23 after each issue is published, and I now understand  
24 more about myself both as a creative and as a person

1  
2 than I would have if my school only offered  
3 traditional English classes.

4       The satisfaction in piecing a story together to  
5 create a final product that is not only informative  
6 but also sprinkled with reflections of the writer's  
7 personality is a feeling that is unmatched outside of  
8 journalism. And to think that nearly 75 percent of  
9 high schools in New York City do not have a school  
10 newspaper - it is not only unfair to students with  
11 stories to share with the world but also a tragedy in  
12 the sense that so many incredible writing pieces  
13 constructed by the youth are lost forever, reduced to  
14 simply "what could have been."

15       We're here today not just to testify in support  
16 of Resolution 0372, but to place it in a larger  
17 context of a citywide student movement to address the  
18 inequity.

19       In partnership with BLAC, we led a day of action  
20 right here at City Hall in April with more than 50  
21 students leaving school to raise awareness about  
22 youth journalism equity. We held a press conference,  
23 shoutout to Council Members Narcisse and Bronx  
24 Science Alumni Council Member Dinowitz for standing  
25 with us even in the rain. We also met with more than



1  
2 20 council members and staff including Council  
3 Members Hanif and Lewis. Students are ready to make  
4 their voices heard, and this resolution is a critical  
5 step in signaling that the City Council is behind  
6 them. Thank you for your time.

7 SALMA BAKSH: Hi, my name is Salma Baksh. I am a  
8 senior at Forest Hills High School in Queens New York  
9 and I'm also a leader with the New York City Youth  
10 Journalism Coalition.

11 Had I not joined my school newspaper in my junior  
12 year, I would not be speaking before you today  
13 because it has equipped me with so many tools. It  
14 has made me ambitious and outspoken and has  
15 encouraged me to challenge and criticize the world  
16 around me.

17 I'd like to establish that the news room is a  
18 classroom in its own right. Being editor-in-chief of  
19 my school paper has taught me how to manage a team,  
20 how to communicate effectively, and also how to be  
21 perceptive of the world around me. Most high schools  
22 in New York City don't have newspapers, despite New  
23 York City being regarded as a beacon for news media.

24 In an era marked by rapid change and  
25 unprecedented internet access, who will be our future

1  
2 storytellers? When only 7 percent of New York City  
3 schools with the highest poverty rates have  
4 newspapers, how can we expect that the stories that  
5 must be told, will be told? School newspapers are  
6 transformative, and more important than ever to  
7 students and the world they live in. We refuse to  
8 let the status quo stand, and Resolution 0372 is part  
9 of a bigger story.

10 This Spring, we launched Journalism for All, an  
11 ambitious public-private initiative to bring  
12 journalism programs to every New York City public  
13 high school, starting with 30 schools in the next 18  
14 months. Nearly 40 schools have indicated interest  
15 already, and we are working directly with Council  
16 Members to nominate schools in their district to be a  
17 part of Journalism for All.

18 A special shout out to Council Member Gutierrez,  
19 who nominated Williamsburg Preparatory High School  
20 and Bushwick Leaders High School for Academic  
21 Excellence. Your co-sponsorship for Resolution 0372  
22 signals to the DOE that the Council is serious about  
23 addressing the inequity in youth journalism.

24 Fourteen Council Members have already co-sponsored,  
25

1 including Council Member Schulman, who I will be  
2 interning for this summer. Thank you for your time.

3 CAMILA SOSA: My name is Camila Sosa. I am a  
4 junior at Uncommon Collegiate High School and a  
5 leader with the New York City Youth Journalism  
6 Coalition. For the past three years, talk  
7 surrounding a potential publication in my school  
8 continues to be spoken about as if it is a distant  
9 dream. I would imagine the stories we could tell and  
10 the perspectives we could share in this hypothetical  
11 newspaper that felt impossibly out of reach. I  
12 constantly wished that one day the students at my  
13 school would finally be able to share the stories and  
14 the stories that mattered to them and be able to feel  
15 heard.

16 I understood that our school was underfunded and  
17 I knew that there were so many details out of our  
18 control, but I also knew the importance of student  
19 expression and why it was imperative to have a place  
20 to unleash our voices. It was not until I started  
21 exploring journalism in New York City that I realized  
22 the extent of this gap in access. I was able to  
23 experience the power of youth voice and how capable  
24 students were of making change through their writing  
25

1 and talents. Students shouldn't have to rely on the  
2 "game" of chance that journalism equity is in New  
3 York City. Students shouldn't have to get "Lucky" to  
4 start a career in journalism. Student voice is the  
5 future and it should be treated as such.

6  
7 In early June, we laid out the Journalism for All  
8 vision to 150 teachers, funders, policymakers and  
9 journalists at the Paley Center. We were joined by  
10 special guests Nikole Hannah-Jones, Council Member  
11 Rita Joseph and Council Member Selvena Brooks-Powers,  
12 who announced her Journalism for All school  
13 nomination on stage.

14 It was a symbol of the immense momentum behind  
15 youth journalism equity, and this Resolution is a  
16 critical step in showing that the City Council hears  
17 and supports our vision for a school journalism  
18 program at every high school. Thank you for your  
19 time.

20 LIZA GREENBERG: Hello, my name is Liza Greenberg  
21 and I'm a junior at the Bronx Science. For the past  
22 year, I have been involved with the New York City  
23 Youth Journalism Coalition. I have been an avid  
24 student journalist since middle school when I created  
25 a newspaper called the Center School Gazette.

1  
2 Now, in high school, I have worked on my paper,  
3 The Science Survey, for two years, this past year as  
4 managing editor. Student journalism is a central to  
5 my identity. It has made me who I am; someone who  
6 looks for stories, dives into the facts, and raises  
7 topics for discussion. Journalism can prepare  
8 students to ask the hard questions, and in turn,  
9 handle controversial and loaded topics delicately and  
10 fairly. By providing a shared base of information  
11 and ideas, student journalism outlets can also foster  
12 a sense of community that unites diverse, citywide  
13 student bodies and provides a counterweight to the  
14 polarizing effects of social media.

15 Newspapers can be a venue about events and to  
16 celebrate accomplishments and talents, be it in  
17 sports, writing, humor, or photography. I just came  
18 from taking the US History Regents but being here is  
19 a lesson in government and civic engagement and  
20 journalism is too. The lack of journalism  
21 opportunities in New York City is a story that is  
22 important to me, and I was able to write about it  
23 with my friend and co-advocate Derry in Teen Vogue.  
24 This is just another example of the great momentum  
25

1  
2 around this issue that you can be a part of by  
3 supporting this Resolution. Thank you.

4 DERRY OLIVER: Hello, My name is Derry Oliver. I  
5 am a senior at Cobble Hill High School and a leader  
6 with the New York City Youth Journalism Coalition.  
7 Colleges may see me as student number 347,288. But I  
8 have a different story. I am a victim of systemic  
9 inequity, where I lack access to a journalism  
10 program. I've been told "to look harder", only to  
11 find the New York Times summer journalism workshop  
12 that costs thousand dollars per week. I'm told to  
13 pursue my passions, and yet I'm not given the  
14 opportunity to do so. I am told "a school is where  
15 you learn the most," and yet- I'm not given the  
16 opportunity to do so.

17 I do not want future young journalists to  
18 struggle the same way I did. I could've done  
19 internships, college credit, possibly even become  
20 editor-in-chief. However, my playing field was  
21 unequal the moment I came into high school. The  
22 access to a journalism program shouldn't be a  
23 privilege- it should be a right. The Council's  
24 support for this student-led movement has been  
25 critical in catalyzing private philanthropic support.

1  
2 In addition to the students, educators, and service  
3 providers who are a part of our movement, we are  
4 working with foundations to raise funds to launch the  
5 first cohort of Journalism for All.

6 We must keep the momentum going. Your support  
7 for this Resolution is critical, but not the end. We  
8 will be back after the budget is passed, ready to  
9 work with you to nominate schools in your district  
10 and commit to supporting them with your discretionary  
11 funding in Fiscal Year 2026. We need urgent,  
12 continuous, dedicated action on behalf of the  
13 students of New York City. We would now all be happy  
14 to take your questions. Thank you for your time.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That type of support does  
16 your school provide helping to establish journalism  
17 club in connections to internship opportunities?

18 LIZA GREENBERG: Uhm, I can speak about this. At  
19 least at our high school and part of our school  
20 newspaper, our journalism advisor posts opportunities  
21 on our google classroom for different internships,  
22 including paid internships with stipends and free  
23 programs so that students in the journalism program  
24 can pursue those opportunities. So I know he posted  
25 something from the Jewish Telegraphic agency and

1  
2 other scholarship opportunities and things along  
3 those lines.

4 CAMILA SOSA: In contrast, my school does not  
5 have a publication and although there are sometimes  
6 posts about certain internships, there isn't much  
7 highlight on journalism internships and that's a  
8 shame. There is also no highlight on these  
9 internships, just the fact that we don't have a  
10 publication, so there's not really any students that  
11 they can get students to apply from.

12 DERRY OLIVER: Uhm, I would also like to add to  
13 that where most of the time I have heard about  
14 journalism opportunities through a friend or a  
15 classmate and that's honestly what led me to learn  
16 about the bill and also the Youth Journalism  
17 Coalition. Instead of my school, I learned it  
18 through a student and at most, what I've learned  
19 about journalism via school is at a career day fair  
20 last year, where they invited journalists in but  
21 that's at most what happened. We didn't get any  
22 follow ups. We didn't receive any formal way to  
23 contact them. I know one girl at my school who  
24 deathly wants to be a journalist, however, she



1  
2 doesn't even know where to start. The school doesn't  
3 offer anything on their end to help us with that.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, everybody is quickly  
5 building the plane as we're flying it pretty much  
6 right?

7 DERRY OLIVER: Yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How much funding are you  
9 looking for in FY26?

10 SOPHIE MODE: So, we're looking to match funding  
11 from both the City Council and private foundations  
12 but from City Council Members, we're looking for  
13 \$10,000 to \$15,000 of discretionary funding.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: See, they came prepared.  
15 They did their homework. They know what they want.  
16 They know how much it's going to cost. It's all  
17 about belts in the room. I will make sure, I like  
18 that. Thank you. Thank you for coming prepared and  
19 thank you for fighting for your space right? For you  
20 to be seen and heard and to tell stories. I don't  
21 want to tell your story; I want you to be able to  
22 tell your story and congratulations to each and every  
23 one of you. You guys did amazing at the gala. You  
24 have the best key note speaker ever. I love her.

1  
2 So, thank you and you already know I'm your champion  
3 and your Ali. Thank you.

4 PANEL: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Next panel Alaina Daniels,  
6 Eman Gad, Raky Sy, Amanda Martinez, Quadira Coles,  
7 Jasmina Salimova, Isabelle Chow. And if I butchered  
8 a name, please forgive me. [02:22:11]- [02:22:21]  
9 And thank you New York City Public Schools for  
10 staying behind to listen to our young people. Make  
11 sure you're connecting with them too. [02:22:27]-  
12 [02:22:39]

13 QUADIRA COLES: I thought I was loud enough. How  
14 is my voice? Okay. Good afternoon Chair Joseph and  
15 the members and staff of the Committee on Education.  
16 My name is Quadira Coles, I'm the Director of Policy  
17 at Girls for Gender Equity and I will be reading a  
18 testimony on behalf of student S, who cannot be here  
19 but she is a part of our Young Women's Advisory  
20 Council program. Student S. is offering testimony  
21 because she has been impacted by dress codes at her  
22 school. Start testimony.

23 I attend a school with a uniform policy, and I've  
24 seen a lot of unfairness surrounding how dress codes  
25 are enforced. I've been dress-coded multiple times.

1  
2 The uniform policy doesn't take any personal style  
3 into consideration, making it difficult to express  
4 myself. The enforcement of dress codes is  
5 unpredictable since sometimes they are enforced  
6 strictly and other times not at all.

7       Once, a teacher chased me around the school to  
8 dress-code me, even though I didn't need to wear the  
9 uniform that day. This has made me fearful of that  
10 teacher having personal bias towards me and how that  
11 will affect if I get dress coded in the future or  
12 not. My school often claims to promote leadership  
13 and self-independence yet enforces a strict uniform  
14 policy that makes all of us wear the same clothes and  
15 colors.

16       The cost of uniforms is another issue. Many  
17 students cannot afford them. I've seen a student  
18 stitch the school logo onto a polo shirt to meet the  
19 requirements. When you get dress-coded, you are  
20 pulled out of class, asked why you're not in uniform,  
21 and sent to detention after school. The disciplinary  
22 measures seem to depend on the enforcing teacher or  
23 staff member's mood that day. The dress code is also  
24 not inclusive, especially for the large Muslim  
25 population at our school. Teachers also tend to

1 dress code based on how "nice" an outfit looks.

2 These experiences have created an uncomfortable  
3 atmosphere for me at school. I often feel anxious  
4 about whether what I'm wearing will get me dress  
5 coded.  
6

7 Overall, the situation is unfair and upsetting,  
8 as there's no consistency in enforcement. For  
9 solutions, I recommend involving the student council  
10 in writing dress code policies to ensure student  
11 representation. Uniforms should be made more  
12 affordable, and faculty should receive training to  
13 avoid cultural insensitivity and to acknowledge their  
14 own biases. I also recommend Council passing two  
15 bills: Int. 0118-2024 and Res. 0292-2024. These  
16 bills are really important to me as solutions to  
17 resolving the issues that occur as a result of unfair  
18 dress coding. The reporting required in these bills  
19 will create accountability and make sure that  
20 everyone has a clear definition of what is  
21 acceptable, which will promote equity across schools.

22 Inclusivity in dress codes is also necessary to  
23 understand the different needs of each student.

24 Thank you for your time and consideration and  
25 testimony.

1  
2 ALAINA DANIELS: Good afternoon. My name is  
3 Alaina Daniels. I'm a white, queer, neurodivergent,  
4 nonbinary, trans woman and teacher. I've been  
5 teaching at New York City middle and high schools for  
6 twelve years. I've taught science, activism, sex  
7 education, robotics, algebra, engineering, queer  
8 media, biology, and been a lunch lady.

9 Currently, I'm the Co-Founder and Executive  
10 Director of Transformative Schools. Throughout my  
11 career, I have observed marginalized students and  
12 teachers being policed by dress codes in ways that  
13 privileged community members are not judged. As an  
14 eighth grade advisor, Black and Brown, queer, trans,  
15 and fat students often came to me upset that they had  
16 been punished for wearing tank tops and crop tops  
17 while their skinny white straight cis peers were not.  
18 Together we researched the history of dress codes and  
19 discussed solutions. We came to the belief that due  
20 to implicit bias in our oppressive world, no dress  
21 code will ever be enforced equitably. We decided to  
22 advocate for a new dress code that simply stated: "We  
23 trust students to choose what to wear to school.  
24 Please don't be hateful."

1  
2 After significant organizing, including teach-ins  
3 and showing up to school wearing t-shirts with  
4 slogans like "Girls Don't Dress For Boys" and "Is  
5 This Against The Dress Code, Too?," we convinced the  
6 school leadership to trepidatiously adopt our  
7 proposed dress code. Four years later, there hasn't  
8 been a problem. I am here today to support to  
9 Quadira Coles and Girls for Gender Equity as the  
10 leading CBO doing this work at the city and level.  
11 As a science teacher who loves data and yet only had  
12 anecdotes to share above, I want to especially thank  
13 Quadira and GGE for the ginormous amount of effort  
14 collecting data and sharing their research reports.

15 As I love to tell students, "Science and math are  
16 some of the most powerful tools to change the world."  
17 While GGE collected data about the ways that dress  
18 codes themselves are oppressive, we need to ensure  
19 that we are counting kids who are targeted by dress  
20 codes. This includes counting trans kids, especially  
21 trans girls, especially those who are additionally  
22 marginalized by race, religion, body size or other  
23 [INAUDIBLE 02:27:34].

24 As we have repeatedly heard today, gender  
25 modality is not currently collected in any of the DOE

1 data, including about dress codes or bullying.  
2  
3 However, we do know that 3 percent of NYC youth are  
4 transgender or nonbinary and 85 percent of trans  
5 youth feel unsafe at school. Please improve  
6 Resolution 0292 and also Resolution 0266 to ensure  
7 that NYC DOE is not erasing some of our most  
8 marginalized young people and then pass these  
9 resolutions and other information gathering  
10 Resolutions to provide us with data to prove who is  
11 being unfairly punished. This will allow us to make  
12 targeted interventions in schools to limit harm to  
13 students. Students can't learn math and science if  
14 they don't feel safe and seen at school. Thank you  
15 very much.

16 EMAN GAD: Thank you Alaina. Good afternoon  
17 Chair Joseph and the members and staff of the  
18 Committee on Education. My name is Eman Gad and I'm  
19 the Policy Coordinator here at GGE but I am  
20 testifying today on behalf of Fevour Edosa. She is  
21 a part of the Speakers' Bureau at Girls for Gender  
22 Equity. She is not able to be here today because of  
23 her Regents.

24 So, as you hear, GGE is an intergenerational  
25 organization based in Brooklyn, New York committed to

1  
2 the all-around development of Black girls and gender  
3 expansive youth of color. GGE has been a leader in  
4 the conversation around gender-based violence and  
5 ending school pushout for close to two decades.

6 I will now be testifying in first person as a  
7 favor. I am offering testimony today in support of  
8 Int. 0118-2024 and Res. 0292-2024, which, if passed,  
9 would help all schools. I also offer testimony to  
10 demonstrate the positive outcomes that arise from  
11 implementing good policies that include student  
12 perspectives and to highlight the profound impact of  
13 allowing individuals to express themselves and  
14 develop their unique styles. Growing up, I had the  
15 freedom to wear whatever I wanted to school. In  
16 fact, I often wondered if my school even had a dress  
17 code policy because it was never a constraint for me.  
18 This freedom was incredibly beneficial as it helped  
19 me develop my own sense of style and allowed me to  
20 express myself in unique ways. Being able to  
21 experiment with my clothing choices during those  
22 formative years played a significant role in shaping  
23 my personal identity. I now have a strong sense of  
24 style, something that might not have been possible if  
25 I had been restricted by a strict dress code.



1  
2 High school is a critical time for self-  
3 discovery, and it's important to set a foundation  
4 that allows students to feel comfortable with  
5 themselves and their styles. Life doesn't end in high  
6 school, and there isn't a dress code once you leave.  
7 By giving students the freedom to explore their  
8 personal style during high school, we help them build  
9 confidence that will benefit them long after  
10 graduation. Because of my experimentation, I was able  
11 to develop a sense of confidence and style beyond  
12 high school.

13 Passing Int. 0118 and Res. 0292 will ensure that  
14 all schools have dress codes that allows their  
15 students to experience this growth and development.  
16 Alongside these bills, schools should train teachers  
17 and staff on how to best handle students who do not  
18 adhere to dress code policies in ways that do not  
19 impede their self-expression and confidence growth.  
20 Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

21 JASMINA SALIMOVA: Good afternoon Chair Joseph  
22 and the members and staff of the Committee on  
23 Education. My name is Jasmina Salimova and I'm part  
24 of the Young Women's Advisory Council program at  
25 Girls for Gender Equity.

1  
2 GGE is an intergenerational organization based in  
3 Brooklyn, New York committed to the all-around  
4 development of Black girls and gender expansive youth  
5 of color. GGE has been a leader in the conversation  
6 around gender-based violence and ending school  
7 pushout for close to two decades. I am offering  
8 testimony today because I want to make sure young  
9 people, such as myself, feel confident and safe in  
10 their clothing and self-expression and also  
11 acknowledge the blatant racism, body discrimination  
12 and misogyny behind dress codes. I support passing  
13 both Int. 0118-2024 and Res. 0292-2024 to make sure  
14 that there is a system in place to hold schools  
15 accountable in their implementation of dress code  
16 policies and to ensure that dress codes are inclusive  
17 of diverse cultures, bodies, gender expressions, and  
18 sexual orientations.

19 In middle school, my first introduction to dress  
20 codes came when my friend who had a curvier body type  
21 was dress coded for wearing a tube top. This  
22 confused me, because other girls in my school did not  
23 get in trouble for their tube tops or tank tops; the  
24 only difference was their body types. That's when I  
25 started realizing that the dress code targeted

1 students with specific body types. Later on, in high  
2 school, I was sitting in gym class once when my  
3 Latina friend walked in with an oversized, wrinkled,  
4 school branded shirt upset that she had been dress-  
5 coded for her low-cut top. White girls in my school  
6 with similar body types were wearing the same tops  
7 but were not subjected to the same level of  
8 punishment by school staff. The racist double-  
9 standard was clear. The gendered double-standard  
10 also became clear, too, because the only time I have  
11 ever witnessed or heard of a boy getting dress-coded  
12 was when my male peer took off his shirt in the  
13 lunchroom and only put it back on after he got dress-  
14 coded. Additionally, I have heard countless  
15 complaints from my peers about unsettling  
16 interactions with male teachers, and all instances of  
17 the dress code enforcement were carried out by female  
18 staff in my school. Given such discriminatory  
19 applications, it must be the case that dress codes  
20 are not protecting students, especially not young  
21 women, but rather protecting instructors.

22  
23 Because of these experiences, I avoid dressing  
24 the way I want to in order to avoid a harsh and  
25 humiliating punishments that may come with being

1 dress-coded. To address this, I ask that both Int.  
2 0118 and Res. 0292 be passed. I also ask that before  
3 developing a new dress code or reexamining an  
4 existing one, schools should consult with their  
5 School Leadership Team, parents, and various members  
6 of the student body in order to ensure that different  
7 perspectives and identities are considered and  
8 respected. Thank you for your time.

9  
10 AMANDA MARTINEZ: Okay, good afternoon Chair  
11 Joseph and the Members and staff of the Committee on  
12 Education. My name is Amanda Martinez delivering  
13 testimony on behalf of student Natalie Henry who  
14 couldn't be here today due to Regents Examination.  
15 She is a part of the Speaker Bureau program at Girls  
16 for Gender Equity.

17 GGE is an intergenerational organization based in  
18 Brooklyn, New York committed to the all-around  
19 development of Black girls and gender expansive youth  
20 of color. GGE has been a leader in the conversation  
21 around gender-based violence and ending school  
22 pushout for close to two decades. I am offering my  
23 testimony today in support of Int. 0118-2024 and Res.  
24 0292-2024 because it is a common experience for women  
25 and girls to be subject to harassment on the basis of

1  
2 what they wear, and if my testimony can lead to the  
3 safe exploration of style and gender expression for  
4 future generations, then I'd Like to contribute.

5 Of course, there are some valid intentions behind  
6 the creation of dress codes, but their enforcement  
7 has unfairly targeted and victimized young women. I  
8 didn't know about the term "dress code" until middle  
9 school, when I noticed peers in school were getting  
10 tapped for wearing certain things like tank tops,  
11 skirts, shorts, or crop tops. There wasn't a clear  
12 dress code policy, though, so its enforcement seems  
13 to come from school staff members' own unpredictable,  
14 personal, and sometimes, biased opinions. The dress  
15 code was enforced so frequently, and so often  
16 arbitrarily, that a silent protest took place in  
17 which students, mainly female began intentionally  
18 wearing the items that one would customarily get  
19 dress coded for.

20 Our school was close-minded in terms of creative  
21 pursuits, hence their rejection of students' creative  
22 expression. The lack of creative exploration and  
23 expression caused me to leave that school for another  
24 school that did value creativity and individuality in  
25 both the staff and student body.

1  
2 In conclusion, if dress codes seek uniformity,  
3 then such policies should be enforced uniformly.  
4 Dress code standards must apply to all genders,  
5 races, and bodies fairly. That is why I believe a  
6 system for holding schools accountable for their  
7 dress code policies is necessary and why I am  
8 advocating for Int. 0118 and Res. 0292 to be passed  
9 today.

10 RAKY SY: Good afternoon Chair Joseph and the  
11 members and the staff of the Committee on Education.  
12 My name is Raky Sy and I am reading on behalf of  
13 Rayna Young. Ryan actually is an alumni of the  
14 National Agenda for Black Girls Steering Committee at  
15 Girls for Gender Equity. And she is also a partner,  
16 she recently graduated with a master's degree in  
17 public policy, and Girls for Gender Equity was the  
18 partner organization for her capstone project.

19 With their support, she produced a research  
20 report entitled Dress Codes, Pushout, and Self  
21 Expression: An Examination of New York City Public  
22 Schools, where she did a qualitative review of over  
23 100 school dress codes policies from all five  
24 boroughs and assessed them based on their adherence  
25 to the Department of Education guidance and other

1  
2 criteria of note, see Appendix A attached to this  
3 testimony.

4 She developed her own evaluation system and  
5 rubric because I noticed that the Department of  
6 Education (DOE) did not have any reporting metrics to  
7 accompany the guidance that they issued on dress code  
8 policies. While it is evident that the department  
9 values inclusivity, the absence of an accountability  
10 structure for schools leaves much to be desired in  
11 practice. She found that a significant percentage of  
12 dress code policies are not publicly available  
13 online. In her sample of the 128 secondary schools  
14 that reported suspending at least one student for  
15 dress code violations between 2021-2023, only 68  
16 schools had digitally accessible dress code policies.  
17 This is gravely concerning, as DOE has suspension  
18 data, but not data regarding the language used in the  
19 policies themselves, and there is no way to assess if  
20 the school policy met the DOE expectation of gender-  
21 neutral, culturally competent dress codes.

22 Passing Int. 0118-2024 and Res. 0292-2024 is a  
23 crucial step in making the inclusive school  
24 environment that the DOE outlined in their guidance a  
25 reality. This reporting mechanism will not only

1  
2 encourage schools to uphold the standards of the DOE  
3 when it comes to dress codes but can also promote  
4 collaboration and sharing of best practices among  
5 schools.

6 In her review, she found some inspiring examples  
7 of schools explicitly stating that they value  
8 students' ability to express themselves as a tenet of  
9 their dress code policies. While schools are  
10 environments for learning, they are also an arena for  
11 young people to develop a sense of self and exist in  
12 a safe space. It is up to the adults to foster that  
13 environment, and to take action to preserve it in the  
14 face of adversity. With that being said, Raky urges  
15 the committee to pass Int. 0118 and Res. 292, in  
16 order to protect and uplift the stories you have  
17 heard from the youth present today, and thousands of  
18 other students who are your future constituents.  
19 Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

20 ISABELLE CHOW: Good afternoon Chair Joseph and  
21 members and staff of the Committee on Education. My  
22 name is Isabelle Chow and I am a recent graduate of  
23 the Master of Social Work program at Hunter College  
24 and a social work intern with the Sisters in Strength  
25 program at Girls for Gender Equity. I am testifying



1  
2 today in support of Int. 0118-2024 and Resolution  
3 292-2024.

4 While I am not currently a student of the New  
5 York City Public School system, I can speak on my  
6 experience I have working with students and the  
7 knowledge I gained researching my graduate thesis  
8 paper on the experiences of Black girls in schools.

9 The lived realities of identifying as a young  
10 femme of color comes with sexism, adultism,  
11 xenophobia, and racism. Simultaneously, many case  
12 studies have shown that school climate plays a large  
13 role in the outcomes of students in that school.  
14 Being that dress code is something that can affect  
15 anyone implies that it plays a large role in the  
16 learning environment that policies create.

17 Passing Intro. 0118 and Resolution 292 would  
18 address these issues that young people face at the  
19 intersections of race, class, gender and dress codes.  
20 Specially, Intro. 0118 will allow policies to be more  
21 accessible and equitable through information sharing  
22 and open dialogue on representation and reporting of  
23 dress codes in schools. Additionally, passing  
24 Resolution 0292 will alter the way we view the  
25 impacts of dress code on our students through

1  
2 inclusion of diverse backgrounds. The truth is,  
3 implicit bias, exclusionary policies and subjective  
4 enforcement keeps students out of the learning  
5 environment and hinder their success in schools.  
6 Alignment and teacher training across district  
7 schools is a huge step towards bridging the gap  
8 between diversity of students and school regulations.

9 School should be a place where we grant students  
10 expression and autonomy over their lives as important  
11 members of our society. In order to do this, we need  
12 more explicit interns, parent dress code regulations,  
13 that students, parents, and school personnel are all  
14 aware of to better integrate the community impacted.  
15 For these reasons, my ultimate recommendation is for  
16 the City Council to pass the two dress code related  
17 bills, Intro. 0118 and Resolution 0292 to create  
18 safer and more supportive learning environments for  
19 all students. Thank you for your time and  
20 consideration.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you all. I have two  
22 questions. What's the process of disputing a dress  
23 code violation at your school? Is there any faculty  
24 or staff you can talk to when you feel that you've  
25 been unfairly dress coded?

1  
2 RAKY SY: At my school, there is no disputing a  
3 dress code violation. Normally, we're given, if it's  
4 like a first time offender, we're given clothes to  
5 cover up and if it's not, then it usually leads to in  
6 school suspension or your parents come to pick you  
7 up.

8 AMANDA MARTINEZ: I've since graduated from high  
9 school but two years ago, my school was Townsend  
10 Harris High School where there was no recourse for  
11 contesting what was called a demerit, which was a  
12 permanent mark on your record for any dress code  
13 violation and those permanent marks, they would add  
14 up very quickly and you would get banned from prom,  
15 from graduation but there was no recourse for  
16 contesting demerits, at least when I was attending.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And there's no way to make  
18 it up after you've met the - you know how you can  
19 earn back your - let's say they take away prom, was  
20 there anyway to earn it back or it was just demerit,  
21 demerit?

22 AMANDA MARTINEZ: I know demerits expired after  
23 one year but if they were very serious and they never  
24 expired, otherwise I don't know of anyone that ever  
25 got a demerit off of their record.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Oh my goodness. Okay, so  
3 thank you all. That was my questions. Thank you.  
4 So, proud of you all. [02:41:54] - [02:42:07] The  
5 next panelist is Sarah Part and Megan Johannesen.  
6 [02:42:15]- [02:42:37].

7 SARAH PART: Thank you for the opportunity to  
8 testify. My name is Sarah Part, and I am the Senior  
9 Policy Analyst at Advocates for Children of New York.  
10 I'm here to testify about four of the bills at  
11 today's agenda. Firstly, AFC supports Intro. 266,  
12 which will require the creation of a bullying  
13 prevention taskforce. AFC hears from many families of  
14 students who have experienced bullying, harassment, or discrimination  
15 at school, and our written testimony includes two recommendations for  
16 further strengthening the bill.

17 We also urge the city to include \$5 million for  
18 the mental health continuum \$6 million for  
19 restorative justice practices in the final Fiscal  
20 Year 2025 budget. As both initiatives play an  
21 important role in preventing and addressing bullying.  
22 We appreciate the attention the Council and the  
23 Public Advocate have given to school accessibility  
24 and agree with the underlying goal of Intro. 0399,  
25 which would require annual reporting on compliance  
with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

1  
2 As AFC detailed in a report last year, two thirds  
3 of New York City Schools are still not fully  
4 accessible to students, parents and educators with  
5 physical disabilities. Until the day the city  
6 reaches full ADA compliance, transparency about the  
7 accessibility status of individual school buildings  
8 is crucial and we would be happy to partner with the  
9 Council and the Public Advocates Office to strengthen  
10 Intro. 0399.

11 More immediately, the most important step the  
12 Council could take to ensure that the ADA has real  
13 meaning in the lives of New Yorkers with Disabilities  
14 is to ensure that the 2025-2029 capital plan  
15 allocates an additional \$450 million for a total  
16 investment of \$1.25 billion for school accessibility  
17 projects.

18 AFC supports Intro. 733 which would require  
19 annual reporting on career and technical education  
20 programs. English language learners and students  
21 with disabilities have historically been  
22 underrepresented in the City CTE programs and at a  
23 time when New York City Public Schools is expanding  
24 career connective learning. Public data reporting  
25 can help hold the city accountable for eliminating

1  
2 barriers and ensuring all students have equitable  
3 access to CTE.

4 Our written testimony uhm, includes several  
5 recommendations for amending the bill to help make  
6 the data produced as useful as possible. Finally, we  
7 support Intro. 771, which would require the  
8 distribution of information on interpretation  
9 services. Too often parents who have limited English  
10 proficiency do not receive the interpretation and  
11 translation services they need to be able to  
12 participate in their children's education.

13 In addition to moving the bill forward, we urge  
14 the Council to ensure that the final budget includes  
15 \$4 million for the Immigrant Family Communications  
16 and Outreach Initiative, which is currently exported  
17 by expiring city funding. We appreciate the  
18 Council's work on these bills and your efforts in the  
19 final week of budget negotiations. Thank you.

20 MEGAN JOHANNESSEN: Good afternoon. My name is  
21 Megan Johannesen. I am a law student intern at New  
22 York Lawyers for the Public Interest or NYLPI in the  
23 Disability Justice Unit. Thank you Chairman Joseph  
24 and Education Committee Members for your time and  
25 attention today and allowing us to speak on Intro.

1  
2 Bill Number 0399, which promotes school accessibility  
3 in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities  
4 Act and local non-discrimination law.

5       NYLPI interacts with students with disabilities  
6 and their families on a daily basis and we hear about  
7 the difficulties they face in receiving services at  
8 school. The availability of accessible schools and  
9 programs within the schools is a critical to students  
10 receiving an appropriate education. For reasons  
11 discussed in testimony by Advocates for Children, we  
12 ask the City Council to promote accessibility in New  
13 York City's Public Schools for people with physical  
14 disabilities including students, their families,  
15 teachers, administrators, and anyone who needs access  
16 to schools. Of course the cost of making schools  
17 accessible must be reflected in the city's budget.  
18 In addition to physical accessibility, City Council  
19 must ensure the data about placement and services  
20 available to students with disabilities are  
21 accessible to the entire community.

22       As discussed in a recent NYLPI report, there are  
23 more than 7,000 students in New York City education  
24 system who are classified as having emotional  
25 disabilities or ED. NYLPI identified an urgent need

1  
2 for the Department of Education to collect data on  
3 these students, including the fact that Black and  
4 Latino students are classified with ED at vastly  
5 disproportionate rates relative to their percentage  
6 in the school population. Children with disabilities  
7 deserve the city's commitment to investing in their  
8 education, both in terms of physical access and  
9 access to critical data. Thank you for your time and  
10 consideration.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for your  
12 recommendations on the bill. We'll definitely be  
13 reaching out. Thank you. [02:46:49]- [02:46:59].  
14 Next panel Husein Yatabarry, Sunita Viswanath, Mark  
15 Fowler, Yyra Takat, Harmeet Kamboj. If I misspelled,  
16 please forgive me. Dr, Henry Goldschmidt. [02:47:21]  
17 - [02:47:47]

18 HUSEIN YATABARRY: Good afternoon Education  
19 Committee Chair Rita Joseph. My name is Husein  
20 Yatabarry. Islamophobia post-9/11 was quite high in  
21 the public school system for a Black Muslim student  
22 like myself. "Saddam Hussein," "terrorist," "Osama"—  
23 these were just a few of the Islamophobic insults  
24 that students thought were "jokes."  
25



1  
2       So, we're here requesting that Resolution 95  
3 finally pass the Education Committee and the City  
4 Council calling for religious diversity curriculum to  
5 be instituted for K-12 students for professional  
6 development for those educators to be religiously  
7 responsive to all the like different religious  
8 practices within our city and then for also reporting  
9 and uhm, like we were talking about before, dress  
10 codes to be accommodating for students and any  
11 bullying to be condemned.

12       You would think there would be a tremendous  
13 difference in 2024 after the landscape of bullying  
14 and religious indifference within schools but NYCPS  
15 reports highlight the urgency for our legislation.  
16 367 religious bias incidents were recorded between  
17 September 2022 and June 2023. This data is available  
18 thanks to Local Law 51. We have to wait until the  
19 new data comes out for this current school year but  
20 from the Chancellors own mouth at the congressional  
21 hearing, uhm, since October 7, there has been 281  
22 bias incidents in New York City Public Schools and  
23 approximately 30 of those have been - 30 percent of  
24 those have been Islamophobic, 42 percent of those  
25 have been antisemitic and that was on May 8<sup>th</sup>.

1  
2       So, that's over the course of what maybe six  
3 months. That number should be zero. No matter  
4 what's happening in the world, there is work being  
5 done in NYSPS to meet the moment but this shouldn't  
6 just meet this moment, it should meet every moment.  
7 Education policy is extremely difficult but I think  
8 it's imperative, even the resolutions are symbolic  
9 for our city's legislatures to make a statement and  
10 support of efforts to promote religious diversity  
11 understanding in schools for students and adults.  
12 Resolution 95 was formerly Res 476 and before that  
13 Res 1257.

14       For us, this must be the last number this  
15 Resolution has, because this statement needs to be  
16 made not just by our coalition but by the City  
17 Council to say inclusivity and religious diversity  
18 are not just tolerated but supported. I urge the  
19 City Council to recognize the importance of  
20 Resolution 95. It's a defining moment for our city  
21 to affirm its values of respect and inclusivity.  
22 Your support is crucial for the wellbeing of our  
23 community and for the future of our children. We  
24 hope this passes the Ed Committee and passes the next  
25 possible stated hearing to be into law. Thank you.

1  
2 REVEREND MARK FOWLER: Good afternoon. I'm  
3 Reverend Mark Fowler. I am the CEO of the Tanenbaum  
4 Center for Interreligious understanding. I also want  
5 to say that Tanenbaum is the secular and non-  
6 sectarian not for profit and while Resolution 95 does  
7 directly call on collaboration with faith based  
8 organizations, I think that there are a number of  
9 organizations in the space that are both faith  
10 aligned as well as faith specific.

11 As a community, we know that educating students  
12 about religious differences creates societies that  
13 are safer for intolerance and hatred and bullying and  
14 in real time, we're seeing the acts of anti-Jewish  
15 and anti-Muslim hate a great deal in response to the  
16 war between Israel and Hamas but not solely and that  
17 actually does not cover the numbers of people who are  
18 experiencing religious based hate that's not being  
19 reported, that are not being reported to schools or  
20 other institutions. These are just the ones that we  
21 know.

22 Regarding Chancellor Banks's statements in his  
23 testimony before Congress, we acknowledge that  
24 schools have experienced this - these 281 bias  
25 incidents but when we were listening to the testimony

1  
2 earlier, by the Department of Education, there didn't  
3 seem to be consistency about the tracking of  
4 incidences being reported by students and parents and  
5 disaggregating that data to figure out where are  
6 these complaints coming from and who is not  
7 reporting.

8 Uhm, all of us here as part of this coalition are  
9 making it clear that religious hate is not to be  
10 tolerated and nobody wants to like advocate for that.  
11 But at the same time, there's a responsibility within  
12 the Department of Education within all city agencies  
13 to actually condemn religious discrimination against  
14 students when it happens and to create classrooms  
15 where young people develop the social and emotional  
16 learning skills that they need. I'll just say that I  
17 was a public education teacher for 11 years. I  
18 taught high school. I was a coordinator of student  
19 affairs for the Brooklyn Comprehensive Night High  
20 School. I did my preservice education at Duke  
21 University.

22 I did untold numbers of professional development  
23 with the Department of Education and not once was  
24 there any provision for the diversity of religious  
25 beliefs practices that I would encounter and need to

1  
2 support as a learning professional. So, as a Native  
3 New Yorker but also as a former teacher and as the  
4 CEO of Tanenbaum, we strongly recommend that the City  
5 Council adopt Resolution 0095. Thank you so much.

6 Thank you Mark. Good afternoon and thank you for  
7 holding this hearing on Resolution 0095 in support of  
8 religious diversity education in New York City's  
9 public schools.

10 DR. HENRY GOLDSCHMIDT: I'm Dr. Henry  
11 Goldschmidt. I'm the Director of Programs at the  
12 Interfaith Center of New York and Director of the  
13 Religious Worlds of New York Summer Institute for  
14 Teachers, a program funded by the National Endowment  
15 for the Humanities, that helps K-12 teachers from  
16 throughout the U. S. teach about religious diversity.

17 Many of my colleagues will speak today about the  
18 experiences of bullying and harassment faced by far  
19 too many young New Yorkers. The Interfaith Center of  
20 New York shares their concerns, and we urge the City  
21 Council, as well as the Department of Education, to  
22 support religious diversity education, as an  
23 essential step to address bullying against religious  
24 minorities in our public schools.

1  
2       In my remarks, however, I'd like to focus on the  
3 many benefits of religious diversity education for  
4 all young New Yorkers. Given the First Amendment  
5 framework that appropriately governs our public  
6 schools, it is essential for the City Council to  
7 understand that religious diversity education is not  
8 just intended to benefit religious students.

9       Indeed, the academic study of religion can  
10 contribute to a number of the DOE's fundamental  
11 educational goals. In order to be truly educated in  
12 American history, global studies, literature, or the  
13 arts, our students need a rich understanding of  
14 religion and religious diversity. How, for example,  
15 can they hope to understand the African American  
16 civil rights movement without a basic knowledge of  
17 the Black Church? In order to succeed in their  
18 professional lives, our students need the religious  
19 literacy required to build relationships with diverse  
20 colleagues. How, for example, can they work  
21 effectively and respectfully with observant Jews or  
22 Muslims without a basic knowledge of kosher and halal  
23 dietary laws?

24       Sorry, just another minute. And in order to  
25 participate in civic life, our students need an

1  
2 empathic understanding of their diverse neighbors'  
3 beliefs and values. Religious diversity education is  
4 thus essential to the health of our multicultural  
5 democracy. For all of these reasons, all of these  
6 benefits for all students secular and religious  
7 alike, the study of religion in public schools is  
8 clearly permissible under the establishment clause of  
9 the first amendment.

10 In deed in the 1963 Supreme Court decision that  
11 banned school sponsored devotional bible reading in  
12 public schools, the court stated "it might well be  
13 said that one's education is not complete without a  
14 study of comparative religion. Nothing we have said  
15 here indicates that such study, when presented  
16 objectively as part of a secular program of  
17 education, may not be effected consistently with the  
18 First Amendment. The Interfaith Center of New York  
19 therefore joins with diverse religious leaders,  
20 educators, policy makers, and the Supreme Court in  
21 calling upon the New York City Council to adapt  
22 Resolution 95 and support religious diversity  
23 education in our public schools. Thank you.

24 Can you hear me? Before I begin, I would like to  
25 thank you Chair Rita Joseph, Ms. Shahana Hanif, and

1  
2 the Co-sponsors of Resolution 0095 for which I'm here  
3 to show my support.

4       YYRA TAKAT: My name is Yyra Takat, I'm 17 years  
5 old and a student at the Bronx High School of Science  
6 and I've been attending NYC DOE public schools for my  
7 entire life. I grew up going to the mosque, fasting  
8 during Ramadan and confused why I had to skip school  
9 for Eve until I was in the second grade when it  
10 finally became a holiday on the school calendar. I  
11 grew up learning about Christmas and Hanukkah during  
12 the holiday season in my class, making ornaments and  
13 dradles and seeing my friends constantly show off  
14 their first communion dresses and confused. Why are  
15 they wearing wedding dresses?

16       I grew up fortunately that my parents would  
17 explain to me what these events and holidays meant  
18 for the people celebrating and why they celebrated.  
19 For example, like first communions impartially when I  
20 asked. Others, however, have been evidently less  
21 fortunate than me in this experience where it is  
22 clear that their parents or guardians have projected  
23 prejudices against the groups being asked about  
24 instead.



1  
2 I was in the first grade when I received a death  
3 threat from a classmate. It was a small class of 14  
4 kids including myself and I was the only Muslim.  
5 Others knew because I was absent on Eve and asked the  
6 teacher, "why didn't we have any activity or lesson  
7 on this holiday, my holiday?" My classmate told me,  
8 "I'm going to come to your house at night and murder  
9 you because you're a terrorist."

10 I remember this vividly only because of what  
11 happened after. I stared at him blankly and  
12 confused. I responded, "sorry, my parents wont let  
13 you. I can only have sleep overs with my girl  
14 cousins." Because I didn't know what the word murder  
15 meant at the time.

16 Later that day, as my mom was paying for a  
17 parking ticket after a doctor's appointment, I asked  
18 her what that word meant murder. I remember how  
19 shocked she was that her little baby was asking what  
20 such a violent word meant and what is engraved in my  
21 memory is the horror of the woman paying for her  
22 ticket beside us face, when I told my mom where I  
23 heard the word. Because I knew what the word  
24 terrorist meant. We learned about it at the  
25

1  
2 beginning of the year after schoolwide moment of  
3 silence after 911.

4       This event still plays in my mind. How could a  
5 child be so full of hate? My questions were answered  
6 a few years later by that very same kid. I was in  
7 the 4<sup>th</sup> grade when the 2016 presidential elections  
8 were taking place and there was an increased presence  
9 of islamophobia in the media and also my school.

10       I was outside of my math class when he threatened  
11 that his cop father would deport my family back to  
12 Afghanistan because we caused 911. And this  
13 horrified me, not only because I was scared that my  
14 life as I knew it would change but also because would  
15 send me to a country whose culture and languages were  
16 completely foreign to me because my family is from  
17 India.

18       My Muslim math teacher was within an ear shot in  
19 driving to the Dean's office where I was called the  
20 next day for him to read me an apology letter where  
21 he said that he wouldn't bully anyone for the rest of  
22 the year and there was no additional action taken.

23       I had exposure to the beauty of my faith because  
24 I practice it but this boy's only exposure was what  
25 his parents were telling him my people were doing.

1  
2 What Fox News and the former President were promoting  
3 stereotypes of and the five minute lessons we learned  
4 on what happened during 911 at our school. Looking  
5 back on the circumstances, even after the toll it has  
6 taken me on how I accept my own culture and how I  
7 have confidence and pride in my own identity, it  
8 makes sense to me how a child could bring such  
9 thoughts to a school and project them onto others  
10 like me.

11 When the one place we go to to learn and be  
12 prepared to enter society will not teach us about the  
13 things we need to know about the diversity of the  
14 world that we live in, there's no question why  
15 religious and race based featured is so prevalent not  
16 only in adults but also in children because the  
17 education that we receive is too little too late.  
18 And this is why I, along with many other children who  
19 have experienced race and religious based hatred like  
20 me would receive such an incredible and so much  
21 better education if this Resolution were adopted.  
22 Thank you.

23 ARIANNA EL HALOUI: Hello and good afternoon  
24 Chair Joseph. My name is -

25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Bring the mic a little  
3 closer.

4 ARIANNA EL HALOUI: Yeah, is that good? Perfect.  
5 Good afternoon my name is Arianna El Haloui, I'm the  
6 Advocacy Program Coordinator at Muslim Community  
7 Network. Today I'm here to testify on behalf Sunita  
8 Viswanath from Hindu's for Human Rights who could not  
9 be here. So, the statement begins.

10 The oldest Hindu text the Rigveda includes the  
11 words let noble thoughts come from all directions.  
12 The core of many Hindu traditions is an open  
13 mindedness. An engagement with ideas whether you  
14 agree with them or not. This also means an openness  
15 to a diversity of thought, belief. Many Hindu text  
16 including the Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita are  
17 presented as a dialogue between one person in the  
18 role of a teacher and the other in the role of a  
19 student. In the Gita, the teacher is Lord Krishna, a  
20 common prayer known to most Hindu's, especially  
21 children includes a line be one for whom teacher is  
22 God.

23 We see teachers as God, books, and schools as  
24 sacred. The act of learning as sadhana or an act of  
25 faith and one of the four equally legitimate paths to

1  
2 the ultimate truth is Yoga, the path of attaining  
3 knowledge. Clearly education, teaching and learning  
4 essential to Hindu life and practice, we recognize  
5 that culturally affirming education on Hinduism is a  
6 critical need in New York City, which is home to a  
7 rapidly growing South Asian and Indo-Caribbean  
8 diasporic population. This Resolution will help  
9 ensure Hindu students feel authentically represented  
10 in their schools and that their peers have a more  
11 robust and holistic understanding of our faith.  
12 Furthermore, a lack of basic education on religious  
13 diversity is one of the reasons why we've seen  
14 increases in hate crimes that target all religious  
15 minorities and we must act swiftly to correct this  
16 and help support a pluralist society where all New  
17 Yorkers feel safe. I feel emboldened and energized  
18 by the large contingent I see here today of faith and  
19 community leaders and am proud to stand in solidarity  
20 with them in support of this Resolution. Thank you.

21 HARMEET KAMBOJ: Good afternoon. My name is  
22 Harmeet Kamboj, I'm the Senior State Policy Manager  
23 at the Sikh Coalition. I'm honored to be here to  
24 testify in support of Resolution 95. As part of my  
25 work, I advocate for policies that ensure the

1 inclusion and representation of all faiths and  
2 background in school curricula across the nation.

3  
4 In April, the Sikh Coalition published, Where are  
5 you really from? A national Sikh school climate  
6 report. Our landmark survey based study of Sikh  
7 students experiences with bullying and other aspects  
8 of school life across the country. The survey found  
9 that 78 percent of Sikh youth, that's almost eight in  
10 ten, reported experiencing behavior defined as  
11 bullying.

12 One in ten young Sikh's reported being bullied by  
13 teachers or staff and more violent physical bullying  
14 was reported by Sikh boys who worked [INAUDIBLE  
15 03:05:01] as Articles of faith. The report also  
16 found a correlation between less inclusive schools  
17 and more bullying incidents as well as a relationship  
18 between bullying and poor mental health outcomes.

19 We feel confident in two things. First, what is  
20 true for the youth of our community is surely true  
21 for the youth of other marginalized groups. And  
22 second, the most fundamental step to countering this  
23 problem of bias based bullying must be through  
24 inclusive education. Resolution 95 ensures the  
25 development of a religious diversity curriculum to

1  
2 address the kids of anti-religious hate that impact  
3 young Sikh's in New York City Public Schools. It  
4 also takes a proactive approach to addressing student  
5 safety and cultural competency by pushing for  
6 professional development for teachers. For these  
7 reasons, the Sikh coalition is proud to support  
8 Resolution 95. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSPEH: Does New York City Public  
10 Schools currently collaborate with any of the  
11 organization if at all?

12 REVEREND MARK FOWLER: Yes, we at Tanenbaum,  
13 we've been doing professional development for  
14 teachers through the Office of School Safety and I  
15 would say over the last three years, the numbers have  
16 been increasing but we're as you know, usually capped  
17 at about 30 teachers per session, so at this rate,  
18 we'd never get to the kind of saturation that we  
19 would need. And we do need all organizations who are  
20 doing this work to be considered, so we're not asking  
21 for any one of us to be considered but to - they are  
22 all of our work as foundation.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many teachers have you  
24 trained so far? If it's only 30, how long for - how  
25 many teachers have we trained?

1  
2 REVEREND MARK FOWLER: I think over the last  
3 three years, it's been about 500 altogether.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay.

5 ARIANNA EL HALOUI: At Muslim Community Network,  
6 after the Hillcrest incident, we have collaborations  
7 with the New York City Public Schools for some  
8 optional programming on diversity within the Muslim  
9 context. It's been optional workshops so we've had  
10 workshops where we've had it as low as two people.  
11 Then on June 6<sup>th</sup>, which was professional development  
12 day, we had a 50 person Zoom room. So, I would say  
13 up to now we've probably done workshops for about  
14 like 80 to 90 people.

15 DR. HENRY GOLDSCHMIDT: The Interfaith Center of  
16 New York does not have the same kind of I think  
17 relationship with DOE Central than Tanenbaum has been  
18 able to develop but we have often worked with  
19 individual teachers you know in public, private and  
20 faith based schools to help to lead site visits to  
21 local houses of worship for their students to bring  
22 sometimes faith leaders into the classroom for  
23 conversation with students. But that's more on a  
24 kind of ad hawk bases with individual teachers and  
25 then we've also had a number of DOE teachers over the



1  
2 years participate in our summer institute, which is  
3 open to teachers from throughout the United States  
4 but we always have a good number of DOE teachers in  
5 the room as well.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How long is your summer  
7 institute for?

8 DR. HENRY GOLDSCHMIDT: It's a three week  
9 program. It actually, the next one starts on July  
10 8<sup>th</sup>. We've done this is going to be the 7<sup>th</sup> running  
11 of the institute coming up in this July and each time  
12 we work with a group of 25 teachers from all over the  
13 U.S.. Again, a good number local but also nationwide  
14 and it's a very intensive program to train them to do  
15 a better job teaching about religious diversity.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Are you doing any advocacy  
17 about curriculum at the state level?

18 SUNITA VISWANATH: Yes, the Sikh Coalition is  
19 part of the Reach Coalition that is advocating for an  
20 AANHPI inclusive curriculum at the state level. It  
21 is just a small part of the education work that we  
22 do. We've been advocating for this legislation for  
23 the last two years. Unfortunately, it did not pass  
24 again this year but we are continuing our efforts and  
25 also engaging with the New York State Education

1 Department about ways that we can guarantee that  
2 AANHPI communities are included in state curricula.  
3 I also wanted to add that the Sikh Coalition has  
4 worked closely with principals and with teachers in  
5 South Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park to share  
6 professional development trainings and Sikh awareness  
7 trainings for teachers, staff and students.  
8

9 HUSEIN YATABARRY: As part of the state level, uh  
10 we have started talking to assembly members to -  
11 we've started working on a draft of a legislation on  
12 a state legislation for these diversity curriculums.  
13 This is something that can actually be bound by law  
14 as far as NYCPS is concerned, I think right now we're  
15 just like, want to gain the support of the City  
16 Council as well to like kind of go into that state  
17 legislation with support from our city officials but  
18 that is something that's on the works with an  
19 assembly member who we're working with legislative  
20 director in order to fine tune the draft language.

21 REVEREND MARK FOWLER: I would just add that  
22 already existing within the state regulations within  
23 the Department of Education within the social study  
24 standards and the language art standards, our  
25 guidance around teaching about religious diversity.

1  
2 So, in some instances we are trying to legislate what  
3 already exists.

4 DR. HENRY GOLDSCHMIDT: And if I may add very  
5 briefly, I think Mark's comment highlights the  
6 importance of professional development for teachers  
7 in this area because the standards are there from the  
8 Regents that students need to learn x, y, and z about  
9 religious diversity. But I know from years of  
10 experience working with teachers, many of them are  
11 afraid to touch the topic because they are  
12 misinformed about constitutional issues. As I said  
13 in my remarks, teaching about religion in public  
14 schools is clearly okay but not all teachers or  
15 administrators are aware of that. And they're also  
16 frankly afraid of parents or community backlash if  
17 they say something wrong. So, teachers need support,  
18 professional development and encouragement from the  
19 City Council, DOE on down in order to make what's  
20 already there in the Regent's standards a reality in  
21 New York classrooms.

22 HUSEIN YATABARRY: One last comment. I was just  
23 going to say I know Yyra kind of touched on it but at  
24 a very young age like you were saying, teachers are  
25 resistant to ever touch the topic of religion within

1  
2 classrooms but some like religious discrimination is  
3 pervasive at those ages of elementary and middle  
4 school but I know for me and myself and for many  
5 students in New York City, you start learning about  
6 other religions once you're like in 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>  
7 grade but by then, the damage is done for a lot of  
8 students by what they've heard, what they've  
9 experienced. Sometimes even physical as the job  
10 pulling's and we've heard about numerous incidents in  
11 our school system since October 7<sup>th</sup>. So, starting  
12 the younger the better. Obviously, development of  
13 age appropriate curriculum is necessary in order to  
14 make sure they can actually take in and comprehend  
15 the information. But it has to start from K up, if  
16 it doesn't then we're going to risk pervasive  
17 incidence until the age of 14, 15, which is just kind  
18 of ridiculous.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Have you - could you uhm,  
20 what are some of the resources New York City Public  
21 Schools can use to implement curriculum focused on  
22 religious diversity?

23 HARMEET KAMBOJ: The Sikh Coalition is a 20 year  
24 old organization and our education team has almost  
25 limitless array of lesson plans and curricula and

1  
2 trainings for teachers, administrators, staff. We have  
3 presented these materials to individual teachers and  
4 principals at the schools but we are also working  
5 very hard to connect with you know the bureaucracy of  
6 New York City Public Schools to be sure that  
7 particularly the Punjabi speaking Sikh population  
8 with limited English proficiency is supported  
9 adequately and to make sure that schools with high  
10 Sikh student populations also have the tools that  
11 they need to offer religious accommodations  
12 appropriately.

13 We have had quite a bit of trouble to be honest  
14 with identifying and working with the appropriate  
15 folks in New York City Public Schools, Department of  
16 Education to be sure that these initiatives can be  
17 widespread. We're making end roads here, working  
18 with the Office of Language Access and with the  
19 Respect for All team but there's still a lot more  
20 work to do.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Religion doesn't leave you  
22 when you enter the New York City Public School  
23 system. Actually, it follows you. It's under the  
24 impression that once you come in front of the New  
25

1  
2 York City Public Schools or any type of building,  
3 your religious freedom is gone. Actually, it's not.

4 REVEREND MARK FOWLER: Can I on the question of  
5 resources, I just want to point out two different  
6 things. First, there's a very healthy kind of  
7 community of educators and scholars nationwide  
8 working on these issues in public schools and other  
9 schools around the country. So, there have been  
10 materials created by the American Academy of  
11 Religion, which is the professional association for  
12 college and University religion professors.  
13 Materials created by the National Council for the  
14 Social Studies, by the First Amendment Center in DC.  
15 There's a whole, there's a laundry list of national  
16 organizations that have created either lesson plans  
17 or guidelines for teachers that can be used in K-12  
18 settings but then also I would say more locally, the  
19 most valuable resource for New York teachers is the  
20 extraordinary religious diversity of the city itself.

21 The Interfaith Center of New York has a  
22 particular interest in promoting community based  
23 religious diversity education. Just kind of a fancy  
24 way of saying field trips to houses of worship. But  
25 field trips to houses of worship don't and

1  
2 pedagogically and constitutionally appropriate ways  
3 to introduce students to their religiously diverse  
4 neighbors. So, I think if educators are empowered to  
5 reach out to local faith communities and built those  
6 relationships, that's the most extraordinary resource  
7 they're ever going to find.

8 DR. HENRY GOLDSCHMIDT: I know you didn't think  
9 we had all these answers. We learned from the other  
10 people.

11 REVEREND MARK FOWLER: Plus, we've been doing  
12 this stuff for a long time.

13 DR. HENRY GOLDSCHMIDT: I would just say it's  
14 something occurred to me that uhm, at a particular  
15 point Tanenbaum had a contract number with the  
16 Department of Education. It was generally just an  
17 opportunity where the vendor we could apply for  
18 services or services could be paid for us but if  
19 there were a contract number for religious diversity  
20 education that could access all of the resources of  
21 the organizations represented here throughout our  
22 coalition and otherwise, then it would eliminate some  
23 of the negotiating of who do we go to and who is  
24 going to actually sign it because it's not  
25 centralized. Not like anything is but there's no one

1  
2 department that says religious diversity education is  
3 something we handle. It generally just happens to  
4 pop off and then the other thing is that we are often  
5 providing that training at our own cost. The schools  
6 and/or teachers do not have any money to actually pay  
7 us and as much as we are not for profits, we are for  
8 money and need to pay our people. And so, that is  
9 really you know one of the resources.

10 Also, I think it makes a difference if there is  
11 language or some kind of statement, not just from the  
12 Chancellor, although I think it's incredibly  
13 important and his testimony at Congress was  
14 fantastic. But the Department of Education at the  
15 state level and at the federal level. When there  
16 were instances several years ago, then Arnie Dunkin,  
17 the Secretary of Education, actually sent out a  
18 mandate from the State Department of Education around  
19 religious diversity education and it was because of  
20 the rise, not just of any one group but noticing the  
21 tide of peoples being discriminated against and acts  
22 of violence against them. So, getting that level of  
23 attention, I think makes it easier and one other  
24 asset are parents. Unfortunately a lot of parents  
25 end up coming into school to either defend their



1  
2 children or defend their faith and there's not an  
3 opportunity for just the exploration of the tradition  
4 from an individual lived experience. People are  
5 often just coming in to defend themselves. So, I  
6 think that a resource that would be useful would be  
7 to restructure the conversation about what our  
8 intention is and what our goals are. We're not just  
9 trying to avoid hate crimes and we're not just trying  
10 to respond in the moment to who is being targeted at  
11 the moment. We're really talking about the kind of  
12 society we want to live in in New York City and how  
13 we're educating young people to participate in that.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Wonderful thank you. Thank  
15 you all.

16 PANEL: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [03:18:51]-[03:19:01] The  
18 next panel is AjiFanta Marenah, Kulsoom Tapal,  
19 Japreet Singh, and Layla Hay. [03:19:15]- [03:19:42]

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin your testimony.

21 AJIFANTA MARENAH: Okay, good evening Chair Rita  
22 Joseph. Thank you so much for your time and  
23 scheduling us in for the hearing today. My name is  
24 Ajifanta Marenah, I'm the Advocacy Program Manager at  
25 Muslim Community Network but I'll be reading a

1 statement from our partners at the Armenian American  
2 Action Network written by Dr. Susie Abajan(SP?) and  
3 Sophia Amen(SP?) and Christine Sajina(SP?). They  
4 couldn't be here today but they signed on and sent us  
5 over.  
6

7 So, Armenian American Action Network proudly  
8 joins community organizations, advocates and  
9 stakeholders in calling for the passage of New York  
10 City Council Resolution Number 0095. As an Armenian  
11 American Civil Rights Organization dedication to  
12 uplifting the rights and representation of all  
13 people, we recognize the urgent need for an  
14 educational curriculum that centers religious  
15 diversity for our youth in our schools.

16 Res number 0095 is a bold and imperative measure  
17 that would compel the New York City Department of  
18 Education implement a curriculum across all grade  
19 levels that emphasize religious diversity.  
20 Additionally in professional development  
21 opportunities focused on religious diversity for  
22 educators. This initiative is a crucial step towards  
23 ensuring our educational environment generally  
24 reflects and respects the rich mosaic of beliefs in  
25 traditions that constitute our city and society at

1  
2 large. An educational curriculum that highlights  
3 really just diversity would not only enhance  
4 students' academic experience but also equip them  
5 with the cultural competence necessary to drive in  
6 our diverse and interconnected world.

7 Educators equipped with professional development  
8 on this crucial topic will be better prepared to  
9 handle diverse classrooms and foster an environment  
10 of mutual respect and understanding. We urge the New  
11 York City Council to pass Res Number 95 setting a  
12 transformative precedent for educational systems  
13 nationwide to follow. In today's climate where  
14 intolerance and discrimination are alarmingly  
15 prevalent, it is more important than ever that young  
16 people and educators feel represented and safe within  
17 our schools.

18 Religious diversity is a fundamental pillar of  
19 our community that must be vigorously protected.  
20 Armenian Action Network is honored to advocate for  
21 the passage of Res. Number 95. This Resolution  
22 represents a significant stride towards rectifying  
23 historical and systemic injustices in our city, in  
24 our country and improving the lives of children,  
25

1  
2 educators and working families in New York. Thank  
3 you so much for your time. We really appreciate it.

4 KULSOOM TAPAL: Hi, thank you so much Chair  
5 Joseph for your time. My name is Kulsoom Tapal, I  
6 lead the Education Policy work at the Coalition for  
7 Asian American Children and Families, CACF.

8 As an organization fighting for API children and  
9 families, we stand united with our community to  
10 advocate for the future of our children and the  
11 quality of their education. At CACF, we know the  
12 exclusion from curriculum has contributed to  
13 longstanding erasure and is a root cause of violence  
14 and harassment towards historically marginalized  
15 communities. This historic and present erasure has  
16 created a seemingly endless cycle of violence and  
17 hate incidence both inside and outside the classroom.  
18 As a coalition with a 90 plus org membership,  
19 reflective of diverse communities within the AAPI  
20 diaspora, the intersectionality between various  
21 identities is not lost on us.

22 We know that so many API communities are subject  
23 to discrimination not only for the color of their  
24 skin or the facial attributes they may have but also

1  
2 for the religious community they may belong to or  
3 presume to belong to.

4       It's why we are urgently calling for the passing  
5 of Resolution 95 and calling for a religious  
6 diversity curriculum. Curriculum void or religious  
7 diversity at best has a detrimental impacts on the  
8 confidence and identity development of students  
9 belonging to specifically religious minority  
10 communities and at worst, feels malicious stereotypes  
11 and misunderstandings that can lead to bullying, hate  
12 crimes and violence.

13       We know that students are experiencing bullying  
14 at alarming rates, which is why in addition to  
15 passing this Resolution, we are in support of Intro.  
16 266, which calls for the creation of a bullying  
17 prevention taskforce. CACF is proud to have our  
18 Asian American student advocacy project or ASAP, a  
19 youth leadership program for Asian American Pacific  
20 Islander Youth from across New York State, or I'm  
21 sorry New York City. Our ASAP-ers have shared with  
22 the City Council time and time again how important it  
23 is for schools to foster safe environments and work  
24 intentionally to address bullying which manifests in  
25 multiple forms including micro aggressions,

1  
2 perpetuating the model minority myth and limited  
3 language access alongside many other issues.

4 For months, ASAP-ers have been testifying right  
5 here in City Hall about the importance of funding the  
6 mental health continuum, which is now at risk of  
7 being completely cut alongside ensuring the funding  
8 of social workers and school nurses in schools.

9 Students have repeatedly shared testimonials right  
10 here about the lack of support for mental health  
11 issues, many of which are caused and furthered by  
12 bullying in schools.

13 The creation of a bullying prevention taskforce  
14 inclusive of diverse student voices is an important  
15 step forward for identifying root causes and  
16 solutions necessary to address the growing mental  
17 health and bullying crisis in schools. So, we ask  
18 you to please act with urgency to pass both the  
19 Resolution 95 as well as build 266 as an essential  
20 step to advancing more inclusive schools. Thank you.

21 JAPREET SINGH: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE

22 [03:25:40]- [03:25:45] Good afternoon Madam Chair,  
23 Council Members, staff, guests and my fellow  
24 coalition partners. My name is Japreet Singh and I  
25 am representing the Sikh community. It has been a

1  
2 very tough few years for our community. My community  
3 has been a victim of senseless hate time and time  
4 again. Just a few months ago, a hate based assault  
5 resulted in the death of an innocent elderly Jasmer  
6 Singh(SP?). He was brutally attacked right in front  
7 of his wife following a road rage incident. The  
8 result, a broken family and a mourning diaspora. A  
9 few short days before that disgusting attack, there  
10 was another victim, a young 19 year old teen who was  
11 riding the bus on his way to Sunday service. He was  
12 punched three times and his [INAUDIBLE 03:26:34]  
13 which is a turban, was ripped off his head while he  
14 was told in America, and I quote, "in America, you  
15 don't wear this."

16 The result, a young man who came to this country  
17 with hopes to pursue the American dream and escape  
18 the dangers of an unstable society now left  
19 disappointed and traumatized for the rest of his  
20 life.

21 These were just two accounts. I can give you  
22 countless more stories and experiences of hate my  
23 community has dealt with in the last few decades.  
24 The one thing in dealing with these hate crimes and  
25 working with our community partners I have learned is

1  
2 that education is the only way to address hate as  
3 roots. This is why I am testifying in favor of  
4 Council Resolution 0095 which will help us combat  
5 hate crimes before they even take place. In an era  
6 where hate crimes continue to plague our society,  
7 it's essential to understand how religious education  
8 can help mitigate these incidences by promoting  
9 tolerance, understanding and unity.

10 You see the battle against hate, we as Sikh's  
11 have to fight here in New York City opens up a lot of  
12 old wounds. 40 years ago, there was a mass genocide  
13 that took place against the Sikh community carried  
14 out by the Government of India. Tens of thousands  
15 Sikh's were brutally murdered based on their articles  
16 of faith and name. It is why my father left  
17 everything behind to come to America but who would  
18 have thought that similar hate would follow them here  
19 as well.

20 Growing up, I was very disconnected with my  
21 faith, I was embarrassed to tell people I was Punjabi  
22 and Sikh. I didn't even tie a turban because I was  
23 scared of what people might think and my fear turned  
24 into trauma. When I constantly turban tying friends  
25 having to deal with being called towelhead and



1  
2 terrorist or Sadam BinLaden. This is a reality for  
3 so many kids and even adults out there, not only for  
4 my faith but other faith groups as well but I can't  
5 help but to think what kind of society we'd have if  
6 my generation had the opportunity to actually learn  
7 about these "terrorists." Their history, their  
8 culture, their values, maybe we could have saved the  
9 lives we have lost over the years due to hate. Maybe  
10 we could have helped create a more tolerant and  
11 understanding classroom.

12       You all look like some cool Council Members. I  
13 know Rita Joseph is because we partied together a  
14 little bit at a colleagues wedding. I'm sure you  
15 follow culture and music but I don't know if you guys  
16 know of an artist named Dilgeed Disange(SP?). I  
17 think Council Member Krishnan or Hanif might do but  
18 for those who haven't heard of him, I'm most certain  
19 you have heard of Jimmy Fallon from the Tonight Show.  
20 Dilgeed Disange who is a very big Punjabi Artist from  
21 India became the first Punjabi Artist to make an  
22 appearance on the Tonight Show last night. To put  
23 into perspective, he is like the Punjabi version of  
24 Drake or Taylor Swift. He appeared in full  
25 traditional outfit and a turban in front of a very

1  
2 diverse audience who have never heard of him. What  
3 is my point of bringing him up? Well definitely  
4 check out his music for starting right? I'm sure  
5 you'll enjoy it but it was a very big moment for the  
6 Punjabi community, the Sikh community, the South  
7 Asian community. It helps start a conversation. It  
8 helps us ask ourselves and encourages us to do  
9 research on the unknown. Likewise, if we put our  
10 kids in a position to learn the unknown, do their own  
11 research and actually draw well educated conclusions  
12 about other faiths and cultures that have  
13 historically been left out of text books or have been  
14 inaccurately cited, we can move towards a more  
15 inclusive and just society.

16 This is why this Resolution is so important. We  
17 would be taking a proactive step in ensuring we can  
18 tackle hate at its roots. We are hopeful that you  
19 will help us in this fight against hate and give hope  
20 to communities that have for far too long been  
21 victims of senseless violence and definitely Madam  
22 Chair watch yesterday nights Tonight Show. Thank you  
23 so much for the opportunity.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'm sure you did. I'm sure  
25 you did. Just wanted to share a little context.

1  
2 Thank you for that. Thank you. My professor was  
3 Professor Sing at Mary Mountain College, so I always  
4 had classmates who wore turbans and we just hung out.  
5 We were kids. So, I think it's also important as you  
6 said, we start very young learning about love and  
7 tolerance and compassion more than anything and  
8 empathy. So, that's important. As a Haitian  
9 American we carried our burden as well. We were  
10 called AIDS carriers and that's what propelled me  
11 into this kind of work. I was 19 year old,  
12 organizing my first rally against FDA that said we  
13 were AIDS carriers. And what our defining was for us  
14 it was when Yi Clef Jung(SP?) came to the grammies  
15 with his flag, his Haitian flag wrapped around him  
16 and they made sure that we were like well, good.  
17 It's okay to Haitian. So, I can definitely relate to  
18 what's happening, so it's always important for me to  
19 listen to this.

20 As the Education Chair also to know that it  
21 starts, I've always said that. It starts in school  
22 and it also starts at home. So, we got to have that  
23 tough conversations. Thank you.

24 LAYLA HAY: Good afternoon. Thank you Chair  
25 Joseph and members on the Committee on Education for

1 holding this hearing and giving the Asian American  
2 Federation the opportunity to testify. I am Layla  
3 Hay, a policy and advocacy intern at AAF, where we  
4 proudly represent the collective voice of more than  
5 70 member nonprofits serving 1.5 million Asian New  
6 Yorkers.

7  
8 Today, I am here to show my support for  
9 Resolution 95, sponsored by Council Member Hanif. In  
10 2021, AAF launched our Hope Against Hate campaign to  
11 address a recent surge in anti-Asian violence. We  
12 surveyed 400 Asian New York City residents about  
13 their experiences with hate crimes and 36 percent of  
14 respondents suggested that ethnic studies and cross-  
15 cultural events would be most effective in preventing  
16 anti-Asian bias incidents.

17 It is clear that education and multicultural  
18 exchange are crucial in preventing discrimination and  
19 fostering safety, tolerance and understanding.  
20 Education combats stereotypes and creates an  
21 inclusive environment for youth of all ethnic and  
22 religious backgrounds. As a city that touts values  
23 of progress and multiculturalism, we must ensure that  
24 educational institutions actually reflect and uplift  
25 the identities of their students.

1  
2 As a born and raised New Yorker, I'm so fortunate  
3 to have grown up with classmates from incredibly  
4 diverse backgrounds. It taught me empathy and  
5 respect for identities different from my own.  
6 However, not all students have this experience and  
7 not all students feel safe and supported being  
8 themselves at school.

9 I grew up in a Buddhist household, yet I often  
10 felt uncomfortable talking about my religion at  
11 school. I feared my peers would not understand my  
12 families beliefs. I felt like an outsider. Looking  
13 back now, I realized that I was far from alone and I  
14 know that I would have benefited greatly from a  
15 curriculum of religious diversity. I would have felt  
16 more comfortable sharing that part of myself and I  
17 would have had the opportunity to appreciate my  
18 classmates religious and cultural practices.

19 No young person should ever feel discriminated  
20 against, ostracized or bullied for their religious  
21 identity. It is imperative to pass Resolution 95 to  
22 establish a culturally sensitive curriculum and  
23 develop school practices around religious diversity.  
24 This initiative is not merely about curriculum  
25

1  
2 development, it's about dispelling ignorance and  
3 preventing our city from becoming a vehicle for hate.

4 Thank you for allowing AAF to testify on this  
5 critical subject and we look forward to continuing  
6 this work with all of you.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I have a quick  
8 question. How does New York City Public Schools  
9 partner with your communities to ensure that students  
10 feel safe and supported and what other supports are  
11 needed?

12 AJIFANTA MARENAH: I'll start more MCN, I know  
13 Husein touched a little bit earlier but in addition  
14 to the diversity education workshops that we do in  
15 New York City Public Schools, we're also like being  
16 called into do mitigations. For instance, at James  
17 Madison High School, we're working with  
18 Administrations there to make sure they had a prayer  
19 room, working with the different MSA and cultural  
20 groups to ensure there's understanding between the  
21 different students groups on campus there as well as  
22 also doing hate crime prevention workshops in New  
23 York City public schools teaching them the difference  
24 between hate and bias incidents, how and where to  
25 report and providing the data on those anti-religious

1  
2 hate crimes and how they can be better community  
3 members to those with different faith.

4 KULSOOM TAPAL: The experience that we've had,  
5 you know I know someone mentioned that they've been  
6 called into like, I'm from the Richmond South - I  
7 live in South Ozone Park and we actually, I reached  
8 out to my own high school that I graduated from and  
9 there was actually a big wall that I've noticed.  
10 Like you know we offer to come in and do panel  
11 discussions, hate crime workshops, just come in and  
12 talk to the kids. So, you know I remember I talked  
13 with one of the AVP's and he's like you know the  
14 leadership just doesn't want to do it and I found  
15 that kind of shocking because John Adams isn't one of  
16 the you know let's say best high schools out there  
17 and but it does have one of the biggest Sikh  
18 communities, Muslim communities that attend that  
19 school so I would think that they would benefit from  
20 it.

21 So, when I saw that kind of hesitance, I'm like,  
22 you know what? Like there's more work that can be  
23 done and in the opposite side, my middle school has  
24 been open to it so they called us in this past April,  
25 which is when we celebrate Vaisakhi, which is a

1 creation of our religion [INAUDIBLE 03:36:39]. We  
2 were able to go in and speak over the loud speaker  
3 and just educate the students on like what this  
4 holiday means, so we're hopeful to expand upon that  
5 in the future as well.

7 LAYLA HAY: I can speak on one aspect, so I know  
8 Hidden Voices has been brought up a few times  
9 throughout today and we had the pleasure of working  
10 with the DOE at various points whenever they had  
11 capacity, whenever we could you know to support with  
12 the creation of the Hidden Voices. Specifically the  
13 AAPI Hidden Voices that was ruled out earlier this  
14 year and one of the things that we noticed and we've  
15 been in conversation with community members,  
16 educators, parents, students, and also with DOE  
17 itself right? And one of the common thread issues is  
18 that even though this curriculum, this Hidden Voices,  
19 Resource Guide has been developed and it's published.  
20 It's available online. It's not necessarily  
21 accessible because people don't know it exists and  
22 the DOE does not have capacity or funding or you know  
23 all of these things and maybe there's not  
24 prioritization you know whatever the case may be to  
25 actually follow through on implementation. So, there



1  
2 to the extent of implementation, it was like okay, we  
3 printed out all these resource guides. We sent ten  
4 to each school, every school in New York City and the  
5 principal signed off on it and that's kind of the  
6 end, like that's what we know happened and so,  
7 there's no really understanding of how principals are  
8 using it. If principals actually told the educators  
9 that these resource guides are available, there's  
10 like no data on those things so, there's this aspect  
11 of you know curriculum being developed but then also,  
12 what does it look like to actually implement said  
13 curriculum. Also a resource guide is very different  
14 from a lesson plan and these sorts of things are  
15 really important when talking about this.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, the implementation  
17 hasn't been done and that's also important and I  
18 always say that the curriculums, even the books,  
19 representation model right? We have to start  
20 creating books where students see themselves. They  
21 see themselves; they accept themselves and they've  
22 been seen because society tell them one thing and we  
23 got to make sure we're supporting them in that way.  
24 When you see yourself in the books, it's different.

25

1  
2 My library always had students. I had a huge  
3 amount of student who wore hijabs and all of my books  
4 made sure that there were girls in my library with  
5 books. There were books with students, with girls  
6 with hijab. If they see that it's like oh, somebody  
7 sees me. So, it's important. I even have a mule in  
8 my district called hijab girls. So, it's important  
9 because I represent a huge diverse community. I'm  
10 trying to meet the needs of all the communities and  
11 as an educator, I always see that it's important for  
12 students to see themselves as well. So, the  
13 curriculum is a great idea but if it's somewhere in  
14 boxes it's not serving the purpose that it was  
15 created for, right?

16 So, we got to work on that. Thank you so much.

17 AJIFANTA MARENAH: And to what Kulsoom said,  
18 while we're doing these workshops and presentations,  
19 there just one time workshops, so having the  
20 resolution pass and actually having the curriculum  
21 will help streamline the process and create a more  
22 like centralized structure for us to be able to come  
23 in as a coalition and have like meetings with the DOE  
24 and set out like, these are the guidelines, right?  
25 These are the you know the lesson plans. These are

1  
2 the things that we have used previously in  
3 professional development trainings with educators  
4 that have worked and we've seen worked in other  
5 states as well. So, yeah, looking for -

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: But this should be an  
7 ongoing conversation as the world change so rapidly,  
8 so the conversation has to be ongoing. It can't  
9 happen because we're in a crisis mode. It has to be  
10 ongoing whether there's a crisis or not. These  
11 conversations need to constantly happen as a reminder  
12 as we all live in this big world, we all got to get  
13 along. We all have to coexist with each other and  
14 interact with each other, not just coexist and don't  
15 know anything about each other but getting to know  
16 each other and it could be the simplest things. Why  
17 do you do this? Why do you wear that? Why do you  
18 eat this and versus that? So, it could be the simple  
19 little exchange that could make a huge difference.  
20 Thank you.

21 AJIFANTA MARENAH: Thank you so much.

22 JAPREET SINGH: Can I say one thing?

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Sure.

24 JAPREET SINGH: And I really like one of your  
25 bills that you had mentioned in the beginning with

1  
2 the newspaper. Just to expand upon that, some of my  
3 nieces and nephews now, I'm getting old but now  
4 they're in schools and one thing when I was in high  
5 school and even middle school, we didn't have no  
6 extra curriculums in my high school and my middle  
7 school. So, when I started college I was so looking  
8 forward to was joining student government right  
9 because I knew there was an outlet. I feel like you  
10 know just to take that newspaper idea even further,  
11 maybe other extra curriculums that kids can  
12 participate in so they can get involved with maybe  
13 MSA that schools that don't have it or you know  
14 Cabot's or Sikh associations, whatever it may be.  
15 Like, when we give our kids the liberty to start  
16 something, they are much more independent and also  
17 much more well versed on what south side and the real  
18 world at an earlier age.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That's one of the bills  
20 actually to talk about the afterschool and the clubs,  
21 what kind of clubs and kids can create clubs in  
22 schools right to seek organization, and the middle  
23 school can create, seek and so there can be dialogue  
24 and communication among their classmates. Thank you.

25 PANEL: Thank you.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you to all the in-  
3 person panelists. If there's anyone else who wishes  
4 to testify in person, please make your way to the  
5 Sergeant at Arms desk in the back. [03:42:28]-  
6 [03:42:40].

7 We will now hear from our virtual panelists.  
8 Once your name is called, a member of our staff will  
9 unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms will set the  
10 timer and give you the go ahead to begin. Please  
11 wait for the Sergeant to announce that you may begin  
12 before delivering your testimony. First up is Nelson  
13 Mar followed by Faron Shariff, Samira Tasoom and Rita  
14 Taleb and Hiba Kalil.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Nelson, you may begin.

16 NELSON MAR: Thank you. Thank you Chair Joseph  
17 and the rest of the members of the Education  
18 Committee for the opportunity to testify regarding  
19 Intro. 266. My name is Nelson Mar and I am a Senior  
20 Staff Attorney in the Education Rights Project at  
21 Legal Services NYC. The largest provider of civil  
22 legal services in the country.

23 Thank you Chair Joseph and members of the City  
24 Council for your continued support of our overall

1 mission to bring justice for low-income residents  
2 throughout New York City.

3  
4 Today, I would like to provide some comments on  
5 Intro. 266, regarding the creation of a taskforce on  
6 the prevention of bullying which is sponsored by you  
7 Chair Joseph. Bullying is an issue we see quite  
8 often at Legal Services NYC with our clients,  
9 especially with those students who are facing long  
10 term suspensions. Often these students are suspended  
11 for actions they engaged in while trying to stop  
12 being bullied. Moreover, the issue of bullying  
13 prevention is an issue that I have a very personal  
14 connection with. As I was a frequent target of  
15 bullies at school and in my neighborhood, which was  
16 almost entirely White, when my family moved in and  
17 essentially integrated the Queens neighborhood in the  
18 mid-70's. My personal experience engrained a  
19 lifelong commitment in me to confront and stop  
20 bullying. This is reflected in my work at Legal  
21 Services NYC where we have worked closely with  
22 community partners to address bullying by helping to  
23 found the Bronx Anti-Bullying Coalition, which has  
24 been uhm, working over the last almost six years now  
25 producing annual resource spheres to educate

1  
2 community members on how they could help prevent and  
3 stop bullying. And also through the work advocating  
4 for healing centered practices we adopted in all New  
5 York City Public Schools.

6 With respect to Intro. 266, Legal Services NYC  
7 believes it is an important goal to convene a  
8 taskforce to develop a plan to prevent bullying given  
9 how significant -

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

11 NELSON MAR: Is an issue in our public schools.

12 Could I just wrap up? Is that alright?

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Go ahead, you can wrap up.

14 NELSON MAR: Thank you. Specifically the bill  
15 would probably benefit from a couple of changes.  
16 Regarding the definition in Section 1A, we think it  
17 would be important to include a reference to ones  
18 appearance. Too often in the clients that we have  
19 worked with, they were targets of bullying based on  
20 their appearance, not necessarily tied to a protected  
21 class. Some students were targeted simply because  
22 they weren't wearing the right brand of shoes or  
23 there was something about their appearance that stood  
24 out from others.

1  
2           In addition, uhm, the two public meetings  
3 proposed in the bill in Section 1F, the taskforce  
4 should be directed to convene a listening session  
5 with agencies, organizations, or community groups  
6 involved in the prevention of bullying. Many groups  
7 and organizations are working tirelessly and at times  
8 effectively to reduce bullying in our schools and  
9 they should be able to share that knowledge and  
10 experience with the full taskforce.

11           Certainly, the bill should require the report to  
12 include an analysis of root causes of bullying and  
13 the impacts of bullying on all individuals in the  
14 school community, especially those individuals who  
15 engage in the bullying. I think often times when we  
16 talk about bullying, the focus is hyper focused on  
17 the individual whose the victim or the target of the  
18 bullying. But given our experiences, addressing  
19 bullying in schools, educators need to have a better  
20 understanding of those students who engage in  
21 bullying in order to develop an effective plan to  
22 minimize those behaviors and I did want to just  
23 finish by commenting on something that Dr. Davson  
24 mentioned earlier in her testimony, there is a  
25 disconnect in some of her testimony and what we see



1  
2 directly on the frontlines. A lot of times when our  
3 clients in these suspension hearings, when they've  
4 been - when the suspension has been upheld, even  
5 though they were engaging in actions to defend  
6 themselves at times from bullying, they are not given  
7 the opportunity to transfer. Dr. Davson talked a  
8 little bit about that all students who have  
9 experienced bullying have that right to transfer and  
10 that's not necessarily the case. If that student is  
11 who is just merely defending themselves, is then  
12 suspended for engaging in that defense of one self,  
13 we definitely believe these students should be  
14 treated with restorative practices and healing  
15 centered practices as opposed to facing more punitive  
16 disciplinary responses. Thank you for your time.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Foron Sharif.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

19 FORON SHARIF: Hi, can you hear me?

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

21 FORON SHARIF: Thank you. Thank you so much to  
22 City Council woman Rita Joseph and to the entire City  
23 Council Education Committee for allowing me the  
24 opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Foron  
25 Sharif. I am a recent graduate from Baruch College,

1  
2 a constituent liaison for the New York State Senate  
3 and I am proud product of the New York City Public  
4 School Education System. Having graduated from  
5 elementary school PS 99, IS2 50 from middle school  
6 and Thomas Edison CTE High School.

7 I am here today to testify in favor of passing  
8 Resolution 0095. If there is anything I have learned  
9 from my time spent in this New York City Public  
10 Education System, it is the beautiful diversity that  
11 Queens has to offer. From the first time I became  
12 friends with a Sikh turban classmate in kindergarten  
13 to the times I sang Hanukkah songs at PS99 for the  
14 holidays, I was surrounded with religious diversity.

15 During my time at the public education system, I  
16 was personally never attacked or faced racism from  
17 being an immigrant family, from being from an  
18 immigrant family or being from a Muslim family.  
19 However, while I was in middle school, I remember  
20 that that was the first time I was exposed to online  
21 content that was filled with hatred, racism and  
22 islamophobia after having received my first fall. I  
23 cannot and will not ever forget being exposed as a  
24 child to the online content such as, that Muslims are  
25 terrorists or that we Muslims don't belong in this

1  
2 country. This is what the islamophobia and hatred  
3 that inspired me to rise up on the path of leadership  
4 so that our community has representation to counter  
5 these false Islamophobic narratives. The reason why  
6 I mentioned this story of my past is to sympathize  
7 with any child here in New York City or the public  
8 education system who has faced incidence of  
9 islamophobia or antisemitism or any other sort of  
10 racism or hate crimes because this will -

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

12 FORON SHARIF: That I was exposed to.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please wrap up.

14 FORON SHARIF: Okay, yes. So, just to wrap up,  
15 I'm advocating and calling upon the Education  
16 Committee and other Council Members to take on  
17 Resolution 95 because in the midst of hatred and  
18 animosity, in the midst of extremists taking  
19 advantage of our high emotions and divisions, this  
20 City Council must step in to ensure that our students  
21 are aided with the education to which stand the rise  
22 in antisemitism and islamophobia so that there is a  
23 common ground and understanding between all students  
24 and groups regardless of religion. We desperately  
25 need Resolution 95 to pass the City Council so that

1  
2 we may have religious diversity, education, because  
3 this is the only solution that could help and protect  
4 students from being the victims of racism,  
5 antisemitism or islamophobia and protect them from  
6 being taken advantage of from extremist groups who  
7 wish to divide our communities here in New York City.  
8 Thank you once again.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The next person Samira  
10 Tasoom.

11 SAMIRA TASOOM: My name is Samira Tasoom. I am  
12 16 years old and I am a junior at the Young Women's  
13 Leadership School of Queens and I support Resolution  
14 95 because there are a lot of misconceptions that can  
15 be cleared up through this education and school  
16 environment would be much more welcoming and  
17 understanding instead of normalizing prejudice and  
18 bullying out of ignorance.

19 Such as a middle school, a Chinese classmate of  
20 mine asked me to call a Korean classmate Kin Jung Ung  
21 and I complied with at a second thought because I  
22 didn't understand the implications behind that  
23 comment, so learning more about each other, our  
24 cultures and religions, is extremely essential to  
25 avoid situations like that. Thank you to everyone

1 here. Thank you Council Member Hanif and the Chair  
2 of the Education Committee. Thank you for your time.

3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Next person,  
4 Rita Taleb.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

6 RITA TALEB: Good afternoon Chair Joseph and  
7 members of the Education Committee. My name is Rita  
8 Taleb and I'm the former community education program  
9 coordinator for the Muslim Community Network. A  
10 nonprofit dedicated to redefining and shaping the  
11 Muslim experience and NYC and the United States  
12 through community education, leadership development  
13 and advocacy.

14 In her book Cultivating Genius and framework for  
15 culturally and historically responsive literacy. Dr.  
16 Goldie Mohammed shares a powerful four part framework  
17 for cultivating intellectual excellence in our  
18 students.

19 First, is identity development. Second is skill  
20 development. Third is intellectual development, and  
21 fourth is criticality. This framework ensures  
22 students "capacity to read, write and think in the  
23 context of understanding power, privilege and  
24 oppression." Dr. Mohammed argues that "as long as  
25

1  
2 oppression is present in the world, young people need  
3 pedagogy that nurtures criticality." Therefore, I  
4 can't think of a more urgent time than now to pass  
5 Resolution 95. Resolution 95 calls for K-12  
6 appropriate religious diversity education curriculum  
7 in NYC. Religious sensitivity training for  
8 educators. Alerts to parents in the event of anti-  
9 religious hate and discrimination and including data  
10 on anti-religious hate crimes in annual school  
11 reports. The Muslim community overstands how  
12 exclusion from curriculum has contributed to  
13 longstanding erasure, violence, harassment, and  
14 bullying both inside and outside the classroom.

15 My esteemed colleagues have shared important data  
16 on this already. Imam Ally once said that there is  
17 no wealth like education and no poverty like  
18 ignorance. Today, I'm proud to be a part of the  
19 strong intersectional coalition of organizations who  
20 deeply care about inclusive education. That will  
21 only further cultivate the genius in our students.  
22 For the reasons our coalition mission has -

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

24

25

1  
2 RITA TALEB: I wholeheartedly support Resolution  
3 95 and urge this Committee to pass it. Thank you for  
4 your consideration and time.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Next person is Hiba Kalil.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: If there is anyone else on  
8 Zoom who wishes to testify, please use the raise hand  
9 feature. No hands. Thank you to all our panelists.  
10 This concludes the public testimony and our hearing  
11 for today. [GAVEL]

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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 July 15, 2024