

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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B E F O R E:
DANIEL DROMM
Chairperson

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

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, good afternoon everybody. My name is Council Member Daniel Dromm and I'm the Chair of the Education Committee. I want to thank all of my colleagues and all the witnesses and attendees for coming together for this very important hearing. Today in the Committee's oversight roll we examine the treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning students, family, and staff in the New York City public school system. We are at the start of a new administration and my hope is that the Chancellor and other officials at the Department of Education will take this opportunity to listen to the voices, among others, our most vulnerable students and work with us to address their needs. Today the Committee will focus on DOE's current policies and practices and will consider stakeholder concerns about how well those policies are working as well as recommendations for improvement. The Committee will also examine how the DOE has complied with DASA requirements and responded to discrimination complaints. Finally the Committee will explore how the DOE is proactively

1 identifying and addressing the needs of LGBTQ
2 students. Schools must ensure that their LGBTQ
3 students receive the education they are legally
4 entitled to in a setting that nurtures their
5 education as well as physical and emotional growth.
6 Similarly to attract the best and brightest talent
7 to our classrooms it is imperative that LGBTQ
8 faculty and staff receive the support they need.
9 Parents and guardians, a vital component to any
10 successful school community, must know that their
11 families are going to be respected. This hearing
12 will highlight for all of us both the problems in
13 how the DOE is dealing with this issue as well as
14 the direction of how we move forward. This hearing
15 also aims to identify gaps and knowledge about
16 LGBTQ students in New York City public schools.
17 Such data is critical to assessing and addressing
18 the needs of this population. Other cities such as
19 San Francisco have already made efforts to collect
20 data and to direct resources where the school's
21 LGBTQ population most needs it. The timing of this
22 hearing at the start of this administration as well
23 as the tenor of my chair is meant to emphasize how
24 critical this issue is to me and this Committee as
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1 well as to give us time to assess the problems and
2 then move decisively and comprehensively to address
3 identified injustices. Many witnesses here today
4 have been fighting for years to realize these
5 basic, civil, and educational rights. I, myself,
6 have spent my entire public career highlighting the
7 struggles of the LGBTQ members of our school
8 communities. My involvement in this issue and in
9 fact my involvement in public life began in 1992.
10 In response to a series of bias incidents including
11 racially motivated killings of African American men
12 in Bensonhurst and Howard Beach and the anti-gay
13 murder of Julio Rivera in Jackson Heights,
14 Chancellor Fernandez tried to introduce a tolerance
15 curriculum entitled "The Children of the Rainbow".
16 These pages were, three pages were dedicated to
17 LGBTQ families. The effort sparked controversy in
18 School District 24 where I taught. The Rainbow
19 curriculum whipped up by racist and anti-LGBT
20 forces highlighted precisely why it was and remains
21 so important to address these issues today. Over
22 two decades after Children of the Rainbow a
23 comprehensive plan to celebrate and not just
24 tolerate our diversity is needed more than ever. I
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1 do not think that the word tolerance accurately
2 expresses where we now need to be as a school
3 system or even as a society. Our school should
4 celebrate our diverse families, take pride in
5 acknowledging the innumerable accomplishments of
6 LGBTQ individuals and practice restorative justice
7 when they or any of its members fall short of
8 recognizing the inherent dignity of all. In 2014
9 New York City public schools lack a comprehensive
10 plan that addresses LGBTQ issues. New York State
11 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual
12 orientation. New York City adds protection based on
13 gender identity and expression. Marriage equality
14 is a reality, the Dignity for All Students Act is
15 in effect, yet the level of harassment, threats,
16 and violence directed at LGBTQ students remains
17 unacceptably high. The spate of high profile
18 suicides across the country highlight why we must
19 address, especially in the LGBTQ context, the links
20 between school climate and absenteeism, mental
21 health, and suicide. With the much welcome demise
22 of the military's 'don't ask, don't tell', a
23 climate of don't ask, don't tell cannot be allowed
24 to govern how matters of personal identity and
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2 family diversity whether relating to the teacher or
3 to the students are handled in our classroom. As a
4 25 year veteran school teacher and chair of this
5 committee I am particularly interested in hearing
6 how educators are treating LGBTQ issues with
7 honesty, openness, and respect. All teachers and
8 administrators are empowered to make a tremendous
9 impact in the direction of the lives of our young
10 charges. That is why I became a teacher. The
11 question today is what is the DOE doing to ensure
12 that all educators are taking such, such actions as
13 discouraging hate speech, setting an inclusive
14 tone, and providing necessary referrals. I, myself,
15 discovered the power of comforting words when I
16 discovered one of my students crying on the
17 playground at the height of the Rainbow
18 controversy. I questioned this 4th grader who was
19 in tears and she finally admitted that the other
20 students were teasing her because she had two
21 mothers. This Committee will also inquire into the
22 situation of LGBTQ identified teachers. What
23 consistent support across the entire system are
24 they being given to not be forced back into the
25 proverbial closet in order to pursue their passion

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2 for teaching? I was fortunate enough throughout
3 most of my career to teach and be myself. However,
4 during the height of the Rainbow debate I had to
5 endure threats to my livelihood. Community School
6 Board Member Frank Borzellieri, a self-proclaimed
7 white racist, an opponent of LGBTQ equality
8 tried repeatedly to have me fired by claiming that
9 I was teaching gay sex in the classroom. Our
10 principal later crumpled a flier that I had placed
11 in the teacher lounge for the LGBT Teachers
12 Association, marched up to my classroom, and threw
13 it at me saying don't put this S H... and I'll let
14 you fill in the other letters, on the walls of my
15 school again. Much to my distress he told me the
16 local school board would cut off my testicles, and
17 that's putting it nice, if I continued to fight for
18 gay rights. Fortunately I had tenor and was well
19 respected but no one including the Chancellor
20 reached out to help me although I asked. Learning
21 from the lessons of the past will we be able to
22 work together to ensure the way things were done is
23 not how they will be done moving forward. This
24 means no one should ever be punished for speaking
25 about the history of LGBTQ civil rights. Just a

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2 year and a half ago fifth grader Cameron Slade
3 wanted to deliver his award winning speech on
4 marriage equality but ended up having to heroically
5 battle entrenched institutional homophobia in his
6 school. And LGBT teacher should never be afraid
7 that administrators will not back him or her up as,
8 as, as administrators repeatedly failed to do for
9 me. A student from a so-called non-traditional
10 family should never be afraid to talk about his or
11 her two moms or two dads in or out of the
12 classroom. And no student should have to learn in
13 an environment saturated with anti-LGBT hate speech
14 and violence. The word F A G G O T is not that it's
15 thrown around with impunity especially in middle
16 schools while the impact of violence or the threat
17 of violence LGBT students reverberates throughout
18 the entire educational system. In what workplace
19 would such blatantly hostile, would such a
20 blatantly hostile environment be acceptable? In
21 what institute of higher education would there be
22 such a lack of deistical response to the needs of
23 the LGBTQ population? Why should our public schools
24 be any different? I hope the exposure of these
25 failures will not frustrate the administration or

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2 any of us here but rather spur us to immediate and
3 forceful action namely the implementation of
4 comprehensive programs in every school. With a few
5 exceptions nearly every single LGBTQ individual in
6 the country has stories of trauma, physical and
7 emotional, lost friends, silent teachers,
8 unsympathetic administrators, etcetera. How
9 devastating is it to a child in adolescent
10 development to have to live in fear, afraid to
11 reveal to the world who you are? How important is
12 it then to make our schools places where all young
13 people can learn in peace, obtain needed services,
14 and develop into productive members of our society.
15 I cannot overstate the importance of listening to
16 the voices of the LGBTQ community, especially the
17 students, who must not only deal with the normal
18 challenges of growing up but also have to face
19 deeply embedded societal and institutional
20 homophobia and transphobia. I feel strongly that
21 the Council Members and the Chancellor and all of
22 the adults who make decisions or otherwise impact
23 students' lives listen to their stories. By doing
24 this schools will be able to meet students where
25 they are. Failing these young people is not an

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2 option. When we fail them or any member of the LGBT
3 community we fail all members of our school
4 communities. I would like to remind everyone who
5 wishes to testify today that you must fill out a
6 witness slip which is located on the desk of the
7 Sargent of Arms near the front of the room. Please
8 note that all witnesses will be sworn in before
9 testifying. To allow as many people as possible to
10 testify, testimony will be limited to three minutes
11 per person. I am also going to ask my colleagues to
12 limit their questions and comments to five minutes.
13 So now, without anything further let me introduce
14 my fellow Council Members who are here as well. So
15 I have Council Member Mark Treyger from Brooklyn,
16 Council Member Vinny Gentile, Council Member
17 Antonio Reynoso, Council Member Inez Barren all
18 from Brooklyn on that side. And I have next to me
19 to my left Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer, Council
20 Member Laurie Cumbo, Council Member Debbie Rose,
21 Council Member Mark Weprin, Council Member Ritchie
22 Torres, and Council Member Corey Johnson in the
23 front row here.

24 [pause]

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So just talking with
3 my Legal Counsel Alex Schomberg [sp?] we had made
4 arrangements today to have the Chancellor here and
5 I'm very pleased that the Chancellor decided she is
6 going to join us. However, she is on her way. She
7 was out this morning speaking on UPK and we expect
8 her momentarily so I'm going to wait because I
9 think it's vitally important for the Chancellor to
10 hear the stories especially of these three young
11 people who are up here. So we're going to just take
12 a break for a couple of minutes I believe before
13 introducing them and she should be here very
14 shortly. So I do feel very strongly, particularly
15 because this has been the focus of so much of my
16 activism and the reason why I wanted to get elected
17 to office that we have this opportunity to share
18 these stories with our Chancellor. So hold on and
19 we expect her very shortly.

20 [pause, background conversations]

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well thank you very
22 much and we are very, very pleased to be joined by
23 the new school's Chancellor, Chancellor Carmen
24 Fariña. Thank you very much for joining us and we
25 really appreciate taking time out of your very busy

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2 schedule, especially all that's going on with UPK
3 and we're supporters of that and we're going to
4 pass a resolution that after the students speak
5 here today. But I very much appreciate you being
6 here to hear their stories and so I'm going to
7 introduce the first two and then Jimmy's going to
8 introduce the third. And the first one is Mazie
9 Varonian [sp?] and Mazie is a student at Forest
10 Hills High School and a member of the Gay/Straight
11 Alliance and José Rodriguez who lives in the Bronx
12 and will be speaking about his experiences in the
13 school system as well. And I also want to turn it
14 over just to Council Member Van Bramer who's going
15 to introduce our third panelist.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Thank you
17 very much Council Member Dromm and first of all let
18 me just say how wonderful it is to have you as
19 chair of education and thank you for having this
20 very important hearing and inviting a constituent
21 of mine, someone who I have come to know and
22 admire. Rocky Sinobria [sp?] is on this panel and
23 will be speaking and as someone who lives in
24 Woodside and who now goes to High School in Queens
25 Rocky came to my attention a couple of years ago

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2 and has been subjected to far too much, far too
3 much bullying and teasing. And as a, a, a
4 transgendered youth. It is so exciting to have him
5 here with his mother in the audience, Gina, who's
6 been amazingly supportive of her son. And Rocky
7 wrote me a letter a couple of years ago and I
8 honestly thought that it was so powerful, so
9 moving, and his experience is one that we could all
10 learn from. So I want to thank Council Member Dromm
11 for thinking of Rocky and asking Rocky to testify
12 and thank Rocky once again for his courage and for
13 the ability to speak out in ways that I couldn't
14 when I was 14 and 15 year old as a gay kid growing
15 up in Queens and going to Bryant High School but
16 Rocky is doing amazing things. So thank you Rocky
17 and thank you Council Member Dromm for having this
18 hearing and inviting one of my favorite
19 Constituents to testify.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Council
21 Member Van Bramer. I just want to also note that
22 this year there are six openly gay or lesbian, LGBT
23 members of the City Council and so we're very proud
24 about that and we intend to, fully to move forward
25 with our gender to protect our LGBT students. So

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before we start I have to swear you in. So I'm going to ask you to raise your right hand please. And I'm going to ask you, do you swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions. I do? Okay, very good. So let's start over here with José with your testimony and then we'll go right across. Jose if you would like to read your testimony. Thank you. Just turn on the mic yeah.

JOSÉ RODRIGUEZ: Hi, my name is Jose Rodriguez and I am a gay student at Bronx Letters. I am in the 12th grade and have been involved in our Gay/Straight Alliance for four years. Last year I was a facilitator in our small groups in GSA and I collate a workshop at a city conference for LGBTQ. This year I help plan events and get people excited about our club. Besides GSA my experience at Bronx Letters has been interesting. I get more respect for being gay from teachers and staff members than the ignorant children in our school. Starting in my 9th grade year it seemed like no matter what I'd do with my hair it always seemed as

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2 gay, stupid, or faggot-y. One time I straightened
3 my hair for my friend's sweet 16, I came to school
4 the next day and I was walking into the cafeteria...
5 students were flicking my hair and laughing at me.
6 This year ever since we did advertisement for GSA
7 in the freshman classes there is this one student
8 who constantly talks about me and points at me like
9 I'm some sort of infected person. If you're a boy
10 and gay everyone thinks you're going to hit on them
11 or flirt with them. It's get away from me you're
12 nasty. A lot of this happens in the absence of a
13 teacher. It's like as ignorant as they are they
14 know to keep quiet. And they do this crap to us
15 over and over again and it makes me and the other
16 kids want, ready to fight back but if we do fight
17 back we're seen as the problem starters. This means
18 at my school I feel like I'm being segregated
19 forced to just hang out with girls and made fun of
20 by the ignorant straight boys. It's not that I hate
21 school but sometimes I do hate school. I feel like
22 I'm trapped. No matter what direction I go in I'm
23 seen as the bad guy. Teachers haven't seen the
24 things that the students do so they can't do

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2 anything and if I turn someone in I'm a snitch. How
3 am I supposed to work properly if I can't get help?

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much
5 and Mazy.

6 MAZIE VARONIAN: My name is Mazy
7 Varonian. I am currently a senior at Forest Hills
8 High School. I attended elementary school at PS3
9 and middle school at MS51 and Halsey Junior High
10 School. Growing up with a gay mom and with best
11 friends who have all had two moms have definitely
12 shaped my life experience and made me a person who
13 stands up to homophobia. When I was about four
14 years old I was shocked out when I found out that
15 my friend Josh actually had a dad, not two moms. I
16 went to an elementary school in Greenwich Village
17 where a number of kids had gay parents and a number
18 of the teachers were gay. For a long time in my
19 life I never realized any of this was outside of
20 the social norm. It was not until camp, the summer
21 I was nine, when a girl made a face and say eww
22 when I told her about my mom and her partner that I
23 learned that not everyone was so open and
24 accepting. That school year the phrase, you're so
25 gay, was the worst insult anybody could use. But I

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2 was always ready for a quick reply. One day a girl
3 said it to a boy who was standing next to me and I
4 responded with there's nothing wrong with gay
5 people. That was enough to end the conversation.
6 When I got to middle school using the word gay was
7 an insult was so popular that I felt totally
8 overwhelmed by the idea of saying something to
9 every person who used it. In a school of a thousand
10 kids it seemed impossible to have a personal
11 conversation with all of the kids using the word
12 gay negatively. It's only increased in high school
13 when people started to substitute the word fag for
14 gay, using it to describe other kids, teachers, and
15 homework assignments. This infuriated me. The times
16 that I did confront people about it their response
17 to there's nothing wrong with being gay was often
18 yes there is. Yet again I felt defeated by the
19 impossibility of saying something every single time
20 I heard a nasty phrase being used. I talked to
21 friends who went to other schools who did not seem
22 to struggle with this problem. I thought about what
23 it was that made my school different from theirs.
24 Many people at my school come from families and
25 Communities that are not as accepting of the LGBT

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2 Community. Because of these deeply seated cultural
3 beliefs I began to realize that I would have to act
4 on a larger level than one on one conversations if
5 I had a chance of solving this problem. Another
6 major difference I saw in my school versus my
7 friends is that most high schools across New York
8 City had Gay/Straight Alliances or some similar
9 organization but we didn't at Forest Hills. I felt
10 strongly that the only way to make some sort of
11 change for the greater good around LGBT issues was
12 to create a GSA in my own school. The idea appealed
13 to me because a Gay/Straight Alliance is a way to
14 educate not just one person at a time but the
15 general public at my school. I was ready to act but
16 I had no idea about the challenges I was going to
17 face or that it would take me more than a year to
18 actually start the GSA. I began the proposal Junior
19 year but I was informed by the Student Activities
20 Coordinator that there were no more club spaces
21 available. This was not the first time this type of
22 club was proposed. I later found out that the idea
23 had been shut down before. This September I was
24 approved to found a club that would create a safe
25 space and be a forum to discuss the homophobia we

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2 see every day and develop action plans to change
3 it. The next step was to find an advisor. This was
4 quite difficult. At least seven teachers said no.
5 After months of trying I spent a lunch period
6 brainstorming with our Head Dean and Student
7 Activities Coordinator. Though the meeting felt
8 unsuccessful I got pulled out of my next period
9 class by the Student Activities Coordinator. As she
10 left the Dean's office she told a fellow teacher
11 about the problems I had getting an advisor.
12 Thrillingly and unexpectedly that teacher
13 volunteered to advise the club as soon as she
14 finished her graduate school thesis. Our first
15 meeting was in January. I had, with permission, put
16 up posters around the school announcing the first
17 meeting and intentions of the GSA. But I arrived at
18 school the next morning to discover they had been
19 taken down by a Dean. This was followed by the
20 Student Activities Coordinator neglecting to
21 announce the meeting during morning announcements.
22 Both of which meant that only two of my friends
23 were the people who showed up to the first meeting.
24 The next week I handed the Student Activities
25 Coordinator the message I wanted her to read and

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2 that helped enrollment for the second meeting.
3 Unfortunately due to whether complications many of
4 our meetings have been cancelled. We are now about
5 seven members and our first project is working to
6 raise awareness that the club exists. It has taken
7 a lot of perseverance to get this club started and
8 I hope that students from the younger grades can be
9 inspired to keep the club going. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much
11 Mazy and Rocky.

12 ROCKY SINOBRIA: Hello, my name is Rocky
13 Sinobria. I'm 15 years old and I'm a sophomore
14 Maspeth High School. I had entered Kindergarten as
15 a gender, with a gender identity disorder and
16 immediately my principal had ignored all of the
17 awareness and the pamphlets explaining and,
18 explaining what gender identity disorder was. And
19 she, she ignored it, she didn't hand it to any of
20 my staff. And so none of my staff understood why
21 there was a, a girl dressing up as a boy and
22 wanting to be referred as a boy. And by first grade
23 I was put into a developmental class which was
24 later explained because I, I had gender, I had
25 tomboy issues. So I was placed in a developmental

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2 class for two years because of these tomboy issues
3 and whether, every time I was bullied the teachers
4 would try to ignore it because they didn't
5 understand why, why that was such a problem for me
6 since I was choosing to be the way I was. And every
7 time there was a situation where I was being
8 bullied my principal did not know what to do. And
9 in a meeting she told me that the best way to
10 resolve the solution was to grow my hair out and
11 try to ignore my feelings of being a boy. She did
12 not want me to go to graduation dressing the way I
13 wanted to dress and there was a big issue. I felt
14 very isolated from the rest of my peers and I, I
15 ended up not going to that prom because I wasn't
16 allowed to identify myself the way I wanted to be
17 identified. And I, I did go to graduation but it
18 was very uncomfortable because I didn't feel like I
19 was being appreciated for who I was. Middle school
20 got a little easier but it seemed like my, my staff
21 and my principal didn't exactly know what to do
22 because they've never had... a student who identified
23 like me was all new to them and they seemed to play
24 it by ear a lot which, which is what they could do,
25 the most that they could do with the experience.

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2 But when there was a bully who came along there
3 wasn't enough discipline that they knew how to deal
4 with. So often times after being bullied and after
5 being scared the bullies got a slap on the wrist
6 and I still felt threatened by their presence every
7 time in the hallways or at class or at lunch. And I
8 was always in fear and there was not much I could
9 do about it because it wasn't much my staff thought
10 they could do about it. And now I'm in high school,
11 I go to Maspeth High School and it's the easiest
12 two years that I've had in New York City public
13 schools. The staff there are very supportive and
14 very great. They seemed to have made a plan ahead
15 of time and it was the first time I could use a
16 male bathroom, the first time that I could go into
17 a male's locker room, and just go as a boy, a he,
18 Rocky. It was just, it feels so much stress off my
19 shoulders. They knew what to do and that's what
20 made me comfortable. There have been only one
21 instance of bullying in this school which my school
22 felt very, very, they were very upset by the bully
23 and it's a repeat offender of bullying kids and he,
24 he announced that he was bullying me because I was
25 transgender, because I didn't know what I was and

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2 seemed to have a justified reason for why he was
3 bullying me and my friends for them being my
4 friends. And when we went to a hearing to have him
5 suspended he, he was suspended but now he's coming
6 back in a few months and he still has this
7 resentment towards me. And although he, he
8 continues to bully kids every year he's still
9 coming back. And that scares me because as a
10 transgender student I know that because of my
11 identity I'm always threatened by other people who
12 don't understand and don't have the, the knowledge
13 of what gender identity really is to us. But I know
14 my school being supporters and being there for me
15 will help me through the way.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well thank you all
17 for your very, very powerful testimony. I have to
18 tell you as we're sitting up here; myself, Corey,
19 and Jimmy who are three of the openly gay members I
20 think, and Richard, Ritchie Torres down there as
21 well, very much identify with what you went
22 through. And I'm sure that the other members who
23 are not members of the LGBT caucus, let me put it
24 that way, do empathize with your stories. And
25 that's why we wanted to conduct this hearing today.

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2 And that's why I'm very grateful that the
3 Chancellor was here to hear that testimony. And
4 we're going to hear from other young people
5 throughout the afternoon but we just wanted to have
6 this upfront today. Usually when we do a City
7 Council hearing the Administration comes first and
8 then we hear testimony, and the Council Members
9 have an opportunity to question. But today we felt
10 that your stories were so important that we wanted
11 to put you up front first so that we know what it
12 is and the reason why we're here today. So I want
13 to thank you all. And members of the Council we're
14 not going to do questioning of the students per say
15 because we're going to go right into the vote on
16 the UPK Reso and then we're going to reconvene with
17 Deputy Chancellor Kathleen Grimm who is also here
18 with us today. And I do want to thank the
19 Chancellor again for giving so much of your time to
20 us and for hearing these stories. I can tell that
21 you've been deeply moved by this as well.

22 CHANCELLOR: [off mic comments]

23 ...standing up for what they believe in and they'll
24 be future leaders of this country because they have

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2 principals to stand on and that's all we can ask of
3 our students so Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Madam
5 Chancellor. Thank you very, very much. Okay, so if
6 you panelists would now like to just move from your
7 seat you can and I'm going to go into the vote
8 session and then we promise to get to the Deputy
9 Chancellor very quickly.

10 KEVIN PENN: Kevin Penn, Committee
11 Clerk. Roll call, call on the Committee on
12 Education Reso. 2. Council Member Dromm.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I vote aye.

14 KEVIN PENN: Gentile.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: I vote aye.

16 KEVIN PENN: Levin.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I vote aye.

18 KEVIN PENN: Rose.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Aye.

20 KEVIN PENN: Weprin.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Aye.

22 KEVIN PENN: Williams.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I excuse my
24 vote? May I be excused to explain my vote?

25 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, of course.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you. I
3 just wanted to say I'm sorry I missed also
4 testimony. I did happen to catch, I think it was
5 the young man that was testifying when I was
6 downstairs. I just want to add my voice to say
7 thank you very much for showing the courage to come
8 and, and share your testimony with us and with the
9 Chancellor. That's an important voice that needs to
10 be heard and I proudly vote aye.

11 KEVIN PENN: Barron.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I vote aye.

13 KEVIN PENN: Maisel.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Aye.

15 KEVIN PENN: Reynoso.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Aye.

17 KEVIN PENN: Treyger.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Aye.

19 KEVIN PENN: By a vote of 10 in the
20 affirmative, zero in the negative, and no
21 abstentions the item has been adopted. Members
22 please sign the committee report.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, and I'd like
24 to hold the vote open for another 15 minutes or so
25 until other members arrive. Today we have three

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2 hearings going on at once. I, myself, will have to
3 leave at some point to just check in with
4 Immigration which is next door so I'll just go back
5 and forth between rooms. So what we'd like to do
6 now is to invite up our next panel which will be
7 Deputy Chancellor Kathleen Grimm. Thank you also
8 Deputy Chancellor for being here to hear the
9 stories of those students. Okay, and I would like
10 to just swear you in as well. So if you would raise
11 your right hand. Do you swear to affirm, swear or
12 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
13 nothing but the truth in your testimony before this
14 committee and to respond honestly to Council Member
15 questions?

16 ELAYNA KONSTAN: I do.

17 CONNIE COROLLA: I do.

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: I do.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And
20 Deputy Chancellor would you like to start us off.

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Yes, could I
22 just ask for some more water?

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, absolutely.

24 Sargent we need water, the water at the table.

25

1
2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Good afternoon
3 Chair Dromm and members of the Education Committee
4 here today. As you know, my name is Kathleen Grimm.
5 I'm Deputy Chancellor of the Division of Operations
6 for the New York City Department of Education. I am
7 joined here today by Elayna Konstan on my left who
8 is a Chief Executive Officer of the Office of
9 Safety and Youth Development which we fondly refer
10 to as OSYD, and Connie Corolla on my right,
11 Director of Professional Development which is also
12 with OSYD. I want to thank you and the entire
13 Committee for the opportunity to discuss the
14 Department's efforts to support lesbian, gay,
15 bisexual, and transgender students, and their
16 parents, and students whose parents are LGBT as
17 well as LGBT staff. I also, just go off of the
18 script for a moment, want to thank you Mr. Chair
19 for your remarks which I found very insightful and
20 I, we begin what I think will be a dialogue over
21 the next coming years. And of course the students'
22 stories were so moving. And I would like to point
23 out that Connie actually worked with Rocky when he
24 was in high school. So we have some familiarity
25 there. Anyhow one of the Department of Education's

1
2 fundamental responsibilities is to provide a safe
3 and supportive learning environment that is
4 inclusive of all students and their families. The
5 Department has made significant strides in
6 addressing the needs of LGBT students and their
7 families as well as students who come from families
8 of same sex parents. And yet we recognize that
9 there's always more work to be done. Our respect
10 for all, the RFA program, as we call it,
11 administered by OSYD, is the cornerstone of our
12 efforts in this area. And we want to thank the
13 Council for its strong support of our FAs from the
14 beginning and also for making this issue a top
15 priority. Since its inception in 2007 RFA has
16 provided our schools with both a vision and a
17 framework to foster inclusive school communities.
18 The program actually grew out of a concerted
19 citywide effort to promote respect for diversity
20 and combat harassment, discrimination, and bullying
21 in the aftermath of 9/11. A significant part of our
22 post 9/11 work was training for K to 12 staff,
23 school staff, which included full day workshops
24 provided by the NYC LGBT center's Yes program. A
25 key focus of the RFA program continues to be

1 professional development. Because of the vital role
2 school staff play in creating a supportive and
3 inclusive school culture and the critical impact
4 that they have in nurturing positive social
5 behavior in our students. The purpose of all RFA
6 professional development which is either one or two
7 full days is to build awareness and sensitivity and
8 increase staff capacity to prevent and intervene in
9 bullying behavior and biased based harassment. Our
10 collaborative partners in this work are the Anti-
11 defamation League, the Gay/Lesbian/Straight
12 Education Network, Morningside Center for Teaching
13 Social Responsibility, and Operation Respect. These
14 organizations along with the Yes program from the
15 LGBT center collaborated with the DOE in the design
16 of the two day training program each RFA liaison
17 has been mandated to complete since 2008. Indeed
18 each principal is required to designate at least
19 one staff member who is referred to as the RFA
20 liaison to whom reports by students or staff of
21 student on student discrimination, harassment,
22 intimidation, and/or bullying can be made and who
23 serves as a resource for both students and staff on
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these issues. All RFA training includes LGBT components.

[background sneeze]

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: God bless you.

For example, to model using children's literature to promote respect for diversity, K to 5 classroom teachers are introduced to books like Todd Parr's Family Book which presents children from different kinds of families. Parr's It's Okay to be Different and James How's Pinky and Rex and the Bully.

Training for RFA liaison serving grade six to 12 use the LGBT experience as a lens to examine the impact of biased and discrimination on youth and the essential role adults play in prevention and intervention. Examples of training components include an LGBT history timeline in which other key civil rights and social milestones are interspersed to provide context, voices and exercise based on statements made by LGBT students, and an examination of the homophobic bias faced by Bayard Rustin an organizer, organizer of the 1963 March on Washington. To further assist our schools in understanding and implementing inclusive instructional practices the document implementing

1
2 respect for all, a guide to promote safe and
3 inclusive school environment for all students and
4 complying with the dignity act is sent to all
5 principals every September. That document provides
6 specific guidance on inclusive pedagogy including
7 quick key questions to ask as part of regular and
8 rigorous examination of curriculum in pedagogical
9 practice. The guide also includes a section called
10 Creating an Inclusive School Community sensitivity
11 to the experience of specific student populations
12 which specifically addresses issues facing LGBT
13 students. It also, also provided to our principals
14 is a training document called Respect for All,
15 Making Schools Safe and Supportive for all Students
16 for mandated annual staff training. Each year we
17 have expanded our RFA professional development. We
18 have, for example provided classroom teachers with
19 training on a K to eight and high school anti-bias
20 curriculum. Beginning in 2010 a series of citywide
21 conferences for middle and high school deans and
22 counselors called Promoting Respect for Diversity/
23 Preventing Hate Crime was conducted in
24 collaboration with a New York State Division of
25 Human Rights, The New York City Human Rights

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2 Commission and the NYPD Hate Crimes Task Force to
3 emphasize the influence that school staff can have
4 in preventing hate crime through their ongoing work
5 with our young people. Last year a full day
6 conference for guidance counselors and our
7 Substance Abuse Prevention Intervention
8 Specialists, our SAPIS workers included workshops
9 by the Trevor project; How to support LGBT Youth,
10 and Trevor Allie Training, and Parents and Friends
11 of Lesbian and Gays working with parents of LGBT
12 youth. This fall we began training on K to five and
13 six to 12 curricula, curricula models to move
14 students from being bystanders to allies of their
15 fellow students. The DOE's respect for all library
16 which can be accessed from the DOE homepage
17 provides families and students with access to a
18 whole range of resources including fact sheets,
19 guidance documents and age appropriate materials
20 specifically designed for students. The library
21 also provides our educators with standards based
22 lesson plans, book lists, and other instructional
23 material. Also made available our professional
24 development opportunities, current research, and
25 opportunities to engage with community based

1
2 organizations that offer additional training and
3 programmatic supports. And student projects such as
4 no-name-calling day and the No Place for Hate
5 program. Resources to support LB, LGBT students are
6 found throughout the library and I encourage each
7 of you to visit that page. This, these central
8 initiatives are only a part of DOE's efforts. Our
9 schools work with many community based
10 organizations to provide staff training and direct
11 services to students. Organizations include
12 parents, families, and friends of lesbians and gay
13 Safe Schools program which engages thousands of
14 students in workshops every year. GLCN, two years
15 ago, donated a Safe Space kit to all of our middle
16 and high schools. The list of collaborations goes
17 on. Operation Respect, facing history in ourselves,
18 counselling in schools, the Anti-Defamation League,
19 The Trevor Project, Morningside Center, Partnership
20 with Children, to name only a handful. These
21 partnerships have been critical to our work on
22 bullying and biased based harassment prevention in
23 our schools and we are very thankful for their
24 commitment and assistance in this work. Sensitivity
25 to and awareness of the needs of LGBT students and

1 families are an integral part of the Department's
2 work to promote respect for diversity.
3 Representatives from DOE's Office of School Support
4 and the Office of Family and Community Engagement
5 attend monthly meetings of the NYC LGBT Community
6 Centers parent advisory to the Department. These
7 meetings are held at the center and are attended by
8 families, professionals, and advocates and elected
9 officials. They provide an important venue to share
10 information about the DOE and other city agencies,
11 the UFT and other organizations that impact or
12 support LGBT students and families. Participants in
13 these, of these meetings develop strategies to
14 encourage more parent participation including
15 outreach through DOE Facebook and Twitter accounts.
16 The DOE has had a longstanding partnership with the
17 center's Parent Advisory Group. And as a result of
18 this partnership, since 2006 critical DOE documents
19 that are sent home to families for example use the
20 general gender neutral term 'parent'. In addition
21 to meeting regularly with the group, the parent
22 group our Face Office has provided parent workshops
23 about bullying. For example during parents as
24 partners week last October Face held a screening of
25

1 the documentary, documentary 'Bully' with the
2 filmmaker who conducted a conversation with the
3 parents after the screening. Parent workshop topics
4 on this spring schedule include Respect for All and
5 Training on Cyber Bullying. We are equally
6 concerned for the wellbeing of our LGBT staff
7 members. Chancellors Regulation A-830 sets forth
8 the Department's anti-discrimination policy and
9 establishes an internal review process for
10 employees who wish to file complaints of unlawful
11 discrimination or harassment or retaliation based
12 on such complaints. In order to develop and
13 maintain a positive and supportive learning and
14 working environment that is free of discrimination,
15 harassment, retaliation, and intimidation the full
16 cooperation of every one of our staff members is
17 necessary. Employees are expected to be exemplary
18 role models in the schools and offices in which
19 they serve. Supervisors are required to maintain
20 and environment free of unlawful discrimination and
21 discriminatory harassment. Behavior which violate
22 the DOE's anti-discrimination policy may serve as a
23 basis for staff discipline. In addition to the
24 Department's anti-discrimination policy other
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2 Chancellors Regulations address staff to student
3 and student to student relations. Chancellors
4 Regulation A-420, Regulations A-420 and A-421
5 prohibit corporal punishment and verbal abuse by
6 staff members against students whose behavior,
7 including behavior which constitutes bullying,
8 intimidation, and harassment. Regulation A-832
9 prohibits harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying
10 by students against other students and
11 discrimination by students against students on
12 account of actual or perceived race, color, creed,
13 ethnicity, national origin, citizenship,
14 immigration status, religion, gender, gender
15 identity, gender expression, sexual orientation,
16 disability, or weight. And it establishes a process
17 for reporting, investigating, and addressing
18 complaints of any such behavior. Regulation A-831
19 prohibits peer sexual harassment regardless of the
20 gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity of
21 any of the students involved. To be sensitive and
22 responsive to student needs we created an RFA email
23 account specifically designated for a student to
24 use if he or she feels uncomfortable making a
25 report of bullying or harassment to a school staff

1 member. Likewise a parent may use the RFA email to
2 seek assistance. Because many questions arise when
3 considering the best supports for transgender
4 students the Department recently issued transgender
5 student guidelines to provide direction to schools
6 to address issues that may arise concerning the
7 needs of transgender students. These guidelines are
8 intended to help schools ensure a safe learning
9 environment free of discrimination and harassment
10 and to promote the educational and social
11 integration of transgender students. We are keenly
12 aware of the risk factors facing LGBT young people.
13 The National Youth Risk Behavior Survey is a self-
14 administered anonymous survey conducted every two
15 years in a, in public and private high schools
16 through, throughout the US for the Centers for
17 disease control. While the 2011 survey revealed
18 that in New York City public high school students
19 reported a nine percent lower incident rate of
20 bullying compared to the rest of the nation New
21 York City youth who identified as lesbian, gay, or
22 bisexual were more likely to be bullied as compared
23 with youth who identified as heterosexual. Of equal
24 concern is that youth in New York City who reported
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2 being bullying were more likely to report other
3 behaviors that put them at risk for poor health
4 outcomes as compared with New York City youth who
5 did not report being bullied. The report also found
6 that youth who were bullied were more likely to
7 have sought help from a professional counselor,
8 social worker, or therapist for an emotional or a
9 personal issue compared to the non-bullying,
10 bullied youth. We're deeply committed to increasing
11 our student's access to health services. The office
12 of school health, a joint program of the Department
13 of Education and the New York City Department of
14 Health and Mental Hygiene provides a comprehensive
15 array of health and mental health services which
16 are integrated with other student support measures
17 including training of DOE staff and partnerships
18 with community, community organizations that
19 provide mental health support to students and
20 families. Currently, there are currently 197
21 programs offer onsite treatment in school based
22 mental health centers with an additional eight
23 sites expected to open before the end of this
24 school year. Services include individual, family,
25 and group counselling, case management, school

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2 community outreach, and a 24 hour crisis coverage
3 if needed. All community based organizations
4 provide interventions that are evidence based,
5 family focused, and culturally and linguistically
6 appropriate. In addition, in the Bronx for example,
7 the Department is piloting a strategy in 17 schools
8 that have formalized partnerships with mental
9 health child serving state and local agencies. We
10 have mobile response team model in Brooklyn which
11 provides 10 middle schools with direct
12 interventions such as consultation assessments,
13 referrals for treatment, classroom observation, and
14 teacher and parent training. In addition to
15 providing crisis intervention. Beginning in the
16 2014 school year that model will be expanded to
17 include five middle schools in Queens, five in
18 Manhattan, and five in the Bronx. Further,
19 providers that work in our school based health
20 centers of which there are 131 including Nurse
21 Practitioners, Health Educators, Social Workers,
22 are all trained on LGBT issues and their offices
23 have rainbow stickers identifying each SB as school
24 based Health Center Clinic as an LGBT friendly
25 place. The Department's Office of School Wellness

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2 Programs provides health education training and
3 recommended materials that include LGBT topics. We
4 collaborated with city's Department of Health and
5 the publisher of Reducing the Risk Curriculum to
6 develop understanding self-identity which is a
7 supplement to our recommended high school health
8 education curriculum. We are also in the first year
9 of a five year CDC grant which focuses on sexual
10 health topics and creating safe and supportive
11 school environments with a particular focus on LGBT
12 students. In conclusion we aim to provide all of
13 our students with a safe and supportive environment
14 where they can learn and grow. In this vain we are
15 deeply committed to addressing the needs of LGBT
16 students, students who come from families with LGBT
17 parents, and LGBT staff. While we have, we think,
18 made good progress as in any large endeavor system
19 we have, we recognize there's more to be done. We
20 have 1,800 schools at different stages of this
21 work. And it's our mission to support and develop
22 all of them to be models of positive school culture
23 where all of our students and all of our families
24 feel safe, included, and respected. And we look
25 forward to continue to partner with a council in

1
2 order to reach this goal. And with that we are very
3 happy to take any questions. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you
5 Chancellor and just before we go to questions I
6 just want to allow my colleagues who have not had
7 an opportunity and have waited to have that
8 opportunity. So Clerk would you please call the
9 remaining roll call?

10 KEVIN PENN: Continuation Committee on
11 Education. Council Member King.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Yes.

13 KEVIN PENN: Levine.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Yes.

15 KEVIN PENN: Chin.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yes.

17 KEVIN PENN: Final vote in the Committee
18 of Education; 13 in the affirmative, zero in the
19 negative, and no abstentions.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright, so we're
21 going to close out the vote and... Okay, we will
22 close out the vote and then proceed with
23 questioning. So let me go to the first question.
24 I'm not going to ask too much because my colleagues
25 have questions, yeah. But let me just commend the

1
2 Department for the work that you have done and I do
3 want to recognize that you have done work and that
4 things have changed dramatically since I was a
5 teacher and, in the 90s and when Rainbow was around
6 as well. Thank goodness for that. But Chancellor my
7 biggest question is despite your good efforts in
8 this area much of the information is not getting
9 out to some of the schools, especially where it's
10 probably needed the most. We often times see
11 teachers who take on the initiative. We heard in
12 the testimony of Mazy today that she tried for
13 seven teachers to get them to sponsor the
14 Gay/Straight Alliance. And that to me is the
15 perfect example of the word not getting out. And,
16 and, and having been a teacher in the system I
17 think it's a double fear that teachers have. One,
18 often times teachers who do volunteer for a GSA are
19 gay teachers themselves, it involves the coming out
20 themselves in a, in a certain way to sponsor that,
21 but also the fear of not having administration
22 support or backlash perhaps from the community as
23 well. How are you getting the message out, that we
24 want Gay/Straight Alliances formed in the schools?
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2 Has there been a concerted effort to get that
3 message out?

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Well I guess
5 whatever effort we'd made it's not good enough, if,
6 if we haven't gotten the message out well enough. I
7 think certainly through the RFA program where we
8 have mandated that every school have at least one
9 person, many schools have more than one, and we
10 have mandated training for those people. And, I
11 mean this sounds like a little thing but you know
12 we put up a poster in every single school, respect
13 for all and identify who that person is. And while
14 I say that's a small thing it, it's a very visible
15 thing. And I hope resonates with both students and
16 staff. I think we need to do more. What exactly
17 that path will be I don't know but I look forward
18 to working with you on it.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: See I agree that
20 Respect for All is a good program and we need to
21 expand it. We need to do it more. One of the
22 problems that I see with Respect for All to be
23 honest with you is that it's not mandated for every
24 class in the school and it's not mandated in
25 general. I think maybe each school comes up with a

1
2 project of some sort or another. So we need to
3 expand that in my opinion. And even within the
4 terms of talking about diversity in the broader
5 issue which is why I wanted to have this hearing
6 today specific to LGBTQ students.

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is because we get
9 left out in that discussion of diversity. Even
10 people with the best intentions still are fearful
11 of saying the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender,
12 questioning words in the schools. And so I can't
13 emphasize that enough in terms of what we need to
14 do, in terms of the training for Respect for All.
15 We need to have the administration at your level
16 saying to teachers and to administrators that it's
17 okay to say those words in our schools. So I would
18 urge that you... [crosstalk]

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Okay.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...do that in your
21 training. Now let me just get a little bit to the
22 couple of the other questions that I had and maybe
23 it's... [crosstalk]

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Sure.
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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...just a little bit harder. I know that the transgender student guidelines went up last night. And I'm glad that they're up. But it took a long time to get them up. Am I correct that they went up for the first time last night.

ELAYNA KONSTAN: Two days ago yeah.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: A few days.

ELAYNA KONSTAN: Yeah... [crosstalk]

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Yeah...

[crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Probably in my opinion... [interpose]

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Very recently...

[crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right. In, in preparation for this hearing. How are you going to disseminate that information to teachers other than just putting it on the website but getting it out to teachers and to the administrators in the schools.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Well that will be, become part of all of the RFA outreach that we

1
2 do obviously and, and training. Is there anything
3 else Elayna you want to add to that?

4 ELAYNA KONSTAN: You're right. It took a
5 while to get out and we've actually been working on
6 it for a while to make sure we got it right, to
7 examine what other states are doing, to really do
8 some real thoughtful research around that. We're
9 also going to put it on the RFA Library, on the, so
10 that parents see it, so you can see it as well, as
11 well as disseminate the information and incorporate
12 it into the document that Kathleen referred to that
13 we give to principals every single year and put it
14 in the training deck as well so that it will be in
15 multiple places. We also have the opportunity to
16 meet with the Youth Development managers that
17 really do the deep level work in our schools. And
18 so we're also going to be, do training there as
19 well. And also to add it to the RFA two day
20 mandated training that we do for the RFA liaisons.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So is it something
22 that a chancellor regulation could be done on this,
23 stating that this is the official policy of the
24 chancellor.

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2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Well we'll
3 take a look at that.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I think that's a
5 much more powerful impact... [crosstalk] than just
6 putting it up there. And actually almost codifying
7 it in that sense it would be very helpful...
8 [crosstalk, interpose]

9 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: I, I just
10 wanted to add you know because, what we became very
11 much aware of as we finalized that and put it up is
12 that it can't just go to schools, it has to go to
13 all of our departments, all of our staff whether
14 school based or not have to be aware of these
15 policies and, and be attentive to them.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right. So Chancellor
17 let me just tell you an experience that I had in my
18 school, when I wanted to bring PFLAG into Newtown
19 High School, they would only allow me to bring
20 PFLAG into the existing diversity club. And those
21 kids in the diversity club didn't need it.

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Right.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You know it's the
24 other kids who really needed it and that's the type
25 of pushback that we receive even as a council

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member when I funded a program to bring into a school. So I, I, I believe that you're well intended in this but the message is still not getting out there that it's okay to have these programs. And we were successful with much persistence in getting them in and PFLAG actually went to every freshman class. And PFLAG is just parents talking about the love of their children. It's not even LGBT people themselves per say.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Right.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You know. But that is what I'm trying to describe to you, the depth of the problem that we face as LGBT people in the school system.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: I understand.

[crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, I'd like to follow up on that and I have other follow up questions and I just want to, before I turn it over, is there a way that we could have an L, a GSA instituted in every school. I mean why, because there are gay people in every school. There are LGBT people in every school. Why shouldn't we have a GSA in every school?

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DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Well, I think what we want to take a look at is how we can better publicize the availability of such organizations and encourage principals... You know we're, I don't think we're, I'm not sure we want to say to every principal you must do this. But I think that we need to make... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And, and...

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: ...more aware.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...why not Chancellor? Why wouldn't you want to ask each principal not to do that? Because there are students that need those services, that need that support in every school. LGBT people, it's estimated in many areas are between five and 10 percent of the population and especially even for the students who are not identified yet as, as LGBT...

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Right.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...but maybe questioning is probably even a larger percentage and getting the message to them that even being questioning is okay because many kids go through that. And having that type of support in the system sends a message like you wouldn't believe to the

1
2 rest of the school community. So I would really
3 urge you to consider that and it's, it's, it's
4 almost, I don't even know if there would be a cost
5 associated with... When you have GSAs do they...
6 [crosstalk] receive precession money for doing
7 that?

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Yes they do.
9 The teacher, the teacher yes...

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So they do it mostly
11 after school?

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right. Well I, I'd
14 like to follow up and I don't want to just to take
15 all the time from my, from my colleagues...
16 [crosstalk] who also have questions so let me go to
17 my colleagues. And the first one is Council Member
18 Corey Johnson.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you
20 Deputy Chancellor Grimm for being here today and
21 for your testimony. Before I ask a question I just
22 want to acknowledge the young people that were here
23 and testified earlier and the other young people
24 that are here today that are going to testify. I
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can't stay for the rest of the hearing. I have a meeting across the street but...

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: I know.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: ...I was incredibly moved by the young people's testimony. I got choked up by it. And I can say as a, an openly gay member of this body and an openly gay person I came out when I was 16 years old, not in New York City, but in Massachusetts. And I was very lucky that I lived in a state that was, that has already made many strides on... [crosstalk]

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: ...LGBT issues. An active Department of Education that had instituted things before I came out. I had a GSA at my school. I was very, very fortunate. And when I came out my experience was by and large a good experience maybe because I was captain of the football team and that put me in a position of privilege inside the school.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: And it shouldn't just be people who are in positions of privilege... [interpose]

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: ...in schools that are respected and accepted but that every student regardless of who they are and what their interests are and where they come from should be treated with respect... [crosstalk]

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: We agree.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: And that is my ultimate hope for the children who go to public school in New York City. And I just think it's incredibly brave for these young people to be here today to share their experiences, many of them painful and hard to talk about. And I want to thank Chairman Dromm for holding this historic hearing in the council. And now for DOE. I think that your testimony reflects a significant amount of outreach, doing the right thing, putting into practice programs that you think would be helpful inside of schools both for students and teachers and administrators. And I commend you for that. And I'm happy to see that it's been going on since 2007. But I'd also like to say that I, I'm assuming, again without any data, so I could be wrong on this, that you may only be touching a

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2 small fraction of kids throughout the city. And I
3 know that most young people who are bullied or are
4 experiencing harassment or physical violence at
5 school are terrified to come forward and talk to
6 anyone about it because they feel like it will
7 continue to be perpetrated against them. So I don't
8 know if there are strategies that you could talk to
9 folks with inside the DOE and the organizations
10 that you partner up with, like the LGBT center,
11 like Listen, about how to reach more young people,
12 not just LGBT young people but also young people
13 who consider themselves allies of LGBT people.
14 Because the testimony we heard today talked a lot
15 about, not all, but many teachers and principals
16 sitting idly by while these children are being
17 harassed, tormented, and bullied. And to me that's
18 unacceptable. That is a breach within our public
19 school system that adults and people in positions
20 of power are sitting by watching these young people
21 be harassed and tortured without actually doing
22 anything about it. So both getting it out amongst
23 young people and amongst...

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Yeah.

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: ...teachers and
3 administrators so that this isn't just sort of a
4 few one shot deals where there's a blitz of
5 outreach and some people are getting a program. But
6 how do we actually make this more widespread so
7 that we can help combat this in schools and try to
8 take care of every student that needs it? That's my
9 question. And sorry for speaking so long but I feel
10 very strongly about this as someone who dealt with
11 these issues as a young person myself.

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Well I think
13 there's two parts to your question. One of the
14 efforts we've made with, we know that sometimes
15 young people are hesitant to report any kind of
16 problem like bullying or harassment. So we have set
17 up this email account centrally which children and
18 parents can use. That's only one effort. I mean
19 we're open to any other suggestions. The other part
20 of your question has to do with what are we doing
21 to make sure everybody gets the message and I think
22 that is a journey we are on at this point in terms
23 of how to, we have so much of this material and
24 thank you all for telling us we've made a good
25 effort but I think what we're hearing is that we've

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2 got to make sure that effort goes even further to
3 make sure that we reach every single person.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: That's right
5 and I look forward to working with you and I'm not
6 on the Education Committee but I thought it was
7 important...

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Excellent.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: ...to be here
10 today with members of this Committee and the Chair
11 and the leadership in Council on this, on this
12 issue with you. And I would just follow up and, and
13 say thank you again for what you just said and for
14 your testimony earlier. I really think there is a
15 real problem and it's not entirely thorough to hope
16 that self-reporting is going to improve anything in
17 anyway. You know that, that, you know students have
18 to sort of come forward with this...

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: No...
20 understood.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: There needs to
22 be a proactive approach and, and not a reactive
23 approach so that we can try to stem some of this.
24 So...

25 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Understood.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: ...thank you very
3 much.

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Understood,
5 thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you and I'm
7 going to ask... Oh, did you want to respond to him,
8 to...

9 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: No, thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Council Member
11 Weprin, Mark Weprin followed by Council Member
12 Reynoso and then Torres.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Thank you Mr.
14 Chair. I, I have to start out by just saying how
15 exciting it is to be here today. I have known the
16 chair of this committee for over 20 years and I
17 knew him when he was having struggles with his
18 school board and with that particular member of the
19 school board. And there's something just so fitting
20 about being here today to see you chair this
21 hearing on this issue for knowing how long this
22 struggle has been going I really, it's very
23 exciting for me to be here. And, and I'm very proud
24 to be part of it. Additionally I am in awe a little
25 bit about just how far we've come in the time that

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2 I'd been elected official on this issue. Not only
3 because of what the Chairman has done but you know
4 seeing that we have six LGBT members of the, of the
5 Council, me being a proud ally for all these years
6 have seen a big change in the way we, people are
7 viewed and, and, and how we've come, the fact that
8 the administration is here talking about what
9 they're doing on behalf of the LGBT community. To
10 see those tree young people; Rocky and Jose and
11 Mazy sit here and testify and be, be brave enough
12 to come to the City Council hearing and testify on
13 their personal stories. It's just really a very
14 moving experience for me and I'm sure for others as
15 well. So with that in mind I did want to address
16 the issue of education a little bit as far as young
17 people. I have a story that was personal to my
18 strict. This past year a middle school girl
19 committed suicide in my, in my neighborhood and a
20 second middle school girl attempted suicide in my
21 son's middle school. I have two teenage sons. I
22 know a lot of you know this but some people don't.
23 I mean the bullying has changed over the years. I
24 mean it's so different than when I was a child
25 where you were in a school yard where you faced

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2 your, your abuser often, where there a lot of
3 things that could happen to step in whether it's
4 the assistant principal, the principal walking by
5 or somebody bigger than you are coming up and
6 telling you to shut up, or you looking in the eyes
7 of the person you're abusing and realizing maybe I
8 went too far. Unfortunately today a lot of this
9 abuse is happening in people's bedrooms on their
10 computers.

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Right.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: And the abuse
13 is, is massive and it's a real epidemic out there.
14 And I've been talking a lot about trying to get the
15 DOE to not just educate teachers and principals and
16 not just do it in some schools but to have a
17 program for everyone, LGBT community, obviously a
18 very important part of this. But every young person
19 needs to see the consequences of what they're doing
20 because I don't think these young people understand
21 what this abuse is doing all the time. And imagine
22 today you could have a conversation about somebody
23 and then they get a transcript of everything you
24 said. It's like when you were a kid you talked to
25 your friends you might of said something you regret

1 but they didn't hear it. Here they can hear it
2 because someone will share it with them. So there's
3 something that needs to be done by the DOE, like a
4 massive education where every kid has to take a
5 course or have a day not just a Respect for All
6 week which is very important and I'm happy to
7 participate in, but one that the kids are told this
8 is what happens and these, and these are the issues
9 that are out there and include the LGBT community
10 in that abuse because they are subject to it so
11 often. But there is an epidemic out there and we
12 need to educate these children who are just too
13 young to understand the implications of it both the
14 victims and, and the bullies. So I really would
15 love to see the DOE take a proactive step in this
16 because this, these two young girls one who, who
17 committed suicide and one who tried it could have
18 been anybody's children. There was nothing unique
19 about them except the fact they were being picked
20 on and picked on a lot and didn't know how to deal
21 with it. And this is happening every day of the
22 week in our schools. And the kids are not getting
23 punished for it and I don't know, understand, I
24 don't think they understand the ramifications. So
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2 my request to the DOE in this new enlightened world
3 that we're living in is to try to make sure that
4 they reach out to each school and not just to make
5 a statement but to actually educate these children
6 on how important it is and how dangerous it is to
7 bully.

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: You are
9 absolutely correct. This is a national, terrible
10 problem. And I'm going to ask Elayna to talk about
11 what we're doing in terms of our young people but I
12 do want to mention, we are also trying to do
13 outreach to parents because parents are struggling
14 with this problem and don't know what to do. So we
15 are planning some sessions in September. But Elayna
16 could you talk a little bit about well our efforts
17 with the young people?

18 ELAYNA KONSTAN: I, I think we, we
19 couldn't agree more because cyberbullying, often
20 times we don't know what we don't know because it
21 does happen in the cyber world and school officials
22 don't know. And that's, so it's really how do we
23 educate our students and young people to really be
24 digital citizens and what does that mean. So we do
25 have a lot of resources there on the RFA website

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2 and resources for schools in terms of looking at
3 cyberbullying, digital citizenship, what does that
4 mean, what does that look like. I couldn't agree
5 more. We all have a huge responsibility as
6 citizens, as educators, as all of us and really
7 addressing it. I just, just the other day saw an
8 amazing commercial on television about, it was a
9 young person being bullied and as she walked by
10 these kids were putting these horrible words on her
11 back. And then an ally came over to her and they
12 knocked her over and this ally came up and picked
13 her up and then started putting other words like
14 you're beautiful, you're wonderful on her. These
15 are the kinds of things that we have to do in our
16 subways, on our television, in our schools. We
17 couldn't agree more. And so working with face, in
18 terms of reaching out to families on what they need
19 to do and how they can help look out and what
20 resources there are for them so that they can work
21 with their, their children embedding it into
22 advisory classes in terms what is... digital
23 citizenship look like. The new program that
24 Kathleen mentioned where helping schools teach
25 young people how to move from being a bystander to

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be an ally and what does that look like. So any more ideas that you have would be great. But you're absolutely right. This is not like it used to be.

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Right. And I will follow up with you on that and I just would love...

ELAYNA KONSTAN: I'd love it.

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: ...to see proactive action on the DOE's part. Thank you. Thank you Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And Council Member Reynoso.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Thank you Chair. I appreciate you giving me the time. Thank you for being here as well from Department. I'm encouraged over the last couple of hearings that we've had to actually see the DOE here and being proactive to, to a certain degree. What I wanted to know is there's always the carrots and then there's the stick so what, what do we do in a case where a child or a student is bullied or, or a teacher doesn't take the right action or a principal doesn't take the right action or their administration is not taking the right action to

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2 ensure that this person doesn't continue to be
3 harassed. For example one student just spoke to a
4 bully that's coming back. And what environment are
5 we moving, moving forward, what environment are we
6 going to set forth so that doesn't happen? And how
7 is the administration being held accountable to
8 ensure that?

9 DEPUTY COUNCELLOR GRIMM: Yeah, well
10 that's a couple of questions. I mean in the first
11 instance we want if a child is bullied and we find
12 out, I mean first we've got to make sure there are
13 avenues for the child to, to share with us, that we
14 are certain that the bullies are frankly
15 disciplined. And you actually add another nuance to
16 it which we all heard and we all took notes on the
17 young person voice concern about what happens when
18 this person comes back. Because while we want to
19 make sure that we are stern in our discipline where
20 it is warranted we also want to try to change the
21 behavior of the bullying child because that child
22 certainly has his or her own problems and we need
23 to address them as well. Then you mentioned
24 something else where the grownups in the building
25 are not being appropriately responsive. We work

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2 very hard at that and principals have a very firm
3 responsibility to report all incidents to us. And I
4 think we have actually done a pretty good job over
5 the last decade on that in terms of being able to
6 track it. Does it happen that grownups walk away or
7 do not respond appropriately yes. But where we can
8 find out about that we take swift action.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: So and, and so
10 I agree that obviously we need to take steps to
11 making sure that everything is, is, is
12 appropriately done. But still the repercussions, I
13 think, I know you take swift action but with the
14 bullying being able, the bully let's say, being
15 able to change his behavior, you know the
16 conditions in the school you know make it so that,
17 that child can now feel that he is going to receive
18 different treatment from the student or from the
19 student body or that the administration itself is
20 going to have a different treatment. How do I say
21 it? I guess what I'm trying to get to is that how
22 is a culture change or what are we doing in the
23 Department of Education to build a culture that
24 makes it a comfortable environment, not necessarily
25 one of you know you bullied now you get suspended,

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2 then you come back, you're the bad guy, you're the
3 bad guy, you're the bad guy, but that we have a
4 process in which the culture of the school changes
5 so that the bullying doesn't happen and the bully
6 doesn't arise.

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Yeah. Well
8 again I, I think there are two sides to this. We
9 have centers to which people who, young people who
10 are suspended. They, they are assigned to, well to
11 what we call alternative learning centers which not
12 only provide academic supports for these students
13 but also guidance counselors, social workers,
14 cultural and emotional learning support so that we
15 can be hopefully positively affecting the behavior
16 of those young people. Where the bigger cultural
17 issue I think is if teachers and school staff
18 aren't responding properly. I mean that's, that's
19 the whole thing we're talking about today. How are
20 we making sure that we get into every single school
21 and we touch every single staff person to make sure
22 that they understand what the right responses are?
23 We have people on staff who have the ability to go
24 into schools and work with the staff to try to
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2 change that culture. Elayna do you want to flush
3 that out some? What...

4 ELAYNA KONSTAN: Sure. And then I'll
5 also ask Connie to talk a little bit about the work
6 we're doing on progressive discipline and really to
7 build that strong culture and climate in school.
8 Because you're right. What we do and I think in, in
9 Chair Dromm's opening remarks talking about
10 restorative justice, we call it restorative
11 reproaches, that's a lot of work that we're doing
12 to really help our schools take more of a
13 progressive latter of discipline so that we build
14 those strong cultures and climates in school.
15 Connie you want to talk a little bit about the
16 restorative circles and the work we're doing in
17 terms of culture committees.

18 CONNIE COROLLA: Sure. We're doing an, I
19 think landmark work in terms of using restorative
20 approaches as and melding that with social
21 emotional learning as part of prevention and
22 community building within a school and as also a
23 way in which to respond on a progressive way when a
24 kid acts inappropriately. And as the Deputy
25 Chancellor said it's not a question simply of

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2 holding the child accountable. It's also providing
3 the interventions to change the behavior so when
4 the child goes back again that we don't see a
5 repeat. And, and I think that that's what we are
6 indeed seeing. Is it a short term fix? No, it is a
7 long term progressive fix and the work that we're
8 doing in restorative approaches, social emotional
9 learning is inextricably linked to the Respect for
10 All work that we're doing. And focusing on working
11 all the time with school staff because those are
12 the folks that are with the kids when they walk in
13 in the morning and when they leave at the end of
14 the day. And when they change their pedagogical
15 practice, when we change their world view of what
16 it means to be part of a school community that has
17 the impact on what that child walking into that
18 building every day experiences.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you. I
20 have just a couple suggestions before I move to the
21 next one. You know Brooklyn Queens day is coming up
22 and that offers a wonderful opportunity for some
23 staff for professional development on this issue.
24 And I think even if you were just to take one 45
25 minute session in every school and have some type

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2 of turnkey training from the administration down to
3 the principal then down to the classroom teachers
4 during those days off it sends a very clear message
5 to everybody. And it doesn't cost anything to do
6 that. And then the other thing that I'd like to
7 suggest is for some type of an LGBTQ advisory panel
8 to the department, much like what we have with the
9 police department and what we have with other city
10 agencies as well where we can have students and
11 teachers, administrators participate in the
12 discussion about how to get the word out in, in, in
13 an appropriate and cost effective ways as well. And
14 I think students in particular would come up with a
15 lot of really good ideas. So let me turn it over
16 now to Council Member Chin.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you Chair.

18 Deputy Chancellor it's always good to see you. I
19 just want to follow up some of the question I guess
20 my colleague has also talked about. I'm really
21 interested in finding out from DOE, what is the
22 collaboration with the Teachers Union, the CSA, the
23 Principals Union to really find a collaborative
24 effort on dealing with this issue of bullying and,
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2 and with, you know making it safe for all student
3 population.

4 ELAYNA KONSTAN: We have, we have a
5 number of intersections. They're very much our
6 partners in the Respect for All program. And
7 honoring our schools that have done amazing work in
8 terms of Respect for all. We have worked closely
9 with the UFT in terms of their Brave campaign. And
10 publicizing that and working with schools on here's
11 another venue for reporting of you know if you're,
12 for students as well. We meet regularly...

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Tell them what
14 the program is.

15 ELAYNA KONSTAN: Brave is a hotline.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah.

17 ELAYNA KONSTAN: ...for young people who
18 need another outlet to report, you know a 24 hour,
19 seven days a week kind of hotline. We have a very
20 close working relationship with the guidance
21 chapter of the UFT as well in terms of the work we
22 do with guidance counselors and supporting them and
23 providing training with them. I think in, in
24 Kathleen's testimony she talked about one example
25 where we did, where we worked together with them.

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2 So there's number of examples that, but we do see
3 both the UFT and the CSA as our partners in this
4 work. And to really call upon them to, to help us.
5 We often do training with their chapter leaders
6 during Chancellor's day, professional days,
7 etcetera.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CHINN: I guess the
9 follow up with that is also community based
10 organization in terms of partnering with their,
11 where they can come in and do training with student
12 or programs.

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: We do.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CHINN: ...And this DOE
15 allocate funding sources to really encourage that
16 kind of partnership.

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: We, this is
18 one area where we are actually blessed in terms of
19 the depth and breadth of the kind of partners that
20 we have. I know we mentioned some of them in the
21 testimony but not all of them. And many of them
22 just do wonderful work in our schools. And, and we,
23 we are funding that.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: But I, I, I wanted
3 to also make sure that you continue to support that
4 and possibly... [crosstalk]

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Of course.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: ...even expanding
7 more funding so that there'll be after school
8 programs or even programs during school time. And I
9 guess following some of my, all my colleague was
10 saying is really creating the culture...

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIM: Yes.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: ...within a school
13 that every kids will be safe. And, and welcome. And
14 I think that's something that we really, truly need
15 to work towards. And Respect for All is great but
16 it's only a week you know of activity. But we got
17 to, it's somehow, that's got to be the whole school
18 year.

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIM: It is, it's a
20 little bigger than the week. Because every
21 principal has to have a Respect for All plan,
22 annual plan. Every principal has to appoint a
23 respect for all liaison in the school who goes
24 through two days of training, one at least,
25 sometimes often more than that. So while we focus a

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2 lot on that week because we honor some of our
3 schools. That program really exists all year long.
4 That, that is not to say what you're saying isn't
5 absolutely correct about working on the culture
6 because that is exactly what has to happen here.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah I think if
8 there's a way that the Council Member, each of us
9 could find out in terms of the plan in each of our
10 district at the same time you know looking at how
11 many incidents of bullying are happening in the
12 district and what schools are doing about it and
13 kind of program that are being planned so that we
14 can also participate and be helpful and...

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Happy to share
16 that with you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you.

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Very happy.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you Chair.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just making sure I
21 got my order right. Council Member Ritchie Torres.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Thank you Mr.
23 Chairman. First I want to note that you know I'm so
24 proud to have Council Member Danny Dromm as our
25 Chairperson. The fact that you are chairing the

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2 Education Committee is a sign of how far we have
3 come as a community. And the fact that you're
4 holding this hearing sends a powerful message to
5 LGBT youth that they're no longer invisible, that
6 they have a powerful advocate in our new Education
7 Chair. And I think many young people can take that
8 to heart. And I want to thank the three young
9 people who came and testified. For them to come to
10 a City Council hearing and share their stories of
11 personal pain so honestly and so openly is not only
12 moving, it's inspirational. And so I thank you for
13 your courage. I might ask you some of the, just
14 different variations of the same questions but I
15 might be going in a different direction. But if,
16 you know suppose for moment if I'm a young gay
17 person from the Bronx as I once was, you know and
18 rejected and misunderstood by my parents at home
19 and I'm bullied by my peers in school. Where do I
20 go, where would you recommend that I go for
21 support?

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Connie why
23 don't you answer this?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Because it's not
25 clear to me whether most kids in those situations...

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2 CONNIE COROLLA: No...

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4 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: ...would know
5 where to go for support.

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6 CONNIE COROLLA: To go for support
7 within a school or to go for support within the
8 community?

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9 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Within the
10 school. Like it's...

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11 CONNIE COROLLA: Alright.

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12 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: I think...

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14 CONNIE COROLLA: Within a, within a
15 school for sure if there was a Gay/Straight
16 Alliance I would strongly suggest that you would go
17 there, to go to a guidance counselor, or a teacher,
18 or the Respect for All liaison or for any of the,
19 any people in that building that you felt a close
20 connection to. That's where you should be going to
21 for support. It could be an AP. It could be
22 somebody in the main office. It would depend upon
23 who you knew and who you felt comfortable with. And
24 if you did not have somebody in the school that you
25 felt that comfortable with I would hope that you
26 would reach out through that RFA email so that we
27 could work to connect you with somebody, that we

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2 could work with you on the phone, or in person to
3 say tell us what you need, tell us where you would
4 feel comfortable getting the help. And then we
5 would work with you to get that help for you.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: And has there
7 been an attempt to train... Because obviously I think
8 there's a recognition that the LGBT youth
9 population is uniquely vulnerable...

10 CONNIE COROLLA: Absolutely.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: ...as, has unique
12 needs. And has there been attempts to train DOE
13 personnel to service those needs.

14 CONNIE COROLLA: Yes, yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Okay. And have
16 you, and obviously there are service providers who
17 have been in, who have been servicing LGBT youth
18 before it was mainstream if you will...

19 CONNIE COROLLA: Right.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: And are you
21 tapping into that institutional expertise?

22 CONNIE COROLLA: Absolutely. We refer
23 kids to the Yes program, we refer kids to Hetrick-
24 Martin, we offer if, if, if a child is very unhappy
25 where he or she is we always say do you want to

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2 stay in your school, would Harvey Milk be a better
3 place for you to be? That's up to the child to say
4 yes, I'm happy where I am or no, I do want to make
5 a change and we facilitate that if that's what that
6 student wants and needs. So it, it would run the
7 gambit. PFLAG has been an enormous help in helping
8 us to support not only students but the parents of
9 students because they're on, on new ground for
10 them. And I cannot say enough about how they have
11 been a, a tremendous source of, of help for parents
12 when we, they, Drew Tagliabue never turns us away.
13 And on the, on a dime has people there for when
14 we've said parents need some help.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: And do you reach
16 out to, I know you refer students but do you reach
17 out to these organizations to help you train your
18 personnel and help you... [crosstalk, interpose]

19 CONNIE COROLLA: Absolutely... is one of
20 our collaborative partners since, since the
21 beginning of this whole initiative.

22 ELAYNA KONSTAN: And if, if I could just
23 add one, one aspect. The RFA email actually comes
24 to my office and every single one of those emails
25 are personally handled and connected to so that we

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2 attempt to address every single one that we
3 receive. And, and Connie could, is, is actually,
4 was the recipient of every single one of those
5 emails and we reach out to the schools to make sure
6 we have resolution for the parent and/or the
7 student who's writing to us.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: And, and as you
9 mentioned one source of support are GSAs but it
10 seems to me many GSAs are struggling to survive.
11 You know I remember when I went to Lehman High
12 School my GSA would cycle in and out of existence.
13 So it was not a, a constant source of support. So
14 I'm wondering, is the DOE attempting to provide
15 central support services to ensure the viability
16 of, of GSAs?

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Well we talked
18 about that a little earlier and I think...

19 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Okay.

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: ...we're going
21 to go back and think about that.

22 COUCIL MEMBER TORRES: Okay.

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: And what else
24 we can do.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: And as far as
3 the data that you collect. You know some of the
4 data on harassment levels as you know are
5 staggering. I mean I see 82 percent of LGBT youths
6 face verbal harassment, 38 percent facing physical
7 harassment. Do you collect data on the harassment
8 levels that LGBT youth face in the New York City
9 public school system?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: We collect
11 harassment data but we do not collect data about
12 individual students themselves. And I know the
13 Chair mentioned in his remarks that San Francisco
14 was doing that. And we will take a look at it.
15 We've always felt that, that we had some privacy
16 issues there.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Yeah.

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: And was not
19 the right way to go. So I think we have to go to
20 talk and think about that a little more.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: And I
22 acknowledge the dilemma there. But I'm wondering,
23 you're committed to figuring out how you can
24 collect data. Because in order, we have to
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understand the scope of the problem to fully address it.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: You know data is critical. And you're committed to figuring out how you can collect data on LGBT youth and LGBT harassment without compromising confidentiality and privacy. Is that something that you're thinking about or...

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: It is...

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Okay.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: ...is something we are, we are going to go back and think about.

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Okay. And, and again I'm just grateful for the opportunity to question you. I, I think you for your, your, your testimony and forever grateful to our chairman. So thank you.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Council Member Torres. You know I just want to go back to the question of data because it's vitally important also.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Okay.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So much of what has
3 gone on in the department has been based on data
4 and statistics. And the collection of that data
5 while somewhat, a little bit controversial in
6 regard to LGBTQ youth is really not in, in many
7 way. Like I have some legislation to collect data
8 on LGBT identified individuals under the care of
9 ACS for example. And we've been doing some work
10 with that department to collect that data because
11 we need to know who are the students that need
12 these services, where are these students, etcetera,
13 so forth, and so on. So I want to just pick up on
14 what Council Member Torres was saying and say that
15 yes, while we need to protect the identity of
16 individual students we do need to begin to collect
17 the data on self-identified LGBT students. You know
18 it's, many students today are proud and want to be
19 out and, and, and let people know. And, matter of
20 fact probably even more so than, than anybody in my
21 generation would have been at that age. So I think
22 that's something I also want to talk with you
23 about, follow up into this hearing as well is how
24 we go about collecting that data. But just to, to

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follow up and I'm, I'm going to have a few more questions for you and then...

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...we'll let you go because I know many other people are here to testify today as well and we can go on and on and on about this because there is so much to, to talk about. But number one funding for Respect for All. Do we have funding? How is that dealt with? I know the council at one point was putting in I think 150 thousand. That's not there now. I want to look to the future. Can we work with you on that? What is the department putting in? Because really money isn't everything but it speaks volumes as to our commitment to these issues.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: We'd, we'd be happy to continue that conversation.

[laughter]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Have you in the past, the DOE, put money in as well...

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...in addition to the council? Do you know how much money, are you putting in now on that?

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2 ELAYNA KONSTAN: Absolutely.

3 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Yeah.

4 ELAYNA KONSTAN: So we have lots of, we
5 have monies and funding streams that come out of
6 the Office of Safety and Youth Development that go
7 for the program support of conflict resolution peer
8 mediation for example, restorative reproaches, site
9 based coaching of schools using restorative
10 reproaches. These are all monies coming out...

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And Elayna just,
12 anything specifically just to do LGBT stuff? It,
13 it, I, the, the restorative justice, restorative
14 discipline and stuff which I support very much but
15 again I want to bring it back. Because what we
16 often times do is we overlook the LGBT community in
17 much of that.

18 ELAYNA KONSTAN: Yeah, that's, I'd have
19 to look at that because generally it's, it's
20 broader but as you know the, the two day training
21 at the secondary level, a huge part of that because
22 we knew that that was an area not addressed
23 historically is really about supporting LGBT youth.
24 But certainly happy to talk about how, other things
25 that we could do and how we can deepen that.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, and do we have
3 a list of coordinators for Respect for All in every
4 school?

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Sure.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And is that
7 something that you could share with us?

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Sure.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And the committee?
10 Can we get that as well?

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And also do we have
13 a list of Gay/Straight Alliances in the schools?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Probably not.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That's something I
16 think that I would really urge you to begin to
17 collect the data on that so that we can follow up
18 and we can find out where they're lapsing as
19 Council Member Torres said. Because one year
20 they're there, the next year they're not. And this
21 is really vitally important to this Committee as
22 well... [crosstalk]

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: ...we'll look at
24 that.

25 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...at here.

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2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: We'll look at
3 that.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I have a note here
5 also from myself to say that I want to point out
6 that Rocky in his testimony, his issues started
7 when he was in elementary school. [crosstalk]

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Yes...
9 [crosstalk]

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And so while we talk
11 a lot about the training for high school I want to
12 say as having been an elementary school teacher
13 myself and having had kids brought to me this he
14 said you're gay and this and this and that. You
15 know. The message even in first grade, first
16 graders is that being gay is something negative.
17 And so I want to explore that further with you as
18 well particularly in light of the testimony that
19 Rocky provided with us. And then finally the Office
20 of Economic, the Office of Equal Opportunity, that
21 still exist in the department?

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Oh yes, yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright, so can you
24 explain to me just the difference between reports
25 to OEO versus reports on the RFA website or is

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that, are they the same or how, how is that all handled...

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: No.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...because I also have this here, this list here which is the report of incidents concerning school safety in the educational climate which does list the types of discrimination that people face. Are you familiar with that?

ELAYNA KONSTAN: That's a state, that's a state document you're, you have...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes

ELAYNA KONSTAN: VADIR yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, but... it's supposed to be put into effect with DASA,

ELAYNA KONSTAN: Yes... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...with the implementation of DOSA versus the, the study and the, and the, the information that you collected which I think was different from what DASA is requiring. The last report that you did was in 2010 I believe if I'm not mistaken. And then OEO and how they all interact with each other. Can you just give me a brief description of that?

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2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Well OEO is an
3 office that is focused on the employees of the
4 department. We spoke a little earlier, you know
5 it's not just our school based staff but it's
6 everybody. And they engage in training of staff. I
7 think last year they, there was about five or six
8 thousand people who received training...

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So Chancellor just
10 on that note... I, I, I don't mean to interrupt you
11 but from my experiences OEO does training but very,
12 very few are in sexual orientation. And if a
13 principal is requesting that type of training for
14 either a faculty conference or for professional
15 development day...

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Okay.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...they're not even
18 often times aware that OEO offers that. They are
19 aware of the other types of training that OEO
20 offers but not in sexual orientation. And so I'm
21 curious to know one, what the numbers are for
22 discrimination complaints to OEO regarding sexual
23 orientation gender identity and the number of
24 requests for training from principals from OEO
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2 specifically related to their sexual orientation
3 training.

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: We'll have to
5 get that for you.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Sure.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I think that would
9 speak a lot. Often times when I would meet with the
10 department before you were here I would have an
11 argument with them that, that nobody had been
12 reporting to OEO so I would suspect that the
13 numbers are low. But it's I believe because people
14 don't know that that exists and they have that
15 available to them to file a complaint. So I, I
16 really would like... [crosstalk] to look at that a
17 little bit further...

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Let's look at
19 it.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...down the road. So
21 if a staff person were to come to you or to anybody
22 and, and make a complaint of harassment, a teacher
23 who feels they were discriminated against to the
24 principal, what is the principal advised to do or
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2 how is the principal, what does the principal
3 instruct the teacher or anybody if the... right.

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Well an
5 investigation would be done first not by the
6 principal but by someone from the central office,
7 whether it's the OEO or legal, you know depends on
8 what the accusation is. But it would be
9 investigated. More than likely the principal would
10 be involved in the investigation and whatever the
11 results were action would be taken.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So in my case the
13 principal was the person who was harassing me...

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Where does the
16 teacher go?

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Go ahead.

18 ELAYNE KONSTAN: They can make that
19 report themselves...

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: At OEO?

21 ELAYNE KONSTAN: OEO, they could also
22 make that make that report to the Office of Special
23 Investigations and those will be investigated and...

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Right.
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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And Elayna to be
3 honest with you from my experience also when I made
4 those reports and although I had a school board
5 member who wrote on letterhead that I was pervert
6 for acknowledging my sexuality in the newspapers,
7 not even in my classroom, they went nowhere. And I
8 just hope that that has changed.

9 ELAYNE KONSTAN: It has.

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: It has.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And, and, and maybe,
12 because I do want to follow-up with another hearing
13 at some point further down the road we can have
14 those O, OEO people here as well.

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Sure.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Because I would like
17 to delve into that a little bit further.

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: No problem.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright, we think
20 you're off the hook at this point so...

21 [laughter]

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Thank you.

23 [laughter]

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Not off the hook
25 completely but...

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2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: We hope that
4 somebody will be here also to hear the testimony
5 that follows as well.

6 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Absolutely..

7 [crosstalk]

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So... And I thank you
9 very much for coming and in spending this time..

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: No doubt we'll
11 be back.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you very
13 much. Okay, so I'm going to bring up another panel
14 of young people; Kimberly Espinosa from Make the
15 Road, Eduardo Flores also from Make the Road, and
16 Renaldo Charica[phonetic] I'm sorry if I said it
17 wrong, from Project Reach.

18 [pause]

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just before you
20 begin I have to swear you in. So would you raise
21 your right hand please? And do you swear or affirm
22 to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but
23 the truth in your testimony before this committee
24 and to respond honestly to Council Member
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2 Questions? Very good. Let's begin over here. Thank
3 you.

4 UNKNOWN MALE: Before Edwardo goes he'll
5 be giving his testimony in Spanish and then I will
6 read it in English.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Very good.

8 EDUARDO FLORES: [gives testimony in
9 Spanish]

10 UNKNOWN MALE: Good afternoon. And thank
11 you to Council Member Dromm and all the members of
12 the Education Committee for allowing me to testify
13 today. My name is Edwardo Flores and I am 19 years
14 of age and I'm a resident of Sunnyside Queens and
15 member of Make the Road New York. Make the Road New
16 York is one of the largest immigrant rights
17 organizations in the state of New York and also has
18 an LGBTQ justice project of which I am a part. For
19 three years I went to school at Newcomers High
20 School in Long Island City, Queens. I like my
21 teachers and was motivated to get good grades and
22 succeed. I even started with the help of Make the
23 Road to create safe spaces for lesbian and gay
24 people in my school as part of my leadership
25 development. However when I presented these ideas

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2 again and again I ran into obstacles from the
3 school principal who in front of organizers of Make
4 the Road New York said this type of space was not
5 necessary and it would be very controversial for
6 the immigrant parents who are involved with the
7 school. At the same time that this was happening I
8 also began to receive threats and harassment by my
9 peers because of my sexuality and gender
10 expression. I began to be absent from my classes
11 and my grades began to get worse and I became very
12 depressed. When I reported this to my counselor he
13 told me I had to come to school no matter what. But
14 how can I go to a place where every day they made
15 fun of me. And when even at one point I received a
16 written death threat and the teachers and
17 counselors did nothing. I went with my mom and
18 organizers of Make the Road to confront the problem
19 with the principal and my counselor. However they
20 said my problem was my absences and my bad grades.
21 I could not believe the lack of support when it is
22 clear and proven that students who are bullied at
23 school do not want to come to school if staff are
24 not doing anything about it. I ended up asking them
25 to transfer me to another school. They wanted me to

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2 transfer to Harvey Milk but as an immigrant student
3 I wanted to go to a school where they specialized
4 in teaching English. I was sent to another school
5 in Queens but there I was also not accepted by the
6 people. I became very frustrated and ended up,
7 decided to take the GED instead of continuing to
8 apply for schools. Now I'm finally getting my life
9 in order with the help of allies from Make the
10 Road. I'm about to take my GED and I'm applying for
11 scholarships and college. But I do not want this to
12 happen to any other student in the public education
13 system of the city of New York. So I ask the City
14 Council to have mandatory training for students
15 through the Respect for All regulation and to
16 further expand the regulation to include harassment
17 by teachers and other employees. I think what
18 happened to newcomers was lack of training and
19 sensitivity. And we need this especially in schools
20 that deal with immigrant populations. Finally I ask
21 the City Council to approve a curriculum that
22 includes LGBTQ topics so that all students in the
23 public education system in the city of New York
24 learn of the rich history and contributions that
25 the LGBT community have made. I appreciate your

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time today and I and my fellow Make the Road New York organizers and students are willing to keep fighting and helping to make these demands become a reality. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Kimberly.

KIMBERLY ESPINOSO: Good after...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just got to hit it so the red button is lit...

KIMBERLY ESPINOSO: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...lit up.

KIMBERLY ESPINOSO: Good afternoon?
Okay. Good afternoon and thank you Council Member Daniel Dromm and all the Council Members of the Education Committee for allowing me to testify today. My name is Kimberly Espinosa and I am a Junior at the Bushwick School for Social Justice and a member of Make the Road New York. My journey to becoming a woman comfortable in herself and accepting of others first started in my freshman year when I joined a queer/straight alliance club in my school. Coming from a family where being a part of the LGBTQ community is necessary one of best things it was hard for me back then to realize how beneficial joining would be. Now I am able to

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2 see how much progress we have made and lives we
3 have touched in these past three years. Through
4 Pride Week, workshops, fundraisers, and meetings
5 we've been able to accomplish a lot. We work,
6 brought people together, and created a safe space
7 for all students at BSSJ. Every Pride Week I'm
8 surprised at how many students are supportive.
9 Without the support system from our teachers and
10 principal I feel like we couldn't have done as much
11 as we have. Being a part of Coro's Mayor's Youth
12 Leadership Council and working around a policy that
13 has to do with bullying has made me realize that
14 there is still more work to be done. Unfortunately
15 not many schools are, are as open and witness and
16 support the LGBTQ students. Important things such
17 as Respect for All week are barely spoken of or
18 marketed in many schools. Both students and
19 teachers lack knowledge on how to tackle bullying
20 and what it means to be a part of the LGBTQ
21 community. I also feel like students, especially
22 males don't feel comfortable enough to speak on
23 sexuality and as much as we try to tackle this
24 issue it's still a big problem. I deeply believe
25 school administrators has to be better informed on

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2 these issues so other students are able to be as
3 comfortable as me to say that I will not give my
4 sexuality a title and put myself in a box. What I
5 will do is say that I am only human and I love. I'm
6 not afraid to love a man or a woman. Each day I'm
7 able to find more clarity about my sexuality and
8 who I am as a person because of supportive teachers
9 and clubs like the QSA. I can be more of who I am
10 and not just in school but outside of it too.
11 Working with Make the Road New York I know my story
12 is not common. Many schools don't really implement
13 Respect for All or don't do it the way the policy
14 is written. However because there is no way of
15 checking we don't know which schools are doing a
16 great job and which need to improve. We need to
17 audit all schools to make sure Respect for All is
18 being implemented. Lastly because Make the Road New
19 York works in many high schools. I know it is
20 common for students not to know who their Respect
21 for All point person is and that many students not
22 involved in QSAs know absolutely nothing about
23 Respect for All. I know there are supportive
24 principals out there so I think part of the problem
25 might, might be a lack of money. If schools are

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going to a good job of putting Respect for All in place they need to, they need enough resources and lots of great training for both teachers and also students. I know we have come far in just a few years but I also note the work isn't over. Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Renaldo.

UNKNOWN MALE: Hi, so we actually gathered testimony from a student who decided not to be here in person. He said that he had an appointment. But we also know that as a student who's not out and as a student who is afraid of retaliation from his school that may have played a role in it. But he gave us permission to read the testimony a loud today. So I'm going to do that...
[crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can you just let this young man who's waiting also...

UNKNOWN MALE: Oh absolutely...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...and do his first, yeah?

UNKNOWN MALE: Oh, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

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2 RENALDO CHARICA: Good afternoon. My
3 name is Renaldo. I am 17 years old and I am
4 originally from Peru. I have been living in the
5 United States for almost three years. I consider
6 myself gay but it's, is not always easy because of
7 the jokes on my friends. I come from a Hispanic
8 culture where being gay is hard. I go to Flushing
9 International High School. Being a junior student I
10 have been bullied plenty of times by my classmates
11 and also some of my friends. Some of them, some of
12 the bullies, I mean some of the problems that I
13 struggle with just the last year it was like I have
14 a friend who was making fun of me because I was
15 behaving in a different way. So he told me all mans
16 don't, man, man, the man don't behave like that.
17 And I was like who are you to tell me what to do.
18 Or one day he started to insult me or throwing my
19 things without no reason. I have been bullied by
20 jocks, people of religion and cultural. I would
21 like the City Council to encourage high school to
22 make more workshops to all the student throughout
23 the city so they could have more knowledge about
24 LGBTQ issues and how they, how is their reaction
25 can affect emotionally and physically. My own

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experiences like my father, my dad is homophobic, and my mom follows my religion and my haven't come out to, to my parents yet because they don't like or they see gay people as inferior. That's it.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Very good and I just want to, before I let you read the other statement as well I, I will make some comments but before, but before I forget you that's, you hit on a very good point Renaldo about parents as well. So when we don't have supportive parents really there's hardly anybody that we can turn to for that type of support. And that's why having a supportive school system is so vitally important. Because if you can't even turn to your parents and other cases discrimination I have found is somebody is anti-black or anti-Latino you can go to your parent and say that this happened. But often times LGBT students can't even go to their parents for fear of being thrown out of their homes. And so I just want to say thank you for raising that point. Thank you. And did you want to continue with the other testimony.

UNKNOWN MALE: Sorry I skipped my turn. Good afternoon and thank you Council Member Daniel

1
2 Dromm and all the Council Members of the Education
3 Committee for allowing my testimony to be read
4 today. I am a senior at a school that I don't want
5 to name in Brooklyn. I also don't want to give my
6 real name because I'm not out to my family and I
7 fear retaliation from my principal. I'm also a
8 proud member of the LGBTQ justice project of Make
9 the Road New York. The only fight I have ever been
10 in during my time in high school happened when I
11 was a freshman. A girl teased me for months. It
12 began when she said there are only girls in this
13 classroom even though I was right there. A friend
14 stood up for me that day and she stopped during
15 that class but she teased me all the time after
16 that. I knew if I went to a guidance counselor they
17 would just say you should just ignore her. But I
18 tried that and it didn't work. Finally one day I
19 got so fed up I threw her jacket on the ground and
20 we started fighting and pulling hair. We were both
21 just suspended for a day but she didn't tease me
22 after that. I shouldn't have had to do that and I
23 shouldn't have had to miss school because I was
24 being teased. I shouldn't have been constantly
25 distracted in school by her teasing or thinking

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2 about her teasing. And I should have felt like my
3 principal would have supported me and teachers who
4 were trying to help me. Some teachers were
5 accepting of the fact that gay kids are in the
6 school particularly a gay teacher who made us feel
7 safe. But if we went to any other teacher they
8 would say what can we do about bullying, there's
9 nothing we can do. When I was a sophomore we
10 started a GSA with the help of Make the Road. We
11 put up posters of LGBTQ people who had committed
12 suicide for day of remembrance. We asked all the
13 teachers if we could put them up on the door but
14 when we asked her she said no, take it down, I
15 don't want to see this on the doors. She wouldn't
16 tell us why but later told the GSA teacher that
17 they weren't appropriate. Later when we tried to
18 have a spirit week she denied us. She did the same
19 for rainbow day where students were supposed to
20 pick their favorite color of the rainbow to wear or
21 wear rainbows. We tried to do it anyway and ordered
22 balloons but our teacher she popped them during the
23 teacher's free period. We tried having a gender
24 switch day but she said the guys may comment
25 something inappropriate and the girls will dress up

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2 like guys by wearing baggy shirts and pants. We
3 tried having a pride week but she didn't want to
4 have it so we tried to get a petition signed by
5 teachers again with the assistance of Make the
6 Road. But they were afraid of the principal and
7 wouldn't sign it. I just know if our GSA tries to
8 do something she will say no. It makes me feel sad
9 that the principal is so homophobic. Because if she
10 looks at the kids in our school half of them are
11 gay or trying to figure out their sexual
12 orientation. We wanted a GSA to make kids feel
13 safe, to make them feel like this school really
14 isn't messed up but it's not going to work out
15 because they won't feel safe in this school.
16 They're thinking we're going to have to be bullied
17 at every single turn. If we say we're gay and try
18 to make friends people will say I don't want to be
19 your friend because you're gay and then try to beat
20 us up. We need workshops so the kids can understand
21 more about sexuality and gender, where kids can
22 learn a little more than whatever they hear from
23 people who don't know. The principal should be held
24 responsible because she doesn't really comply with
25 the rules of Respect for All and she also denies us

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2 the right to have a GSA when, a right to have a GSA
3 that does anything. When kids are graduating middle
4 school and are looking for a high school they want
5 to know if there's a GSA because they want to know
6 if there's a place to feel safe, a place to express
7 themselves and when they hear there isn't they
8 won't want to come. Working with the LGBTQ justice
9 project organizer of Make the Road New York I now
10 know that dignity for all students act says that
11 the staff like principals can't bully students but
12 that the Respect for All regulation doesn't. We
13 need the Respect for All regulation to come in
14 compliance with DASA and to prohibit staff to
15 student harassment. Because sometimes it's teachers
16 or school safety officers or even principals who
17 bully kids for years. Because of this I also think
18 all students, teachers, SSOs, principals, and other
19 staff should get some LGBTQ and anti-bullying
20 training. This could change so much for so many
21 students across New York City not only for when
22 they are in school but because school bullies
23 become bullies in jobs and on streets when they
24 leave school. If everyone in a New York City school
25 got training like this how many people wouldn't get

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beaten up or killed or kill themselves. We need to act now. Thank you again for listening to my story even though I couldn't be there in person.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Wow, well that's very powerful testimony from everybody on the panel today. I want to thank you for coming in. I wanted to also say that as the new chair of the Education Committee I'm going to use my oversight powers to visit schools where I hear of these incidents. So if you can feed me that information I'm going to go into the schools themselves to find out what is exactly going on. And that is a way for me to force compliance with existing regulations in the Department of Education. So if you hear or you know of students or anybody is here in the audience today please let me know. Inform my, my, my assistant Michael Mallon and I will be going to those schools personally to find out what is happening there. So I want to thank you all for coming and for your testimony and we're going to call the next panel.

[combined "thank you" from panel members]

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So now we're going
3 to invite up our next pane. Okay, we have Sterling
4 Roberson from the United Federation of Teachers
5 yeah, and Patricia Crispino from the United
6 Federation of Teachers as well. Two people that I
7 know well from my days of being involved with the
8 United Federation of Teachers as a Chapter Leader.
9 And we have been joined by Council Member Brad
10 Lander who's been a strong proponent of LGBT rights
11 as well. Thank you Council Member for being here.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Congratulations
13 on doing this hearing Mr. Chairman. It's great and
14 long overdue and I really admire and appreciate
15 your leadership in doing it so...

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
17 I appreciate it as well. I must say I'm a little
18 bit prejudice to our next panel because I fully
19 recognize that had I not had tenor when I came out
20 as an openly gay teacher in 1992 I probably would
21 not be sitting here. And had the UFT not been there
22 to help me and support me I know that I wouldn't
23 have been sitting here. So I look forward to
24 hearing from your testimony and you may begin.
25 Thank you.

1
2 STERLING ROBERSON: Testing. Okay. So
3 good afternoon Chairman Dromm and all of the
4 members of the Education Committee. My name is
5 Sterling Roberson. I'm the Vice President for
6 Career in Technical Education and Alternative
7 Programs at the United Federation of Teachers and I
8 want to just say on behalf of our entire membership
9 and our president Michael Mulgrew I want to thank
10 you for the opportunity to actually talk on a
11 crucial topic. One of the things that we want to do
12 from the outset is actually acknowledge your work
13 in terms of your longstanding advocacy not just as
14 a teacher but as you mentioned as a UFT chapter
15 leader and in support of the LGBT Community and the
16 impact that it has on our school system. And
17 congratulations as it relates to your, your role as
18 the Education chair to bring forth this important
19 topic. So we, we definitely are partners in that
20 way. In terms of as our Union we have understood
21 for a very long time would help professionals and
22 understood the, the needs of members from a full
23 spectrum of issues that face the LGB community.
24 When we think about discrimination, workplace
25 discrimination, when we think about that

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2 discrimination based on race, gender, gender
3 identity as well as other issues. We know that it's
4 important that our school system become a safe
5 environment for all. Although as a union we
6 represent educators. One thing that we do recognize
7 is that although schools are a place of safety and
8 as a work place that we want to be safety we also
9 note that it has to be a environment that is safe
10 for students to be able to learn. And when we think
11 about that important issue that's something that we
12 cannot forget. And when we have these kinds of
13 issues of, of bullying and the discrimination and
14 I'll talk about that in a, in a minute, we
15 recognize that is very important from the outset.
16 The UFT in terms of its membership back in the
17 early 80s we actually started a victim support
18 program which was in collaboration with the
19 Department of Education to address victimization in
20 workplace environment. And although it has not, it
21 was targeted for members one of the things in, in
22 terms of this conference is that it only shows how
23 we need to do more and how that trickles down to
24 the, the student body as well as the LGBT
25 community. With me is Patty Crispino just to let

1
2 you know and we've, she's done a lot of work from
3 the national level with the American Federation of
4 teachers and also as a part of our LGBT caucus for
5 the, for our, for our national union. So I think
6 this topic and this, this conversation today and we
7 heard the, the powerful testimonies of the students
8 and, and others in terms of what has been done,
9 where we are, and where we need to be to be able to
10 address this topic. So I'm going to talk about it
11 in three phases. One, I sort of touched on safety
12 but when we think about the culture of bullying we
13 think that that's a very important thing. I'm not
14 going to read verbatim on my, my testimony because
15 it is distributed in the interest of time and
16 others. But I'm going to just highlight some of
17 those things that we have been able to, to do
18 without necessarily going into details because I
19 don't, I know it will be redundant on some of the
20 things that we've, we've talked about. But when we
21 think about crime and the importance of schools
22 actually being a safe haven many may not know that
23 you know for young people that are victims of crime
24 overall that happens not necessarily in the schools
25 but on the way to and from schools. So although we

1 need to address the issues in school it's important
2 for us to have a global understanding why it's
3 important that we have to create a, an environment
4 in a school that is a safe space for all. And as
5 much as we've been, we've heard testimony and as
6 much as we have, we have done that is just, we just
7 move the needle a little bit. But we all have to
8 work together to ensure that we, we are all in to
9 make sure that the schools meet that mark. But when
10 we think about the national statistics in terms of
11 what happens in America regarding bullying because
12 that's a huge topic. We touched on bullying,
13 cyberbullying and we understand that's, that's a
14 huge thing. But that number from 2011 where it was
15 only 15 to 25 percent already moved up to 40 to 50
16 percent when cyberbullying becomes a factor. But
17 those statistics alone is an alarming rate. And as
18 we talked about and as we've heard the LGBT
19 community, many of those numbers are not
20 necessarily extracted and defined clearly so
21 everyone knows what that looks like. I know when a
22 Department of Ed talked about the Respect for All
23 campaign we, in 2011 when we heard these
24 statistics, our Director of Safety actually in
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1
2 partnership with the Department of Education, the,
3 the Council for School Supervisors and
4 Administrators, as well as the Mental Health
5 Community we thought that it would have been
6 necessary to create a hotline so that all student
7 have the ability to actually have a call when there
8 is a crisis so that they can speak to adults that
9 can provide them with information and guidance as
10 it relates to addressing their issues. And we know
11 that this is important. But although we do have a
12 hotline one of the things that we do know is that
13 eight percent of those calls come from individuals
14 in the LGBT community. And for us that is something
15 that is alarming. It only tells us that we have to
16 do more. When it comes to policy and programs and
17 laws we believe that they can make a difference.
18 When we think about what has happened we looked at
19 the Chancellor's regulations, it's touched on it
20 that they've done a pretty good job in terms of
21 quantifying... or, or narrowing the regulations to
22 be... specific around harassment and bullying and the
23 disciplinary action. But more importantly we
24 definitely have to realize that it's not just about
25 what we do with respect to modifying our discipline

1 codes and, and providing disciplinary action. It's
2 the interventions that's going to be important.
3 Those are big pieces that is going to, to help us
4 as we, we move forward in those kinds, in that
5 effort. We did support the Dignity for All, DASA.
6 We believe it's important. We are one of the, we
7 provide training for our members to ensure that
8 they are aware. But it, even though that, that's
9 global we still have to work with the Department of
10 Education, the Council, and others to ensure that
11 there is a, an awareness out there at not just the
12 city level but also at the state level to address
13 violence. In terms of, and we've done that with,
14 with, in terms of teacher awareness because we
15 talked about training a lot. And through our
16 teacher centers we've actually developed a, we,
17 based on the, the, based on the, the act, the, the
18 law that was passed we are actually, one of the
19 things we provide, professional development for our
20 members, to actually take that course. And we think
21 that that's a, a move in the right direction when
22 it comes to preventing, when it comes to bullying,
23 when it comes to violence, and we've been a
24 starch[phonetic] advocate of that and we do offer
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1
2 the six hour course in terms of prevention and
3 intervention and bullying, discrimination, and
4 harassment. And we are an authorized provider of
5 that training. And I think that that's a
6 significant move when it comes to how do we ensure
7 that all of our educators are informed with respect
8 to, to that. The last think I would, would say also
9 is, is in terms of how do we build alliances with
10 the LGB community. And I think that in
11 organizations I should say. And we've done that, we
12 support, and we advocate for pride at work, we,
13 with parents and friends and, and lesbian and gay.
14 We've, we've done, and we've recently met with
15 glisten. I know the department talked about that
16 partnership and the UFT has met and we look to
17 explore ways in which we can actually continue to
18 contribute. So there's three things that I always
19 say. You know the first portion of it, just to
20 narrow everything down is number one, back to
21 safety. Our schools have to be ensured that we have
22 a clear understanding; parents, students, teachers,
23 administrators, all of us, that schools have to be
24 a safe haven for all students. Number two, it comes
25 down to training; how do we ensure that everyone is

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2 aware, trained, and how do we all take a active
3 role to ensure that everyone is aware of what's
4 happening, what interventions and what parts each
5 and every one of us can play based on what we do to
6 ensure that all students are feeling safe when they
7 come into a school. And I think that that training
8 piece is that yes we've done training, the
9 Department of Education is 100 percent correct when
10 it comes to them partnering with us in terms of
11 BRAVE and, and, and other Respect for All, in terms
12 of that week. And yes we realize there's point
13 people in the school just like we have Chapter
14 Leaders as you know Chairman, posters, and point
15 people, but we need to deputize others. It's great
16 and it's important to have those, those pieces in
17 the Department of Ed and we agree is, is correct to
18 have those infrastructures but we also have to get
19 some ambassadors that are the practitioners on our
20 side to be able to move that needle even further.
21 And we also should look what, what are other things
22 that we need to do to ensure that every classroom
23 has this kind of training, not just for teachers
24 but also for students. Elayna touched on several
25 different things and, and obviously with

1 restorative approaches and social, emotional
2 learning and, and Connie mentioned those things,
3 progressive discipline. These are all pieces of a
4 larger puzzle. So what I, what I'll say in closing
5 is that all of these things is that we have to do
6 more. The engagement in the community to, to look
7 at things that we, things that we know and things
8 that we need to consider is going to take a
9 collective effort and a collective responsibility
10 for all of us. That includes students in engaging
11 them, engaging parents, convaging[phonetic]
12 community based organizations. So on behalf of the
13 United Federation of Teachers we understand that
14 dynamic and we are looking to continue our
15 partnership and looking to continue the
16 conversation. And we commend you Chairman Dromm for
17 the work that you have done. And as a long time
18 Chapter Leader, educator we believe that this is an
19 extremely important topic and we are just happy to
20 be here to testify but also roll up our sleeves to
21 do the work necessary to make the kind of impact so
22 that we don't hear the kinds of testimonies that we
23 heard from many of the students so that we can
24 address their issues and concerns. And they could
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make the positive educational choices that they deserve to make not by being distracted by the things that's going to take them off course of their education between bullying and, and harassment and those kinds of things.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well thank you very much. Pat were you going to testify? No? Okay. I did, do forget to do something Sterling so I'm going to do it...

STERLING ROBERSON: Swear me in.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right.

STERLING ROBERSON: Okay... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...going to get away but... So you swear that everything you said was the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

STERLING ROBERSON: Absolutely, would you like me to go over it again... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright. I, I do want to also invite up Ilogos [sp?] Rodriguez who's here from Local 372. Is she still here? Okay good because I didn't know you were here and I wanted you to be part of the Union panel as well. But you know I, I do have a question while she's...

STERLING ROBERSON: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...coming up as well.

One is well a question and, and a statement as well. I think that the fact that the UFT has had a float in the pride parade is really important. Now some people think that's a minor thing but it's really not because our biggest enemy as LGBT people is our invisibility. And so having that type of visibility and that type of support from a major union in the city is seen by probably over a million or so people who come to watch that parade. And that lends a lot of credibility to our movement. So I want to thank you for that. I also, because of my own personal experiences just want to get a feel from you, one, how important is having tenor in coming out? Because as a personal issue... very, the first question I was asked when I...

STERLING ROBERSON: Mm-hmm.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...came out was do you have tenor. And then the second part of that is Do you still get complaints from teachers who say that they are afraid to come out or who have come out and then faced some recrimination of some sort. And I, I want to also refer to this beautiful article that was in the UFT paper on January 16th about a

1 teacher who discussed her sexuality with her class
2 because she put a picture of herself and her wife
3 on her desk and the kids wanted to know who that
4 was and she just explained it beautifully. But I
5 did notice that she wrote it under pseudonym. And
6 so that says to me that she's still somewhat afraid
7 of the implications of what it would mean for her
8 to be out in her school. I would think that that's
9 why she wrote it that way. So can you just comment
10 on that perhaps a little bit. What I would say is
11 that obviously when you, when you, when some is,
12 is, is telling their story and they're not, they
13 don't feel safe enough or within their workplace to
14 actually come out and say what they shouldn't have
15 to necessarily feel ashamed to be able to say for
16 repercussions or, or ramifications from an
17 administration or whatever. Tenor is important in
18 terms of the due process that we have in the
19 workplace. And we believe that it's important for
20 everyone to have due process. So we really, we
21 note, but that's, that's after a number of years
22 will you, will you get that. One of the things a
23 union that we're diligent about is whether you have
24 tenor or not we believe in reporting those
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2 incidents to us as well as with the, the, through
3 the proper channels that the DOE has outlined in
4 terms of reporting. It's incumbent upon us to
5 provide protections for all of our members. And
6 we're very aggressive when it comes to those kinds
7 of practices, especially when we know that folks
8 are being under attacked and it, it has nothing to
9 do with their pedagogical, their professional work
10 but it's, it's, it's also on something different.
11 So tenor is a, is a, is a factor. We know that
12 without tenor and that due process it puts you in a
13 different sort of a category but then it, it puts
14 us as, as an organization to even ramp up
15 diligently to ensure that folks' given rights are,
16 are protected especially that doesn't have to do
17 anything with education or, or their pedagogy.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay thank you.
19 Ilogos did you want to give your testimony? Yep,
20 you can begin. Oh, I have to swear you in which is
21 true. Thank you. Please raise your right hand. And
22 do you swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole
23 truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony
24 before this committee and to respond honestly to
25 Council Member questions.

ILOGOS RODRIGUEZ: Yes I do.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, please begin.

ILOGOS RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon

Chairman Dromm and members of the committee. On behalf of the 25,000 school aids, parent and community coordinators, crossing guards, lunchroom workers, counselors, and SAPIS professionals I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak out on, on the subject which has been ignored for far too long. I am, by profession, one of the 300 trained substance abuse prevention and intervention specialists which we call SAPIS, currently working within the Department of Education. We are the professionals responsible for providing violence, drug prevention, and intervention services within the schools we are assigned. Toward that end we initiate the prevention services including individual, group, family, and crisis counselling, provide classroom presentations, peer programs, and make referrals for additional professional services. Working within the schools we see the daily interaction between students and sit with those students who have been the victims of the verbal taunts and bullying. Unfortunately we also

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2 deal with these same victims after they have turned
3 to drugs, alcohol in an effort to cope with the
4 physical and emotional hurt. By being in schools
5 every day we certainly didn't need to see a
6 national study to tell us that more than 80 percent
7 of LGBT students have been victims of verbal abuse
8 and harassment. Or that nearly 40 percent have been
9 physically pushed or shoved in school. A 2012
10 report issued by the center for American progress
11 found that due to the stress that comes from the
12 daily battles with discrimination and stigma as
13 much as 20 percent to 30 percent of the LGBT
14 community our substance abusers compare to nine
15 percent of the general population. No one should be
16 subjected any type of verbal or physical abuse.
17 Local G72 believes everyone has the right to live
18 their lives in the atmosphere of dignity and
19 respect. We also believe we have that, an
20 obligation to the victims of harassment and
21 bullying and to those who have turned to drugs and
22 alcohol, to do everything in our power to bring
23 them back from the netherworld of drugs and alcohol
24 to a life of fulfillment and sobriety. Each of the
25 300 SAPIS professionals in the system have built

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our careers upon doing just that. We also know that in a school system of 1.1 million students we are going to need more 300 dedicated men and women to ensure each and every student in need of those services receives them. And I thank you for your attention.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well thank you very much for that testimony as well. It reminded me of my own personal situation when I came out to my mother at the age of 17. And she started to cry and I asked her why she was crying and she said it's not that I'm disgusted by the fact that you're gay or anything like that. She said I'm just concerned about the prejudice and discrimination that you're going to face in your life. And thank you also for reminding us about the issue of substance abuse in the LGBT community and how often time young people who see their only way to ease the pain of the discrimination, etcetera may turn to substance abuse as well. So I want to thank you for coming up and for making that presentation and thank you all for coming in today.

[collective thanks from the panel members]

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Our next panel will
3 be Thomas Krever from the Hetrick-Martin Institute,
4 Nemia McFree [sp?] from the Hetrick-Martin as well,
5 Elayna Izen Markowitz [sp?] from the Bronx, Sara
6 Camiscoli from the Bronx Academy of Letters and
7 Alym Guffar [sp?] from C Pack [sp?]. And while they
8 are assembly I want to announce that we've received
9 several items for the record. One is from the
10 Council of School Administrators, Supervisors and
11 Administrators, CSA. Thank you for that as well. I
12 want to say that we also received testimony from
13 Lawyers for Children. Thank you. Lambda Independent
14 Democrats of Brooklyn and something from Sara
15 Madulfski, it's from asexuality.org, talking about
16 asexual visibility in education in our schools as
17 well. So let's begin right over here. Thank you all
18 for coming in. Do you swear, will you all please
19 raise your right hand. Do you swear to affirm to
20 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but
21 the truth in your testimony before this committee
22 and to respond to Council Member questions? Thank
23 you. And would you like to start? Do we have a
24 fifth panel? Sargent can we get a chair?

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2 SARA CAMISCOLI: Hi, my name is Sara
3 Camiscoli and I teach ESL through writing
4 literature to 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 11th graders at
5 the Bronx County of letters in Mont Haven. I also
6 co facilitate the Gay/Straight Alliance with
7 powerful educators and students. I identify as gay.
8 Several weeks ago while proctoring a middle school
9 exam I smiled and waved at one of the more unique
10 femininely young men in the 6th grade. Though he is
11 not one of my students we often greet one another
12 in recognition. After we performed our usual
13 acknowledgement I complimented his new aqua green
14 fohawk. He smiled warmly and said, you know we're
15 not normal me and you. I paused, taken aback by his
16 statement. He continued; we're just not like other
17 people. We don't dress or think like normal people.
18 Taking this as an opportunity I ask him to clarify
19 the concept of normal. I don't know, he kept
20 saying, just normal. And even though after some
21 persuasion I was able to convince that what wasn't
22 normal was unique, fabulous, and flawless, a
23 reference to a recent Beyoncé hit he thoroughly
24 enjoyed.

25 [laughter]

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2 SARA CAMISCOLI: We felt strongly that,
3 he felt strongly that normalcy at our school did
4 not involve either of us. And even though we left
5 smiling appreciating our difference there was a
6 part of me that felt unsettled about the
7 conversation. One week later while cutting
8 valentines during our high school Gay/Straight
9 Alliance meeting Quinn, one of our fearless student
10 facilitators asked you heard about that middle
11 schooler[phonetic], the little cute kid, he got
12 jumped because they say he acts like a girl. After
13 questioning Quinn further I concluded that it was
14 in fact the student who had spoken to me about
15 normalcy the week before. And while I felt pained
16 by the news there was a strange irony at that
17 moment. I was sitting only several feet away from a
18 Respect for All poster and in a Gay/Straight
19 Alliance meeting that was culminating in making
20 valentines for the entire high school. There were
21 clearly supports and spaces there for a LGBTQA
22 community but those spaces were not prevalent in
23 our middle school and they do not permeate the
24 culture of the entire school. We need to consider
25 more deeply what it means to promote more culture

1 of respect and acceptance in diverse schools. I
2 believe the Respect for All campaign is a powerful
3 and commendable initiative taken by the DOE to
4 promote respect and maintain a safe environment and
5 supporting learning environment for all students.
6 But schools don't currently feel safe for all
7 students. And the programmatic supports that have
8 been reviewed today don't reach those students who
9 do not feel safe. Many students don't feel normal
10 and worry about their physical and emotional safety
11 regardless of the number of trainings and
12 curriculum sent to admin and educators thus
13 maintenance of what we have now is not enough. If I
14 were to give a recommendation for shifting school
15 culture it would be to offer more earmarked funds
16 to support admin teachers and students in
17 implementing these supports on a systemic level in
18 their schools as they see fit. While trainings for
19 staff, the designation of a RFA liaison and awards
20 granted to exemplary schools are commendable many
21 schools need more comprehensive budgets to promote
22 their work. If the DOE wishes to promote respect
23 for students despite their difference schools need
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2 more funds allocated to facilitate their time.

3 Okay.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just finish up.

5 SARA CAMASHOLE: An implementation of
6 intentional moves to check the school. It is my or
7 my colleagues understanding that needs to be
8 shifting. It is the funds that are earmarked. For
9 example if our high school had more funds made
10 available by the RFA to pay our GSA facilitators
11 per session for after school planning and to use as
12 a budget for student organized events perhaps our
13 high school could plan events for our middle
14 school. If earmarked precession could be allocated
15 perhaps our middle school teachers could facilitate
16 an effective intentional program instead of being
17 paid per session to proctor a middle school exam.
18 Really having Respect for All means shifting school
19 culture. And from my perspective a dramatic shift
20 in culture requires systemic change with earmarked
21 budget. In order for individuals to be a part of
22 this change we need more regular time and resources
23 which means a more comprehensive budget
24 specifically earmarked for the implementation of a
25

1
2 powerful initiative by the teachers, students, and
3 administrators who make the school culture.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Tom. And
5 thank you also to all the panelists who are waiting
6 to, so patiently today but it's a very important
7 topic. Thank you all.

8 THOMAS KREVER: Thank you all Council
9 Member. It's an honor to be here. And what I'll do
10 is just jump to the salionaire[phonetic] so you
11 have a full copy. It's a pleasure to be here. My
12 name is Thomas Krever. I'm the Chief Executive
13 Officer of HMI, the nation's largest LGBTQ youth
14 service organization. I want to talk a little bit
15 about... we keep hearing about the special needs of
16 LGBT youth and I, I'd like to move away from that.
17 We have no special needs. We need nothing different
18 than anyone else in this room or in any school
19 community. What we have are special challenges and
20 that's what I, what I'd like to talk about today,
21 the barriers that we face that show themselves
22 systemically whether it's health, mental and
23 physical health, emotional safety, the suicide
24 ideation, and depression, the lack of safety in an
25 employment arena when you finally do grow up to

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2 have more than half a nation be able to fire you
3 based on your sexual orientation, gender identity,
4 the adolescent development challenges that never
5 really become addressed. And I'd like to talk
6 really just quickly about some systemic chall...
7 excuse me, solutions that I think with some
8 resources really could move the needle on this
9 issue. First is professional development and so
10 it's really about focusing the resources and the
11 training for a staff to, that really perhaps do not
12 have a basic understanding of the challenges that
13 effect LGBTQ youth. It's really making sure that
14 this curriculum, that the training, it doesn't
15 happen. Whether it is one week or not there's
16 certainly a perception that it, it is one week
17 contained. And that's how it's actually treated
18 throughout the school system is we experience it...
19 HMI. An environmental design, frankly it's more
20 than a sticker on a window. You know we, we
21 appreciate a poster here or there but so many of
22 the young people and the adults we work with can't
23 find that sticker. And you know if you're working
24 in an environment that's not supportive you're not
25 going to investigate where it lies. Next is policy

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2 and procedures, the spine, the backbone of what we
3 do. Are they accessible, where are they, how do we
4 access and utilize them and how do we hold one
5 another accountable in building a community. Lots
6 of work around that. The program design and
7 instructional support is the next area. It's really
8 making sure that the programs that are taught in
9 the schools include the curriculum that is, we're
10 not talking gay math and gay science, we're talking
11 about a greater sensitivity to the work in the
12 approach. Although talking about our LGBT historic
13 figures would be a huge step ahead. Finally
14 technology and communication. You've heard us talk
15 about in the days of the inter and intranet in the
16 world wide web it, we have to be much more on our
17 game and that includes the skills and the
18 abilities. Just like it can unite a world it can
19 cause isolation in new ways. Dignity, DAS, you know
20 DASA, the work that we're doing at HMI leading the
21 way with the new school curriculum our experience
22 has actually been incredibly I shouldn't say
23 surprising but refreshing, it just simply wonderful
24 with school safety agents. And that's without
25 resources. This is time that organizations are

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2 taking to prioritize this work, to meet with the
3 heads of school safety and create a new curriculum
4 for the 1.1 million school age children. That was
5 done with zero resources and from HMI, Make the
6 Road, Yes, and other organizations that really just
7 believe in the work we do. It's not systemic change
8 that's happening though. That, it, and it is not
9 butriced[phonetic] or supported by finances. So we
10 really need to make sure that this work continues
11 and the other huge... I'll just lap, wrap up... the
12 other huge area is when we talk about safety those
13 individuals most held accountable to supporting
14 school safety agents, well our, our experience has
15 been basically positive there is such a vast lack
16 of communication on who does what and who reports
17 to who at the school systems. Systemically it, it's
18 scary. So thank you. That's a real synopsis.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That was very good
20 and very informative and I'll have some comments as
21 soon as we finish the rest of the panel. So would
22 you like to go next?

23 NEMIA MCFREE: Hi, I'm Nemia McFree. I
24 also represent the Hetrick-Martin Institute.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can you just move
3 the mic a little closer to you so I can hear you.

4 NEMIA MCFREE: Okay. Yeah, I also
5 represent the Hetrick-Martin Institute. I've, 21
6 years old. I've graduated high school with a GED
7 diploma, equivalency diploma. So I guess my
8 experience with the lack there of, the lack of
9 action in the board concerning LGBTQ, LGBTQ youth
10 with DOE schools starts with middle school. I
11 wasn't, and this was before I was open with my
12 sexuality, so now, I've paraded around school with
13 all of the girls I can and masked my sexuality as
14 much as I could. But when it came to the physical
15 part of it, I guess like in classes like gym they
16 would sort of turn the other way when I went to
17 them with my complaints about what the other kids
18 were saying or what my peers were saying, what they
19 were doing, and they were instances where they
20 would meet me in front of the school after school
21 sometimes or even before school and have their
22 comments or follow me a couple of blocks away from
23 the school. And I've complained to the principal
24 and other administrators in the school about these
25 issues. And it seems as if they just leave it as

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2 such and turn their heads and I guess leave me to
3 handle the situation as I can which is, was never a
4 good thing for me to do. Upon graduating middle
5 school into high school is when I sort of openly
6 expressing my sexuality like wearing colors, being
7 visually loud as you, if you please. And that's
8 when it started getting worse for me. I've always
9 been a strong type of person but when I can't go to
10 the teachers and to the people who are responsible
11 for like making things better for the students who
12 aren't comfortable in their school environment who
13 do I go to? I can't go to my parents. I'm having
14 problems at home as well concerning my sexuality.
15 We created a GSA within my, my first high school my
16 freshman year. And just like Council Member said,
17 forgot his name sorry, about how it was circled in
18 and out of existence and barely was there. There
19 were barely a couple of students who were willing
20 to even be a participate in this group. Most of
21 them were scared of the other students as well;
22 their reactions, the gathering amongst gay people
23 in one group, and I guess it never really like
24 flourished as a group. And there was no results
25 from this group so it just cancelled itself out.

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There was one I guess gay assistant principal in this school who I communicated with and I've, you know was on the same level with and he helped me morally whenever I, we had council sessions and that was the most help I got in my first year of high school. It got so bad to the point where I actually ended up fighting almost every other day. And I would get of course in the most trouble because I was getting in all of these fights with most of the other students. And the teachers kind of made it my fault because I must be doing something that has everybody, has, has all of the negative attention, negative attention drawing toward me. I apologize. I don't have a written speech or anything but the bottom line is I didn't have the support that I wanted and I ended up transferring to Harvey Milk high school to seek the support that I wanted. I figured out that this, the support comes from of course the staff and the staff should get this information from the training and the teaching that education isn't there, how to deal with LGBTQ youth problems, and how to deal with their everyday issues even outside of school, and where to find the support is lacking in these

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DOE schools. Like pamphlets, cards, anything to show them where to get the information from, get help.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

I just want to interrupt for a moment. I have to step next door. It's a silly thing to get my attendance requirement at the immigration committee hearing. And I'll be right back but in the meantime Council Member Margaret Chin is going to Chair. I'll be right back.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Next thank you.

ELANA IZAN MARKOWITZ: Hello my name is Elayna Izan Markowitz and I've been teaching high school social studies for eight years. I work at a small non-charter public school in the Monthaven neighborhood of the Bronx, actually the same one as Sara does. I'm gay, I'm gender queer and I'm completely out in my work and in my life. I'm very fortunate to be here today, a school day with 17 of my students who have sense left. Several members of our school's Gay/Straight Alliance, colleagues from my school, and around the city and the blessing of my principal. However, my experience isn't the norm in the city. And it isn't even the norm in my

1 school. What I have seen in my time as an educator
2 and what is reflected in the range of testimony
3 today results from the lack of citywide policy and
4 effective supports for LGBTQ individuals in New
5 York City public Schools. Six years ago a student
6 came to me about an administrator in our school who
7 was regularly using sexist and homophobic language
8 to address our young people. I had the student
9 write a report and we talked to our respectful
10 Respect for All representative three times. Nothing
11 happened. I didn't really know what I was doing and
12 it felt like I was doing it alone. Ultimately I
13 took a big risk. As an untenured second year teach
14 approaching my supervisor I spoke directly to the
15 administrator. The homophobic language didn't stop
16 entirely but word got around to think twice about
17 using that language at our school. At the end of
18 that year students approached me to help them start
19 our school's first Gay/Straight Alliance. I knew
20 and they knew that creating a, a space specifically
21 for LGBTQ and ally identified members of our school
22 community was necessary and right. But I was
23 nervous. Again, I didn't really know what I was
24 doing and it felt like I was doing it alone.
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2 Luckily I found outside organizations like Fierce,
3 like Bronx community Pride Center, Glisten and
4 NYQueer to help me and my school. There are two
5 main messages in my story. One, I am fortunate. I
6 have found places and people to support me and my
7 school. Many more of my colleagues, my students,
8 and their family members are now out as lesbian,
9 gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer and we are
10 working to make our school a safer place for
11 everyone. It has taken years to get here but we've
12 worked really hard. And two, we shouldn't have to
13 work so hard to find the support on our own. None
14 of the support that we've gotten at our school
15 comes from formalized systems set up by the
16 department of education or city policy. It's like a
17 second full time job just to feel safe. What if
18 there were policies that required trainings about
19 restorative approaches to intervene in LGBTQ
20 bullying for all of our staff and resources to make
21 sure that those trainings were prioritized. What if
22 sex ed. classes were comprehensive and relevant to
23 LGBTQ students. What if there was professional
24 development that specifically, that was
25 specifically earmarked to connect me to LGBTQ

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2 history resources for my US History classroom. It
3 can't be all on us as individuals at the school
4 level. Without systems in place to prioritize the
5 work that many of us are already trying to do to
6 make schools safer and more comfortable places for
7 LGBT folks, sustained work as individual,
8 individual educators is nearly impossible.

9 ALYM GUFFAR: Good afternoon Chairman
10 Dromm, members of the Council. My name is Alym
11 Guffar. I'm a parent of an elementary school
12 student in District 26 and the co-chair of C Pack,
13 the parent organization that represents the city's
14 1.2 non-charter public school students. I'd like to
15 thank you, to giving, for giving me the opportunity
16 to testify on this timely and important matter.
17 This city is a jewel that glimmers with a light of
18 a vast and diverse members, of its vast and diverse
19 members. We are diverse in our cultural background,
20 in our homelands, our language, our religious
21 beliefs, in short in who we are. Since the days of
22 the Dutch settlers the freedom to be who you are,
23 who you want to be has been a core trait of what it
24 means to be a New Yorker. But it's never been easy.
25 At different times in the city's life different

1 groups have suffered intimidation, alienation, and
2 discrimination. In school simply being labeled a
3 nerd could get you bullied. I know, I experienced
4 that as my youth. And among other things... I'm
5 sorry... and among other... and among those dealing
6 with intolerance today are members of the LGBT
7 community. As a leader of parent community, of the
8 parent community this is especially concerning.
9 While the DOE's discipline code and the chancellors
10 regulations specifically a 842 covers student to
11 student discrimination, harassment, intimidation,
12 and or bullying it's not at all clear that this
13 extends to the families on campus. Likewise there
14 is nothing that I know of in the regulations that
15 offers this protection to staff and teachers. Most
16 likely if it exists at all it's part of the
17 collective bargaining agreement and absent to
18 contract it's unclear how teachers and staffs would
19 be protected. Protection in writing is one thing,
20 execution is another. From parents we hear varying
21 stories regarding schools enforcing the provisions
22 of their discipline code; the agreement of
23 acceptable conduct required by schools that parents
24 sign off on. For some justice is not swift. The
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2 prolonged period to have bullying matters resolved
3 only serves to exacerbate the victims torment and
4 sometimes the accused. As parents and for those of
5 us who manage people know correcting behavior is
6 most effective when remediation occurs early near
7 the time of the transgression. This needs to be
8 remembered. Often parents feel that justice get
9 lost out, gets lost out in the process, to the
10 process. It's not unheard of to hear bullying
11 reported in September still unresolved the
12 following May. Still better is to find ways to
13 ensure tolerance by providing meaningful
14 instruction and resources to obviate the kind of
15 likelihood of bullying in the first place. We
16 educate for knowledge. We should also educate for
17 tolerance. To ensure uniform protection is afforded
18 to all stakeholders on school grounds a local law
19 should be contemplated. C Pack would be willing to
20 work with the City Council to engage parents and
21 other stakeholders in an effort to craft a bill
22 that provides protections to the members of the
23 LGBT, LGBT community. I'm sorry, I'm a little
24 nervous. I want to add a couple of things to this
25 by the way which I didn't get to put in here

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2 because I thought the time would be a lot more
3 restricted. One of the things we have noticed is
4 that there seems to be a tendency we believe as
5 parents that there's under reporting on bullying
6 that goes on and that they're not enough incentives
7 in place to encourage principals and administrators
8 to put the information into the system. Often we're
9 told that you know there's a feeling that it might
10 work against them and the schools in terms of their
11 ratings. And second we need to find ways to help
12 families deal with the issues of the children
13 coming out. And this comes out of hearing the
14 testimony today. We have been thinking about
15 parents who are from the gay community themselves
16 who are this, in, in, in the construct that, that
17 we deal with today, this new definition of what a
18 traditional family is and who've been approaching
19 it from that point of view. But hearing from the
20 children also that they are dealing with their own
21 cultural issues and family issues it's certainly
22 something they think that C Pack can help try to
23 get more parents involved in, in trying to
24 understand what the emotional impact is on not
25 supporting their children. Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well thank you Alym
3 that's really a very wonderful testimony as were
4 all the panelists. You know back in the days of
5 rainbow and I hate to keep going back to that but I
6 think in some ways the way that we're limited in
7 approaching this topic is because of the reaction
8 to rainbow and the groundwork had not been laid in
9 those days to work particularly with parent
10 organizations and particularly with parent
11 organizations in communities of color. And so your
12 testimony here today is vitally important to that
13 outreach piece to the parents that need to, that
14 needs to happen. Anybody can have an LGBTQ child.
15 And I think that any parent understands that you
16 know it could be their own kid. So I think we've
17 grown in that. And I also appreciate your
18 willingness to work with us on this issue as we
19 move forward and down the road. Because I think the
20 parent involvement in this process is going to be
21 vitally important.

22 ALYM GUFFAR: You know I, I think what
23 I'm hearing is that's like lacking to some degree
24 and, and the sensitivity to the children's issues
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2 within the family is really something that needs to
3 be overcome.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: When you hear a
5 story like this young man's story of his efforts to
6 create you know a GSA or to get support in a school
7 it's...

8 ALYM GUFFAR: Right.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...just. To be honest
10 with you I was getting texts from the other LGBT
11 Council Members up here saying they're making us
12 cry you know to hear, the, the pain that students
13 had to go through you know. And it recalls in our
14 own lives the pain that we had to go through and
15 what we're trying to do as an LGBT community is to
16 prevent other children from ever having to go
17 through that again. So I also think that I heard
18 some people as I was coming back into the room
19 speak about LGBT history. And one of the things
20 that, that we, and that I particularly want to see
21 happen in the public school system is that we offer
22 role models to our, our LGBT youth as well just as
23 other communities have done. I have a friend who I
24 asked him to host a film called brother outsider on
25 the life of Bayard Rustin. And he had never heard

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2 of Bayard Rustin never mind that he was African
3 American and Bayard was African American as well.
4 But he had no idea that Bayard was, was gay. You
5 know and so we need to do a greater job in, in that
6 effort. And, and by providing those types of role
7 models to our, our, our students you know we're
8 sending a message as well that these are good
9 people that deserve recognition and credit. And
10 then finally I heard our first panelist as well
11 talk about the need for some commitment budgetary
12 wise. And I brought that up earlier in the hearing.
13 I don't know if you were here but getting the money
14 is always something that's difficult to do but I am
15 a believer that you put your money where your mouth
16 is and that where you put the money it's going to
17 be a priority. So I would like to work more on that
18 issue as well. So if anybody has anything else to
19 say... Yes?

20 SARA CAMISCOLI: Yeah, about the
21 budgetary allocations. I think just one thing to
22 note too something like precession specifically so
23 that teachers can be there after school,
24 specifically schools where precession is used for
25 things like proctoring and teachers are pulled in

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all these directions. Having it specifically allocated for something like RFA I think would be really helpful and would be a push for administrators to use the budget effectively.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: We're going to work on that. I'm, I'm going to bring them back. This is the first hearing of what it'll be over the next four years and as my tenor as the chair of the Education Committee, you know numerous hearings on the LGBT students. So we're going to work on that.

THOMAS CREVOR: Council Member if I may...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Tom, yeah.

THOMAS KREVER: There was one, I think it was actually you that mentioned it. But you've heard it, we've heard it time and again today and previously. RFA is, is a gum-less mouth, it has no teeth. And the reality of being able to train one individual in a school that can have several hundreds if not more, it borders a little bit on you know the definition of insanity. So expecting different results after doing the same thing over and over. So, so along with the resources whether you train one or train 15 in the same precession or in the same 45 minutes I should say, or more

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2 hopefully. We're not looking at that much money and
3 resources in terms of moving the needle. I think it
4 has to start with, with what we have in place and
5 expanding that. And as you said before really
6 making it mandatory and some sort of a checklist or
7 accountability. We have LGBT leadership in the room
8 and, and beyond that we're not even clear on, on
9 who, who does what and how we can even engage the
10 system to offer our support.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That's why I want to
12 continue to push this idea of an LGBT advisory
13 board. I think that bringing experts like yourself
14 in to discuss this with the ideas that you have as
15 well as anybody else who testified here today would
16 be an important move in the right direction.

17 THOMAS KREVER: We, to that point, our
18 work, HMI's work on rewriting the curriculum with
19 our colleagues for the school safety agents would
20 not have happened if we did not hold a seat on the
21 LGBT advisory panel which frankly we don't know if
22 it will even exist now. So we're still waiting to
23 hear on the NYPD panel what that future is so...

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right, right.
25

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2 SARA CAMISCOLI: I want to, there's
3 been, I definitely agree with the resources and
4 allocation of funding. But I also want to say that
5 I, I, I work at a school that is sort of under, has
6 been under constant threat of instability, co-
7 locations, threats of closure, and, and, and there
8 are a lot of schools like that in the city and one
9 thing that I've realized is that, so I don't know
10 how the learning environment survey is going to be
11 used moving forward. But the learning environment
12 service is, is something that our school, being a
13 school under, under various threats is very
14 interested in. And there's only one question on the
15 learning environment survey and it's a question
16 that doesn't, that doesn't, it doesn't disaggregate
17 the question, the like, do you feel safe in terms
18 of race, class, gender, religion, sexuality... and
19 it, and it doesn't, and that's just one question of
20 many, many, many questions and I, I actually think
21 it would do a lot to separate those different
22 categories out to make schools reckon with
23 different issues. I don't think that, it, it's,
24 that's the end all be all but I do think that at
25 least for schools that have a lot of other things

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2 on their plate and principals have, we've had three
3 different principals in the last five years.
4 Principals have a long list of things that they
5 care about and that they're paying attention to
6 that that might do a little bit to make principals
7 pay attention to, to this particular issue.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That's a great
9 suggestion.

10 THOMAS KREVER: If I may... Recently we
11 were visited by the DOE with regard to the survey
12 called the tripod survey which is a student end
13 survey. And a lot of the questions on that are
14 perception based questions in terms of how you feel
15 and so on. Our, our organization reaches out to,
16 it's pretty much an open organization. They're
17 voting members, they're nonvoting members. And
18 we've reached out to form a committee to actually
19 interface with DOE to go over the tripod survey. So
20 if this is something that you think you might want
21 to have input into we'd be more than happy to bring
22 members in.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROOM: Alright good. We're
24 networking here. Now we got to this point it's
25 great. We need a lot more of this going on. I want

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to thank the panel for coming up and for being here with us today and I'll call the next panel. Thank you very much everyone. Okay, Dr. Elizabeth Payne from Syracuse, Queering Education Research Institute at Syracuse University, Johanna Miller from NYCLU, Luke Cussle [sp?] from the New York City Museum School, Anthony Menerver [sp?] from Queer Teachers and Don Cal from Project Reach. Okay would you please raise your right hand? Do you swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions? Thank you. And let's begin right over here. I think your mic. needs... yep.

DOCTOR ELIZABETH PAYNE: My students tell me I don't need it. Alright so we're, I want to just sort of go through some of the bigger picture issues that are framing the little things that we're hearing...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And just identify yourself if you...

DOCTOR ELIZABETH PAYNE: Doctor Elizabeth Payne, Director of the Queering Education

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2 Research Institute, Syracuse University School of
3 Education.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

5 DOCTOR ELIZABETH PAYNE: You know they,
6 they kind of pull the picture together. And I'm
7 going to do it, I'm going to go through this just
8 sort of as quickly as I can. There are a lot of
9 pieces of the puzzle that we've heard today but
10 some of the key things that are going to actually
11 get us to sustainable change you have actually
12 alluded to yourself in mentioning things about the
13 culture and the bigger picture that are really at
14 the root of where our problems are and that many of
15 our interventions are not actually accessing. So
16 we're doing a lot of work up here when the problem
17 actually exists down here. We have to shift the way
18 we think about the problem and then that will allow
19 us to come up with interventions that actually
20 target the roots and get us towards sustainable
21 change. So I'm going to quickly go through several
22 issues that are sort of keeping us from getting to
23 where we need to be. We do research across the
24 state. We've done a lot of research on the dignity
25 for all students act in the past six months. And

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I'm happy to talk about that as well. Okay, so the problem of LGBT bullying is more complex than what's being portrayed at the culture at large. Our redress needs to become more complex. We keep thinking about this in, in terms of the way it's been shaped by our media discourse. And that has a focus on individual, psychological, characteristics of bullies and victims and this neglects the research that examines issues of hostile school culture, attitudes, and training of school professionals. The social dynamics of young people's peer groups and the ways implementation of state anti-bullying legislation has failed to give districts and schools the needed tools for success. Unfortunately LGBTQ student marginalization is often only understood in terms of homophobic and transphobic language and aggression. Reducing harm through consistently intervening in anti-LGBTQ language is critical for the wellbeing of these students but that alone does not solve the problem of queer youth being stigmatized in school environments. We must think more complexity about what we can and should do to address it and seek long term sustainable change. So in this testimony

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2 I'm briefly going to go through research on the big
3 picture, youth experiences in schools nationally
4 and in the state of New York and then some of the
5 issues around marginalization. One of our big
6 issues is that we are consistently failing to talk
7 about bullying as gender policing. So some research
8 says as much as 90 percent of bullying behaviors
9 are actually social behaviors designed to control
10 the expression of gender. So anyone who deviates
11 from what is believed to be normative masculinity
12 or normative femininity is potentially a target
13 regardless of their sexuality. Bullying is very
14 tightly connected to sexual harassment and it is
15 connected to the reproduction of expectations
16 around normative gender. Most bullying
17 interventions have no tools to deal with this piece
18 of bullying. So what we're doing is Whac-A-Mole. We
19 are saying oh Billy, you know Billy bullied Bobby
20 so let's intervene here in this problem where the
21 root issues are never being addressed in our
22 interventions. We've got to enable our educators to
23 be able to see what the root is and give them the
24 skills to actually be able to address it. And
25 that's one of the things I want to talk about next

1 is the utter lack of school that our, our teachers
2 have around this. So we know that 72 percent of
3 teacher preparation programs in the United States
4 rank sexual orientation as either their lowest or
5 an absent priority in diversity curricula. So our
6 schools of education are choosing not to include
7 addressing LGBTQ issues in their missions to
8 prepare teachers from multi-cultural classrooms.
9 Most states including New York State does not have
10 a multi-cultural education component required in
11 the teacher certification process. So our teachers
12 can go into very diverse educational environments
13 not having had any preparation for the kind of
14 student difference that they're going to experience
15 there. That's one of the things that we need to
16 change. We need to have in the state, a law, that
17 requires a multi-cultural component with a mandated
18 LGBTQ piece in our teacher preparation programs. We
19 also don't have a lot of quality professional
20 development. Most of the professional development
21 that's done around LGBT issues in schools does not,
22 isn't tested. It's, a great deal of it is not done
23 by education professionals. A great deal of it has
24 never been evaluated and a lot of it is not based
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1 on research. So we actually need high quality
2 professional development that's being delivered in
3 schools. We need professional development that it
4 has been supported through research and that is not
5 only addressing intervention but is helping
6 teachers to recognize these root, these cultural
7 issues, these gender issues that underlie bullying.
8 So without training and specific guidance school
9 staff are not able to see the connections between
10 sexual harassment, gender based bullying, and the
11 norms, roles, and practices of the school and peer
12 culture through which gender based bullying
13 operates and marginalizes LGBTQ students. The
14 existing research demonstrates a need to explicitly
15 include LGBTQ students in school policy and to
16 specifically train educators through sound
17 professional development on their role in
18 implementing school policy and providing them the
19 skills to do so. While inclusive anti-
20 discrimination and anti-harassment policies are
21 becoming more common state boards of education in
22 school districts that include sexual orientation
23 and gender identity in their student anti-
24 harassment policies do not require professional
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development on the needs of students in order to support compliance and there are not clear expectations stated for the trainings that do occur as to the content, duration, or delivery of those staff trainings.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright and can I just ask you to wrap it up a little bit because I have to move along.

DOCTOR ELIZABETH PAYNE: Okay, so if, in order, if we're going to ever really make a difference in the LGBT school experience we need to recognize that bullying is actually not anti-social behavior. It is both intensely social and functional behavior rooted in the school and larger cultural systems of value. It serves to the social purpose by reinforcing hierarchies of power and privilege and it's a reflection of the broader social inequity and prejudice. And schools perpetuate this. Schools need to examine the discrepancy between their school missions and the visibly reward and value system present in the school. It is possible to begin to change school culture through small acts which demonstrate that students are not valued solely based upon their

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2 gender conformity. Some of these include a
3 proactive plan for creating a positive school
4 culture that look beyond eliminating avert acts of
5 violence and address the school role in
6 systematically marginalizing some students are
7 privileging others. A school plan to explore
8 possibilities for elevating the prestige and
9 community visibility given to academics and the
10 arts. An inclusive curriculum that's representative
11 of LGBTQ people as well as a commitment to
12 incorporate gender diversity and different family
13 structures into posters, brochures, bulletin boards
14 and other sites of visual representation and
15 reviewing the visibility and prestige in the
16 school. One of the things that we say is that
17 schools often think they're not teaching sexuality
18 or gender but they're actually crowning those often
19 with little, literal tiaras who most meet their
20 ideal of what the perfect student is. And that
21 perfect student is generally perfect based on their
22 gender and sexual conformity.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you.

24 JOHANNA MILLER: Thank you Chair Dromm
25 and Council Member Chin. I'm Johanna Miller from

1
2 the New York Civil Liberties Union. I just want to
3 thank you for your broad approach to this issue. I
4 think that the experience of LGBTQA students in our
5 schools is really a bellwether for school climate.
6 And our experience in the schools is that school
7 culture and climate in New York City is
8 inconsistent. Schools that are doing good one year
9 are doing terrible the next year. Principals and
10 teachers say to us we have a program this year, we
11 invest in it, we put everything into it, and the
12 next year it's gone. And so I think it's really
13 important to look at specifically, at the
14 experience of these children but think about it
15 more broadly. This is about education that goes
16 beyond standardized testing. I think most valuable,
17 the lesson that government institutions will not
18 discriminate against you. We have worked really
19 closely with the DOE on implementing the Dignity
20 Act. We know that they're dedicated. They've put a
21 lot of resources into participating on a state wide
22 task force there. But where does the rubber meet
23 the road? We're just not seeing it. So a lot of
24 people have talked about training. I just want to
25 mention. I think that the, and I know this is an

1
2 issue that's important to you but training on non-
3 exclusionary discipline is really key particularly
4 for this population. Exclusionary discipline does
5 not help or protect LGBT students. LGBTQA students
6 are highly visible in schools. They're 40 percent
7 more likely to receive punishment at school and 50
8 percent more likely to be stopped by the police. So
9 as long as our culture in our school relies on
10 those tools that's actually going to be harming
11 this population as much as helping anyone. So the
12 training I think has to go, go right to the heart
13 of that. The DOE also has to equip principals to
14 support transgender and gender non-conforming
15 students. Some people have talked about the
16 guidance that was issued 24 hours or 48 hours ago.
17 That guidance is a good first step. It has to go a
18 lot longer. Even principals who want to do well by
19 transgender and gender nonconforming students are,
20 are often uncomfortable, they're held back by
21 parents, they don't know what their rights are or
22 what the law requires. But the law actually
23 requires access. It requires access to gender
24 segregated facilities. It requires pronouns and
25 names to be recognized and honored. And it requires

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2 privacy. Schools can't out students to their peers,
3 to teachers, to parents, that type of information
4 and that type of support for principals is just not
5 happening. It's certainly not going to happen from
6 a list of guidelines from the website. We had to
7 really look at the, the really unnecessary gender
8 segregation that happens in schools. We had a story
9 brought to our attention this week of a student who
10 ended up transferring schools because of things
11 like her teacher making them just line up by gender
12 for... There's really no pedagogical purpose there at
13 all but that becomes a very fraught environment for
14 a transgender, gender non-conforming student. The
15 last thing I would just mention is that preliminary
16 data from the Dignity for All Students Act
17 indicates vast under-reporting in New York City and
18 mischaracterization of the categories. I think
19 there's a lack of understanding among the people
20 who are recording these things, what the purpose
21 is, and how that information is going to be used.
22 But it's really important that we get that to the
23 ground level which is often sometimes non-
24 professional staff. Secretary, someone's working in
25 the front office, they don't necessarily have the

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right training to tell how to report these informations. So that, that feels really important to us as well. Obviously we have a lot more remarks in the, the longer written testimony but we're happy to talk offline as well.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

LUKE CUSSLE: Good evening everybody. I Luke Cussle a sophomore at New York City Museum School in Chelsea. As a gay identified student I have felt the direct intolerance and ignorance of my, from my peers in the education system against the LGBTQ community. The education system promotes ignorance by keeping LGBTQ historical and health related information out of the school curriculum and off the desk of students. The LGBTQ community is a minority group and yet students will never learn of our struggles or triumphs. From the activism of Martin Luther King Junior and Rosa Parks to Harvey Milks Leadership. New York City students deserve to learn about all struggles for equality. By keeping students in the dark about major historical movements such as the stonewall riots the school system directly fosters an atmosphere in which questioning students cannot

1
2 embrace themselves because they have never been
3 taught about individuals who were proud to be as
4 they were. We have students who are scared to admit
5 who they are because they fear for their lives and
6 or that one day the people they once considered
7 their friends would turn against them because they
8 do not understand the lifestyle of LGBTQ
9 individuals. Health related information provided in
10 schools is also terribly one sided. With many
11 lesbian and gay students lacking the resources
12 necessary to feel that this information being given
13 is relevant once so ever creating prejudice and
14 bias in the classroom on the ideas of what is
15 indeed normal. We need the school curriculum to be
16 inclusive to all people including the LGBT, LGBQ,
17 LGBTQ community whose history is rife[phonetic]
18 with knowledge and information that is still
19 relevant today in modern-day society. Classrooms
20 should be a place in which students are free to
21 express themselves without threats of persecution
22 and in which students can grow and flourish as
23 individuals for that is the true purpose of the
24 education system to help us the students find their
25 own sense of individuality and give them a voice

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2 when they are not strong enough to give themselves
3 one. Thank you for your time.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Don.

5 DON CAL: Good afternoon. It's been so
6 long in this room that I can't even remember what I
7 wanted to say. [laughter] And also I came here
8 prepared to, to, to say something and I forgot to
9 eat so I'm like no meal today yet so if I sound
10 like I am, like losing it I apologize. My name is
11 Don Cal. I'm Director of Project Reach. And Project
12 Reach is a, a youth and adult run anti-
13 discrimination social justice training space. And I
14 want to thank Danny and Margaret for hanging out
15 with me. They're two of our strongest supporters
16 and so I, I felt like even though everybody else is
17 kind of leaving I thank you for being here. I
18 wanted to try to, I'm, I'm not really good at
19 reading speeches so I didn't write one. But I've
20 got some notes here. I wanted to just talk about a
21 few interesting cases that we ran into in our work.
22 We've been doing this work for about 29 years. We
23 integrated an all Chinese immigrant program under
24 the Chinese American Planning Council by inviting
25 black, Latino, and Italian youth to come into this,

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2 into our space. I, I've been there for literally 29
3 years. And what we began to do is identify what,
4 who we called marginalized youth. So by year two or
5 three we began to do work with the Hetrick-Martin
6 Institute and I, myself am gay but I wasn't out at
7 the time. In fact just so you know I'm Chinese
8 immigrant background, came out to my parents when I
9 was 39 and I'm 62. So I was gay even when they had
10 black and, colored and white bathrooms in Florida
11 just to give you a little frame, you know frame of
12 reference. So anyway at Project Reach we began to,
13 to work with a lot of different marginalized youth
14 and we've grown a, a consortium that used to be
15 called the social justice boot camp and we gay-
16 ified it because we got five years of funding from
17 the Department of Health. We called it the outright
18 consortium. And it's now presently a consortium of
19 about 35 schools, immigrant youth, immigrant youth
20 programs, and out, what we call outer borough LGBT
21 centers. Many of the centers that are really
22 struggling in the outer boroughs because they
23 don't, they're not as well-resourced as say the
24 Manhattan programs. But it's been interesting
25 because we got the funding through the Department

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2 of Health by identifying a community of young
3 people that we felt were not being targeted which
4 were immigrant, undocumented, and in the closet
5 youth. And it's very difficult to get funding from
6 the Department of Health on our LGBT initiative
7 because they require you to work with at least 50
8 percent LGBT whatever, in whatever communities you
9 are. But we applied and we actually got the funding
10 because we got support from the Arab community, the
11 native American community, the black community, the
12 Jewish community, because they wrote letters of
13 support. But some of the interesting cases that we
14 came up with and I wish the Department of Health
15 people, Department of Health, Department of
16 Education people were hear. We got a case from an
17 after school program of 14 middle school boys ages
18 11 to 13 who urinated in an 11 year old boys drink
19 because they perceived him to be gay. Okay, this is
20 an after school program. He didn't tell the after
21 school teachers. He didn't tell the school. But he
22 went home and told his mother. And then well, if
23 you'll excuse the expression, shit hit the fan. She
24 came back to the school and, you know a whole lot
25 of stuff was going on. And we ended up helping out

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2 by... we actually had to ask them. We, they were
3 worried I think because of a lawsuit potentially
4 because of what had happened with this boy. And so
5 they basically said they would do anything we
6 wanted them to do. And what we chose to do was get
7 them out of that community. We basically said we
8 want all 14 boys to come into Chinatown where our
9 center is and we did a whole day of anti-
10 discrimination, anti-homophobia workshops with,
11 with the 14 boys and what we also did, what we also
12 didn't do is we didn't even mention the incident
13 about the urine. Because what we find is that it
14 was seen as homophobic but they were playing a
15 practical joke. But of course because they thought
16 he was gay you know these issues become
17 intertwined. But what we realized is that you can't
18 change people, you can't change people by dictating
19 a law or... a value unless they come to it
20 themselves. And so what we were able to do is we,
21 there were mostly black and Latino boys, what we
22 did was we addressed issues where they were
23 impacted by discrimination and then moved into a
24 homophobia workshop where they actually began to
25 see the connection between their own discrimination

1
2 and the discrimination of, of you people who are
3 lesbian or gay. Then we ran into another situation
4 because we, I don't have enough time to tell you
5 all of the things. We ran into what I would call a
6 GSA identity crisis. We were in a Bronx high school
7 and the principal was very proud. It's a school of
8 220 people, 220 students. And I walked into a GSA
9 of 30 students out of 220 students that were in
10 their GSA. And I thought gosh we don't even have to
11 do any work at this school. Would, wouldn't you
12 agree right? A GSA? Oh you guys know what a GSA is
13 right? Gay/Straight Alliance? Well what happened is
14 we came in to do another kind of workshop because
15 we felt we didn't have to do anything around
16 homophobia and it just didn't work. Something was
17 wrong and so I just, I just asked. I said, could I
18 just ask how many of you are actually lesbian or
19 gay identified, three people out of the 30 very
20 carefully, cautiously raised their hands. And we
21 knew something was wrong. And so we ended up coming
22 back to the school and asking them, you know well
23 we, we asked them you know what is this, what is
24 this group about. And they said, oh it's lesbian
25 gay and straight, straight allies supporting

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2 lesbian and gay people. And we ended up working
3 with them in separate gender because we realized
4 that something else was going on. The females were
5 really quiet. The males were pretty loud. And when
6 we worked with them in separate gender do you know
7 what we found out? We found out that their GSA had
8 become a breeding ground for picking up bisexual
9 and, bisexual young women and lesbians by these
10 basically straight identified boys who realized
11 while they were the ones who said there are no gay
12 boys in our school. Okay, and what they were doing
13 is they were coming to the GSA to basically pick up
14 girls. And so...

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Don, can you wrap it
16 up... [crosstalk]

17 DON CAL: Yeah, yeah, so we, we've been
18 finding a lot of these different situations that
19 are really, I mean you'd think even with the GSA
20 existing that's, that, that, a space would be safe
21 and it's really not safe. And so I want to piggy
22 back just to, off of a little bit of what the woman
23 who spoke first said. What we've come to find is
24 that bullying, bullying and bullies are not the
25 problem. But if you heard a lot of the testimony

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2 and a lot of the replies from the Department of,
3 Department of Education and other people it was
4 sort of like well how, what do we do with the
5 bullies. And what I don't think people are
6 realizing is that the root causes are not the
7 bullies. The bullies are only symptoms. The root
8 cause is what I would call identity destruction
9 whether it's the destruction of an identity of a, a
10 young man of color, or a gay youth, or a young
11 woman through sexual harassment or any number of
12 other things. And until we prioritize addressing
13 all forms of discrimination in the school system
14 and through the curriculum then we should really
15 recognize that the way our, our education system is
16 going right now and the curriculum that we have
17 it's really producing bullies. And this is one
18 reason why I, I'm, I'm really against this notion
19 that we just have to address the bullies harder
20 because we all know the cycle of, of violence. The
21 cycle of violence. You know somebody who's a bully
22 was bullied somewhere in their own lives and
23 they're taking power where they can. And until we
24 recognize that all the legislation we can do and
25 everything else we can do like Respect for All

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week. I think that that's why it doesn't have any teeth because we're not really addressing the root caused.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Don. And I want to thank the panel. I particularly want to thank Luke for your courage and for coming up and for speaking. Thank you very, very much. And I wish I could go on. We do have a Dominican celebration right after this today so that's why I'm rushing a little bit to get to the next panel. But thank you all very, very much for coming in. And I'd like to call up Jeff Levin from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Community Center, Steven Burg from the Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance, Jonathan Lang from the Empire State Pride Agenda, Brian Ellicott from Queers for, Queer Empowerment Project, and Robin Mall from Fierce, Mann I'm sorry. Robin Mann come on up. And thank you again for waiting so long everybody. Yeah, we still have another panel after this. So we want to make sure everybody gets an opportunity to speak. And thank you everybody for staying. Yeah, mm-hmm. And we just hope everybody will stick to the topic and get to the point. So let's begin right over here. Oh,

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2 let me start by swearing you in. I forgot about
3 that. Do you swear to infirm, swear or affirm to
4 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but
5 the truth in your testimony before this committee
6 and to respond honestly to Council Member
7 questions? Okay, very good. We do this for a reason
8 by the way folks because we don't want anybody
9 coming and telling us stories which has on occasion
10 in the past happened. So thank you.

11 JEFF LEVIN: My name is Jeff Levin and I
12 am the Family Services Program Coordinator at the
13 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community
14 Center. I work with the LGBT community, parents and
15 families, for three years. And I've also come to
16 share the experience of my colleagues who work in
17 our youth program. We serve over 2,000 LGBT youth
18 and families on an annual basis. While the New York
19 City public school system has made strides such as
20 the Dignity for All Students Act and Respect for
21 All there remains little to no oversight of these
22 requirements other than through hearings like this.
23 We continue to see many students and families who
24 face bullying, discrimination, harassment, and
25 worse based on actual or perceived sexual

1 orientation, gender identity, gender expression or
2 family make up. In the center is LGBT parent
3 advisory to the Department of Education. Parents
4 raise concerns about the lack of inclusive forms,
5 staff that is not culturally competent in working
6 with LGBT families, and the lack of educational
7 materials and books that are inclusive of LGBT
8 families are shared. The center in partnership with
9 the Ali Forney Center and the Hetrick-Martin
10 Institute offers the leadership, education,
11 advancement, and placement program otherwise known
12 as LeAp to youth 18 to 21. The LeAp program is
13 designed to increase access to college and careers
14 to homeless and runaway LGBT young people. While we
15 wish that all young people could gain the skills
16 needed for college and a career at their local
17 public schools we know all too well that many youth
18 grow into adulthood underemployed due to diminished
19 educational attainment resulting from violence and
20 harassment in school, an ongoing discrimination in
21 the workspace. Positive impacts could be much
22 greater with increased oversight. Who is
23 accountable for ensuring staff and administrators
24 are accessing necessary resources and mandated
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2 trainings? When bullying and harassment occurs
3 who's held accountable? A lack of universal forms
4 with gender neutral language and parentage status
5 for registration, emergency, and medical contacts
6 is a small way to ensure that LGBT families of all
7 make ups are included and their experiences
8 validated. We know that there have been successful
9 book drives by the City Council to help get LGBT
10 affirming books onto shelves. Are the schools
11 receiving the books? Are the school staff trained
12 and experienced to utilize the books? We recommend
13 that the City Council continue to implement the
14 Respect for All program and the Dignity for All
15 students Act and actively seek out the successes
16 and challenges of both. Centralized universal forms
17 for registration, emergency, and medical contact
18 should be gender neutral with options and fill in
19 spaces for families of all shapes and sizes to be
20 included. We also recommend that the City Council
21 support and mandate anti-bullying and harassment
22 policies, ensure that school personnel are trained
23 effectively, be committed to Gay/Straight Alliances
24 be active and supported, and reach out to the LGBT
25 community to get assistance in insuring that. LGBT

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2 inclusive curricular resources are available to
3 staff and youth. With the active participation of
4 LGBT parents, youth, and staff the city Council can
5 positively affect school climate and ensure that
6 New York City public schools are safe for all LGBT
7 students, family, and staff.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next.

9 RABBI STEVEN BURG: Good afternoon,
10 actually good evening Chairman Dromm, Council
11 Member Chin. You're probably wondering why a
12 mainstream, orthodox Jewish rabbi has made it his
13 business today to appear before you to discuss the
14 treatment of LGBTQ students, family, and staff in
15 the New York City public school system. The answer
16 is quite simple because there is nothing more
17 important than fighting bigotry and discrimination
18 in all of its forms and facets. My name is Rabbi
19 Steven Burg and I have the distinct privilege of
20 serving as the Eastern Director of the Simon
21 Wiesenthal Center and it's educational arm of the
22 Museum of Tolerance. The Museum challenges visitors
23 to confront bigotry and racism and to understand
24 the holocaust in both historic and contemporary
25 context. Through interactive workshops, exhibits,

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2 and videos individuals explore issues of prejudice,
3 diversity, tolerance and corporation in the
4 workplace, the classroom, and the community at
5 large. When Simon Wiesenthal was first approached
6 over 30 years ago to lend his name to the center he
7 insisted on a specific condition; that the center
8 would not be a museum of artifacts in remembrance
9 of those people who have been oppressed rather it
10 would serve as an activist institution committed to
11 reminding future generations of the dangers of a
12 society filled with hate. Not too long ago I had
13 the pleasure of giving a tour at the museum of
14 tolerance to and speaking with a senior member of
15 the NYPD. I asked him during our conversation what
16 he believed to be the single largest issue facing
17 our city today. He didn't answer terrorism, he
18 didn't say addiction to drugs, he unequivocally and
19 most incessantly answered bullying. Most of us here
20 were growing up, at least bullying ended when, with
21 the ring of the school dismissal bell. That is
22 certainly no longer the case. With the advent of
23 cyberbullying our children, their families have to
24 endure bigoted attracts 24 hours a day, 7 days a
25 week. And our New York Museum of Tolerance where we

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2 serve over 15,000 school children annually mostly
3 from New York City public school system we had
4 developed award winning seminars for all ages
5 teaching not only that bullying is bad but
6 demonstrating the effects felt by its recipients.
7 In our, in our point of view Diner Seminar Room, a
8 room specifically designed to provide a comfortable
9 friendly setting to students. We have interactive
10 multimedia demonstrations which are specifically
11 geared to showing what goes inside the heads of
12 those that are bullied and those in the LGBTQ, Q
13 community become, become their, their peer most
14 sought after most harshly treated targets. Many
15 members of the council have come through our center
16 over the past several months and we were happy to
17 host that a new council member's event this past
18 month to once again demonstrate that bullying in
19 all its forms must be prevented to the best of our
20 ability. Why is a mainstream orthodox Jewish rabbi
21 here today? To talk about protecting the LGBTQ
22 community in our public schools. Because when we
23 look historically at the world's worst atrocities
24 it all begins by instilling or ignoring bigotry in
25 the formative years of our children's lives. In one

1
2 of our videos we hear Joseph Stalin [sp?] say that
3 ideas are more powerful than guns. So we don't
4 allow our enemies to have guns why should we allow
5 them to have ideas. And we all know how welcoming a
6 place it was to live in the 1930s era soviet union.
7 However ideas are the most powerful driving force
8 of the human race and the idea that bullying can
9 persist, that hatred is okay, that bigotry of any
10 kind is in the least bit acceptable is an idea we
11 have to actively counter in the next generation of
12 New Yorkers while we still have their attention the
13 school age years. I'm here today because the Simon
14 Wiesenthal center wants the community to be part of
15 the solution to the bullying problem in our public
16 schools public and private. I'm here because once
17 we allow the Pandora's box of hatred to intrude
18 into our society there's no telling where it will
19 end. I'm here to lend our name support of today's
20 proceedings and to let the New York City Council
21 and the LGBTQ community know that they have an ally
22 in the Simon Wiesenthal center.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

24 JOHNATHAN LANG: Good evening. My name
25 is Johnathan Lang. I'm the Director of Governmental

1 projects and Community Development at the Empire
2 State Pride Agenda which is New York State's LGBT
3 civil rights and advocacy organization. I was asked
4 to talk about the implementation of the Dignity for
5 All Students Act and briefly talk about health
6 disparities which I'll do in a very short time
7 because I'm heading to Penn station to take my
8 train back to Albany. So the Dignity for All
9 Students Act has been of, a labor of love for many
10 of us for the past couple of years originally
11 passed into law and signed into law by Governor
12 Patterson in September 2010. I wasn't fully enacted
13 until recently July of 2013. And the reason for
14 that was because there were a lot of additional
15 elements that were added to the law. So there's
16 more than just you know lessons about civility,
17 respect, tolerance in the Dignity for All Students
18 Act. It's also a lot about cyberbullying, reporting
19 requirements, teacher certifications, and all
20 things that are going to be able to make safe and,
21 and inclusive school environments. What we've
22 learned though is that the pace of the
23 implementation of the Dignity for All Students Act
24 has been uneven at best. And a large part of that
25

1 becomes, is because of the guidance that the State
2 Education Department has provided or not provided
3 in many instances. We have consulted a large array
4 of the best experts in the state to look at some of
5 the best practices out there available and to
6 compel those into a commend, you know best
7 practices. One, it's a little difficult to find
8 that companion of best practices and two, the State
9 Education Department doesn't aggressively push out
10 that companion of the best practices as an avenue
11 for folks to create these pathways to success. So
12 what you see is schools who've already get this,
13 who already understand that student achievement is
14 intrinsically connected to school environment do
15 this work already. So all they've had to do is
16 amend their current programs and do the
17 fenaminark[phonetic] they're already doing. Other
18 schools who have not recognized this as an
19 important part of their criteria have adopted zero
20 tolerance polies which we all recognize are often
21 used against those they're supposed to protect. We
22 know that LGBT students more often are in fights,
23 more often are armed to protect themselves, and
24 zero tolerance polies within were used against them
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2 to kick them out of school and to increase truancy
3 rates. We also note too that the reliance on school
4 security and metal detectors is definitely not an
5 avenue that we would like to see in our school
6 system. Last week I had the opportunity to meet
7 with a large array of school students from across
8 the state that came to Albany on their day of
9 vacation to meet with us and talk about the school
10 safety issues. By and large they said that there
11 are far too many school, security officials and not
12 enough guidance counselors. I think that's a very
13 powerful message that we're more concerned about
14 having our schools resemble prisons than looking
15 into promoting their future. I also want to say to
16 that the over reliance on metal detectors is a huge
17 problem. If the only piece of technology that a
18 young person has in contact with throughout their
19 school day is a metal detector what exactly are we
20 telling to our young people. And so I wanted to say
21 that the Dignity for All Students Act can be a lot
22 better. There's definitely an avenue for success
23 there. We have to put some teeth to this, some meat
24 on the bones. And I want to briefly, I know my time
25 is running out talk about health disparities. I

1
2 know that Councilman Torres had talked about the
3 need to get information on health disparities and
4 data. We actually do collect that information
5 already in New York City. The Youth Risk Behavior
6 Survey does collect information on sexual
7 orientation. So in August of 2013 the Pride Agenda
8 put together a report on LGBT health disparities in
9 New York City. We are able to indicate very clearly
10 information on Lesbian, gay, bisexual students. We
11 are know that they're a higher risk for school
12 violence, higher risk for eating disorders, higher
13 risk for sexual assault, higher risk for mental
14 stress. All these things that we know need to be
15 addressed in a more informative manner. We do not
16 have any information on transgender New Yorkers.
17 That is not an oversight. New York City currently
18 does not collect information on gender identity and
19 expression and that absolutely needs to change.
20 Thank you for your time.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Johnathan.

22 I'm going to go before..

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [crosstalk] Go ahead

24 Brian.

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1
2 BRIAN ELLICOTT: Good afternoon Council
3 Member, Chairperson, Chin, Menchaca, and Reynoso.
4 You know me already. I'm Brian Ellicott and I'm an
5 open, bisexual, and transgender man and I was born
6 and raised in Staten Island. I went to public
7 school 42, the same school as Council Member
8 Ignizio. Public School 75 and South Richmond high
9 school. And I graduated and survived in June of
10 2008. I say survived because the person you meet
11 today didn't get to exist by then. She wasn't
12 allowed to. I was told I wasn't normal, that I
13 couldn't be me and that, or my favorite quote;
14 you're such a nice looking girl why would you want
15 to do that. I think things would have been really
16 different had they had LGBT history. Like they have
17 women's history, and African American history. I
18 was taught you know Rosa Parks, Elizabeth Cady
19 Staton, Susan B. Anthony, things like that. Had I
20 learned about people like Harvey Milk, about Act
21 up, about the 1980 Democratic National Convention
22 where they took a platform about LGBT my life would
23 have been different. History and politics has
24 always been my thing. I used to sit in class and
25 argue all the time. Had I been learning these

1
2 things I wouldn't have felt like an alien inside my
3 body and I probably wouldn't have gotten in as much
4 trouble as I thought I could have. I wasn't the
5 kind of person to throw my hands around and get
6 into a fight but I would get into an argument when
7 I felt like I wasn't being heard, being understood.
8 So I'm not here to talk about bullying even though
9 that's a really big problem. What I want is for
10 people like me; bookworms and nerds and I wear
11 those titles proudly that when I pick up a textbook
12 someday Jason Collins is going to be in that
13 textbook. You, you all are going to be in that
14 textbook. It's, that's why I'm here. So thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Bryan. And
16 next.

17 ROBIN: My, is this close enough, too
18 close? Okay, I'm going to do it from, oh my god
19 you're recording. Okay, so my name is Robin. I'm a
20 9th grader at Hunter College High School. And I'm
21 representing fierce which is this organization for
22 Queer youth of color from ages 13 to 24. So I'll,
23 I'll just jump right into it. So in my school I'm
24 involved in all sorts of late dialogues and
25 initiatives and around topics like diversity and

1
2 prejudice and social justice, around like all sorts
3 of identifiers for like I've noticed through like
4 very particular ways that queer students were
5 treated in like our curriculum and the
6 conversations we have between students and with
7 administrators. And whenever the, whenever the
8 topic is raised of like how queer students are
9 perceived or treated at Hunter you always hear
10 words. And then, again I say from students and
11 administrators like liberal and progressive and
12 tolerant. And I feel that these terms are just only
13 self-affirming and they, and they only remove
14 accountability from like the people who say them.
15 And when you, and then when you put the onus of
16 like you know what queer acceptance is on like this
17 general political attitude that you perceive then
18 decenters like experiences of like actual queer
19 people that are in the building. And I feel like in
20 an environment and like an environment like that
21 what often happens is pink washing which I'll try
22 to loosely define as something that can happen like
23 on a state level or with corporations. But in like
24 schools and like small businesses and blocks what
25 pink washing is, it's kind of this exaggerate

1
2 promise or like aesthetic of queer rights or queer
3 visibility. And with what and what pink washing
4 does is for example at my high school on national
5 coming out day what we do is we hand out rainbow
6 ribbons for people to like pin on their backpack or
7 like their clothes or like whatever. And, and like
8 the whole idea of like just putting rainbows on
9 things, like I know some teachers like when they
10 were trained with like safe space kids and stuff
11 they literally just ask for like a poster or like a
12 rainbow sticker to like stick on a wall but that
13 doesn't make it a safe space. And when we, and when
14 we go through measures like that it just detracts
15 from doing like actual, beneficial reforms that can
16 support queer students, like gender neutral
17 bathrooms or changing rooms, or like properly
18 training administrators or teachers to be sensitive
19 or maybe actually looking at like the curriculum
20 especially like health and sex ed. curriculum and
21 how that's exclusive. Ow, that makes me nervous.
22 Okay, so in addition just in my experience the
23 whole like putting rainbows on everything and like
24 tokenizing the GSA at school, it has not helped
25 anyone or like anything at all. Like when, when a

1
2 boy at my school like slurred me and threatened me
3 and I told the public security officer there he, he
4 went on to tell me what a good basketball player
5 that boy it is and how right here he's the big fish
6 in a small pond. And he said he, actually like said
7 to me I won't tell my superiors so it didn't help
8 me then and that it doesn't help me when a teacher,
9 that I very much consider an ally, is always
10 questioning and pressuring me about when am I going
11 to come out to my parents or like am I out to them
12 yet and puts that sort of question on me and I
13 can't really articulate to her how that could
14 compromise my, my living situation especially since
15 ACS breaks up my family. And I feel that fierce
16 which I've like recently joined has like given me
17 some of the like tools to bring these conversations
18 to my school. And it's like the only thing that's
19 really empowered me because so far the teachers and
20 the students are just stuck in this complacency of
21 like visibility that doesn't actually do anything
22 and not having genuine reforms. And I just think
23 that's an important aspect that having GSAs or like
24 having an announced queer presence isn't enough.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well thank you very
3 much. I want to thank Jeff I know, and thank
4 Johnathan, Broven[phonetic], Brian for coming in,
5 and Rabbi I also want to really thank you as well.
6 I think you called yourself a mainstream orthodox
7 Jewish rabbi and having straight allies in this
8 fight is really vitally important, especially from
9 the Jewish community which suffered so much during
10 the Holocaust. And I was a former board member of
11 the holocaust center at the Kupferberg Center in,
12 in Bayside at Queens Borough Community College..

13 RABBI STEVEN BURG: Sure.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I was on the board
15 there with Doctor Arthur Flug and he also does a
16 great job of making the connections between
17 discrimination against Jewish people, against LGBT
18 people and what happened in the holocaust being
19 probably the greatest hate crime ever to occur in
20 the history of the world. So thank you all for
21 coming in. I need to get to my last panel and then
22 we need to get to our celebration. Okay, so the
23 next one is Josh Terefay [sp?] Ally Forney Center,
24 Darren Hoke [sp?], alright thank, thank you Darren,
25 and Marcella Meya [sp?] from ACT UP

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[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh yeah... what's your name? Yep, sure. Okay. So we'll call you up. Come on up. Martin and is it Eli Senses Straus [sp?] here? Okay, come on up as well. We'll do everybody at once as our last panel here.

[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: We weren't sure you were still here so... Thank you for waiting and for your patience.

UNKNOWN: Swear us in.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh yes, I got to swear everybody in. Alright, please raise your right hand. And...

[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, so we do have one more panel. I'm sorry. Anyway, raise your right hand. Do you swear to, swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions. I want to say also that we've been joined by Council Member Carlos Menchaca and we've been rejoined by Council Member Antonio Reynoso. And Council Member

1
2 Chin gets the endurance record for being here with
3 us all day long.

4 [applause]

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you and let's
6 begin right over here.

7 DARREN HOKE: Okay, good evening at this
8 point. Chairman Dromm and the Education Committee.
9 Thanks for having me. My name is Darren Hoke. I am
10 the director of a vocational educational program at
11 the Ally Forney Center. The program is called the
12 LeAp program. I just would like the opportunity to
13 kind of shift the focused here and talk about some
14 of the residual effects of our LGBTQ young people
15 who do not survive the Department of Educational
16 school system. And what happens is, is that they
17 are abandoned by their, their family members and
18 their parents. They are kicked out. They become
19 homeless. The experience severe trauma at many
20 levels. They learn survival skills such as street
21 work as well as survival theft. And then they come
22 to the Ally Forney Center where we specialize with
23 providing services for LGBTQ homeless youth and
24 look for a safe haven, a second chance. So the Leap
25 program is funded by the Department of Labor. It's

1
2 a very short term program. It's 18 months. It has
3 specific criteria. It is for LGBTQ young people who
4 are from the ages of 18 to 21 who have had a
5 history of interaction with the juvenile justice
6 system. Our young people come to us very fractured.
7 One of my chief obstacles that I am encountering as
8 I guide this program is that they are coming to us
9 well behind their grades. Because of all of the
10 misfortunes, the abuse, the neglect that has taken
11 place in the classroom and in the school system
12 they are not at the grade levels where they should
13 be which means that it is making my job and our
14 support systems very challenging to get them to the
15 place where they need to be. The Leap program is a
16 curriculum that is broken up into a few components.
17 It's basically designed to fast-track LGBTQ young
18 people who fit that criteria that I outlined and
19 try...

20 [timer sound]

21 DARREN HOKE: ...wow, and try to stabilize
22 them so that they are able to hopefully obtain
23 employment so they can become self-sufficient. In
24 short the curriculum consists of situational
25 judgment, active listening, skills that you need to

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be able, that sounds enticing to an employer as you walk into the door. At this point I would like, because in light of time I would like to turn it over to one of our LeAp participants who will share his experience with the school system as well as Leap.

JOSH TEREFEY: Hello, my name is Josh.

I'm 20 and I identify with male pronouns or my name as my pronoun and identify as a trans male. My personal experience in school was very difficult as far as whether it be freshman year, sophomore year or junior year or senior year. Freshman year I was punched in the face for identifying how I did. My parents were called in and I was in trouble for getting bullied, actually because I wore a gay bracelet. And those are just some of the kind of antidotal things that happened to me just within one year. So the things that do happen to the LGBTQ youth in schools is very serious and as a study estimates nearly one-third of LGBT students drop out of school to avoid harassment. And I think that's something that's very interesting to look at and something that we need to change. I am a part of Leap as Darren had said which is held at AFC

1 with the morning classes and we also do have a
2 community part that is held with the Yes program.
3 And just being in an environment with other people
4 who are either LGBT identified or gender non-
5 conforming or the many other different things that
6 people do identify as is very comforting because we
7 all don't focus on the things that happen to us in
8 high school. But we focus on the goal of education
9 which we did miss in our years which is so funny
10 because now we're able to sit in a classroom
11 comfortably, laugh, and tutor each other which is
12 something where we never even thought you know we
13 would even tutor anyone anything. So I think that
14 is something that is very necessary for us and for
15 a lot of people who do need that. With the service
16 learning project that was created and done we
17 created a day in the life a teacher's guide which
18 is basically based off of a film that we created
19 for our community service learning project where we
20 in every single scene that happened in the film
21 have ways that you can as a teacher use tools to
22 help the staff as well as the students. But this is
23 mostly targeted for teachers and for administration
24 so that way they can know what to do in case they
25

1
2 ever are in a pickle or a jam. We also have GSA
3 proposals as well as cyber bullying tools, what to
4 do, and safety plans, and what exactly is DASA, why
5 is it important. Because as well as myself even
6 though DASA did come into effect after I finished
7 school a lot of people didn't even know that was
8 something that needed to be in a school. Like a lot
9 of people didn't even, students don't even know
10 that this is something that exists. And I think
11 that's something that you know we should know
12 about. So in the teacher guide there are issues
13 that are apparent. There are things that we should
14 know. There's also a lot of just guidelines and
15 trans 101 and things that if you don't know it's
16 very, very informative. And something that is not
17 to be thrown or shoved down your throat but
18 something that is very able to understand and
19 something that you know if you, it's very easy to
20 sympathize with a LGBT student. I feel like after
21 reading this and knowing what ways to support them.
22 Because we do need support. We are visible. And
23 even though people who say five to 10 percentages
24 of the population, those are people who decide to
25

1
2 come out. Those are not the ones who are
3 identifying. And thank you very much.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just before we go to
5 the next one. Josh, can I get a copy of that first
6 of all. And second of all you're the second young
7 person that has told me about gay bracelets. What
8 was, what did the bracelet look like?

9 JOSH TEREFY: The, the bracelet that I
10 had, that I got in trouble for was a simple rainbow
11 bracelet... did not say anything, it just had colors.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Like one of those
13 rubber ones?

14 JOSH TEREFY: Yes, the rubber ones.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And they, they made
16 you remove it?

17 JOSH TEREFY: In my school, I had it on
18 so I got in trouble for it and then they made me
19 remove it.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Very interesting.
21 It's the second one I heard in two days so thank
22 you. I'm just curious to know what that's all about
23 you know. Okay, thank you. Next please.

24 MARCELLA MEYA: Hi, my name is Marcella
25 Meya and I'm with Act Up New York. Thank you

1 Council Member and the other Council Members for
2 holding this hearing and then congratulations on
3 your chairmanship of this committee. I'm going to
4 change the subject a little bit. I'm going to talk
5 a little about HIV which I haven't heard yet on
6 this panel, on this committee hearing. One of the
7 main issues, and I'm going to specifically talk
8 about the K to 12 HIV curriculum. One of the main
9 issues with the K to 12 HIV curriculum refers to
10 the number of students who are sexually active and
11 are not using condoms. Almost 40 percent of high
12 school students engage in behavior that put them at
13 risk for acquiring HIV. When compared to
14 Philadelphia and DC there is a huge disparity the
15 numbers. While New York City has 44 percent,
16 Philadelphia has 67 percent, and DC 62 percent of
17 the students, male students engaged in sex. What
18 justified this difference, the teaching of
19 abstinence which happens throughout curriculums
20 cannot explain it. The... and the New York City K to
21 12 HIV curriculum has a, have it those of
22 abstinence as if it was a good policy. That's a
23 failed policy. That's a policy of denial. The
24 disparity between New York City data in our
25

1 metropolitan areas the percentage of high school
2 students who have had sexual intercourse indicates
3 that there is something wrong with New York City
4 numbers. While young adults have much easier access
5 and opportunities to have sex New York State
6 numbers are higher than New York City numbers. How
7 can we explain that if not by filling our own
8 reporting. Most importantly how the HIV curriculum
9 is being implemented. Are teachers comfortable with
10 the material and prepared to talk about sex, to
11 deal with difficulty, difficult questions about
12 sexuality, HIV, and other sexually transmitted
13 infections or pregnancy? The answer is no. During
14 age 2012 there was a session between health and
15 education officials. It became clear that there is
16 a dance between educators and healthcare
17 professionals who share responsibility but at the
18 end no one assumes their responsibility for young
19 gay, bisexual, or other men who have sex with men
20 increasing rates of HIV infection. It become, it
21 becomes obvious that that has to end. The DOHMH
22 must take responsibility on HIV. It is a health
23 issue which of course is influenced by education.
24 The Department of Health must make sure that those
25

1 teachers who teach HIV prevention have accurate
2 information, that they are comfortable with the
3 material, that... the lessons are based on science
4 free from personal bias towards sex, sex education,
5 or homophobia. The fact is that young black and
6 Latino gay, bisexual, and other men that have sex with
7 men comprise the population who has seen the
8 highest increases in HIV transmission rates. While
9 New York City fails to, just mystify HIV and offer
10 education that would enable students to protect
11 themselves and reduce risk for HIV when they have
12 sex will not only fail their education but will
13 endanger the lives and then contribute to the
14 spread of HIV especially among young city
15 residents. We from Act Up demand that the New York
16 City HIV curriculum be implemented... HIV curriculum
17 implementation and teachers be evaluated... a survey
18 to find out the percentage of students from what
19 race are having sex with what frequency, if
20 they use condoms or not, if they have access to
21 condoms and lubricants, and what have they learned
22 from lessons on HIV prevention. Thank you very
23 much.
24

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next
3 please.

4 MARTIN KORNGOLD: Good afternoon. My
5 name is Martin Korngold [sp?] I'm Staten Island's
6 representative to the citywide Council on High
7 Schools. We're elected by the parent and teacher
8 associations in each of the boroughs and we, we
9 yell at tweet a lot. I would just like to, to
10 reiterate what's been noted about DASA as being
11 the, the central document that can make this
12 situation better. Several years ago when we had
13 another teen suicide by a young gay male on Staten
14 Island I recognized that bullying and being gay too
15 often is inextricably linked. For about 20 years
16 I've been involved with the Empire State Coalition
17 which works with homeless youth. And without,
18 without question 30 to 40 percent of homeless kids
19 are gay. Okay, they just feel alienated, etcetera.
20 I started speaking to several of the high schools
21 about what they do regarding DASA and they all said
22 oh we do things already. The reality is that while
23 they do so much they are overwhelmed by the new
24 responsibilities that DASA give them. The city can
25 now be sued for acts of intolerance that were

1 brought to their attention. I mean anything, and
2 even if they're not fully brought to their
3 attention. Principals are overwhelmed. Many years
4 ago the city could be sued for potholes until they
5 corrected the situation wherever, after 30 days
6 that they're identified they have to be fixed then
7 they could be sued. The fire department of New York
8 if they hit somebody the city is sued. NYPD if
9 someone gets killed inappropriately the city gets
10 sued. Corp Council... Anyway I guess what I'm trying
11 to get to is we do not have enough money to do so
12 in the city. There is a law, state law which states
13 that we now have a way to address the amount of
14 services that need to be done to address this issue
15 under bullying. We can't rely on the Department of
16 Education's number through the Department of Safety
17 and youth. It won't work. You have to go to a cross
18 section of schools to find out what their needs are
19 versus reasonably what's going on and have a state
20 discretionary revenue source that dedicates just to
21 this issue. I guess I just can't impress upon you
22 enough that we're going to get sued incredibly. We
23 don't have many things in the paper now but we've
24 had them in the past. It's only when the city wakes
25

1
2 up and recognizes that it's being sued for millions
3 every year is it going to be able to tell the state
4 would you please raise some revenue to do this or
5 the amount of money we're going to have to pay each
6 year for an act of violence against a kid, through
7 no act of their, through, through no problems of
8 their own except being who they are will continue
9 and increase.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And next.

11 ELI SENSES STRAUS: Hi, thank you all
12 for sitting for so, so long. My name is Eli Senses
13 Straus. I'm a product of the New York City public
14 schools in as many generations as is almost
15 possible. My, all my grandparents went to public
16 schools. My grandmother taught in the public
17 schools. My parents went to the public schools. My
18 brother and I did. I taught in the public schools
19 as well. I was out as a public school student and
20 not out as a public school teacher. And now I work
21 in Assembly Member Richard Gottfried's office and
22 I'm here with their blessing but I'm not speaking
23 for them. I'm speaking on my own behalf. I agree
24 with and echo what everyone else has said but I
25 wanted to focus in on two things. The first is that

1
2 it's been so wonderful to have so many students
3 here. As a former high school student a former high
4 school teacher I have tremendous affection and
5 respect for high school students and how well they
6 know themselves really. And I want to urge the
7 consideration of some way to formally court and
8 incorporate the voices of high school students and
9 out LGBT high school students in what they need
10 because like all of us, teenagers are experts in
11 their own experience and their own needs. And it's
12 wonderful that so many people showed up here. But
13 it would be great if there were some sort of
14 formalized mechanism for incorporating those
15 voices. And then I also wanted to speak about sex
16 education and sexual health for a minute and say
17 that as a high school teacher one of the most
18 disturbing experiences I ever had was New York City
19 has this opt out provision with condoms which I
20 understand was litigated through tremendous amount
21 of legal action and lawsuits. But in some what it
22 says is that the default is that we give condoms to
23 high school students unless their parents
24 specifically sign a piece of paper saying don't
25 give it to them. The problem being that that

1
2 extends to 17 year olds. 17 year olds in New York
3 are of the legal age of consent. And it creates
4 this really destructive loophole where you have
5 these 17 year old queer students who are not out to
6 their families from whom the only place they can
7 get a condom is a high school teacher or a high
8 school guidance counselor and they are disallowed
9 because their parents signed something when they
10 were 13 saying no, don't give it to them. Again, I
11 understand that is something that was litigated but
12 it specifically was one of the most really
13 heartbreaking experiences I had as a high school
14 teacher and I would love to explore some way to see
15 that. Because it's hard to look a kid in the eye
16 and say you are legally granted the right to
17 consent to your own sexual behavior but I am not
18 legally granted the right to help you do it safely,
19 particularly given that young queer men of color
20 are the highest HIV rate in the city and it's, it's
21 just climbing and climbing.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well thank you. I
23 want to thank the whole panel for coming in
24 Marshello[phonetic] and, and this young man here as
25 well. We're going to look at HIV aids curriculum

1
2 separately I believe, some point further down the
3 road in the sex education curriculum. I kind of
4 tried to avoid it a little bit today because I was
5 a little concerned that when we talk about LGBT
6 community they often lump us in as just being
7 sexual and not... I wanted to kind of just keep it a
8 little bit away from that today. So that was the
9 intent of not raising too much of the HIV AIDS
10 issues today is that we're other than that. We're a
11 class of people. We're a group of people and, and,
12 and I wanted to focus more in on that. And again
13 thank you to our parent person here today for your
14 representation. It's really vitally important that
15 we have parents standing up and supporting the
16 issues that we're, that we're attacking today.
17 Thank you. Thank you all. And then our last panel.
18 And thank you very much for waiting. Yung Xou [sp?]
19 Chin, and Yung Xou Chin from Asian, the Coalition
20 for Asian American Children and Families and Allen
21 Findbloom [sp?] from New York Jail's Action Center.
22 Is he still here. I think Allen left because I saw
23 him but now he's gone. So, yeah, is there anybody
24 else who wants to speak? Now is your opportunity.
25 Okay, seeing no takers we have our last testimony

1
2 here. I'm going to ask you to raise your right
3 hand. And do you swear or affirm to tell the truth,
4 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your
5 testimony before this committee and to respond
6 honestly to Council Member questions.

7 YUNG XOU CHIN: Yes I do.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, please begin.

9 Thank you.

10 YUNG XOU CHIN: So good evening. Thank
11 you Chair Dromm and Council Member Chin for stay
12 here so, so late. My name is Karen Chin and I'm
13 from Coalition for Asian American Children and
14 Families. Since 1986 CCF is the nation's only
15 planation, planation children's advocacy
16 organization. So we challenges to your types of
17 Asian Pacific American as a model minority and
18 advocates on behalf of honor served families in our
19 community. Today's hearing as we focus on LGBTQ
20 community can really attest it, attest to examining
21 how we can better support our youth and better
22 provide a healthy learning environment where all
23 youth can feel safe and to learn and explore their
24 identities. With regard to education outcomes the
25 Asian model minority stereotype has been, has been

1
2 most pervasive and as a result APA students who
3 make up almost 14 percent of New York's, New York
4 City public school population and are often
5 invisible in the ongoing education reform debates
6 which negatively impacts their ability to engaging
7 mainly for college and career readiness
8 opportunities. Consider these facts. One out of
9 four APA high school students doesn't graduate on
10 time or at all. And one out of five Asian Pacific
11 American students is an English language learner.
12 One out of five English language learner students
13 is Asian Pacific American. So as CCF fights to
14 challenge the invisibility of the needs of APA
15 youth and education we are here today to also fight
16 the often times overlooked issues of our LGBTQ
17 youth. For the APA community where a majority come
18 from working class immigrant's families our youth
19 do not have much support and guidance at home. Many
20 of their parents do not speak English or are barely
21 home as they are work at, they are out at work
22 seven days a week. When it comes to navigating the
23 education system and preparing for college it
24 becomes doubting as they do not know where to go to
25 find guidance. For many of the LGBTQ youth that

1
2 we've worked with they feel even more isolated as
3 the coming out process is something that they
4 cannot speak to their families about. Many already
5 feel the pressure of the financial burden of their
6 parents working long hours to support them here.
7 And they do not want to place additional burden of
8 opening their LGBTQ identity to their family. And
9 for many they do not exactly know how to articulate
10 this. In the schools the biggest challenge is
11 bullying, harassment, and threats. So CFS urges the
12 New York City Council to work with the DOE to
13 develop and implement measures to ensure a safe
14 learning environment for all students. That
15 includes first mandate, mandate and enforce the
16 anti-bully regulation in the DOE. Second, designing
17 an integrated curriculum and a pedagogical approach
18 that includes teaching tolerance and
19 ecology[phonetic], the diversity of our New York
20 City student population, third couchel[phonetic],
21 competency training for DOE and Cuny teaching and
22 Counselling staff so that they can provide all
23 students and their parents with counselling to
24 successfully navigate K to 12, and last increase
25 the number of DOE college counselling and

1
2 advisement staff to reduce the case loads. In
3 addition for LGBTQ youth we need to make sure that
4 also a full array of intensive social
5 couchel[phonetic] and family supports to ensure
6 that they unique, their unique challenges are fully
7 acknowledged as our public school system advances a
8 well-rounded education agenda for all students.
9 Thank you all for this opportunity. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well thank you very
11 much Karen and I've worked closely with the
12 coalition on a number of issues and I really deeply
13 appreciate your being here today and having some
14 visibility. And unless there are questions from
15 our, my colleagues... Margaret Chin.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah, I just
17 wanted to thank you for coming. I think it's really
18 important to show the diversity of the LGBT youth,
19 that especially coming from immigrant background
20 and other ethnic group that is such a big
21 challenge.

22 YUNG XOU CHIN: Yeah.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: And more support
24 is really needed from our school and from our
25 community.

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YUNG XOU CHIN: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So thank you for being here and waiting so long.

YUNG XOU CHIN: Your welcome. Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: And Carlos Menchaca from Brooklyn, Council Member Carlos Menchaca... [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: I also want to extend my thank you for testifying today. I'm, I'm a Council Member that represents Sunset Park with a growing Asian community.

YUNG XOU CHIN: Mm-hmm.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Immigrant Asian community.

YUNG XOU CHIN: Yeah, I'm actually live there.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: You live in...

YUNG XOU CHIN: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: ...Sunset Park? Oh great...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Ah-haa.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: That's wonderful. So then we should talk. I really want to, want to talk with you and, and really

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understand how I can utilize the Council Office and, in the work that we're doing here but, but really just be able to go into communities myself and talk about our, my story of being an openly gay person in an immigrant family and, and, and really impact, impacted that way. So I'm hoping we can work together on doing that.

YUNG XOU CHIN: Yeah, thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Wonderful, thank you.

YUNG XOU CHIN: Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright, well thank you everybody for staying this long for this hearing. And I just want to say what an important hearing it has been and a historic hearing in that sense and I want to say this meeting is adjourned. Thank you very much. And it is now 5:31 thank you.

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Meeting adjourned.

[gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date March 09, 2014