

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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October 20, 2014
Start: 1:24 p.m.
Recess: 2:21 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E:
DANIEL DROMM
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Vincent J. Gentile
Daniel R. Garodnick
Margaret S. Chin
Stephen T. Levin
Deborah L. Rose
Mark S. Weprin
Jumaane D. Williams
Andy L. King
Inez D. Barron
Chaim M. Deutsch
Mark Levine
Alan N. Maisel
Antonio Reynoso
Mark Treyger

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

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: 'Kay. My name is

Daniel Dromm and I'm Chair of the Education Committee of the City Council; today we're here to have a vote on two items before us. The first is a Local Law to amend the Administrative Code of the City of New York in relation to requiring the Department of Education to report information regarding guidance counselors and social workers in the schools; that legislation is primarily sponsored by Council Member Antonio Reynoso. And a second piece of legislation, which is a resolution, primarily sponsored by Council Member Debi Rose, calling upon the New York City Department of Education to establish a comprehensive college preparation program, based on the college readiness model proposed by the Urban Youth Collaborative, to improve and expand college access for all students.

And before I call on the sponsors of the legislation, let me say I'm proud to support both pieces of legislation and [background comments] was very glad to have held what I thought was a successful hearing on guidance counselors and this is our first step in that direction, in terms of looking at guidance counselors and the guidance services that

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2 the Department provides, because a lot of focus has
3 been on UPK and I think that's really important, but
4 I think we also need to look at our guidance
5 counselors and how they help students get into
6 college, which is why the resolution sponsored by
7 Council Member Rose is also so really important and I
8 also support the Urban Youth Collaborative's program,
9 Getting Us to College Program and so I'll be voting
10 in favor today. But before we get to the vote, let
11 me call upon Council Member Antonio Reynoso for
12 remarks.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Thank you Chair
14 for allowing me to speak today and also for your
15 assistance and your leadership in getting me to here,
16 my first bill, hopefully, come stated, it'll be the
17 first bill I pass and it's fitting that it's an
18 education-based bill, which is the foundation of what
19 I ran on and is still something that I hold dearly as
20 the way to get out of poverty in my district, it's
21 the great equalizer, so I'm excited and I'm also
22 excited that I'm sharing this floor with Council
23 Member Debi Rose, who I look up and I'm extremely
24 grateful to be sharing this with her.

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2 Int 0403, which was heard earlier this
3 month, required that Department of Education to
4 report information regarding guidance counselors in
5 schools. Right now only one out of every five public
6 school students in New York City graduate from
7 college within 12 years of starting high school and
8 this is unacceptable. Guidance counselors play an
9 invaluable role in ensuring that our students are
10 prepared for college; however, many New York City
11 public school counselors are so overburdened with
12 large caseloads that they are unable to provide
13 students, especially those who are struggling, with
14 the individualized attention and services that they
15 need. The ratio of students to counselors is more
16 than 50 percent of New York City high schools; is
17 higher than 250:1. Demographics also play a role.
18 Neighborhoods with the lowest college readiness rates
19 currently, directly with low-income communities of
20 color, particularly in The Bronx and Brooklyn. Right
21 now the Department of Education does not report
22 publicly on its counselors. This bill will help us
23 analyze needs across the Department of Education --
24 where are the counselors concentrated; how many
25 students are they serving; are they providing

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2 services in multiple languages, etc. Are students in
3 lower performing schools receiving equitable college
4 readiness counseling in those [background comments]
5 in higher performing schools? This will help us
6 begin to effectively regulate this complicated system
7 to ensure that students, particularly the most
8 struggling, are receiving services they need to help
9 them succeed. I was privileged and lucky to go to a
10 private school for high school and it was 125
11 students for every college counselor, not including
12 guidance counselors and I will continue to fight to
13 make sure that my luck becomes the standard in the
14 Department of Education. Thank you very much.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,
16 Council Member Reynoso. I agree about that number,
17 250:1; it is very, very important in setting our
18 students on the right path, so thank you for that. I
19 forgot to mention and to say welcome back to my
20 counsel, Aysha Schomburg, who is back with us after a
21 little bit of an absence, looking well and feeling
22 well and I wanna say thank you for [background
23 comments] being here. [applause, cheers] And as all
24 my other staff members, but Aysha, a special welcome
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2 back to you. [background comments] I now turn it
3 over to Council Member Debi Rose.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you, Chair
5 Dromm. I wanna again thank Chair Dromm for holding
6 that very important oversight hearing on guidance
7 services for students and I wanna thank Council
8 Member Reynoso for bringing it up; it's a very
9 important topic and it's so critical to the success
10 of our students and their ability to go on and be
11 successful, graduate and then move on to college.
12 And as I said at the hearing, I spent 20 years prior
13 to being elected to office working with at-risk
14 youth, so this is an area of great interest and
15 concern for me. I am thrilled that my resolution
16 calling on the New York City Department of Education
17 to establish a college preparation program to improve
18 and expand college access for all will be voted on
19 today and I hope all Committee members will support
20 Res 0166, as I also support Int 0403, which will
21 require that the Department of Education report
22 information regarding guidance counselors in schools.

23 I want to again commend the Urban Youth
24 Collaborative for developing its Get Us to College
25 model, which amongst other things calls for

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2 increasing student success centers in our high
3 schools and providing funding to high schools to
4 implement Bridge to College programs; these are
5 exactly the innovative types of initiatives that will
6 help us create meaningful pathways to higher
7 education and as a result, better jobs for our
8 students. And with that I vote yea on both items and
9 again, I am very thankful to Chair Dromm and to
10 Council Member Reynoso for these pieces of
11 legislation.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: 'Kay, thank you,
13 Council Member Rose and I thank you also for the
14 legislation. I'm going to ask the clerk now to call
15 the vote.

16 [background comment]

17 COMMITTEE CLERK: Kevin Penn [sp?],
18 Committee Clerk, roll call on the Committee on
19 Education, Int 0403-A and Res 0166. Council Member
20 Dromm.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I vote aye on both.

22 COMMITTEE CLERK: Gentile.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: I vote aye on
24 both.

25 COMMITTEE CLERK: Chin.

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COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Aye on all.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Rose.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Aye on all.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Weprin. Williams.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I'd like to ask the Clerk to add my name to Int 0403-A and I vote aye on all.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Barron.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I'd like to be excused to explain my vote.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: As the Chairman, I also served with the Department of Education for many years and understand the importance of guidance counselors. When I was assigned an elementary school in the Bed-Stuy section of Brooklyn, I did not have an allocation for a guidance counselor, it just was not in the budget, but I did work with the superintendent and we were able to secure one. So I want to commend both sponsors of the bills and I vote aye on all and I would like for the Clerk to also make sure that my name is recorded as a sponsor. Thank you.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Deutsch.

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COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Aye on all.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Levine.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: I'd also like the Clerk to add my name to 403-A as a sponsor and I vote aye on both.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Maisel.

COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: I just wanted to make just some remarks. Like Miss Barron, I also worked in the public school system, in the junior high school, and I can tell you a most important ally in working with the children were the guidance counselors and so I think this is a great bill, but it's a reporting bill; we need to get the legislature to actually authorize certain specific ratios that the Department of Education would be obligated to follow, plus the fact just because you have guidance counselors, the numbers don't necessarily mean a thing, because if all they're doing is paperwork, which frequently happens, they're not meeting children, so there has to be something in any legislation that would require a certain number of visits from children to the guidance counselor so they actually provide guidance, not do paperwork for the City. So I think this a wonderful bill, but it's

1 just the very, very beginning and I congratulate the
2 introducers. Thank you, I support it and please add
3 me as a sponsor.
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5 COMMITTEE CLERK: Weprin.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Aye. [background
7 comment]

8 COMMITTEE CLERK: Reynoso.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: I vote aye.

10 COMMITTEE CLERK: Treyger.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Permission to
12 explain my vote.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Yes, I think
15 there's a number of former educators here in this
16 Committee and I applaud Council Member Reynoso;
17 Council Member Rose for really addressing major
18 inequity I think that exists in our system today and
19 one of the themes we heard over and over during the
20 course of that excellent hearing -- by the way,
21 Chair; that was a really informative hearing that
22 shed light on issues that have been kept in the dark
23 for way too long -- is that principles and people in
24 budgetary positions of power often will say, I wanna
25 do that, I wanna hire more counselors, but it's not

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2 measured and if you don't make this a measurable goal
3 without providing adequate resources to meet that
4 goal, just not gonna happen. So I think that this
5 legislation is going to shed a very bright light on
6 the gaps that exist in our system and how short-
7 changed our children are in receiving the services
8 they most vitally need. So I applaud you again,
9 Council Member Reynoso and Council Member Debi Rose
10 for beginning to shed a big bright light on how much
11 more we have to do to give our kids the very best,
12 which they deserve, services for college, but also
13 making sure that they're taking the right classes,
14 making sure that if there's any type of social-
15 emotion learning needs, there are outside academics
16 that have to be addressed, counselors play a
17 critical... that is the missing link, in my opinion,
18 and common core as well; they don't address the
19 social-emotional leaning needs of students, so this
20 is a great pieces of legislation here and I would ask
21 the Clerk to please add my name to In 0403-A as well.
22 And with that I vote aye on all. Thank you, Chair.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK: By a vote of 12 in the
24 affirmative, 0 in the negative; no abstentions, both

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2 items have been adopted; members please sign the
3 committee reports.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So I'd like to ask
5 the Clerk to hold the vote open for about a half-hour
6 or so till the others get here and also I'd like to
7 ask that my name be added as a co-sponsor to the
8 legislation and with that I'll have the Clerk
9 circulate to get your signatures before you leave.

10 [background comments]

11 [pause]

12 COMMITTEE CLERK: Levin.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: With my
14 appreciation to the Chair for keeping the roll open,
15 I vote aye.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK: Vote stands at 13 in
17 the affirmative.

18 [pause]

19 COMMITTEE CLERK: Garodnick.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GARODNICK: Aye.

21 COMMITTEE CLERK: Vote stands at 14 in
22 the affirmative.

23 [pause]

24 [background comments]

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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COMMITTEE CLERK: Council Mem..

[interpose] [background comment] Council Member King.

[pause]

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: I vote yes.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Final vote in the
Committee on Education 15 in the affirmative, 0 in
the negative and no abstentions.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: What time is it?

[background comment] 'Kay, so this meeting is
adjourned at 2:21 p.m.

[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 October 21, 2014