

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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February 25, 2015
Start: 1:28 p.m.
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - 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)

Milady Baez
Deputy Chancellor of DOE Department of ELLs.

Richard Bellas
Senior Director of Policy and Compliance at DOE

Kleber Palma
DOE Translation Services

Evelyn DeJesus
Vice President of United Federation of Teachers

Teresa Arboleda
Citywide Council of English Language Learners

Nancy Villareal de Alder
New York State Association for Bilingual
Educators

Louis L. Reyes
Former Board of Education

Elizabeth Olsen
Internationals Network for Public Schools

Melissa Katz
NYC Charter School Center

Kate Menken
Graduate Center of CUNY

Kim Sykes
New York Immigration Coalition

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

Roksana Mun

DRUM South Asian Organizing Center

Shamsun Nahar

DRUM South Asian Organizing Center

Vanessa Ramos

Committee for Hispanic Children and Families

Abja Midha

Immigrant Students Rights Project at Advocates
for Children of New York

Darnell Benoit

Fambwayan Haitian Literacy Project

Sheelah Feinberg

Coalition for Asian American Children and
Families

Louise Chan

CAACF ASAP Program

Della Dekay

Saint John's University

Marwa Kedhr

Arab Association of New York

Weam Al Rubaye

Arab Association of New York

Stephanie Mulcock

Cidadao Global

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

Mae Lee
Chinese Progressive Association

Maria Trinadage [sp?]
Cidadao Global

Elsie Saint Louis
Haitian Americans United for Progress

Christina Ramos
Hispanic Federation

Aracelis Lucero
MASA

Gulshan Ara Chowdhury
SAPNA

Haydee Zabrana
Latin Women in Action

Ramatu Ahmed
African Life Center

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Hola y Bueno dias.

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[speaking Spanish] Margaret Chin?

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COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: [speaking

6

Cantonese]

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [speaking Spanish]

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ESL and ELL students. So, for those of you who may

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not have understood Spanish or Cantonese, we wanted

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to open this hearing specifically by speaking other

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languages so that you could understand what it feels

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like to be a student who comes into a classroom for

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the first time not speaking English and very basic

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things that ELL students need to know that often

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times are overlooked. For example, even asking how

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they can go to the bathroom or who they can associate

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with at lunch time. These are difficulties that our

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ELL students face when they come into the school

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system. And trying to be the teacher, because I was a

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teacher for 25 years before I got elected to the City

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Council, getting people to understand those

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difficulties that our students face is the purpose of

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us both speaking in Spanish and in Cantonese, and I

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want to thank Margaret for helping me with that as

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well and getting people to understand why this

1 hearing in particular is so vitally important to us.
2 And now I'm going to go to my formal remarks. I hope
3 my Spanish was okay. Perfecto? Oh, gracias,
4 gracias. Alright. Good afternoon and welcome to the
5 Education Committee's Oversight Hearing on Ensuring
6 English Language Learners Receive Appropriate
7 Education Services. We will also hear testimony
8 today on a resolution, Resolution 388, sponsored by
9 Antonio Reynoso, Council Member Antonio Reynoso.
10 I'll talk more about the resolution shortly after
11 some opening remarks, and then we'll move on to hear
12 a statement from my colleague, Council Member
13 Reynoso, the lead sponsor of 388. According to the
14 Department of Education, an English language learner
15 or ELL is a student that speaks a language other than
16 English at home and scores below a state designated
17 level of proficiency in English upon entering the New
18 York City public school system. Last year, more than
19 43 percent of New York City public school students
20 spoke a language other than English at home, and more
21 than 14 percent of all students are designated ELL's.
22 These students speak approximately 160 different
23 languages, with the most prevalent languages being
24 Spanish, spoken by 62 percent followed by Chinese,
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1 Bengalis, Arabic, Haitian-Creole, Russian, Urdu,
2 French, Uzbek, and Punjabi. The majority of ELL
3 students, more than 79 percent, receive services in
4 English as a second language with approximately 15
5 percent served in transitional bilingual education
6 programs and four percent participating in dual
7 language programs. There is a serious and
8 longstanding achievement gap between ELL students and
9 those who were proficient in English. In 2014, only
10 14 percent of ELL's scored at levels three and four
11 on state and math tests compared to 34.2 percent of
12 all students citywide and 37.5 percent of students
13 who are English language proficient. Similarly, on
14 2014 ELA tests, only 3.6 percent of ELL's scored at
15 the highest levels compared to 28.4 percent of all
16 students citywide and 37.5 percent of English
17 proficient students. Graduation rates for ELL
18 students also lag far behind other students. The four
19 year graduation rate for ELL's in New York City
20 public schools was 32.5 percent in 2014 compared to
21 68.1 percent for English proficient students and 64.2
22 percent for all students. In addition, though
23 overall graduation rates rose from 2010 to 2014,
24 graduation rates for ELL's actually declined from
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1 42.6 percent to 32.5 percent during that period.

2 Closing these achievements gaps and improving
3 academic outcomes for ELL students is a requirement
4 under the federal No Child Left behind Act and a high
5 priority for the city. To address the continuing
6 achievement gaps for ELL students, the DOE and the
7 State Education Department signed a new memorandum of
8 understanding in November 2014. The memorandum of
9 understanding outlines specific goals in four focus
10 areas that the DOE is expected to achieve by June of
11 2018. In addition to signing the MOU, the DOE has
12 taken other steps to improve services for ELL
13 students under Mayor de Blasio's administration. The
14 city allocated 13 million dollars in the fiscal year
15 15 budget to support initiatives for ELLs, much of
16 which will go toward training teachers. The city
17 already hosted an all-day professional development
18 session for more than 300 teachers in November 2014.
19 Further, Chancellor Carmen Farina announced in
20 January that DOE will create 40 more dual language
21 programs next fall. The DOE also commits in the MOU
22 to addressing the longstanding shortage of certified
23 bilingual teachers as well as other support personnel
24 who can provide high quality bilingual and special
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1 education services to students in their native
2 language. Parents and advocates have also voiced
3 concerns about the availability of translation and
4 interpretation services. Many ELL students and their
5 families are not fully engaged in the school
6 community because of language barriers and other
7 obstacles including the need for identification to
8 enter the school building, which can be intimidating
9 to parents, especially those who are undocumented.
10 This is one of the reasons that I proudly sponsored
11 legislation creating the city's new Municipal
12 Identification Card, IDNYC. Another major concern is
13 the impact of implementation of the new Common Core
14 standards on ELL students, particular the new Common
15 Core state tests. Finally, another emerging concern
16 is the recent increase in unaccompanied minors that
17 have immigrated to New York City to escape growing
18 gang violence and extreme poverty in Central America.
19 More than 1,300 of such unaccompanied minors have
20 entered city schools this year presenting significant
21 new challenges. Beyond help learning English, these
22 students need additional services such as counseling
23 and legal assistance. Clearly, this is an important
24 topic that we have a lot to examine today regarding
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1 the instruction of ELL students in New York City
2 public schools. The Committee also looks forward to
3 hearing testimony from parents, students, educators,
4 advocates, unions, CEC members and others on this
5 issue. As I stated earlier, we will also hear
6 testimony on Resolution 388 today. That resolution
7 voices support of the New York State Education
8 Department's Elementary and Secondary Education Act
9 waiver renewal requests that newly arrived English
10 language learners be exempt from participating in the
11 English Language Arts exam or assessments for two
12 years. Under state and federal accountability rules,
13 student performance on the ELA assessments partially
14 determines whether a school makes adequate yearly
15 progress which can impact the school's state and
16 federal accountably status and may affect its level
17 of support and intervention. Currently, the United
18 States Department of Education has approved use of
19 the New York State English as a Second Language
20 Achievement Test, or the NYSESLAT, in lieu of grades
21 three to eight ELA assessments for newly arrived
22 students who have been attending school in the United
23 States for less than one year. I want to say, imagine
24 trying to learn a language in less than one year no
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1 matter what are you come into the school system.

2 Resolution 388 supports the state's request to the

3 federal government to extend this exemption for newly

4 arrived students to two years. I would like to

5 remind everyone who wishes to testify today that you

6 must fill out a witness slip, which is located on the

7 desk of the Sergeant at Arms near the front of this

8 room. If you wish to testify on Resolution 388 please

9 indicate on the witness slip, whether you were here

10 to testify in favor of or in opposition to the

11 resolution. I also want to point out that we will

12 not be voting on the resolution today, as this is

13 just the first hearing. To allow as many people as

14 possible to testify, testimony will be limited to

15 three minutes per person, and by the way, there is a

16 celebration at five o'clock in this very chambers

17 that we need to vacate the room for, so I'm going to

18 have to be very strict about that. And now, I'd like

19 to turn the floor over to my colleague, Council

20 Member Antonio Reynoso for his remarks, but also to

21 introduce Council Member Mark Weprin, again, Council

22 Member Margaret Chin and Council Member Mark Levine

23 who have joined us. Council Member Reynoso?

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Okay, the three
3 B's of public speaking, be brief, be intelligent and
4 be gone. Given our time constraint, I'm going to
5 move--I'm going to make sure that I do that. I was a
6 former ELL student. I'm extremely grateful for the
7 Department of Education and giving me the opportunity
8 to learn and take advantage of all that is afforded
9 to me here in this great country and of course in
10 this amazing city. My only problem was that I was
11 considered a failure in my first and second grade in
12 not being able to pass, leave ELL. I needed to be
13 proficient in English in one year. I didn't learn
14 English fast enough. I thought I knew English. I
15 didn't know it proficiently in one year, even though
16 I was making progress, but I consider myself a
17 failure because that's what they told me I was. I
18 couldn't get a three. So, well, they didn't tell me
19 that, but I knew the numbers, one, two, three, four.
20 If I got a four, I'm advanced. If I get a three, I'm
21 proficient. If I get a two, I'm subpar, and if I get
22 a one, you know, I just have no grasp of the language
23 at that point. So, my resolution today speaks to--I
24 wanted three years, that you get three years to learn
25 the language proficiently, and then you get

1
2 considered--it can be considered in the statewide
3 exams. I know that's a state issue that's why it's a
4 resolution. We probably can't speak to that, but
5 there's two victims in that. It's also the school
6 itself. The school gets a person that is not
7 proficient. So the school is now looked upon as a
8 failing school because it wasn't able to get that
9 student into proficiency. I was a great student and I
10 was a burden on the statistics of my school. So, and
11 that's a big issue as well. So I just want to make
12 sure that both of those things are taken into
13 account. And I think even though the state is in
14 charge of that, especially the proficiency portions
15 of it, that the Department of Education should be
16 doing something to mitigate the--what it represents
17 to me or to students and what it represented to the
18 schools. [speaking Spanish] I thank you Chair Danny
19 Dromm, and I'm looking forward to this hearing.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, thank you
22 Council Member Reynoso, and in regard to what it was
23 that you just said in Spanish, I'm very grateful that
24 the Department has separated the names of the Office
25 of Special Education and the Department of English

1
2 Language Learners. I think that was a really good
3 step in the right direction for the stigma purposes
4 that were included, but also because now we have the,
5 I guess, former Director, but new Deputy Chancellor
6 of the Department of Education, and that is Milady
7 Baez, who I had the fortune of being able to work
8 with in District 30 as a UFT rep actually in the
9 summer going from school to school and checking to be
10 sure that the schools had their supplies, and all of
11 them did in your district, which was great, but I
12 want to congratulate you and welcome you. And since
13 it's your first hearing, we'll try not to be too hard
14 on you. But I do have to swear you in, and so I need
15 to ask you if you would raise your right hand please,
16 both people at the desk, at the table, please. Thank
17 you. And let's understand that there was a third,
18 Richard Bellas--that's you? And Kleber Palma? Okay.
19 So you also, if you want to come to the table. Okay,
20 and I need you all to just raise your right hand. Do
21 you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the
22 whole truth and nothing but the truth and to answer
23 Council Member questions honestly? Okay, thank you.
24 And again, Deputy Chancellor, would you be starting?
25 Okay.

1
2 MILADY BAEZ: Good afternoon, Chair--

3 CHAIRPERSON DROMM:[interposing] And
4 Deputy Chancellor, just hit that, the button on the
5 mic. Yep. Thank you.

6 MILADY BAEZ: Good afternoon, Chair Dromm
7 and all the members of the Education Committee here
8 today. My name is Milady Baez, Deputy Chancellor of
9 the Department of English Language Learners and
10 Student Support at the New York City Department of
11 Education. I am joined by Richard Bellas, our Senior
12 Director of Policy and Compliance. Thank you for the
13 opportunity to discuss our work to support English
14 language learners in New York City schools. As this
15 is my first appearance before this committee, I would
16 like to provide you with an overview of my
17 background. I have been an educator for over 30
18 years. I started my career as a bilingual teacher at
19 Public School 314 in Brooklyn. Subsequently I served
20 as an Assistant Principal for over 10 years and one
21 year as Principal interim acting for a total of 22
22 years at Public School 314. In 1997, I was appointed
23 Principal of PS 149 in Jackson Heights, Queens. At
24 both schools I established and I directed nationally
25 acclaimed dual language programs. After that, I

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2 became the local instructional superintendent in
3 former Region Four in Queens where I supervised 12 K
4 through 12 schools and served as the liaison for dual
5 language and bilingual programs for all schools in
6 the region. While I have devoted my career to serving
7 English language learners, my interest is not just
8 professional. It is also personal. Like Chancellor
9 Carmen Farina, I entered grade school as an ELL
10 student, a perspective that continues to inform my
11 work as I pursue educational equity and opportunities
12 for all students. We are fortunate to live in a city
13 built by immigrants and to have a school system that
14 reflects this rich cultural and linguistic diversity.
15 ELL's account for over 14 percent of our total school
16 population or approximately 140,000 students and
17 represent roughly 160 languages. Sixty-one percent
18 of students are Spanish speakers, followed by
19 students who speak Chinese, Bengali, Arabic, Haitian-
20 Creole, Russian, Urdu, French, Uzbek, Punjabi, and
21 Albanian. Last November, the DOE and New York State
22 Education Department signed a Memorandum of
23 Understanding that outlines the Department's
24 commitment to serve ELL's. The MOU set four focus
25 areas. First, programs and services for ELLs.

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2 Second, identification and placement of Ells and
3 parent information. Third, certified teachers and
4 staffing, and fourth, accountability. We are
5 currently collaborating with New York State Education
6 Department in order to continue to implement the
7 requirement of the MOU. I would like at this time to
8 introduce Richard Bellas, who will tell you more
9 about the demographics and achievements of our
10 English language learners. Richard?

11 RICHARD BELLAS: I would also like to say
12 thank you to all of the Council Members here today
13 for giving me the opportunity to present this ELL
14 data, something that is very important to me as an
15 educator for 24 years. Okay, so the total number of
16 all students in New York City public schools is 1.1
17 million. Of that number, over 420,000 students have
18 at the time of their initial enrollment in the New
19 York City Department of Education's schools indicated
20 that they come from homes in which the home language
21 is not English. That is over 43 percent of our
22 students. And to put this in perspective that means
23 that one out of every two and a half students that
24 comes to us comes from a home where the home language
25 is other than English. This does not mean that all

1 of these students are all ELLs, however. In fact,
2 most are not. Now, again, of all the students in New
3 York City, approximately 140,000 are ELLs. That is
4 over 14 percent. Again, to put that in perspective,
5 if there were seven New York City public schools
6 students standing in front of you, at least one of
7 them would be an ELL. Being an ELL does not mean you
8 were born outside the US. In fact, slightly over
9 half of the ELLs, 51 percent, were born within the
10 United States. The top two languages of ELLs are
11 Spanish and Chinese. These two combined total 76
12 percent, or we can say that three out of every four
13 ELLs in New York City have Spanish or Chinese as a
14 home language. The other top languages are Bengali,
15 Arabic, Haitian-Creole, Russian, Urdu, French, Uzbek
16 and Punjabi. This often surprises people as people
17 often think other languages may be higher. The top
18 two languages, Spanish and Chinese, have held the top
19 two spots for many years. However, the DOE regularly
20 monitors the number of ELL's home languages as well
21 as all students, and they do change from time to
22 time. The top five languages of birth for ELLs are
23 the US, the Dominican Republic, China, Bangladesh,
24 and Ecuador, and this is very consistent with the
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1 home languages as well. ELLs are not a monolithic
2 group of students. They come to us with unique
3 social backgrounds, needs, academic, linguistic,
4 educational backgrounds of cultural diversity.
5 Therefore, in order to address each of their unique
6 needs, we have established subgroups. We have
7 newcomers which are identified as students who have
8 zero to three years of ELL service. Then we have
9 ELLs with four [sic] years of ELL service, long term
10 ELL's--Long term ELLs are identified as those
11 students who have completed six years of ELL service
12 and continued to be identified as ELLs. We have ELL
13 students with disabilities. These are ELLs with
14 IEP's. We have students with inconsistent or
15 interrupted formal education. These are ELLs who
16 enter a US school in grade three or above and have
17 had at least two years less schooling than their
18 peers. And then there are former English language
19 learners, these are English language learners who
20 have taken the NYSESLAT and have tested proficient.
21 We'll take a look at the ELLs by borough. Queens has
22 the largest percentage of ELLs, nearly 30 percent.
23 In order, we follow that by Brooklyn, Bronx,
24 Manhattan, and Staten Island. Now let's take a look
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1 at ELL achievement. The New York State English as a
2 Second Language Achievement Test, also known as the
3 NYSESLAT, is the test that is given every April and
4 May to English language learners to determine if the
5 students will continue to be an ELL the following
6 school year. If the student reaches proficient
7 level, the student is considered a former ELL the
8 following school year. In 2003, 16.3 percent of ELLs
9 reached proficient level, or as it is sometimes
10 referred to as tested out. In 2014, 17.4 percent
11 reached the proficient level. So this is an increase
12 of 1.1 percentage points over the previous year. The
13 2014 ELA and math scored by ELLs show slight gains
14 over the previous year, but this is where our focus
15 is on. The percent of students at or above
16 proficient on the ELA and math have gone down
17 significantly for all students in 2013 and so did the
18 results for English language learners. In 2013, 11.4
19 percent of ELLs scored at or above proficient on the
20 math exam. In 2013--in 2014, the percentage increased
21 by 2.6 percentage points to 14 percent. In 2013, 3.4
22 percent of ELLs scored at or above proficient on the
23 ELA. In 2014, the number made a slight gain to 3.6
24 percent. Now we're aware that we have work to do. We
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1 know that. We have a number of profession development
2 opportunities and resources to support schools along
3 with the strong commitment from Mayor de Blasio and
4 Chancellor Farina to bolster instructional supports
5 and close the achievement gap for English language
6 learners. The ELL graduation rate is also another
7 area that we are focusing our work on. Over the past
8 five years, the ELL graduation rate has decreased to
9 37.3 percent. Part of this increase was due to the
10 phasing out of one of our local diploma options that
11 was available to students. Students used to be
12 allowed to get a 55 or higher on five Regence exam to
13 get a local diploma. That type of local diploma was
14 phased out as we raised the bar for all students,
15 including English language learners. Research also
16 shows that ELLs require additional time to acquire
17 the academic language necessary to succeed in school.
18 Now, when we look at the five and six year graduation
19 rates, the percentages of graduation rate increase
20 significantly to 48.1 and 50.4 percent respectively.
21 Giving ELLs additional time can make a big
22 difference. Now, again, we know that we have work to
23 do. This is not acceptable to us as a result. We
24 have a number of initiatives to support English
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1 language learners at the high school level. As one
2 example is the recent release of high school grants
3 of 2.1 million dollars. That goes directly to
4 schools to create additional instructional and credit
5 accumulation opportunities for ELLs. This is just
6 one example of the commitment that Chancellor Farina
7 has made to support ELLs, and Deputy Chancellor Baez
8 will be discussing some of these initiatives in
9 greater detail in her testimony. And last, the four
10 year graduation rate for former ELLs has seen a
11 slight decrease over the past several years, but that
12 remains at 75.1 percent. Thank you.

14 MILADY BAEZ: Thank you, Richard. And
15 now, I would like to give you a more detailed picture
16 of the work we're doing on behalf of our ELL
17 students. As you know, last September, Chancellor
18 Farina created the Department of English Language
19 Learners and Student Support. This stands along the
20 vision within the DOE, reflects the Chancellor's
21 commitment to provide English language learners with
22 access to rigorous instruction, targeted resources
23 and support and high quality programs that value
24 their cultural and linguistic heritage and
25 recognition that as a system we need to do better to

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2 improve outcomes for English language learners. In
3 support of Mayor de Blasio's vision of one school
4 system rising together, the DOE is working to meet
5 the unique and diverse needs of our ELLs and to
6 ensure that they are prepared for college, careers
7 and futures as productive citizens. Our multifaceted
8 approach includes providing school with ongoing
9 support and guidance in the successful implementation
10 of bilingual and English as a Second Language
11 programs, strengthening and expanding the range of
12 professional development opportunities and technical
13 support available for school based staff, and working
14 closely with parents and community based
15 organizations. Our aim is to improve the learning of
16 ELLs across the core content areas of English,
17 Science, Math, and Social Studies. Consistent with
18 the Chancellor's renewed emphasis on teacher training
19 and rigorous instruction to help improve student
20 achievement, a key component of our work is providing
21 research based professional development across the
22 city to support principals, teachers and central
23 staff in deepening their understanding of second
24 language acquisition, literately development and how
25 to design Common Core aligned lessons that meet the

1
2 diverse linguistic needs of ELLs. To that end, we
3 are continuing our multiday professional development
4 series for middle schools serving linguistically
5 diverse populations. Sections will provide school
6 leaders with the knowledge and tools that they need
7 to develop student advanced literacy skill, including
8 increased vocabulary development, reading
9 comprehension, and communication. We believe that
10 these sessions which were also offered during that
11 2013/14 and 2014/15 school years will advance ELLs
12 academic achievement and lead to the literacy
13 success. Because of speaking multiple languages is
14 an asset for students, families and schools we will
15 encourage access to high quality options by opening
16 40 new dual language programs and 10 transitional
17 education bilingual programs throughout the city next
18 school year. Under this initiative, 40 schools have
19 been selected to receive 25,000 dollars planning
20 grant to open or expand dual language programs in
21 Mandarin, French, Haitian-Creole, Hebrew, Japanese,
22 and Spanish. Dual language programs enable students
23 to develop new language skills and learn academic
24 subjects in both languages. In addition, we've
25 recently released a transitional bilingual planning

1 grant initiative inviting schools to strengthen
2 student's native language development and content
3 knowledge while they build social and academic
4 English skills. In this exciting model, ELLs learn
5 English and keep pace with native English speaking
6 students of the same grade. In transitional
7 bilingual programs, students develop English
8 proficiency using the strength and knowledge and
9 academic skills acquired in the native language to
10 help them develop English proficiency. The planning
11 grant will provide a school with up to 10,000 dollars
12 to establish its transitional bilingual program in
13 September of 2015. As with our dual language
14 initiative, participating schools will receive
15 program planning support, curriculum of
16 recommendations, resource development, and
17 professional learning in partnership with institutes
18 of higher education. Similarly, we are committed to
19 expanding bilingual program options for ELLs. We
20 will continue to support schools in offering new
21 programs and strengthening existing programs across
22 the elementary, middle and high school grades to meet
23 the needs of each student and school community. Our
24 goal is to have program models that will include dual
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1 language and transitional bilingual education. We
2 are working with superintendents to analyze
3 enrollment data, identify schools serving large
4 number of ELL of the same language groups that at
5 this time may or may not have offer of bilingual
6 programs. To attain our goal of increasing
7 graduation rates and academic achievement for ELLs in
8 high school, we will be releasing an ELL high school
9 guidance development providing research based test
10 practices to support school communities in providing
11 high quality instructional programs and support
12 services. That document will focus on student
13 programming, instruction, professional development,
14 and ways to create a welcoming school culture for
15 ELLs. In an effort to improve college and career
16 readiness for ELL population in collaboration with
17 the Department Office of Post-Secondary Readiness,
18 this school year, our department is offering high
19 school student the opportunity to participate in a
20 college career readiness Saturday instructional
21 program, offering at college campus sites throughout
22 New York City. The program targets high school
23 immigrant students including ELLs who aspire to enter
24 a four year college and is focused on strengthening
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2 their academic English and helping them navigate the
3 college application process. We have also
4 collaborated with the New York Immigration Coalition
5 on the release of a college guide for immigrant
6 parents. We know that it is critical to prepare
7 students for the jobs of today and tomorrow,
8 including careers in science, technology,
9 engineering, and Mathematics. So we have what we
10 call our STEM initiative. This will increase access
11 to high quality STEM education for all students
12 including English language learners. In December, we
13 began a STEM collaborative between 24 schools with an
14 ELL population of at least 14 percent and five
15 partner organizations. This initiative is designed
16 to increase ELL's awareness of STEM career by
17 connecting them with STEM professionals. We are also
18 focused on helping our SIFE students, those are
19 students with interrupted formal education to improve
20 academically. During the 2015 spring semester, our
21 department will pilot Mind Research Institute special
22 temporal math, and this is where the school will use
23 more broadly with our ELLs and English proficient, a
24 program which has been designed and is based on the
25 latest research on learning and the brain, using game

1 based instructional software to boost math
2 comprehension and proficiency as well. Fifty schools
3 with 10 or more students with interrupted formal
4 education will be chosen to participate in this
5 pilot. We recognize that ELL families are key
6 partners in achieving academic excellence for their
7 children and we are committed to enhancing
8 communications and access to information that will
9 ensure that they can make informed decisions in
10 selecting ELL programs that are right for their
11 children. To strengthen our school and partnerships,
12 in the spring we will be offering borough wide
13 trainings for families on ELL programs and summer
14 learning opportunities. We will also be releasing
15 new guidance documents and multilingual videos for
16 parents to understand their rights and
17 responsibilities as parents of ELL students. This
18 will also ensure that families understand their right
19 to translation and interpretation services. Next
20 month, they will receive the Parent's Guide to
21 Language Access, which is a multilingual brochure for
22 parents with limited English skills. As part of our
23 efforts to ensure better outcomes for English
24 language learners, the Department is proud to
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1
2 participate in an interagency task force charged with
3 spearheading the city's efforts to support
4 unaccompanied minors. The ELL's continue to play an
5 integral role in coordinating DOE overall effort to
6 support our unaccompanied migrant children. We not
7 only guide the enrollment, instruction and support of
8 unaccompanied minors. We also provide staffing to
9 support families as they navigate immigration court
10 proceedings. As you are aware, the Chancellor
11 recently announced structural changes in the way we
12 align support and supervision for our school
13 beginning in the 2015/16 school year. In our new
14 geographically based support structure, there are
15 four core components, the superintendents,
16 geographically based borough field support centers,
17 central divisions, and affinity groups. Each borough
18 field support center will house the full range of
19 school support personnel, including an expert on
20 supporting English language learners. In addition,
21 we already are working with superintendents,
22 principals and teachers to ensure that schools are
23 able to implement the changes to the amendment of
24 part 154 of the state regulations which sets the
25 standards for educational services provided to ELL

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2 students in New York State. By working
3 collaboratively we are confident that we will meet
4 the academic, linguistic and cultural needs of our
5 English language learners. We will continue to you
6 partner with families, school communities and other
7 stakeholders to monitor our progress and strengthen
8 supports to schools. The renewed commitment by
9 Chancellor Farina is setting the stage for improved
10 social, emotional and academic outcomes so that all
11 ELLs will be college and career ready upon leaving
12 the New York City school system. These initiatives
13 are ambitious, achievable, and the beginning of a
14 long term strategy to achieving educational equity
15 and success for all English language learners. Thank
16 you, members who are here today, for giving us the
17 opportunity to testify and I welcome any question
18 that you may have at this moment.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, thank you.
20 Thank you, very--

21 MILADY BAEZ: [interposing] Let me have
22 some water.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Am I on? Thank you
24 very much, and I appreciate your testimony. I just
25 want to start off, because I don't know if you

1 defined in your testimony how is an ELL identified?

2 And I think that's important for people to know right
3 off the bat. How do you identify ELL's?

4
5 MILADY BAEZ: Okay. Our--we have a
6 procedure which is set by part 154. When a child
7 enters our school system for registration we have a
8 pedagogue at the school level that will interview the
9 parent and assist the parent in fulfilling or filling
10 out home language survey form. So that interview
11 determines whether the child and the parents in that
12 family, if they speak another language other than
13 English. If the child and the family do not speak
14 English, the child will then be administered an exam
15 to determine the English language proficiency. If
16 the child score below a level that has been stated by
17 the State Education Department, then the child will
18 be identified as an ELL student, and he has the right
19 for ELL services.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And is that test still
21 the lab test?

22 MILADY BAEZ: No. Right now, we have
23 what we call the NYSITELL.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: What's it called?
25

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2 MILADY BAEZ: NYSITELL, the New York
3 State Identification Test for English Language
4 Learners.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: NYSITELL.

6 MILADY BAEZ: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright, and how does
8 someone become a former ELL?

9 MILADY BAEZ: Well, in order to become a
10 former ELL, which I am one, you will be given after
11 that the NYSESLAT every year, and when you pass a
12 NYSESLAT, then you come out of ELL services. However
13 we need to support students for the next two
14 continuous years.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, very good. And
16 I'm going to go to some questions about parental
17 involvement. My colleagues will also have questions
18 as well, and hopefully they'll cover some of the
19 other topics. But my first question is, what
20 progress has the DOE made in developing a concrete
21 plan to improve ELL parental involvement and
22 participation? Because I really firmly believe any
23 time a parent gets involved in a child's education
24 that can make a real difference in their lives. So,

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2 what have you done in that regard to improve parental
3 participation?

4 MILADY BAEZ: Well, I am very pleased to
5 let you know that Chancellor Farina has been very
6 much interested in embracing all parents and to make
7 them partners with their children and the school. As
8 a matter of fact, even on Saturdays we hold meetings
9 for our parents. In my office we have designated a
10 Director for Family Engagement. We're going to be
11 rolling out a series of professional development for
12 the parents so that they can be fully involved, so
13 that they can learn their parental rights, so that
14 they can understand the benefits of being involved in
15 their child's education. In addition to that, we
16 have parent coordinators at the school level and we
17 are providing more training specific for those parent
18 coordinators to bring the parents into the school and
19 to forge that very wanted partnership that they must
20 develop for the students.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So what's being done
22 to identify schools that need support, especially for
23 translation services, etcetera, and to deliver that
24 support to the ELL parents? Because there are some
25 schools that do a better job than others in terms of

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2 taking advantage of the phone system or having
3 translators available at parent teacher conferences.
4 How are you dealing with that system wide to improve
5 access to those services?

6 MILADY BAEZ: Okay, I am going to defer
7 this question to Kleber Palma who is in charge of
8 translations.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And just if you can
10 identify yourself.

11 KLEBER PALMA: Yes. Good afternoon. My
12 name is Kleber Palma. I'm the Director of the
13 Translation Interpretation Unit. So, what we've been
14 doing at the Department of Education because of what
15 you just mentioned, Councilman, is that a lot of
16 schools do do a fabulous job of providing services.
17 Others don't. Others somewhere in between. And up
18 until recently we did not have a good point person to
19 go to at each school to determine what level, what
20 they knew, what they didn't know. SO in the previous
21 school year we asked principals to designate a
22 Language Access Coordinator at each one of our
23 schools, and it's that point person that we now have
24 a point of contact to train, to provide resources, to
25 also receive input and feedback and to identify needs

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2 in certain areas to practice, to share best practices
3 amongst schools. So we now have a network in place
4 that we feel really good about to get and obtain
5 information from the field and also ensure that
6 they're receiving the resources information they need
7 to do in order to overcome language barriers.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is there any way to
9 track use of the phone service or use of translators
10 for parent/teacher conferences?

11 KLEBER PALMA: Yes, the use of the phone
12 service actually comes through the Translations Unit.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And is it particular
14 to each school?

15 KLEBER PALMA: I'm sorry? Oh, yeah. So
16 the school accesses the services through the central
17 office.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But I mean, you could
19 look at data that says, you know, such and such a
20 school has used the translator services--

21 KLEBER PALMA: [interposing] Yes,
22 absolutely.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: certain number of
24 times?

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2 KLEBER PALMA: In fact, in last year to
3 this year services have increased about 50 percent in
4 terms of the usage of the service, and we could take
5 a look at what schools are using them, which schools
6 are not, and that's why it's important to have a
7 Language Access Coordinator to go back and ask why
8 haven't you used it, do you have staff on site that's
9 bilingual and addressing those needs locally?

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Because I know
11 it's been a very helpful tool for teachers to have
12 that translation service. I've used it myself.

13 KLEBER PALMA: Yeah, absolutely. In fact,
14 we extend the hours for parent/teacher conferences
15 until 8:30 in the evening to make sure that parents
16 also have access to that service during conferences.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So one of the
18 frustrations though that I've had is the teacher was
19 some of the emerging languages and not being able to
20 get translation services for those parents. What are
21 you doing for that?

22 KLEBER PALMA: So, going back to the over
23 the phone service, that's a service that our vendor
24 provides in over 200 languages, and so whenever there
25 is a need in new languages, we do go out and make

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2 sure that they increase their talent pools in those
3 areas. In terms of translation, written document
4 translation, likewise. We go back to our providers
5 and make sure that they have the necessary languages
6 present there to address these new needs as they come
7 up.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So with ELL outreach
9 materials, etcetera, what languages are you
10 translating them into?

11 KLEBER PALMA: Everything that the
12 Department produces for parents at this point at a
13 central level goes into nine languages.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So there are nine
15 languages, okay. But included in those nine
16 languages, I don't--is Bengali included in that?

17 KLEBER PALMA: Yes, it is.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is Nepali?

19 KLEBER PALMA: No, it's not.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, so those--so
21 it's Nepali, Tibetan, Uzbek, West African languages
22 that I think we are concerned about, and I would
23 really like to see some type of a plan. It
24 particularly effects my district, which the Deputy
25 Chancellor knows very well is a changing community

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2 all the time, and there's a growing South Asian
3 community that often times feels disenfranchised from
4 parent/teacher conference, etcetera, because of the
5 lack of that translation service, and I really would
6 like you to look at that moving forward.

7 KLEBER PALMA: Will do.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And that brings up
9 another concern. With the new contract there were
10 additional 40 minute periods for parental
11 involvement. Are translation services available to
12 teachers during that 40 minute time, both on the
13 phone service and also on site?

14 KLEBER PALMA: So, language services are
15 available to everybody at the school site between the
16 hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. This includes the
17 over the phone. Arrangements can be made to have on
18 site interpreters any time during the school day.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And you feel that
20 you're able to deal with the number of requests
21 during that certain period of time? Is that standard
22 throughout every school, the time period, or does
23 that vary from school to school? Is it every Tuesday
24 afternoon, the extra 40 minutes, and--because I would
25

1
2 imagine there would be a surge of request for
3 translation if everybody has the same time period.

4 KLEBER PALMA: Right, I agree, and I
5 think that's what we come across in parent teacher
6 conferences, because they're all held exactly at the
7 same time frame. In terms of the training, I'm not
8 quite sure exactly what days and the time periods set
9 aside for that.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So that would be
11 something I think that would be worthwhile looking at
12 as well, to see how those 40 minutes are being used
13 in terms of translation services also, because you
14 know, you really do need--be honest with you, because
15 I can speak a little Spanish, parents would come in
16 to talk with me because they knew that they could
17 communicate with me. If parents don't know that,
18 then they tend not to come to the school, and so
19 that's why I think it's so vitally important and that
20 those 40 minutes are used productively. Okay. What
21 about at the family welcome centers, what are you
22 going to do to ensure that new students and families
23 are made available or made aware of the options that
24 are available to ELL students? Because often times,
25 you know, especially with immigrant populations, they

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2 have a tremendous respect for teachers, and the
3 teacher's word is the golden word, and unless they're
4 told that your child can be placed in one of three
5 different type of language programs the benefits,
6 etcetera, so forth and so on, they don't know to even
7 ask. I mean, I've even had families that didn't know
8 that a deaf daughter was eligible for special
9 education services because in their country that
10 wasn't a possibility. So what type of information
11 are you providing people, especially at these new
12 welcome centers?

13 MILADY BAEZ: Well, we're working closely
14 with the enrollment office and from our Department we
15 send out people to assist the parents. We're also
16 using a website in different languages that the
17 parents can go into those websites, and one of the
18 initiatives that I would like to see this here, which
19 we will do, is to hold these district and borough
20 workshops for our parents so that they could be very
21 well informed as to what is the procedures, what are
22 the rights, and what kinds of programs we have to
23 offer for their students.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. I don't want to
25 take too much time either, but I do want to just--

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2 because I do have some questions about dual language
3 programs, especially for the South Asian community
4 and languages and emerging languages. But I also
5 want to ask a little bit about--it'll come back to me

6 MILADY BAEZ: Okay.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: It'll come back to
8 me. Okay, let me go to my first question with Council
9 Member Rodriguez.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And Council Members,
12 we're going to keep everybody to a three minute time
13 period.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you,
15 Chairman, for your leadership in this committee.
16 First of all, no doubt that we, the new leadership of
17 this committee, we inherit, you know, a big challenge
18 when it comes to our ELLs student population. The
19 data that I can refer to is the data that represent
20 what haven't happen, and before we have educators in
21 charge of the DOE. So, in district six, not in
22 Manhattan as you are aware, 98 percent of students--
23 98 percent of--no, when we look at the ELL student
24 population, 98 percent of students in eighth grade,
25 they are level one and level two, and it would not be

1
2 easy to move that number, you know, in a matter of
3 months. It would take a lot of time and a lot of new
4 initiatives, and I think that the quality of the
5 school program that we can provide to that particular
6 population will make a difference. I can tell you as
7 a former teacher working out of Peronei [sic] High
8 School, a school that we created only to certain new
9 coming student from Latin American. What made the
10 difference was that we find a way of how to keep the
11 school open to 7:30 or 8:30 p.m. So, I know that you
12 have your heart and the Chancellor has a heart on
13 improving education, and for me, like, what I would
14 like to hear is that knowing that you inherit those
15 numbers, you know, which is bad, those are the kids
16 that--those number of youths who make the projection
17 on how many beds we need in prisons, in the third
18 grade. So knowing that that's the number that we have
19 for many decades, what are the changes that we expect
20 we'll see happening in the city, that we can say
21 those are like the three new different initiatives
22 that we are doing to improve, especially our ELL
23 student population?

24 MILADY BAEZ: I am glad you brought that
25 up. I met with the superintendent of District Six

1
2 last week and we sat down to strategize a plan in
3 order to meet the educational needs of the student in
4 District Six. Following this visit that I had with
5 the superintendent, we are going to bring a team to
6 address all principals in District Six so that they
7 can begin to understand what are the commitments that
8 we have in order to support all the schools with
9 ELLs. We're also going to provide for District Six,
10 a series of professional development for teachers and
11 administrators. We're also going to emphasize that
12 in order for them to begin to get most of the ELLs to
13 have a more rigorous content instruction, they need
14 to have their teachers participate in all the
15 professional development that we're going to be
16 rolling out during this school year and the next.
17 Also, we spoke about expanding and opening dual
18 language programs in District Six, because you may
19 have to realize that in many of the schools they
20 still have a long way to go in order to provide the
21 services that the students need in order for them to
22 excel. So, we are working and we will be making a
23 plan for district Six, absolutely, and you are
24 correct, we need to step up the rigor of the work for
25 all students in District Six.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Two questions I
4 thought of that I wanted to ask and I'll use the
5 Chairperson's prerogative to do that. I remembered
6 what it was. SLT's, School Leadership Teams, what are
7 you doing or what do you think you can do moving
8 forward to encourage parents of ELLs to become more
9 involved on our School Leadership Teams? Because to
10 be honest with you, a lot of decisions are made on
11 that level as to actually--first of all, they
12 actually need translators at the School Leadership
13 Team meetings. That was always an issue, and funding
14 to pay for those translations. But that's where a lot
15 of decisions are made on the local level as to what
16 type of translation services they'll have etcetera,
17 so forth and so on. Have you thought about school
18 leadership teams?

19 MILADY BAEZ: Well, my thoughts on school
20 leadership teams is that they need to begin to
21 reflect on how to get more parents to participate,
22 especially parents who have children that have been
23 identified as ELLs. So, right now, we will be
24 addressing the superintendents who are going to be
25 held accountable for every single school in their

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2 district and by sharing with them that we need more
3 ELL representation at every level in the school,
4 especially in the School Leadership Team, and the
5 fact of the matter is that man of our parents may not
6 want to participate because everything is conducted in
7 the English language. So we are going to be talking
8 to schools about having translations and making sure
9 that at least one of the parent represents the ELL
10 population.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, because that's
12 really important because the language that we often
13 use, just our ED speak so to speak, like the SLT and
14 the ALL, and the IEP, trying to translate those
15 things for parents is difficult enough, but if you
16 don't have a translation for that it makes it even
17 more difficult for parents to understand what's going
18 on in the schools.

19 MILADY BAEZ: Yeah. That's why we have
20 Kleber Palma here.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, good so--

22 MILADY BAEZ: [interposing] He's going to
23 make sure that we begin to address those issues.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So one big issue for
25 me always was in my school, which is 199, and I think

1
2 this is citywide as well, was having bilingual
3 guidance counselors. What have you done in terms of
4 getting more bilingual guidance counselors into the
5 school system? I think out of the 25 years that I
6 was teaching there we had a bilingual guidance
7 counselor two or three years. What's going on with
8 that?

9 MILADY BAEZ: Well, when I was a
10 principal, I always had a bilingual guidance
11 counselor, but it is all about beginning
12 conversations with every school principal and to talk
13 about the needs of recruiting bilingual guidance
14 counselor. You know that that is a shortage area.
15 So we're working very closely with HR. we're talking
16 to the universities, and we're saying to them we need
17 to have these course program for bilingual personnel,
18 and if they don't have the license, at least they can
19 have a bilingual extension so that our principals can
20 have more of a group that they can select to
21 represent the language that is desired within that
22 school community, but definitely they should have if
23 at all possible, bilingual guidance counselors.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So we were like
25 allotted one full time and a part time. The

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2 bilingual was the part time. We've had a discussion
3 in the hearing actually here and legislation I
4 believe sponsored by Council Member Reynoso if I'm
5 not mistaken, on guidance counselors, and I hope that
6 moving forward we will be able to get an accurate
7 number of those bilingual counselors which will give
8 us a basis to make some future decisions on how those
9 resources can be allotted to our schools. And
10 finally, before I go to my other colleagues, one of
11 the issues that I've seen with the dual language
12 programs is the continuation of the program. So
13 you're familiar with our neighborhood, so I'm going
14 to use that as an example. So at PS 222 they have a
15 bilingual--a dual language program. If they go to 69
16 they don't have it, which some kids are zoned for,
17 and then if you go to 149 I believe that they do,
18 your old school.

19 MILADY BAEZ: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But the zoning, the
21 way that it works, means if you get the two years or
22 the three years I guess that you're in 222, if you
23 have to go to 69 it ends at third grade. What type
24 of plans are being done to make sure that there's a
25

1 continuation of services through at least the junior
2 high and into the high school?

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4 MILADY BAEZ: I am so glad that you
5 brought that up, and I know the school very well, and
6 I have weekly conversation with the Chancellor
7 because I report directly to Carmen Farina, and we
8 have been talking about program continuity, which is
9 also part of part 154. And in those instances we
10 have talked about, encouraging the principal from PS
11 69 to open up a dual language program in grade three
12 so that the student from PS 222 can go directly to
13 that school. That is in conversation with the
14 superintendent, and we will be having a conversation
15 with the principal. The other issue would be that we
16 can then allow the children who have been receiving
17 dual language instruction at PS 222 to be able to go
18 to PS 149 or other schools in District 30 that do
19 have dual language programs, but we are talking about
20 program continuity and we will try our very best so
21 that those children can continue in a dual language
22 program.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I brought it down to
24 a local level, but I've heard other examples and
25 other areas where that problem exists.

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MILADY BAEZ: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And I think that these programs are highly desirous--

MILADY BAEZ: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: of non--of just the regular English speaking parents who want their kids in dual language programs because they realize the advantage that there is to speaking more than one language, and so I want to encourage that as well moving forward.

MILADY BAEZ: We will.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you. And now I'm going to go to Council Member Reynoso followed by Council Member Levine, Chin and Treyger.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Thank you. Thank you so much, Chair. Love to hear the work that you're doing, but I still personally don't think it's enough, and I know a lot of it, it isn't your responsibility. So, first I want to thank the committee staff and the human resources division. I know they don't get a lot of credit for these briefings that they put together, these briefing papers as well, and it was very well done. I'm extremely grateful that that happened. So, thank you

1
2 to human resources and the committee staff for the
3 work that they do. Second, is there an opportunity
4 for you, for the Department of Education to
5 internally, within your primaries, to remove the need
6 for an evaluation through the English Language Arts
7 Assessment for schools that teach at least 14.3
8 percent or more, which is above the average of
9 enrolled ELLs and instead use the NYSESLAT to
10 evaluate their progress and begging able to have a
11 better understanding of the work that these schools
12 are doing? It's internal, so it's for us.

13 MILADY BAEZ: Councilman Reynoso--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: [interposing] So
15 that you can--

16 MILADY BAEZ: I do not think that we can
17 do that because the state mandates what the city
18 needs to do in order to have every child assessed
19 with the NYSESLAT.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: No, so that's
21 fine, but when you come here for example, there's
22 schools in my district that have 40 percent of the
23 children are ELL.

24 MILADY BAEZ: Right.

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: And they have
3 below 10 percent both in Math and English
4 proficiency, but these schools, the progress that
5 they're making with this 40 percent of the population
6 being ELLs, official ELLs, not even the other 50
7 percent that are--that English is their second
8 language at home, but ELLs. I'm sorry, ELLs, why
9 can't you give us that better assessment? They're
10 making progress from ones to twos and eventually twos
11 to threes, why not use that as an evaluation measure?
12 In person, internally.

13 MILADY BAEZ: I understand. I understand
14 your question, but the fact of the matter is is that
15 it is up to the state Education Department to make
16 that arrangement. We cannot do that.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Okay. So I'm
18 going to ask you one more time a little differently.
19 I don't--this is a separate and aside from what you
20 have to produce for the New York State, for New York
21 State, but for us to have a proper evaluation of
22 what's happening in our schools, a real evaluation,
23 that we use another standard. It has nothing to do
24 with the state. You don't need to send it up there.
25 It's a report that you could give to us that does a

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2 better assessment of the progress that we're making
3 in teaching ELLs and not making them failures, not
4 making the schools failures when they are actually
5 producing results, and that we can see that real
6 result through the effort that you would make to try
7 to determine that.

8 MILADY BAEZ: I am going to get back to
9 you on that. This is a matter that needs to be
10 discussed with the New York City Chancellor, Carmen
11 Farina, but I will very glad to have a response for
12 you within a week.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: And then the last
14 thing very quickly is just it was New York State that
15 put in for the waiver to allow for us to have two
16 years through the federal department to allow for an
17 exemption of an evaluation through the traditional
18 English Language Arts Assessment Exam. What is New
19 York City doing to-- New York City DOE doing to
20 support that request? Are you supporting that
21 request? So this is not necessarily--it is--do you
22 support my bill? But I try to put it in another way,
23 my resolution. What is New York City doing to try to
24 support--

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2 MILADY BAEZ: [interposing] Okay, my
3 understanding is--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: the state.

5 MILADY BAEZ: that I cannot make a comment
6 on a resolution, you know that right?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: So forget about
8 my resolution, so just very quickly. So don't speak
9 on my resolution. The New York State is putting in
10 for a waiver for two years for English language
11 learners to not have to be assessed through the
12 English Language Arts, but instead using the NYSESLAT
13 to evaluate their progress. Are you as the
14 Department of Education supporting the state in their
15 effort to get this waiver? That is not--that has
16 nothing to do with my resolution.

17 MILADY BAEZ: It will definitely benefit
18 our students who have been identified as ELL, and if
19 the state is supporting this waiver, we definitely--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: [interposing]
21 They are. They put in an application. They tried
22 for three years. It didn't work. Now they went for
23 two years, and I hope just maybe you guys can write a
24 letter to them saying, "We have your back, we think
25

1
2 this is a great idea." Just want to see you publicly
3 support their effort.

4 MILADY BAEZ: My understanding is that we
5 have.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Thank you very
7 much.

8 MILADY BAEZ: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Let me just say also,
10 a lot of this is based on No Child Left Behind and
11 the requirements left by No Child Behind. And so the
12 state's request for that waiver is to the federal
13 government to be released of that requirement for the
14 one year test. Now, when I was teaching it used to
15 be two years, to be honest with you, and it may have
16 even been longer at some point, and actually there
17 are some educators who feel it should be as much as
18 five years or maybe even more, because it's a very
19 difficult thing to learn another language. As
20 someone who had to do that at the high school level
21 and try to learn--and then speak a little Spanglish,
22 right? That you know, how difficult it is to learn a
23 language and the amount of time, but a lot of it
24 comes in with that testing, Council Member, and
25 that's the issue. And by the way, the NYSESLAT test

1
2 is not an easy test to pass. It is a competent and
3 a--it's a difficult test to pass. So, its equivalent
4 in many ways to Common Core or it would be in my
5 opinion acceptable substitution. Council Member
6 Levine?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: [speaking foreign
8 language] No, no, like this, like this. Deputy
9 Chancellor, it's a pleasure to see you again. Really
10 happy that you are in charge of this important
11 mission, and I'm thrilled that the DOE has expanded
12 the number of dual language schools. I'm a huge
13 proponent of this, both for its benefit on ELLs, but
14 also in the general population as you pointed out.
15 I'm not sure if you have exact numbers, but even if
16 you could give an approximation of the total number
17 of dual language programs today and the total number
18 of students enrolled in those programs.

19 MILADY BAEZ: Well, this is what I have
20 for you. We have 135 dual language programs. So, we
21 continue to expand. We definitely have in our vision
22 to--next year we will have 40 more, plus 10
23 transitional bilingual, and in 2016 we're hoping to
24 add another 40. So, every year we will be increasing
25 the numbers of dual language programs.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Can you estimate
3 the number of students enrolled?

4 MILADY BAEZ: In the dual language?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Yes.

6 MILADY BAEZ: Do we have that figure?
7 Okay. So I have here 4.5 percent. We do not have--
8 4.5 percent.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: So that would be
10 about 50,000 kids is what it sounds like, which is
11 significant for sure.

12 MILADY BAEZ: Yes.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: You're rolling
14 out new programs in six or seven languages. It's
15 like an incredibly diverse group of languages, not
16 only European languages. I was really pleased to see
17 this. Do you have staff proficient in each of those
18 languages so that when they observe a dual language
19 program in action they can understand the half of the
20 day which is in the non-English language? For
21 example, in Japanese Mandarin, do you have staff that
22 can supervise in those languages?

23 MILADY BAEZ: We have staff. We do not
24 have anyone who can speak Japanese, but I know that
25 every school at their local level, they will have

1 teachers who can speak the target the language, but
2 in our staff we have people who can speak Chinese,
3 Spanish, French, French-Creole. Any other languages?
4 Oh, Jill [sic], yeah. One of our members, she speaks
5 Japanese.
6

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Okay, that's
8 great. With the growth in schools and a broader
9 diversity of languages, something which I celebrate,
10 I would hope you'd consider a way to bring on staff
11 who speak languages like Hebrew, Russian--I've heard
12 Uzbek is a potential program.

13 MILADY BAEZ: Well, we do have Russian as
14 well.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Okay.

16 MILADY BAEZ: What we would like to
17 encourage more schools to open up dual language
18 programs.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Okay.

20 MILADY BAEZ: Because it is based on
21 parent's choice, the community wanting to open a dual
22 language program, the principal of the school, the
23 entire school community, and we will be asking the
24 school to consider the implementation of dual
25 language programs.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Okay. My time is
3 up. If you need any help finding Hebrew speakers for
4 staff, let me know. I got you covered.

5 MILADY BAEZ: I will.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Council Member Chin
7 followed by Council Member Treyger.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you, Chair.
9 Welcome, Deputy Chancellor. It's great to have a
10 department all to the ELLs, and we're not cast aside.
11 I mean, as a former ELL myself it is very hard to
12 learn a second language, another language in less
13 than a year or two, and I think that's why the
14 resolution that Council Member Reynoso put forth,
15 that it would give us a little bit more time.
16 Because I came, you know, in the 60's. I started in
17 the fourth grade. Could not--I mean, I'd go home
18 crying because I couldn't understand the subject, but
19 by the time I finished sixth grade I was already--I
20 was on--reading on grade level, but it took two and a
21 half years.

22 MILADY BAEZ: Yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So I think that
24 timing is important, but the support for the student
25 links to the support for the parents. I also was a

1
2 bilingual teacher in China Town. Sad to say that
3 when I graduated there was no bilingual education
4 position available in China Town. They only had ESL
5 program. So I think we have come a long way now with
6 all these choices for the parents and the students,
7 but we also have a special, you know, population of
8 students with disability who, you know, parents also
9 want them to be able to participate in bilingual
10 education programs or dual language programs. So are
11 there any attempt to really work on incorporating
12 programs for students with special needs?

13 MILADY BAEZ: Absolutely. As a matter of
14 fact, we have been in conversation trying to talk to
15 the schools that if they have students with special
16 disability that they should definitely be able to
17 participate in a dual language program, and we do
18 have in our public school system dual language
19 program for students with disabilities at this time.
20 So, the whole idea is that we will continue and do we
21 anticipate expanding those programs at all levels.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I think that's
23 important is to have--

24 MILADY BAEZ: [interposing] Yes.
25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I know that we have
3 a very--we have the dual language high school in my
4 district, and it's very difficult for them to get
5 students because we don't have enough dual language
6 program in elementary level or in the middle school.
7 So, the high school, a lot of times they're
8 scrambling for students all over the city. So really
9 looking at starting at all level, and I think that
10 the DOE probably need to do more publicity, education
11 around dual language program, because this is such a
12 great resource for New York City. I mean, being the
13 international city of the world, we have all the
14 languages here. Imagine the people that everyone
15 could walk around speaking, you know, two languages
16 and three languages. I mean, it'll be amazing for
17 future of the city. So the resource is there. How
18 do we cultivate that? So, I think really increasing
19 the number of dual language school starting from pre-
20 k all the way up, it will be a great benefit to the
21 city, because we have the people who are--we already
22 have a lot of people who are multilingual, and we
23 need to make sure that every student in New York City
24 is multilingual.

1
2 MILADY BAEZ: So our Chancellor, Carmen
3 Farina, is truly committed to make sure that we
4 provide programs for all children who would like to
5 be part of dual language, and that is why we are
6 spending allocated funding to expand those programs
7 throughout the city of New York, and I do agree with
8 you. It is such an incredible way to educate children
9 so that all children will have more than one language
10 when they go on to college and careers. It will be
11 wonderful, and I myself, I speak more than one
12 language, and of course we understand as educators
13 how important it is for our students to be able to
14 speak more than one language.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Definitely. And
16 you see it from our Chair, too. Just one last
17 comment. I think the DOE should really do some study
18 on the benefit of dual language in terms of helping
19 ELL student be more English proficient, because
20 they're able in that situation, they are able to
21 learn from their peers, vice versa, but to really
22 help them improve on their English language skill if
23 they are in the dual language program with, you know,
24 native speakers. I think it'll be amazing to see how
25 that really could be the model to really help the ELL

1
2 student gain more proficiency in English. So, I look
3 forward to see studies like that in the future.

4 MILADY BAEZ: Thank you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you. Thank
6 you, Chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
8 Council Member Treyger.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: [speaking
10 Russian], Chairman Dromm. [speaking Russian] That's
11 for Russian speakers.

12 MILADY BAEZ: Okay.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Take that, Mark
14 Levine.

15 [laughter]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you,
17 Chair, and welcome Deputy Chancellor and the DOE. My
18 first question goes into making sure that--we
19 certainly know that we need more funds to meet the
20 needs of all of our kids. But my first question, and
21 I'm a former teacher myself, about--does the budget
22 calendar for schools accommodate ELL students that
23 might come over the counter to a school past the
24 October budget month? So for example, when I was a
25 teacher, October was a big important month, because

1
2 that's what they used to count how many kids would be
3 in a school, that they would count attendance. So
4 big, big emphasis on that. But if you have students
5 that come to the school in January, February from a
6 new country, does the DOE accommodate school budgets
7 to meet their needs and not to have them go through
8 half the year without the required services?

9 MILADY BAEZ: Yes. I'm going to defer
10 this question to Richard Bellas.

11 RICHARD BELLAS: Sure. The, I mean, the
12 simple answer is yes, we actually do. We come out
13 with an additional budget, and it's called the ELL
14 Reserve Funds. So, for schools that see an increase
15 in the number of English language learners that come
16 in between September and December, those schools will
17 be provided additional funds based on the number of
18 students that they've gotten.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Right. Because
20 this was an issue when I was teaching, and I'm not
21 sure if this is--my concern is that we welcome all
22 children.

23 MILADY BAEZ: Right.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: But when kids
25 would come into the school, especially immigrant

1 families come, you know, they come in January,
2 February. They come in and they need help, additional
3 services. I did hear complaints that we just didn't
4 get the funds to accommodate their needs. So
5 principals had to, you know, really try to make the
6 best of what they had. So, I just want to make sure
7 that our budget calendar is not in any way
8 conflicting with making sure that the needs of our
9 schools are being met. The second thing I wanted to
10 mention is that I believe that--we mentioned ELL
11 education. It has to run through every single part
12 of a school building, in a classroom, also making
13 sure if students--if there's a discipline issue,
14 making sure that, you know, school security follows
15 up with parents, making sure that every segment of
16 that school is ELL friendly, because historically
17 that has not always been the case. And I would hear
18 from parents coming into community events and saying
19 well if there was an issue, an incident, making sure
20 that we have guidance counselors, making sure that we
21 have security, making sure we have teachers and so
22 forth. And I'm happy you mentioned before that there
23 is a discussion underway to making sure that the
24

1
2 school staffing is more reflective of our student
3 population. Is that correct?

4 MILADY BAEZ: That is correct.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Okay. And the
6 third thing I'll say finally is what is being done to
7 make sure to partner with our teacher preparedness
8 programs, teachers who are in--educators in the
9 pipeline, school leaders in the pipeline? I was
10 concerned because sometimes some programs are very
11 general and broad. Sometimes they're very content
12 heavy, which is okay, but in reality, are these
13 programs helping future teachers understand skills,
14 how to reach and teach the ELL populations in our
15 schools? PD is nice, but PD can't be used as a
16 bandage. We need to make sure this is engrained from
17 the beginning all throughout the entire school life.
18 So, can you describe for us what is the DOE doing now
19 working with our CUNY and other school, you know,
20 teacher preparedness programs and making sure that
21 their curriculums--

22 MILADY BAEZ: [interposing] Right.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: for future
24 teachers are all in line with the population today
25 and the population of 50, 60 years ago.

1
2 MILADY BAEZ: I am very glad that you
3 brought that up because I myself have been visiting
4 universities and having conversations with them as
5 well as the Chancellor, and one of the items that we
6 are continuously bringing up is that they should be
7 training teachers so that when they enter our public
8 schools system they're fully trained and aligned with
9 what we are doing in our schools. In addition to
10 that, we're also working with the UFT. They have a
11 department for ELLs and we're going to be
12 collaborating our professional development so that
13 everything is aligned. You are absolutely correct.
14 Every teacher is a teacher of ELLs, and the state
15 issued the blueprints for English language learners
16 success and that is one of the first issues, that we
17 should devote 15 percent of our professional
18 development to all teachers, teachers who are in
19 general education so that they can have a better
20 understanding about our ELLs. That it should not be
21 just the responsibility of the bilingual teacher, but
22 that all teachers should be responsible and
23 accountable for that child. So, by us reaching out
24 to the advocacy groups, reaching out to the UFT, CSA,
25 reaching out to universities and making those

1
2 partnerships, it is in our commitment for the near
3 future that we aligned all of our resources so that
4 we can improve the world of our ELLs.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: And just to
6 close, Chair. Thank you for just one moment. I
7 appreciate those comments, but as we welcome more and
8 more immigrants to our city and to our school system,
9 I hear stories for example that there's a freeze in
10 hiring paraprofessionals, for example. And students
11 come in. We can't ignore those needs. They have
12 needs, and so we have to make sure that our budget is
13 reflective of the needs of today. And I'll close by
14 saying the ac--the Chair mentioned before a very
15 important point about the test.

16 MILADY BAEZ: Yes.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Has there been a
18 review of the accuracy of the results of these tests
19 in the sense where I've heard of cases where students
20 who might have not done well on the test, but still
21 are doing pretty well but they're being held back
22 because they failed that test. So, I'm a big critic
23 of our exam system in general, but has there been a
24 review down by the DOE about the accuracy, making
25 sure kids are not falling through the cracks because

1
2 they fail the test that some consultant somewhere
3 drew up.

4 MILADY BAEZ: Right. So we're looking at
5 our promotion policies. We're looking at multiple
6 way of assessing our students so that we are more
7 fair in terms of promotion. We are continuing to
8 talk about how do we assess our ELLs and how fair is
9 it, but that is working progress. It's nothing that
10 we can resolve on a given day, but we need to begin
11 to talk about why do we have all these tests for our
12 students if they're not ready to take them, and that
13 is an issue that is very important to us and we
14 continue to discuss it.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, and I had kids in
16 my class who could pass the ELA, but couldn't pass
17 the NYSESLAT, and it was just amazing to see that
18 happening all the time. So it's this test madness. I
19 feel free, I can say this. Maybe you can't. We
20 really need to move away from it, and I think we need
21 to send a clear message to Albany as well, which I
22 think Council Member Reynoso was hinting at as well.
23 That--

24 [applause]

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, but hold
3 the applause. We'll go like this. Because you
4 know, I think ultimately what I fear is that it harms
5 our ELL students and in particular our immigrant
6 students by being so test crazy. And I fear also
7 moving forward in the future that if we continue to
8 only assess especially teachers and teacher
9 evaluations on tests, nobody will want to take
10 classes with ELL students because of the progress or
11 the lack thereof with our ELL students, and so that's
12 a major concern of mine as well. But I'll say that
13 and I'm going to end here unless you had any other
14 remarks to make.

15 MILADY BAEZ: I just want to thank you so
16 much, and we are taking notes. Members of my
17 department are here. We're taking notes because one
18 of the things that we would like to do is to discuss
19 and debrief so that we can bring all those items to
20 the attention of our Chancellor.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, good. We're going
22 to have a number of advocates now speak who are going
23 to come up with suggestions, and I hope somebody will
24 be here to hear those suggestions as well. There is
25 so much more that I wanted to cover in this hearing,

1
2 but I will have to do that at a later hearing, and I
3 want to say that we will definitely be covering this
4 topic at another hearing, but thank you for your time
5 and thank you for coming in.

6 MILADY BAEZ: Thank you, and it's good to
7 see you again.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Same here. Thank you.
9 Alright, and our next panel will be the Vice
10 President of the United Federation of Teachers,
11 Evelyn DeJesus and Liz Truly from the UFT as well.
12 CSA has issued a memorandum of support on the record
13 for this. Thank you very much for coming in. I do
14 swear everybody in, so I want to ask you to raise
15 your right hand and ask if you solemnly swear or
16 affirm to tell the whole truth and nothing but the
17 truth and to answer Council Member questions
18 honestly? Okay, thank you very much. Evelyn, do you
19 want to start? Put that mic on.

20 EVELYN DEJESUS: Okay, can you hear me
21 now? Okay. Buenos dias. Good afternoon. My name is
22 Evelyn DeJesus and I am the Vice President for
23 Education for the United Federation of teachers. I
24 first want to thank Chairman Dromm and the members of
25 this Educational Committee for raising the profile of

1
2 an issue that is very important to me and many of our
3 members and families. And I just want to say today I
4 haven't been in a council meeting for a while, but
5 how refreshing it has been for me and my partners and
6 this audience. First, the way you started out with
7 different languages and the way you know the issue
8 and you live the issue. That is--I mean, I haven't
9 seen that in a long, long time. So, I take my hat
10 off to you and say thank you, thank you, thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank--

12 EVELYN DEJESUS: And thank you for
13 making--

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] I was
15 going to say thank you very much. You can say it
16 again if you want.

17 [applause]

18 EVELYN DEJESUS: And how it resonates in
19 your heart, you know? We come here and we advocate
20 for many, many issues and every issue is just as
21 important as the next, but this issue has been a
22 critical issue for us, and it's been an issue that's
23 been put in the back burner for many reasons as we
24 all know. But to me it's a dear issue, because I
25 think we have so many ELLs in this audience and in

1 this council. I'm also a Latina from Puerto Rico. My
2 mother and father were immigrants that came, and I
3 spoke Spanish. I have four grandchildren and we call
4 them chaniquas [sic] because they're Chinese and
5 they're Latinos. So in my household--and my daughter
6 is married to an African-American. So I have collard
7 greens, lo mein and rice and beans. So when we have
8 languages, we have languages in every stage and every
9 level, but really, really is important to me that I
10 was a Latina and I grew up in the Lower East Side and
11 I taught in China Town for over 20 years. Margaret
12 Chin also taught in China Town. So, I taught Asian
13 kids for 25 years and I'm very familiar with the ELL
14 issue. And I'm also here today to tell Council
15 Member Reynoso that the union is in full support of
16 your resolution. We're in full support for
17 addressing the needs and the ESCA and for city and
18 everything for the two year. I really wanted the
19 three, but I know we can't, but five--but we fully,
20 fully support you and we'll do anything that we need
21 to do. We commend this Council for reviewing the
22 DOE's Memorandum of Understanding with the state
23 Education Department and with its update of the 2012
24 corrective implementation plan for the ELLs. So I've
25

1
2 curtailed my speech because many of you have said
3 what I want to say. So, as educators, we know that
4 it's vital that all students receive a quality
5 education and that their academic needs are met.
6 Specifically, at a minimum with deliberate speed, we
7 ask the Council to join us in recommending that the
8 DOE and the state ED Department undertake the
9 following steps. One, we're in critical state of
10 teachers. We do not have them. And Dan, you said
11 clearly, "Why would I want to teach that?" And
12 Milady and I have had those conversations. So, we'll
13 talk bout that in a bit, but we need to hire more
14 certified bilingual teachers, guidance counselors,
15 paraprofessionals. We need to expedite current plans
16 to work with SUNY, which we have been meeting with
17 them and CUNY schools, other universities, Fordham,
18 St. John's to help with tuition assistance, which is
19 another thing. And also look at the par professions
20 as my brother said. Look at the paraprofessionals
21 that speak other languages and guide them and train
22 them and give them PD and maybe this is a venue when
23 you do career ladder that you would want to go. So we
24 already have them in house. We're training and
25 building capacity, and we don't have to--you know we

1
2 could utilize it the best way we can. Collect and
3 report student level data desegregated to detail
4 where students fall on the language acquisition
5 continuum, native origin, languages understood,
6 performance level in native language, and disability
7 if applicable, which we say today that the DOE did
8 do. Establish a system wide language allocation
9 policy team to ensure that all students with the need
10 receive the right services. So, I and Milady, I know
11 we talked about it. Who's watching the fox in the
12 hen house? You know, when, you know, previous
13 administration, 12 years, these children from K to
14 12, how many did not receive the proper services?
15 That is criminal and it hurts my heart so badly. So
16 for K to 12 under the previous administration may of
17 the--we know those children didn't get what they're
18 supposed to. We will not allow that to happen again.
19 So change the current testing requirement as another--
20 - Council Member Reynoso had stated. We accept it
21 and we receive it. Also, to adjust accountability
22 measures for student Common Core test results to
23 align with where ELLs fall within the wide language
24 acquisition spectrum, and to ensure that all district
25 partners and charter schools, which we haven't talked

1 about at all, are committed to serving ELLs
2 effectively and equitably. So let me express how
3 much I have welcomed and Michael Mogul [sp?] and the
4 United Federation of Teachers have welcomed the
5 partnership working with school Chancellor Farina and
6 Deputy Chancellor Milady Baez. So I want to talk
7 about the ELL's landscape. The Chancellor and her
8 team have inherited vast challenges, very, very many
9 challenges. We are aware of that. In the first year,
10 the new administration has been visiting schools and
11 actively collecting and analyzing data which we saw
12 today. It now knows the transitional, bilingual
13 educational programs that have been dismantled, even
14 in schools where there have been very high ELL
15 population at every grade level. Despite the prior
16 administrations' 2012 agreement with the State
17 Education Department to take positive steps towards
18 getting the ELLs the services to which they were
19 entitled and were not given. The prior administration
20 minimally implemented the agreed upon corrective
21 actions and hardly moved the needle in the increasing
22 number of ELLs who graduate ready for college and
23 careers. Our ELL students have no more time to lose.
24 We are all equated with the sobering statistics
25

1 reflecting the differences in achievement between
2 ELLS and the English language proficient peers.
3 Numbering at over 154,000 and according to the DOE's
4 Memorandum of Understanding with the state, speaking
5 over 160 different languages, the population of
6 students identifies as ELLs in the city's public
7 schools is significant. Additionally, the challenge
8 is further deepened as 22 percent of ELLs are
9 students with disabilities, which we haven't talked
10 about. Under state ELL and math tests for grades
11 three through eight in 2014, ELLs scored
12 significantly lower than the citywide average, 21.8
13 percent points and 20.2 percent points lower
14 respectively. While we are not aware of any current
15 data on the performance of ELLs with disabilities, we
16 expect that gap in achievement might be even more
17 profound. The 32.5 percent four year graduation rate
18 of ELLs as compared to the 68.1 for English language
19 proficient students is another measuring indicating
20 the gap in the provisions of services to ELLs. While
21 this is the latest data, the children have been
22 shortchanged for years. I need to recognize and
23 agree that ELLs are not monolithic. One size does
24 not fit all. ESL programs alone will not meet the
25

1
2 need. Their spectrum of language acquisitions lack
3 basic interpersonal communication skills to students
4 who are on the cusp of achieving cognitive academic
5 language proficiency. Plus, many subcategories along
6 the proficiency continuum are students with autism or
7 other intellectual learning visions. Disability
8 issues must not be confused with language acquisition
9 issues, but where both are present, the mandated
10 services must be targeted to address both challenges.
11 Equally important to collecting the full data, we
12 have to develop a multipronged approach to building
13 the professional capacity amongst certified educators
14 and school related personnel. So what would it take
15 to build capacity? We do not have a perfect metric
16 for determining how many more bilingual ESL certified
17 teachers will be required, but we must underscore the
18 urgency of increasing our workforce to meet the needs
19 of our ELL students. We're encouraged by the Mayor's
20 plan to set aside 13 million dollars to help build
21 capacity as well as the Chancellor's plan to dedicate
22 federal funds from title three to launch 40 new dual
23 language programs in September. The need, however,
24 is far greater. We're pleased that the DOE plans to
25 train the administrative staff who enroll students

1
2 which will provide more support for bilingual and
3 non-English speaking parents. Mention our fairness
4 and equity campaign and that our city's students are
5 owed 2.5 billion. Infusing these dollars into the
6 DOE's budget will definitely help finance our union's
7 recommendation. We are cautiously optimistic about
8 the recent school support restructuring. Hopefully,
9 the leadership of district superintendents will lead
10 to greater accountability and transparency of ELLs.
11 We await the establishment of a citywide language
12 allocation policy team to serve the ELLs in our
13 public schools. We support the resolution seeking
14 the ESEA waiver to eliminate the rigid and
15 standardized testing and over testing that
16 disadvantage ELLs and the schools that serve them
17 before these students are truly proficient in
18 English. We thank Council Member Reynoso, Chin,
19 Johnson and all of you and all resolution sponsors
20 for recognizing that testing should focus on the
21 needs of the students and help their teachers gorge
22 their learning. But we would go a step further. We
23 plan to ask Mayor de Blasio to send a letter to US
24 Secretary of Education Arnie Duncan requesting the
25 testing waiver for English language learners to

1
2 underscore the importance of putting these critical
3 assessment into the hands of educators. In addition
4 to the recommendations already covered, mentioned,
5 already covered, culturally sensitive and supportive
6 educators, parents and community partners, contracts
7 for district services and approvals for local charter
8 schools should be contingent on assurance to service
9 ELL population. We also challenge both the DOE and
10 the State ED Department to enforce state law and so
11 that the charter schools enroll their fair share of
12 ELLs and other students requiring special resources
13 and supports. The new administration has a dedicated
14 team in place and now has a better handle on the data
15 in order to provide ELLs with the proper supports,
16 including info on how a child is identified as an ELL
17 learner, or programs and services for ELLs, explain
18 how ELLs participate in the state assessment program
19 and exit from ELL status, parent's rights, and
20 identify who parents can contact for further
21 information and support for those ELLs who
22 participate in regular assessment and those who
23 participate in alternate assessments. We believe the
24 administration. We believe the administration will
25 work closely with superintendents holding schools

1
2 accountable. UFT calls for increased transparency
3 and greater communication which will be particularly
4 beneficial. Common Core learning standards have
5 higher language literacy standards across all content
6 areas. So, teachers need to be equipped with the
7 proper tools and professional learning as it relates
8 to the new and enhanced Common Core content for
9 English language learners. The UFT is ready to be a
10 partner in this work. We welcome the opportunity to
11 help the DOE identify and address any barriers that
12 may be hampering the recruitment and the retention of
13 bilingual teachers. If we are furnished with the
14 necessary information and data we can assist the DOE
15 in ensuring that ELLs receive the supports and
16 services they need. And in closing, as the world--as
17 we focus on all these challenges and all the
18 challenges on ELLs and special ED, we need to
19 remember that these ELLs are assets to our school,
20 our system, our city, and not a liability. They are
21 the future as we grow in globalization. Thank you
22 very much. Any questions?

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, thank you very
24 much. I have just some observations more than
25 questions actually, to say that I agree with most of

1
2 what it is that you said. You know, when I first
3 started teaching, I was told in the courses that I
4 took at city college where I attended for my Master's
5 Degree not to even look at the children's record
6 cards until you've had them for a couple of months,
7 because you didn't want to become prejudiced by what
8 another teacher might have thought or by what test
9 scores would seem to signify where that student was
10 at and for you to make your own assessment of that
11 child without prejudice. We have gone so far away
12 from that practice, and especially as it relates to
13 ELLs, and then you have the stigma that's attached to
14 ELLs in particular who cannot for one reason or
15 another pass that NYSESLAT or have not been given
16 enough time or enough attention or support or
17 whatever it is to be able to live up to the standard
18 that we expect from them. But that's a statement as
19 to where we are today. There are issues, and I'm
20 very glad that the Deputy Chancellor has been here
21 and has stayed with us for this a well, where we do
22 continue to need the additional support services, and
23 to the extent that we can support that in this
24 council, we looked forward to be able to do that, in
25 particular bilingual guidance counselors which I

1
2 constantly saw a shortage of and also for bilingual
3 teachers and dual language teachers, etcetera, so
4 forth and so on moving forward. So we agree with you
5 on that as well. But basically those are my
6 observations that somebody like yourself who's
7 experienced in the classrooms knows, and let me just
8 also address the tone of the hearings here as well.
9 I hope that we have set a tone of communication and
10 not yelling at each other, because I do believe that
11 that's how we get the answers. We may disagree on
12 certain things, and I already have disagreed with the
13 Department on a number issues, but it's not by
14 screaming and yelling that we're going to find out
15 those answers.

16 EVELYN DEJESUS: So, may I say something?
17 I want to say that Milady and I have been working
18 very collaboratively together. We don't agree on
19 everything, but we haven't really disagreed on much.
20 We know--my biggest issue and my urgency and
21 Michael's urgency is the lack of teachers, the lack
22 of certification, and we have teachers that have the
23 certification but have over the previous
24 administration have changed licenses. So there are
25 licensing issues. You know, why would I go back? Do

1
2 I lose my tenure? So there are a lot of issues that
3 her and I have talked about. Actually on Monday we
4 got together. Carmen Farina and Michael--

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Evelyn,
6 just because you--you're skipping over something. So
7 you get a bilingual extension, and then you use that
8 extension, you lose school seniority if I'm not
9 mistaken, right?

10 EVELYN DEJESUS: And tenure.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And--

12 EVELYN DEJESUS: You're right. So what
13 happens--

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] But
15 that's an obstacle to hiring people in those fields,
16 and that is something that we need to look at I
17 think.

18 EVELYN DEJESUS: And we are talking about
19 it also, and I think we have several of three prongs.
20 As Mark said, we have paraprofessionals already in
21 place. So as we're looking at that piece we're
22 looking at the para piece. Also we're looking at,
23 you know, I know in Texas they have teachers that are
24 very, very, very highly qualified, and they have an
25 abundance of that, maybe doing an exchange. We're

1
2 really thinking about different innovative ideas that
3 have never been talked about before. So, the
4 challenges are there. They've inherited. And I have
5 to say with Chancellor Farina and Milady, we have
6 worked very nicely together. We're on the same page
7 and so are you guys, which is probably a miracle, but
8 the thing is how--so now the boat is in the water.
9 We're all on the boat. How do we get to where we need
10 to go and get for the children?

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, Council Member
12 Reynoso followed by Council Member Treyger.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: So, Ms. Evelyn
14 DeJesus, I want to thank you for your support, and I
15 want to say that my big thing is the burden that ELLs
16 are in schools. That's a sad thing to say, but right
17 now that's what we are. That's what I was. And it
18 shouldn't be that way. These teachers are doing
19 amazing work in making progress and are being
20 credited as failures. Both the child and the teacher
21 and the school. I also want to just acknowledge that
22 the CSA also wrote a support to the principals.
23 Everyone is a failure under this system when we're
24 making so much progress. And I want to again
25 congratulate the Deputy Chancellor Baez and your new

1
2 appointment here, and it is a breath of fresh air. I
3 don't know if all of our committees are going to be
4 this harmonious, right, this unified, but I'm
5 extremely grateful for your testimony, and thank you
6 again and please send my regards to Mogul [sic].

7 EVELYN DEJESUS: Yeah, and just my
8 colleague said which is a good idea, we need to
9 recognize those teachers that are doing extremely
10 great work under very serious and lacking whatever it
11 is that they, you know, they don't have, because many
12 of our children are under the ESL, you know,
13 trajectory, so they're not getting the bilingual and
14 they're doing it, but you know, like you--it's that
15 [speaking Spanish] like how long is it going to take.
16 Listen, they've inherited a monster, believe me when
17 I tell you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: But that's what
19 I'm trying to get at with this secondary assessment.

20 EVELYN DEJESUS: Right.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Outside of the
22 state's purview.

23 EVELYN DEJESUS: Correct.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: So that you
25 recognize the quality work that is happening at our

1
2 level here in the city of New York, because right now
3 there is no recognition of the hard work that these
4 folks are doing to make better than its progress. So
5 we need a secondary way of evaluating the progress
6 that they're making and that's what I'm asking for.
7 So thank you again. And I know you're paying
8 attention, thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Council Member
10 Treyger.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you.
12 Welcome, Vice President to the UFT. I just wanted
13 just to quickly get your feedback and thoughts on
14 when I was still teaching there was a common issue
15 about over the counter students that would come from
16 other countries past the October month.

17 EVELYN DEJESUS: Correct.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: DOE is saying
19 that it's been resolved. I'd like to get your
20 feedback on this because I still hear concerns.

21 EVELYN DEJESUS: I believe, yeah, it has
22 been resolved. We've been talking about it, and
23 again, we have a big system. It may not be happening
24 everywhere. So if there's any issues, whatever, I
25

1
2 guess you can let myself or Milady know and we can
3 handle it together.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Right.

5 EVELYN DEJESUS: You know, something goes
6 out in emails or whatever and everybody digests it in
7 different ways. So if there's an issue in any way,
8 let us know.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: And this is with
10 the full understanding that the state still owes the
11 city--

12 EVELYN DEJESUS: [interposing] Correct.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: billions of
14 dollars.

15 EVELYN DEJESUS: That's right.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: SO I fully
17 understand that. It's just that historically--

18 EVELYN DEJESUS: [interposing] Right.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: October was the
20 big month.

21 EVELYN DEJESUS: Correct.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: And we don't
23 control when immigration comes to our city. We
24 welcome all kids, and it just--it became difficult to
25 meet those children's needs when the budget was

1
2 settled in October. I just wanted just to very
3 quickly discuss about there are efforts under way to
4 work with the teacher preparedness programs.

5 EVELYN DEJESUS: Yes, sir.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Because this is
7 crucial. I mean, I went through one and I was very
8 proud of where I went to. I went to CUNY and a great
9 job, but some of the programs I've heard are very
10 broad general, sometimes very--more content, less
11 pedagoguery [sic]. We need to make sure that these
12 programs are giving future teachers the full scope on
13 New York City urban education and not the education
14 of a small town somewhere in Idaho.

15 EVELYN DEJESUS: I totally--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: [interposing]
17 That's my concern.

18 EVELYN DEJESUS: Yeah. We're aware.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Right.

20 EVELYN DEJESUS: Many of our teachers are
21 under five years and they come from all over, and
22 many, you know, they don't--it's not equal to what
23 the children are, the nationalities that they are.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Right.
25

1
2 EVELYN DEJESUS: So we're very, very
3 aware. Milady and I talked about it, and I met with
4 City University and SUNY to talk about some programs
5 that we can curtail just to that--and
6 paraprofessional programs. I was a para, and people,
7 I just feel, I did so much more guided reading. So
8 we can utilize them in a better way and really, you
9 know, up the ante if you want to bring rigor in a way
10 that we can really get more for the children.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: And lastly, in
12 the interest of time, the state obviously is very
13 concerned about making sure we move ELLs through the
14 system and graduate them. But when I was a high
15 school teacher I remember going through Regents time
16 where the state didn't prepare exams in all the
17 languages that our students spoke. So if they truly
18 care about all the ELLs in our school system, you
19 would think that they would prepare the assessments
20 in all those languages or they didn't prepare enough
21 of them for that. Has that issue--is that still an
22 issue that you hear about, about the Regents exams or
23 state final assessments?

24 EVELYN DEJESUS: You know, I can get back
25 to you find out. I'm not really aware.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Yeah, because
3 they really like to try to box us in. Meanwhile,
4 they don't provide the resources adequate. So thank
5 you very much.

6 EVELYN DEJESUS: You got it. Thank you,
7 Mark.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you. We
9 have a question from Council Member Barron, and we
10 had already been joined by Council Member Garodnick.
11 Council Member Barron?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you, and I
13 want to thank the panel for coming and presenting
14 testimony. The city of New York has three programs
15 that are offered for ELLs, the dual language,
16 transition and the ESL. So parents can select the
17 program in which they want their children to
18 participate. Suppose they select a program that's not
19 at their community based school, not at their home
20 school, how are they accommodated to go to a site
21 that has a program that they would like their child
22 to participate in? Because it's--I see that 79
23 percent are in ESL, 15 percent are in transition, and
24 only 4.5 percent are in dual language. So if a
25 parent wanted their child to have a dual language

1
2 program, are they guaranteed that they can have their
3 child participate in that program?

4 EVELYN DEJESUS: I don't--I just want to
5 say, this question that you just gave me is a
6 question that has been burning in my heart. Prior to
7 the Farina administration, this was something--so if
8 a--as you said, if you're a mother, you come in, one
9 does ESL, one has dual language. What I have
10 experienced as a teacher was if some--when I taught
11 in District Two in China Town, if my daughter had ESL
12 she would go to one school and the parent or I would
13 have to send another daughter to another school if I
14 wanted the dual language. I--that was a big pet
15 peeve for me as a teacher and as a parent. During the
16 previous administration there was really no choice.
17 I believe 80 percent of children were in ESL only
18 because they didn't have. We're hoping to change
19 that around with the Department of ED and have
20 choice, because it's a federal regulation and it's
21 not done.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And do you know
23 if there have been any differences in the successes
24 of the three different programs? Have you done any
25

1
2 comparisons? Do you know of any results that show
3 that one seems to get better success than another?

4 EVELYN DEJESUS: I--that question would be
5 a Department of ED question.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay.

7 EVELYN DEJESUS: But I would like to know
8 that data also.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay.

10 EVELYN DEJESUS: Thank you so much.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you very
13 much.

14 EVELYN DEJESUS: Thank you so much.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And I'm going to call
16 the next panel. Thank you. And that would be Doctor
17 Reyes, Louis L. Reyes, a former member of the Board
18 of Education. Glad to see he's here. Nancy
19 Villareal Alder from New York State ABE. Elizabeth
20 Olsen from Internationals Network for Public Schools,
21 and Teresa Arboleda from the Citywide Council on
22 English Language Learners. Sergeant, can you just
23 give us one of those chairs? We're going to get you
24 a chair, a little more comfortable. Okay, I do swear
25 everybody in in this committee, so I'm going to ask

1
2 if you'd raise your right hand. Do you solemnly
3 swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth
4 and nothing but the truth and to answer Council
5 Member questions honestly?

6 LOUIS REYES: So help me God.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, very good.

8 Who'd like to begin? Doctor Reyes?

9 LOUIS REYES: It was the best of times.
10 It was the worst of times. We heard that a year ago
11 when our new Mayor was running and when he became
12 Mayor and talked about a tale of two cities. Last
13 year, at the same time a report came out about a
14 growing, yet underserved student population,
15 nationally. It was very critical then. It's very
16 critical now that people pay attention to the
17 demographic growth, the demographic shift not only in
18 New York City but in New York State, in the United
19 States. The numbers speak for themselves. We have a
20 new chancellor now for a year who was elected to
21 address some of these unequal education
22 opportunities. We have a Commissioner who's now with
23 the federal government and the Secretary of
24 Education, Doctor King, who actually sent the waiver
25 that I would like to tell you that I support that

1
2 waiver along with many organizations that have
3 written letters in support of the State Education
4 Department's request. We have someone who was in
5 charge of bilingual education ELL programs in the
6 city, now an Associate Commissioner, never before at
7 that level sitting at the table of decision making
8 with the Regents and the Commissioner. Today we find
9 out, congratulations to Milady Baez, because the
10 person who preceded her is the Associate Commissioner
11 and she's now the Deputy Chancellor. She's got very
12 strong shoulders and I wish her well. Something
13 borrowed, something blue, something old, something
14 new. The old is that we have spent--I have spent 30
15 years, but we have spent the last 12 years seeing the
16 dismantling of transitional bilingual programs. When
17 I started counting, it was 47 percent of the children
18 who were in transitional and about 46 were in ESL and
19 about three percent in dual language. Today, 15
20 percent of the 159,000 children, including all the
21 children that come and go in the last school year,
22 four percent were in dual language. Not very much.
23 But 15 percent in bilingual. It's now 79 percent
24 ESL. So we have seen very clearly that the intent
25 and the policies of the last administration have in

1 fact decimated programs with new 170 high school,
2 small high schools created, and ELLs and special Ed
3 kids were told they didn't have to apply. They didn't
4 have to be accepted for the first two years. This
5 was an unwritten policy that took a long time. It
6 caused advocates at this table and in the city to go
7 to the Department of Justice. We have a corrective
8 action plan which is now an MOU because of all of
9 these problems, children not being identified,
10 teachers not being certified, language allocation
11 plans not being submitted, parents not being informed
12 in their own language in too many places. And the
13 teachers who were doing a good job in the places
14 where there were strong transitional ESL and dual
15 language programs were neglected, not just the
16 students. We have to tell the truth. Part of the
17 truth is the testing and the outcomes. When given
18 time when tested in a language they understand on
19 content that they have been taught, international
20 high school children have higher graduation rates
21 than the school system as a whole, and that same
22 holds for other schools that have transitional
23 programs. But when only four, excuse me, 6.5 percent
24 of ELLs have graduated to the State Education's
25

1 Department Colleague and Career Ready Standard,
2 there's something rotten in the city. English
3 language learners are the only graduation, the only
4 category where the graduation rate has been falling,
5 32 percent. It's gone down. We need--these are state
6 information. Third and eighth grade, only 14 percent
7 pass the state math test, fewer than four percent
8 pass the English test. The campaign for fiscal
9 equity is 22 years old. ELLs were part of that
10 lawsuit. They were included as one of the six areas
11 that the billions of dollars of funding were supposed
12 to address. We receive 31 million dollars, the city,
13 every year in CFE dollars. There's no accountability.
14 Nobody's held responsible. There is no trail. And
15 so what is worse is that today in the US Congress and
16 the House and the Senate, there is a bill for the
17 reauthorization of ESEA, which would take away the
18 monies in Title Three, federal dollars that come to
19 New York that are formed part of what the city, the
20 state and the feds provided in public education
21 dollars for ELLs and put them all into one pot and
22 allow districts to use them as they will including
23 giving out vouchers. The National Association of
24 Bilingual Ed and the American Federation of Teachers
25

1
2 today put out an emergency red alert, and I would ask
3 the City Council Members of this committee to not
4 only support the resolution with the state, with the
5 federal government Department of Education for a
6 waiver of the one year testing, but that you support
7 a reauthorization of ESEA that protects the original
8 50 year role commitment to civil rights equal
9 education opportunity irrespective of race, religion,
10 gender, national origin, language barriers, which was
11 built into the ESEA and to the Equal Education
12 Opportunity Act in the 60's. So we can't pat
13 ourselves on the back with all of our blueprints,
14 MOU's, corrective action plan unless we have the
15 resources, the policy, and that the commitment is
16 followed through. Nobody has said a word yet about
17 the 23,000 children who this year are four year old
18 and are in either Department of Education or ASC
19 program, universal pre-k, who come from homes where
20 English is not the first language. We used to call
21 them language minority. We had--they're not ELLs,
22 because there is no test for ELLs. We do not
23 identify four year olds, but they're--

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Doctor
25 Reyes, I'm going to have to ask you to wrap it up.

1
2 LOUIS REYES: I will. There are 10,000
3 of those children who are not being identified and
4 the Department has to this date not identify any
5 programs in any school district or school that
6 provides either transitional dual language or even
7 ESL UPK programming. They may exist, but the
8 Department and the Agency for Children Services is
9 not providing in any of the nine languages that the
10 guides are providing information about where parents
11 can find those programs. Next year, there will be
12 13,000 in September, and we need to hear from the
13 Department not only the plans for doubling or adding
14 40 dual language programs, but what are the plans for
15 those children 18 percent of whom now and into the
16 future coming from homes who have brothers and
17 sisters who are older and have rights and they don't.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Let me ask you, and I
19 don't usually do this in the middle of a testimony
20 from a panel, but is there any correlation or
21 connection to the madness around testing and the
22 wrongful perception of simply immersing kids into the
23 classroom will somehow effect test scores?

24 LOUIS REYES: Everything that we know
25 from brain surgery from early childhood education

1
2 research and science says that the earlier you get to
3 children and build on their home language, the better
4 they will do to be ready for school, to be
5 emotionally stable, to be cognitively advantaged, and
6 the children who receive those services when they're
7 three and four year old, whether it's in Head Start,
8 daycare or preschool do better then and they do
9 better in third grade, and they do better along the
10 way in terms of behavior, in terms of academic
11 achievement. So, immersing them is a disjuncture.
12 Imagine that as a four year old you're told, "Well,
13 you're not an ELL, so we're going to put you in an
14 English only environment." And then the next year,
15 you're tested and you're found to be an ELL, and they
16 offer you a bilingual program. Why would--

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] I think
18 part of the problem though, Doctor Reyes, has been at
19 the federal level, and even with Commissioner King
20 who placed such heavy emphasis on this testing
21 business, and they also need to be held accountable,
22 because I think that the decline in bilingual
23 education because I'm of a similar opinion as you
24 are, has been the responsibility of those folks who
25

1
2 insist on that type of evaluation of programs,
3 etcetera. I do believe that.

4 LOUIS REYES: The State Education
5 Department under Doctor King created a bilingual pre-
6 k working group that includes teachers, researchers
7 and stakeholders from throughout the city, including
8 Sophia Papas from the Department of Education who's
9 in charge of the Office of Early Childhood Education,
10 and it's clear that the first thing we need to do is
11 to do a screening of children that is not a test like
12 taking a first grade test and giving it to a four
13 year old, but it's a screening that includes a home
14 language survey, conversation with the parents and
15 information about what the experiences that they have
16 in the home in terms of different languages, and that
17 has to be developed. And the State Ed Department is
18 supportive, and I believe the Federal Government is
19 providing early learning grants for the development
20 of those assessments. All of us need to work
21 together.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And let's
23 go to our next panelist. I have to move this along,
24 because I must be out of this room at five o'clock.

1
2 NANCY VILLAREAL ALDER: Okay, good
3 afternoon. Thank you very much for this opportunity
4 to discuss some important, urgent issues related to
5 our English language learners. I would like to start
6 by expressing the feelings of the New York State
7 Association for Bilingual Education whom I'm
8 representing right now. I'm the Executive Director.
9 We would like to express our full support to the
10 efforts of Chancellor Farina and the newly appointed
11 Deputy Chancellor Milady Baez in trying to set up new
12 structures so New York City can serve as an example
13 on how to comply with the law. We're talking about a
14 law, laws part 154, that protect the education of our
15 students. We are talking about also about fiscal
16 accountability that Doctor Reyes just referred to.
17 We want to empower our DOE to ensure that there is
18 fiscal accountability in the City of New York. In
19 other words, the monies that have been generated by
20 English language learners must be used for ELL
21 education. We must also ensure, they must ensure
22 that there is programmatic accountability. If there
23 are laws and regulations for the education of English
24 language learners we must comply with those laws or
25 regulations. Bilingual education may be an option,

1 but the compliance with the law is not an option here
2 in New York. And I think that we should all be
3 united in that sense. We are talking about also
4 empowering our teachers and empowering our school
5 administrators, district administrators so we can all
6 be united in our vision of complying with fiscal
7 accountability and programmatic accountability, and
8 in that sense, we need your support, your commitment
9 as City Council. Okay, now let's get into the ESA
10 waiver. I wish that Council Member Reynoso were here,
11 because I have something to share with you, and I'm
12 sure that you will be able to share with him. Back
13 in the spring when we had conversations and meetings
14 with the New York State Education Department and we
15 discussed this issue of the ESA waiver renewal and
16 our insistence of getting the waiver, New York State
17 Association for Bilingual Education, New York SABE,
18 started a national campaign by writing to different
19 national organizations and asking for their support,
20 such as the National Association for Bilingual
21 Education, International TESA [sic], International
22 Reading Association, etcetera, etcetera. So all of
23 them made sure that their affiliates throughout the
24 nation understood and also supported this request
25

1
2 that New York was sending to the US Department of
3 Education. In addition to that, different
4 organizations here in New York City and throughout
5 the State of New York also wrote letters. So the US
6 Department of Education was invaded by letters and
7 phone calls. So, from getting a no, no, no, we got a
8 maybe, maybe, maybe we should reopen the discussion.
9 And that gives a certain optimism, but the job is not
10 done. So, what I'm saying right now is that we fully
11 support, and please tell Council Member Reynoso that
12 New York State Association for Bilingual Education
13 fully supports the resolution. And--

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Thank
15 you.

16 NANCY VILLAREAL ALDER: let me finish.
17 When we--this afternoon, we have talked about the
18 student, but we have not talked about the test being
19 used to assess the students in a punishable way. So
20 the test that is being used right now to evaluate the
21 students was designed for non-ELLs and right now is
22 being used by ELLs. Why should we use that when in
23 reality we should be using the NYSESLAT which was
24 designed--

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] I did
3 bring that up as an issue with them as well and the
4 validity of the test, etcetera, so forth and so on,
5 but we are going to--as a matter of fact, I spoke to
6 Council Member Reynoso, and we're also going to write
7 a letter to Arnie Duncan [sic] asking for a waiver.

8 NANCY VILLAREAL ALDER: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

10 NANCY VILLAREAL ALDER: And you have the
11 summary of everything right here?

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, we have it here.
13 Yep.

14 NANCY VILLAREAL ALDER: Okay? With the
15 research.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
17 Next, please.

18 ELIZABETH OLSEN: Good afternoon. My
19 name is Elizabeth Olsen, and I'm the manager of
20 Policy and Advocacy for Internationals Network for
21 Public Schools. I'd like to thank Chair Dromm and
22 the members of the Education Committee for holding
23 this hearing. Internationals works to ensure that
24 recent immigrant ELLs have access to a quality high
25 school education. We work with school districts to

1
2 open and support new schools that serve this
3 population. There are 15 international high schools
4 in New York City. Chancellor Farina has shown a
5 commitment to supporting ELLs as demonstrated by her
6 appointment of Milady Baez as Deputy Chancellor for
7 ELLs. The Chancellor has emphasized the importance
8 of bilingualism and biculturalism and has also shown
9 a commitment of supporting schools as they work with
10 ELLs. Our schools have benefited from two recent DOE
11 initiatives. International high schools
12 participating in the Learning Partners Program have
13 had the opportunity to further enhance their work
14 around teacher professional development and
15 supporting ELLs. Through the Pros [sic] Program, our
16 schools have reorganized instructional time to create
17 more opportunities for teachers to work together to
18 address the academic and social/emotional needs of
19 their students. In addition to these positive
20 developments, there are other opportunities for the
21 city to support ELLs and their schools. As you will
22 hear from the New York Immigration Coalition, many
23 immigrant families need access to quality translation
24 and interpretation services in order for them to be
25 fully engaged in their childhood education.

1 International strongly supports providing schools
2 with the resources and supports they need to provide
3 families access to these services. We also urge the
4 city to support two other key issues, supports to
5 schools with significant increases of unaccompanied
6 minor students and the State Education Department's
7 ESEA waiver request. Several international high
8 schools and many other New York City schools have
9 seen significant increases in unaccompanied minors.
10 According to the US Department of Health and Human
11 Services, over 2,000 unaccompanied minors were
12 released to sponsors in New York City during the 2014
13 federal fiscal year. This does not include the many
14 students who aren't apprehended at the border.
15 Unaccompanied minor students are heavily concentrated
16 in some New York City schools. These students have
17 fled extreme violence in Central American countries,
18 has suffered severe trauma and often have significant
19 gaps in their formal education. Schools serving
20 large numbers of unaccompanied minors need additional
21 resources to ensure these students receive the
22 supports they need to be successful. The State
23 Department of Education has requested 10 million
24 dollars to support school districts that have seen
25

1 significant increases in ELL enrollment. The city
2 should advocate for the state to include this funding
3 request in its final budget. City Council could also
4 consider partnering with the DOE to provide grants
5 directly to schools to fund supports such as tutoring
6 and partnerships with external service providers.
7
8 SED's ESA waiver request would allow the state to use
9 the NYSESLAT instead of the ELA exam to assess ELLs in
10 grades three through eight during their first two
11 years of instruction. As we heard from many others
12 today, ELLs are still developing their English skills
13 and aren't able to demonstrate the language arts
14 progress that they make on this test. The NYSESLAT
15 provides a better measure for newly arrived ELLs and
16 we fully support City Council's proposed resolution
17 in support of this waiver request. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,
19 and thank you for being concise. Next please.

20 TERESA ARBOLEDA: I'm Teresa Arboleda and
21 I'm the President of the Citywide Council on English
22 Language Learners. I have another fellow member,
23 Mitchell Wu [sp?], who is also a public advocated
24 appointed to the Council as I am. The Citywide
25 Council on English Language Learners was established

1
2 by the New York State Education Law to advise and
3 consent on any educational policy involving bilingual
4 education. The Council promotes second English
5 language learning and advocates on behalf of New York
6 City public school students in the bilingual
7 programs. The Council also encourages parent
8 engagement in their children's language learning and
9 they provide information about programs and they
10 provide a forum for parents in the community to
11 express concerns about these programs. Bilingual
12 education in New York City has often been met with a
13 lack of support from school administrators. Programs
14 that were flourishing could be dismantled when a new
15 principal who did not support bilingual programs came
16 on board. The Memorandum of Understanding announced
17 November between the New York State Education
18 Department and the New York City Department of
19 Education should lead to better outcomes and provide
20 hope for support of bilingual education that did not
21 always exist in New York State. The 40 dual language
22 programs added were offered to principals who applied
23 for them. So, this assures support by administration
24 and lessens the chance that the program will be
25 discontinued. The supports were expressed by Milady,

1
2 so I won't go into them. There is a call for dual
3 language programs in the future. A lot of parents
4 have requested Arabic programs and Russian programs.
5 Meaningful parent engagement leads to successful
6 students and to succeed it is necessary to engage
7 families and school communities. Parents must be
8 provided with the opportunity to attend free English
9 classes in their children's school or nearby.
10 Resources for these classes, including funding for
11 staff supplies and learning materials must be made
12 available. There are also concerns in the schools
13 that there's not appropriate translation and
14 interpretation in the languages. This was covered
15 before. PTA meetings as well as information, you
16 know, flyers and things like that should be
17 translated. Right now there is someone assigned in
18 the school to coordinate translation, but you know,
19 parents are often afraid to express concerns and the
20 staff should be trained to be sensitive to these
21 different cultures. We fully support Resolution 388.
22 In light of the new Common Core standards not
23 exempting ELLs is counterproductive. There's a lot
24 of concern about ELL students losing their
25 proficiency in math with the implementation of the

1
2 new Common Core standards. The possibility of losing
3 confidence faced by these students is challenging.
4 Also, research shows that while you may attain
5 conversational fluency in two years, it takes a
6 minimum of five to seven years to acquire academic
7 aspects of language. Students will stay longer in
8 bilingual programs. They acquire math and reading
9 skills faster than those in the English emersion and
10 those who leave the programs early. Data shows that
11 students who begin English only scored lower than in
12 the achievement tests than students who had been
13 exposed to formal, their first language education.
14 So, first language proficiency in their first
15 language influences them positively when they get the
16 second language, and testing after only one year does
17 not really present an accurate demonstration of a
18 student's progress.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. I just
20 want to make one little quick comment about the
21 translation services. Not only do parents sometimes
22 fear it, teachers also do because unless you have a
23 real competent translator, it's difficult to convey
24 the sentiment that the teacher is trying to express
25 as well, and that's an issue that needs to be looked

1 at. And often times, some of the translations that
2 were done were quite harsh, especially if you had to
3 deal with a learning disability and would turn or
4 scare parents away from the issue itself. So I agree
5 with you, but I need to move on because I have so
6 many other people coming up to speak, and I thank you
7 all for coming in and participating today. Oh, and
8 Laurie, Council Member Laurie Cumbo has joined us.
9 Thank you, Laurie. Alright. Next one, Roksana Mun
10 from DRUM; no relation. Shamsun Nahar from DRUM.
11 Kate Menken from CUNY Queens College Graduate Center,
12 and Melissa Katz from the New York City Charter
13 School Center. Okay, I'm going to ask you to raise
14 your right hand. I swear everybody in. And do you
15 solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole
16 truth and nothing but the truth and to answer Council
17 Member questions honestly? Okay. Who would like to
18 start? Roxanna? Okay, very good.

19
20 ROKSANA MUN: [off mic] and I'll do her
21 translation.

22 SHAMSUN NAHAR: [speaking foreign
23 language]

24 ROKSANA MUN: So her translation: My
25 name is Shamsun Nahar.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Roxanna, just your
3 name for the record, on the record.

4 ROKSANA MUN: Oh, sorry. Roksana Mun
5 from DRUM translating for Shamsun Nahar. My name is
6 Shamsun Nahar. I am a leader of DRUM South Asian
7 Organizing Center. DRUM builds the power of low
8 income South Asian adults and youth to fight for
9 immigrant worker and education justice. We support
10 the Build the Bridge Campaign and the testimony and
11 the recommendations shared by the New York
12 Immigration Coalition. I am here today because I have
13 son in high school and a daughter in elementary
14 school. I'm a newly arrived immigrant from Bangladesh
15 and I'm raising my family in the Bronx. Bangla is my
16 main language. I came to this country for my children
17 to have a chance at a good education. The political
18 situation in Bangladesh makes it very difficult for
19 my kids to have that chance. I regularly attend
20 parent/teacher conferences, information sessions and
21 workshops at my children's schools. The schools make
22 no effort to provide interpreters for me or other
23 parents who need it. Many of us are just sitting
24 there and are upset at not having access to
25 interpretation. This results in our ability as

1
2 parents to--our inability as parents to discuss
3 important concerns about our kid's education with the
4 teachers. I've discussed the lack of involvement
5 with other parents and many of them have expressed to
6 me that they feel ashamed at not being able to speak
7 English, believing that they shouldn't try to express
8 their concerns and engage in their kids' schools. I
9 attend these workshops so that I can be involved with
10 the progress of my children's education, but because
11 I do not get the translation or interpretation at
12 these workshops, I feel that my time is being wasted.
13 I am a beauty salon worker. So, when I take time out
14 of my schedule to become involved in my kid's schools
15 and I'm not getting the services I need, it has an
16 impact on how well they are doing in school and how
17 much income I am able to bring into my family and
18 household to take care of them. For my children's
19 education's wellbeing, I want to be as informed as
20 any English speaking parent, but for this to happen,
21 we need to have much more translation services and we
22 need to hire interpreters that represent all diverse
23 languages in our school system. I want to tell our
24 Education Department that many immigrants come to
25 this country and do not speak English and that is

1 fine. That should never be a problem. Language
2 justice is a human right. It is our right to speak
3 our native language and the education system should
4 provide language access through translation
5 interpretation for all communities. Thank you. So,
6 if I may, can I also give my testimony?
7

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Uh-hm.

9 ROKSANA MUN: Good afternoon or almost
10 evening everyone. My name is Roksana Mun. I am the
11 Campaign coordinator for DRUM South Asian Organizing
12 Center, and we're also members of NYCE [sic] and
13 support the Build a Bridge Campaign. South Asians
14 are among the fastest growing immigrant population in
15 New York City. The translation and interpretation
16 services, however, are not keeping up with this
17 growth. The latest 2010 US Census data says that
18 there are over 100,000 South Asian youth in our
19 school system in New York City. this means diverse
20 South Asian languages such as Bengali, Hindi, Urdu,
21 Godrati [sp?], Panjabi, and Nepali, Tibetan, just to
22 name a few are not represented--are being represented
23 in the South Asian population, but those up and
24 coming numbers and increases in languages are not
25 being provided the services that they need in the

1
2 communities and their schools. So one of our--for
3 example, one of our members Muni Akdar [sp?] really
4 feels this because she has a daughter enrolled in the
5 universal pre-k program in her neighborhood, and she
6 says, "I always ask for an interpreter, but the
7 school never has one for me. So now, like many of
8 the other South Asian mothers, I have just stopped
9 asking for interpretation." So what are immigrant
10 students and families and parents left to do? They
11 are relying, parents are relying on other parents or
12 their own children for translation in school rather
13 than interpreter from the school. So, imagine
14 children as young as six or seven years old being
15 asked to explain to their parent what the teacher is
16 saying about their education or what they need to
17 understand, or parents who themselves are not
18 actually proficient English, but giving second hand
19 translation of what they understand to other parents.
20 So the lack of language justice really effects
21 students and families in all areas of education. And
22 for example, an example that perhaps most people
23 don't commonly think about is, you know, New York
24 City has a really high rate of suspensions and
25 arrests in the school system, and often students are

1 completely unaware of their right to a fair hearing
2 to challenge or remove summons or suspensions, and
3 the documents that all students receive have always
4 been in English and not in their native languages,
5 and that has an impact and makes it very difficult
6 for students and families to actually access their
7 rights in being able to get a fair hearing to
8 challenge suspensions and arrests, to remove those
9 things from their records. Obviously what I've
10 stated from Muni Akdar, our member, but also from
11 Shamsun Nahar is that translation and interpretation
12 is key to allowing working class low income immigrant
13 students and families to really fully engage in their
14 education and improve academic performance. Because
15 when mothers like Shamsun who are breadwinners for
16 their families make the effort to engage in their
17 schools and they're not given the language justice
18 that they deserve, it effects their household income
19 and it sends a clear message to immigrant families,
20 "You are invisible. You can either keep up or quit."
21 Translation and interpretation services really need
22 to become a completely normal and expected part of
23 the education experience in New York City. It should
24 not be seen as a special or occasional service, but
25

1
2 as a welcomed and enriching experience for students
3 and parents and educators, but it can't happen when
4 you have two people in the translation and
5 interpretation unit being give the responsibility of
6 over 1,700 schools for making sure that they are
7 tracking and maintaining what they need for their
8 translation services. So if education for ELLs is
9 really a priority, we highly recommend that this
10 number of just two people needs to increase
11 immediately, along with the recommendation's put
12 forward by the NYCE on this. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next
14 please.

15 KATE MENKEN: Hi my name is Kate Menken,
16 and I'm Associate Professor of Linguistics and TSOL
17 [sic] at Queens College in the Graduate Center of the
18 City University of New York. I'm also your
19 constituent, and the proud parent of a bilingual
20 kindergartener in a dual language bilingual education
21 program in Jackson Heights. So, for the past 12
22 years I've been researching the impact of standards
23 based education reform and high stakes testing on
24 emerging bilinguals, English language learners or
25 emerging bilinguals and have found over and again

1 that the drawbacks of this test based accountability
2 structure that we've put into place far outweighs the
3 benefits. I know that you're--I'm preaching to the
4 choir in some ways on this, but I want to frame the
5 issue. As you know, all high school students
6 including emerging bilinguals have to pass a set of
7 five Regents exams to graduate from high school, and
8 as a result of this exam policy, direct result,
9 regardless of the amount of time that a student is in
10 US schools, the four year graduation rate is 32
11 percent in New York City as compared to 68 percent
12 for English speaking students. Statewide, we have
13 the recent Common Core exams with 2.6 percent passing
14 rate on the ELA grades three to eight among English
15 language learners or emerging bilinguals. The issues
16 remain for math as well. It's an 11 percent passing
17 grade. I just want to--let us be clear here that the
18 reason that the students underperform in comparison
19 to English monolinguals is because of language.
20 Language proficiency mediates performance across
21 subject areas. It doesn't mean that the students are
22 failing to acquire to learn English or to learn the
23 content that they need to, but it just simply
24 reaffirms that they are indeed language learners. And
25

1 so what we have to keep in mind always is that the
2 students are consistently going to be deemed low
3 performing, yet, there's no research to indicate that
4 the scores that these students attain are either
5 valid or reliable. So we--the politicians have put
6 all of their eggs into the testing basket, when the
7 truth is for this population of students, the results
8 that they yield on these exams are invalid and
9 unfair. Okay? And the Common Core is not replacing
10 federal education legislation. It's working in
11 tandem with it. I kind of think of the Common Core as
12 being like No Child Left Behind on amphetamines when
13 it comes to the testing, the test and punish approach
14 to education reform which has already proven so
15 detrimental for emerging bilingual students or
16 English language learners. So for example, just some
17 of the evidence of how language has really become a
18 liability for schools and for students, for the
19 teachers that serve them. Schools statewide serving
20 above average numbers of emerging bilinguals are
21 disproportionately likely to face sanctions under
22 accountability policies like closure and
23 restructuring. We've seen a drastic decline in
24 bilingual education programs that in research I've
25

1
2 conducted with Christian Solorsa [sp?] shows is a
3 direct result of testing and accountability
4 pressures. Doctor Reyes already went over the
5 numbers of the loss of bilingual education programs
6 in city schools. But this occurring in spite of
7 robust research base that we have showing that
8 students who have the opportunity to learn and
9 develop their home languages in schools will
10 outperform their peers in English only programs such
11 as ESL. Likewise, schools don't want to admit--I
12 have documented evidence that schools simply don't
13 want to admit English language learners or emergent
14 bilinguals out of fear that doing so that these
15 students will pull down their school wide test scores
16 and that they will be then facing sanctions under the
17 current accountability policy. The graduation rate
18 has decreased and the dropout rate has increased,
19 again, as a direct result of the requirement that
20 English language learners or emerging bilinguals also
21 pass the five Regents exams to graduate from high
22 school. Teaching to the test, as we know for anyone
23 who spends time in school, is common place. We're
24 destroying spaces for play, for creativity. It
25 breaks my heart. My son's favorite day of school was

1
2 October when he was actually for the first time able
3 to play with all the blocks and toys in his
4 kindergarten classroom. So, in 2013, another issue
5 is that in the wake of the Common Core now and under
6 pressures to prepare for the tests that count,
7 schools are adopting English only curricula. The New
8 York City Department of Education has pushed schools
9 to adopted Pearson's, Ready Gen [sic], Core
10 Knowledge, Expeditionary Learning. These curricula
11 are available. These are the elementary, the grades
12 three through eight curricula, they're only available
13 in English. So they directly undermine bilingual
14 education programs.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Kate, I'm going to
16 have to cut you at this point, but thank you, and I
17 really deeply appreciate that. I appreciate the
18 opportunities we've had to talk as well on this
19 topic.

20 MELISSA KATZ: Hi. This working? Good
21 afternoon.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Good afternoon.

23 MELISSA KATZ: My name is Melissa Katz and
24 I'm the ELL Specialist for the New York City Charter
25 School Center. Thank you for the opportunity to

1 present testimony today. Having worked both with New
2 York City district and charter schools, I've seen the
3 challenges and successes of working with schools in
4 their support of English language learners. For four
5 years, I worked in District Nine as an elementary ESL
6 teacher. I think I wanted to work with the ELL
7 population because I related to them. I came from a
8 bicultural home. I knew what it was like to have a
9 parent who felt like they couldn't really help with
10 homework or to feel like they didn't want to come to
11 school, and to be a student who felt like they were
12 not reflected in the curriculum and their school and
13 their culture was not reflected. My third year, I
14 did actually a teacher exchange program, and I went
15 to France and taught English, and a teacher from
16 France went to my school in the Bronx and taught
17 French. I think we probably had very different
18 experiences, but when I was abroad, I was proficient
19 in French, but certainly did not have native fluency
20 and I really felt it. I felt like I could not be my
21 authentic self. I would get jokes ten minutes later,
22 think of something to say way past the point, and I
23 felt very down on myself like I was failing at
24 something. And I took that experience back and
25

1
2 taught for two more years and was always thinking
3 that I never wanted my students to feel that way. I
4 always wanted them to feel like they could be
5 themselves, be proud of who they were and not to feel
6 like failures, to feel like they could celebrate
7 their progress, which with the testing isn't always
8 possible. So, after two years teaching, I
9 recognized--another two years of teaching I
10 recognized that ELLs really represent the gap within
11 the gap. I joined the Charter Center as part of the
12 Charters Open Doors campaign. We know that charter
13 schools are under enrolling ELLs and underserving
14 ELLs. So we have been working to run ads in multiple
15 languages. We have the charter common online
16 application in multiple languages. We really have
17 been trying to reach out to different communities to
18 let them know that yes, charters accept and enroll
19 English language learners. Part of my job is also
20 meeting with school leaders, talking more about
21 enrollment and programming and training ELL educators
22 on best practices. We admire Chancellor Farina's
23 efforts that she's done in supporting ELLs, creating
24 the dual language programs, restructuring DELLS
25 [sic], formerly the Office of English language

1
2 learners and also her work around ELL parents. We
3 realize that the time is now to support ELLs all
4 across the city. We support resolution 388. We do
5 believe that collaboration is key. Just this morning
6 I was on a school tour, the first of four. We are
7 featuring four schools, all of which use native
8 language supports, two district and two charter
9 schools, and everyone is welcome to attend. So, I
10 think moving forward, collaboration between ELL
11 schools will be key in helping our ELLs.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. I'm glad to
13 see the charter schools are working on this issue.
14 I'm glad to see that there's more outreach in the ELL
15 population. I hope that you are extending invitations
16 to schools to come in and share practices with you. I
17 think that would be beneficial to the district public
18 schools as well. And with that, I'm going to say
19 thank you to the whole panel, although I'd like to
20 comment more. I do appreciate you coming down and
21 sharing testimony with us and being here today. So
22 thank you. I wish I had more time. Our next panel
23 is Kim Sykes, New York Immigration Coalition, Abja
24 Midha from Advocates for Children, Vanessa Ramos from
25 the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, and

1 Darnell Benoit from New York Immigration Coalition.

2 Alright, I have to swear everybody in. We have our

3 fourth person coming up. So I'm going to ask you if

4 you'd raise your right hand, please. Do you solemnly

5 swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth

6 and nothing but the truth and to answer Council

7 Member questions honestly?

8 : Yes.

9 : I do.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, and we want to
11 begin over here.

12 KIM SYKES: Good afternoon. I'm Kim
13 Sykes from the New York Immigration Coalition.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, okay.

15 KIM SYKES: And I want to thank you,
16 Council Member Dromm, for giving us this opportunity
17 today and thank the Education Committee. The NYIC
18 convenes an education collaborative of grassroots
19 immigrant groups and legal and policy and
20 practitioner organizations and many of us are here
21 today. The NYIC strongly supports Resolution 388.
22 Thank you very much. The DOE has taken a number of
23 positive steps to address how far English language
24 learners lag behind. I think Milady's appointment
25

1 today as Deputy Chancellor is a really good thing.
2 We've been pleased to work with the Department of
3 ELLs on our College Grad for Immigrant Parents
4 Project, which is meeting a real need in the
5 community, and we appreciate the translation and
6 interpretations unit's real concern for the barriers
7 that immigrant parents are facing. But we're all
8 here today because more needs to be done for ELLs.
9 My colleagues from the collaborative are going to
10 give recommendations that are student focused and the
11 NYIC supports those. My testimony today is going to
12 focus on the collaborative Build the Bridge Campaign
13 to improve immigrant parent's access to quality
14 translation and interpretation. We applaud
15 Chancellor Farina's focus on parent engagement and
16 note that here in New York City you can't have parent
17 engagement without translation and interpretation
18 with nearly half of our parents speak--or our
19 school's students speaking a language other than
20 English at home. That's almost half a million
21 families, more than 160 languages spoken. It's truly
22 astounding. And while parents have a right to
23 translation and interpretation and services
24 technically are available, parents still face very
25

1
2 serious barriers accessing those services. Folks
3 from DRUM already mentioned inappropriate and
4 impartial individuals being called upon to translate
5 their issues with parents and schools facing long
6 wait times for services, not getting services at all,
7 student specific documents like report cards or IEPs
8 not getting translated, parents afraid to ask for
9 services due to the school climate or due to
10 misperceptions. And sometimes, translation quality
11 is poor, leaving parents who still don't understand
12 what's there. So, other witnesses from our
13 collaborative are going to testify about the impact
14 these barriers have on parent's ability. You've
15 already heard a little bit of that from DRUM. We know
16 that many schools want to provide quality services to
17 parents, but they need support in order to understand
18 how the system works and they need help solving
19 problems. And we also must ensure that schools are
20 doing their part to provide quality services to
21 parents at the end of the day. SO, the additional
22 funding for translation and interpretation in the
23 city's budget is a positive step, but much more needs
24 to be done. There are just two people right now at
25 the DOE in charge of supporting, monitoring, and

1 holding accountable more than 1,700 schools on
2 translation and interpretation. SO, it's no wonder
3 we're talking about this today. And we really have a
4 singular opportunity now to address this key problem
5 because of the changes that are being made to the new
6 school support structure to expand superintendent's
7 offices and create new borough field support centers.
8 So the NYIC's education collaborative is calling on
9 this new structure to also include staff who are
10 focused on addressing the language barriers that
11 immigrant parents are facing. So, instead of having
12 two people to go out and work with, 1,700 schools,
13 there should at a minimum be a point person in each
14 superintendent's office who is responsible for doing
15 four really important things. Number one,
16 identifying which schools need support on translation
17 and interpretation. Number two, identifying
18 successes and gaps in school's practices and the
19 services that they pass along centrally. Supporting
20 schools, number three, and number four, ensuring that
21 schools are able to deliver quality services to
22 parents at the end of the day. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Vanessa?

1
2 VANESSA RAMOS: Buenos tardes. Vanessa
3 Ramos, Committee for Hispanic Children and Families,
4 and I thank you and the members of the committee for
5 the opportunity to testify. Our organization
6 supports Resolution 388. English language learner
7 students comprise 14.8 percent of the population of
8 New York City student population and 62 percent are
9 Spanish speakers. That's why our organization formed
10 the Latino Coalition for Early Care and Education
11 that is committed to increasing the availability and
12 quality of culturally and linguistically appropriate
13 childcare and early education programs for Latino
14 children and English language learners students in
15 New York. English language learner students,
16 emerging bilinguals, are developing their
17 understanding and use of the English language. They
18 differ in native language, national origin, age,
19 socioeconomic status, histories, and capacities.
20 Seen in this light, ELA assessment is not an adequate
21 instrument to capture instructional gains or language
22 development. It does not afford newly arrived
23 students the opportunity to demonstrate what they
24 know and what they have learned and what they can do
25 on English language arts.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Vanessa-

3 -

4 VANESSA RAMOS: We salute--yes?

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Which test did you
6 say?

7 VANESSA RAMOS: The ELA, you know, the
8 federal--the English Language Arts test. We
9 acknowledge and we salute the positive impact of
10 opening universal pre-k to all children in New York
11 City and we strongly support the principle in the
12 blueprint of the New York State Department of
13 Education English language learners, that all
14 teachers are also teachers of English language
15 learner students. Committee for Hispanic Children and
16 Families and our Coalition, LASESA [sic], recommend
17 that in the process of UPK implementation expansion
18 funding is set aside for meaningful ongoing
19 preparation and professional development of the pre-k
20 workforce with course work on dual language
21 acquisition and effective practices for emerging
22 bilingual students. And we also want New York City
23 to ensure that all the web based information about
24 enrollment choices, programs, rules, policies, and
25 academics are also available in print format in the

1 parent's home languages. Not all of our families
2 have access to the web or to internet or to
3 computers. As a member of the New York Immigration
4 Coalition Education Collaborative, we strongly
5 support the Build the Bridge Campaign calling upon
6 the Department of Education to provide quality
7 translation and interpretation services to parents so
8 that they can actively participate in the education
9 of their children. We do have a collective
10 responsibility to invest in programs, curriculum,
11 educators, and lessons to fulfill the human right to
12 an education. The deficit base remedial monolingual
13 system must be transformed into a system that
14 embraces linguistic and cultural diversity as assets.
15 Thank you. Muchas gracias.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: De nada. Next.

18 ABJA MIDHA: Good afternoon. My name is
19 Abja Midha, and I direct the Immigrant Students
20 Rights Project at Advocates for Children of New York.
21 At AFC we fully support the Build a Bridge Campaign
22 and the recommendations of the New York Immigration
23 Coalition to improve language access services for
24 immigrant parents whose children attend New York City
25 public schools. However, I'm going to focus on a

1
2 different issue today. For many years now, AFC has
3 worked with immigrant parents who are interested in
4 enrolling their children in bilingual programs, both
5 transitional bilingual programs as well as dual
6 language programs. And under New York State law, ELLs
7 have a right to choose bilingual programs.

8 Unfortunately, when parents that we work with and
9 that we speak with attempt to exercise the right to
10 bilingual programming they learn that few if any
11 programs are available in their native language, and
12 when these programs do exist, parents find out that
13 they are not available across all grades and that
14 there are not enough seats to accommodate all
15 interested families. Currently, as we heard earlier,
16 less than 20 percent of ELLs attend bilingual
17 programs and access to bilingual programs is even
18 less for students who speak languages other than
19 Spanish. The percentage of ELLs enrolled in
20 bilingual programs remains low despite the fact that
21 the Department of Education has a legal obligation to
22 create bilingual programs. Whenever an elementary or
23 middle school has 15 or more students who speak the
24 same language in the same grade or two consecutive
25 grades, or whenever a high school has 20 students who

1 speak the same language in a single grade. When we
2 have raised our concerns about bilingual programming
3 and the lack of programs to the Department of
4 Education, we repeatedly hear that parents need to
5 express an interest in bilingual programs. However,
6 based on our experiences working with immigrant
7 parents, parents rarely learn about their right to
8 bilingual programming until it's too late. When
9 students are identified as ELLs parents are supposed
10 to be informed of the different program options and
11 given an opportunity to choose which program they
12 prefer. What we hear from parents very frequently is
13 that one, schools tell them to choose the program
14 that the school offers, thereby preventing parents
15 from actually expressing their preferences, and that
16 schools do not take the time to explain the different
17 program models and the benefits of these programs.
18 Without this information, parents are not able to
19 make meaningful decisions about the program options
20 for their kids. The DOE's announcement that it will
21 be creating 25 new dual language programs and
22 expanding 15 already existing programs, it's a
23 welcomed step forward, but it is not nearly enough.
24 Parents need to be informed about the program
25

1 options, including the benefits, in order for them to
2 be able to exercise their right and in order to
3 ensure that these programs have the ELL designated
4 seats filled. Moreover, the Department of Education
5 must move forward with opening programs in other
6 languages. In particular, I'd like to note that
7 Bengali and Arabic, which we heard are the third and
8 fourth most spoken languages by English language
9 learners in New York City, there are currently five
10 programs total to serve 16,000 plus students. At the
11 same time, the Department of Education needs to make
12 a commitment to opening more bilingual programs at
13 the high school level. There are only three new dual
14 language programs opening at the high school level
15 when 30 percent of ELLs are in high school, and we
16 need to see more bilingual special education programs
17 as well because more than 20 percent of ELLs have
18 disabilities or are classified as having
19 disabilities. And just in conclusion, I would also
20 like to express our support for Resolution 388. We
21 definitely support the State Education Department's
22 request for the ELL related waiver with respect to
23 testing. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.
24
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And one
3 observation about your testimony. The 15 and 20
4 minimum for the classes, one of the problems I think
5 principals are presented with is because other
6 classes in the school have such high registers, that
7 they hesitate to open those classes, because then
8 they're going to have one class with half the size of
9 another class. So, a struggle that we should unite
10 on, I believe, is to reduce class sizes across the
11 system, which would also help the objective that I
12 think we're seeking as well. So, thank you for that.
13 Next please?

14 DARNELL BENOIT: [speaking foreign
15 language] Good afternoon. Thank you for the hearing
16 and thank you for listening. My name is Darnell
17 Benoit, the Director of Flambwayan Haitian Literacy
18 Project, also an organization that is part of the New
19 York Immigration Coalition Education Collaborative
20 where we work on different challenges immigrant
21 communities face in the public school system. I also
22 represent the CCLOSE Coalition, also an immigrant
23 coalition that is working on closing the gaps in
24 ELL's education. For the past 10 years we have been
25 working to help new Haitian families enroll their

1 children in school as they enter the country.
2
3 Haitians are the fifth largest ELL group in the
4 public school system. We take families and their
5 children to enroll in high school all year 'round.
6 The enrollment centers are not the friendliest of
7 offices to be in when you don't speak English. The
8 enrollment center is the entry point into the public
9 school system at the high school level. It is very
10 important that we do a better job at welcoming
11 parents and help them to navigate the system. It is
12 an opportunity to guide them and build relationships.
13 Parents at enrollment centers often feel desperate
14 and neglected, unable to speak for themselves because
15 of the lack of translation and interpretation
16 available. Parents are not given any explanations of
17 the different school options. They are not talked to
18 in their language because there isn't anyone present
19 to help. They don't have a voice in the process at
20 all. For example, families often spend an entire day
21 waiting for school placement, only to find out they
22 are missing documents. If there was information in
23 their language or someone who was giving out
24 information in their language as they entered the
25 center that would make a world of difference.

1
2 Immigrant parents must have access to translation and
3 interpretation services throughout the public school
4 system so they can be better engaged in their
5 children's education. We strongly support the Build a
6 Bridge Campaign and the testimony and recommendations
7 made by the New York Coalition. As part of the
8 CCLOSE Coalition, a coalition that is working on
9 closing the gaps in ELL's education, a special focus
10 for us is the plight of older ELLs or young adults at
11 the high school level. We all know how extremely
12 important a high school diploma is for our world
13 today. The city's ELL graduation rates are alarming.
14 Many older ELLs don't have access to educational
15 opportunities in the public school system that would
16 help them obtain a high school diploma. ELLs don't
17 have access to alternative pathways to graduation
18 like general population students do. General
19 students are able to transfer to another school
20 program when they are failing like credits or Regents
21 exams. They're able to leave the traditional school
22 and attend a program that is more supportive, smaller
23 and more engaging. According to DOE data, most
24 newcomer ELLs enter the public schools in elementary
25 grades and in high school, which give them limited

1
2 time to learn English, gain content knowledge and
3 pass test exams. Therefore, the DOE needs to expand
4 opportunities for ELLs in all programs so every
5 student can find success, especially at this time of
6 the restructure of different offices. Without a high
7 school diploma, these immigrant students face severe
8 challenges in their future.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, well thank you
10 all. Yes, thank you. Thank you very much for all
11 coming in and I appreciate it. I wish I had more
12 time, like I said before, but I appreciate you giving
13 testimony. Thank you. Our next panel is Sheelah
14 Feinberg from the Coalition for Asian American
15 Children and Families. Louise Chan, I hope I said it
16 right, I apologize if I didn't, from CASF also, ASAP
17 Program, and Della Dekay from Saint John's
18 University. Okay, if you'd all just raise your right
19 hand, I'll swear you in. Do you solemnly--right hand?
20 Yeah. I need to swear you--okay, very good. So,
21 alright, okay. Do you solemnly swear or affirm to
22 tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the
23 truth and to answer Council Member questions
24 honestly? Okay, thank you.

1
2 LOUISE CHAN: Okay, good afternoon. My
3 name's Louise Chan. I'm here as a representative from
4 Asian American Students Advocacy Project, ASAP. We're
5 a citywide youth leadership program on the Coalition
6 for Asian American Children and Families, CACF.
7 Members in ASAP represent Asian Pacific Americans,
8 APA public high school students from all five
9 boroughs. And I'm here to represent our concerns as
10 English language learners, ELLs, and the former ELLs.
11 I would like to thank Chair Dromm and the members of
12 Education Committee for holding this important
13 Oversight Hearing. I'm currently a junior at France
14 Louis [sic] High School. I immigrated to NYC my
15 freshman year and I was enrolled in ESL classes. My
16 mom believes education is crucial to my development
17 so she come to school to ask for my academic
18 progress. However, she doesn't get useful
19 translation interpretation service from my school.
20 When she asked for interpretation, the school will
21 just randomly ask for some teachers who can speak
22 Mandarin, but lack the understanding of the culture.
23 My mom also goes to parent teacher conference every
24 time, but she has to take me with her since she
25 thinks I'm a better translator. In fact, I'm not able

1 to fully convey my teacher's words due to several
2 reasons. First, my teacher hesitate to [sic] my full
3 academic situation [sic] when I'm present. Second,
4 I'm not able to expand my full--the education system
5 to my mom because I don't really understand it. The
6 lack of translators with cultural competency
7 discourage parents to involve in their schools. My
8 mom doesn't understand the law [sic] of PTA and there
9 are no translations in PTA meetings. Most ESL
10 student's parents like my mom never attend PTA
11 meetings. First generation APA students often report
12 that their families cannot help them navigate the
13 school system, career planning and the college
14 application process. Unfortunately, the school does
15 not provide ESL students a sufficient amount of
16 assistance either. The guidance counselor only
17 schedule one meeting with me each school year.
18 However, this guidance counselor doesn't track my
19 academic progress or ask me any college or career
20 interest. I know many ELL students that drop out.
21 Currently in NYC, one of four Asian Pacific American
22 students does not graduate from high school at all.
23 We recommend that DOE implement linguistically access
24 for parent outreach by school staff, increase DOE
25

1
2 partnerships and contracts with community based
3 organizations with family outreach. The institutions
4 of Comprehensive Guidance Services and the
5 implementation of the use of college road map
6 [inaudible 03:01:13] for family support and
7 assistance. Lastly, we would like for
8 social/emotional develop [sic] factors in school
9 standards and correct ethnic status in school
10 curriculum to enhance ELL and minority students
11 culture awareness. I think standards [sic] which is
12 the learning of history and contributions of minority
13 and LGBTQ communities are crucial in the development
14 of students. I think studies [sic] would have a
15 positive impact for minority students, especially
16 ELLs since it will encourage EL to engage in classes,
17 build ELL's confidence in their own cultural
18 backgrounds, promote diverse studies in our schools,
19 and help increase the graduation rate in public
20 schools. Thank you again for holding this important
21 Oversight Hearing and giving me the opportunity to
22 testify.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much. I
24 really appreciate that. Thank you. Next please?

25

1
2 SHEELAH FEINBERG: Good afternoon. My
3 name is Sheelah Feinberg, and I'm the Executive
4 Director of the Coalition for Asian American Children
5 and Families. I want to thank you Council Member
6 Chairman Dromm and member of the Education Committee
7 that were here before to hold this important
8 Oversight Hearing on educational services for English
9 language learners. For nearly 30 years, CACF has
10 been the nation's only Pan-Asian children's advocacy
11 organization. We work to improve the health and
12 wellbeing of Asian-Pacific American children and
13 families in three policy areas, education, and health
14 and child welfare. CACF advocates on behalf of
15 underserved Asian Pacific American families,
16 especially immigrants struggling with poverty and
17 with isolation due to limited English proficiency. I
18 don't want to repeat what others have said, but I do
19 feel it's important to just highlight a few things.
20 Specifically here, many APA families in New York City
21 are challenged by linguistic isolation, poverty,
22 disparate levels of formal education and lack of
23 familiarity with the US school systems. I just think
24 it's worth noting that that's a huge bureaucracy for
25 anybody to navigate, and yet alone if you don't have

1 the English proficiency or language proficiency, even
2 if your own language to access that vital
3 information. Our parents struggle to support their
4 students when navigating their education as we just
5 heard and desperately need translated information
6 that is delivered in a culturally competent manner.
7 It's not enough just to provide the translation. It
8 has to be culturally competent as well. APA students
9 face a multitude of barriers to success, one of which
10 is language access. Twenty-five percent of ELLs in
11 New York City spoke an Asian language in 2013 and one
12 in four APA students do not graduate on time or at
13 all, and the language access needs of the APA
14 community are acute. Seventy-three percent of the
15 Asian population in New York City is foreign born.
16 Thirty-five percent of APA's living in New York City
17 are limited English proficient, and the diversity of
18 languages and dialogues spoken by APA families makes
19 community outreach and education challenging, and we
20 understand that. We appreciate that is challenging,
21 but we also know that many APA's have limited
22 literacy in their native languages. This underscores
23 the necessity of partnering with community based
24 organizations and community members to engage in
25

1 direct outreach to contact isolated families by
2 phone, visits and/or word of mouth. CACF supports
3 the New York Immigration Coalitions Build a Bridge
4 Campaign. We've been tweeting about it. Immigrant
5 parents must have access to quality translation and
6 interpretation services in order to be engaged in
7 their children's education. Additionally, CACF
8 recommends that the DOE improve data collection and
9 reporting practices in accordance with City Council
10 Intro 251, thank you, provide culture competency
11 training for interpreters, teachers and staff,
12 conduct targeted parent engagement campaigns for
13 immigrant communities in cooperation with CBO's,
14 implement improved socio/emotional development
15 supports and assessments in schools and include
16 ethnic studies in DOE curricula. We believe that
17 these are all critical factors to ensure ELL success,
18 student success, and college and career readiness.
19 Thank you again for holding this hearing.

20
21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, and you
22 brought up some really good points. You know, in my
23 own experiences as a teacher, as newer emerging
24 communities came in, we'd really receive very little
25 cultural competency training and I never knew was Ead

1 [sic] was, for example, or Diwali, or just the
2 holidays, the very basic minor things. I had to learn
3 it really pretty much all on my own, and I tend to
4 think that's probably still what goes on in the
5 system, you know? And so I think the cultural
6 competency aspect is also very, very important, and
7 thank you for brining that up.

8 SHEELAH FEINBERG: You're welcome. Thank
9 you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next please?

11 DELLA DEKAY: My name is Della Dekay. I'm
12 an Assistant Professor at St. John's University, and
13 my area is TESL and bilingual education. I'm here
14 today, however, as a representative of TESL, Teaching
15 English as a Second Language and as a member of TESL,
16 New York State TESL, we would like to put it on the
17 record that we very much support Resolution 388. The
18 reason as has been stated repeatedly today that by
19 using the ELA test as it exists today, we are not
20 measuring the competence of Ells, but rather we're
21 measuring their incompetence, and that that test
22 needs to be changed and revised. On a personal note,
23 and I do promise I'm going to be done before that
24 clock hits zero, I'm also an attorney, and one of the
25

1 things that I do with all of my student teachers is
2 that I insist that they go to the Bronx Housing Court
3 and that they see what it is like to be someone who
4 is actually impoverished in New York City and who is
5 not able to speak English well and is in a world
6 where they do not understand what is happening, and
7 where they have a six year old who is trying to
8 explain to them what that eviction notice means. I
9 feel very strongly that the Common Core should be
10 replaced with common sense, and that what we need to
11 do is we need to produce students that can read
12 contracts not Beowulf. Thank you for your time and
13 thank you for listening.

14
15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Professor, would you
16 care to give me a time frame when you think students
17 should begin to be tested? Do you ever--

18 DELLA DEKAY: [interposing] The age that--

19 -

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] You
21 think they need more than two years?

22 DELLA KEKAY: I think that ELLs
23 definitely should be tested after five or six years.
24 It is not fair and I think that it is also not fair
25 to put them into a classroom with Gen Ed students and

1
2 to have everybody all mixed up together, because what
3 happens is the ELL goes to the back of the class and
4 everybody tries to pretend that they're not there.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Controversy about
6 pulling kids out as well, but I understand what
7 you're saying. So, thank you all for coming in.

8 DELLA DEKAY: Thank you very much. And I
9 did it.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Yes, you
11 did. You were all good. Alright. Our next panel is
12 Christine Ramos from the Hispanic Federation, Mae Lee
13 from the Chinese Progressive Association, Maria
14 Trinitade [sp?] from Cidadao Global, Stephanie
15 Mulcock from the same organization, Cidadao Global,
16 Elsie Saint Louis from Hollis, New York. Okay, I'm
17 going to ask you all to raise your right hand, and
18 before I forget, remind you that I need you to stick
19 to that three minute time slot, because we're getting
20 very close to that five o'clock period when I must
21 vacate. So would you raise your right hand, and do
22 you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the
23 whole truth and nothing but the truth and to answer
24 Council Member questions honestly? Okay, very good.
25 Who would like to begin?

1
2 ELSIE SAINT LOUIS: Good afternoon. My
3 name is Elsie Saint Louis. I'm the Executive
4 Director of the Haitian Americans United for Progress
5 and a collaborative member and board member of the
6 New York Immigration Coalition. Thank you for
7 holding this hearing and for the opportunity to speak
8 today. My organization, the Haitian Americans United
9 for Progress, we are a 40 year old organization. We
10 provide highly effective programs to assist
11 immigrants and low income individuals to increase
12 their self-reliance, improve their wellbeing and
13 develop the capacity to reach their full potential.
14 We are committed to improving the education of
15 English language learners, and we are collaborating
16 with many organizations in that endeavor,
17 particularly the New York Immigration Coalition to
18 ensure that ELLs receive the appropriate educational
19 services that they need not only to just graduate
20 high school, to succeed in college and actually in a
21 career. With ELL student dropout rates continuing to
22 rise, the special needs of ELL students must be
23 addressed and must be addressed now. ELL students
24 need additional resources and support to adjust to
25 learning a new language while mastering content. It

1 is imperative that the Department of Education finds
2 effective strategies of achieving this. In addition
3 to meeting the academic needs of ELLs, the DOE must
4 appropriately meet the translation and interpretation
5 needs of students and parents. Research has shown
6 that students whose parents participate in their
7 education definitely do better in school.

8 Accordingly, we applaud Chancellor Farina's effort to
9 increase parental engagement by engaging parents in
10 every aspect of school life. However, this will only
11 be achieved through the enforcement of the rights and
12 services in Chancellor's regulation A663. How can
13 parents engage in their children's school life if a
14 non-English speaking parent does not receive the
15 translation and interpretation services that he or
16 she needs? While parents have rights and services
17 technically are available to them, they often aren't
18 getting them. Immigrant parents must have access to
19 quality translation and interpretation services in
20 order to engage in their children's education. We
21 strongly support the Build the Bridge Campaign and
22 the testimony and recommendations shared by the New
23 York Immigration Coalition. In addition, we applaud
24 Chancellor Farina's appointment of Milady Baez as
25

1 Deputy Chancellor for English language learners. This
2 is definitely a strong sign that the DOE is serious
3 about creating broader opportunities for all language
4 learners. Thank you for holding this hearing and
5 thank you for supporting our cause.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

8 Next please?

9 CHRISTINA RAMOS: Good afternoon. My name
10 is Christina Ramos and I'm the Director of Education
11 at the Hispanic Federation. Thank you for allowing
12 us the time to speak on this issue. As you may know,
13 Hispanic Federation is the premier Latino membership
14 organization in the nation founded to address the
15 many inequities confronting Latinos. As already
16 mentioned, the state of education for our city's ELL
17 is in crisis. Latinos constitute nearly two-thirds
18 of the city's ELL population and needs to be
19 provided, they need to be provided with appropriate
20 linguistic and educational support to succeed
21 academically. While HF agrees with the need for high
22 standards and establishment of Common Core, we must
23 ensure that all students have the appropriate
24 instruction and guidance to meet these new academic
25 standards. Again, it is unjust and unrealistic to

1 hold recently arrived students to the same measures
2 as students who are fully English proficient.

3 Therefore, we favor the passage of Resolution 388
4 supporting the New York State Ed's waiver.

5 Furthermore, access and quality have been a greater
6 challenge for our community. For far too long ELLs
7 have been under resourced and underserved. If New
8 York City schools are to improve ELL graduation

9 rates, then the range of ELL programs must be

10 available to all students who need such academic

11 supports. To remedy this, the city must consider

12 doing the following, expand and invest in more

13 bilingual ESL transitional and dual language

14 programs, although we do thank Ms. Farina and the DOE

15 for their recent commitment to expand dual language

16 programs. They must provide resources to bolster an

17 ELL corpse [sic] already mentioned before.

18 Additionally, they must support the expansion of

19 innovative immigrant and ELL serving schools like the

20 internationals. They must provide extended

21 instruction in summer academies for the at risk ELLs

22 and the SIFEs, the over age and under credited

23 students and the students with an interrupted formal

24 education. Additionally, parent education is a vital

25

1
2 component of student success across the education
3 spectrum, and while we acknowledge that the DOE has
4 invested--we acknowledge the DOE for investing in
5 translation services and providing multilingual
6 documents. Much more needs to be done for our
7 parents. Therefore, New York City should replicate
8 and expand community based initiatives that train
9 parents on how they can support their children's
10 learning. One such example is Hispanic Federation's
11 Pathways Program to Educational Excellence, a series
12 of parent tailored workshops on college preparation,
13 drop-out prevention and early childhood education.
14 We are currently on track to serve 1,000 parents.
15 However, that is not enough. We must engage parents
16 of our youngest children, ages zero to four, to start
17 building relationships with their schools at the
18 outset of children's school lives. We must support
19 and expand community organization-run schools parent
20 resource centers to provide multilingual information
21 and computer access regarding school issues. And
22 lastly, establish an ELL parent academy to prepare
23 and assist parents and families in supporting their
24 children's education, including teaching them how to
25 participate in schools and manage their child's

1
2 academic progress. This can also narrow the gaps
3 that exist currently between home and school
4 learning. If we are to significantly approve college
5 access rates overall, we must make improving ELL
6 education and immediate citywide imperative, and it
7 is our hope that making these investments will build
8 a stronger city for us all. Thank you for this
9 opportunity.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

11 Next please.

12 MAE LEE: Good evening. My name is Mae
13 Lee. I'm with the Chinese. I'm the Executive
14 Director of the Chinese Progressive Association. We
15 are a community based organization in China Town, the
16 Lower East Side. Thank you for having this hearing.
17 We are also a member of the New York Immigration
18 Coalition. It's an education collaborative, and
19 support the Building Bridges Campaign. I'm also a
20 board member of the New York Immigration Coalition.
21 So, our organization, we've always served the entire
22 community. We are increasingly serving new immigrant
23 population who have been here for three years or
24 less. We work with the students. We work with the
25 parents. Typically, our parents have great

1 challenges in helping their children through their
2 education. Typically, they work long hours
3 themselves. And more so, what we provide,
4 immigration services, English classes for the adults.
5 We have a leadership program for the high school
6 youth, and more recently we've been doing workshops.
7 We've been going into the high school to do workshops
8 about college prep and that's for the parents so that
9 they can help their kids get ready for college, since
10 education and higher education is a real big deal for
11 the Chinese community. So, I would just like--there's
12 a couple of things I'd like to say. First of all,
13 you know, parents, we get parents coming--families
14 coming in all year round and but yet, just a couple
15 of months ago I heard a principal say that there's a
16 problem with the funding. You know, it has to be
17 finalized on October 31. So I am glad to hear that
18 there is an opportunity for schools to adjust their
19 budget for new--especially for English language
20 learners who come in all year round, not just in
21 September. So as--so the other thing is, as for
22 translation and interpretation, as I said, we support
23 the Building Bridges Campaign--bridges--Build a
24 Bridge Campaign, but there's one thing I'd like to
25

1 point out. Translation and interpretation has come a
2 long way, you know, with the establishment of the
3 central unit, the central translation and
4 interpretation unit at the central office, but we
5 still need resources and support and supervision that
6 comes from a more local level so that schools can
7 respond to these needs in a meaningful way and in a
8 timely fashion. So for example, I mean, there's
9 Chinese translation, but it's not Chinese. There's
10 many dialects and it varies from school to school and
11 we have to know what those dialects are. You know,
12 often I hear that, you know, turnaround time, you
13 know, for getting translated materials for school-
14 based events, you know, and interpretation, well,
15 still takes a long time. It takes too long. So,
16 there's an opportunity here to fix this. So, just
17 about a month ago there was an announcement about the
18 superintendents playing a larger role in support and
19 services to the schools. That translation and
20 interpretation should also, supervision, should also
21 happen that level. So what I'm proposing is that
22 extra staff be provided at the superintendent's
23 office that would help supervise and support
24
25

1 translation and interpretation at the local level,
2 and that is in addition to the central unit.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You know, you're
5 talking about the support services and training for
6 supervisors as well, and it reminded me of a story.
7 Because one time I was teaching in summer school
8 class, and I dared to translate a word from English
9 into Spanish during an observation, and I was written
10 up by it for the principal and told I was never to
11 speak Spanish again in the class. So that's a little
12 bit of how far we have come. That was, you know, 15
13 years or maybe even longer ago. But can you imagine,
14 you know, doing that, especially in a summer
15 environment where it was supposed to be like an
16 enrichment environment for those kids to grasp what
17 they might not have gotten throughout the school
18 year. So, that training has to occur across the
19 board. Thank you. Next please.

20 STEPHANIE MULCOCK: Good afternoon and
21 thank you, Chairman Dromm and the members of the
22 Committee on Education. My name is Stephanie
23 Mulcock, and I'm the Executive Director of Cidadao
24 Global, a nonprofit advocating on behalf of Brazilian
25 immigrants in New York City. Cidadao appreciates the

1
2 opportunity to present testimony to the City Council
3 today in support of English language learners.

4 First, we would like to thank the committee for
5 providing a forum to have this important discussion.

6 This is an essential step towards finding ways to
7 increasing graduation rates for English language
8 learners in New York City. Cidadao [sic] is educated
9 to advocating for the human rights of Brazilian
10 immigrants while strengthening citizen participation,
11 fostering [sic] leadership development, community
12 organizing, civic engagement, culture preservation,
13 and providing essential services. Cidadao works with
14 a number of immigrant parents whose children are
15 English language learners in the New York City public
16 school system. These parents are English learners
17 themselves and often do not have the language skills
18 that are necessary to fully participate in their
19 children's learning experience without appropriate
20 translation and interpretation services. There are
21 many parents who still not know they have the right
22 to request translation and interpretation from school
23 officials. Of those who are informed of their rights
24 to translation and interpretation, many believe that
25 requesting it will cause the school administrators to

1 see the parent and the child as a nuisance and to
2 negatively target the child, preventing her from
3 accessing equal learning opportunities. Many
4 immigrant parents believe that requesting translation
5 and interpretation will block them from being seen as
6 collaborative partners in their child education, and
7 worse yet, will cause the child to be mistreated in
8 school by the school administrators. We have reports
9 from several members of our organization that ELL
10 children are often pulled out of class to translate
11 between their parents and the administration and even
12 between the parents of other children and the
13 administration. This takes responsibility of
14 translation and interpretation out of the hands of
15 the school administrators and it places it with the
16 child, creating in the child issues of fear, anxiety
17 and the need to be in control of forces she is
18 powerless to control. Moreover, this ostracizes the
19 parent from the child's learning experience and the
20 child feels unsupported while the parent feels
21 powerless. I immigrated to the United States when I
22 was 14 years old, and I too was an English language
23 learner, and this is a very, very scary place for a
24 child and a scary position to be put to a child to
25

1
2 have to come out and translate for herself and for
3 her friends. In my high school I had three other
4 friends that were from Brazil, and I was put in the
5 place to translate for their parents as well. So I
6 had to translate for my own parents and their parents
7 as well, and it's a scary place to be put in, and no
8 child deserves that. Restoring dignity in our
9 schools, Cidadao fully supports the following policy
10 recommendations to the Mayor and the City Council.
11 We support Resolution 388-2014, which will allow ELLs
12 to be exempted from participating in English Language
13 Arts Assessments for at least two years. With
14 support increasing the number of interpreters and
15 translators that serve New York City public schools,
16 especially in Portuguese, and we fully support the
17 Build a Bridge Campaign, a campaign Cidadao is
18 engaged in and the testimony and recommendations
19 shared by the New York Immigration Coalition who we
20 work in coalition with. We encourage the Mayor and
21 the City Council to invest in translation
22 interpretation in schools as a way to increase
23 graduation rates, empower immigrants and ultimately
24 lift immigrant populations out of poverty. We
25 believe that if our English language learner children

1
2 can be supported by our elected officials and by our
3 government agencies, we will empower our communities
4 to excel. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
6 Next please.

7 MARIA TRINDAGE: [speaking foreign
8 language]

9 TRANSLATOR: May I translate?

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Sorry? Yes, uh-hm.

11 TRANSLATOR: Good afternoon and thank you
12 members of the Committee on Education. My name is
13 Maria Trindage [sp?] and I am a Brazilian immigrant
14 and a parent of three English language learners. In
15 the past 30 years, I have had to work with the New
16 York City public schools in order to educate my
17 children. I often felt confused through the process
18 and asked my children to translate for me every piece
19 of mail that arrived from the school, even report
20 cards. My children translated every communication
21 from the school and interpreted at their own
22 parent/teacher conferences. I felt I could never ask
23 for interpretation or translation in Portuguese,
24 because I thought it was too difficult for this
25 school to access it. I also thought that if I

1 demanded to have translation and interpretation as a
2 right, that the school administration would target my
3 children, treating them badly or keeping them from
4 accessing the same educational opportunities that the
5 other non-immigrant children access. Today I am
6 still asking the school to provide translation and
7 interpretation for my son who is in high school. The
8 school provides me with interpretation in Spanish,
9 which is not my native language. So my son continues
10 to translate for me. I would like to ask the Council
11 to provide more translation and interpretation for
12 immigrant parents in the public schools, especially
13 in Portuguese. Many Brazilian immigrant parents feel
14 outside of the system because our language is not
15 included in any school materials. We feel we do not
16 count. I ask that you will reinforce to our children
17 that our community matters and empower Bazillion
18 immigrant parents to fully participate in their
19 children's education. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I mean to mention in
22 the--when DRUM was testifying also, because they had
23 a parent, I believe, who had problems accessing
24 translation services. If you would email me if
25 you're comfortable the school, I'll follow up as well

1
2 and see what we can do to try to provide those
3 adequate resources for you.

4 TRANSLATOR: Thank you. I'll be happy to
5 pull up [sic].

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, thank you.
7 Okay, thank you. Thank you everybody. Alright,
8 Marwa Kehdr from Arab American Association of New
9 York, Weam Al Rubaye, Arab American Association.
10 Again, I apologize if I'm not saying it correctly.
11 Gulshan Chowdhury from SAPNA, and Aracelis Lucero
12 from MASA. Okay, if you'd raise your right hand I'll
13 swear you in. Do you solemnly swear or affirm to
14 tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the
15 truth and to answer Council Member questions
16 honestly?

17 PANEL: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, okay. Thank you.

19 WEAM AL RUBAYE: Hello, my name is Weam.
20 I am an English student at the Arab American
21 Association of New York. I am also a parent to two
22 public school students. I will now share the story
23 of one of my friends from the Arab American
24 Association of New York. This is Sarah's translated
25 story. As an English language learner and parent of

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2 English language learners, the biggest problem I face
3 is to support my children in their schooling. I live
4 Bay Ridge [sic] Brooklyn which is home to the largest
5 Arab American community in the state of New York.
6 However, most of the schools there are not helpful
7 when it comes to Arabic speakers who are English
8 language learners. I feel frustrated and powerless
9 when it comes to supporting my son at his school due
10 to the language barrier. I moved here along with my
11 son from Egypt three months ago after the problems in
12 our country made it too difficult to stay. My son,
13 Ali, is in high school. He works hard to keep up
14 with his English class. The standard curriculum
15 prevents my son's specific needs from being met. It
16 also prevents him from building onto his strengths.
17 Ali faces difficulty trying to meet the regular
18 standards of his class. He wants an education that
19 is just as rigorous as the class's effort [sic] to
20 his English speaking peers, but one that is shaped
21 around English language learning. I wish I could be
22 more invoked in supporting my son. I wish I could
23 talk to teachers or communicate better at
24 parent/teacher meetings. With no translators, it is
25 difficult for me to engage at the level that I need

1
2 to. I strongly support the Build the Bridge Campaign
3 and the recommendations shared by the New York
4 Immigration Coalition.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Did you say you came
6 three months ago? Three months ago you came to this
7 country?

8 WEAM AL RUBAYE: Yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And you came here for
10 the hearing. That's amazing. I want to give you a
11 round of applause for having the courage to do that.

12 WEAM AL RUABYE: Thank you. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very, very
14 much. Thank you for your testimony. Next, please.

15 MARWA KEDHR: Good evening. My name is
16 Marwa. I'm from Brooklyn. I've been living here for
17 two and a half years. I'm a student at the Arab
18 American Association of New York. I'm reading a
19 testament on behalf of another student also, Salma
20 [sp?], who is a mother with children who are also
21 English language learners. This is her translated
22 testimonial. "My name is Salma. I feel sad and
23 helpless when my children experience bullying in
24 school due to their accent and because of their
25 religious and cultural identity. I feel devastated

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2 when my 14 year old daughter came home to me a few
3 months ago in tears telling me how a group of
4 students at school yelled racial slurs at her and
5 pulled off her hijab head scarf as they mocked her.
6 When my daughter tried to report this problem by
7 telling school administrators, they brushed it off
8 and said that this was just a matter of student
9 arguing. I wish I could advocate for my daughter. I
10 wish she felt safer at school, but it is difficult to
11 do so because of the language barrier. I wish there
12 were counselors and educators who had more sensitive
13 approach when it comes to responding to the problems
14 students' face, especially when it comes to bullying
15 and discrimination against English language barriers-
16 -learners. I strongly support the Build the Bridge
17 Campaign and the testimony and recommendation shared
18 by the New York Immigration Coalition. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. I'm so
20 sorry that happened to your daughter. When I was
21 teaching I had a boy, a Sikh [sic] boy who came to
22 school and they teased him and they pulled off his
23 turban. It was horrible, but we dealt with it very,
24 I think, appropriately for the time, and although I
25 would have liked to have some resources to be able to

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2 explain why he was wearing a turban, but certainly we
3 don't like to see this ever happen in our system. So
4 I'm really sorry that that happened to your daughter.

5 MARWA KEDHR: Thank you so much.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Very moving. Thank
7 you.

8 MARWA KEDHR: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next, please?

10 ARACELIS LUCERO: Hi, good evening. My
11 name is Aracelis Lucero, and I'm the Executive
12 Director of MASA, nonprofit organization whose
13 mission is to promote educational team [sic] and
14 committed leadership and civic engagement among
15 underserved students living in New York City, and we
16 have a particular focus on those of Mexican descent.
17 We work really with the Mexican community and mostly
18 like Latino American communities. MASA provides
19 academic support and homework help to about 92
20 students in the South Bronx. We work very closely
21 with parents and provide them with assistance in
22 understanding their children's academic needs,
23 strategies to improve their academic standing, and
24 more importantly, guidance on how to navigate the
25 vast New York City public school system. ON many

1 occasions we have joined parents at parent/teacher
2 conference and in private meetings with school staff
3 to help clarify questions that the parents may have
4 but are either too shy or embarrassed to ask or
5 simply do not feel entitled to ask. Recently, a
6 parent of a third grade student came to us with a
7 promotion doubt [sic] letter for her child. The
8 letter was not translated into Spanish, and although
9 she understood it, the letter did not contain good
10 news. She did not understand what it meant. She
11 finally had a meeting with the teacher who explained
12 the letter to her and then suggested that she work
13 with her child one on one at home instead of
14 attending any after school programming. However, this
15 parent was too embarrassed to tell the school that
16 she could barely read or write and therefore could
17 not help her child. I wanted to share this story
18 because we work with a lot of families who speak
19 indigenous languages and who barely have an
20 elementary level grade education, and they often
21 struggle with how to help their children at home.
22 MASA believes that it is critical for teachers in
23 schools to understand the backgrounds, demographics
24 and challenges of immigrant communities so that
25

1
2 different strategies and resources could be offered
3 to better support ELL students and their families. I
4 also want to relay the story of Wendeen Uloah [sp?],
5 a parent of a public school student in the Bronx who
6 faced challenges in getting the proper translation to
7 understand why her daughter was falling behind in
8 math. Upon meeting with the teacher, the mom
9 requested translation and was told that there was no
10 translation available and that she did not speak
11 Spanish. On other occasions, the teacher suggested
12 using another parent to translate, which Wendeen
13 refused because she did not want another parent to
14 know such private information about her child. MASA
15 finally accompanied this parent to the parent/teacher
16 meeting and provided translation. However, Wendeen
17 continues to feel discriminated against and not
18 supported by the school. I would like to close by
19 reiterating the importance of understanding immigrant
20 families' backgrounds and that immigrant parents must
21 have access to quality translation and interpretation
22 services in order to be engaged in their children's
23 education. We strongly support the Build the Bridge
24 Campaign and the testimony and recommendations shared
25 today by the New York Immigrant Coalition. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much
3 and thank MASA for the work they're doing. Thank you.
4 Next, please?

5 GULSHAN CHOWDHURY: Hello. My name is
6 Gulshan Chowdhury. I am a parent advocate and
7 community health [sic] worker at SAPNA NYC. We work
8 with new South Asian immigrant families in the Bronx
9 and Queens. SAPNA NYC is part of the New York
10 Immigrant Coalition. I am here today to share the
11 story of one of my Bangladeshi friends who lives in
12 my neighborhood of Casali [sp?]. My friend Ruhema
13 [sp?] came to us because she was having trouble
14 getting translation and interpretation at the school
15 for her nine year daughter. One day she signed a
16 paper that was English. Later, she learned that she
17 gave the school permission to transfer her daughter
18 to another high school. The family was very upset
19 because the new school was far away and no one
20 explain what was happening. She wanted her daughter
21 to go back her old school, but the school staff
22 didn't understand her and did not offer any help.
23 Then they were asked if she needed interpretation.
24 This is when she come to SAPNA NYC for help. We talk
25 her about her right and that she should ask someone

1
2 at the school speak to her in Bengali. When Ruhema
3 returned to the school, she was told she didn't have
4 any appointment and needed to come back. This made
5 her very upset because this was very important. Every
6 day [sic] cost her family money and time. Ruhema told
7 she was felt like the school staff did not realize
8 how hard this was for her family. Finally, when she
9 returned to the high school she was about to speak
10 for translation, the staff told her she had to wait
11 because it takes a long time to get someone on the
12 phone. Ruhema had two hours before she was finally
13 put on the phone with the interpreter. Ruhema's
14 finally able to bring her daughter back to her
15 original school, but it took one year for the mistake
16 to be fixed. As a mother, she felt frustrated and
17 helpless because she couldn't get her daughter or
18 herself the service she needed. She felt embarrassed
19 to ask for translation because every time she had to
20 work or was told to come back later. Now, that
21 Ruhema's daughter is come back at original school,
22 Ruhema feels scared to ask for translation because
23 she thinks that the school will see her daughter as a
24 problem or trouble-maker. It is hard for her to
25 participate at a school because she remember her

1
2 negative experience that the school staff and
3 administrator. I am saying Ruhema's story because I
4 do not want any other immigration or limited English
5 speaking parents in the New York City to live and
6 experience this. This is why I strongly support the
7 Building the Bridge Campaign and testimony and
8 recommendations shared by the New York Immigrating
9 Coalition. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, thank you very
11 much for coming in, and in particular, I want to
12 thank the parents for coming and providing us with
13 your perspective, because I think it's a very
14 important point. Matter of fact, when I started my
15 questioning of the DOE today, I focused on that
16 because I really believe that parents like you when
17 you get involved in your children's education, you
18 can make all the difference. Coming down here today
19 and doing that is really a step in the right
20 direction. So I'm very pleased that you came. MASA,
21 too, but I just want to acknowledge my parents. So,
22 thank you very much for coming.

23 GULSHAN CHOWDHURY: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And our last panel,
25 somebody from my own neck of the woods, Haydee

1
2 Zambrana, Latin Women in Action, Ramatu Ahmed
3 representing African Life Center, Zeinab Eyega, Sauti
4 Yetu Center for African Women, and Maricella Tenorio
5 Bocangel from Manhattan Borough President's Office,
6 intern. Oh, okay. Anybody else going to testify?
7 Going once. Going twice. Nobody, okay. Alright, so
8 we'll swear these folks in. If you'll just raise your
9 right hand, please? Do you solemnly swear or affirm
10 to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but
11 the truth and to answer Council Member questions
12 honestly? Thank you very much. Haydee, you want to
13 start?

14 HAYDEE ZAMBRANA: Yes. Good afternoon
15 and thank you for this great opportunity. You know,
16 we know each other well, and thanks to everyone else
17 who has given us this opportunity to be able to
18 testify on this very important issue. Haydee
19 Zambrana, I'm the Executive Director of Latin Women
20 in Action, a nonprofit organization located in
21 Corona, Queens. We've been there--this is our 25th
22 year, and we provide a multitude of different
23 services including education to our community. We go
24 to many different elementary, high school and middle
25 schools to provide workshops on many different

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2 issues, domestic violence, child abuse, education,
3 immigration and so on. As a recently retired,
4 bilingual education counselor I worked at all
5 different levels in that system, both in high school,
6 middle school and elementary levels. I experienced
7 firsthand the barriers that immigrant high school
8 students had to graduation. The main reason as I saw
9 it that they dropped out of high school was the fact
10 that they had a barrier of not being credited for the
11 many credits that they brought from their native
12 countries. Many times it was not until the last
13 semester when someone realized the student had double
14 or triple credits because they had failed to validate
15 and translate those credits. That was the reason for
16 them dropping out of high school. Another barrier to
17 graduation was the requirement of certain regions
18 that made it possible for newly arrived immigrants
19 who arrived as a sophomore or senior level to be able
20 to achieve the required ELA standards in order to
21 pass such Regents and graduate. If we wish to reduce
22 the number of Latino dropout rates, and I'm saying
23 Latino because those were the main students that I
24 dealt with and how I saw those numbers dropping out,
25 the guidelines need to change. And at every level

1
2 that I worked I experienced a need for parents as has
3 been mentioned again and again throughout this
4 meeting. Parents coming to the schools with their
5 children to be able to translate for them because of
6 the lack of translators in the school system. As a
7 bilingual guidance counselor I was able to meet some
8 of those standards because I was able to talk to
9 those Spanish speaking parents or Portuguese or some
10 Italian as I was able to cross that barrier. However,
11 there shouldn't be that need for that. Parents should
12 be able to have translators within the school system.
13 And lastly, these are extremely important issues that
14 must be dealt with and action has to be taken as well
15 as the fact that immigrant parents must have access
16 to quality translation and interpretation services in
17 order to be engaged in their children's education.
18 And so of course, we strongly support the Build the
19 Bridge Campaign and the testimony and recommendations
20 shared by the New York Immigration Coalition, and of
21 course, we also support Resolution 388. Thank you so
22 much.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Haydee.
24 Next, please?

25

1
2 RAMATU AHMED: Thank you. Thank you for
3 having me. My name is Ramatu Ahmed, and I'm the
4 Director of the African Life Center, a Bronx based
5 organization serving the African community. Before I
6 start, I would like to emphasize that African
7 language do not have this ability in the educational
8 materials. African community, we are one of the
9 emerging communities in America, but a lot of times
10 in terms of other activities or programs, we are
11 always relegated [sic] at the bottom. Africa has
12 diverse languages. We have several languages. Africa
13 has a dynamic background in languages that include
14 ethnic languages and the languages of the colonial
15 masters [sic]. But most times, we limit ourselves to
16 only French, English, Portuguese, and Arabic.
17 However, we have over 1,000 languages, ethnic
18 languages, in Africa. Our expectations are to improve
19 our children's education and to apply whatever means
20 possible to develop their potentials to become
21 productive adults. Our children are bright in class.
22 If they get the resources they need, they will
23 succeed further. We know the complexity in spoken
24 and written languages. English language has a
25 negative impact on our children, and children often

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2 build and inferiority complex within themselves and
3 that suppresses their potentials. This have strong
4 concerns of parents in our community and more often,
5 the parents themselves feel helpless because they
6 face their own challenges to navigate the school
7 system. The lack of quality translation and
8 interpretation for parents creates barriers for
9 children and affects class performance. Quality
10 translation and interpretation services if applied
11 correctly engages parents leading to higher
12 performance of children in school. The children are
13 able to progress through the grades without
14 interruption. I'm saying this because most of the
15 children who do not get the access or don't have the
16 resources to pursue in school or to sit in school,
17 they drop out, and we have that problem in the Bronx.
18 I come from the Bronx, and Bronx is noted to be one
19 of the failing boroughs. And if so, and it has over
20 100,000 Africans, it means that most of our children
21 are affected. And [inaudible 03:48:24] live in the
22 Bronx. So, it's very important to look into the
23 interpretation and translation to help our children
24 in the Bronx. Our community leaders, the faith based
25 leaders and the women leaders have a stake in the

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2 education of our children. When using interpretation
3 services, we have to look up community based
4 companies who can be contracted to do the job. We
5 have an issue where interpretation company was used
6 and they wanted to know where Legalla [sp?] language
7 was spoken. They thought it was spoken in the
8 western--West Africa, but it's a language in the
9 Central Africa. So we have to be cognizant of the
10 diversity of languages in the African community. And
11 before I end, I would like to thank you for having us
12 here on behalf of the African community and I
13 strongly support the Build the Bridge Campaign and
14 the testimony and recommendations shared by the New
15 York Immigration Coalition.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, thank you also
17 for coming, and I'm very appreciative of the
18 testimony that you've given. You know, before
19 becoming the Chair of the Education Committee I was
20 Chair of the Immigration Committee, and so it's been
21 a while since I've wanted to do this hearing and
22 finally we got around to having this hearing and
23 making the connections there as well. But we will be
24 doing more work on this issue as we move forward, and
25 I look forward to working with all the advocates.

1
2 And sorry I was a little pressed for time, but we did
3 pretty good considering we got a late start, and with
4 that, I want to thank you for your cooperation in
5 that matter as well. And I guess it is now 5:18 and
6 this meeting is adjourned. Thank you very much.

7 [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date March 9, 2015