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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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November 20, 2020
Start: 10:10 a.m.
Recess: 2:03 p.m.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING

B E F O R E: Mark Treyger,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- Alicka Ampry-Samuel
- Inez D. Barron
- Joseph C. Borelli
- Justin L. Brannan
- Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.
- Daniel Dromm
- Barry S. Grodenchik
- Ben Kallos
- Brad S. Lander
- Stephen T. Levin
- Mark Levine
- Farah N. Louis
- I. Daneek Miller
- Ydanis A. Rodriguez
- Deborah L. Rose
- Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
- Eric A. Ulrich

A P P E A R A N C E S

1
2
3 LaShawn Robinson
4 Deputy Chancellor for School Climate and
5 Wellness, NYCDOE

6
7 Lauren Siciliano
8 Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

9
10 Lawrence Pendergast
11 Deputy Chief Academic Officer

12
13 Mark Rampersant
14 Senior Executive Director

15
16 Christopher Caruso
17 Senior Executive

18
19 Kenyatte Reid
20 Executive Director

21
22 Elizabeth Stranzl
23 Director of Policy Operating Officer

24
25 Meril Mousoom
Teens Take Charge and Dignity in Schools

Dana Ashley
Positive Learning Collaborative

Karen Alferd
UFT and our United Community Schools

Dr. Sanayi Beckles-Canton
Member of the Community Education Council in
District 5

Rocio Zumaya
Parent Leader in the Bronx

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Liana Garcia

Student at Bronx Leadership Academy

Rasheedah Harris

Proud Member of the Healing Centers Schools
Working Group

Kaveri Sengupta

Education Policy Coordinator at the Coalition for
Asian American Children and Families, CACF

Jeehae Fischer

Executive Director of the Korean American Family
Service Center, KAFSC

Roshni Ahmed

Advocacy and Outreach Coordinator Women for
Afghan Women

Judy Ling

Certified School Counselor currently working at
Immigrant Social Services, ISS

Dr. Dave Anderson

Clinical Psychologist and Vice President of
School and Community Programs at the Child Mind
Institute

Alice Bufkin

Director of Policy for Child and Adolescent
Health at Citizens Community for Children

Nicole Hamilton

Director of Community Partnerships for Girls for
Gender Equity

Laura Rebell Gross

Senior Managing Director of Girls Education at
Student Leadership Network

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Eric Connor
Program Director at Good Shepherd Services

Dawn Yuster
Director of Advocate for Children of New York
School Justice Project

Janna Bruner
Chief Program Officers at Counseling in Schools

Travis
Parent of a Student at PS1 30 in Brooklyn

Isha Taylor
Service Disabled Combat Veteran and an Elected
Member of the Community Education Council for
District 10 in the Bronx

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: PC Recording is started.

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SERGEANT DAUTAJ: Cloud recording is good.

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5

SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: Good morning and welcome to today's remote New York City Council hearing of the

6

Committee on Education. At this time, would Council

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staff please turn on their video. Please place

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electronic devices on vibrate or silent. If you wish

9

to submit testimony, you may do so at

10

testimony@council.nyc.gov, that is

11

testimony@council.nyc.gov.

12

Thank you Chair, we are ready to begin.

13

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, good morning. I am

14

Council Member Mark Treyger, Chair of the Education

15

Committee. I would like to welcome you to today's

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virtual hearing on Examining Social-Emotional

17

Learning and Support Staff in Schools.

18

Today, we are discussing this critical issue in

19

the context of a public health crisis. However, to

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understand how much work New York City's Department

21

of Education needs to do, we must understand where we

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were before we got here. I have said this many times

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before COVID-19 and I am going to keep saying it

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until we get this right. DOE historically and up to

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this point continues to fall short to meet the

1
2 social, emotional wellbeing of our students. In an
3 educational system of 1.1 million students, DOE
4 employed just 1,533 social workers, 2,992 guidance
5 counselors during that 2019-20 school year while the
6 American School Counselor Association recommends a
7 school counselor and student ratio of 1 to 250. Last
8 school year at least 137 DOE schools had a ratio
9 above this recommendation.

10 Furthermore, more than 1,200 DOE schools had a
11 social worker to student ratio above the national
12 association of social work recommendation of 1 to
13 250. With these discrepancies, well before this
14 current crisis the Council, advocates, teachers,
15 students and parents fought for more social-emotional
16 supports in schools.

17 I would like to say that the Administration
18 worked with us and particularly this Council to add
19 in the last budget 200 new full time social workers
20 and in this latest budget, it was a very hard battle
21 that still sits fresh for many of us when 25 of those
22 social worker positions were in jeopardy and the
23 Council had to fight very hard to keep every one of
24 those positions, which we were able to do.

1
2 We also fought very hard to fight back against a
3 proposed \$100 million fair student funding cut which
4 would have devastated school communities and elected
5 a loss of counselors, teachers, social workers, we
6 fought back and we also helped fight back to keep the
7 Single Shepard program which provides counselors and
8 social workers to schools in central Brooklyn and
9 South Bronx but we know we have so much more work to
10 do.

11 I have to say that with all that I just shared,
12 we are nowhere near where we need to be. Further, I
13 must acknowledge my disappointment that during this
14 pandemic, a moment in which we should be increasing
15 social-emotional supports for students. You know,
16 many of us still had to kind of go through these
17 battles to save critical programs that really are the
18 lifeline, safety net for kids and that also includes
19 programs such as community schools learning to work
20 and others, they are all a part of our student social
21 safety net, which we have to protect.

22 The challenges our students are facing are
23 daunting. The National Center for Biotechnology
24 information reports that isolation, social distancing
25 mandates and economic shutdowns could have had a

1
2 devastating impact on the mental health of young
3 people, including increasing their anxiety and
4 reducing their opportunities to match stress.

5 Research also shows that the mere closure of school
6 buildings can negatively effect the wellbeing of
7 students, especially since school serves as the
8 defacto mental health system for students. So many
9 may be missing out on important social and emotional
10 supports due to school closures.

11 Beyond the research anecdotally, I have been
12 learning about the impact COVID-19 has been having on
13 our city students. School leaders have informed me
14 that they have discovered through wellness calls,
15 that domestic violence cases maybe increasing.
16 Students are going hungry, particularly in need of
17 hot meals and families are stressed out about remote
18 learning.

19 All of these issues have a social-emotional
20 impact on students. I also want to add that a number
21 of our students have taken on increased
22 responsibilities and tasks since the pandemic. Many
23 high school students have now become essential
24 workers working in food stores, grocery stores to
25 help their parents and families pay rent and they had

1
2 no choice but to opt for full remote and a decision
3 that I disagree with the department, they did not
4 allow students who opted for remote in high school to
5 receive a Metro Card even if they were eligible to
6 receive one and that has a severe impact on that
7 family. Many of these students don't have a choice.
8 They have to pick full remote. Many of them are
9 working right now and now we have added an added
10 burden, an added cost to them and to their families.

11 Also, I have heard from high school principals
12 where their students are not in receive of adequate
13 internet. Where they have to travel to a space to
14 get a Wi-Fi signal. But that travel cost is out of
15 their own pocket. So, that's something that we could
16 fix immediately by just granting and issuing them
17 their Metro Cards, which they rightfully deserve.

18 As mentioned, many of our schools still are not
19 equipped with enough guidance counselors and social
20 workers to support many of our kids who are
21 experiencing a whole host of trauma and challenges.
22 I understand that DOE has developed many pandemic
23 programs including creating a bridge to school
24 program, providing teachers with trauma informed
25 professional development and offering targeted mental

1
2 health supports for students. This hearing will
3 provide the opportunity for the Committee to examine
4 these programs and DOE's effectiveness in supporting
5 the social-emotional wellbeing of kids.

6 I am interested in how DOE is connecting students
7 to services. What are some of the most critical
8 issues coming up during wellness calls and what is
9 DOE doing to effectively address such issues and also
10 not penalizing students if they are not able to log
11 onto internet and to devices and marking them absent,
12 which leads to unwarranted and unjust calls to ACS.
13 It is not the parents and families fault that DOE and
14 the city has not given them internet service and I
15 know that DOE recently changed their policy and
16 approach where they still have to call parents first.
17 But what happens during the call, the family shares,
18 I don't have internet, I don't have a device. What
19 then? It is you know, New York City had over half a
20 year to get this right. Every child in every zip
21 code should have a device and reliable internet at
22 this point and that is not the case. Including
23 children in shelter who still cannot connect to a Wi-
24 Fi signal. They knew this. They knew this.

1
2 I just feel that I have to say the impacts our
3 kids are experiencing; they are no longer temporary.
4 These impacts are generational. We have to get this
5 right. We have to act with a sense of urgency and
6 not kick things down the road and being denied
7 because I hold City Hall and the Mayor responsibly
8 for being in denial that has cost our students and
9 our school communities precious time that they will
10 never get back.

11 I want to thank everyone who is testifying today.
12 I want to thank the City Council staff for all the
13 work that they put into today's hearing. Malcom
14 Butehorn, Jan Atwell, Kalima Johnson, Chelsea
15 Baytemur, Masis Sarkissian. I just want to thank my
16 Chief of Staff, Anna Scaife and my Policy Director
17 Venessa Ogle and I will just note the members who are
18 here with us this morning. We have been joined by
19 Council Member Rose, Council Member Barron, Council
20 Member Levine, Council Member Kallos, Council Member
21 Grodenchik, Council Member Louis and Council Member
22 Borelli. And with that, I will turn it now over to
23 the Administration to testify.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair and we have
25 also just been joined by Council Member Lander.

1
2 Thank you Chair Treyger. I am Kalima Johnson, Senior
3 Legislative Policy Analyst to the Committee on
4 Education of the New York City Council.

5 Before we begin testimony, I want to remind
6 everyone that you will be on mute until you are
7 called on to testify. After you are called on, you
8 will be unmuted. I will be calling on witnesses to
9 testify in panels. So, please listen for your name
10 to be called. I will be announcing in advance who
11 the next panel will be. I would like to remind
12 everyone that unlike our typical Council hearings,
13 while you will be placed on a panel, I will be
14 calling on individuals to testify one at a time.

15 Council Members who have questions for a
16 particular panelist, should use the raise hand
17 function in Zoom. You will be called on in the order
18 with which your hand is raised after the full panel
19 has completed testimony. We will be limiting Council
20 Member questions to five minutes. This includes both
21 questions and answers. Please note, that for the
22 purposes of this virtual hearing, we will not be
23 allowing for a second round of questioning.

24 For panelists, once your name is called, a member
25 of our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms

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2 will give you the go ahead to begin after setting the
3 timer. Please listen for that queue. All public
4 testimony will be limited to two minutes. At the end
5 of two minutes, please wrap up your comments so we
6 can move onto the next panelist. Please listen
7 carefully and wait for the Sergeant to announce that
8 you may begin before delivering your testimony, as
9 there is a slight delay.

10 I will now call on the following members of the
11 Administration to testify. Deputy Chancellor LaShawn
12 Robinson, Lauren Siciliano Chief Administrative
13 Officer, Lawrence Pendergast Deputy Chief Academic
14 Officer, Mark Rampersant Senior Executive Director,
15 Christopher Caruso Senior Executive, Kenyatte Reid
16 Executive Director and Elizabeth Stranzl Director of
17 Policy.

18 I will first read the oath and after I will call
19 on each panelist here from the Administration
20 individually to respond. First, I will call on
21 Deputy Chancellor LaShawn Robinson. Deputy
22 Chancellor, do you affirm to tell the truth, the
23 whole truth and nothing but the truth before this
24 Committee and to respond honestly to questions?
25

1
2 Can we please unmute Deputy Chancellor LaShawn
3 Robinson.

4 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Yes, I do.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Lauren Siciliano,
6 do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and
7 nothing but the truth before this Committee and to
8 respond honestly to Council Member questions?

9 LAUREN SICILIANO: Yes, I do.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Lawrence
11 Pendergast, do you affirm to tell the truth, the
12 whole truth and nothing but the truth before this
13 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member
14 questions?

15 LAWRENCE PENDERGAST: Yes, I do.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mark Rampersant, do you
17 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing
18 but the truth before this Committee and to respond
19 honestly to Council Member questions?

20 MARK RAMPERSANT: Yes, I do.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Christopher Caruso, do you
22 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing
23 but the truth before this Committee and to respond
24 honestly to Council Member questions?

25 CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Yes, I do.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Kenyatte Reid, do you affirm
3 to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but
4 the truth before this Committee and to respond
5 honestly to Council Member questions?

6 KENYATTE REID: Yes, I do.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And finally, Elizabeth
8 Stranzl, do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole
9 truth and nothing but the truth before this Committee
10 and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

11 ELIZABETH STRANZL: Yes, I do.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you all. Deputy
13 Chancellor Robinson, you may begin when ready.

14 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you so much. Good
15 morning Chair Treyger and members of the Education
16 Committee. It is a pleasure to be here this morning
17 to talk about a topic that is vital to the New York
18 City Department of Education. The social and
19 emotional wellbeing of our children.

20 I am LaShawn Robinson, the Deputy Chancellor for
21 School Climate and Wellness at the DOE, which is a
22 position created by Chancellor Carranza three years
23 ago with the specific intent of making supportive and
24 welcoming school environment for our students a top
25 priority.

1
2 I would like to thank Speaker Johnson, Chair
3 Treyger and the City Council for your strong support
4 and interest and what I know to be some of the most
5 important work of the New York City Department of
6 Education. You should know that even though we had
7 to close our school buildings earlier this week, out
8 of an abundance of caution, the social and emotional
9 wellbeing of all our students have remained a central
10 focus of the DOE throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

11 It is deeply embedded in all of the remote
12 learning we are doing as well as the connection we
13 established with students who attended in person
14 during the first week of the school year. And it
15 will remain so throughout the school year including
16 when we reopen our building, hopefully in the near
17 future.

18 All of our social emotional learning and
19 supportive environment work is organized through what
20 we call a multi-Tiered system of support or MTSS.
21 MTSS refers to the idea that everyone requires a
22 foundational level of support. That's called Tier
23 One. That is universal and it is intended for all
24 students.

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2 Of course, we know some students need additional
3 small group or individual support on top of that,
4 which we call Tier Two and Tier Three. For students
5 who need even more intensive Tier Three services, we
6 may provide individual counseling, an intervention
7 plan or a referral to an outside mental health
8 provider. Schools use their relationships with
9 students and families as well as data to determine
10 when students require additional support and whether
11 a student is making adequate progress after a given
12 intervention.

13 The pandemic has made clearer than every why
14 supportive school environment are so important. We
15 know that our students, families and educators have
16 experienced significant trauma over the past year.
17 Including abrupt separation for their school support
18 system, loss of teachers and loved ones, fear and
19 anxiety about their health and safety and so much
20 more than that and Chair Treyger described some of
21 those challenges.

22 At the same time, we have also seen tremendous
23 resilience. We are amazed at the ways our
24 communities have worked together, supported one
25 another and persisted despite tremendous obstacles.

1
2 Now that school buildings have closed, hopefully for
3 just a short period, we remain committed, committed
4 to building resilience through wellness and strong
5 school community.

6 Back in the Spring when we transitioned to remote
7 learning, my team immediately began thinking about
8 both remote learning support strategies as well as
9 how to prepare to welcome students back in a way that
10 reminded them that school is a place where they are
11 safe. Where they are welcome and where they are
12 supported.

13 We started offering staff training and crisis and
14 trauma 101 immediately. That's the professional
15 development theory focused on crisis response, recent
16 loss, bereavement and self-care in a crisis. This
17 included school crisis team members responsible for
18 addressing crisis who implemented the schools crisis
19 intervention plan and provided supports to the school
20 community. We also facilitated social-emotional
21 learning sessions called Support the Supporter that
22 built adult capacity to nurture their own wellness.
23 These trainings continue throughout the Spring and
24 summer for over 13,000 staff members, including
25 crisis team members and administrators. These

1
2 practices were put into immediate use across the
3 system during remote learning and of course benefited
4 students, families and staff members who experienced
5 losses this spring.

6 Over the summer, we built further on that
7 training using some graphic support and funding to
8 start this full wide Trauma Responsive Educational
9 Practices or TREP. TREP, which all school leaders
10 completed this summer and will continue to roll out
11 to all school based staff, enables educators to
12 recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma and its
13 impact on young people. The TREP training also
14 includes effective classroom and schoolwide trauma
15 care practices consistent with existing social-
16 emotional and mental health support system used in
17 the DOE.

18 These trainings were implemented in conjunction
19 with our Bridge to School plan. Bridge to School is
20 a guide we provided to schools to help them focus on
21 supporting the social-emotional well being and
22 resiliency of students by integrating social-
23 emotional support with academic content. It is
24 especially focused on the opening days and weeks of
25

1
2 the school year when it is most important to make
3 students feel nurtured and supported in a safe space.

4 Given the trauma our students face during the
5 pandemic, it was a priority for me during the most
6 recent budget to maintain our level of direct in-
7 school social and emotional support for students.
8 This includes the schools clinician and many of our
9 other social worker programs, including bridging the
10 gap social workers for schools with high populations
11 of students in temporary housing.

12 Our single Sheppard's and our new high need
13 social workers. Hundreds of social workers were
14 added to our schools over the past few years thanks
15 to the Council and in particular, Chair Treyger. I
16 am pleased that we were able to maintain these
17 positions and to ensure every student has access to a
18 guidance counselor or social worker even in the
19 difficult budget circumstances.

20 I want to thank the Council again and in
21 particular you Chair Treyger for your essential
22 support and your continued advocacy. Even in the
23 difficult financial circumstances caused by the
24 pandemic, we continue to find ways to provide
25 critical services for our most vulnerable students.

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2 Students in temporary housing and foster care face
3 especially acute challenges as a result of COVID-19
4 and the shift to remote learning. More than 300
5 field base staff supporting students in temporary
6 housing have been equipped with resources and skills
7 to support the mental health of students and
8 families, including a specific focus on trauma
9 informed care and restorative approaches.

10 Bridging the Gap Social Workers provide
11 teletherapy and remote counseling to students in
12 temporary housing. Field base staff are also
13 conducting bonus check-ins with students in temporary
14 housing to ensure they are accessing self-support and
15 connecting to remote learning.

16 Additionally, a few weeks ago, we announced two
17 support programs targeted specifically at schools and
18 the neighborhoods in our city's hardest hit community
19 by COVID-19. One, is a new partnership with New York
20 City Health and Hospitals that helps connect our
21 students to a variety of services including
22 outpatient mental health clinics where children and
23 adolescents can receive ongoing therapy, psychiatric
24 evaluation, medication management and other clinical
25 services.

1
2 Excuse me, the second is our School Mental Health
3 Specialist program, formerly known as the School
4 Mental Health Consultant Program. It has been
5 designed or redesigned to focus on those
6 neighborhoods with greatest need and to provide more
7 direct services to students. As you know, this
8 program is funded through Thrive NYC and the
9 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and we are
10 deeply grateful for their support as well as the
11 additional assistance we are not receiving through
12 this partnership. We are so fortunate to have
13 partners in government who work with us to find
14 creative ways to support our children in this time of
15 crisis.

16 To support adult mental health, DOE employees
17 have access to supportive services through the
18 employee assistance program and NYC Well. Free
19 confidential mental health services are available
20 from NYC Well in over 200 languages and can be
21 accessed through checks or phone calls. Of course,
22 mental health supports available prior to the
23 pandemic, like our school based mental health clinic
24 also remain in place.
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Under this Chancellor, and with the support of this Council, we have investing in the social-emotional wellbeing of our students well before the pandemic. For example, in June of 2019, the Division of School Climate and Wellness announced our Resilient Kids Safe Schools Package. That was a major effort designed to expand key initiatives and programming like our centrally funded restorative justice programming, which is now featured in about 500 of our high schools and middle schools.

At the elementary school level, the package included centrally funded trainings and curricula for social-emotional learning established in partnership with Stanford Harmony to roll out to all elementary schools in three years.

This school year marks the second year of that roll out and I am pleased to say that we are still on track for our universal goal, even with the complications caused by the pandemic. Through our partnership with Thrive NYC, we also established our School Response Clinicians or SRC, for social workers especially trained in crisis response and management who provided services for students in need of

1
2 specialized support in approximately 300 middle and
3 high schools.

4 I cannot emphasize enough how powerful this
5 initiative proved to be this spring as COVID-19 hit
6 the city and SRC enabled our students to remotely
7 access the support they needed more than ever. The
8 SRC's continue to be one of our most valuable
9 resources.

10 I also want to acknowledge that all of our cell
11 and trauma informed work is rooted in our commitment
12 to a culturally responsive sustaining environment and
13 the priority of advancing equity now.

14 Our Bridge to School plan has activities that
15 honor students identities and lived experiences. Our
16 schools know our students best and all of the work I
17 have described is intended to ensure that schools
18 have access to resources they need to support
19 students to give them strategies and tools they can
20 use in real time.

21 The Resilient Kids Safe Schools package also
22 included measures to reduce the use of punitive and
23 inclusionary discipline measures, including changes
24 to the discipline code and the NYPD, DOE Memorandum
25 of Understanding and the NYPD Patrol Guide. Among

1
2 other things, these changes significantly limited
3 interaction between schools and the police, including
4 stricter guidelines around arrest in schools and
5 limit on the length of suspension.

6 We are already seeing the effects these
7 initiatives are having in creating more supportive
8 climate in schools. Last year, the first year under
9 which these changes were in place, we saw a major
10 drop in both the youth and length of suspension.
11 Even before the transition to remote learning,
12 suspensions were down 12.6 percent compared to the
13 year prior, including the period of remote learning
14 suspensions dropped 44.5 percent.

15 We also saw a tremendous decrease in the length
16 of suspensions and this is really important. These
17 were down 81 percent versus the previous year when
18 comparing the portion of the year with in-person
19 learning and 88 percent when taking into account the
20 full year.

21 Last, we saw the gap in racial disparities and
22 length of suspensions closed almost entirely. The
23 average length of a superintendent suspension, for
24 White students 11.1 one days, for Asian students 11.4

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2 days, for Latino students 11.5 days and for Black
3 students 11.8 days.

4 I want to thank the leader of the office in this
5 development Mark Rampersant and Kenyatte Reid for
6 developing a thoughtful and measured approach to
7 students discipline and behavior during remote
8 learning and for working with schools to assure its
9 successful implementation.

10 While we are encouraged by the results so far, we
11 absolutely know there is much more to do. We will
12 continue to build on this work as we begin the
13 transition of our school safety agents and school
14 safety division from NYPD to DOE. We know this is of
15 great interest to the Council and we will continue to
16 solicit your input and keep you updated on our
17 progress.

18 Before closing, I must, I must ensure to
19 acknowledge the important role that parents play in
20 this work. We work closely with our partners in the
21 Office of Family and Community Engagement to build
22 connections with our parents, including providing
23 professional learning for parent coordinators on
24 mental health during COVID. We have also made
25 available on the DOE website extensive resources that

1
2 are shared directly with parent coordinators for
3 dissemination to family. We take every opportunity
4 to promote these resources and I would be happy to
5 work with any of you on enabling your community to
6 further benefit from them. Our goal prior to the
7 pandemic was to effectively support the social and
8 emotional wellbeing and restorative values of our
9 students and that mission has become even more vital
10 due to the trauma imposed by COVID-19. The systems
11 and structures we put in place the last few years
12 have been integral in allowing us to provide these
13 services and supports through both remote and blended
14 learning.

15 The Council and this Committee have always been
16 supporters and advocates of our work and I again,
17 want to thank you for the opportunity to provide to
18 you with these details about what we are
19 accomplishing together. I look forward to continuing
20 to work with you on providing these necessary
21 supports to our children and I am happy to answer any
22 further questions you have. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Deputy
24 Chancellor. I just want to note that we have also
25 been joined by Council Member Lander, Council Member

1
2 Rodriguez and Council Member Dromm. And before I go
3 into questions, I just want to note for the record
4 that I have always found Deputy Chancellor Robinson
5 to be accessible, responsive, she gets it. So, a lot
6 of my frustrations and anger and the disappointments
7 don't really lay with her but with City Hall directly
8 because she can only do with what resources she has
9 and to implement.

10 So, I just want to begin by saying that because
11 it is important to note the really great work of
12 folks in DOE who get this but we still have a job to
13 do to hold folks accountable. So, I just want to
14 just begin by sharing that.

15 Deputy Chancellor or any folks on the panel,
16 could anyone tell us an updated number as of this
17 morning how many students are waking up today still
18 without a device and reliable internet in our school
19 system?

20 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Absolutely, we take seriously
21 supporting all of our young people and we know that
22 all of our young people having devices, that is
23 certainly essential. We still have approximately
24 60,000 young people in need of devices and Lauren
25 Siciliano from our CEO's team is here to talk more

1
2 about our progress in ensuring that students receive
3 the necessary supports to be successful.

4 LAURAN SICILIANO: Yes, thank you Deputy
5 Chancellor Robinson and good morning Chair Treyger.
6 It is a pleasure to be with you all here this
7 morning. As the Deputy Chancellor said, we are
8 absolutely committed to ensuring that our students
9 have what they need to support remote learning. As
10 we discussed and as you know, we have ordered and
11 delivered 350,000 LTE enabled iPads to students and
12 based on the additional demand information that we
13 have received from schools, we ordered an additional
14 100,000 iPads that are starting to roll out to
15 schools now and will be delivered over the next few
16 weeks. And that 100,000 iPads is to meet – will
17 allow us to meet any additional demand as well as
18 ensure that we have devices on hand for repairs and
19 replacements.

20 So, we are actively working to get those
21 additional iPads out to students to get to them as
22 quickly as possible.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And just so for the record,
24 is it accurate to say that City Hall was made aware
25 back in even in spring that we would need more

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2 technology and I will explain why we need more
3 technology. First, when the DOE initially shared a
4 remote device survey, readiness survey the week
5 before schools shifted to full remote back in March,
6 the questions were kind of fuzzy in the sense where
7 they asked families, do you have a device at home.
8 And so, if mom or dad or if a student said, yes,
9 there is a computer at home, you know, that computer
10 might be for mom or dad to work.

11 And if there is two or three children in the
12 household, they are sharing one device. So, we have
13 a significant number of children sharing a device.
14 Also, a number of schools could not wait two months.
15 If you recall, the shipments came in months after
16 March. Schools gave out whatever technology they had
17 and if you were an eighth grader, before graduation
18 you had to return the laptop and then you enter high
19 school as a freshman and they didn't have a device
20 for you and I was hearing this and I was hearing this
21 as a Council Member back in spring and into you know,
22 into June.

23 So, I am certain that DOE was aware of this. I
24 am certain that City Hall was made aware of this.
25 Were requests made to City Hall and to OMB back in

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2 spring and into summer to request more devices
3 because I will note, the Mayor only announced that he
4 is ordering 100,000 iPads recently, when quite
5 frankly they should have been ordered months ago.

6 Could anyone speak to making requests to City
7 Hall and to OMB of more devices back in spring?

8 LAUREN SICILIANO: So, I want to highlight a
9 couple of things that you said, Chair Treyger. I
10 think that as you note, the devices that our students
11 are using are coming from a range of different
12 sources. So, there are obviously the central iPads
13 that we have purchased and are distributing to
14 students but as you pointed out, we have encouraged
15 and continue to encourage schools to distribute
16 inventory that they have and schools as you know,
17 continue to purchase devices as well that are coming
18 in and that they are distributing to students.

19 So, there are a few different sources that
20 schools are using. We know of course that there
21 would be schools who gave out their devices, we have
22 heard similarly that not of them were able to get
23 those devices back and so, we have been working with
24 schools to order new devices. We also distributed
25 Smart Schools Bond Act funding for some of our

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2 neediest schools, so they could use those dollars to
3 purchase devices in order to backfill those gaps.

4 And to your earlier point and this is important,
5 the device need is constantly changing. You know,
6 which is why we are working with schools directly to
7 confirm the needs. Schools are giving out their own
8 inventory and students who maybe had a device
9 yesterday may not have one today, may need a device
10 and so, those numbers are constantly influx in that
11 is what we are monitoring.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And how are you helping
13 immigrant families receive a device who shared with
14 us months ago that the request form, you know,
15 required personal information which they were
16 understandably fearful to return back to the
17 government and so, that's why I had asked City Hall
18 to change the process to just let the principals
19 decide how much they need for their schools and give
20 it to their children, as opposed to this form that
21 was in a way a barrier for many of our immigrant
22 families to receive a device. Has DOE changed that
23 process?

24 LAUREN SICILIANO: Yes, so, in the spring, as you
25 pointed out, because of the health conditions, we

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2 needed to ship devices directly to students and
3 therefore get that address and personal information.
4 What we have done though since the fall and are
5 continuing to do is to deliver devices to the school
6 to distribute to the students for several reasons,
7 including the concern that you mentioned.

8 We have also – schools are also able to fill out
9 the device request on behalf of their students given
10 some of the concerns that you raised as well.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: How many students are you
12 aware of at this time that are in need of adaptive
13 technology that is mandated by their IEP?

14 LAUREN SICILIANO: So, here I have to apologize.
15 For the adaptive technology needs, I am not sure if
16 we have someone from our Special Ed team on here but
17 I am happy to take that question back if not to get
18 you a response.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes, because I want to note
20 for the record that I have had families in my
21 district and beyond reach out to me that they are
22 required to have technology to help them adapt to
23 remote learning and it is very expensive to purchase
24 this on their own but they are actually required to
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2 have it but I have been hearing that some stuff is on
3 backorder.

4 If you can get back to me on that, I would
5 appreciate it. Has the DOE ordered Chrome books and
6 laptops? As a former high school teacher, I could
7 tell you it is not easy for high school students or
8 any student, middle school, anyone, elementary, to
9 type essays on an iPad. Has the DOE ordered Chrome
10 books and laptops that are also internet enabled for
11 our students? And if so, how many?

12 LAUREN SICILIANO: Thank you for the question.
13 So, I hear you on the concern about the keyboard and
14 the difference between the Chrome books and the
15 iPads. Schools are able to purchase Chrome books but
16 to your question about the LTE enabled devices, the
17 reason why we purchase the iPads is because we were
18 able to get a large supply and a large supply of the
19 LTE enabled devices at a discounted price point.

20 So, for the Chrome books that schools are
21 ordering now, those devices are not LTE enabled but
22 what we have been able to do is order a substantial
23 number of keyboards that go with the iPads,
24 particularly for older students. So, the iPad that
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2 they get has a case that has a keyboard, so that the
3 can use it very similar to a Chrome book.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And what is the plan, by
5 the way, I want to note, a number of principals are
6 aware that they could purchase Chrome books but many
7 of them are on back order and that's why you know, I
8 have asked to see if we can contact the manufacturer
9 directly to just order a large shipment on behalf of
10 the school district and I think, I think they would
11 be interested in hearing from the DOE on that because
12 many of our students are very interested in having
13 Chrome books and laptops to help them with
14 functionality with remote learning.

15 So, have you heard concerns from principals that
16 stuff is on backorder?

17 LAUREN SICILIANO: We know that that there are
18 global supply chain issues. There are – the supply
19 of devices is just globally, not enough to meet the
20 demand. We do work very closely with our contracted
21 vendors to get them to prioritize supply for DOE.
22 But if there are schools that are encountering
23 particular back order issues, please don't ever
24 hesitate to let us know and we would be happy to help
25 follow up with the vendor.

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2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah, there are many. So,
3 I just wanted to share that. What is the plan for
4 students who even if they receive a device, do not
5 have adequate internet or reliable internet? I think
6 about our students in shelter, who they might have a
7 device but they cannot catch a Wi-Fi signal in their
8 shelter. Where does the DOE stand on that?

9 LAUREN SICILIANO: Sure, I am happy to talk about
10 that. So, for students in shelter, any student that
11 is having difficulty connecting, we are swapping out
12 their current iPad, which is supported by T-Mobile
13 for a Verizon iPad, so that they are better able to
14 access the signal. We have a dedicated help desk for
15 families where families in shelter can call. We are
16 also working very closely with our partners at DSS to
17 - who are reaching out to each family to confirm that
18 their iPad, that they are able to access the internet
19 through their iPad and we are doing those swaps in
20 real time as those issues come in.

21 As you know, the city is also working to install
22 Wi-Fi in the shelters but in the immediate term, we
23 are also doing those device swaps.
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2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I just want to note for the
3 record, was the government aware that many of these
4 shelters had Wi-fi issues prior to the pandemic?

5 LAUREN SICILIANO: So, I certainly can't speak to
6 that. I will say generally though that one of the
7 reasons why we bought the LTE enabled iPads is that
8 we know that there are students across the city who
9 have difficulty connecting to the internet and that's
10 why it was so important to us to be able to get a
11 device that didn't require Wi-Fi access in order to
12 connect. We have been working very closely with T-
13 Mobile to boost signal in areas of the city and where
14 that hasn't been possible, we are now swapping out
15 for the Verizon iPads that families can connect.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, I just want to share
17 this that you know, I know the Mayor repeatedly said
18 for months that every child who needed technology had
19 technology and he kept repeating the talking point
20 about ordering 350 or 1,000 or so iPads. I just want
21 to know for the record, about 750,000 students in our
22 schools system qualify for free or reduced lunch.
23 Which means three quarters of a million of our kids
24 are over the poverty line. So the need was always

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2 great and I think you know, I go back to my teacher
3 days, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail.

4 And it is unacceptable that over 60,000 kids that
5 we know of, I think the number is greater, still do
6 not have a device and reliable internet. There is no
7 excuse for this and again, I am not faulting the DOE
8 because I believe the DOE made these requests to the
9 Administration. I think these numbers were known but
10 unfortunately folks were in denial at the highest
11 levels of our government and I hold them accountable.

12 I want to get to – just so we are clear, when
13 will the 60,000 kids plus have a device in their
14 hand?

15 LAUREN SICILIANO: So, the 100,000 devices that
16 we have ordered and we of course share your
17 commitment to making sure that all of our students
18 have what they need to support remote learning.
19 Those 100,000 devices will be delivered over the next
20 four to five weeks.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Four to five weeks.

22 LAUREN SICILIANO: Correct.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And when did the school
24 year, new school year begin?

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LAUREN SICILIANO: In September and we are as you know, there have been global supply chain issues and we are trying to get these devices out as quickly as we can to our students and our schools are also preparing hard copy packets for any student who doesn't have a device. I know our Deputy Chancellor LaShawn Robinson wanted to add some more here. So, LaShawn, if you wouldn't mind unmuting LaShawn to add some more as well.

LASHAWN ROBINSON: Yes, I just wanted to add that this is absolutely a top priority for us ensuring that young people have what they need. I was going to add Lauren that our schools are aware you know, who the students are that are still waiting for their devices to come in and have organized to be able to provide support. The Chancellor sent out additional guidance directly to principals to ensure that our students would have what they need to be successful academically during this time. Not only packets but textbooks and other resources that are necessary and our First Deputy Chancellor and our Superintendents have also been a great support in assistance to schools during this time to think how to meet this challenges. And Lauren and her team, they have

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2 absolutely been working diligently. We you know,
3 monitor this often, this issue often as a cabinet and
4 really are working to ensure that every student has
5 what they need to be successful because we understand
6 that this is a stressor for students and families and
7 of course, we want our students to be able to engage
8 academically and be successful.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Deputy Chancellor,
10 I just would like to remind DOE panelist to not mute
11 themselves. It is okay to stay unmuted so you can
12 answer questions. Thank you Chair.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah, you know, this is
14 very painful to hear and I am speaking when I was a
15 teacher, not just as a Council Member because when I
16 used to teach high school regents classes, if my
17 students missed a couple days of instruction, that
18 was a lot. We are talking about kids with months of
19 interrupted instruction. This is devastating. These
20 are generational impacts; these are not temporary
21 impacts. We are losing our kids and we have to do
22 everything possible to help save them and to help
23 meet their needs immediately and that is why I am
24 livid many times with the administration because they
25 are just in denial and they waste precious time and

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2 again, I hold Mayor de Blasio directly accountable,
3 directly accountable. We have a mayoral control
4 system and for months he kept saying that every kid
5 had technology, that was not the case. That was
6 counter to what I was hearing on the ground from many
7 of my principals and many families in my district and
8 across. I want to remind the public that back in
9 spring when there were some communities having a
10 debate about Zoom versus Google Meet, families in
11 Coney Island were asking, where is my device. Where
12 is the internet and so, there are two different tales
13 of New York happening at the same time in our school
14 system right now.

15 I want to turn to wellness calls. Deputy
16 Chancellor, do we know how many total wellness calls
17 have happened since March to now? Do we have some
18 numbers on that?

19 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Absolutely, thank you so much
20 for that question. Our goal is to ensure that every
21 student is learning every single day and you know,
22 that's why our team and Lauren and her team, they
23 have been focused on ensuring that young people
24 receive the devices that they need. But in addition
25 to that, that every young person is in contact with a

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2 caring adult, that's been our goal before the
3 pandemic, certainly during the pandemic back in the
4 spring when everything first hit us so abruptly the
5 way it did and it will remain our goal after this
6 pandemic fades to ensure that young people are
7 connected to caring adults.

8 Educators and school leaders, they have been on
9 the frontlines of this work, really working closely
10 with our families and with our students and making
11 that outreach at the school level and tracking
12 carefully. Centrally our team individual for School
13 Climate and Wellness, within the office of community
14 schools, where our supports for some of our most
15 vulnerable students, like our students in temporary
16 housing and our students in shelter in particularly,
17 those supports live. We have carefully tracked our
18 outreach through wellness calls.

19 Back in the spring, we were - I think the number
20 was about 14,000 wellness calls. Of course, that
21 body of work continues to grow and we are at about 32
22 or 34,000. I know Chris Caruso was on the line now.
23 I would like for him to join and kind of talk about
24 the impact of those calls, especially with our most
25 vulnerable students like our students in shelters and

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2 some of what we are learning from those calls as
3 well. You know that we had an opportunity to speak
4 with school leaders to hear directly from them about
5 what they are learning through their calls and I
6 thank you for sharing that information. That helps
7 us to be reflective practitioners but I would love
8 Chris to join to talk about that process. How we
9 were able to codify the process and share these
10 promising practices citywide and then also talk about
11 what we are hearing from our families and our
12 students directly. Chris?

13 CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Thank you Deputy Chancellor
14 Robinson. Good morning Chair Treyger, good to see
15 you again. Thank you for hosting this important
16 hearing. So, as was alluded to in the last line of
17 questions, we knew that supporting our most
18 vulnerable and frankly our most resilient children as
19 Deputy Chancellor Robinson likes to remind us, our
20 students who are experiencing homelessness was going
21 to be a top priority for this administration when we
22 transition to bold remote learning. And so, last
23 spring, we marshaled the support of our field base
24 staff who are dedicated to supporting our students in
25 temporary housing.

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2 Thanks in large part to your leadership Chair
3 Treyger, we have 100 Bridging the Gap social workers
4 deployed in schools that have the highest number of
5 students living in shelters. We also have over 100
6 community coordinators and in our shelters, not
7 everyone always remembers this, we have almost 120
8 DOE employees who are assigned to shelters,
9 specifically to support our students in temporary
10 housing living in shelter.

11 The timing coincides with our week of learning or
12 that we call STH Achieve. You might have seen that
13 Chair Treyger. All week we have been bringing
14 together our social workers, our community
15 coordinators and our families to share best
16 practices. To exchange ideas on how we are
17 effectively meeting the needs of our students in
18 temporary housing. And we are talking about the
19 things that we have learned through direct outreach
20 and direct calls to make sure that our staff know our
21 children well.

22 Salone Pitts, one of our Bridging the Gap Social
23 Workers from the Bronx was talking about the
24 connections that she is making to families to make
25 sure that they know how to sign up for EBT. That

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2 they know how to access their cash benefits and their
3 entitlements that are due to them.

4 Jason Kapelus who is one of our great Community
5 Coordinators also in the Bronx, he was telling
6 everyone that sometimes he is called the backpack
7 man. Sometimes he is called the laptop man,
8 sometimes he is called the clothes man. He is like,
9 I don't care what I am called, as long as they know
10 that I am the man they can call.

11 This is the spirit of the work. These are the
12 people that are connecting directly with our families
13 to make sure that they have what they need. And so,
14 last spring when we encouraged all of our staff to
15 reach out and kind of assess the need to the
16 families, we were hearing a number of things that we
17 compiled and kind of pulled together both school
18 needs and family needs and they are not going to come
19 to any surprise to any of us right. Families are
20 worried about unemployment. Families are worried
21 about putting food on their table. Families are
22 worried about their children staying engaged in
23 education and it was good to have this data so that
24 our school leaders know which families need which
25 supports and in closing, I will just say and I want

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2 to follow up on Lauren's statement just a moment ago
3 but I want to just revisit the staff that are in our
4 shelters and I want to give you know, a note of
5 gratitude to Commissioner Banks and the team at the
6 Department of Homeless Services because our nonprofit
7 providers of our family shelters and our DHS staff
8 and our family assistance who are in shelters, they
9 have been going door to door. They have been making
10 sure that families know how to log on. I mean, I
11 know I still have to call my kids sometimes when I
12 get bounced off the Wi-Fi signal or my Bluetooth is
13 connecting to somewhere else. When you have multiple
14 people in a single apartment, it is confusing and it
15 can be complicated. And we are really trying to
16 empower families to learn from one another with the
17 staff that are in the shelters to make those
18 connections and support them.

19 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you so much Chris. I
20 would just add that many schools have that they may
21 not call wellness calls. When I was a principal
22 there was an expectation for I am sorry, if you could
23 just go off of mute Chris. Thank you.

24 When I was a principal, we had practices in our
25 schools where our staff members would contact

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2 families on a consistent basis. The expectation was
3 a weekly call and it was a call to yes, to check in
4 on families and also to share good news. That was a
5 great opportunity to share good news to talk about
6 competency, skills that we were focused on within our
7 classrooms. Many schools have advisory programs.
8 They have kids protocols and then they have school
9 based support teams and I talked earlier about the
10 multitiered system of support. And what happens with
11 the multitiered system of support, if everyone – if
12 you think about it from the perspective of just
13 visualize a triangle right now if you can. Just join
14 me for a minute in this journey.

15 If you visualize a triangle and you think through
16 the foundation of that triangle, at the base of that
17 triangle, every school is working to provide
18 foundational supports for every young person. And
19 the foundational support may look at our schools like
20 the ruler program for example, where young people
21 have mood readers and schools will build that in as a
22 way for young people to share their feelings and
23 share their experiences and what they are going
24 through and really foster communication in a safe,
25 supportive environment with a caring adult and their

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2 peers where teachers have a way to check in on the
3 wellness of young people. It can happen through a
4 restorative circle within a classroom where as often
5 a time I remember a school that we visited in
6 District 18 and it was a time for young people to
7 share their successes but also share their challenges
8 as well and the young people would come together and
9 support each other during challenging times and then
10 celebrate each other during successful times.

11 We also see these kinds of practices through
12 Stanford Harmony where we have protocols such as
13 where there is a classroom meeting or a buddy up,
14 where there is one on one interaction in relationship
15 building. We see it in classrooms as a former
16 teacher, many of our teachers, they have writing
17 prompts for young people to be able to write things
18 that they are experiencing or collaborative work that
19 young people maybe engaged in the classroom.

20 So, really building those skills across a
21 classroom or a school community, those foundational
22 skills to ensure that young people can be successful.
23 And then, we also know that you know based on those
24 kinds of assessment, there may be more targeted
25 supports that young people need and those would be

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2 tiered to supports, small group or classroom or even
3 top tier supports, supports that maybe necessary like
4 one on one counseling or clinical social work.

5 So, these protocols are really important to have
6 and live in a school. We describe them as wellness
7 checks and you know, like I said, we really thought
8 through the protocol that we saw as a promising
9 practice within the office of community schools and
10 their work with students in shelters in particular.
11 We put this practice within our Bridge to School
12 plan. Resources that we provided in advance of
13 school reopening this school year to talk more about
14 what a wellness call entails. Questions to ask,
15 considerations that the practitioner, the teacher,
16 the social worker, the school leader should have as
17 they really think about engaging with families in
18 that way because often times families are sharing
19 very personal information and we want to ensure that
20 it is done in a way that you know is caring with a
21 great sense of empathy and understanding to what a
22 family is experiencing.

23 So, I just wanted to share a little bit more, so
24 that you can see how these kinds of practices are
25 embedded within school systems instructors, like a

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2 school based support team or an advisory group or a
3 kid talk group and how schools will work together to
4 collect data and make determinations about when more
5 support is needed. And then as we find out
6 information like Chris shared centrally, it informs
7 us as it relates to the resources that we share with
8 schools or the training that we should pose for
9 parent coordinators to make sure that you know they
10 are trained and then they have the skill set and
11 expertise necessary to interact with our parents and
12 our families.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, Deputy Chancellor and I
14 appreciate very, very powerful stuff and anecdotally
15 I want to share with you in my conversation with
16 school communities. There are some schools that are
17 very innovative where every member of their staff
18 becomes a case worker. Where they are responsible
19 for a group of kids and they call them once a week to
20 check up on them to see how they are doing and during
21 the course of those calls, they find out a lot of
22 important and concerning information and they try to
23 respond within the school community.

24 But then I hear some cases where there is not
25 really connections being made. One parent reached

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2 out to me that their school just does robocalls. So,
3 just if we can just have a clear you know, is there
4 an expectation or any type of requirement on a school
5 by school basis for proactive communication, not just
6 during parent teacher conferences you know through
7 Zoom but communication with kids beyond a device, if
8 they even have a device, to see how our children are
9 doing. And I share this because we did get that
10 data, got spring attendance which was deeply
11 concerning where a number of our kids, predominantly
12 our communities of color, were showing you know, low
13 connections, low engagement rates because many of
14 them still did not have access to devices or live
15 internet and so, what is the expectation now of our
16 school communities as far as wellness calls or
17 outreach, whatever the terminology is.

18 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Yeah, there is absolutely an
19 expectation for outreach to our families, especially
20 when students are not engaging. There is an
21 expectation that schools are making those connections
22 and we have seen significant gains over time this
23 year as it relates to our attendance data. And even
24 in the spring, there was certainly even more of an
25 expectation for the wellness calls or the wellness

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2 checks. We also use the survey data. You mentioned
3 that data earlier to kind of take a look at what we
4 were learning from the survey data. That information
5 was shared with you know, across the Administration
6 but then also with superintendents to be able to have
7 targeted outreach to schools based on the information
8 that they were receiving in that data. And then to
9 provide support, support with strategies, support
10 with resources. As I shared during testimony, we,
11 you know, knew that we had to have a support the
12 supporter kind of training because our adults were
13 dealing with so much and had to really be thoughtful
14 about selfcare during this time.

15 Kenyatte is on but he always shares that we need
16 our adults to put on their own oxygen mask, just like
17 you would when you take a flight, they tell you know,
18 if there is a crisis or something happening to put on
19 your own oxygen mask first before you help others.
20 We took that same approach through the supporter
21 training and making sure that our adults had what
22 they needed to be able to support our young people
23 and our families. But with that survey data that we
24 administered back in the spring, we had over 100,000
25 young people who responded and we were able to build

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2 in systems for superintendents to be able to support
3 schools when we were seeing trouble and indicators
4 and then celebrate schools when we were seeing really
5 great work happening as well. We are gearing up for
6 another survey, so we can continue to be reflective
7 about our practices and make adjustments in real time
8 based on what we are seeing in the field. And we
9 continue to do that work, we are committed to it.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, Deputy Chancellor, I
11 want to share with you very quickly because I am
12 mindful of time, some of the things that I took notes
13 on feedback from wellness calls that educators have
14 conducted in our city schools. One of the common
15 concerns educators have heard, is the issue of hot
16 meals. A number of our students are sharing with our
17 school staff that the DOE and the Learning Bridges
18 and Learning Labs basically provide cold food and in
19 some cases it is a partially frozen sandwich. In
20 some cases in the Learning Lab programs, I have heard
21 literally, no exaggeration, a slice of bread because
22 there was issues with delivery.

23 And students have asked for hot food, hot meals
24 and some teachers have asked their principals, can
25 the school use school money to order pizza to deliver

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2 to their students because they would like to have a
3 hot meal. Principals were told they cannot use
4 school money to purchase hot food for their students.
5 Is that accurate, the school can not use school money
6 to purchase hot food for their students? And number
7 two, which is the broader, bigger question, is there
8 a plan to provide hot meals for our students in
9 school – whether it is Grab and Go, whether it is
10 Learning Bridges, Learning Labs, is there a plan to
11 provide our kids hot food?

12 And I just want to give context, the City of New
13 York contracts with food vendors to provide hot meals
14 for seniors, Meals on Wheels programs, I heard about
15 some of the Early Childhood programs and I am very
16 mindful and I am actually very grateful to our
17 extraordinary school food workers who are hero's,
18 essential workers every day. That they have issues
19 in terms of space and there is work safety issues
20 within the kitchens, I get that but many of the
21 programs for seniors are prepared offsite and then
22 delivered and shipped to seniors. Is there a plan in
23 place for hot meals for our kids?

24 LASHAWN ROBINSON: So, we are absolutely working
25 on developing the option for schools to be able opt

1
2 into hot meals for students learning in person. I
3 had an opportunity to see the menu next week and we
4 will be offering hot meals there and we also know,
5 like you said, I appreciate you acknowledging the
6 work of our school food team. They have done an
7 incredible job. They have served over 65 million
8 meals since March, which is just unheard of. And our
9 priority of course is making sure that students have
10 healthy nutritious meals but you know, we have heard
11 your feedback. I really appreciate you; I do. You
12 stay in touch with your school communities and you
13 raise you know, issues and concerns to our attention
14 so that we can make an adjustments in real time and
15 we continue to hear from our school community and
16 make adjustments in real time.

17 So, I know that there will be an option for
18 schools to opt into hot meals. That's something that
19 we are working on right now and in regards to using
20 fair student funding to purchase food, Lauren is on
21 and may be able to provide more insight there. I
22 would have to defer to that team who may know a
23 little bit more and if not, we will certainly get
24 that information back to you.

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, I appreciate it
3 and so there is a plan or something in the works to
4 start having a hot meal access at some point in the
5 near future, is that right?

6 LASHAWN ROBINSON: We are working on developing
7 that option right now.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I would appreciate any
9 information. Thank you Deputy Chancellor for that.
10 What about the issue of the Metro Card which I raised
11 earlier where there is a policy put in place that in
12 my view penalize students, high school students from
13 not getting a Metro Card if they opted for full
14 remote and as I mentioned earlier, a number of high
15 school students have taken on additional
16 responsibilities of working now helping their
17 parents, families pay rent and they have no choice
18 and then some kids in my district, use the Metro Card
19 to go to a location to get internet service. Are you
20 aware of this issue and is there a plan to reverse it
21 to give our kids access to Metro Cards?

22 LASHAWN ROBINSON: I was made aware as soon as
23 you shared that information. I started looking into
24 this immediately and I believe students are able to
25 receive Metro Cards when they have internships, they

1
2 need to go somewhere you know, to be able to study,
3 to access Wi-Fi or for different issues like that but
4 I can certainly get you the firm answer and make sure
5 that or principals have the guidance that they need
6 to make those important decisions.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I would appreciate that and
8 final question and then I will turn to my colleagues
9 for questions. Do we have data Deputy Chancellor on
10 I think you mentioned earlier about the survey
11 results. Can we get the results that you have as
12 well over to us, so we could see that?

13 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Absolutely.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah, because I am very
15 interested in that. The number – do you have with
16 you the number of students currently with a grade of
17 course in progress? And I ask that for a number of
18 reasons. This is sort of a holding grade. There are
19 many kids, no fault of their own, do not have a
20 device, do not have instruction, do not have access
21 and rather than assign a failing grade or an
22 incomplete, this is a holding grade. A number of
23 kids are still in that holding pattern going into
24 summer, going into this new school year. I am
25 interested in knowing, what is the total number of

1
2 the students in the course and progress universe and
3 of that number, how many of them still don't have a
4 device? And don't have access to really meaningful
5 instruction?

6 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Yes, that is an important
7 concern of this Administration, ensuring that we are
8 providing all of the necessary supports for our young
9 people. We really ramped up in terms of wrap around
10 support. Social-emotional supports for young people
11 but then also ensuring that they are able to be
12 successful academically and carefully tracking and
13 monitoring the students who receive the mark of
14 course in progress. So, that work is happening in
15 terms of tracking and monitoring in our teaching and
16 learning office. The Chief Academic Officer's team
17 and the Office of First Deputy Chancellor where
18 superintendents are involved and they are doing the
19 data and making sure that young people are completing
20 those classes.

21 I know that information is available and will be
22 shared with Council, so we can certainly get that to
23 you and I also know, you know I don't have that exact
24 number but when we track it, I have seen things over
25 time. I am aware that some gains over time in terms

1
2 of students being able to actually complete those
3 courses and earn the credit for that class.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah, I am deeply concerned
5 about this Deputy Chancellor because a number of our
6 students as you know, have not had access to any
7 meaningful instruction for quite some time. A number
8 of our kids with IEP's have not had all of their IEP
9 requirements met. I mentioned before about adaptive
10 technology, there are other challenges I have heard
11 about the ICT classes during the remote days and so
12 forth, there was still a severe teacher shortage when
13 schools were still open particularly in high school
14 and middle schools.

15 So and to my colleagues and to the public, these
16 are the long term impacts because these are the marks
17 or the grades that stay on records and no fault of
18 their own, our kids should not be penalized and
19 punished for things that are not their fault beyond
20 their control and quite frankly the responsibility of
21 government to get right.

22 So, I am very worried about this. Deputy
23 Chancellor, I don't know if you wanted to elaborate.

24 LASHAWN ROBINSON: I just wanted to share that
25 you know the work that's gone into teaching and

1
2 learning really providing support for teachers to be
3 able to excel whether during full remote or in
4 blended format has been tremendous. I know Larry
5 Pendergast is on today. Like I shared, that he has
6 been carefully monitoring you know, this process in
7 ensuring that students receive what they need to be
8 successful in those courses but also, just be
9 successful academically as they continue to learn
10 during this pandemic. I would really like to give
11 Larry an opportunity to share more about their
12 outstanding work.

13 LAWRENCE PENDERGAST: Thank you Deputy
14 Chancellor. Yes, to answer your question Chair
15 Treyger, it is a big concern for all of us. We do
16 know the Office of the First Deputy Chancellor, the
17 superintendents, the principals have made this one of
18 their highest priorities. Making sure that these
19 students are identified. That there is consistent
20 outreach going on. That they own completely the
21 support for these students and making sure they have
22 access to digital curriculum. Access to all the
23 resources and teachers to go in the need in order to
24 finish this work and complete their access going
25 forward for the year ahead.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right and isn't January a
3 deadline for students to make up work to get that
4 course and progress rate off of their report card?
5 Isn't January a key month?

6 LAWRENCE PENDERGAST: Yes, that is a key month
7 January 31st the students are asked to finish the
8 work that they have to do. The annex does not stay
9 on their transcript, it does convert into a no credit
10 grade but what is important is that they successfully
11 complete the course, right. So, there is a
12 significant push on now to make sure that happens.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, how are they supposed
14 to – if a student doesn't have a device or reliable
15 internet and they have to wait four to five weeks,
16 how are they supposed to complete a course by January
17 31st?

18 LAWRENCE PENDERGAST: Right, exactly, so there
19 are a couple ways. One, if there is no device, they
20 cannot be penalized for that. So, we would have to
21 revisit you know, reimplement an arbitrary deadline
22 if they physically do not have the option to complete
23 the course.

24 When it comes to support for students without
25 devices, schools have been creating a lot of

1
2 resources in order to help them make sure they finish
3 the courses and centrally, we have – recognizing that
4 the school needed additional resources, our
5 instructional team centrally have created from open
6 educate additional resources, daily lessons and get
7 grade K-12 to in the core content areas, that
8 teachers can use – they can print out and they can
9 make sure the students have the access they need,
10 resources that are made available to teachers a week
11 in advance in order to support them. But we also
12 realize and one of the lessons learned from spring
13 and you will know this as a former teacher, that the
14 students need to be supported by their teachers. And
15 so, we are trying to resource the teachers in the
16 schools to make sure that they are able to see these
17 students across the line.

18 They are as you said, our most vulnerable
19 students and we are going to make sure we get it
20 done.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, I also want to just
22 note that and I think Deputy Chancellor, I think we
23 spoke about this also recently back. For those
24 students who don't have a device, don't have
25 internet, don't have access, that they are not

1
2 penalized, not just in terms of academics but also in
3 terms of calls to ACS and to their families. I know
4 that DOE made a shift in their policy where schools
5 have to call the families before anything is
6 triggered with ACS but my question is during you
7 know, the course of that call, families share that we
8 don't have internet. We don't have you know,
9 reliable internet, what is the plan to respond to
10 concerns like that and also, part two of this, I am
11 hearing from a lot of parents particularly parents of
12 young children, where remote learning is not working.
13 Children are having difficulty and quite frankly even
14 adults have difficulty staying in front of a device
15 all day. I think many politicians have had issues
16 adjusting to this life and what is the plan to
17 support our young children, our most vulnerable
18 children and also parents and families who are
19 juggling work, other critical responsibilities while
20 trying to help their children with remote learning?
21 Can anyone speak to that?

22 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Yes, I can start to address
23 the ACS issue and the Larry can weigh in on supports
24 for our youngest learners. With remote learning, we
25 have Chair Treyger made it abundantly clear that we

1
2 understand that school have a responsibility as
3 mandated reporters of abuse and neglect and that's
4 under New York Social Services Law and the New York
5 Family Courts Act. Any additional delay in reaching
6 families or connecting with families from remote
7 instruction alone is not a cause to report
8 educational neglect.

9 We shared this with schools in the spring and we
10 have done so more than once this school year because
11 we do want the calls to ACS to occur when a school is
12 delaying, initial delay. There is no internet
13 service, not have a device. That is not a reason to
14 report educational neglect. We have worked closely
15 with our partners at ACS and we have absolutely
16 provided this guidance to schools.

17 Larry, do you want to talk about support for our
18 youngest learners?

19 LAWRENCE PENDERGAST: Sure. Young and old we
20 have done a lot. First of all, we came forward with
21 over the summer working closely with Deputy
22 Chancellor Robinson's team in making sure we are
23 integrating our academic instructional supports with
24 social-emotional learning supports. Our teams met
25 all summer, did four day trainings for principals in

1
2 July. Also, set up a nine day professional learning
3 period in the fall and the overwhelming message that
4 we wanted to send to schools was that social-
5 emotional learning starts in the classroom and that
6 there is no academic success without social-emotional
7 health. And it is a tribute to Deputy Chancellor
8 Robinson and her team that she champion this cause
9 early on, saw the importance of trauma informed care
10 and we made sure we integrated it into our
11 pedagogical [LOST AUDIO 1:21:11].

12 Professional learning and sent a message in
13 September, it would be putting social-emotional
14 learning first. When it comes to the remote learning
15 side, the technical side, there have been hundreds,
16 hundreds of trainings for teachers that have taken
17 place with tens of thousands of teachers trained and
18 there have been some collaboration in two ways in
19 approaching the work.

20 We understand that parents are no longer partners
21 in the learning process, in the sense of after school
22 students go home and then parents support what
23 happens in school. They are now co-teaching right
24 alongside our children.

25

1
2 And so, we have for example, with Early Childhood
3 Education, the division of Early Childhood Education
4 created guidance for families, very specific about
5 what they can do, how much scene time is appropriate
6 for each child which is not a lot at such an early
7 age, activities they can do with their students and
8 it included guidance to destress as a parent.

9 Because having one and two and three or four
10 children, trying to do remote learning with the
11 students is extremely stressful for the parent as
12 well as the students and they gave very specific
13 guidance as far as self-regulation and emotional
14 health for the parents as well.

15 We did set up for our teachers, priority
16 standards so they were understanding some students
17 had interrupted, many had interrupted education in
18 the spring, that they would be focused on the
19 priority standards from the following year and the
20 priority standards at grade level as students came
21 in.

22 We also added resources such as blended learning
23 considerations which offered by content area.

24 English, math, science, social studies but also in
25 the arts, the CTE guidance for teachers of what

1
2 practices they should use in an in-person setting
3 versus in a remote setting and included – in the
4 remote setting, we have even said, hey, these certain
5 strategies are going to be better suited for
6 synchronize instruction and others when you are not
7 engaging directly with a student in a live setting,
8 we have activities that are best suited for
9 asynchronous –

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, Lawrence if I may
11 because I want to turn to my colleagues but of the
12 300,000 students or so families that chose blended,
13 some in-person services, of the 300,000 how many of
14 them are elementary school students? Do you have
15 that with you?

16 LAWRENCE PENDERGAST: I don't have that data with
17 me but we can get you that data sir.

18 LASHAWN ROBINSON: We definitely have that data.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right and of that – and
20 also, just to add to that data request, of the
21 300,000 how many of students have IEP's? How many
22 children live in temporary housing? How many
23 children are in foster care? Because it is my
24 understanding that a significant number of that,
25 where children in elementary school, our younger

1
2 children, anecdotally, I heard from some of the
3 larger high school buildings that they have been
4 largely empty because there is a severe teacher staff
5 shortage and kids that were promised in-person
6 instruction were getting virtual study hall because
7 there is not enough teachers to teach. But many of
8 the kids who opted for in-person, blended, hybrid,
9 were our youngest children, our most vulnerable
10 children which is something that we have, I mean,
11 certainly my office has tried to center the entire
12 time to give them more options.

13 And I think that through these wellness calls or
14 again, the terms the school use, I think we are
15 hearing a lot from folks particularly from these
16 families that they need more services. They are
17 having difficulties dealing with homelessness, with
18 mental health crisis, with food insecurity, housing
19 insecurity and they rely on our school system to be a
20 sense of stability, to be a safety net, to be a
21 support network.

22 And that's why I think that we are failing to
23 meet their needs and I know that many in the DOE
24 understand that and we just have to do better. But I
25 am going to turn it over now to my colleagues. We

1
2 have also been joined, I just want to note by Council
3 Members Salamanca, Council Member Brannan, Council
4 Member Ulrich and I will turn to Kalima to call on
5 members for questions and members, we have five
6 minutes on the clock. Thank you very much.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair Treyger. I
8 will now call on Council Members in the order they
9 have used the Zoom raise hand function. We will be
10 limiting Council Member questions and answers to five
11 minutes. The Sergeant at Arms will keep a timer and
12 will let you know when your time is up.

13 First, we have Council Member Borelli followed by
14 Council Member Barron and then Council Member Levin.
15 I will turn it to Council Member Borelli.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Thank you and good
17 morning.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Thank you. The Mayor
20 just said on the Brian Lera Show that there has been
21 no testing and tracing link that they found back to
22 gyms and restaurants. So, I am just wondering since
23 in-person learning has been going on for a few months
24 now and testing and tracing has been going on,
25 whether the Testing and Tracing Corp. has found links

1
2 to school clusters and how many and what is the data
3 you received?

4 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you so much for that
5 question. We absolutely work close with the test and
6 trace team. They have worked collaboratively with
7 the Department of Buildings to set up the situation
8 room which has been a tremendous resource. We have
9 extremely strict protocols in our schools and a very
10 high standard. Whenever there is a case in school,
11 we move immediately to close that classroom and close
12 contact. If we have two cases outside of the same
13 classroom, we move immediately to close the school.
14 Test and Trace is very much involved and we have not
15 seen many clusters in schools. I know that
16 information is available as we work you know to be
17 transparent. It is posted on our website. We
18 immediately share communication across the entire
19 school community and the schools campus, so we have
20 worked to be very transparent there. As there is
21 information, more targeted information Council Member
22 that we can provide, we would be more than happy to
23 do so.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: So, the Testing and
25 Tracing Corp, haven't really found any clusters that

1
2 have been spread through schools. That's kind of
3 what you are indicating. You know the CDC came out
4 yesterday and recommended schools don't shut. UNICEF
5 has come out and said schools shouldn't shut. The
6 World Health Organization has said schools probably
7 shouldn't shut. I mean, the last dozen or so peer
8 reviewed medical journal articles that have come out
9 have concluded schools shouldn't shut on a mass. The
10 governments of foreign countries, the governments of
11 neighboring states have indicated that schools
12 shouldn't shut.

13 So, can you just tell us specifically and by the
14 way, there is an article in the Daily News saying
15 that the city's Health Department also said that
16 schools perhaps shouldn't shut. So, can you just
17 identify for us who within the DOE actually made the
18 call to set the 3 percent limit and whether we stand
19 by that?

20 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Actually, our health and
21 safety protocols were set by the Department of Health
22 and the city doctors. These are some of the most,
23 like I shared rigorous protocols and very cautious
24 protocols. As a Deputy Chancellor and also as a
25 parent, my son as many of you know, he is now a 12th

1
2 grader in our school system. He has been attending
3 some of his core classes -

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Right, what I am trying
5 to get at though is I want to find the person because
6 there seems to be some consensus that schools are not
7 super spreaders. Our own data from Testing and
8 Tracing Corp. indicates that they are not super
9 spreaders. We are doing irreparable harm to children
10 by not providing them with even a day or two of in-
11 person education. So, I would like to know who is
12 the person who made the call to limit the positivity
13 rate at 3 percent to trigger the school closing, so
14 the media, the press, other medical professionals can
15 evaluate that persons medical qualifications,
16 scientific qualifications and can make our own
17 [INAUDIBLE 1:30:37].

18 LASHAWN ROBINSON: The DOE, we are not, as I
19 shared, the Department of Health. Along with the
20 city's doctors that they are responsible for all of
21 our protocols. We are not as you know, medical
22 professionals but we do appreciate the partnership
23 for the work. I appreciate them as I was sharing
24 previously as both a parent and a DOE employee,
25 really having a very high standard. Once that

1
2 standard was set and it has been set for quite some
3 time now.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Yeah but I mean, about
5 that high standard. So, I mean I am reading the
6 CDC's COVID guidelines and the standard is so high
7 that our transmission rate is actually in the green.
8 Like, you know they have the chart like everything
9 else where it goes from green to the red and we are
10 in the green level. But our standard is so high,
11 despite being the green level which the title of
12 which is lower risk of transmission in schools, we
13 have decided to close schools down.

14 So, again, I am just trying to figure out, you
15 are saying it is the Health Department, that's fine.
16 That's not what they have speaking sort of off the
17 record to reporters on but my concern is that we
18 should identify who is making these calls and -

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Evaluate whether that is
21 the best call because I think that there is also
22 clear consensus that we are doing irreparable harm to
23 children by giving them essentially what is going to
24 amount to almost a full year of not wholly
25 encompassing in-person education and I am afraid for

1
2 my son who is a kindergartener, his peers. You know,
3 obviously you can see I am angry but a lot of parents
4 are very angry about the same thing and I just wanted
5 to be the one to just say this and confront you guys
6 with it, so that at least someone is vocalizing to
7 you and I am sure many of you know this also and I am
8 not saying you are not aware but you had to hear it.
9 That many parents are really concerned about their
10 childrens development and education and there should
11 be more of an emphasis on reopening as robust of an
12 in-person program as possible. Thank you.

13 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Council Member, first of all,
14 I appreciate your passion that you are presenting
15 this morning. No one wants schools to reopen more
16 than this team. We have worked diligently from March
17 when schools first closed to reopen schools. We have
18 been able to withstand significant opposition to
19 reopening because we knew that it was in the best
20 interest of our children and our school community.
21 We have so many speakers and parent and school
22 leaders who wanted schools to be reopen and we are
23 going to work quickly. However, in partnership with
24 our health partners to continue to prioritize safety
25 but we will get our schools reopened as quickly as we

1
2 possibly can while continuing to put health and
3 safety first. So, I thank you and I appreciate your
4 passion.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Thank you Deputy
6 Chancellor.

7 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Absolutely.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah and before we turn
9 over to the next Council Member, I just want to note
10 folks who know me, I am not shy to call out the Mayor
11 and hold him accountable but I have to note for the
12 record to certainly to my colleagues and to the
13 public watching that there were preexisting
14 conditions plaguing our school system prior to the
15 pandemic that also inhibit our ability to fully
16 reopen the way folks would like to fully reopen. It
17 is hard to comply with social distancing measures
18 when we still have schools that are very overcrowded.

19 The fight to reduce class size is not new. The
20 fight to build more schools is not new. The fight
21 for more nurses is not new. The fight for more
22 social workers is not new. That is where New York
23 State holds a lot of responsibility as well and
24 that's why I will call out those from the state that
25 like to lecture the city about school decisions when

1
2 they in fact have starved the school system not in
3 compliance with the CFD decision over a decade ago
4 that disproportionately hurts our most vulnerable
5 children.

6 So, all the state leaders who like to speak about
7 the damage done to our most vulnerable children, they
8 had a big part in this because they have starved and
9 short changed our kids for many, many years. So, I
10 just want to note that there are preexisting
11 conditions plaguing our school system that also
12 impact our ability.

13 With that, I will turn it back to Kalima. Thank
14 you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair Treyger.
16 Now, we are going to turn it to Council Member Barron
17 for some questions.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you Mr. Chair and
19 thank you to the panel for coming.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will begin.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Can you hear me? Okay
22 and in full disclosure, I want to let everyone know
23 that Deputy Chancellor Robinson and I have a common
24 ancestor in the person of William Robinson who was my
25

1
2 grandfather and was her great grandfather. So, I
3 just want to put that on the record.

4 I appreciate the work that is being done by the
5 Chancellor and his staff. They have got a yeoman's
6 task before them and we have got to make sure that we
7 get it done and we get it right. We know that this
8 pandemic has exposed the systemic racism that exists
9 in all of the entities and institutions in our
10 society and it has exacerbated the disparity that we
11 see between Black and Brown children and others in
12 our educational system.

13 So, I have just a couple of questions. We are
14 talking about social-emotional health and wellness
15 and we know that certainly children in a social
16 setting of a classroom are encouraged, they interact,
17 they develop friendships, they learn how to temper
18 themselves in the appropriate situations and it is
19 critical that that happen. Now, during this pandemic
20 when there are children who are not in that setting,
21 we have got to look at the setback that children are
22 experiencing by getting a paper package of work and
23 not having a connection via the internet because the
24 Wi-Fi is not working, the spotty Wi-Fi and the damage
25 that's being done to the children who maybe gaining

1
2 academically, which I question but who certainly are
3 missing out on that socialization that occurs in a
4 classroom which is an important factor of learning
5 that takes place in the classroom.

6 We have got to get those 60,000 devices without
7 delay. We have got to call the Mayor to get the
8 money to get the devices and get them into the hands
9 of children, particularly those children who have
10 other kinds of hurdles that they have to pass.
11 Children with IEP's, children who are in temporary
12 shelters where the Wi-Fi just doesn't work. We have
13 got to do that. I can't emphasize that enough. It
14 is not good enough to say it is coming. We have got
15 to get it immediately. Post haste with all delivered
16 speed. We have got to have a date certain by which
17 we will say every child has a functioning device.
18 Every child is getting the assistance that they need
19 or their parents need to help them use these devices.

20 You know, I had to get on Zoom. You know, I
21 missed the Skype generation and just jumped to the
22 Zoom generation. We have got to get more of an
23 opportunity, whether that be through mobile sites
24 where parents can go and get assistance in learning
25 how fully to operate these devices. We have got to

1
2 get 60,000 devices into the hands of all of our
3 children or we will be at a worse place when we
4 finish this pandemic. It said the new norm will try
5 to bring us closer together. No, it is going to keep
6 us further apart in terms of Black and Brown children
7 not having those devices.

8 And as we talk about schools being closed and the
9 disinfecting that has to take place either in a
10 particular classroom or a school based on the
11 infection rate, where do those funds come from? Is
12 the principal taking those funds out of their school
13 budget or is the DOE providing the funds for that
14 cleaning?

15 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you so much. It is
16 great to see you during the hearing. I would just
17 also like to share that for everyone that you are
18 going to take it easy on me, on us. You have very
19 high standards for children, as you should and we
20 hear you loud and clear.

21 I am pretty certain that well, let me just start
22 by saying, I hear you loud and clear with ensuring
23 that those 60,000 young people have the devices that
24 they need to be successful. This and higher team, we
25 all hear you loud and clear. That's been a key

1
2 focus, we have talked about this you know, throughout
3 the course of the summer and reopening. Lauren and
4 her team, they have been following up and pushing the
5 vendors to get us what we need. We have been
6 prioritized, we know that many of these devices have
7 been on backorder because of just ordering that's
8 happening across the nation and around the globe
9 really. But we agree with all -

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

11 LASHAWN ROBINSON: We will work to get those
12 devices to our young people. I could not agree more
13 about this pandemic being a pandemic that has really
14 surfaced what in there. So, Chair Treyger, just that
15 we have been dealing with these issues for some time
16 but we have also been dealing with systemic racism
17 for quite some time as well within our school system,
18 within our city and the Chancellor has not been shy
19 about calling it out when its been seen. We will
20 continue to do that important work.

21 I will get back to you on the funds for - I don't
22 know if Lauren is still on if she can respond
23 quickly.

24 LAUREN SICILIANO: Yeah.

25 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Okay, thank you Lauren.

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2 LAUREN SICILIANO: Yes, just to echo what LaShawn
3 said, absolutely we share your urgency on getting
4 those device out and we are doing everything we can
5 to distribute them as quickly as possible and have
6 been and will continue to prioritize our most
7 vulnerable students, including students in shelter
8 and students with IEP's.

9 On the question you asked about the cleaning.
10 So, it was very important to us that all of those
11 costs be covered centrally. So, those costs do not
12 come out of the schools budget.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, great thank you and
14 thank you Mr. Chair and thank you to the panel.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member
16 Barron. We have also been joined by Council Member
17 Robert Cornegy. With that, we will turn it to
18 Council Member Levin for some questions.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very much. I am
21 out with my one and a half year old right now, so we
22 are out on a walk. So, thank you Deputy Chancellor
23 for your testimony today. I want to drill down a
24 little bit more on the 60,000 devices, especially as
25 it relates to how we are tracking them. How we are

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2 tracking the students that don't have them and
3 particularly those students in temporary housing. I
4 spoke with Department of Homeless Services in recent
5 days as the Chair of the General Welfare Committee
6 and you know, we are looking at the end of the
7 academic year likely for when there will be the Wi-Fi
8 in every family shelter.

9 That's a very large undertaking, not the kind
10 that can be done in a matter of weeks. So, those
11 children that don't have working devices in shelter
12 where there is no Wi-Fi, that's a desperate
13 situation.

14 So, first question is how is it that we are
15 tracking who doesn't have a working device?

16 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you so much for your
17 question. Lauren is on and I know she has that
18 information and she has been working closely with CHS
19 and our other partners in addressing this issue.

20 LAUREN SICILIANO: Yes, thank you for unmuting
21 me. Thank you Council Member Levin for the question
22 and happy to share the work that we are doing to
23 ensure that our students in shelter have access to
24 LTE enabled devices.

1
2 So, as I think you know, we set up a dedicated
3 help desk, so that families who have an iPad that
4 isn't working or they are not able to connect, they
5 can call our help desk and we are replacing those
6 devices for any connectivity issue.

7 So, we are continuing to do that and as I
8 mentioned earlier, DSS and their providers, we are
9 working closely with them to make sure that they are
10 reaching out to any families who have students in our
11 system. So, if there are any iPad issues that they
12 receive, they report those to us and we can address
13 them.

14 Broadly speaking though, I just want to make sure
15 it is clear that one of the really important ways
16 that we are tracking these devices, each device is
17 assigned to individual students and every school has
18 an interactive report from us with the latest
19 information on the students on their roster who has
20 indicated that they need a device and how that need
21 is being met. Whether it is through a schools device
22 or one that we are shipping centrally.

23 So, through that, we are able to have really
24 clear information on exactly assigned to which
25

1
2 students, which then helps us troubleshoot when
3 families call in with questions and need support.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Well, right now, there are
5 60,000 students that don't have a device, is that
6 right?

7 LAUREN SICILIANO: Correct.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: So, what are we doing
9 right now for those students since we are all remote?
10 What education are they getting? Are they not
11 getting an education?

12 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Yeah, so, sorry Lauren.

13 LAUREN SICILIANO: No, absolutely, just go.

14 LASHAWN ROBINSON: We have coordinated and work
15 closely with our school communities. The Chancellor
16 has sent out guidance. Superintendents are
17 supporting schools. Principals are working with
18 families to ensure that our young people are
19 receiving the lessons and the activities along with
20 resources ranging from textbooks and other materials
21 that are necessary for our people to be successful
22 during this time. We are working diligently to get
23 those devices and as Lauren has shared, our Deputy
24 Chief Academic Officer is also on Larry Pendergast,
25 he spoke about resources that have been shared with

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2 schools and how we have been working collaboratively
3 to make sure that every student can engage
4 academically. We understand that we must have these
5 devices and will work diligently to get every single
6 device that they need to be successful academically.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, thank you Deputy
8 Chancellor, I just have one other question which is
9 about the Learning Bridges sites. The Mayor had
10 announced when they first announced that this was
11 going to be an option for families. The capacity of
12 100,000 for Learning Bridges. What is the capacity
13 now and obviously it is not going to be 100,000 and I
14 want to know why we are not at 100,000. I have
15 actually heard from particular landlords that they
16 have offered space and have not been – those offers
17 have not been taken up. So, how many spots in
18 Learning Bridges currently exist?

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

20 LASHAWN ROBINSON: We continue to ramp up with
21 Learning Bridges and our early childhood centers that
22 will continue to operate. Chris Caruso is our
23 partner with the Learning Bridges team. Chris may
24 have that information readily available, Chris?

25 If you could please unmute Chris Caruso.

1
2 CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Thank you Deputy Chancellor
3 Robinson. Yes, Council Member Levin, so currently we
4 have the capacity to serve 40,000 young people in our
5 Learning Bridge programs. We have received
6 applications from 46,000 families so far. So, we are
7 almost meeting the demand that we have received to
8 date.

9 We are actively working to expand that capacity.
10 We have a number of sites in the pipeline right now
11 and we are working very closely; this is a true
12 interagency effort, working closely with our
13 colleagues at the Department of Youth and Community
14 Development and our colleagues at City Hall to
15 identify new spaces so that we can get them ready to
16 board more capacity for students and families.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: So, when do you expect to
18 be at 100,000? Because I am assuming that the demand
19 will go up now that schools have been closed.

20 CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Yes, we too are anticipating
21 an increased amount. We are bringing new sites on
22 every week and we are continuing to grow our
23 capacity.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, I would suggest
25 looking at the Navy yard. I heard from someone there

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2 that they offered a site and haven't heard anything
3 back, so. That's just one indication.

4 CHRIS CARUSO: Thank you, we will follow up with
5 that.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, thank you all very
7 much. Great, thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I will also add Chris and
9 Deputy Chancellor, look at many of your high school
10 buildings because many of them are largely empty.
11 Many of them are reporting five to six percent in-
12 person attendance. There are schools in Brooklyn
13 with rosters of over 3,500 students, about 150 are
14 showing up each day. So, I think there was a
15 proposal earlier this year that tried to use high
16 school space for younger, most vulnerable children
17 but you know, I am going to keep speaking about it
18 because I believe in trying to center equity and
19 safety at the same time.

20 I want to ask, I don't know if Chris knows or
21 Deputy Chancellor, the DOE has an office of adult
22 continuing education. Has anyone taken stock of the
23 technology needs for adults who are enrolled in the
24 DOE's adult continuing education?

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2 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Yes, we absolutely have an
3 office, adult education. Lauren may have that
4 information available; I am not sure.

5 Sergeant at Arms, if you can unmute Lauren.

6 LAUREN SICILIANO: Hi, can everyone hear me?

7 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Yes.

8 LAUREN SICILIANO: Okay, great. Yes, so we have
9 been working with District 79 and our office of Adult
10 and Continued Education and I would be happy to share
11 more detail on that with you. But we have been
12 working with them to understand their device needs
13 and get some additional devices out for their
14 students.

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, Lauren, how many
16 students are enrolled in District 79 in total?

17 LAUREN SICILIANO: I unfortunately don't have the
18 details with me but we would be happy to get you that
19 information.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And are you in receipt, are
21 you aware of requests for technology by adults in the
22 Adult Education program?

23 LAUREN SICILIANO: Yes and we have been working
24 closely with that program to distribute devices.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, the number 60,000 that
3 you said before, that does not include adults in need
4 in the Adult Education program?

5 LAUREN SICILIANO: Correct. That work has been
6 happening separately.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, the number is greater
8 than 60,000, is that correct?

9 LAUREN SICILIANO: We purchased devices for the
10 need. I will need to check back with them on the
11 outstanding need. I don't have that number right in
12 front of me but we have been working closely with
13 them to meet their device needs.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I will take that as a yes
15 Lauren. The number is greater than 60,000 and I also
16 just want to note for the record that there are many
17 kids in our school system who are sharing a device.
18 Because the initial survey that the DOE gave to
19 families in my opinion was flawed. They asked
20 families if you have something at home and if mom or
21 dad and someone had a computer at home, it doesn't
22 mean that everyone has access to it at the same time
23 and equal access to it. So, there are many kids
24 sharing a device and there are also many immigrant
25 families who don't have a device because of the prior

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2 barriers. So, I think the number is far greater and
3 then we are not really factoring in that there are
4 some that still don't have reliable internet. And as
5 I said at the previous hearing, it is shameful to me
6 that City Hall has a franchise agreement with AT&T to
7 provide free Wi-Fi in Central Park. Let me repeat,
8 the City of New York has a franchise agreement with
9 AT&T, a mega company, to provide free Wi-Fi for
10 Central Park goers but no such agreement for our
11 children living in shelter. And I know that that is
12 an agreement that was established by the Bloomberg
13 Administration but it has been continued and
14 perpetuated by the de Blasio Administration. He is
15 the Mayor, he has the power to pick up a phone and
16 call AT&T and say, you know what? Maybe Central
17 Park, you know, folks can have you know, internet
18 service already on their own. Let's move or get
19 infrastructure in place for our most vulnerable
20 children. He has that power and I question whether
21 or not he has even called AT&T or called any of the
22 companies to provide free, reliable internet for all
23 of our families. It is shameful and unacceptable.

24 Kalima, I am sorry, who was the next member to
25 ask questions?

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair Treyger. I
3 would like to say, we said in the opening that we
4 were not allowing for a second round of questioning.
5 So, I am going to turn it back to you Council Member
6 Treyger.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, Deputy Chancellor,
8 there was a report in a publication about children in
9 juvenile centers that were greatly also impacted by
10 the decision to go fully remote where a number of
11 them mentioned that the only way that they can
12 communicate with their instructors is through what's
13 called a text chat, which I am not even sure exactly
14 what that means. Are you familiar with this
15 situation where students are in these juvenile
16 centers, where they don't have access to their
17 instructors and they are texting through some sort of
18 chat?

19 LASHAWN ROBINSON: I don't have that information
20 available. If anyone from the team has been
21 supporting and you would like to share, then that
22 would be helpful. I would like to say, I am happy to
23 partner - like I said, I don't have that information
24 but I understand that for all children regardless to
25 this circumstance, I fundamentally believe and along

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2 with my team that schools must be places of healing,
3 especially now and prior investments in mental health
4 have allowed us to create a foundation to confront
5 this crisis and to be thoughtful and strategic about
6 how we meet the needs of students wherever they are.
7 What ever the circumstances might be. I imagine this
8 text chat and I really don't know what it is about
9 but maybe there is some restrictions in place for
10 some kind of reasons. I will absolutely look into
11 this immediately following this hearing, but I know
12 that we are not starting from scratch you know, due
13 to your advocacy and your support. We have you know,
14 seen social emotional learning and trauma informed
15 care grow across this Administration and I can think
16 right now of some strategies that we would be able to
17 utilize if we have to meet young people where they
18 are in text chat format. But then also to advocate
19 to push that they can have more robust learning
20 environment and to be able to engage at a different
21 level. So, I will absolutely look into that but
22 certainly invite my team in partnering with Tim
23 Lisante, Executive Superintendent Tim Lisante and his
24 team to address these issues.

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2 What I can say is, I am sure Tim Lisante is aware
3 of what you are sharing and he has a phenomenal team,
4 a phenomenal support system and I know that they
5 would be on the frontline supporting this challenge
6 and you know, coming up with solutions.

7 They have been doing work social-emotional
8 learning, mental health and wellness, restorative
9 practices, long before the dimension where we had an
10 opportunity to grow these practices across the
11 system. They have also been some of our first
12 community schools also and now, we have had an
13 opportunity to grow such an important program with
14 demonstrated impact, like community schools across
15 our system.

16 So, we certainly learned a lot from that team and
17 I know that they would be addressing this.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah and I wanted to speak
19 to that student population because a lot of folks
20 enrolled in the adult education programs are folks
21 that really rely on the social safety net. Many of
22 them could not complete school due to societal
23 economic pressures. Many of them had to help their
24 families, help pay rent and were forced to leave
25 school for a number of very painful reasons. A

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2 number of them are also single parents and it was
3 very hard to go to school and manage childcare at the
4 same time and something that I fund in my district
5 with an organization called Opportunities for a
6 Better Tomorrow, that I am very proud of and of
7 course, the pandemic has disrupted some of the
8 services but we fund in Coney Island a free adult
9 education program with free dinner, free childcare
10 and wraparound services and we saw retention rates
11 you know, increase. The students are able to stay
12 and complete the course because we knock down
13 barriers to many of our students and who are a part
14 of our fabric. They are our essential workers, they
15 are keeping our city going and so, I want to just
16 speak to them and make sure that they are included in
17 this population that needs access to device, internet
18 and other critical supports and services and finally
19 Deputy Chancellor, we heard, I am hearing reports
20 that the Mayor was on a radio program this morning
21 talking about a school reopening plan that will be
22 shared at some point next week. Could anyone speak
23 to anything that you are aware of at this time about
24 this and I am going to again reup something that I
25 shared back in July, prioritizing critical in-person

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2 services for our most vulnerable children, our
3 youngest children, children with special needs, our
4 homeless children, children in foster care. Our
5 English language learners and beyond who are in
6 crisis right now and can anyone speak to what the
7 latest is because clearly the Mayor has not been
8 consulting with the City Council.

9 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Such an important question.
10 We are working to return to in-person learning as
11 quickly as possible. I know that the team has been
12 working on reevaluating some of the thresholds that
13 we have but we will share the reopening plan in the
14 coming days. I don't have the timeline; I apologize
15 for that but we have made a commitment to getting our
16 students back in school as quickly as we possibly can
17 and there will absolutely be more to share on this
18 soon.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I would appreciate it and
20 again, I want to just distinguish, I know there are
21 folks within DOE who have been working around the
22 clock and my criticism and my anger and frustration
23 and lie directly with the Mayor and this has been
24 very painful to sit through this but my pain fails in
25 comparison to what families are going through right

1
2 now. And seeing their children losing months of
3 instruction which they are never going to get back.
4 And the last thing I will say Deputy Chancellor,
5 there has been a lot of talk about federal stimulus
6 money and helping support the MTA, which absolutely
7 needs help. Small businesses absolutely need help,
8 they are in crisis as well. I really haven't heard
9 about what the plan is as far as stimulus resources
10 for our schools and I keep hearing about people
11 asking questions about when can we return to a sense
12 of normal back to March or February.

13 We can't go back to February. There were
14 preexisting conditions that were plaguing our school
15 system that inhibited our ability to fully meet the
16 needs of our kids at this moment. When our kids need
17 us the most, we have failed to meet their needs. We
18 can't go back to what got us here in the first place.
19 We need a vision forward and something that I know
20 Deputy Chancellor you and I share and I know Chris
21 Caruso shares and I know this is a big, bold thing to
22 say but every single school must be, should be a
23 community school. Because in many cases, that school
24 nurse in that school building and again, many of our
25 schools did not have a nurse but that school nurse in

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2 that school building might be the only primary
3 healthcare access point for that child and the
4 child's family.

5 In many cases, that school food pantry that is
6 located in the community school, might be the only
7 critical social safety net service for children in
8 that community. So, every school must have full time
9 nurses, full time social workers, full time
10 counselors, critical integrated services. Every
11 school should be a community school and we should
12 know what that cost is and we should give the Mayor,
13 the Governor and the incoming president of the bill
14 and our congress members, our senators, the bill.
15 This is what we need for New York, not just the
16 practical back to February but to move forward to
17 2021 and beyond to better meet the needs of our kids.
18 This to me is an indictment that we have not been
19 able to meet the needs of our kids at a time when our
20 kids need us the most and so, and I hold our
21 government leaders, all of us accountable.

22 But certainly, I think we need to present a plan
23 and a bill to the incoming federal administration, to
24 the new congress, to our state leaders including to a
25 city administration and Deputy Chancellor, I would

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2 appreciate if your team, and we have spoken about
3 this, if we can get a cost estimate of what that
4 would cost, what that would mean to make every single
5 New York City public school a community school.

6 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you so much for saying
7 that. You have said this before, prior to the
8 pandemic. As you know, we have celebrated the
9 success of the Community School Program initiative
10 before the pandemic and I remember you saying it then
11 that every school should be a community school. And
12 that's so important because the community schools
13 have been at the forefront of the work, especially
14 now during this pandemic. They are really designed –
15 they are the schools that we need right now and they
16 are the schools that we will certainly need beyond
17 this pandemic.

18 Those school communities, the work that has been
19 done under this Administration, under the leadership
20 of Chris Caruso and his team, it has been evaluated
21 externally. We have the evidence, we have impact
22 here and really, it has really just been a national
23 model where other school districts at this point and
24 other cities are coming to us to find out more about
25 you know, what we are doing. So, you are dead on

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2 with that and you have always said that and I
3 appreciate you lifting that now.

4 I really would like to give Chris an opportunity
5 to just talk about the work because the wrap around
6 support for a lot of what we discussed today from
7 mental health and wellness, healthcare support to
8 supporting a family who may be experiencing food
9 insecurity or housing insecurity or just dealing with
10 other challenges, the community school model has been
11 essential and an important part of our strategy to do
12 this work well. Chris?

13 CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Thank you LaShawn and thanks
14 to Chair Treyger for your ongoing advocacy. The good
15 news here is that it is not us alone that are
16 thinking about this. In fact, just yesterday, the
17 Brookings Institution in collaboration with our
18 office convened a national taskforce to help guide
19 the Biden Administration on a scaling strategy for
20 community schools. We had former Secretary John
21 King, we had California State Superintendent Tony
22 Thurmond, Linda Darling Hammond. The national
23 thought leaders around education have really been
24 lifting up and saying that in this time, not only
25 during the pandemic but post-pandemic, community

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2 schools are the equity strategy for education. And
3 New York City has led the way, as Deputy Chancellor
4 Robinson said, cities are coming to us to look at the
5 infrastructure that we built. To have over 130,000
6 students enrolled in community schools across the
7 city and to look at the trust that was established in
8 those neighborhoods pre-pandemic, so that those
9 families feel a sense of support, connections and
10 relationships when this crisis hit, we were prepared
11 for that.

12 I just can't help but tell the story of there is
13 a community school in Corona that is in partnership
14 with United Community Schools and their community
15 school director operated a food pantry out of the
16 school every two weeks and when the school shutdown
17 in the spring, it was remarkable to see, there was
18 obviously the need for food increase. And so, they
19 were getting hundreds of families every week and the
20 need, you know they had a great need and so, they had
21 existing relationships with the local hair salon in
22 the neighborhood that had to shutdown and they
23 converted that space to become the community food
24 hub, right across the street from the school. It is
25 that type of nimbleness, it is that type of

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2 responsiveness to community and it is that type of
3 empowerment of partnerships that will help us get
4 through this crisis and hopefully come out stronger
5 on the other end.

6 So, thank you for your advocacy that has been
7 steadfast and I can't thank the principals and
8 community schools directors across the city that come
9 in each and every day to really put our children and
10 family first to help drive this work home.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Chris, in closing, can you
12 speak to the impact of the Mayor advancing still a
13 \$3.16 million cut to community schools and what that
14 means to the program right now?

15 CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: I think that in a time of
16 this financial crisis and I have been a budget
17 director at city agencies in the past. I was you
18 know, in the prior administration during the great
19 recession. We see that every program and every
20 initiative has to absorb some of the reduction. The
21 fact that with your leadership and with the
22 Administration and City Hall and the strong advocates
23 about community based partners to reduce that
24 reduction to 3 percent, \$3 million, I am sorry. To
25 allow 95 percent of the funds to continue flowing is

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2 something that we are working with our providers and
3 our schools to absorb.

4 I think the big question here, as you know, we
5 have an RFP out in the street right now. We had an
6 overwhelming response to that. Over 550 proposals
7 were submitted by community based organizations. The
8 key here is going to be to make sure that the RFP is
9 able to fully fund these programs going forward. We
10 can't incur any additional cuts and that's what we
11 are really hopeful for.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, Chris, I am going to
13 just respectfully disagree that you know, yeah, we
14 are in a financial crisis and we have to make tough
15 choices but I will never understand why the Mayor
16 chose to prioritize a bailout of a private school bus
17 company in the middle of a crisis to the tune of
18 millions and millions of dollars at the expense of
19 programs that you yourself just acknowledged are
20 vital to our kids, like community schools and like
21 the program LTW Learning to Work. Which was so vital
22 for our older students.

23 I don't know where they found the money to bail
24 out a reliant school bus company out of the blue.
25 Just made this announcement and it is going to cost

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2 millions of dollars and I know that the PEP recently
3 postponed a hearing because there are still questions
4 about this, about this contract. But I believe we
5 need to prioritize every dollar for our kids and not
6 for a bailout to a private company in the middle of a
7 financial crisis.

8 So, in total, I have \$3.16 million cut that the
9 Mayor wants to advance for community schools and what
10 is the figure that folks have for LTW as of at this
11 time?

12 LASHAWN ROBINSON: We can certainly work with the
13 CEO's team to get the information for LTW. I can
14 speak first hand as a former Trans fiscal leader with
15 a principal and an assistant principal and a trans
16 fiscal about the importance of those supports for our
17 young people but we will ask to get that information
18 for you.

19 Our Chancellor has really worked with our team,
20 our division to prioritize social-emotion learning
21 and to ensure that this work would be at the
22 forefront and could thrive during this time and
23 that's what we have seen. With the community schools
24 in particular, we have seen that body of work as an
25 incubator of innovation within our school system and

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2 we worked diligently to learn from those practices
3 with a demonstrative impact and to be able to scale
4 those practices across our school system. We have
5 also been intentional and strategic after this
6 division was formed, we looked at the body of work,
7 like our students in temporary housing and our
8 students in shelter supporting some of our most
9 vulnerable, our most resilient young people and we
10 transitioned that body of work to live under the
11 office of community schools so those wraparound
12 supports would be present.

13 So, we have continued to be a champion for this
14 work, both our Chancellor and our Mayor, I must say,
15 believe deeply in the Community Schools Program and
16 work to scale that body of work and I agree 100
17 percent with you about every school being a community
18 school as I shared and said it before and I
19 appreciate that you continue to elevate this
20 important work now. We absolutely appreciate you and
21 your partnership.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Deputy
23 Chancellor. I believe that the Chancellor believes
24 in this work. I am in disbelief that the Mayor would
25 choose to cut these programs when our kids need them

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2 the most and just want to note for the record and
3 those who know me, know I am a very straight shooter
4 about this, this is a top priority for me to restore
5 immediately. As soon as we have a chance for
6 additional budget negotiations, this is a top
7 priority. Community schools, LTW, our kids needs
8 these. I want the public to know in closing,
9 Learning to Work program for our transfer high
10 schools, these are folks, these are counselors, that
11 have literally been lifelines. It is not a program;
12 it is a lifeline for our kids. I know they are young
13 adults but I still call them our kids, lifelines. It
14 is through these connections they learn about kids
15 facing food insecurity, where they have gone into
16 their own pocket to get our children hot food. Where
17 they become case workers to solve housing issues.
18 This is what is on the line right now. There is a
19 number of crisis embedded in this crisis and to
20 choose to target these lifelines, it is unacceptable
21 to me. And I am prioritizing them, just like I did
22 for Fair Student Funding and Single Sheppard program
23 which are also critical to our school and to our
24 children, and these are programs that must be
25 restored. And again, we need a bigger vision and

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2 that's why Deputy Chancellor, you know, whenever you
3 can get us that estimate, every school should be,
4 must be a community school. We cannot go back. We
5 only have to move forward and again; I thank the
6 panel for their testimony and their time here today.
7 Thank you very much.

8 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you so much.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair Treyger. We
10 will now turn to public testimony. Once more, I
11 would like to remind everyone that unlike our typical
12 Council hearings, we will be calling individuals one
13 by one to testify.

14 Council Members who have questions for a
15 particular panelist should use the raise hand
16 function in Zoom and you will be called on after each
17 panel has completed their testimony. For panelists,
18 once your name is called, a member of our staff will
19 unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms will give you the
20 go ahead to begin after setting the timer. All
21 testimony will be limited to two minutes. Please
22 wait for the Sergeant to announce that you may begin
23 before delivering your testimony.

24

25

1
2 The first panelist will be Assembly Member
3 Charles Barron. Assembly Member Charles Barron, you
4 may begin.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin now.

6 CHARLES BARRON: Thank you very much. First, I
7 want to say to Chair Treyger, I couldn't agree with
8 you more on the responsibility of the state. How
9 dare them. How dare they with \$170 plus billion
10 budget, only allocate \$600 million toward a \$4
11 billion debt for campaign for fiscal equity and every
12 state assembly member who voted for that is not
13 voting for our children and you are right, the Mayor
14 is talking about he loves our children, he respects
15 our children, he prioritizes our children. Then put
16 your money where your mouth is. You don't cut a
17 measly \$3 million from a program that is so important
18 when you love our children. The bible says where
19 one's treasure is so lies their heart.

20 So, the Governor and the Mayor are heartless and
21 I would like to say also that the Community School
22 concept is a great one. We met with the Chancellor
23 around that and you are right on target there as well
24 and we were going forward before this pandemic hit.
25 And finally, the Chancellor is caught between and

1
2 rock and three hard places. A bullying, incompetent,
3 arrogant governor who is fighting a Mayor over some
4 political things and the union head of the UFT. This
5 is what this Chancellor has to deal with. The worst
6 thing that happened to our school system is giving it
7 mayoral control, and that was something that the
8 state did as well.

9 If you comb the \$170 million plus budget in the
10 state and the \$88 plus billion budget in the city,
11 don't tell me they don't have \$3 million for our
12 children and don't tell me they don't have money to
13 leave our children out with 60,000 children not
14 having the equipment. And then as you mentioned
15 about Central Park and their getting their stuff.

16 So, this Mayor, this Governor has failed our
17 children. I think we have a good Chancellor trying
18 to do the best he can caught between a rock and these
19 three hard places. Good job Chairman.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Assembly Member
21 and thank you for always, always speaking up for our
22 children. That has been your consistent record in
23 yeoman's words and I truly appreciate that. You have
24 always centered children throughout your career. I
25 appreciate you very much and your outstanding

1
2 colleague and partner in life, Council Member Barron
3 as well. I appreciate you.

4 CHARLES BARRON: I like her too.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair Treyger and
6 thank you Assembly Member Charles Barron. I will now
7 be calling on the next panel to testify Meril
8 Mousoom, Dana Ashley, Karen Alferd. We will be
9 starting with Meril Mousoom, Meril, you may begin.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin now.

11 MERIL MOUSOOM: My name is Meril Mousoom, I am
12 16-years-old and I am from the group Teens Take
13 Charge and Dignity in Schools. In the beginning, I
14 just want to make clear that the timing of this
15 hearing during school hours is not conducive to
16 hearing student voice.

17 The big question of being in the time of the
18 coronavirus is when we are going back to normal but
19 for young people whose childhoods make the basis of
20 who they are as adults, there is no going back to
21 normal. Our lives have been changed forever. We
22 need schools to recognize that the person that we
23 were eight months ago is not the person that we are
24 now and will be for the rest of our lives.

1
2 We have had our childhoods taken away from us.
3 We realize that the federal and even mayoral
4 government has not protected our health sufficiently.
5 For me, I became an adult the moment that our schools
6 went online in our junior year this March. I spent
7 hours glazing into blank space, time passing me by as
8 I submit assignments.

9 I used to be the type of person who would always
10 participate in every class but now I get too scared
11 to turn on my camera and in some of my classes like
12 gym, I am being penalized for it. The only thing
13 that I look forward to every week is my weekly
14 therapy appointment to set up by my school. It is
15 clear as day that we need to make sure that these
16 services are expanded and let students know that they
17 have a therapist available. I should not have had to
18 reach out for a therapist because many students don't
19 even know that they are suffering. We need to make
20 clear to our immigrant and low income families that
21 these services are available and educate students
22 about the importance of mental health from a young
23 age in the school curriculum, so that they understand
24 what they are going through.

1
2 Equity means that this funding for these services
3 need to come from somewhere and it is clear in the
4 midst of a pandemic when we are all just fighting for
5 us and our families for the basic right to live in
6 this world without dying of a disease. We do not
7 need to be criminalized. We do not need a suspension
8 and expulsions when education is our –

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

10 MERIL MOUSOOM: When education is our only way of
11 making sure that we have the luxury of working from
12 Zoom in the future unlike our parents who are
13 essential workers. But most of all, we need a world
14 that recognizes that we, the ones who will carry the
15 trauma of having our most formative years wrecked by
16 this pandemic need investment and that is what I am
17 asking for today.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I want to thank you for
19 your continued powerful and spot on advocacy. Not
20 just for yourself but for your classmates and your
21 peers throughout our school system and I certainly, I
22 want to also apologize to you and to your students
23 about the timings of these hearings as well. I
24 always want to try my best to central student voice.
25 So, point taken and I just, first of all it takes a

1
2 lot of courage to speak up for students even in a
3 class or let alone at a public hearing like this and
4 truly appreciate you. And I would love to continue
5 working with you even beyond the hearing to address
6 many of the serious concerns that you have raised,
7 particularly around the issues of access to mental
8 health counselors and helping students know that
9 resources are available to them and that we need to
10 fight for more resources.

11 Thank you so much. I appreciate you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
13 hearing from Dana Ashley.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin now.

15 DANA ASHLEY: I want to thank the Education
16 Committee and Councilman Treyger for holding this
17 very important hearing. The Positive Learning
18 Collaborative is a joint initiative between the
19 United Federation of Teachers and the New York City
20 Department of Education.

21 We work with schools as partners to end the over
22 reliance on suspensions and build safe and equitable
23 positive environments for all children. Through
24 intensive training in social-emotional support
25 strategies, coaching and courageous conversations, we

1
2 aim to change the mindset of adults from punitive to
3 restorative.

4 We build relationships and we include everyone in
5 a school building from principal to school aid and
6 now we include parents as well. We have been very
7 successful. Pre-COVID our schools saw a 54 percent
8 drop in suspensions, a 44 percent drop in incidents,
9 improvement in ELA and math scores and our survey
10 data consistently show that teachers are more
11 equipped to support students in a more positive way.
12 Now during the pandemic, we turned all of our
13 educator support groups and all of our in-person
14 social-emotional learning, crisis intervention and
15 restorative practices workshops into virtual
16 trainings and support.

17 Our coaching focuses in what educators need most,
18 self-care and strategies to better engage students
19 virtually, build equitable communities and identify
20 students affected most by the trauma of the pandemic.

21 For PLC, the virtual platform in reduction of
22 travel time has actually allowed us to expand our
23 reach. We analyze public data that has detailed the
24 communities where the loss of life and the financial
25 impact from COVID have been most severe and we are

1
2 expanding beyond PLC schools to support educators
3 with our support groups and workshops across the
4 communities that need it most. We are also making
5 these vital supports available to thousands of
6 parents and guardians across the city. They now have
7 access to weekly support groups for grieving
8 families, workshops such as ending the power
9 struggle, how to stop getting in losing battles with
10 your kids. Along with access to our weekly
11 livestreams on self-care and stress reduction. PLC
12 is making a critical difference.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

14 DANA ASHLEY: We are helping school communities
15 cope during this very difficult time and will
16 continue to help them heal when it is over. Thank
17 you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will
19 hear from Karen.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin now.

21 KAREN ALFERD: Good afternoon Chair Treyger and
22 our elected officials. Thank you for giving UFT and
23 our United Community Schools an opportunity to share.
24 Chair Treyger, thank you for your advocacy for
25 community schools. They are uniquely suited to deal

1
2 with the trauma and upheaval created by the pandemic.
3 Our United Community Schools which I will refer to
4 UCS, have been bringing needed resources to our
5 communities, ranging from mental health services to
6 emergency food supplies to academic support for
7 children learning remotely.

8 We engage the parent, community, civic and faith
9 based relationships that we have built over the years
10 to deliver what our students and families need right
11 now. UCS was uniquely situated to help students and
12 families when the COVID-19 crisis struck. Our
13 community school directors and social workers quickly
14 converted our 32 physical schools into online
15 communities and intensify the social-emotional
16 support our educators and staff already provided
17 students and their families.

18 From March indefinitely, September through
19 November our UCS social workers have provided, group
20 and individual counseling, cognitive behavioral
21 therapy, wellness checks, social-emotional lessons
22 and classroom supports.

23 What this might look like; peer mediation, play
24 therapy, art therapy, anger management, coping
25 skills, parents caregiver counseling to name a few.

1
2 Thank you to the Council for your funding to UCS. We
3 have more than doubled the number of mental health
4 professionals in our schools under COVID. We have
5 added online customized professional development
6 trainings for our staff and educators on trauma,
7 including one as recently as yesterday. As well as
8 teaching strategies to assist our staff in the new
9 digital reality. UCS's mission throughout the health
10 crisis remains unchanged, eliminating obstacles to
11 students success.

12 We need your help to continue our work and I want
13 to thank you for this time of letting us speak.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I want to just publicly
15 thank Vice President and the entire UFT. It is
16 important for me to share this once more. Teachers
17 have died in defense of their students. Teachers
18 speak up and fight like hell for their kids. When I
19 was a teacher I understood that before I could ask my
20 students to open a notebook in class, I had to first
21 establish a safe, supportive, learning environment
22 and establish trust in the classroom. And if that
23 cannot be established, it is very hard to advance
24 academic work. And so, up to 80, it could be more

25

1
2 now, DOE employees passed away due to the pandemic,
3 that was as of June.

4 Many educators have experienced loss in their
5 families and their school families, personal
6 families, students have experienced loss. Teachers
7 have always centered children. That is in their
8 bones and so we are forever in debt, forever in debt
9 to our extraordinary, powerful resilient educators
10 who quite frankly still remain under resourced and
11 under appreciated and under paid. And I just want to
12 publicly note that because I know that sometimes
13 folks give flack but teachers have always centered
14 kids and many teachers themselves are working
15 parents. Some folks forgot that as well and so, this
16 is personal for them. And I know that many teachers
17 refer to their students as their children as well. I
18 even said, these are my kids too and if I can't keep
19 them safe in the classroom, I am going to speak up.
20 And there were teachers were literally sitting this
21 past week in their coats shivering cold because the
22 windows being open was the only source of
23 ventilation. Teachers have been speaking up on
24 ventilation issues for years, not just now. They
25

1
2 have been speaking up of reduced class size for
3 years, not just now.

4 The fight for more counselors, social workers, so
5 forth, these are not new fights and to the credit of
6 the UFT, community schools is not a new – they have
7 been on the lean of community schools way before
8 folks suddenly found this term.

9 So, I just want to publicly acknowledge that and
10 give thanks to our extraordinary educators, the
11 entire UFT team, even CSA, DC 37, 32BJ, the entire
12 school family who have always been essential and just
13 we appreciate you. Thank you very much.

14 KAREN ALFERD: Thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair and thank you
16 to these panelists. This is a reminder to the
17 Council Members that if you would like to ask
18 questions of the panelists, please use the Zoom raise
19 hand function.

20 Seeing no hands, I am going to call on our second
21 panel. Dr. Sanayi Beckles-Canton, Rocio Zumaya,
22 Liana Garcia, Rasheedah Harris. We will be starting
23 with Dr. Sanayi Beckles-Canton.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.
25

1
2 DR. SANAYI BECKLES-CANTON: Good morning, my name
3 is Dr. Sanayi Beckles-Canton and I am a member of the
4 Community Education Council in District 5. The
5 Education Council Consortium and the Healing Center
6 Schools as well as a pre-school director for a pre-K
7 program here in Harlem.

8 Across the city and nation, we have been exposed
9 to the issues around COVID-19 in our homes, in our
10 schools and in our communities. And despite our best
11 efforts, our education system continues to fail at
12 supporting the most neediest students and the most
13 neediest families during this pandemic. I ask that
14 the City Council continue to hold DOE accountable but
15 I must acknowledge the fact that Chancellor Carranza
16 and his staff has worked very hard and diligently to
17 fill the gaps and holes that for decades that have
18 been created about systematic racism, lack of
19 resources and lack of care for the most vulnerable
20 children in the system.

21 Being a part of the Healing Center School Working
22 Group, they have worked diligently with the
23 Department of Ed to create social-emotional trainings
24 and supports to help the staff support our children.
25 Back in August of this year, they met with the

1
2 Department of Education and they explained that there
3 was certain trainings that was supposed to be
4 mandated for teachers as we came back in the building
5 and my questions today is that since that meeting in
6 August, what tracking systems have DOE created to
7 actually track to see if the trainings that they
8 provided for social-emotional training to principals
9 is actually being filtered down to teachers and
10 students and families. Are there pamphlets or
11 handouts for parents to be able to use or teachers to
12 be able to use to effectively implement the training?
13 And how many members of the DOE's staff has actually
14 been trained?

15 Just this past Wednesday in my own district I
16 questioned my Superintendent in regards -

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

18 DR. SANAYI BECKLES-CANTON: In regards to the
19 training and my question asked was how many teachers
20 have been trained? While she said that most have,
21 there was still no clear understanding of which
22 teachers have been trained, how is the training
23 working and how are kids getting the services.

24 So, my question and ask is please make sure that
25 we follow up with this expensive training that we

1
2 paid for, how are people actually getting the
3 services they need and is it working for teachers?

4 And lastly, while we understand that we are out
5 of school, there are preschool children still in
6 buildings and teachers are working in those
7 buildings. I have a teacher who has a son who is
8 deaf and has autism and while she has to be in a
9 building to teach three and four year old's, there is
10 no place for her child to receive an education.

11 So, she is now forced to leave her child home
12 with a babysitter because there is no enrichment
13 center she can send her child to. No learning center
14 that accommodates his special needs for being deaf
15 and having autism, so that he can be educated to.
16 How do we answer that dilemma? Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I just want to say, you are
18 spot on correct and that is unacceptable what these
19 educators are going through. There are no words and
20 we have to do better immediately and we heard earlier
21 that the Deputy Chancellor mentioned that they are
22 working on another plan but we need to help our
23 families immediately, like yesterday. So, I
24 appreciate your very powerful and timely testimony.
25 Thank you so much.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now be
3 hearing from Rocio Zumaya.

4 ROCIO ZUMAYA: If I may before I start -

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin now.

6 ROCIO ZUMAYA: In Spanish and then in English.
7 SPEAKING IN SPANISH [2:34:53-2:37:09].

8 Now I am going to do it in English.

9 Hello, good evening, good afternoon, my name is
10 Rocio Zumaya, I am a Parent Leader in the Bronx,
11 parent of four children in the public school. My
12 responsibilities as a Parent Leader is to support
13 families. Families who are in the most need during
14 the pandemic who have not received the proper help.
15 My responsibilities as a parents in time of pandemic
16 has been beyond my limitations. Some of them have
17 been to make sure that my students are in class on
18 time. That they are receiving the related services
19 they are supposed to be receiving. That they are
20 able to emotionally be in class during remote
21 classes. Why? Because can a teacher really pick up
22 on emotions? Social and emotions of a student
23 through our scene for 25 students or in some cases 40
24 students. That's not okay.

1
2 Teachers are not trained to capture emotions for
3 all students. Remote class structures are currently
4 not conducted for students during pandemic. Where is
5 all the training? The DOE told schools that 12 per
6 session in August to plan trauma informed practices
7 including nonstructural staff but we have received no
8 information about which schools use them. There is
9 no responsibility. A goal to discuss a training
10 [INAUDIBLE 2:38:40] town halls for all time and the
11 proper implementation of trauma informed practices.
12 Who guarantees that the training? Who provides the
13 training?

14 Now, for the transformation team, how do we
15 support students, parents, advocates and school
16 administrations to become involved with healing
17 center schools models? We have yet to receive
18 response from the DOE. Where is our answer? Again,
19 how do we bring healed centered school models into
20 our communities to make it suitable for our families?
21 Show us that you really care about the wellbeing of
22 our students with action. Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.
24 Now, we will be hearing from Liana Garcia.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

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CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Let's unmute Liana.

LIANA GARCIA: Okay, sorry, I don't use Zoom a lot, alright. My name is Liana Garcia, I am 17-years-old. I am a student at Bronx Leadership Academy in the Bronx. I am also the founder of a small youth led organization whose mission is to fight for the liberation and the bettering of our community.

I join you all here today to address the lack of inclusivity of students and parents when it comes to decision making by the Department of Education. We are tired of begging for schools to be centered around healing and as a student, although I am lucky enough to have some adults in my school who guide me, I am tired of this not being the case for my peers.

I want to ask why the DOE have ignored the snails pace for years when it comes to enforcing schools, especially in low income communities to be more healing center and trauma informed? Why does DOE continue to disregard the voices of students and parents? When students are in housing situations that do not allow them to engage in the same way that they would in school, how would DOE handle that?

1
2 How is the DOE going to ensure that students are
3 not facing even more trauma during remote learning if
4 they continue to exclude students from the
5 conversation? So, many students don't have a home
6 environment where they can adequately be able to
7 learn and participate and so many times are these
8 students for not being able to do things as much as
9 they would in school.

10 This causes more trauma. As a student, I want
11 the Department of Education and all of you officials
12 here to know that we are putting you all on notice.
13 I join the Healing Centered Schools Breaking group
14 because they have released a roadmap that shows how
15 schools can make these fundamental changes and
16 because they actually care to listen to the voices of
17 students and parents, unlike the Department of
18 Education. Which has done barely anything to make
19 these voices heard and to make actual structural
20 change.

21 Teachers and staff can only do so much at this
22 point and parents and students alike. Specifically,
23 in low income communities it is important for our
24 voices to be heard and it is far long overdue. Our
25 working group demands that the Department of

1
2 Education includes students and parents in decision
3 making about schools make more healing centers
4 because we know real structural change cannot be
5 accomplished if they do not cooperate.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

7 LIANA GARCIA: I think it is by far disgusting
8 that the Department of Education refuses to listen to
9 their students and their parents and make decisions
10 that we aren't included in. It is disgusting that my
11 peers do not have mental health resources in their
12 school during this time. It is disgusting that our
13 schools will face budget cuts. It is disgusting that
14 we have to deal with these things during the middle
15 of the pandemic. As we are putting you guys on
16 notice and we want you to do better.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I want to thank Liana for
18 her very powerful testimony and again, a high school
19 student; as a former high school teacher, it takes
20 courage to speak up in a classroom let alone speaking
21 in front of a large audience in a public hearing such
22 as this on issues that she is absolutely spot on and
23 correct on. We are failing to meet the needs of our
24 kids, so I want to thank Liana publicly for her
25 excellent and powerful testimony. Thank you.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
3 hearing from Rasheedah Harris.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You time will begin.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Rasheedah Harris? She needs
6 to be unmuted.

7 RASHEEDAH HARRIS: Thank you, can you hear me?

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we can hear you. Thank
9 you.

10 RASHEEDAH HARRIS: Okay, thank you. Hi, my name
11 is Rasheedah Harris and I am a proud member of the
12 Healing Centers Schools Working Group. Our group is
13 a coalition made up of students, parents, educators,
14 mental health professionals and advocates who are
15 fighting for schools to become trauma informed and
16 healing center. We all know social-emotional
17 learning and wellbeing are essential to our students
18 success [INAUDIBLE 2:43:47] on this call.

19 We know that students cannot learn if they do not
20 feel physically, psychologically or emotionally safe
21 but even if our students have perfect social-
22 emotional skills, they cannot learn in an environment
23 that is harmful, that is hyper punitive or neglectful
24 to their needs. We can no longer ignore that
25 unfortunately schools are not safe spaces and are

1
2 places of healing. They are not for our children.
3 Even worse, schools are actually sites of trauma for
4 our children yes, even in this virtual setting and
5 the impact of systemic trauma inflicted upon our
6 children effect our abilities to learn and engage
7 thus causing further harm in our communities.

8 Everything that has been said so far on this call
9 with all the work that has supposedly been being
10 done, we recognize that our schools are still not
11 able to provide support when students struggle
12 emotionally.

13 We need to go beyond social-emotional curricula
14 and create schools that are truly trauma informed.
15 Healing center schools train their staff to
16 understand the impact of trauma and engage whole
17 school change to adopt healing center practices
18 inside and outside of the classroom. These practices
19 help students learn and build social and emotional
20 skills.

21 In June, our working group published a roadmap
22 describing how the DOE can adopt this model. We met
23 with Deputy Chancellor LaShawn Robinson's office
24 about our roadmap and we were pleased when the DOE
25 included our roadmap in their Bridge to School plan

1
2 and rolled out a training, a trauma training that we
3 recommended but training is just a first step.

4 As Dr. Canton said, we need follow up, we need
5 accountability and aside from the training everyone
6 supposedly completed, we all still see little
7 progress. We cannot sit by and watch another
8 desperately needed program –

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 RASHEEDAH HARRIS: Thank you. Let me finish. We
11 cannot sit by and watch another desperately needed
12 program fail because of poor implementation. Our
13 students need schools that are prepared to support
14 them with dealing with all the trauma of COVID-19,
15 all the trauma of dealing with systemic racism that
16 have plagued this countries inception and is trauma
17 that all of our school community endures from the
18 Institutional inside Blackness in our school system.

19 Chair Treyger, social-emotional curricula wont
20 alone wont cut it. We need the DOE to plan ahead to
21 help schools become healing centered period. We are
22 asking the DOE to meet with us again to discuss
23 implementation and we are asking the City Council to
24 help us make this happen.

1
2 The need for change is now. We all need healing.
3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I want to thank you and
5 after this hearing, I will make the request to Senior
6 DOE officials that they meet with your organization
7 as soon as possible because I absolutely believe in
8 your work and the importance of the healing center
9 approach. Appreciate you, thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to this panel.
11 Next, we will be hearing from our next panel. This
12 includes Kaveri Sengupta, Jeehae Fischer, Roshni
13 Ahmed and Judy Ling. We will be starting with
14 Kaveri.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

16 KAVERI SENGUPTA: Good afternoon. My name is
17 Kaveri Sengupta and I am the Education Policy
18 Coordinator at the Coalition for Asian American
19 Children and Families or CACF. The nations only Pan
20 Asian children and families advocacy organization
21 leading the fight for improved and equitable
22 policies, systems, funding and services.

23 Thank you to Chair Treyger and members of the
24 Committee on Education for giving us this opportunity
25 to testify at this important hearing. "Go back to

1
2 your country, we don't want you hear. You created
3 this virus." Are a few of the racist comments
4 Nathaniel, a youth leader in our student program
5 lists as language he has heard during this pandemic.

6 Another youth leader Sofie said, I am actually
7 pretty fearful to be honest about how I might be
8 treated if I were to set foot out of my house.

9 Students contending with such challenges to their
10 mental health cannot be expected to learn as though
11 these are normal times. Schools must provide
12 language accessible and culturally responsive social
13 and emotional supports for Asian Pacific American or
14 APA students and with their families. Many of whom
15 are members of marginalized immigrant populations.
16 Centering input from community based organizations
17 empowering those organizations to provide training to
18 existing staff and investing in more community
19 schools are essential to this work. Among other
20 benefits, culturally responsive support will enable
21 students to establish strong connections with staff,
22 which is critical to social-emotional wellbeing,
23 which in turn is pivotal to helping students learn.

24 We must commit to fighting a model minority myth
25 and ensuring that our students are heard,

1
2 acknowledged and served. Comprehensive support also
3 places importance on reaching students who may not
4 access mental health services due to stigma. This is
5 more important than ever in a remote learning
6 environment where students and particularly recent
7 immigrants may feel even more isolated from their
8 peers and educators and uncomfortable reaching out
9 for help.

10 We must prioritize accountability to the
11 community through surveys or other measures after
12 initiatives have been piloted or training has been
13 administered. We have heard from community members
14 that the system often considers the one time
15 implementation of culturally responsive education
16 measures and other social-emotional supports has been
17 ominous with success. We cannot claim accomplishment
18 if we do not circle back with the community.

19 We also need data disaggregation to better
20 understand the ethnic makeup of and languages spoke
21 by our support staff, including school counselors and
22 social workers but first, we need more of these staff
23 members, particularly in over credit school districts
24 in Queens serving large APA populations. For years,
25 studies have shown that when students learn from

1
2 teachers who look like them, they perform better
3 academically and feel more comfortable in the
4 classroom.

5 Students have shared with us that they feel
6 similarly when their counselors look like them.
7 However, although teacher demographics are collected
8 and are publicly available, we remain unaware of
9 counselor demographic data. DOE must report school
10 counselor demographics to understand and address
11 gaps.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

13 KAVERI SENGUPTA: Currently, we can only yield
14 anecdotal and testimonials evidence of the lack of
15 culturally competent counselors, rather than evidence
16 from data from across the system. This does a
17 disservice both to our students who are likely not
18 receiving adequate support and to potential educators
19 and staff who might be interested in becoming
20 counselors who may not see representation and
21 conclude that counseling is the wrong career path for
22 them.

23 As we continue to watch existing disparities
24 grow, we must be sure to center all of our decisions
25

1
2 on our most marginalized students. Thank you so
3 much.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
5 hearing from Jeehae Fischer.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

7 JEEHAE FISCHER: I would like to thank the City
8 Council and the Committee on Education for the
9 opportunity to testify. My name is Jeehae Fischer
10 and I am the Executive Director of the Korean
11 American Family Service Center, KAFSC.

12 KAFSC provides social services to the immigrants
13 survivors and their children who are effected by
14 domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse.
15 All our programs and services including our Hodori
16 afterschool program, are offered in a culturally and
17 linguistically appropriate setting. KAFSC's Hodori
18 afterschool program serves Asian American students
19 from kindergarten through eighth grade who are from
20 families at or below the federal poverty level with
21 immigrant parents and caregivers.

22 Our Hodori afterschool program targets students
23 who are under the care of single parents who
24 consistently struggle financially and are challenged
25 by cultural and language barriers. We also target

1
2 children who are victims of domestic violence or
3 sexual assault as well as children who are indirectly
4 effected from being exposed in their own households.

5 Our program supplements and supports the myriad
6 of challenges faced by our APA students. Many who
7 are immigrants themselves and are L students. The
8 beginning of every school year, we conduct an
9 assessment and find that close to 100 percent of them
10 never finish their homework on time. They struggle
11 to meet metrics and their report cards show
12 difficulties in their classes.

13 Challenges due to limited English proficiencies
14 exacerbate already existing issues due to family
15 violence at home, poverty and cultural differences.
16 Teachers and administrators at school often lack
17 cultural competencies necessary to properly engage
18 these AP students and often make assessments or
19 decisions based on standards that do not take into
20 account the cultural nuances that are extremely
21 relevant in developing the correct academic plan for
22 these children.

23 The model minority myth is indirect contradiction
24 to the fact that many APA students from immigrant
25 families displayed serious emotional, social and

1
2 behavioral difficulties. Our APA children require
3 additional support from school counselors to mitigate
4 and work to reduce stressors in the school
5 environment that hinder not only their academic
6 performance but also their social-emotional
7 development, increase their self esteem and develop
8 healthy communication skills.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

10 JEEHAE FISCHER: And teachers at campus work with
11 the families in our Hodori afterschool program to
12 specifically address the gaps in the education system
13 that overlook our APA immigrant student population
14 and the families of school educators and
15 administrators to fund and resource proper protocols
16 for families to address their child's unique needs
17 and challenges.

18 I would like to thank you again for this
19 opportunity to testify.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
21 hearing from Roshni Ahmed.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Roshni Ahmed.

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: We have to unmute her.

25 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Give us one second please.

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2 ROSHNI AHMED: Thank you. My name is Roshni
3 Ahmed and I am the Advocacy and Outreach Coordinator
4 Women for Afghan Women. Thank you Chair Mark Treyger
5 and members of the Committee on Education for taking
6 the time to better understand our communities needs.

7 Women for Afghan Women has been providing
8 holistic and culturally specific services to Afghan,
9 South Asian and Muslim low income immigrants in New
10 York City since 2003. Currently our youth
11 participants are facing high levels of stress due to
12 increased work load and challenges with balancing
13 school work, familial responsibilities and an overall
14 lack of social interaction. They lived in cramped
15 apartments with multigenerational family members and
16 their parents have lost their sources of income due
17 to the pandemic.

18 Increased support within the classroom and
19 linguistically and culturally responsive resources
20 within schools must be prioritized to ensure students
21 emotional and social wellbeing is not further being
22 compromised by the additional stress factors created
23 by the pandemic. Youth with limited English
24 proficiency and in particular, newly arrived
25 immigrant youth have expressed further difficulties

1
2 in accessing support and assistance in keeping up
3 with and feeling empowered in the virtual classroom.
4 Families have also expressed barriers in staying
5 accurately informed and updated on policies in New
6 York City schools throughout the pandemic. This has
7 proved challenging for many parents to navigate
8 making decisions around their children's safety,
9 social and emotional health.

10 Schools must be equipped with the tools to ensure
11 there is language access for every single community
12 in person, often time dialects or languages spoken by
13 smaller communities are overlooked and ignored. Both
14 within the Asian Pacific American communities and
15 beyond.

16 We have seen instances during which community
17 members could not readily access interpretation
18 services or were connected to the wrong interpreter.
19 Families and students should be aware of the
20 resources available to them and with the support of
21 trained school counselors, social workers and other
22 staff that are culturally responsive. It is
23 important to hire school counselors particularly in
24 overcrowded schools who can respond to these needs.
25 We look forward to working –

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

ROSHNI AHMED: With the Council to ensure the social and emotional wellbeing of our communities together. Thank you for your time and consideration today.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be hearing from Judy Ling.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

JUDY LING: Good afternoon. Thank you for giving us the time to testify at this hearing. My name is Judy Ling and I am a Certified School Counselor currently working at Immigrant Social Services, ISS.

ISS is dedicated to improving the conditions and promoting the welfare of our community in the China Town and lower east area of New York City. ISS has worked extensively with immigrant children and the families, many of whom are from low income households with limited English proficiency. We partner with schools to provide enrichment academic support and prevention through OASIS but that is not enough. There is so much more that needs to be done. The needs of Asian Pacific American community are consistently overlooked, misunderstood and uncounted. We are constantly fighting the harmful impacts of

1
2 systemic racism, the model minority myth which
3 prevents our needs from being recognized and
4 understood.

5 First, the DOE needs to lift the current hiring
6 freezes. Schools were already understaffed,
7 especially when it comes to people personnel
8 services. COVID-19 is a traumatic experience. Now
9 more than ever, students and families need social
10 emotional support. I chose to be a school counselor
11 so I could give back to my community but was appalled
12 that I wasn't even given a chance at a job interview,
13 not because I didn't have the skill set but because I
14 was born too late to be in this field.

15 Just simply applying SEL in schools is not
16 enough. You need the PPS to help address the crisis.
17 Teachers are not trained like we are and they are
18 already burnt out and overworked.

19 Second, we demand that the city increase language
20 access when providing information about COVID-19 and
21 providing more resources to support China Town and
22 lower east side area. Our Pan Asian community is
23 often overlooked when decided who needs support. For
24 example, on the drive NYC Mental Health Support
25 website, every resource is in English and less than

1
2 half of it is in Chinese. I translated some
3 resources because it wasn't done already but realized
4 that free internet doesn't apply to my families
5 because the websites are all in English.

6 So third, we demand that the city give more
7 budget to hiring bilingual professionals. The little
8 information our families receive in their native
9 language are often hard to understand because it was
10 a product of Fogo Translate. Since the school does
11 not have bilingual staff due to budget cuts.

12 Fourth, the city needs to give more funding for
13 remote learning and technology needs. It has been
14 eight months and many families still don't have
15 iPads. I had to lend an iPad to my nephew, so he
16 doesn't have to attend his Zoom classes on his mom's
17 phone.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

19 JUDY LING: The ones who do have the iPads in the
20 schools had to buy their own because the internet was
21 lagging so much they would drop from their classes.
22 Students often go to class with lots of background
23 noises because their housing situation does not allow
24 for a quiet learning environment. There should be
25 more Learning Bridges locations, without the

1
2 restrictions, open to the general public because
3 there is a need for that.

4 Thank you again for this opportunity to testify.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Judy, I want to thank you
6 for your service and I fully agree with you, we need
7 a lot more counselors in our schools, bilingual, no
8 question about it and if you have any specific – I
9 think you have raised some items already about some
10 schools in China Town, I would be happy if you want
11 to send me an email mtreyger@council.nyc.gov about
12 that, I would be happy to follow up.

13 Thank you for your service again, I appreciate
14 you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to this panel. We
16 will now be hearing from the next panel, Dr. Dave
17 Anderson, Alice Bufkin, Nicole Hamilton and Laura
18 Rebell Gross. First, we will be starting with Dr.
19 Dave Anderson.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 DAVE ANDERSON: Thank you to Chair Treyger and
22 the Committee for the opportunity to join you today.
23 My name is Dr. Dave Anderson and I am a Clinical
24 Psychologist and Vice President of School and
25 Community Programs at the Child Mind Institute. We

1
2 are incredibly grateful of the New York City which
3 has supported our work in New York City schools every
4 year since 2012.

5 Through your leadership and belief in our work,
6 we provide treatment for students experiencing
7 behavior problems, post-traumatic stress and
8 depression, a social-emotional skill building
9 curriculum for students from elementary through high
10 school and workshops on a range of mental health
11 topics for educators and parents. We also train
12 teachers and counselors across the DOE on our social-
13 emotional curriculum and trauma treatment models, so
14 they can better sustain service year over year for
15 their school communities. With your support, our
16 work thus far has reached more than 45,000 students,
17 parents, teachers and school counselors across all
18 five boroughs in every City Council district.

19 This year, all school communities are facing the
20 new stress of the coronavirus pandemic and our
21 social-emotional supports as we have heard so many
22 times today have never been more essential to
23 creating an environment where students can succeed
24 and thrive.

1
2 To address this urgency we have worked with the
3 DOE as part of the Bridge to School and Healing
4 Centered Schools Initiative to incorporate mental
5 health supports and to reopening plans. We are
6 providing webinars and a helpline for educators
7 across the DOE. We have also created a digital
8 wellness toolkit including videos and activities that
9 allow educators to easily integrate social-emotional
10 skill building into their instruction, as well as
11 take home worksheets to ensure that students of all
12 grade levels can review and practice these skills at
13 home and with their caregivers.

14 These resources are available to the entire DOE
15 and will remain so on our website
16 www.childmind.org/nycdoe for the entire school year.

17 Our schools and teachers are facing unprecedented
18 strain this year. Even with our best efforts, the
19 mental health toll on students, teachers and parents
20 has been immense. Increasing the number of
21 professionals available to provide support to
22 students is only one part of the solution to this
23 problem. The other facet to the solution is to
24 provide the training and the resources to these
25 providers to allow them most effectively serve their

1 communities. On this, we are working hard already.

2 There is still so much work to be done.

3 We at the Child Mind Institute stand ready to
4 work with you to scale the scope of this work
5 further. The more we can do support our schools to
6 make it easier for schools to engage and to integrate
7 mental health services and the DOE's existing plans,
8 the better for our students and their future.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

10 DAVE ANDERSON: It has been a privilege to work
11 with you and with schools in your districts to ensure
12 the wellbeing of students, educators and families and
13 thank you again for the opportunity to speak with
14 you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
16 hearing from Alice Bufkin.

17 ALICE BUFKIN: Good afternoon. My name is Alice
18 Bufkin and I am the Director of Policy for Child and
19 Adolescent Health at Citizens Community for Children.

20 Thank you Chair Treyger and members of the
21 Committee for holding today's very important hearing.
22 I am submitting written testimony with more detail
23 but in the next couple of minutes, I want to
24 highlight some of the priority CCC has identified.
25

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2 First, we must minimize and restore cuts to
3 essential behavioral health supports and oppose cuts
4 in the future, even in the face of dire financial
5 limitations caused by the pandemic. New York will
6 never recover from COVID-19. The same families that
7 have faced job loss, economic devastation, illness
8 and loss of loved one are also harmed by reductions
9 to their schools, healthcare systems, housing and
10 behavioral health services.

11 As Chair Treyger and so many emphasized already,
12 cuts to community schools, the Affinity Schools
13 Network and Learning to Work have already undermined
14 the city's ability to meet the behavioral health
15 needs of students. In fact, we believe that our city
16 must meaningfully invest in the full continuum of
17 behavioral health supports. From whole school,
18 trauma informed approaches in training, to clinical
19 care in community and school based settings.

20 We believe the recent proposal to connect H&H to
21 more schools will improve referral pathways to
22 outpatient services. We would support expanding this
23 initiatives to CBO's. However, improving referral
24 pathways is not a substitute for increasing capacity.
25 Without additional funding commitments to the

1
2 clinical care, H&H like other providers in our
3 community is a risk of seeing a dramatic increase and
4 demand without an accompanying increase in staff
5 necessary to meet the needs of students.

6 Additionally, we urge DOE to reject punitive
7 approaches that cause harm to students by pushing
8 them into the school to prison pipeline. These
9 harmful practices include contacting school safety
10 agents, law enforcement, EMS or ACS in response to
11 instances of emotional distress would be better
12 handled by teachers and mental health professionals.

13 We also believe the city should place a
14 moratorium on suspensions, divest from policing in
15 schools and invest in a healing center culturally
16 responsive and trauma informed services.

17 Finally, we believe the city must develop a
18 proactive cross agency plan for reaching disconnected
19 students, addressing their learning loss and
20 connecting them and their families to help,
21 behavioral health and social services they may have
22 lacked due to the digital divide.

23 Brining social emotional learning is not just
24 about new policies and initiatives going forward, it
25 is about identifying those students and families who

1
2 are left behind because of the digital divide or
3 other complications of this pandemic and connecting
4 them to the care and supports they lost as a result.

5 Again, thank you for your time today and all your
6 work for children and families in our city.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next we will be
8 hearing from Nicole Hamilton.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 NICOLE HAMILTON: Hi good afternoon everybody.
11 Thank you so much for having us. Thank you Chair
12 Treyger for this time and for holding this space. I
13 am Nicole Hamilton; I am the Director of Community
14 Partnerships for Girls for Gender Equity and a lot of
15 what I would have wanted to say has been said time
16 and time again already on this Zoom but I would like
17 to just point out that Chair Treyger mentioned in the
18 beginning of this call that everything is SEL and I
19 absolutely agree. But then we took a huge pivot and
20 spent a lot of time talking about a tactical
21 conversation about technology and tracking and
22 devices, instead of talking about strategy and
23 implementation for SEL. Because this is the really,
24 really hard work that we have to do and it is easier
25

1
2 sometimes to divert to other things that feel more
3 tangible.

4 We have been having this conversation ongoingly
5 for a very long time. Back in March I testified here
6 at the return to remote hearing testimony oversight
7 hearing, uplifting something that Meril just
8 mentioned in their testimony, that young people were
9 asking for therapy and that was back in March and
10 here we are now in November and we are still writing
11 the same letters and sharing the same testimony and
12 it feels like we are on this wheel that's not
13 stopping.

14 And at the end of this wheel are some really,
15 really affirmable models. The community school model
16 and the healing centered schools plan, our models and
17 we may not be able to fix everything at one time or
18 implement across the board everything that we want to
19 do to stop this thing from ravaging us in the way
20 that it is. But if we can just drill down on the SEL
21 supports that are outlined in these two specific
22 things, the Healing Centers Schools Plan and
23 Community Schools Model and start to create a
24 holistic and comprehensive implementation plan, I
25 think that schools will be able to actually achieve

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2 some of the things that we need them to achieve
3 across the board. Not just community schools and not
4 just schools that have resources and not just schools
5 where the teachers are not overwhelmed in saying, I
6 didn't sign up for this and then you can't just throw
7 a Bridge to school plan at me and expect me to
8 implement it but giving people actual step by step
9 comprehensive guidance that meets them where they
10 are. Every school is not in the same place. As the
11 Chair said, we are a divided city, a tale of two
12 cities. So, when you implement a plan that way, you
13 have the likelihood of either having success or not
14 and further disadvantaging some people and setting
15 other people up and continuing to perpetuate a system
16 of inequity.

17 We also ask that you expand the narrative of SEL.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

19 NICOLE HAMILTON: To further include the mental
20 health and wellbeing of adult staff and teachers.
21 Folks are at their wits end and they are leaving
22 their jobs and we need to resource this work. There
23 are mental health professionals, there are youth
24 service providers, there are folks who are doing this
25 work regularly who are maybe burnt out but are also

1
2 very skilled and know how to implement these things
3 and we need to tap on that community and bring them
4 in in light of the community school models that they
5 can pick up some of this work. That teachers may not
6 be equipped or have the capacity to do at this time.

7 And then we ask finally that we institute a
8 moratorium on suspensions and commit to not further
9 traumatizing young people in policing practices that
10 isolate them from school because we know that a lot
11 of folks are not logging on because they don't have
12 access and some are not logging on because they are
13 just disconnected. And what makes a disconnected
14 student want to return back to a classroom in
15 physical school if they have checked out. So, we
16 need to find a way to reengage and to take care of
17 the needs of our young people and our adults at the
18 core and continue to build foundational and
19 fundamental practices that can sustain this work.

20 Thank you for this time.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I want to publicly thank
22 Nicole and I want to share; I agree with you that
23 there was quite bit discussed about technology today.
24 One of the reasons why I reupped this was because
25 during the course of – I conduct my own version of

1
2 wellness calls with school principals in my district
3 and this topic keeps coming up over and over again
4 and what I was told by principals, which I don't know
5 if it came up during the exchange with the
6 administration, is that many of the sessions for
7 therapeutic services are now virtual as well but kids
8 can get it if they don't have any access to internet
9 device.

10 So, you know, a lot of the central, even the
11 clinical social workers that we fought to save that
12 are Thrive DOE, they are conducting virtual sessions
13 now. They are not doing anything in person, so they
14 can't connect with kids who don't have anything to
15 connect to. And so, you are absolutely correct, we
16 need to center social-emotional therapeutic services.
17 I just need to get the infrastructure in place for
18 kids to get those connections but I always just
19 appreciate you and GGE always, for always centering
20 kids and their needs and their families. I
21 appreciate you very much. Thank you.

22 NICOLE HAMILTON: Thank you so much.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and next, we will
24 be hearing from Laura Rebell Gross.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

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2 LAURA REBELL GROSS: Thank you so much and thank
3 you for getting my name right. Thank you to the
4 Committee and to Chair Treyger and I want to echo
5 what you just said about thanking Nicole as well, who
6 is an incredible resource herself for Student
7 Leadership Network where I work.

8 I am the Senior Managing Director of Girls
9 Education at Student Leadership Network. We operate
10 two programs in New York City, one is College Bound
11 Initiative where we place full time directors of
12 college counseling in New York City public schools
13 and the other are the young women's leadership
14 schools. We have five of those schools in four
15 boroughs around the city. Two in Queens, one in
16 Brooklyn, one in the Bronx and our flagship school in
17 east Harlem. I want to echo what we have been
18 hearing today about the great need for social
19 emotional resources particularly counseling in our
20 schools. Like so many of the schools that have been
21 discussed today, our students have been hit
22 incredibly hard by the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and
23 institutionalized racism. They have experienced in
24 their families of job loss, more homelessness than we
25 have ever seen before, a lack of resources and

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2 because we are single gender schools with girls, they
3 are also experiencing the fact that they are
4 caretakers in their own families more than ever
5 before and having to balance that with being in
6 either virtual or in-person school.

7 And so, what we hear over and over again from our
8 teachers and our school leaders is that they need
9 counselors. That the parents need family sessions
10 and training on how to disrupt some of the effects of
11 the trauma that they are experiencing and that the
12 one on one working with the families who are
13 experiencing the trauma and the students that are
14 experiencing the trauma is most valuable.

15 I want to take the remainder of my time to read a
16 quote from one of our principals. Our community has
17 been hit extraordinarily hard by the COVID pandemic
18 and systematic racism in our society. The zip code
19 where we are located has one of the highest rates of
20 COVID infections, death and unemployment. In
21 addition, our community is one of only Black and
22 Brown children.

23 With all of these factors combined, our students
24 feel the injustice being done to them and the trauma
25 this causes. We have an increase need for mental

1
2 health support for both our students and their
3 families.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and thank you to
5 this panel. Next, we will be hearing from our next
6 panel. It consists of Eric Connor and Dawn Yuster.
7 Eric Connor, we will be starting with you.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Let's unmute Eric, Thank
10 you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Give us one moment Eric while
12 we work on that.

13 ERIC CONNOR: I think I am good. Alright, good
14 afternoon everybody. My name is Eric Connor, I am a
15 Program Director at Good Shepherd Services which
16 partners with Franklin D. Roosevelt High Schools
17 Young Adult Borough Center which falls under the
18 learning's work contract that was mentioned several
19 time during this meeting.

20 Thank you Chair Treyger. It was a pleasure to
21 see you again from the last time at our Brooklyn
22 Rally and thank you to the Council Members of the
23 Committee on Education for the opportunity to submit
24 my testimony here today.
25

1
2 Guided by social and racial justice Good Shepherd
3 Service partners and grows with communities so that
4 all New York City children youth and families succeed
5 and thrive. Good Shepherds work in schools began in
6 the 1980's when we cofounded in partnership with the
7 DOE of course, the South Brooklyn Community High
8 School which is a transfer school which is a small
9 full time high school designated to reengage students
10 who have dropped out or fallen behind in credits.
11 Since then, Good Shepherd Service has been using both
12 the trauma informed and primary personal model to
13 provide services.

14 Our model focuses on individualized and group
15 support that leverages educators, peers and staff
16 support. Today Good Shepherd operates in 20 after
17 school programs, 7 community schools, 10 young adult
18 borough centers and 4 partnership schools with our
19 14-wide season partnership schools supported through
20 once again the Learning to Work program contract.

21 Annually, our educational programs serve over
22 10,000 students here in New York City. Social and
23 emotional learning is at the core of all that work.
24 Learning to work is much more than just a job or an
25 internship experience as I mentioned before in one of

1
2 our rally's. It is program that ultimately helps
3 students learn how to live and at FTR Good Shepherds
4 exposing youth opportunities and experience to help
5 empower them with tools and skills to help them
6 navigate decisions that result in successful
7 educational experiences.

8 With that said, the recent cuts to the community
9 schools in the amount of \$3.1 million and to the
10 Learning to Work in the amount of \$10 million
11 continue to threaten Good Shepherds abilities to
12 support students and communities they come from.

13 Good Shepherd, the cuts amount to 103,000 which
14 went across five community schools and specifically 2
15 million across 12 Learning to Work programs, one of
16 them being my program.

17 When participants and their families are faced
18 with barriers, they turn to the staff in my program
19 in FDRYBC. The 215 young people who we are
20 contracted to support, turned to two advocate
21 counselors, one internship coordinator and one social
22 worker and this doesn't even include our shared
23 instruction population as well.

24 The staff is committed to identifying supports,
25 resources and making referrals. The connections that

1
2 the staff make, the relationships that they develop
3 and create and the bond and the trust that come along
4 with the young people, that's how we do our work.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

6 ERIC CONNOR: And seeing the growth of the young
7 people we support comes with great pride. It is not
8 only the English Language learners who struggle with
9 speaking English and they stay muted on the Zoom
10 calls that the staff offer tutoring on; it is the
11 young adult parents who are forced to choose between
12 working a 12 hour shift or to provide for their
13 family or to complete their online courses that the
14 teachers are demanding they sign on to.

15 It is the parents who want to ultimately be
16 involved with their child who is in our program and
17 need support to engage the young person. These are
18 the situations that our staff are addressing daily to
19 make it possible for youth to not only show up to
20 school but to be present and successful.

21 With that said, we know that COVID-19 exasperated
22 the conditions for the youth and communities that we
23 service. At FDR these needs were compounded. The
24 needs include needs for equipment, continuing to work
25 and the challenge of accessing resources when in a

1
2 mixed immigration status household, mental health,
3 food injustice, racial injustice and mourning for the
4 loss of family members is always a constant struggle.
5 We got to do whatever it takes to ensure the support
6 of the schools that are fully funded to ensure that
7 the safety and wellbeing of the young people we
8 service can successfully complete high school and I
9 want to thank everybody for the opportunity to
10 testify here and I would be happy to answer any
11 questions.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Now, we will be
13 hearing from Dawn Yuster.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 DAWN YUSTER: Thank you for the opportunity to
16 speak with you today. My name is Dawn Yuster and I
17 am the Director of Advocate for Children of New York
18 School Justice Project.

19 For nearly 50 years Advocates for Children of New
20 York has worked to ensure a high quality education
21 for New York students who face barriers to academic
22 success focusing on students from low income
23 backgrounds. During this time when families are
24 facing unprecedented challenges, it is more urgent
25 and critical than ever that students receive the

1
2 social-emotional and mental health support they need
3 to succeed in school.

4 We appreciate the city's and the DOE's provision
5 of trauma training for school staff, release of the
6 Bridge to School curriculum, addition of two new
7 mental health initiatives in schools and
8 neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID-19 and commitment
9 to expanding restorative practices to all middle and
10 high schools and removing police from schools.

11 At the same time, NYPD school safety agents out
12 number school social workers 5,400 to 1,500. Black
13 student and students with disabilities continue to be
14 disproportionately harmed by exclusionary punitive
15 discipline and policing including the NYPD
16 intervening in more than 2,250 incidents involving
17 students in emotional crisis last year before schools
18 closed. Handcuffing some kids as young as 5-years-
19 old, 58 percent of those were Black.

20 We are hearing troubling stories from families.
21 An untold number of students are not engaging in
22 school at all due to unmet mental health and academic
23 needs, including those who were struggling to engage
24 in school before the pandemic. Students are going
25 without the mental health services and behavioral

1
2 supports they need to successfully participate in
3 instruction. Including a bright teenager and music
4 lover with severe depression struggling to engage in
5 remote learning whose mother repeatedly requested
6 evaluations and supports from her sons school and
7 instead got threatened with calls to the
8 Administration for Children Services ACS.

9 Students are struggling within attention and
10 difficulty focusing. Frustrated with technology, not
11 answering the phone when counselors and service
12 providers call to encourage them to participate in
13 remote learning or therapy, not logging in to remote
14 classrooms or completing classwork and going without
15 the support of their paraprofessionals.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

17 DAWN YUSTER: Our unofficially disciplined and
18 removed from in-person remote learning. We have
19 several recommendations, I will give a few today and
20 I have a lot more written testimony given the short
21 time.

22 We are seeking that the city and the DOE honor
23 the commitment to remove police from schools and
24 create a school safety task force with public
25 participation to craft a new vision of school safety

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2 that ensures all students are truly safe and
3 supported.

4 Number Two, identify all students who are not
5 engaged in remote learning, provide targeted outreach
6 to these families in a language they can understand
7 through local means of communication, without
8 threatening to call ACS. Offer support using
9 creative interventions, including mentoring. Address
10 root causes of lack of engagement.

11 Number Three, clearly communicate to families how
12 they can access direct mental health supports and
13 services using multiple methods to communicate this
14 information, including on school website, home pages,
15 the DOE website, sending letters to families, posting
16 contact information of school social workers,
17 counselors, psychologists, crisis response
18 clinicians, mental health supports, prohibit
19 suspensions.

20 Number Four, suspensions for students for all but
21 the most serious behavior. A couple more things I
22 just want to add, create a system to track unofficial
23 discipline and clearly communicate to school staff
24 that removing students from in-person learning to
25 remote learning for behavior or muting them or

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2 removing students from remote learning platforms
3 constitute school discipline including in juvenile
4 detention and promote the use of positive
5 alternatives like keep students learning instead.

6 We also want to make sure that the new mental
7 health teams of EMS health professionals and mental
8 health crisis workers that will be dispatched through
9 911 in two communities that they must also respond to
10 calls about students in emotional crisis from schools
11 in those communities as well.

12 We are also looking to – we want engagement in
13 interagency policy change to revise the NYPD Patrol
14 Guide to prohibit the NYPD from handcuffing students
15 in emotional crisis. We also want to ensure that
16 students in juvenile detention receive better access
17 to learning as well as mental health and academic
18 supports.

19 Right now, they are not able to be seen by their
20 teachers. They are not able to communicate except
21 through chat messages and so, and they are also being
22 disciplined by ACS and being taken off technology and
23 so we want coordination with DOE and ACS to ensure
24 that this doesn't continue to happen.

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2 I want to thank you for holding this hearing
3 today and we so appreciate the ongoing work that you
4 have been doing to draw attention to the social-
5 emotional needs of students and to secure critical
6 resources for them. We have been looking to the City
7 Council to [INAUDIBLE 3:22:37] speak to the choir to
8 fulfill its commitments, to foster interagency
9 partnership and planning with public input. To help
10 get the data needed to better understand the extent
11 of unofficial discipline and target solutions and to
12 secure desperately needed resources to better meet
13 the students needs and get students back on track.

14 Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak
15 with you. I would be happy to answer any questions
16 and thank you so much for letting me go over. I so
17 appreciate it.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And I thank you. I mean, I
19 have learned so much from your great organization and
20 from many of the folks speaking up who have always
21 centered children and their needs. I always, quite
22 frankly, if folks listened to the recommendations
23 years ago, we maybe wouldn't have been in this deep,
24 deep of a crisis that we are in right now but I just
25 - a quick question, I don't know if Eric wants to

1
2 chime in as well. Are there any types of cases that
3 you have come across and I know Eric for example, I
4 am very familiar with FDR High School in Southern
5 Brooklyn. Any type of cases you want to flag that
6 kind of highlight the point of how deep our kids are
7 in crisis. I mean I have shared that through
8 wellness calls and connections made with some
9 students where they shared that they were facing food
10 insecurity, where they are in a crowded dwelling and
11 it is hard for them to pay attention and to hear even
12 a remote class because other folks are in the home.

13 You know, we take issues like this for granted,
14 some folks but this is the reality for many of our
15 student and some high school kids I am aware are now
16 working as essential workers to help their parents
17 pay rent and have been marked absent because they are
18 now working and they had to choose full remote. Are
19 you hearing cases like this? Has that been flagged
20 and what has been the response from DOE when you
21 brought this to their attention?

22 DAWN YUSTER: We have several cases right now
23 just in my team alone and that's not even in all of
24 Advocates for Children, where we are losing these
25 kids. I mean, it is unbelievable to me the number of

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2 students who because of remote learning or blended
3 learning, these are students that all have mental
4 health and emotional behavioral challenges in one
5 form or another, whether it is autism, whether it is
6 post traumatic stress disorder, ADHD, combinations of
7 these things and depression. And so, they really
8 need these wrap around services. They need mental
9 health supports both outside of school, inside of
10 school to be able to, in addition to a lot of them
11 needing academic support to. A more individualized
12 support, one on one support and there definitely has
13 been outreach by schools to some degree with teachers
14 and counselors calling but there has to be more in
15 terms of – and one thing that I keep thinking of is,
16 we have to keep asking students what motivates them.
17 What do they want and so like, we have one student
18 who very severe mental health challenges that are not
19 being addressed appropriately and so, and frankly, it
20 is so disheartening to me because ACS is
21 investigating this mother. And I think it maybe
22 because the school has called. She was involved with
23 ACS before because I mean, it is a long story but
24 because of the history of the father, who is not in
25 the household anymore you know, there was domestic

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2 violence that he was abusive. So, he was following
3 the children but what's happened is that ACS was with
4 this family supposedly doing prevention before we got
5 involved and then once passed there are no wrap
6 around services.

7 So, this is what is so troubling to me is this
8 case is just to me the example of we know this
9 family, we have it, the government knows, ACS knows
10 they have Children's Aid Society was involved but
11 there has been call after call visit after visit that
12 this poor child has been sent to the psychiatric
13 emergency room, not getting proper psychiatric
14 evaluations and not getting proper diagnosis and you
15 know, then the school says, he doesn't belong here.
16 He is too serious; you need to find another school.
17 They are not finding another school for him.

18 So, like this is where there is layer on layer of
19 like the very basic, as a foundation is we need wrap
20 around services for the family and you know, and of
21 course the students but supports, mental health
22 behavioral is really critical and I see that in all
23 of these cases. And it is troubling to me because it
24 is not even that some of them aren't even involved.
25 Like, some of them have some kind of they are

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2 touching the system but they are not being supported
3 in it.

4 Some of them have like, this student has a nurse
5 practitioner instead of a psychiatrist and when he
6 clearly has like significant mental health issues, it
7 just as a person, myself, I was diagnosed as a
8 teenager with severe depression and I was on home
9 bound instruction. I get it and you need those
10 connections. You need the supports and there are so
11 much better treatment, therapy, medication, support
12 that can be gotten today. I know there is a deficit
13 out there but between like, I am almost 52, you know,
14 decades ago there was nothing. I mean the medication
15 was zilch, there were no therapies. There are so
16 many acronyms of therapies now different treatments
17 that we have to figure out a way to connect our
18 families and young people with appropriate care. And
19 I know that's a huge thing to tackle but we have got
20 to figure it out because we are - I can tell you we
21 have got like, half of our, like a good portion of
22 our case load, we are losing these kids and you know,
23 this is after you know, one of them we got a great
24 neuropsychological evaluation from Child Mind who was

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2 on there. You know, they do amazing work and they do
3 it often at a very discounted price you know for us.

4 So, I will just stop there but thank you so much
5 for paying so much attention and hearing so much
6 Chair Treyger. You are really, what can I say, you
7 pay the attention to this issue that it really needs
8 and I am really hoping that we can pull together. We
9 have great minds in this city. We have incredible
10 you know, so many people who care and want to do well
11 and I think we have to just figure out how to tackle
12 these issues and I am hoping that the Council and
13 also the Department of Education and City Hall will
14 pay attention to the recommendations that I am making
15 and my colleagues, you know, other colleagues here.
16 And again, there were other recommendations that I
17 didn't quite get to because of time.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I appreciate it Dawn. I am
19 certainly paying attention and I know many folks in
20 the Council take this serious and I want to speak for
21 I know Deputy Chancellor Robinson is still with us
22 but I am sure that these words impact her. She hears
23 you as well.

24 Eric, did you want to add anything about some
25 cases at FDR that you might want to share?

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ERIC CONNOR: Yeah, real briefly, I think it comes down to something that I believe Deputy Chancellor Robinson mentioned about foundational support. I think that's what it comes down to for a lot of the things that are being mentioned. The tech issues, the training issues, SEL being implemented. I think we have to really get back to the root of things and making sure not only the students but the staff, their families, everybody involved. All the stakeholders within the services that we provide are getting trained and acclimated to the new way of things, which is being conscious of all the moving pieces. The different variables that are taking place right now with the city and everything going on and supporting the students in their path toward success.

So, in short, it is really getting back to the foundation and kind of restructuring and reinventing the wheel that we have been stuck on, as somebody else mentioned. We got to get out of that and start moving forward and planning ahead because these things are not changing as we have seen in the past months.

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2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And I am going to put a
3 plug in for Deputy Chancellor Robinson on another
4 issue. We didn't hear this today but I know that
5 this means a lot to her and I am going to connect it
6 to what is happening today.

7 I have heard, because I am a former high school
8 teachers, so I am in touch with a lot of my high
9 school colleagues and high school communities. The
10 number of coaches, folks who are part of the athletic
11 programs who have always taken on the roles of
12 mentors and sort of case workers for their kids.
13 Those schools that have access and resources in terms
14 of the PSAL and athletic programs, a lot of that
15 staff checks on their kids like every single day and
16 also deliver food and make sure that there is kids.

17 So, what is painful is that right before this
18 pandemic, we have met with Deputy Chancellor Robinson
19 to discuss how do we expand that opportunity to all
20 of our kids, all of our programs. But I want to just
21 give an acknowledgement, a public shoutout to our
22 PSAL folks who have also become case workers helping
23 our kids, being their social safe net.

24 As it is many of the kids were going through a
25 very hard time in life and now, they are relying on

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2 them even more. So, I just want to just acknowledge
3 that for the record and say that's a part of our
4 fight for equity for all of our kids.

5 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Absolutely and Chair Treyger,
6 you were you know and still are committed to that
7 body of work in making sure that we do right by our
8 young people there. I am a full partner; we can't
9 wait to get our sports programming back up and
10 running and I would love to meet with you in the
11 coming weeks to talk about the model that we are
12 proposing to get us through the rest of this school
13 year.

14 And thank you Dawn and Eric and everyone else for
15 your testimony. I am here, I am listening, I am
16 taking notes and please feel free to reach out to me
17 at any time. You know Dawn, you know how to reach
18 me. We are partners in this together and I am
19 absolutely committed and looking forward to continued
20 growth in this area for the DOE. So, thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. Deputy
22 Chancellor, earlier we had testimony; I am not sure
23 if you heard from I think Dr. Rasheedah Harris about
24 the healing center, asking for a meeting. If we
25

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2 could help make that connection, I would appreciate
3 it.

4 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Absolutely, absolutely.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Deputy
6 Chancellor. Okay, thank you Kalima, we can move on
7 to the next one. Thanks to the panel for your great
8 work. I truly appreciate you all.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, thank you Chair
10 and thank you to the panel as well. Next, we will be
11 hearing from our final panel Janna Bruner, Travis
12 Adkins, Isha Taylor and Nija Howard. We will be
13 starting with Janna Bruner.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 JANNA BRUNER: Thank you so much Kalima and thank
16 you to Council Member Treyger and the Education
17 Committee for giving me the opportunity to speak with
18 you today, as well as all of the support you have
19 provided to counseling in schools throughout the
20 years.

21 Again, my name is Janna Bruner, I am one of the
22 Chief Program Officers at Counseling in Schools and I
23 would like to focus on something that I don't believe
24 I heard about yet today, which is the extended school
25 day violence prevention program grant. Since July,

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2 we basically have received no information from the
3 city or the state about when these funds might be
4 reinstated. The state is already withholding 20
5 percent of last years ESDSVP funding for services
6 that were already completed and it seems to be
7 appearing to withdraw from them fifth year of
8 contractual commitment to this program for the 2021
9 school year.

10 The SVP programs were specifically focused on
11 violence prevention for young people and obviously
12 that's needed more now than ever before. You know,
13 every day in the news, average New Yorkers keep
14 hearing about the increase in violent crimes
15 throughout the city, yet our most vulnerable children
16 and families are living it.

17 As we know violence leaves a lasting wound on the
18 entire community from the perpetrator to the victim
19 along with everybody in between and it is a mark that
20 really is etched into the psyche of our young people.

21 So, as a CBO that has previously received these
22 SP funds to provide mental health counseling, we are
23 very concerned that organizations such as ours that
24 have both the capacity and commitment to heal these
25 emotional wounds of violence and provide hopeful

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2 options to young people have been put on hold
3 indefinitely.

4 You know, without the source, the access to
5 mental health counselors for children is severely
6 limited. So, my request in this testimony is
7 basically to ask for your support in focusing efforts
8 in advocacy to get these and other funding streams
9 reinstated immediately, so that we can help our
10 communities heal and offer a more hopeful future for
11 our children and I thank you for your time.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I just want to say I took
13 note of that and I will try to get more information
14 and circle back with you and I am going to give a big
15 plug for Counselman schools. They are doing Gods
16 work in schools in Coney Island. I am so grateful
17 that we have this partnership and through our therapy
18 it is making a tremendous, tremendous positive
19 difference. I mean the kids, before the pandemic I
20 visited the classroom and they were gravitating to
21 our therapists and I just want to thank you and we
22 are going to fight for more resources because every
23 school should have these types of resources and
24 opportunities. Thank you so much.

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2 JANNA BRUNER: Thank you. I really appreciate
3 you saying that thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I appreciate you, thank
5 you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
7 hearing from Travis Adkins.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 TRAVIS ADKINS: Hi, my name is Travis, I am a
10 parent of a student at PS1 30 in Brooklyn and may I
11 first just say that hearing these sort of unvarnished
12 truth of what the Council is up against on so many
13 fronts has really given me a new appreciation for the
14 work you do and I really want to applaud you for all
15 the work you do in so many ways. Not just now during
16 the pandemic but you know, all year long every year.

17 With that said, you know, I would love to see if
18 some of this great effort you put forth into things,
19 more of it could be poured forth into the single most
20 pressing problem facing New York City right now,
21 which is the fact that public schools should not be
22 closed. They should be reopened. I have heard
23 exactly one Council Member, that was Council Member
24 Borelli say that in as a straight forward way as it
25 needs to be said. The overwhelming global scientific

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2 and political consensus is that schools should be
3 open. And I want to say it, open fully, not
4 partially, fully and immediately.

5 You know, Council Member Treyger, you know, one
6 thing you brought up I just want to address is you
7 said that you know, one reason we can't do this is
8 because the overcrowded issue.

9 Well, a partial list of countries that do not
10 follow the six foot distancing rule that seems to be
11 stuck in everybody's head here, just a partial list.
12 England, Italy, France, Switzerland, Portugal, the
13 WHO the World Health Organization has said that the
14 six feet mandate rule is not necessary.

15 So, by sticking to these and the Mayor's
16 arbitrary and unscientific three percent metric, you
17 know, the Council should publicly state that they do
18 not support that policy and you should use whatever
19 means are at your disposal to take decision making
20 power away from the Mayor. I don't know what you can
21 do to stop this runaway train of a mayoral
22 administration but you know, at this point we should
23 be going forward and instead we are going backwards
24 and I do not understand why in this four hours that I
25 have been on this call, exactly one Council Member

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2 has said, fully, straight forward schools should be
3 reopened. Why can't we just say that? Why can't we
4 just say that and do that? Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, Travis, I appreciate
6 you testimony and maybe I wasn't more clear. I
7 shared a different vision than the Mayor back in July
8 and I still stand by it and I believe in a phased in
9 approach beginning with our youngest children, most
10 vulnerable children, all kids with IEP's,
11 multilingual learners, children in temporary housing,
12 children in foster care, children in unsafe housing
13 situations. They are in absolute vital need of some
14 in-person services. The challenges for the entire
15 system to go back is - it is numerous. First of all,
16 the Administration still has not shared with us how
17 many teachers are they short by for full in-person
18 instruction? You can't have in-person instruction
19 without a teacher. That problem particularly hurts,
20 impacts high schools and those schools because you
21 need specific licensed educators to teach specific
22 subjects.

23 So, if a high school has two or three signs you
24 know, chemistry teachers and they are both out. You
25 can't put a history teacher to teach a chemistry

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2 class. You need a licensed chemistry teacher to
3 teach that class. Many of our high schools are
4 facing this exact problem, so what ends up happening
5 is, students come into school expecting in-person
6 instruction. Instead they have an adult watching
7 them as they are Zooming with their teacher working
8 from home and many kids say, hey, I didn't sign up
9 for this. This is not in-person instruction.

10 In some cases, in a school, all of their
11 counselors have been granted, have applied for
12 medical accommodations working from home. So, we
13 have a severe staff shortage, fiscal crisis pandemic.
14 It is still CDC guidance and other guidance with
15 regards to social distancing and that presents a
16 challenge for some school communities. So, what I am
17 saying is prioritize a reopening proposal for our
18 most vulnerable children, take stock of that and then
19 you build from there. It does not and also, for high
20 school kids who absolutely need some form of social
21 interaction, let's partner with our libraries. Our
22 local community centers, YMCA's and others to create
23 in-person enrichment opportunities as well for them.

24 There are college campuses that are literally
25 closed right now, sitting dormant because many of

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2 their students are remote. We could be utilizing
3 that space as well. So, we need to get creative and
4 innovate but I think what happened Travis, which the
5 Mayor has basically acknowledged, he really did not
6 have a plan and you know, now he is promising a new
7 plan moving forward but – and I want to be very
8 clear, as you mentioned correctly, we are under a
9 mayoral control system. The Mayor has been really
10 calling the shots and that's why and I want to just
11 acknowledge that many folks at DOE have been working
12 very hard to try to operationalize everything.

13 I also want to give a shoutout to principals and
14 their school leadership. Every single thing that
15 City Hall Tweets about, guess who has to
16 operationalize everything? Those are your
17 Principals, your Assistant Principals, your school
18 teams. They are the ones that absolutely have to
19 operationalize everything.

20 So, I just want to acknowledge their work as
21 well. So, with that, I thank you Travis for your
22 testimony. It is received and Kalima, we can move
23 onto the next person.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, thank you Chair.
25 Next, we will be hearing from Isha Taylor.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

ISHA TAYLOR: Hello, I would like to first thank Deputy Chancellor LaShawn Robinson for being a true leader of this work from the Community Renewal Schools Team with Dr. Karen Mapp to work tirelessly to create equitable, cultural, relevant and student center community centered schools.

I would like to thank Chair Treyger, NYC Council Members and my fellow community Education Council Members as well.

My name is Isha Taylor and I am a Service Disabled Combat Veteran and an Elected Member of the Community Education Council for District 10 in the Bronx. I unapologetically advocate and amplify the parent voice of over 55,000 students, of which 13,000 students in shelter and temporary housing.

Yes, we parents want our children back in school but not without adequate resources, not without a student centered virtual learning experience, not without nurses and social workers. It seems that we are a tale of five microecosystems under one governor without a unified system. It seems that the local city and state officials have declared psychological warfare on its most vulnerable people who are

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2 impacted by numerous intersectional pieces of an
3 already underserved and underfunded community.

4 You are literally telling our most marginalized
5 and silenced voices that they are not even worth
6 having their basic needs met. To just listen as you
7 speak and bark orders or pass down instructions and
8 do what you are told. The voices of parents and
9 students continue to go unheard.

10 Even the elected parent leaders sworn in and
11 governed by New York State education law are not
12 allowed access to schools or provided the data that
13 you all are asking for. You know, your political
14 titles and positions matter more than the actual
15 people that you were elected in position to serve.

16 We are your constituents. We are more than a
17 number. This data that you all are using and quoting
18 and sharing throughout the DOE, it is most definitely
19 flawed and it is manipulated to promote the gender of
20 DOE.

21 Parents need language access and documents free
22 from DOE jargon and workshops free from DOE jargon.
23 We are tired of it. We don't want to hear anything
24 else. We are boost to ground in the streets at our
25 schools, okay and we don't need your permission at

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2 this point. We know what is happening in our
3 schools. We know what is happening. If we were
4 elected to give advice to the DOE, to the Chancellor,
5 why not hear our voices. The students have been
6 speaking loud and clear.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

8 ISHA TAYLOR: We have been dismissed, we have
9 marching, we have been advocating, we have been
10 lobbying, we have been doing everything that we need
11 to do. We have given you multiple plans of how to
12 make this work. We requested for the schools to not
13 open until you all had a plan and provided multiple
14 plans. And yet, the DOE decided to do whatever it
15 wanted to do because you all are so concerned about
16 this talking point of being the first in the world to
17 open up. That makes no sense. Look how many lives
18 we lost. Look how many students that we are losing
19 that somebody mentioned the year but this is
20 generationally going to take a few years for our
21 students to catch up and they were already behind.
22 They were already underfunded; they were already
23 under you know resourced. Like, why are we still
24 having these conversations? People are dying. This
25 is a real thing. You have declared war on our

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students and I saw some of you smile today and this is not a smiling thing. This is a real thing. People are losing their lives, their livelihoods, everything that they worked for. If you are a small business owner, you are losing that and then you are losing your children sitting here watching, I have been watching my children slowly die in front of a damn computer screen for 8 hours and excuse me but this is real.

Eight plus hours sitting in front of a computer screen. How could you do that? We need to be honest about these issues and what is truly happening in our communities. We are tired, especially in the Bronx. One district 55,000 students, 13,000 of them are in shelter and temporary housing and we are guessing and you guys are talking about five weeks for 60,000 devices. We have 1.1 million students. I almost have 55,000 in my district. So, you coming with 60,000 devices when we already told you in March that we were going to need more devices.

But we are tired of this. No more politics. No more power lying. No more placing profits and position over our children, over the people, over our communities. We are tired and we just ask that you

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2 take us – we are very capable of doing this work. We
3 don't need anybody else to come in and decide for us,
4 somebody who has multiple degrees in multiple
5 positions. We don't need anyone else to come in and
6 serve our community the way that we already have
7 been.

8 So, hear us actively. Hear us. Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
10 hearing from Nija Howard.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12 NIJA HOWARD: Hello, can you hear me?

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we can hear you Nija.

14 NIJA HOWARD: So, hello everyone. My name is
15 Nija Howard, I want to thank the Committee on
16 Education for taking the time to listen to my
17 testimony. I am here today to discuss the issue of
18 food insecurity and food waste coming from our school
19 cafeterias. Growing up, I was a student in the
20 public school system from kindergarten to twelfth
21 grade. Just like many children who attended public
22 schools, I ate breakfast and lunch provided in my
23 school cafeteria.

24 During my time attending these institutions, I
25 have seen first hand the amount of food that goes to

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2 waste. My classmates and I would often times eat all
3 that was – wouldn't eat all that was given to us on
4 our lunch trays. Milk, vegies, fruit, pizza or any
5 other item we did not have enough time to finish or
6 just chose not to eat would go to waste.

7 Data collected regarding food waste shows that
8 approximately 53,000 tons of food waste come from our
9 school cafeterias. Keep in mind these numbers were
10 collected pre-COVID. These numbers cannot be ignored
11 considering roughly 12.8 percent of New York City
12 residents experience food insecurity and wonder when
13 they will eat their next meal and 1.4 million New
14 Yorkers rely on emergency food services annually.
15 These services provide food for one and five senior
16 citizens and children that rely on food pantries and
17 soup kitchens.

18 These numbers are only expected to increase with
19 school closures and escalating rates of unemployment
20 during the pandemic. These numbers cannot be ignored
21 and make me question why we are not using the
22 resources we already have to address a problem that
23 so many of our communities are facing.

24 This is why I am calling for the passage of local
25 law 0802-2018. This bill was assigned to the

1
2 Education Committee and proposed by Jumaane Williams.
3 This law would require the Department of Education to
4 donate unconsumed meals to food bank organizations
5 that provide free meals to New Yorkers in need.

6 With that said, I am asking for the Council
7 Members on this call to vote in favor of the passage
8 of this bill. Thank you again for your time.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Thank you so
10 much. Thank you to that panel. If any Council
11 Members have any questions for this panel, just
12 please raise your hand while using the Zoom raise
13 hand function. Thank you, that was the last panel
14 but if we inadvertently missed anyone that would like
15 to testify, please use the Zoom raise hand function
16 and we will call you in the order your hand is
17 raised.

18 Seeing none, we have concluded public testimony
19 for this hearing. I will now turn it back to Chair
20 Treyger for some closing remarks.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very much Kalima
22 for your help and service and for all Council staff.
23 It has been very helpful. I appreciate it. We have
24 a lot of work to do yesterday and we have to act with
25 a sense of crisis urgency and as many of the folks

1
2 have rightfully said on this call, these are issues
3 that have been raised months ago. To me there is no
4 excuse why every child does not have a device in
5 their hands right now, when principals I know put in
6 these requests months ago. And protocols need to be
7 in place and applied in terms of responding to kids
8 in crisis, mental health crisis when you get into the
9 fact that the number of kids I have heard anecdotally
10 but again, there is no data out there right now but
11 anecdotally I am hearing the kids with suicidal
12 ideation cases that schools have to respond to.

13 That has come up during the course of some calls
14 but I just want to note that any folks watching,
15 listen to the Zoom, if there is a particular school
16 community, student, family that's in need of help,
17 please email me as well mtreyger@council.nyc.gov. I
18 took some notes to follow up on here today as well.

19 This is work that we take very, very personal.
20 These are our kids and we are going to continue to
21 keep up the fight to demand accountability,
22 transparency and to prioritize services, in-person
23 services for the children who absolutely need it the
24 most in a phase in approach. And I will continue to
25 hold the Mayor [INAUDIBLE 3:53:50].

1
2 And with that, I appreciate everyone's time today
3 and this hearing is adjourned. Thank you.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: The live stream is off and
5 that concludes this Education hearing.

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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 December 5, 2020