

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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February 23, 2015  
Start: 1:12 p.m.  
Recess: 3:32 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm,  
14th Fl.

B E F O R E:  
INEZ D. BARRON  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
James Vacca  
Fernando Cabrera  
Jumaane D. Williams  
Laurie A. Cumbo  
Ydanis A. Rodriguez  
Vanessa L. Gibson

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

Matthew Sapienza  
Vice Chancellor  
Budget and Finance  
City University of New York

Eduardo Marti  
Interim President  
Bronx Community College

James Murphy  
University Dean for Enrollment Management  
City University of New York

Jeff Lowell  
Representing  
Eric Adams, Brooklyn Borough President

Barbara Bowen  
PSC

Lucas Almonte  
Vice Chair of Legislative Affairs  
University Student Senate  
City University of New York

Donovan Borington  
Vice Chair for Fiscal Affairs  
University Student Senate

Naiay Israel  
Graduate of Hostos Community College

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

Anita Bhattacharjee Dachshund  
Mother

Katherine Gutierrez  
Student  
LaGuardia Community College

CarrieAnn McHale  
Student  
New York City College

Cynthia Jimenez  
Student  
Hostos Community College

Lizaida Rodriguez  
Student  
Hostos Community College

Jamell Henderson  
Graduate  
Borough of Manhattan Community College  
Student  
Brooklyn College

Oscar Martinez  
Vice Chair of Senior Colleges Affairs  
CUNY University Senate

Eber Blanco  
Vice Chair of Community Colleges  
University Student Senate  
Queensborough Community College

1  
2 [gavel]

3 [background comments]

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Good afternoon. I'm  
5 Inez Barron, chair of the Committee on Higher  
6 Education. I want to welcome you to today's hearing  
7 on The Presidents' Free Community College plan.

8 Education is an entitlement that belongs  
9 to everyone; though we may differ about methods, we  
10 all take it for granted that children are entitled to  
11 a first class public education and until the State  
12 took CUNY over in 1976, we took it for granted that  
13 every New Yorkers was entitled to a first class free  
14 college education, which in fact means that we  
15 recognized that free education was from preschool  
16 through graduate school. At that time the City was  
17 bankrupt and falling apart; now the City is a magnet  
18 for the richest people in the world and we are  
19 subsidizing housing for people who are able to spend  
20 \$93 million for an apartment while we increase the  
21 tuition at our public university -- our priorities  
22 are out of whack.

23 On January 8th of this year, President  
24 Barack Obama unveiled a plan to make community  
25 college free for anyone who maintains a 2.5 GPA. The

1  
2 plan calls for the federal government to spend \$60  
3 billion over 10 years and to pay 75 percent of the  
4 tuition cost for eligible students provided the State  
5 pays the remaining 25 percent. The proposal has  
6 received mixed reviews, with some critics complaining  
7 that it overlooks the "real" cost of higher  
8 education; the cost of living.

9           There are practical considerations about  
10 capacity -- will free tuition increase demand at the  
11 community colleges and if so, how will the State help  
12 us meet that demand; and/or considerations about how  
13 CUNY will reduce the average time to graduate from  
14 six years to two; will the State increase funding for  
15 ASAP to make it so every community college student  
16 has the resources and guidance to finish in a timely  
17 fashion. This hearing will examine these and other  
18 questions that arise as we consider the value of the  
19 President's plan.

20           As we consider these issues, we do so  
21 considering whether the Council should adopt a  
22 resolution urging the passage of the State and  
23 Federal legislation necessary to implement the  
24 President's plan. I will read that resolution now.

1  
2 A resolution calling upon Congress to  
3 pass and the President to sign legislation to  
4 implement President Barack Obama's "America's College  
5 Promise Plan" to make two years of community college  
6 free to anyone who maintains a 2.5 GPA and calling  
7 upon the New York State Legislature to pass and the  
8 Governor to sign legislation funding the State's  
9 obligation under the plan, by Council Members Barron,  
10 The Speaker, Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito,  
11 Council Member Kallos, Council Member Williams and  
12 Council Member Crowley.

13 Whereas according to the Center on  
14 Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University,  
15 by 2020 an estimated 35 percent of jobs will require  
16 at least a bachelor's degree and 30 percent will  
17 require some college or an associate's degree and  
18 whereas community colleges have multiple missions  
19 directed at addressing the needs and interests of a  
20 wide variety of constituencies which include general  
21 education towards an associate's degree, transfer to  
22 a baccalaureate program, occupational certificate  
23 programs and workforce development and whereas, in  
24 fall of 2013 approximately 40 percent of all  
25 undergraduate students were enrolled in public two-

1  
2 year colleges, according to recent data by the United  
3 States Education Department, National Center for  
4 Educational Statistics. Whereas, according to the  
5 Pew Research Center, in 2013, 46 percent of all  
6 Latino college students were enrolled in a public  
7 two-year college as compared to 34 percent of black  
8 undergraduate population, 32 percent of the Asian  
9 undergraduate population and 30 percent of the white  
10 undergraduate population enrolled in a public two-  
11 year college. And whereas, in New York City the  
12 representation of students enrolled in a community  
13 college is approximately 39 percent Latino, 28  
14 percent black, 16 percent Asian and 17 percent white.  
15 And whereas, President Barack Obama announced the  
16 proposal called "America's College Promise" to make  
17 community colleges tuition-free for the first two  
18 years and whereas, under the plan full-time and part-  
19 time students would be required to maintain a 2.5  
20 Grade Point Average (GPA) and make consistent  
21 progress towards completion of a college degree. And  
22 whereas, the plan would be open to community colleges  
23 that offer credit towards a four-degree at a public  
24 institution or occupational training that offers  
25 certificates or degrees in high demand fields and

1  
2 whereas the plan calls for an estimated \$60 billion  
3 over 10 years to help cover tuition and fees, whereas  
4 the federal government would cover three-quarters of  
5 the cost and states that choose to participate in the  
6 program would cover the remaining costs and whereas  
7 if all states participate, the program could save  
8 each full-time student an average of \$3,800 a year.  
9 And whereas, as of fall 2014, New York State  
10 residents who enrolled full-time at community  
11 colleges in the City University of New York (CUNY)  
12 pay \$4,500 per year in tuition; therefore, the  
13 President's plan would be highly beneficial to these  
14 students. And whereas under the plan participating  
15 states are also required to "continue existing  
16 investments in higher education, coordinate high  
17 school, community colleges and four-year institutions  
18 to reduce the need for remediation and repeated  
19 courses and allocate a significant portion of funding  
20 based on performance; not enrollment alone. And  
21 whereas opponents of the plan argue that making  
22 community colleges tuition-free is unnecessary  
23 because the average tuition for community college is  
24 an estimated \$3,330 a year and that community  
25 colleges are even more affordable to poor and working

1  
2 class students through Federal Pell Grants, according  
3 to New York Times and whereas according to the latest  
4 data by the National Center for Education Statistics,  
5 41.9 percent of dependent students enrolled in a two-  
6 year college come from households with incomes less  
7 than \$20,000. And whereas the plan would especially  
8 benefit students of color, including black, Latino  
9 and Asian, many of whom come from low-income  
10 households earning less than \$20,000, as indicated in  
11 the National Center for Education Statistics. And  
12 whereas almost half, 46.8 percent, of students  
13 enrolled at CUNY community colleges come from  
14 households with incomes less than \$20,000 which  
15 exceeds the national level. And whereas, although  
16 financial aid is available, low-income community  
17 college students are still confronted with additional  
18 costs, such as housing, food, books, transportation  
19 and other expenses that make it very difficult for  
20 them to meet their financial obligations, which can  
21 often deter them from completing a college degree and  
22 whereas such costs are exacerbated by those students  
23 living in New York City, which is one of the most  
24 expensive cities in the nation. And whereas  
25 according to the Center for American Progress,

1  
2 community colleges have been disproportionately  
3 impacted by state budget cuts in recent years,  
4 resulting in rising tuition costs, thus limiting  
5 educational and career opportunities for students.  
6 And whereas, it is important that all states,  
7 including New York State, participate in President  
8 Obama's America's College Promise Plan to make  
9 college more affordable and to educate a competitive  
10 workforce that is vital to stimulating local  
11 economies in New York City, across the nation and  
12 globally.

13           Now therefore, be it resolved that the  
14 Council of the City of New York calls upon Congress  
15 to pass and the President to sign legislation to  
16 implement President Obama's America's Choice Promise  
17 Plan to make two years of community college free to  
18 anyone who maintains a 2.5 GPA and calling upon the  
19 New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor  
20 to sign legislation funding the State's obligation  
21 under the plan.

22           Before I begin, I want to recognize  
23 members of the Committee of Higher Education --  
24 Council Member Williams, Council Member Kallos and  
25 thank my Legislative Director and CUNY Liaison, Ndigo

1  
2 Washington, the Committee Finance Analyst, Jessica  
3 Ackerman, our Policy Analyst, Tonya Cyrus, our  
4 Counsel, Jeff Campagna and I want to especially  
5 recognize my co-sponsors of the resolution, Council  
6 Member Jumaane Williams and Council Member Ben  
7 Kallos.

8           And since we all know that this is the  
9 conclusion of Black History Month, I wanna share a  
10 little bio with you of a significant African American  
11 person in history.

12           Many of you I'm sure know of Carter G.  
13 Woodson. Do you know of Carter G. Woodson? Oh  
14 great. Carter G. Woodson, you may or may not know,  
15 was self-taught and when he finally had an  
16 opportunity to go to high school he was able to  
17 complete four years of high school in two years. So  
18 he completed that two-year program and then he went  
19 to a local college and he had an opportunity to serve  
20 as an ambassador for education in the country of --  
21 I'll have to go back and find out where that is --  
22 oh, he worked as an educational superintendent in the  
23 Philippines. He returned to the United States; he  
24 went to the University of Chicago and he received his  
25 bachelor's degree and a master's degree and he was

1  
2 only the second African American to receive a Ph.D.  
3 from Harvard University. He went on to become the  
4 founder of the Association for the Study of Negro  
5 Life and to produce The Journal of Negro History and  
6 he may be most well-known for his book, *The Mis-*  
7 *Education of the Negro*. He was a principal of a  
8 training school in D.C. and he went on to become the  
9 dean of Howard University.

10           And I just wanna share two of his quotes  
11 with you. "Those who have no record of what their  
12 forebears have accomplished lose the inspiration  
13 which comes from the teaching of biography and  
14 history." And he was very much concerned about the  
15 impact of education on particular African American  
16 children and another well-known quote that he has is:  
17 "When you control a man's thinking you do not have to  
18 worry about his actions, you do not have to tell him  
19 not to stand here or go yonder, he will find his own  
20 place and will stay in it." So we certainly know  
21 that as a Committee of Higher Education, we have an  
22 obligation to help stimulate people's thinking and  
23 analytical ability and encourage them to carve their  
24 place out in this society so that the entire society  
25

1  
2 benefits and we're not relegated to positions based  
3 on people's prejudices or lack of information.

4 At this time I'm going to call the first  
5 panel.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: Excuse me, Madame  
7 Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh, I'm sorry.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: I'm sorry. No, no  
10 Madame Chair... [interpose]

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: We've been joined by  
12 Council Member also, Council Member Van Bra...  
13 [interpose]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: Council Chair,  
15 Inez Barron; I just wanna be added to bill, please..

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: if you can add my  
18 name.

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you so much.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. We'll first  
22 call on Council Member... [background comment]  
23 Williams, senior person; you may go. [background  
24 comments] Thank you.  
25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you,  
3 Madame Chair; I know Kallos' name is first, so I  
4 appreciate that. This is a very, very important  
5 piece of legislation and what President Obama is  
6 trying to do is immensely important in order to get  
7 ourselves further along and although we're saying  
8 we're out of the recession, many people have not felt  
9 it; as a matter of fact, particularly in the low-  
10 income communities; particularly in the black and  
11 brown communities; black communities in general are  
12 usually twice as high on unemployment scale of  
13 everyone else and we can't fix this problem without  
14 providing access to quality education, so the  
15 resolution -- I wanna thank Council Member Barron and  
16 my colleagues and the committee staff, including Jeff  
17 Campagna and Tonya Cyrus for drafting the resolution  
18 in the cause [sic] to call on Congress to pass and  
19 the President to sign legislation to implement  
20 President Obama's America's College Promise Plan to  
21 make two years of college free for anyone the  
22 maintains a 2.5 GPA; that may not have included me,  
23 depending on the year we're looking at, but although  
24 everyone might not choose to attend a two-year or  
25 four-year college or university, we all know how

1  
2 critically important access to a college education is  
3 and I commend President Obama for this proposal; cost  
4 should not be prohibitive when deciding whether to  
5 attend an institution of higher education and I  
6 applaud CUNY, that has still provided good education  
7 at a cost that's lower than private institutions; I  
8 applauded them further, however, when they had free  
9 education and it was happening actually during the  
10 Great Depression, because we understood that in order  
11 to get out of the Great Depression we had to provide  
12 free education for people who needed it the most and  
13 I believe that this plan is on the same kind of  
14 wavelength that they were thinking back then.  
15 Community colleges are essential pathways to the  
16 middle class because they're local and they're  
17 flexible. According to The College Board, 2010-2011  
18 average tuition for full-time students in a public  
19 two-year was \$2,713 compared to a public four-year,  
20 \$7,605. Since the Great Recession, community  
21 colleges have had 20 percent increase in enrollment,  
22 while four-year public institutions have had an  
23 increase of 10.6 percent; clearly the path to getting  
24 educated is in community colleges. About 7.7 million  
25 Americans attend community colleges for credit, of

1  
2 whom 3.1 million attend full-time, according to the  
3 American Association of Community Colleges.

4 Overall, the federal government provides  
5 about \$9.1 billion to community colleges or 16  
6 percent of the total revenue the colleges receive.  
7 Tuition for students provides \$16.7 billion a year or  
8 narrowly 30 percent of revenue. According to the  
9 American Association of Community Colleges, 46  
10 percent of all U.S. graduates attend community  
11 colleges; of these students, 36 percent are first  
12 generation, 17 percent single parents, 7 percent non  
13 U.S. citizen, 12 percent with disabilities; further,  
14 61 percent Native American, 57 percent Hispanic, 52  
15 percent black and 43 percent Asian Pacific Islanders,  
16 according to 2013 data. In 2010-2011 academic year,  
17 approximately 45 percent of all students who  
18 completed a degree at a four-year institution had  
19 previously enrolled in a two-year institution; 60  
20 percent of Americans say they favor President Obama's  
21 proposal to give two years of community college  
22 tuition to students with C+ or better or making  
23 progress toward a degree; hopefully the next step  
24 will be the Council being on record in support of  
25 this plan and soon, hopefully soon, the step will be

1  
2 that a four-year at City University will follow suit.  
3 Thank you so much.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Council  
5 Member Kallos.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Thank you to  
7 Council Member Inez Barron for her leadership on the  
8 Committee on Higher Education, as well as for  
9 introducing this resolution in support of the  
10 President's America's College Promise Free Community  
11 College Plan, which I am proud to co-sponsor along  
12 with Council Member Williams.

13 I am Council Member Ben Kallos; I would  
14 be remiss if I did not say you could tweet me  
15 @BenKallos. I am a graduate of public high school  
16 and public university for both undergraduate and  
17 graduate school, much like my colleague to my right,  
18 who also went to a public high school and a public  
19 university; he was at CUNY; I was at SUNY, but that  
20 being said, even though a public education helped me  
21 get where I am today, I couldn't get here without  
22 significant debt, which I am still paying off and  
23 will continue paying off for the foreseeable future  
24 until luckily, now that I am in government service,  
25 according to a 2007 act, I will be able to be

1  
2 forgiven for a small portion of my debt after I'd  
3 already finished paying it off significantly. And so  
4 I have been committed to making sure that we have  
5 free higher education. One thing we were able to do  
6 under our Chairperson's leadership and under The  
7 Speaker's leadership was launch the City Council  
8 Scholarship Program for CUNY students and so that  
9 stands today and we will continue to provide funding.  
10 However, the President's proposal is a bold proposal;  
11 it would make community college free for so many  
12 people and it would provide an entre into a career  
13 and to vocational training and provide them with a  
14 pathway to college. So I'm committed to working as  
15 hard as we can and for what it's worth, according to  
16 the United States Census, the greatest investment we  
17 can make as a government is an education, because we  
18 earn so much of our revenue from income taxes and it  
19 turns out that a high school graduate earns more than  
20 a high school dropout, an associate's degree holder  
21 earns so much more than a high school graduate, and a  
22 college degree holder earns more than somebody with  
23 an associate's degree. And so for every single  
24 dollar we invest in education for somebody who  
25 graduates, we actually receive a windfall over their

1  
2 careers and the math actually pays for itself when it  
3 comes to the city and state. So I join the Committee  
4 and ask that you please vote in favor of this  
5 resolution and I hope that our Congress passes a  
6 budget with this program, that the Governor opts into  
7 it and that the City also does its fair share so that  
8 we can offer it in the City of New York so that this  
9 can truly be closer to the land of opportunity that  
10 has always been promised, where everyone can get a  
11 higher education. Thank you so very much.

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Council  
13 Member Vacca.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: Thank you. Thank  
15 you, Chair Barron. And I want to also state that I'm  
16 a graduate, a proud graduate of City University,  
17 Queens College, where I received my master's degree  
18 and I saw this resolution and I wanted to sign on and  
19 I thank the Chair for signing me on today. I do  
20 wanna say that usually I'm a little hesitant to sign  
21 onto resolutions; I do it once in a while, but you  
22 know, resolutions are a sense of the body,  
23 resolutions are not in fact law; we adopt resolutions  
24 to advise other levels of government where we as a  
25 City Council stand on an issue where we may not have

1 jurisdiction, but I consider this very important. I  
2 do want you to know that when I first heard the  
3 President's announcement I really was enthused, but I  
4 have to tell you, I thought that we in the New York  
5 City Council provided a model for the President; we  
6 have funded what is known as the Vallone Scholarship  
7 for many years and now this year we restored funding  
8 for that program. I really think that everyone who  
9 wants to go to college, who works hard and does well,  
10 should not be held back by an economic circumstance;  
11 I never believed that, and many times in the  
12 community colleges we have students there who need  
13 remediation. Now should the high schools do the  
14 remediation? Absolutely. But we and the colleges  
15 face the reality of what we have to do and many times  
16 the financial aid that students are entitled to in  
17 the community colleges evaporates because they do  
18 need the remedial courses and then they cannot get  
19 enough tap after the remedial courses to get the help  
20 they need to get the two-year degree. So when I  
21 heard the President's recommendation I was very  
22 enthused; I think this recommendation is correct, we  
23 need the funding, we need the support and I think  
24 that we in the Council should speak up, so I support  
25

1  
2 this effort before us today and I thank you, Madame  
3 Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. I wanna  
5 acknowledge we've been joined by Council Member  
6 Laurie Cumbo and Council Member Vanessa Gibson. And  
7 at this time we're going to call the first panel.  
8 We're going to have Eduardo Marti, the Interim  
9 President of Bronx Community College; Matthew  
10 Sapienza, the Vice Chancellor for Budget and Finance  
11 of CUNY, and James Murphy, the University Dean for  
12 Enrollment Management at CUNY.

13 And if you would raise your right hand,  
14 I'd ask that you listen to this affirmation. Do you  
15 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing  
16 but the truth in your testimony before this committee  
17 and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

18 [background comment] Thank you; you may begin.

19 [background comments]

20 MATTHEW SAPIENZA: Thank you. Thank you.  
21 Good afternoon. Good afternoon Chairperson Barron  
22 and members of the New York City Council Higher  
23 Education Committee. I am Matthew Sapienza, Vice  
24 Chancellor for Budget and Finance at the City  
25 University of New York. Thank you for the

1  
2 opportunity to speak with you today about President  
3 Obama's free community college proposal.

4 I am joined this afternoon by Eduardo  
5 Marti, the Interim President of Bronx Community  
6 College and James Murphy, our University Dean for  
7 Enrollment.

8 This past January, President Obama  
9 unveiled a new proposal called America's College  
10 Promise; this initiative would make two years of  
11 community college free and is based on programs that  
12 were instituted this past year in both Tennessee and  
13 Chicago. The President's proposal called for a  
14 partnership between the federal government and local  
15 states to cover the cost of community college  
16 tuition. If all states participate, the White House  
17 estimates that 9 million students could benefit and  
18 that a full-time community college student could save  
19 an average of \$3,800 in tuition per year. The White  
20 House has estimated that this proposal will cost  
21 approximately \$60 billion over 10 years; Congress  
22 must approve this proposal before it is enacted into  
23 law.

24 Here at the City University of New York  
25 we are very pleased that President Obama has drawn

1  
2 focus to the critical role that community colleges  
3 play in our society. The President's plan for free  
4 tuition at community colleges sends a powerful signal  
5 of the important of access to a quality education and  
6 of these vital frontline higher education  
7 institutions to America's future. Let me show you  
8 some details that were contained in the President's  
9 proposal.

10           Students who attend at least half-time,  
11 maintain a 2.5 GPA while in college and make steady  
12 progress towards completing their programs will have  
13 their tuition eliminated. Federal funding will cover  
14 three-quarters of the average cost of community  
15 college; states that choose to participate will be  
16 expected to contribute the remaining funds necessary  
17 to eliminate community college tuition for eligible  
18 students. States must also commit to continuing  
19 existing investments in higher education, coordinate  
20 high schools, community colleges and four-year  
21 institutions to reduce the need for remediation and  
22 repeated courses and allocate a significant portion  
23 of funding based on performance, not enrollment  
24 alone. Community colleges will be expected to offer  
25 programs that are either academic programs that fully

1  
2 transfer to local public four-year colleges and  
3 universities or occupational training programs with  
4 high graduate rates and that lead to degrees and  
5 certificates that are in demand among employers.  
6 Other types of programs will not be eligible for free  
7 tuition.

8           Colleges must also adopt promising and  
9 evidence-based institutional reforms to improve  
10 student outcomes. When President described this  
11 requirement in his press release, he specifically  
12 cited CUNY's groundbreaking, accelerated study and  
13 associate programs initiative. The President called  
14 on other community colleges to adopt programs such as  
15 -- and I'm quoting the President -- "such as the  
16 effective accelerated study and associate programs at  
17 the City University of New York which waive tuition,  
18 help students pay for books and transit costs and  
19 provide academic advising and supportive scheduling  
20 programs to better meet the needs of participating  
21 students, resulting in greater gains in college  
22 persistence and degree completion."

23           ASAP was an innovation that took some  
24 time to develop but has proved its worth beyond our  
25 most optimistic expectations; it began in fall 2007

1 with a cohort of 1,132 students. The goal was to  
2 significantly improve, even double graduation rates.  
3 Students were required to attend full-time and to  
4 participate in bi-monthly advising sessions, weekly  
5 non-credit group seminars, dedicated tutoring and  
6 career and employment counseling; they received  
7 tuition, books and a monthly MetroCard; results were  
8 quite spectacular. To date ASAP has served 8,670  
9 students and just admitted its eighth cohort. ASAP  
10 has consistently surpassed its target with 52 percent  
11 of students graduating within three years versus 22  
12 percent of a comparison group of similar CUNY  
13 students. The most recent graduate [sic] ASAP cohort  
14 has done even better, realizing a 57 percent three-  
15 year graduation rate. The national average at urban  
16 institutions is 16 percent. The takeaway is that  
17 students in ASAP graduate at three times the national  
18 average for urban community colleges. As noted by  
19 the President, the program has been held out as a  
20 model to be emulated and the state of Ohio has  
21 already made plans to replicate at several of their  
22 community colleges.  
23

24 And I wanna take just a minute to  
25 recognize the Executive Director of the ASAP program

1  
2 who's here today, Donna Linderman; she's done heroic  
3 work in getting these results for the ASAP program.

4           Based on the program's truly impressive  
5 results, we are planning a major expansion, extending  
6 the program to more of our community college  
7 students. In fall 2014 we enrolled 4,000 students  
8 and working towards an enrollment goal of at east  
9 13,000 students by fall 2017. The program actually  
10 saves money by shortening the time it takes for  
11 students to receive a degree.

12           We are extremely proud of President  
13 Obama's recognition of ASAP as a national model of  
14 effectiveness and successful student outcomes. We  
15 join with the President in offering ASAP as a  
16 national model to be expanded both here in New York  
17 and throughout the nation. Although we would all  
18 agree that more needs to be done to ease the barriers  
19 to a higher education degree, we are proud of the  
20 University's accomplishments in keeping the costs of  
21 attendance as low as possible.

22           Here at CUNY more than 7 out of 10 full-  
23 time community college students attend tuition-free  
24 due to federal and state financial aid. This focus  
25 on making CUNY's historic mission of access and

1  
2 excellence continues to result in student seeking  
3 CUNY as their institution of choice. In fact, the  
4 enrollment for the fall 2014 semester was the highest  
5 in the University's history, over 274,000 students;  
6 this represents an increase of over 40 percent since  
7 the year 2000. In addition, freshmen enrollment is  
8 also at an all-time high, totaling 38,000 for the  
9 fall semester.

10 This record enrollment, particularly at  
11 our community colleges, leads to one of the concerns  
12 we have with the President's proposal; that is, the  
13 physical capacity of our community college campuses  
14 to absorb additional students. If Congress approves  
15 the President's plan and more students are drawn into  
16 the community colleges, our facilities' resources,  
17 which are already stretched to the limit, will be  
18 severely compromised. Stated simply, CUNY's  
19 community colleges are over-subscribed in terms of  
20 space. Accommodating additional students could be  
21 addressed by providing additional weekend programs  
22 and increasing summer course offerings, but this will  
23 require additional operating budget resources.  
24 Additional capital funding for newer renovated  
25 facilities would also be required.

1  
2 We have additional areas of concern with  
3 the President's proposal. For instance, we have a  
4 significant associate degree student population at  
5 Medgar Evans College, New York City College of  
6 Technology and the College of Staten Island; it is  
7 unclear if the America's College Promise initiative  
8 would extend to these associate degree students at  
9 our senior colleges. University Dean Murphy will be  
10 outlining these, as well as further questions and  
11 concerns about the President's plan in his testimony.

12 Chairperson Barron and Committee Members,  
13 we are grateful for your constant leadership in  
14 assuring that a high-quality and accessible CUNY  
15 continues to be a mandate for a successful and  
16 progressive city. We look forward to working with  
17 you to uphold that commitment. I would now like to  
18 ask Interim President Eduardo Marti to provide his  
19 testimony.

20 EDUARDO MARTI: Thank you very much. Is  
21 it on? [background comment] Okay, great.

22 Good afternoon, Chair Barron and members  
23 of the Higher Education Committee. My name is  
24 Eduardo Marti and I serve as the Interim President of  
25 Bronx Community College. Prior to this assignment I

1  
2 served as Vice Chancellor for Community Colleges for  
3 CUNY and as President of Queensboro Community  
4 College. All toll, I have over 30 years of  
5 experience leading community colleges, both in CUNY  
6 and in SUNY and almost 50 years of service as a  
7 faculty member and an administrator, mostly in CUNY,  
8 as I said, but also in SUNY and in Connecticut. So I  
9 am pleased to share with you what I have learned from  
10 my experiences and to enter into a discussion as to  
11 how to determine how we can work together to ensure  
12 that all New Yorkers have a clear path for a better  
13 life.

14 In all my years of service, and I sound  
15 like an old man when I say that -- and I am old -- in  
16 all my years of service I have seen community  
17 colleges grow from storefront operations to respected  
18 institutions of higher education. Now that over 45  
19 percent of all undergraduates in this country attend  
20 a community college; now that community colleges are  
21 seen not only as launching pads to the baccalaureate,  
22 the as economic development engines for their  
23 localities; now that community colleges are seen as  
24 the vehicle for bolstering the middle class, it is  
25 time to seize the moment and to do something bold,

1 something that will significantly catapult our  
2 colleges to enable us to fulfill individual dreams  
3 and to work for the public good, but we have a duty  
4 to do this carefully and to ensure that access leads  
5 to graduation and not to failure. Let me start by  
6 giving you my impression of the importance of access  
7 and the impact that personal finances have on any  
8 student attending our community colleges.  
9

10 As it was said before, while  
11 approximately 70 percent of our students receive full  
12 financial aid and therefore attend college for free,  
13 there are approximately 30,000 students who are in  
14 need of some sort of assistance. I can tell you that  
15 at Bronx Community College last fall we had 1,584  
16 students that couldn't go and register for the spring  
17 semester because of some sort of financial hold on  
18 their record and now some of them didn't pay, but a  
19 lot of them couldn't pay. Thus, increasing financial  
20 access for the working poor of the city is important  
21 initiative. I am grateful to you, members of the  
22 City Council, for trying to get as much information  
23 as possible before you take action so that we do this  
24 in the right way and we can help as many people as we  
25 possibly can.

1  
2 From my vantage point, I believe that  
3 retention of students is of paramount importance.  
4 Parenthetically, let me indicate to you that when we  
5 make a promise to a student of an associate degree  
6 when they come to a community college and that  
7 student doesn't graduate, we have shattered dreams;  
8 we have a significant impact on the emotional and  
9 economic well-being of that particular student; some  
10 students never ever come back because they really  
11 believe that they completely failed by failing at a  
12 community college. So I say at our college that  
13 failure to graduate a student is our failure, it's  
14 not the student's failure.

15 But access without completion leads to  
16 grave damage to the self-esteem for the under  
17 prepared student; it also ends up costing so much  
18 more. While the CUNY graduation rate for community  
19 colleges surpasses that of most community colleges,  
20 at 23 percent, as it was indicated -- nationally it's  
21 about 16 percent -- we're still not graduating enough  
22 students. When you look at this from the negative  
23 side, that means that we have a significant number of  
24 students that just go away, never graduate.

1  
2 Programs such as the ASAP have proven  
3 that with sufficient academic and student support,  
4 our students are capable of far surpassing the  
5 national graduation average. As it was mentioned  
6 before, again, to date the ASAP has realized an  
7 average of three-year graduate rates of 52 percent  
8 across the five cohorts that have graduated to date.  
9 So I ask you to consider reducing the financial  
10 barriers to access but also consider enhancing the  
11 services that lead to increased retention and  
12 graduation.

13 There's one benefit that students in the  
14 ASAP program consider to be very important -- a free  
15 MetroCard; it is one of the best retention tools  
16 associated with this program. The program  
17 distributes the MetroCard according to the student's  
18 attendance and participation in the program and it is  
19 clear that attendance and participation in student  
20 services are important factors in retaining the  
21 student. So if you want to help students attend  
22 community colleges immediately, give them a free  
23 MetroCard; the cost for students without taxable  
24 income right now would be about \$9.4 million annually  
25 for full-time students; if we make it so that the

1  
2 full-time student can get the MetroCard, this is a  
3 powerful incentive for them to register as a full-  
4 time student and all studies indicate that a full-  
5 time student graduates more effectively than a part-  
6 time student.

7           So as you consider additional funding to  
8 improve access and retention, I would urge you to  
9 keep working with the University in providing  
10 enhanced support for initiatives that reduce the need  
11 for remediation at community colleges; programs such  
12 as CUNY Start, College Now; Graduate NYC help ease  
13 the transition from high school to college. While  
14 ASAP program attends to students who have a better  
15 academic preparation, these other programs attend to  
16 those students who need additional help.

17           I hope that we can find ways to better  
18 streamline the relationship between secondary sectors  
19 and the community colleges. At Bronx Community  
20 College I am trying to establish better lines of  
21 communication between the five largest feeder high  
22 schools and the college. My idea is to utilize the  
23 PSAT scores at the 10th grade level and to norm [sic]  
24 them to the campus exam, which is our placement exam.  
25 Using this data we can determine those students that

1  
2 are in line to require remediation at Bronx Community  
3 College. Once we identify these students, I want to  
4 work with the faculties of both the high school and  
5 the college to better align the curricula. It is my  
6 understanding that CUNY Start does some this;  
7 however, I would want to start quickly to provide  
8 some assistance to the students this spring while  
9 they are beginning to go into the 11th and 12th  
10 grade. Think about what we could do if we save some  
11 of the \$30 million that we currently spend in  
12 remediation and how we could use that money to put it  
13 into student services that can help our students.

14 Another initiative that we're exploring  
15 at Bronx Community College is paying attention to our  
16 graduating class. We are converting our career and  
17 transfer office from a place where students are  
18 advised as to how to get a job to a job placement  
19 office, where we actually get students a job or  
20 secure a transfer place at a baccalaureate unit of  
21 the university. My goal is to have -- and mark this;  
22 hold me accountable, 'cause you can't really fire me  
23 -- [laughter] my goal is to have 90 percent of the  
24 graduates of 2015 secure employment or transfer as  
25 they complete their studies at BCC this year.

1  
2 I applaud the Committee's interest in  
3 trying to expand access to this great university;  
4 there's no question that the financial barriers are  
5 insurmountable for some, especially the working poor,  
6 but we should find ways to reduce these barriers and  
7 we should consider providing assistance to those  
8 students with existing and proven programs that can  
9 significantly impact retention and graduation at our  
10 community colleges. ASAP is a great program and  
11 while it is expensive, it produces results, results  
12 that translate into better jobs, more taxes paid and  
13 therefore a better return on investments. You have  
14 always been supportive of CUNY and its community  
15 colleges; thanks to you we have an effective system  
16 that provides the pathway for students from a high  
17 school equivalency to the Ph.D.; now you have an  
18 opportunity to significantly increase the access and  
19 retention of students at CUNY's community colleges.  
20 As always, through hearings such as this and by  
21 requesting further information of what works best, I  
22 am certain that you will arrive at a sound decision  
23 so as to help the residents of our city break the  
24 cycle of poverty through an effective higher  
25 educational system. Thank you for your attention.

1  
2 JAMES MURPHY: Good afternoon Chairperson  
3 Barron and members of the Higher Education Committee.  
4 My name is James Murphy; I'm CUNY's University Dean  
5 for Enrollment Management and I'm going to pardon  
6 myself; I have a little bit of a cold coming on, so I  
7 might cough in the middle of this.

8 Our offices are responsible for  
9 admissions, financial aid and registration for all  
10 274,000 undergraduate and graduate students at CUNY,  
11 including the 99,000 students registered at our  
12 community colleges. We all work diligently to ensure  
13 the students can access a top-notch education without  
14 being overburdened by debt and we're proud that CUNY  
15 remains one of the nation's best value institutions.  
16 As Vice Chancellor Sapienza mentioned, approximately  
17 7 out of 10 of our full-time community college  
18 students attend for free, thanks to financial aid and  
19 benefits from federal, state, city and institutional  
20 sources. Those who do not attend for free include  
21 international students, out of state students; those  
22 are academically ineligible, and sadly, the  
23 undocumented students.

24 President Obama's Community College Plan,  
25 called America's College Promise, provides free

1  
2 tuition for community college students who attend at  
3 least half-time, have a family income of less than  
4 \$200,000, maintain a grade point average of 2.5 and  
5 make steady progress towards a degree. The community  
6 college would be expected to offer high-quality  
7 programs with credits transferable to four-year  
8 colleges; the federal government would provide 75  
9 percent of the costs while participating states would  
10 be asked to fund the other 25 percent.

11           The American College Promise Plan, if  
12 enacted, would lift the perception and value of a  
13 community college education. I was originally hired  
14 by a CUNY community college to assist students in  
15 completing the application to New York State Tuition  
16 Assistance Program (TAP) immediately following the  
17 implication of tuition at CUNY. I spent my first 17  
18 years at CUNY as a financial aid administrator, so  
19 naturally -- [cough] excuse me -- I am in favor of  
20 any program which provides funds to students in any  
21 form; however, there are several aspects of this  
22 program which need clarification.

23           This plan provides for free tuition at a  
24 community college but it does not specify an amount  
25 or the source of determining the amount, nor does it

1  
2 clearly define a community college. Will students in  
3 any high-quality associate degree program at any  
4 public college be included or just those attending a  
5 traditional community college? A plan which only  
6 includes the traditional community colleges would be  
7 unfair to those who would then have the misfortune of  
8 enrolling in an associate degree program in a college  
9 that offers bachelor's degrees and would affect  
10 enrollment and ultimately funding at CUNY's three  
11 comprehensive colleges, the College of Staten Island,  
12 Medgar Evans and City Tech. The cost of operating a  
13 community college varies by a number of factors,  
14 including location and type of program offered; if  
15 the plan includes the use of an average tuition,  
16 which many believe it does, states like New York will  
17 need to provide additional funds above the 25 percent  
18 or the colleges would be required to reduce costs or  
19 operate at a deficit. We are not sure how the need  
20 for increased revenue in future years will be handled  
21 and who funds the out of state students, including  
22 those on student visas. Also, how will the students'  
23 eligibility for other financial aid programs, such as  
24 TAP and Pell be affected both in the short-term and  
25 the long-term?

1  
2 We were originally under the assumption  
3 that all community college students who met the  
4 qualifications would receive the benefit; it is now  
5 unclear if this includes both current and new  
6 students; we are also not sure if transfer students  
7 would be eligible; if they are, how are remaining  
8 eligibilities determined and tracked, as well as the  
9 eligibility of students with prior degrees?

10 Community colleges will be expected to  
11 provide high-quality programs with credits  
12 transferrable to four-year college. I believe all  
13 colleges would argue they provide high-quality  
14 programs and the credits should transfer to four-year  
15 colleges. Who will determine if the programs are  
16 high-quality? Will terminal associate degree majors  
17 be included or just STEM majors? The transferability  
18 of credits is determined by the receiving college,  
19 not the sending college, so this is problematic.

20 These are points which need  
21 clarification; should not be taken as objections to  
22 the proposal. CUNY would like to be part of the  
23 discussion to ensure that eligibility extends to as  
24 many of our students as possible. Thank you.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I wanna thank the  
3 panel for their presentation and I do have some  
4 questions and then I'll invite my colleagues to share  
5 their questions as well.

6 You talked about CUNY not having the  
7 capacity if all of the graduates decided they wanted  
8 to go; would you be able to identify satellites that  
9 could function; would you be able to identify public  
10 schools or other institutions that could function to  
11 house the students that might want to go to a  
12 community college program?

13 MATTHEW SAPIENZA: Well that's part of  
14 what we would have to do if we had a sudden surge in  
15 community college enrollment. Over the last 20 years  
16 or so we've had a tremendous surge in community  
17 college enrollment; the last several years it's kind  
18 of flattened out a little bit. But part of the  
19 challenge that we have is identifying space,  
20 especially at where some of our community colleges  
21 are located. You look at Borough of Manhattan  
22 Community College, which is a few blocks away from  
23 here, it's very critical for us to try to find space  
24 for that campus. The national standard for  
25 assignable square feet at community colleges is about

1  
2 75 net assignable square feet per student; at BMCC  
3 the average is 37, so BMCC is nowhere near to where  
4 it should be in terms of the amount of space it  
5 should have. Looking at just that center, they  
6 should have twice the amount of space that they have,  
7 so space is definitely a concern. Other community  
8 colleges, like Bronx Community College or Queensboro  
9 Community College that have a physical campus, if we  
10 had capital funding to build new buildings, that  
11 would be terrific, but that's been a challenge as  
12 well. Queensboro Community College, the last new  
13 building that was constructed on that campus is now  
14 37 years old. So space is definitely an issue and  
15 something that we would have to consider if we did  
16 have a sudden surge in enrollment. And any of the  
17 ideas that you brought up, Chair Barron, about  
18 working with the New York City public schools to  
19 identify space or other institutions, we would be  
20 happy to look into.

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And Dean Murphy, you  
22 talked about the plan provides for free tuition at a  
23 community college, but it does not specify an amount  
24 or the source of determining the amount, nor does it  
25 clearly identify community college. What would be

1  
2 your concerns if in fact this plan had no cap and it  
3 just provided 75 percent of whatever the tuition is  
4 at a community college?

5 JAMES MURPHY: That would not be a  
6 concern... [crosstalk]

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

8 JAMES MURPHY: my concern would be the  
9 reverse; if they come up with an average tuition...  
10 [crosstalk]

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

12 JAMES MURPHY: that's much lower than... we  
13 would need to support a student in CUNY.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. And in terms  
15 of the transferability, we know that we have the  
16 Pathways Programs for CUNY so that students can move  
17 from the community colleges smoothly into the senior  
18 colleges and we're certainly going to have a hearing  
19 on that to see where we are with that, but would that  
20 be a problem in terms of... [interpose] the transfer...

21 JAMES MURPHY: You see the... the issue of  
22 a student transferring within CUNY should not be an  
23 issue, that should not be the issue... [interpose]

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Uhm-hm.  
25

1  
2 JAMES MURPHY: the problem is if they  
3 come up with some kind of -- I don't know, criteria  
4 where they have to transfer to other colleges -- when  
5 I worked at Baruch I used to kid that there isn't an  
6 accounting department in the country who thinks any  
7 other accounting department knows how to teach  
8 accounting, [background comment] so there are a lot  
9 of colleges that just will not accept credits not  
10 only from CUNY community colleges, but from other  
11 public community colleges.

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. And in terms  
13 of the commitment to help students, 90 percent of the  
14 students who graduate get a job or transfer?

15 EDUARDO MARTI: That's my goal.

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. How are you  
17 going to do that?

18 EDUARDO MARTI: Well as I said in my  
19 testimony, right now... [interpose]

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: 'Cause we... no, you  
21 told us we can't fire you, so how are you going to..

22 EDUARDO MARTI: [laughter] Right.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: and I'll have to  
24 look into that, but how are we going to do that?

25

1  
2 EDUARDO MARTI: Oh you... you... you... you  
3 can. Yes, you can, as of June 30th this year you  
4 can. [laughter] No; right now what we have is career  
5 and transfer services...

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

7 EDUARDO MARTI: so what happens is, it's  
8 up to the student to come to this office to learn how  
9 to do a resume, how to go through an interview  
10 process and you know, it's advice; [background  
11 comment] what I'm doing is I'm turning that office  
12 around from being a career and transfer services to  
13 being a job placement office; I wanna use the  
14 Advisory Boards from each one of the programs to make  
15 certain that I can identify jobs that are available  
16 through companies that are associated with the  
17 college; I also wanna use Department of Labor's data  
18 that I can use, you know, things like the jobs at  
19 CUNY that are available, and I want the office to  
20 take on the responsibility of making appointments for  
21 our students, making certain that they get an  
22 interview with an employer and I think I can do it.  
23 I think I can do it, just hold me accountable.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I like to hear that  
25 kind of thinking, because if we think we can, we can;

1  
2 you know the story of the little engine that could,  
3 [background comments] he thought that he could and he  
4 was able to do that, so [background comment] at the  
5 outset, when we have that mindset, it's very helpful.  
6 Now you... [crosstalk]

7 EDUARDO MARTI: And I'm little too, so I  
8 can... I can do that. [laughter]

9 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, I'll leave  
10 that. The objective now of looking at the PSAT  
11 scores...

12 EDUARDO MARTI: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: to identify where  
14 students are going to need assistance; how are you  
15 going to work with the public schools; how are you  
16 going to work with your feeder schools to give that  
17 support to those students at that point, although I  
18 have some reservations about the PSAT and the SATs as  
19 indicators of what students can actually do, but  
20 starting with your premise that you're looking at  
21 that, how are you going to... [interpose]

22 EDUARDO MARTI: Well -- two-step process...  
23 [interpose]

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.  
25

1  
2 EDUARDO MARTI: first of all, utilizing  
3 the research capability of the university, use the  
4 Compass exam and try to norm that to whatever scores  
5 are in the PSAT...

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

7 EDUARDO MARTI: and that is relatively  
8 easy to do. The second and the more difficult part,  
9 and perhaps the part that I may need a little help  
10 from my friends, is to ensure that the people in the  
11 secondary sector are willing to listen to us in the  
12 community colleges; I want to get some professional  
13 development assistance so I can get faculty from the  
14 high school in the same room as faculty from the  
15 college, so they can talk to one another; I believe  
16 very strongly that if they start talking to one  
17 another they can align their curricula so that in the  
18 11th and 12th grade the high school faculty -- I  
19 don't think the community college faculty should  
20 become involved in taking a piece of work from the  
21 high school faculty, but the high school faculty  
22 would have better information as to how they can help  
23 their students. And then we have other programs,  
24 like Graduate NYC, we have CUNY Start, we have  
25 College Now, so some of those students could then

1  
2 come to the community college and start the process  
3 of gathering some credits before they graduate and  
4 therefore getting, you know, better self-esteem.

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Without casting any  
6 kind of aspersions on the capabilities of the DOE  
7 teachers, 'cause certainly I was a part of that  
8 system for many years, do you feel that they are  
9 capable of doing that, because we're not at this  
10 point getting students who are graduating ready for  
11 college... [crosstalk]

12 EDUARDO MARTI: I... I am...

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: so how are we going  
14 to raise their level so that they can... [interpose]

15 EDUARDO MARTI: No, it's not even raising  
16 the level... [crosstalk]

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

18 EDUARDO MARTI: it's real... it's not  
19 really... I really truly believe the members of the  
20 faculty in the high school are... [crosstalk]

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Not say raise their  
22 level; how are we going to get the success and the  
23 results that we need?

24 EDUARDO MARTI: By focusing where they  
25 teach. Right now high school faculty teaches

1  
2 students to go to Harvard; they wanna teach at the  
3 higher level of mathematics, let's say and in doing  
4 that they are overwhelmed, they have so many students  
5 that they have to concentrate on those students they  
6 can help the most, so as a result, the students that  
7 begin to fall by the wayside in 9th grade and 8th  
8 grade, by the time they get to the 10th and 11th  
9 grade they are really way behind, so to try to help  
10 them at least do some sort of academic triage as to  
11 what are the things that we will be looking for when  
12 they enter our colleges as the minimal standard of  
13 writing, mathematics, you know, computational  
14 abilities, not even mathematics, right, and reading  
15 so that by the time they come to us we'll reduce the  
16 burden of remediation.

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And do you see that  
18 -- with all of the emphasis that DOE has on testing  
19 -- do you see this academic triage taking place  
20 during the school day or do you envision it as  
21 happening in another type of after-school setting...?  
22 [crosstalk]

23 EDUARDO MARTI: That is a discussion  
24 we're gonna have to have -- we have to help the  
25 faculty in the secondary sector navigate that because

1 obviously they have their requirements and they're  
2 gonna have to abide by those requirements, so if it  
3 could be done through tutoring, maybe peer tutoring  
4 from our students going to the high schools  
5 [background comment] where it could be after school  
6 programs and we can provide -- I mean, those are the  
7 discussions that we have to have, but I know it can  
8 be done.  
9

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. I have other  
11 questions, but I will yield. Council Member Cumbo.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you so very  
13 much, Chair; this is really an important conversation  
14 and just wanted to add from myself that I started a  
15 not-for-profit organization right out of graduate  
16 school, but it was very expensive for me to actually  
17 undertake that and so I'm hoping that a program like  
18 this will create more social entrepreneurs who wanna  
19 work in our not-for-profits and who wanna give back  
20 on that level. My question really was more in terms  
21 of; will this make the process of entering into our  
22 community colleges more competitive in that way and  
23 so that because you may not have the building  
24 infrastructure, you may not have all of the staffing;  
25 would it then start to create a competitive situation

1  
2 where those individuals that were previously going  
3 may not be admitted because it's become so  
4 competitive and that you would start to create a  
5 cream of the crop kind of admissions policy?

6 JAMES MURPHY: Unfortunately, that could  
7 be a downside on this and we'd have to try to figure  
8 out a way around that. But certainly the students  
9 who realize they could go to school for the first two  
10 years of college for free are usually the ones who  
11 apply early and would naturally fill the seats before  
12 the others, so that could be the downside of this; we  
13 have to figure out how to proceed, how to avoid that.

14 EDUARDO MARTI: May I follow up on that?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Yes, please.

16 EDUARDO MARTI: Whatever you do, because  
17 you do have the power; absolutely insist, absolutely  
18 insist that the open admissions concept remains; you  
19 cannot use the space requirements or -- you shouldn't  
20 be able to use anything to prevent someone from  
21 coming to a public institution of the City University  
22 of New York. The reality is that that happens,  
23 because people get discouraged and you know, they  
24 have to stand in long lines and you know, [background  
25 comment] so we have to work all of that threw, but

1  
2 there should never be a barrier to anyone who wants  
3 to have an education at the City University of New  
4 York.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: So what typically  
6 happens when you stated that tuition -- excuse me,  
7 when enrollment was at a record high for 2014; what  
8 happens when you reach your peak in that way; is  
9 there some sort of waiting list or in the CUNY system  
10 you're always able to find a space for a student or  
11 do some... [interpose] [background comment]

12 JAMES MURPHY: Well to be clear, since  
13 2009 we think we've reached the peak every year and  
14 we haven't, we just have to keep make -- you know,  
15 making more space and a lot of... there's a lot of  
16 areas that are being converted to classroom space  
17 that were not classroom space before; unfortunately,  
18 that takes away student space; you know York College,  
19 for instance, is in dire need of student space as  
20 opposed to classroom space for clubs and other  
21 activity, so that's one of the problems. The other  
22 problem of course is, where do we get the faculty  
23 from and as we've increased enrollment, the one thing  
24 we've tried to do is not to increase class size; you  
25 can't... [interpose]

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Right.

3 JAMES MURPHY: teach a math class with 40  
4 students, I just can't happen, but sometimes, you  
5 know, we get pretty close to that. So there are some  
6 issues and we just have to be flexible and keep  
7 bending. At some point though we are gonna run out  
8 of space.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: How does this  
10 impact the Dream Act in terms of how could they work  
11 in partnership or would they be in opposition to each  
12 other or would some of the same challenges that  
13 students are facing with it not being implemented;  
14 how would this proposal potentially either override  
15 or would it still maintain what's happening?

16 JAMES MURPHY: So the Dream Act, for  
17 those who are not sure what it is, New York State  
18 would actually provide access to the Tuition  
19 Assistance Program to students who are undocumented,  
20 graduated from [background comment] high school in  
21 New York State and this would go hand in hand with  
22 the law. Right now we cannot give any type of  
23 financial assistance to students who are undocumented  
24 students, even from institutional sources and that  
25 really has to change; this is something I've been

1  
2 frightened for many, many years. This would go a  
3 long way, providing that we are allowed to give this  
4 benefit to undocumented students and it's not clear  
5 that we would be unless the Dream Act passes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: So if this were  
7 to... it's hard to determine which would be the one  
8 that would happen first, hopefully; I mean it's  
9 difficult to determine that, but if we were able to  
10 not pass the Dream Act and this proposal and plan  
11 were actually able to go through, would it be that  
12 students that are undocumented, although the entire  
13 institution is offering two years free tuition, that  
14 these students would still be expected to pay full  
15 tuition [background comment] to attend?

16 JAMES MURPHY: That's an interesting  
17 question and it's one of the questions I had about;  
18 who is actually going to be eligible for the free  
19 tuition; are international students eligible for the  
20 free tuition; [background comment] are out of state  
21 students eligible for the free tuition? You know,  
22 those are questions, so this is -- the thing you're  
23 bringing up, the argument you're bringing up right  
24 now [background comment] is part of my concern; we  
25 need some clarification now.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay. Okay, thank  
3 you... [crosstalk, background comment] those are all  
4 the questions I had. Yes, sir.

5 EDUARDO MARTI: And perhaps in the  
6 resolution that you have, you just insert the word  
7 all students; it could cover it.

8 JAMES MURPHY: And if I... you know the..  
9 the 2.5 GPA requirement sort of irks me, [background  
10 comment] because like Council Member Williams, I was  
11 not always over 2.5 myself, [laugh] so that part of  
12 it really irks me.

13 [background comment]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I would say I  
15 concur, except my mom's probably watching.  
16 [laughter]

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Well I'm a part of  
18 that club as well, so that is a concern as well.

19 As the President is talking about free  
20 tuition for community colleges, can't we say not  
21 restricted to community colleges but just say, two  
22 years free tuition and if you go to a senior college  
23 the first two years are free; what's your opinion  
24 about restricting it to students at community college  
25 as opposed to saying two years of tuition will be

1  
2 free, whether you're going to a community college or  
3 whether you're going to a four-year college and the  
4 first two years would be free; what's your reaction...?

5 [crosstalk]

6 JAMES MURPHY: If they're willing to fund  
7 it, I'm all for it.

8 [background comments, crosstalk]

9 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: 'Cause you know I'm  
10 always trying to push for free tuition at CUNY; you  
11 know that's my objective; [background comment] before  
12 I leave I want to see that happen.

13 EDUARDO MARTI: You'll get... [interpose]

14 JAMES MURPHY: And we wish you... we wish  
15 you much luck with that. [laughter]

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right. And you  
17 know, I have that optimism and that ability to think  
18 that it can happen; you know so many things that  
19 people thought would never happen have happened, once  
20 they get... [crosstalk]

21 JAMES MURPHY: If you don't push for it,  
22 it'll never happen.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Say again.

24 JAMES MURPHY: If you don't push, it'll  
25 never happen... [crosstalk]

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Exactly. Exactly.  
3 Okay. We're gonna now have questions from Council  
4 Member Gibson.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Thank you very  
6 much; thank you, Madame Chair. Good afternoon to  
7 each and every one of you, it's a pleasure to be here  
8 and I wanna thank you, Dean and Vice Chancellor and  
9 it's good to see one of my presidents here from my  
10 borough, the Borough of the Bronx. I appreciate your  
11 testimony and certainly looking at this resolution  
12 obviously I wholeheartedly support it, I'm a graduate  
13 of CUNY and SUNY; I'm a twofer and Baruch College  
14 gave me a huge foundation of my career, so I would  
15 not be here if not for many programs like TAP and  
16 other opportunity programs.

17 I just had one question; I think Dean  
18 Murphy, you may have talked about it in your  
19 testimony, but I'm trying to visualize what this  
20 model would look like, America's, you know College  
21 Promise. Two years of free tuition for community  
22 colleges, you referenced that there are existing  
23 programs in Chicago, I believe, and Tennessee,  
24 [background comment] so not knowing about those  
25 existing programs, can you give us a little bit of

1 background on when they were instituted; some of the  
2 challenges that you may be aware of, because I too  
3 share Council Member Cumbo's sentiments and our  
4 community colleges right now are severely  
5 overcrowded, many of them are bursting at the seams  
6 and you know Bronx Community College is very unique  
7 because it's a start-up NY site, which was the  
8 Governor's plan of several years ago, so all of these  
9 existing programs, the infrastructure needs, all of  
10 the challenges that we know will arise with high  
11 enrollment if tuition is free; can you tell me a  
12 little bit about those two model programs so that we  
13 can [background comment] get a sense of what it would  
14 look like?

16 MATTHEW SAPIENZA: Yeah, that's an  
17 excellent point; it's part of the reason why we  
18 outlined the facilities needs as part of our  
19 concerns. The Tennessee program started -- both the  
20 Tennessee and Chicago programs started within the  
21 last year and as a matter of fact, the President,  
22 when he announced this new proposal on the federal  
23 side, he announced it in Tennessee. But the  
24 Tennessee program, the number of students who applied  
25 for community colleges in Tennessee in year one of

1  
2 the program represented about 90 percent of the  
3 graduating high school seniors in Tennessee, so they  
4 had a tremendous infusion into the community colleges  
5 in Tennessee in year one, and so that's part of our  
6 concern is that if we have a similar situation here  
7 in New York City, having the capacity to serve those  
8 students, both from the facilities perspective and as  
9 Dean Murphy pointed out, hiring the faculty and being  
10 able to keep up with that. So both programs are new,  
11 they both started within the last year, but that's  
12 the concern we have in terms of trying to learn  
13 lessons from what's happened elsewhere; Tennessee did  
14 have a huge surge in applications to the community  
15 colleges in year one.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: So I can imagine  
17 many of the preliminary conversations you're having  
18 now is, you know, with a lot of the proposals that  
19 come from the feds and the state, you know there's  
20 really not a lot of operating dollars and I know CUNY  
21 struggles, I served as an assembly member with our  
22 Chair, so I know that you know CUNY was always in  
23 Albany for operating money, for the base aid to be  
24 raised, because that's really how you get the  
25 colleges you know operational. So is there a

1  
2 conversation on what -- with this implementation,  
3 what some of the infrastructure, the capital needs,  
4 the operational needs would be, and I think about  
5 when we launched IDNYC, the New York City Municipal  
6 I.D. program and we didn't anticipate that would be  
7 thousands of New Yorkers that would sign up for it,  
8 so it was much larger than we anticipated, so I think  
9 this would be the same thing, much larger than we  
10 anticipate an opportunity for high school grads to go  
11 to community college for free. So have you had those  
12 conversations about what your requirements would be  
13 in terms of operating dollars?

14 MATTHEW SAPIENZA: Yeah, I think it's an  
15 excellent point; I think that's one of our other  
16 concerns is, and both of you, Council Member Gibson  
17 and Chair Barron having sat in the Assembly, know it  
18 really well, that the community college base aid for  
19 this current year is \$2,497 per student FTE; the  
20 Governor's Executive Budget proposal for next year  
21 keeps that flat. Looking back to 2009, before the  
22 recession hit, that amount of \$2,675 per FTE. So  
23 we're below where we were in 2009 in terms of  
24 community college aid from the State of New York and  
25 one of our concerns is that if the State participates

1  
2 in this program and has to put up 25 percent of the  
3 cost, that the State will say well that's our  
4 contribution to community colleges and so we're not  
5 gonna increase the base aid or we may even reduce the  
6 base aid, and that would be a terrible thing because,  
7 you know we've talked about facilities, we've talked  
8 about faculty; we need more advisors, we need you  
9 know so many other things for our community college  
10 students and so that is certainly a concern that you  
11 raise about the State's participation and the State's  
12 funding of the community colleges and how that would  
13 be impacted by this proposal.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Thank you very  
15 much. Thank you, Madame Chair.

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. In the  
17 testimony earlier from the panel, you talked about  
18 the significant graduation rate and you wanted to  
19 even increase that; how can we determine those  
20 students who came to community college and didn't  
21 really intend to graduate but who came for specific  
22 courses or specific training and how does that impact  
23 the validity of the graduation rates?

24 EDUARDO MARTI: It does impact the  
25 validity. The adult learner, the retooling person

1  
2 that wants to take one or two courses, even the very  
3 high end student that wants to stay close to home;  
4 this is more upstate than down in the city, because  
5 the community colleges are much more accessible here,  
6 but you know, there are some populations of students  
7 who [background comment] access the community college  
8 without intending to graduate; they are -- I don't  
9 remember precisely the figures, but I can get them  
10 for you -- the Community College Research Center at  
11 Columbia has done a study of that and I believe that  
12 if you put it altogether, the graduation or the  
13 completion rate in six years of community college  
14 students, it's around between 35 and 40 percent, in  
15 that range. But I can get you the actual figures.

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. And in  
17 terms of Obama's plan to have students complete  
18 college in two years, how are we going to factor in  
19 those kinds of... [interpose]

20 EDUARDO MARTI: You really can't do it  
21 unless you eliminate all remediation and you make  
22 every student take 15 credits per semester.

23 MATTHEW SAPIENZA: Right and I think some  
24 of the things that we've learned from the ASAP  
25 program are the things that would have to be

1  
2 implemented; as President Marti said, students in  
3 ASAP go full-time... [crosstalk]

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yeah.

5 MATTHEW SAPIENZA: The advisement levels  
6 in ASAP, when you look at community college students  
7 throughout the country, usually it's about one  
8 advisor for about 500 students and in ASAP it's about  
9 1 to 60, so there's stronger advisement that's  
10 available; we have financial incentives, like the  
11 free MetroCard that we mentioned earlier and  
12 President Marti proposed as well. So I think those  
13 are some of the things that would have to be put in  
14 place in order to reach that goal.

15 While on the term [sic] at ASAP, I just  
16 wanna take a moment 'cause I recognized our Executive  
17 Director, Donna Linderman and her great work, but of  
18 course, those graduation rates wouldn't be... we  
19 wouldn't have reached anywhere near the success that  
20 we have without our terrific faculty at the community  
21 colleges, so I want to recognize their great work as  
22 well.

23 JAMES MURPHY: [cough] Excuse me. You  
24 know, one of the concerns... another concern I have  
25 about this plan, if you're gonna require students to

1  
2 graduate in two years, if that's part of it, that's  
3 gonna add [background comment] an additional burden  
4 on the colleges, because right now the majority of  
5 students at the community colleges take 12 credits a  
6 semester... [crosstalk]

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

8 JAMES MURPHY: if they begin taking 15 a  
9 semester, that's more space, more faculty that will  
10 be needed.

11 EDUARDO MARTI: But beyond that, it's  
12 the... the working student, the student who has  
13 children at home; I mean, if you're gonna force those  
14 students to go on a full-time basis and not provide a  
15 living wage if you will for them to be able to  
16 maintain the families, it's an impossibility. So  
17 since I have the floor, one of the concerns that I  
18 have, and since we're talking about concerns about  
19 the program, is that people in this country, and I'm  
20 now looking at the entire... people tend to look at  
21 education as for the private gain; why should we give  
22 money to this particular student because you know, I  
23 had to pay for... I for my school, I had to get the  
24 loans, I had to go to work and had to do those things  
25 and why should this be something that's given for

1  
2 free? People forget that education is for the public  
3 good and I think you mentioned this at the very  
4 beginning of your remarks and if we look at the good  
5 that education can provide for a community, then it  
6 becomes part of the, almost a national imperative  
7 rather than, you know, something that's for the  
8 public good. So we need to be careful that we don't  
9 set insurmountable barriers, that we don't go out  
10 with a political statement and say oh everybody's  
11 gonna graduate in two years, everybody's gonna go for  
12 free and then the people who really need it can't do  
13 it.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, thank you very  
15 much; I wanna thank you for your participation, for  
16 your information and perhaps we can work together on  
17 preparing a document which we can send to the present  
18 to help him to shape what that final plan looks like.

19 [background comments]

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you.

21 [background comments] Okay, we're gonna call the  
22 second panel, we'll have Jeff Lowell of the Brooklyn  
23 Borough President Eric Adams's office, Andrew  
24 Stettner from Single Stop, and Barbara Bowen from  
25 PSC. [background comments] Thank you very much for

1  
2 coming and if I could ask if you could condense your  
3 presentations to about five minutes and be available  
4 for questions, and perhaps during the question period  
5 expand on any other topics that might not have been  
6 covered; I would appreciate that. So the timekeeper  
7 will please give each panelist five minutes. Thank  
8 you. If you would raise your right hand.

9 [background comments] Do you affirm to tell the  
10 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in  
11 your testimony before this committee and to respond  
12 to Council Member questions honestly? Thank you; you  
13 may begin.

14 JEFF LOWELL: Hi, good afternoon, my name  
15 is Jeff Lowell, I am testifying on behalf of Eric L.  
16 Adams, the Brooklyn Borough President and  
17 representing 2.6 million residents who call Brooklyn  
18 home, uhm... [interpose]

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yea.

20 JEFF LOWELL: [laughter] Thank you for  
21 that. I'd like to thank Madame Chair Barron and the  
22 Committee for Higher Education for taking positive  
23 and necessary action on President Obama's bold and  
24 forward-thinking call for free community college for  
25 everyone who maintains a 2.5 GPA and makes steady

1 progress toward a degree. While the President's  
2 goals are certainly laudable and I fully support the  
3 resolution before you today, the likelihood of this  
4 proposal passing through the current Congress is slim  
5 in the present political climate; fortunately, New  
6 York City does not have to wait for the federal  
7 government to act, we can revive the free tuition  
8 program at CUNY, provide tuition relief for current  
9 students and unburden tens of thousands of current  
10 and future students from the heavy weight of student  
11 debt; 2016 will mark 40 years since CUNY ended its  
12 Free Tuition for All program; in those 40 years,  
13 education costs have skyrocketed. In 1976, the  
14 average annual tuition and fees for higher education,  
15 including public in-state tuition, was just over  
16 \$1,000; by 2012 it was over \$13,000 and even  
17 adjusting for inflation the rise is significant, as  
18 evidenced by an even more shocking statistic. In  
19 1976 the percentage of median household income needed  
20 to pay that tuition was 9 percent, in 2012 it's 26.7  
21 percent. These numbers do not include the total cost  
22 of attendance, just tuition and mandatory fees.  
23 These higher tuition costs, combined with an  
24 increased reliance on student loans instead of grants  
25

1  
2 have led to an overwhelming amount of student debt,  
3 which is now approaching \$1.2 trillion nationwide and  
4 second only to mortgage debt in the United States.  
5 Education is a key component of creating economic  
6 mobility, but it is less effective if those same  
7 students are simultaneously overburdened with debt.  
8 The benefits of higher education are indisputable --  
9 21st century skills, better-paying jobs and economic  
10 growth all rely on access to higher education; access  
11 means affordability and affordability means being  
12 able to pay the bill and also a better economic  
13 situation upon graduation.

14           According to CUNY's Office of  
15 Institutional Research reports, there are over 71,000  
16 full-time equivalent students enrolled at CUNY's  
17 seven community colleges, included over 13,000 full-  
18 time equivalent students at Brooklyn's own  
19 Kingsborough Community College. Tuition for full-  
20 time enrollment at CUNY schools is \$4,550 a year.  
21 According to CUNY's master plan for 2012-2016, 63  
22 percent of two-year community college students  
23 received Pell Grants, indicating that they come from  
24 financially challenged backgrounds, but grants alone  
25 do not cover all the costs of attending community

1 college; living expenses are also a burden on  
2 students. Further, in the absence of passing the  
3 Dream Act, immigration status continues to hinder the  
4 ability of first-generation students to receive  
5 student aid. We can help these drivers [sic] to make  
6 the voyage from dreamed reality a little easier; we  
7 can make community college free again.

9 Last month, in response to President  
10 Obama's call to action I requested that the  
11 Independent Budget Office look into the costs and  
12 benefits of providing free community college at CUNY  
13 institutions throughout New York City; we anticipate  
14 the results to be released in the coming weeks and we  
15 look forward to sharing them with this committee, the  
16 City Council and the Administration. Preliminary  
17 data appears to show that with all other things held  
18 constant, free tuition would reduce the overall cost  
19 of attendance by 18-24 percent of the students living  
20 independently and by 38-74 percent for those living  
21 at home, depending on whether or not they are  
22 receiving any other aid. These are significant  
23 savings that can not only make a difference in a  
24 student's ability to attend community college, but in  
25 their financial stability upon graduation.

1  
2 I urge this committee not only to support  
3 the resolution that endorses President Obama's plan,  
4 but also to introduce legislation that would make  
5 community college at CUNY free once more for those  
6 who are seeking a better life through higher  
7 education. My office looks forward to working with  
8 you in partnering to make that a reality as soon as  
9 we can. Thank you very much.

10 ANDREW STETTNER: Hi, good afternoon; I'm  
11 testifying on behalf of Single Stop USA, which is a  
12 national non-profit organization; serves over 150,000  
13 New Yorkers in poverty in all five boroughs of the  
14 City. We commend this City Council's Higher  
15 Education Committee for drawing its attention to  
16 President Obama's America's Promise proposal to  
17 provide free community college tuition. In this  
18 increasingly technical and information-rich era, a  
19 college education at the minimum; most of us need to  
20 find a decent middle class job. About half of all  
21 college students today attend community college and  
22 the vast majority of minorities in higher education  
23 choose community college and 83 percent of all CUNY  
24 students are people of color; it's a stepping stone  
25 to stability and achievement. That's why President

1  
2 Obama's proposal to make the first two years of  
3 community college free for full-time students should  
4 be seen as an historic moment, both from the  
5 viewpoint of educational progress and of civil  
6 rights; it's a critical step towards a more just  
7 country; it's a necessary baseline to maintain a  
8 vibrant democracy; free community college today is  
9 what universal public education meant to our nation a  
10 century ago.

11           But we can't stop at free tuition; low-  
12 income students will still need additional social and  
13 financial supports to succeed in school and graduate  
14 from community college. To maximize the potential of  
15 America's College Promise, New York must be ready to  
16 meet the other needs of their students -- books,  
17 housing, food, transportation, childcare and more.  
18 The other real costs of a college education quickly  
19 add up, particularly for low-income New Yorkers and  
20 those with children. A student who doesn't have a  
21 place to live can't learn, a student who's hungry  
22 can't focus and without childcare a student parent  
23 cannot attend class, and that reality can be seen in  
24 community college graduation rates. On average, less  
25 than 20 percent of students who enroll at a CUNY

1  
2 community college today complete their degree, even  
3 after six years; many others drop out because they  
4 simply can't afford to stay in school, so making  
5 tuition free will help but not solve this problem.  
6 The good news is that Single Stop is changing that  
7 equation; at all seven CUNY community colleges Single  
8 Stop provides a unique one-stop approach to help  
9 students access food assistance, free tax  
10 preparation, financial counseling, health insurance,  
11 legal assistance and other resources. The average  
12 Single Stop student receives \$5,400 in existing  
13 safety net resources that were previously  
14 underutilized; it's a total of 58,000 students we've  
15 served since 2009 alone and drawn down \$136 million  
16 in other resources. And not surprisingly, we're  
17 finding that Single Stop students stay in school at a  
18 rate that is 17 percent higher than those who do not.  
19 As America considers President Obama's plan,  
20 community colleges must be able to provide the  
21 necessary wraparound services that are needed to keep  
22 students in school and as a first step we encourage  
23 the Council to support the continued provision and  
24 expansion of Single Step services at CUNY. Thank you  
25 very much.

1  
2 BARBARA BOWEN: Thank you so much for  
3 your initiative in sponsoring this resolution, for  
4 gathering others to support it, the support of the  
5 Speaker and also I wanna say I'm honored to be here  
6 with colleagues speaking so forcefully for the needs  
7 of CUNY. I represent the 27,000 faculty and staff  
8 members of the City University of New York; we are  
9 the people who are proud to teach the students we're  
10 speaking about and who would love to teach under the  
11 basis of the President's bold and really innovative  
12 and breakthrough proposal for free community college.  
13 We also note, as others have, that although he gave  
14 the speech in Tennessee and recognized that system,  
15 the only model that he cited during his presentation  
16 was the model at CUNY, the ASAP program, which  
17 essentially -- and this is the point I really would  
18 like to make, and I did condense a little bit in  
19 response to your request, Madame Chair -- the  
20 important thing to note about the ASAP program is  
21 that it includes more resources per student; that's  
22 the key to helping students to graduate, and as  
23 you've probably seen in studies that have come out of  
24 cost-effectiveness, because so many more students  
25 graduate from ASAP than the national average, it

1  
2 actually costs less per student who graduates than  
3 other programs. So while it's more per student as an  
4 initial investment, it's less per graduate because  
5 the rate of graduation is so much higher. So I think  
6 one of the key things to recognize is that when the  
7 President made his proposal he stood on the grounds  
8 of a proposal or of a successful program that is  
9 based on more investment. So we strongly support the  
10 Council's resolution and we strongly support the  
11 proposal, but we ask the Council to keep its eye on a  
12 central fact, which is that the Council has always  
13 looked, and is increasingly doing this, looking at  
14 the question of resources into CUNY for operating  
15 costs, as well as relieving the cost for students.  
16 The President's plan is about relieving the cost for  
17 students and if it were to go through, one of the  
18 things we would ask the Council to do is to use its  
19 political fight to make sure that existing resources  
20 are not withdrawn; we've seen that pattern too much;  
21 we particularly are looking at TAP; we are concerned  
22 that the amount of the total revenue in TAP, should  
23 this plan go through, would be diverted or absorbed  
24 and one of our concerns as the union is that the  
25 success of such program not be used to diminish

1 existing resources; everything that is currently put  
2 into CUNY from the State and City we would argue  
3 should continue to be put in and the President's plan  
4 could be an enhancement; therefore, some of the  
5 dollars that CUNY has to use right now from student  
6 tuition and the increases in tuition that we heard  
7 about, many of those dollars go to just basic  
8 expenses, like keeping the lights on; we want those  
9 resources to go into real enhancements of CUNY so  
10 that we can offer the rich education that we have  
11 seen works. So the President's plan is a  
12 breakthrough in that it recognizes that higher  
13 education is a public good, not a private good;  
14 that's something that PSC has firmly stood for, it's  
15 a breakthrough in that it recognizes that going to  
16 college costs more than just college itself, that  
17 there are other costs for students; CUNY estimates it  
18 over \$7,000 per year right now; it's a breakthrough  
19 because it does include part-time students; it  
20 doesn't, as we've heard earlier, put a stop on them  
21 that they must graduate in a certain period; it gives  
22 them four years of support if they go half-time and  
23 then uses that four-year benchmark to measure their  
24 progress. It also would give an ability for all  
25

1  
2 students to benefit from the program as long as they  
3 maintain the GPA; we too would like to see the GPA  
4 requirement relieved, but it does open the door to  
5 all students.

6 I just ask you in closing though to keep  
7 your eye on the fact that it does continue current  
8 levels of funding which depend on having a huge  
9 underpaid adjunct workforce; this is one of the  
10 criticisms of the plan that we've seen in some of the  
11 discourse nationally; the current levels of funding  
12 for community colleges rely on having more than half  
13 the courses taught by people who are systematically  
14 underpaid and really to address the community college  
15 issue in this country we need funding that lifts the  
16 level of investment so that students can have access  
17 to the counselors, the kind of one stop, the full-  
18 time faculty they need. So we call on you and the  
19 PSC, yes, support them; can't wait to see the study  
20 on the cost-effectiveness of free tuition; we have  
21 always stood for free tuition as a union; we are not  
22 a union [bell] that says, you know a student should  
23 pay more so our salaries are higher; we have always  
24 stood for free tuition and we call on the Council to  
25 advance that initiative but all the time to be

1 watching for the initial investment in CUNY, and even  
2 in this year's budget, even while we wait to see  
3 whether Congress will move at all on President  
4 Obama's initiative, the City Council has an  
5 opportunity in this year's budget to make sure that  
6 there's full funding for CUNY, so we call on you also  
7 to do that now and thank you so much for holding this  
8 hearing and this initiative. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you very much;  
11 I appreciate your testimony. And as you're talking  
12 about the tuition dollars that would no longer be  
13 required of students to give to the institution  
14 because they would be going free, are you then saying  
15 that that amount should be designated to give  
16 assistance to students in terms of counseling and  
17 MetroCards and those other kinds of support; you want  
18 that entire amount shifted over or do you see a  
19 portion of that going over; how do you envision that?

20 BARBARA BOWEN: Our concern is that  
21 existing support in programs -- for instance, like  
22 TAP, not disappear...

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

24 BARBARA BOWEN: should this initiative go  
25 through. We'd have to look at the whole budget to

1  
2 make sure -- I don't wanna pronounce on the exact  
3 dollars here, [background comment] but we've seen in  
4 the past and I know you've seen this, that when a new  
5 funding initiative comes through, [background  
6 comment] the State and sometimes the City, but to a  
7 lesser degree the City, uses that as an opportunity  
8 to [background comment] stop funding something they  
9 currently fund.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Give with one hand  
11 and take with the other... [crosstalk]

12 BARBARA BOWEN: Right. So we are very  
13 concerned about [background comment] TAP, [background  
14 comment] which you know, currently does supply  
15 substantial tuition assistance to our students; we  
16 believe that the whole TAP amount, should the  
17 President's plan go through, the whole TAP amount  
18 should be rolled over and used for enhanced resources  
19 rather than just disappear into the State budget;  
20 there are other amounts we could cite in that way,  
21 but we do have a concern that out of this we not see  
22 an impoverished educational experience for students;  
23 we have to see an enhanced educational experience for  
24 students and the State is already making contribution  
25 [background comment]; that contribution must stay and

1  
2 then the additional contribution from the federal  
3 government can simply boost that.

4           ANDREW STETTNER: Well one way to do  
5 that, the unmet need for most students, when you look  
6 at books, transportation, you know nationally the  
7 average is about \$8,000 for a community college  
8 student that they don't have need, so even after you  
9 do free tuition, you should allow other programs --  
10 TAP, Pell -- to come into play to help cover those  
11 additional needs.

12           CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And in terms of the  
13 program, if it were approved and moves on and became  
14 a reality, what do you see as the funding for -- well  
15 the faculty ratio; how can we anticipate getting a  
16 better ratio in terms of faculty and student?

17           BARBARA BOWEN: Glad you asked about  
18 that. That's one of the reasons that we are  
19 concerned that existing funding streams not disappear  
20 if this program goes through and same thing I would  
21 say about free tuition, which as you know we've  
22 advocated for a long time, but we want CUNY to be  
23 more than revenue neutral, we want to make sure that  
24 there is additional revenue for CUNY, because our  
25 faculty to student ratio, as the Chancellor himself

1  
2 has said, is completely unacceptable and in fact with  
3 students who come in with so many needs, and we've  
4 just heard about some of these needs, some are  
5 educational, but some are just economic, right; they  
6 should have more access to full-time faculty even  
7 than the national norm; instead they have far less  
8 access. I mean we're lucky at CUNY that we have  
9 heroic part-timers who are willing to make a full  
10 career out of teaching [background comment] a course  
11 there, teaching a course there; they live on \$30,000  
12 a year those people and some of them have Ph.D.'s  
13 they all have masters and that's an insane way to  
14 deliver an education. So we would be pushing with  
15 the -- should this occur -- for this to be an  
16 opportunity to change that ratio and make sure that  
17 there are more full-time faculty. And Matt Sapienza  
18 from CUNY mentioned one of the -- I think he was  
19 asked about, you know where would there be faculty --  
20 believe me, there are people wanting full-time  
21 faculty jobs; if there were jobs opening at CUNY,  
22 people would be beating down the doors to have those  
23 jobs, so there would be no problem.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Do you anticipate or  
25 do you think that those persons who are presently

1  
2 functioning in part-time positions would move to  
3 full-time or is that a select group of people who  
4 prefer to do part-time for whatever reason and you'd  
5 be pulling from another pool to create the full-time  
6 persons that you would need?

7           BARBARA BOWEN: That's an interesting  
8 question that we've been looking at; I would say out  
9 of our 11,000 part-time faculty at CUNY, I think it's  
10 11,600 right now, may be 2-3,000 would prefer to be  
11 in a full-time job teaching at CUNY. There are many  
12 others who are retirees or they're high school  
13 teachers or principals or they're City Council  
14 Members and they teach one course, but I would think  
15 there are about -- our estimates are between 2,000  
16 and 3,000 who would prefer to be in a full-time job.  
17 In the past, the union has worked on initiatives to  
18 create with CUNY -- we've done a joint initiative to  
19 create new full-time positions reserved for current  
20 part-timers; we've done that through the State  
21 Legislature, created 200 positions that way; we'd  
22 like to create many more and that would be an  
23 important pipeline. And I'd also just say one other  
24 thing, that we are about to release our study that  
25 we've been working on about race and gender among the

1  
2 faculty members [background comment] and we found  
3 that being a part-time teaching employee at CUNY is  
4 an important pipeline to a full-time job for all  
5 faculty, but especially for faculty of color and that  
6 was a new finding, it's very important, so it's  
7 something we're looking at especially carefully as we  
8 think about creating full-time jobs.

9 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: How is it that you  
10 determined that you needed 200 positions or how did  
11 that number come about and how were those people  
12 selected to move from the part-time to the full-time  
13 positions?

14 BARBARA BOWEN: I wish we could've had  
15 2,000, but it was collective bargaining, so we..  
16 [background comment] it was collective bargaining; we  
17 got it through collective bargaining and.. [interpose]

18  
19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And was it a number  
20 that was determined based on departments or?

21 BARBARA BOWEN: What we bargained was  
22 that -- I mean we would like to have seen many more,  
23 but we were glad to enter into partnership with the  
24 university; it was a true partnership because it was  
25 a side agreement to our bargaining and that has other

1  
2 implications. So what we bargained was that we would  
3 create those lines, they would be restricted to  
4 current adjuncts who met certain qualifications of  
5 time in the job... [crosstalk]

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

7 BARBARA BOWEN: the number of courses  
8 taught, etc. and then the lines for the new positions  
9 were allocated to colleges, by the university and  
10 college presidents allocated them within the  
11 colleges. So the union does not have an influence in  
12 determining where positions go, [background comment]  
13 but we did have influence in picking out the -- well  
14 creating the number of lines and the criteria and  
15 once the criteria were established, [background  
16 comment] then departments -- let's say my own  
17 department, English at Queens, we now have I think  
18 four people who came through that position and it's  
19 been transformative.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Was there any  
21 consideration as to the ethnicity of the staff,  
22 because you know that's always a question and a  
23 concern that I have with CUNY... [crosstalk]

24 BARBARA BOWEN: It's uh...  
25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: it's abysmal, it's  
3 not moving, it's minimal and it's a problem.

4 BARBARA BOWEN: I agree with you that  
5 it's not moving; I think, even though we're very  
6 critical of the lack of progress, I think given that  
7 it's about 34 percent faculty, in the full-time  
8 faculty, people of color and the national average is  
9 17 percent; CUNY is ahead of that, but then if you  
10 look at the percentage of our students who are  
11 [background comment] people of color versus the  
12 faculty, there's a 40 percent gap in those two  
13 numbers and that gap is far beyond the gap  
14 nationally, [background comment] so that's a way of  
15 measuring it. It is a concern with so many part-  
16 timers that affirmative action searches are not  
17 carried on, there are no searches for those positions  
18 generally because there's such a need and sometimes  
19 they're on such a short-term basis [background  
20 comment] that they are short-term employment, so we  
21 do have that concern; that's one of the reasons we  
22 want to see a shift to more full-time positions,  
23 [background comment] because those searches are  
24 extensive; they're governed by affirmative action;

1 [background comment] there's much more possibility  
2 there.  
3

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, good. Okay.  
5 If you have any other comments that you'd like to  
6 share; if you wanna take another minute or two, I'd  
7 be glad to entertain what it is you wanna share with  
8 us. No?

9 ANDREW STETTNER: [background comment]  
10 thank the Committee and encourage you to continue to  
11 look at this and you know, we talked with your office  
12 about Single Stop in the past, but we're looking at  
13 ASAP and all the programs at CUNY that are giving all  
14 the resources that are needed to help students to be  
15 able to complete.

16 BARBARA BOWEN: Thank you so much.

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, thank you so  
18 much. We'll do panels of what, [backgrounds]. I  
19 wanna call the next panel; we have Lucas Almonte of  
20 USS, Naiay [sp?] Israel, of Hostos Community College,  
21 Cynthia Jimenez from Hostos Community College and  
22 Lizaida [sp?] Rodriguez, also from Hostos Community  
23 College. [background comment] On this panel?  
24 [background comments] Oh, okay, Donovan. Thank you.  
25 And Donovan Borington of USS. [background comments]

1  
2 Anita also has to go. [background comments] We  
3 appreciate your coming and staying, yes. [background  
4 comments] Of the ones that I called, is there  
5 someone who can defer to the second panel so that we  
6 can still have panels of our? [background comments]  
7 Okay, so Cynthia and Lizaida will defer to the next  
8 panel and they'll be replaced by Donovan and by... what  
9 was the last name? [background comment] Anita [sp?]  
10 [background comment] Oh... Bhattacharjee? [background  
11 comment. Okay, thank you. If you'd raise your right  
12 hand... thank you. Do you affirm to tell the truth,  
13 the whole truth and nothing but the truth in your  
14 testimony before this committee and to answer  
15 Committee questions honestly? [background comment]  
16 Thank you. And I'd ask if you could consolidate your  
17 testimony to three to four minutes, 'cause we still  
18 have two other panels; I'd appreciate it. Thank you.  
19 You may begin.

20 LUCAS ALMONTE: Good afternoon Chairwoman  
21 Inez Barron and members of the Committee. My name is  
22 Lucas Almonte and I'm the Vice Chair of Legislative  
23 Affairs, University Student Senate and the Student  
24 Government President at New York City College of  
25 Technology; I'm also a proud resident of City Council

1  
2 District 10. Thank you Council Member Ydanis  
3 Rodriguez for your service.

4 I would like to begin by thanking the  
5 Committee for holding this hearing and advancing  
6 conversation on educational quality; educational  
7 equity is also an issue that we believe in.

8 For us at the University Student Senate,  
9 protecting the access to quality higher education is  
10 a core tenant of our mission statement. We deeply  
11 share President Obama's vision to provide two years  
12 of free community college. The President's plan  
13 addresses the problem of affordability for many  
14 students throughout the country and despite the fact  
15 that over 60 percent of CUNY students attend school  
16 without that, in part because other financial aid  
17 packages, 40 percent still have to pay some sort of  
18 tuition and most students have to overcome the rising  
19 cost of rent, subway fares, textbooks and challenges  
20 of a struggling economy. These ancillary expenses  
21 are not covered by the current TAP program.

22 The focus of this hearing today is to  
23 discuss the Committee's resolution calling on  
24 Congress and the State to support and pass the  
25 legislation to initiate the President's proposal. I

1 support the resolution and its goal; I however will  
2 pause at several questions that I'm hoping will help  
3 us better understand the substance and inclusiveness  
4 of the President's proposal. Aside from the question  
5 of total cost of this program, because we believe  
6 that money's not the issue here, [background comment]  
7 we would like to know, as the U.S. says [sic], is who  
8 is eligible to benefit from this program. If a  
9 student, for example, is a resident of New Jersey and  
10 wants to attend a CUNY community college, would that  
11 student be considered for in-state tuition or would  
12 they have to cover the eventual [sic] cost between  
13 in-state and out-of-state tuition? Will undocumented  
14 students be eligible for free community college  
15 education? Will students who already graduated [sic]  
16 on a social program be able to return to a community  
17 college and obtain another degree free of tuition  
18 charges? And lastly, will students who would have  
19 been eligible for a Pell Grant still be able to  
20 receive these grants on top of the free tuition?  
21 This is an important question to be answered because  
22 many current students heavily depend on Pell to cover  
23 living expenses.  
24

1  
2 I raise these concerns because perhaps  
3 the better option will be for our great state or city  
4 to take ownership of the President's vision, like  
5 Tennessee and Chicago have already done by offering  
6 free community colleges. I personally think that a  
7 state or city should not wait for the national  
8 government to act; we should act here today and this  
9 year. Today you will hear from several students, all  
10 with different backgrounds and experiences as  
11 community college students. I will ask you to listen  
12 to the testimonies carefully and see why it's  
13 important that we answer these questions that I've  
14 raised. Their experiences will show you that we need  
15 a free community college program that will provide  
16 access to everyone. We remain optimistic and support  
17 the City Council's resolution calling on Congress to  
18 pass and fund the proposal we're discussing here  
19 today. We would also like to motivate the City  
20 Council to look internally for immediate and  
21 effective solutions to ensure that at least New York  
22 City offers free community colleges and support  
23 services to residents of our local communities.  
24 Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Next.

1  
2 DONOVAN BORINGTON: Good afternoon  
3 Chairwoman Inez Barron and members of the City  
4 Council Higher Education Committee. Borington, and  
5 I'm a resident of City Council District 31; I'm a  
6 student at Barnard M. Baruch College, majoring in  
7 corporate communication and in a few months I'll be  
8 the first in my family to graduate with a  
9 baccalaureate degree. I'm also the Vice Chair for  
10 Fiscal Affairs for University Student Senate and I'm  
11 a proud alumni of LaGuardia Community College and I'm  
12 here today to express my support for President  
13 Obama's proposal for American College Promise.

14 I was born and raised in Williamsburg  
15 project housing; I'm a product of the public high  
16 school system and when I graduated, college was  
17 farfetched; most of my peers didn't graduate with a  
18 high school degree, so immediately after graduation I  
19 decided to work and after three years of working I  
20 decided that I wanted to go to college and earn an  
21 associate's degree, and I attended LaGuardia  
22 Community College in spring of 2008, and after the  
23 first semester I decided to drop out because I just  
24 couldn't afford it; even though I had financial aid,  
25 I needed to cover living expenses. After working for

1 a few years and saving up, I decided to return in  
2 spring of 2010 and since then it was pretty hard  
3 because this time around I didn't have the financial  
4 support in terms of financial aid, so I had to  
5 balance my workload with my classes so that I can  
6 still provide for living and go to school. And I  
7 wanted to point that out because it's important; when  
8 I was in class, most of my classmates, you know some  
9 of them participated in the ASAP program and I  
10 thought I was the only one struggling financially,  
11 but it was even worse for some of my classmates, they  
12 didn't have jobs, they didn't have other supports  
13 other than you know, LaGuardia Foundation  
14 scholarships or participating in SEEK programs and  
15 things of that nature. One of my classmates  
16 mentioned that the ASAP program was valuable to her,  
17 not because it covered her tuition, but the  
18 MetroCard, something as simple as a MetroCard was  
19 important to her and she told me that were it not for  
20 that MetroCard that ASAP provided, she would not  
21 continue, you know, enrolled in LaGuardia and upon  
22 her graduation in spring 2011 she got accepted to  
23 several schools and she decided not to attend because  
24 college was just too expensive, aside from the  
25

1  
2 financial aid package, but again, transportation was  
3 something that she needed to stay enrolled, so  
4 currently she has an associate's degree and decided  
5 not to get her baccalaureate because she can't get  
6 transportation to and from school.

7           One of the things that I wanted to point  
8 out about the President's plan is that it's not about  
9 making community college free; to me it seems that  
10 the President wants to make community college more  
11 accessible, which is the mission at the University  
12 Student Senate; it allows everyone to be eligible to  
13 participate in the workforce that's coming up ahead.  
14 You know, we know that most of the graduates are  
15 gonna have to have associate's or baccalaureate's  
16 degree and if we're not prepared now, then we can't  
17 participate in said workforce. So I think what the  
18 President is saying is; hey, you know let's get 'em  
19 out there, get 'em in college so that we can be a  
20 part of that and contribute to society. I often hear  
21 you know different analyses of the plan saying that,  
22 you know, students, we don't have our skin in the  
23 game and I differ from that, you know I've been  
24 working for 10 years, so if I get financial aid I  
25 feel I've vested my tax dollars in it as well; most

1  
2 of our students at community colleges do work, if not  
3 part-time; full-time, so if we got this so-called  
4 free ride, it would be our tax dollars that are  
5 contributing to it.

6 Another point that I wanted to make out  
7 was that; would this plan be eligible to students who  
8 do not graduate from high school but obtain a GED;  
9 would they not be qualified; you know, is it  
10 important for them to say hey, you know I wanna earn  
11 my college degree, but I didn't graduate from high  
12 school; I decided to go back late? These are some  
13 things that we would really like to plan to look at,  
14 because in our city it's a little bit different than  
15 it would be in Tennessee or Chicago; a lot of our  
16 students aren't going straight to college after high  
17 school, a lot of our students aren't graduating from  
18 high school; they may earn a GED, so a program like  
19 this should be available, accessible to them. And  
20 you know, I really wanna thank, you know, Chairwoman  
21 Barron for your leadership on this and the other  
22 Council Members; you know this is one of the reasons  
23 why New York City continues to shine out because we  
24 take the lead on some of the most controversial  
25 issues and I hope that we can now challenge the State

1  
2 Legislature and Congress to act immediately and if  
3 not, like my colleague said, I think it's good for us  
4 to take the first steps and implement a plan right  
5 here in New York City. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Next.

7 NAIAY ISRAEL: Good afternoon, members of  
8 the Committee on Higher Education; thank you for  
9 giving me the opportunity to provide this testimony.  
10 My name is Naiay Israel and I'm a recent graduate of  
11 Hostos Community College. As a student in Hostos I  
12 was fortunate enough to be a part of the CUNY  
13 Accelerated Study and Associate Program, also known  
14 as the ASAP program; I was very lucky to be a part of  
15 it because I did not have to pay for books, tuition  
16 and transportation. However, I had many friends that  
17 did have to pay for tuition and other expenses. My  
18 friends that had to worry about covering these  
19 expenses were not as successful as I was; if all they  
20 had to do was focus on their coursework and not work  
21 full-time or part-time, then I think they would have  
22 benefited dramatically. It took me only a year-and-  
23 a-half to graduate from Hostos; I graduated at the  
24 age of 18. The reality is that many students cannot  
25 get into the ASAP program and they juggle jobs and

1 family responsibilities; if you have to choose  
2 between eating one meal for the day before going to  
3 class or just buying a MetroCard to get to class or  
4 paying for your tuition, which one would you choose?  
5 We know that school is very important, but nobody  
6 should have to make such a decision. If community  
7 colleges were free for those who do not receive  
8 financial aid or an entire scholarship package, just  
9 think about how many students would enroll and  
10 graduate on time or at least faster than the national  
11 average. These students will have extra money to  
12 take care of other responsibilities and still be  
13 successful in their classes. I'm glad to say that  
14 being in the ASAP program did save me; I graduated  
15 before my time, again and excelled in every class  
16 that I took; I did not have to worry about being  
17 part-time or full-time because I had no money to  
18 finish school on time. I am now continuing my  
19 studies at Hunter College and I major in English, to  
20 become a teacher. Everyone, however, cannot get into  
21 the program, so I hope that you can listen to what  
22 I'm saying and take heed to making this plan happen.  
23 Thank you.

24  
25 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

ANITA BHATTACHARJEE DACHSHUND: Good

afternoon. I would like to share my story with you.

I'm a mother with three children, a daughter and two

sons. In 2004 my daughter gradu... [background

comment] Anita Bhattacharjee [sp?] Dachshund [sp?]

In year 2004, my daughter graduated from her high

school, Evander Childs High School, one of the most

violent schools in New York City. She was smart and

hard-working and finished her school with honors at

16 years old. I had hopes for her, like any mother

would wish for her daughter. She said she would like

to be a lawyer and advocate for the underserved

communities and she was ready to go to college and

university. However, that dream never came true; it

is because she was not able to receive any financial

aid and I could not pay for her college. Eventually

she drifted about selling clothes in the stores;

today she's a waitress in a restaurant. Today she

does not want to be involved in any college dream.

Today I feel the pain as a mother. When I know that

given at that time, if she had access to college she

would've gone for it. Today I have two broken

dreams. Please, as a mother, I hope that this two-

year free college would come true and would be

1  
2 approved so our mother's dream can become a reality.  
3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I thank all the  
5 panelists for coming and for sharing their testimony;  
6 I've been working very closely with USS in terms of  
7 trying to have a program that addresses the needs;  
8 they've been very responsive and they've shown great  
9 leadership in the issues related to the college and  
10 the students, so I'm very pleased to continue to work  
11 with you; think that you've shown great leadership in  
12 terms of fighting against the trustees' initial move  
13 to try to remove protection of remaining silent and I  
14 look forward to working with you; I appreciate the  
15 work that you do; I want to encourage each of you,  
16 especially the student -- how do you pronounce your  
17 name, Niya?

18 NIYAY ISRAEL: Niyay.

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Niyay, you're going  
20 to my alma mater; I went to Hunter, it's a great  
21 school; I want to encourage you to do that, and I  
22 went on to become a teacher, so. And to Bhattachega  
23 [sic]...

24 ANITA BHATTACHARJEE DACHSHUND:  
25 Bhattacharjee.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Bhattacharjee, I  
3 just hope that your daughter's dream, even though it  
4 seems perhaps at this time to have -- you know  
5 there's a poem, *What happens to a dream deferred?*;  
6 does it dry up like a raisin or does it explode?  
7 Hopefully, if this plan goes through, she might be  
8 encouraged to go back to school and to continue that  
9 dream; hopefully it's not gone forever, perhaps just  
10 delayed. But I do wanna thank all of you for coming  
11 and sharing your testimony with us.

12 DONOVAN BORINGTON: Thank you, Madame  
13 Chair [crosstalk, background comments]

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. We'll  
15 now call the next panel. I wanna thank you all for  
16 staying; I know the time has been extended, but this  
17 is important. Katherine Gutierrez Rios from  
18 LaGuardia Community College USS, CarrieAnn [sp?]  
19 McHale [sp?], Hostos City College, Lehman College,  
20 Cynthia Jimenez from Hostos Community College and  
21 Lizaida Rodriguez from Hostos Community College. If  
22 those would come forward at this time, thank you.

23 If you would raise your right hand.  
24 Thank you. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the  
25 whole truth and nothing but the truth in your

1  
2 testimony before this committee and to answer all  
3 members' questions honestly? [background comments]  
4 Thank you; you may begin; give us your name, please.

5 KATHERINE GUTIERREZ: Good afternoon,  
6 Chairwoman Inez Barron and members of the New York  
7 City Council. My name is Katherine Gutierrez and I'm  
8 a student at LaGuardia Community College, majoring in  
9 business administration.

10 I am here today to testify in support of  
11 Barack Obama's proposal to provide two years of free  
12 community college. My ability to testify here today  
13 has been made possible because of the financial help  
14 that I have received as a recipient of a LaGuardia  
15 Foundation Scholarship and if it wasn't for that,  
16 perhaps I would have not received a college education  
17 in my life.

18 In fall of 2014 I was struggling to raise  
19 money to pay for my semester tuition bill and other  
20 expenses. I have to work different part-time minimum  
21 wage jobs during the day and I work more than 48  
22 hours a week to help pay my bills. Yes, the  
23 scholarship I received helped me, but what if I  
24 didn't have this financial support; I wouldn't have  
25 studied. I believe that free community college can

1  
2 help people like me who have decided to get an  
3 education but still need help to afford it; LaGuardia  
4 is the first step for me and I'm proud having chosen  
5 that community college as my first step, because the  
6 opportunity I have today I wouldn't have never  
7 received at another college. People today need an  
8 education more than ever and like I heard last week  
9 at the New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic  
10 and Asian Caucus, if you are opening a door for  
11 education you're closing a door to jail. After  
12 LaGuardia I plan to stay in CUNY because of the  
13 tremendous opportunity that I'm receiving. I also  
14 want future students to achieve their potential goals  
15 and feel that having free community college is a  
16 great way to start. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Next.

18 CARRIEANN MCHALE: Good afternoon. My  
19 name is CarrieAnn McHale; I am a student at City  
20 College, currently pursuing international public  
21 policy; that's my major there. My testimony begins  
22 -- I graduated high school in America in 2003, after  
23 migrating from Jamaica, and at the time I was  
24 undocumented and I didn't go to college right away  
25 because I couldn't afford it. We actually thought it

1 was really impossible and that was around the time  
2 when legislation came out that students who went to  
3 high school for two years here could actually go to  
4 college and pay in-state tuition, so around that time  
5 that came out, by then my family, we were just so  
6 poor and so afraid of everything that I didn't even  
7 attempt to go to college until years later. And when  
8 I began college, I remember the first semester I  
9 didn't know how I was gonna pay for anything; I  
10 didn't even have the down payment for anything like  
11 that, but the dream that -- you know, during that  
12 period when I wasn't going to college, I was  
13 babysitting, I was cleaning toilets; I did anything I  
14 could to survive, basically what you can do if you do  
15 not have money and I got spat on by a kid I was  
16 babysitting and I couldn't leave my job because I  
17 needed the money, so eventually I'm like you know  
18 what; I have to do something, so I went to college  
19 and I could hardly afford to pay for tuition every  
20 semester; I remember there were semesters where I  
21 waited until the very last day and scrimped aside as  
22 much money as I could and paid a down payment and  
23 just begged and I got help from the school because  
24 sometimes they saw that I was a good student and that  
25

1  
2 I was very involved in community service; I was very  
3 involved in what I wanted to do, so they helped me a  
4 little bit, but the greater issue here is that no  
5 person who has a dream and has a will to pursue their  
6 dream and has a talent should go to waste just  
7 because of tuition and many people are saying right  
8 now that, you know, if you're undocumented you may  
9 not qualify for this; I'm going to ask the Chair and  
10 those in the committee, please push for people who  
11 are undocumented; you know, it's really, really  
12 horrible if we can lose so much and we're losing  
13 natural talent, natural assets if we cannot pay for  
14 students or undocumented to go to college. So the  
15 time I have here, let me just say please push for  
16 students who are undocumented to go to college and to  
17 get free tuition and I hope this goes through. Thank  
18 you.

19 CYNTHIA JIMENEZ: Good afternoon. My  
20 name is Cynthia Jimenez and I'm 26 years old; I  
21 consider myself to be a New Yorker even though I was  
22 born in Ecuador. The first time I arrived to the  
23 United States I was 5 years old; after I finished  
24 high school it was impossible for me to attend  
25 college due to my immigration status. In 2012 the

1  
2 Obama Administration came out with a legislation of  
3 what is known as Deferred Action for Childhood  
4 Arrivals. This law has given me the opportunity to  
5 attend college and to start a promising career in  
6 dental hygiene. As of now I'm attending Hostos  
7 Community College; I expect to get the most out of my  
8 education and use my skills to help the community I  
9 grew up in. In order to reach my full potential, I  
10 need a miracle and I strongly believe that Obama's  
11 plan can be part of a miracle I and many others need  
12 in order to pursue our dreams. Coming from a low-  
13 income immigration family and not being able to  
14 qualify for financial aid or any type of help from  
15 the government, I have no other way but to pay for a  
16 tuition out of my pocket in order to get an  
17 education. It makes it hard for students like me to  
18 worry every day about money for college when it comes  
19 to students enrolling in classes, full-time student  
20 tuition and fees for community college, \$4,500 per  
21 year; this makes it difficult for students who need  
22 to have jobs who attend college or parents who have  
23 kids and to attend classes to be able to focus on the  
24 studies. To this day I have maintained a perfect

1  
2 attendance which proves that I'm determined to push  
3 myself to my goal to a four-year college.

4           President Obama once said that what makes  
5 someone American isn't just blood or birth, but an  
6 alliance to our founding principles about faith and  
7 the idea that anyone from anywhere can write the next  
8 chapter of our story. Being undocumented is a  
9 constant fear, a constant of being taken from your  
10 family and being taken from your home. While  
11 enrolling for college, the fear was also a constant;  
12 when I had to do applications, there were questions  
13 about your immigration status, which reawakened the  
14 fear in my family and me; it came to a point when  
15 they said, don't go to college because they will know  
16 you are undocumented and they will take you away from  
17 us. That fear played a big role in me, but I didn't  
18 allow it to stop me. I had to have courage and  
19 motivation and just because I am undocumented doesn't  
20 mean I should quit. My job; my dreams don't end  
21 here; just because I don't have the right documents  
22 to succeed, I want to have more for my future and to  
23 become a successful person. This motivates me to  
24 earn a degree; filling out college applications was  
25 the first step to achieving. My courage of wanting

1  
2 to have more in my life is not only for myself; I'm  
3 setting an example of my younger siblings and my  
4 future children. When it's time to apply for  
5 college, they shouldn't have fear I had; even if they  
6 did, I would like them to be able to stand up for  
7 themselves and pursue their dreams without worrying  
8 about these fears or expenses of tuition, 'cause the  
9 only way to achieve success is to make a difference  
10 in their lives. This is why against all problems is  
11 even more motivation and determine to achieve all my  
12 goals. I support Obama's plan for free community  
13 college, but I also would like to see undocumented  
14 students benefits from this great proposal. Thank  
15 you very much.

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Next.

17 LIZAIDA RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon,  
18 Madame Chair Inez Barron and to all the members of  
19 the Committee. My name is Lizaida Rodriguez and I am  
20 a student at Hostos Community College. First I would  
21 like to cite the troubling fact that currently  
22 millions of American hold student debt -- thank you  
23 -- student debt is increasing while wages are flat or  
24 decreasing, not to mention that having student debt  
25 can also make you ineligible for many government

1  
2 jobs. Over the years student debts keep rising while  
3 the numbers of jobs keep going down; does anyone else  
4 see a perpetual problem here?

5           Let's look at the dilemma many students  
6 face. We typically have two actions; the first  
7 action is to not go to college, thus not acquire a  
8 degree, therefore, we have to settle for a job that  
9 pays little to nothing and still struggle to make  
10 ends meet, but this option makes us get stuck in a  
11 low-paying job. Action number two, on the other  
12 hand, is to go to college and get a degree that would  
13 enable us to advance socially and professionally, but  
14 by the time we graduate we are sinking in debt from  
15 student loans and then stress trying to find a job as  
16 soon as possible to be able to start paying those  
17 crushing student loans. The President's plan for  
18 community service college will help many students who  
19 do not receive financial aid support receive a  
20 college education.

21           We also need to focus a discussion on how  
22 we can provide student support services to help  
23 students graduate on time. Apart from taking care of  
24 their families, whether that's consisting of being a  
25 mother, father; primary caregiver, many students also

1  
2 are responsible for working full-time while attending  
3 school to be able to sustain themselves; this could  
4 be a contributing factor to the low graduation rates  
5 that are common in community college.

6 I myself am a mother of two wonderful  
7 boys, so in my first year of college I was a full-  
8 time student and worker; that was extremely hard for  
9 me to handle and my responsibilities at home while  
10 making sure my GPA was above 3.5. Despite my  
11 struggles, I managed to do it all and was successful  
12 in all my classes; I learned a few things and I also  
13 share that knowledge with my children. I did spend  
14 many hours at work studying, many hours at home not  
15 sleeping and many hours at school trying to figure  
16 everything out. However, it was overwhelming and I  
17 came to the conclusion that I had to make some  
18 changes. I struggled with the idea of taking out  
19 loans or work enough never to have to do that, but I  
20 do think that that won't be possible when I get to my  
21 senior college for my bachelorette in nursing and it  
22 may even become an issue while I pursue my nursing  
23 degree at Hostos. It was overwhelming and I came to  
24 the conclusion that I had to make changes and give  
25 some things up. I hope that if President Obama's

1  
2 plan becomes a reality that students attending  
3 community college will not have to give up their Pell  
4 Grant or other sources of financial help. Many low-  
5 income and middle class families like myself who  
6 qualify for financial aid depend on using this money  
7 to help support ourselves and not have to work while  
8 attending college, hopefully. Focusing on just the  
9 studies, being able to focus on our studies and not  
10 tuition; expenses will hopefully improve our student  
11 performance and graduation rates as well.

12 Hostos is not the end for me, it's only  
13 the starting point. After graduating I plan to earn  
14 my bachelor's in nursing and my master's in nursing  
15 as well. I stand here today to request you to take  
16 this plan at heart to help improve the lives of us  
17 who are working so very hard to make a better life  
18 for ourselves and our families. Thank you for your  
19 time and consideration and the idea of free community  
20 college.

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I wanna thank the  
22 panel for sharing your stories; it's always the  
23 personal touches and stories that bring to life what  
24 it is that students have to go through and I want to  
25 encourage each of you to continue on your journey;

1  
2 you may get some stumbling blocks, but I would  
3 encourage you to keep pressing your way forward so  
4 that you can achieve what it is that you've set for  
5 yourselves. Thank you. [background comment] And  
6 for our last panel, last but certainly not least, we  
7 want to call you forward at this time; I wanna thank  
8 you for staying to share your important testimony  
9 with us -- Jamell Henderson from BMCC alumni and USS,  
10 I believe it's Eber Blanco from USS, Lillian George  
11 from Students and Communities Working and Oscar  
12 Martinez from USS. Is there a fourth person her?  
13 [background comments] No? So I'm removing.. which  
14 name am I removing? Well you'll give us your names  
15 as you do your testimony. Would you please raise  
16 your right hand? Do you affirm to tell the truth,  
17 the whole truth and nothing but the truth in you  
18 testimony before this committee and to answer all  
19 questions honestly? [background comments] Thank  
20 you. You may begin; give us your name, please.

21 JAMELL HENDERSON: So I'll start.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

23 JAMELL HENDERSON: Good afternoon  
24 distinguished members of the New York City Council;  
25 my name is Jamell Henderson; I am a student at

1  
2 Brooklyn College and a proud graduate from the  
3 Borough of Manhattan Community College. [background  
4 comment] It's truly a great honor and privilege to  
5 be here among you. One again, my name is Jamell  
6 Henderson and I am a senior at Brooklyn College.  
7 I'll be graduating on May 28th with a bachelor's  
8 degree in political science, but before I could have  
9 even arrived at this point in my higher education  
10 journey, it began with me being a proud 2011 graduate  
11 from the Borough of Manhattan Community College, with  
12 my associate's degree in business administration. It  
13 is my honor to testify here before you and share the  
14 importance of supporting the President's proposal for  
15 free community colleges and the impact it would have  
16 on the community at large.

17           During my time as a student at BMCC, I  
18 truly embodied this great motto and creed -- "Start  
19 here. Go anywhere." Being a student at BMCC gave me  
20 a second chance to getting back on the higher  
21 education highway towards my success. I have enjoyed  
22 my academic experience and it's because of the  
23 phenomenal world class of professors who understood  
24 that as a student coming from the New York City  
25 public education system, I unfortunately did not

1  
2 learn the fundamentals of the subjects that I'm  
3 required to learn authentically. I have utilized all  
4 the resources during my tenure as a student at BMCC  
5 who is eager to get back on track but the one factor  
6 that I must say that really helped push me to go and  
7 reach the maximum was when I sought to use my gift of  
8 leadership to serve the students; that opportunity  
9 was presented to me through the Student Government  
10 Association. One of my great mentors and a legend in  
11 BMCC, Curtis Brown, saw something in me and he has  
12 always encouraged me to go for the maximum; because  
13 he saw this in me, he invested in me in ensuring that  
14 the future of the SGA was in true capable hands in  
15 serving the people. I served as a student  
16 representative, to vice president, to becoming  
17 president and then finishing my tenure as a senator.  
18 All these positions I served in SGA were for the sole  
19 purpose for the students, for they saw something  
20 great within me and it was my obligation to show them  
21 that I am of service to advocate and represent them.  
22 Even through all of this I was constantly reminded to  
23 never forget the goal of being at BMCC, which was to  
24 graduate and move onward and upward. One of the most  
25 glorious events that I will always remember was to

1 walk down that aisle of the Jacob Javits Convention  
2 Center, where my late mother was in attendance to  
3 witness me become the first to graduate from college  
4 within my family; the impact that this event had on  
5 my family was immeasurable. As a simple young man  
6 who was born and raised in East Flatbush, Brooklyn,  
7 who had to endure many life-changing events that I  
8 wouldn't wish on anyone to endure or encounter, I  
9 have persevered to make it to this point in my life  
10 and if it weren't for the investment of the great  
11 people of the Borough of Manhattan Community College,  
12 when I graduate from Brooklyn College and achieve my  
13 bachelor's degree, I will pursue my master's degree  
14 and doctorate degree and begin my political journey  
15 to one day become the President of the United States  
16 of America, and when that day happens I will be  
17 beyond proud and honored to say that I started my  
18 journey, my second chance at the Borough of Manhattan  
19 Community College, a college that is a gateway to the  
20 follow brothers and sisters of my community and the  
21 community at large.

22  
23 So why should community colleges be free?  
24 Because of the key work in community college --  
25 community, where individuals who may never have the

1  
2 opportunity to even think about going to college to  
3 honor their family, friends and their community at  
4 large can be able to be a shining light and a stoward  
5 [sic] pillar in their community to make a difference.  
6 For my fellow brothers and sisters from East New  
7 York, Brownsville, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Crown Heights,  
8 Bushwick and Coney Island can become a positive  
9 statistic against the social obstacles that have been  
10 placed before us as individuals who won't make it  
11 anywhere and become the transcending individuals who  
12 will be come the future innovators and leaders who  
13 will make a different in this great city of New York,  
14 where families will be able to have someone to be  
15 able to provide a larger income to help them be out  
16 of poverty and make history within their families to  
17 be the first to graduate from college.

18 In conclusion, I would like to thank the  
19 USS Chair and CUNY Trustee, Joseph Awadjie in his  
20 absence, Vice Chancellor Sanchez and the Borough of  
21 Manhattan Community College for this wonderful  
22 opportunity to show the great importance that  
23 community colleges have on students like myself.  
24 This is just a small piece of my great testimony on  
25 how CUNY has truly impacted my life. I must thank my

1  
2 BMCC family, for this is where my journey towards my  
3 destiny has begun. BMCC had seen something in me to  
4 invest their time, energy and resources because they  
5 believe in my destiny. I shall not let them nor this  
6 wonderful leadership that stands before me down, for  
7 I carry all with me as I continue to climb to the top  
8 as a proud alumni. The opportunities that have given  
9 me a greater appreciation of my abilities and have  
10 strengthened my commitment to help others. Thank  
11 you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Next panelist.

13 OSCAR MARTINEZ: Good afternoon,  
14 Chairwoman Inez Barron; members of the New York City  
15 Council and New York City students. I'm Oscar  
16 Martinez, Vice Chair of Senior Colleges Affairs at  
17 the CUNY University Student Senate. I'm currently a  
18 senior at Lehman College, majoring in computer  
19 information systems. One of the reasons why I'm in  
20 favor of the new proposal by President Obama making  
21 community college free is that I graduated from one,  
22 a SUNY community college, an alumnus of SUNY  
23 Westchester Community College. Westchester Community  
24 College provided me with the information needed in  
25 order to succeed in a four-year institution. Aside

1 from that, right now I see community colleges as a  
2 building block of higher education. Nowadays more  
3 students are deciding to start college at a two-year  
4 institution instead of going to the big-name  
5 institutions. The reasons why they choose community  
6 colleges is because the schools offer a variety of  
7 programs, certificates and the necessary tools to  
8 enter the workforce, as well as affordability. In  
9 coming years, to have an associate's degree will be  
10 beneficial because you're allowed to work and also  
11 able to transfer to a four-year institution to  
12 complete your bachelor's degree. I still remember my  
13 last year of high school, where some of my friends  
14 applied to big-name institutions such as Penn State,  
15 Dartmouth, Syracuse, Binghamton and I was not the  
16 only one who decided to start at community college.  
17 I got accepted to many great schools, especially my  
18 top choice, Yukon, but my parents couldn't afford  
19 sending me there. My friends weren't very pleased;  
20 they told me, why are you going to a community  
21 college; it's not the best option for you? Well I  
22 just told them, wait, I wanna see how it goes; it  
23 really can't be that bad, and don't regret it. I  
24 learned so much in the community college that I could  
25

1  
2 ever imagine; I met friends, I was involved on  
3 campus; I was part of the orientation team and in the  
4 end I learned important values and what to expect at  
5 four-year institution. At a two-year institution,  
6 students go through the process of finding what they  
7 want to do and explore many options that the school  
8 can offer. In the end, once they apply to a four-  
9 year school most likely they know what to do compared  
10 to a freshman entering for the first time.

11           If President Obama's proposal is approved  
12 in Congress, it will help ease the burden of students  
13 worrying about debt and other college expenses; it  
14 will give them more opportunities to see what their  
15 school has to offer and not to worry about working  
16 two jobs and being involved at the same time. Some  
17 students pay out of pocket, like myself, and others  
18 get financial aid, but there is always the part where  
19 students worry about the financial issues on how to  
20 pay for school; by providing a free community  
21 education, more students will be encouraged to apply  
22 to a two-year institution, help and make [sic]  
23 increase of jobs in the coming years and be part of  
24 the growing workforce. Everyone deserves the  
25 opportunity to have a higher education degree and

1  
2 this proposal will make that possible. One quote  
3 that I hear the most is; "Education is the key to  
4 success." Well I do agree, but when you don't have  
5 the necessary resources and the help, how can you  
6 succeed? Thank you and I'll end it with a quote --  
7 "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can  
8 use to change the world." Nelson Mandela.

9 EBER BLANCO: Hello, my name is Eber  
10 Blanco. [background comment] Good afternoon  
11 Chairwoman Barron, members of the Committee, fellow  
12 students and citizens of New York City. My name is  
13 Eber Blanco and I'm a student at Queensborough  
14 Community College and I am honored to be testifying  
15 as a Vice Chair of Community College's of the  
16 University Student Senate.

17 Representing 100,000 students in the CUNY  
18 Community Colleges, I am not only speaking for myself  
19 when I say that it is crucial that we support  
20 President Barack Obama's proposal regarding free  
21 community college. A proposal to make community  
22 colleges free is a progressive step not just for all  
23 parts of our country; as one of the world's most  
24 influential cities, it is important that New York  
25 City maintains an educated workforce that will

1  
2 continue to carry the legacy of our great city. It  
3 is not longer enough, nor should we allow ourselves  
4 to be satisfied with only providing a high school  
5 education to future generations. How can we push our  
6 students to pursue higher education when the cost of  
7 living in this great city alone is a financial  
8 hardship? Free community college is about offering  
9 opportunities to those who have the capacity and will  
10 to better their lives but don't have the resources to  
11 do so. Ask around at any community college and you  
12 will find that many of these students are bright  
13 individuals who are grateful to have an opportunity  
14 to better themselves; many work long hours or  
15 multiple jobs to pay for their education on top of  
16 balancing their schoolwork and other  
17 responsibilities. What if these students didn't have  
18 to worry about paying for community college; what if  
19 instead of having to take an extra shift or pick up a  
20 second job they were able to attend an internship, go  
21 to a career workshop or maybe even pick up an extra  
22 class to learn a new skill? Having the opportunity  
23 to have the time to participate in research and  
24 internships will make an associate degree student as  
25 marketable and competent in the work field as any

1 bachelor degree student. Community colleges cater to  
2 many different individuals, including people fresh  
3 out of high school, veterans, single parents such as  
4 myself, and hundreds of ethnicities. A free  
5 community college program would allow the nation's  
6 diverse population to get a better education, hence,  
7 providing our citizens the stepping stone to attain  
8 better jobs, wages and benefits. This nation was  
9 built on the fruits of labor or hardworking  
10 individuals and by providing the opportunity we're  
11 also investing in the future of this country. As the  
12 Committee mentioned in the resolution, according to  
13 the Center on Education and the Workforce at  
14 Georgetown University, by 2020 an estimated 35  
15 percent of jobs will requires at least a bachelor's  
16 degree and 35 percent will require some college or an  
17 associate's degree. Let's make that process more  
18 attainable by providing students with free community  
19 college. It's about time that our government begins  
20 taking proactive steps towards this country's  
21 educational future. It should be a necessary  
22 decision to prioritize increased funding towards  
23 education, whether it be on the city level, state  
24 level or on the federal level. By proposing the  
25

1  
2 first two years of community colleges to be free, we  
3 are taking a step in the right direction to becoming  
4 a more educated and successful nation. It is  
5 important for the citizens of our great country to  
6 get an education so that we can keep a competitive  
7 edge in this globalized world. President Kennedy  
8 once said -- "As not what your country can do for you  
9 but what you can do for your country." We're not  
10 asking for our country to give us anything; we're  
11 asking you, the citizens of this very own country, to  
12 think about the future of your own nation and what  
13 you can do to ensure that the United States gets the  
14 education it deserves. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [background comment]  
16 Thank you to the panel for coming, for staying, for  
17 your patience and for your substantive testimony.  
18 Certainly as we hear about the reality of what it is,  
19 it brings it to life that it's not just numbers and  
20 data on a page, but people's lives who have been  
21 impacted or who have the opportunity to improve and  
22 we look forward to being able to participate and  
23 benefit, not just for themselves, but in the  
24 generations to come to benefit and improve what it is  
25 that our society has. I wanna thank you for your

1  
2 testimony and I wanna thank everyone for coming and  
3 thank all of you for staying and at this point this  
4 hearing is adjourned. Thank you.

5 [gavel]

6 [background comments]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date March 3, 2015