

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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January 19, 2017
Start: 1:17 p.m.
Recess: 2:30 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: DANIEL DROMM
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Vincent J. Gentile
Daniel Garodnick
Margaret S. Chin
Stephen T. Levin
Deborah L. Rose
Ben Kallos
Andy L. King
Inez D. Barron
Chaim M. Deutsch
Mark Levine
Alan N. Maisel
Antonio Reynoso
Ydanis A. Rodriguez
Helen K. Rosenthal
Mark Treyger
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.

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

Vanda Belusic-Vollor, Senior Executive Director
Office of Post-Secondary Readiness
Division of Teaching and Learning
NYC Department of Education

Andrea Soonachan, Executive Director
College and Career Planning
Office of Post-Secondary Readiness
Division of Teaching and Learning
NYC Department of Education

Gretchen Van Wye, Assistant Commissioner
Office of Vital Statistics
NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Anne Romatowski, Deputy Director
Special Projects
Department of Consumer Affairs

Sandra Chapman Appearing for:
Eric L. Adams, Brooklyn Borough President

Sabrina Lamb, Founding CEO
World of Money, WorldofMoney.org

2 [sound check, pause]

3 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, good afternoon.

4 Today's Education Committee hearing will consist of
5 Intro 1250—excuse me—1254 sponsored by Council Member
6 Treyger, whom I'd like to thank the sponsor in this
7 legislation at the request of the Brooklyn Borough
8 President. Essentially, Intro No. 1254 would expand
9 upon legislation that we passed in 2013. That bill
10 was sponsored by Council Member King and requires the
11 Department of Education to distribute information on
12 college savings plans and other information about
13 tuition and financial aid to every student upon entry
14 into kindergarten, grade 6 and grade 9, and to every
15 student who enters a school as a new student. Intro
16 No. 1254 would expand the distribution of college
17 savings plan materials by DOE to include pre-
18 kindergarten students. Intro No. 1254 would also
19 require the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
20 to distribute information on college savings plans to
21 parents or guardians along with a child's birth
22 certificate. Certainly, providing parents with
23 information earlier about college savings plans will
24 result in more parents starting to save for the
25 children's college education earlier enabling them to

2 accumulate more money and increasing their child's-
3 their children's likelihood of graduating from
4 college. This is increasingly important as college
5 costs keep rising every year. Even if college
6 tuition were free, as Governor Cuomo and others have
7 recommended, there are still many other college
8 related expenses including costs for room and board,
9 books, computers and other materials that college
10 saving plans can cover. The issue of college savings
11 is timely as it coincides with the recently announced
12 New York City Child Savings Account Initiative, which
13 will begin in the fall of 2017. As part of the pilot
14 program approximately 3,500 kindergartners in School
15 District 30 who each have \$100 allocated to them in a
16 scholarship account next fall plus up to an
17 additional \$200 in matching funds during the
18 program's first three years. A total of about 10,000
19 children will be part of the initiative during the
20 three-year pilot funded by a \$10 million contribution
21 from the Gray Foundation. If the pilot program is
22 successful, the goal will be to expand and provide a
23 universal scholarship account to every child in the
24 New York City Public School system. A new non-
25 profit, New York City Kids Rise has been formed to

2 oversee the scholarship accounts and programs within
3 the guidelines of New York 529 College Savings
4 Program, as well as to raise additional private funds
5 to support the ongoing costs and expansion of the
6 initiative. This initiative is a welcomed investment
7 in our children's future, and along with other
8 efforts encouraging families to invest in college
9 savings plans will help make college more attainable
10 for our youth regardless of their economic status.
11 I'd like to remind everyone who wishes to testify
12 today that you must fill out a witness slip, which is
13 located in the desk of the sergeant-at-arms near the
14 front of this room. Please indicate on the witness
15 slip whether you are you are here to testify in favor
16 or in opposition to Intro No. 1254. I also want to
17 point out that we will not be voting on the bill
18 today as this is just the first hearing, and to allow
19 as many people as possible to testify. Testimony
20 will be limited to three minutes per person, and now
21 I'd like to turn the floor over to my colleague Mark
22 Treyger for his remarks regarding Intro No. 1254.
23 Council Member. We've also been joined by Council
24 Member Rafael Salamanca from the Bronx.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Good afternoon
3 and thank you so much Chair Dromm for your
4 leadership, for your support and all my colleagues.
5 I'd like to speak today about Intro 1254, a bill that
6 I've introduced in partnership with Brooklyn Borough
7 President Eric Adams. This legislation is designed
8 to help new parents save for their child's college
9 education by raising awareness of New York's 529
10 College Savings Program and other college savings
11 plans. As you may know, the 529 College Savings
12 Program is a flexible investment tool that assists
13 parents in saving for their child's post-secondary
14 education, whether their children attend a four-year
15 college, a two-year college, a trade school or any
16 other post-graduate degree. This program offers
17 participants an annual \$10,000 deduction withdrawals
18 from which can be used for tuition, books, supplies,
19 electronics or room and board. These withdrawals are
20 tax free, and the program can provide significant
21 assistance for parents who my otherwise struggle to
22 pay for the rising costs of post-secondary education.
23 Many students already receive college savings plan
24 materials in school as a result of great legislation
25 previously introduced by our colleague Council Member

2 Andy King. Intro 1254, as the Chair mentioned, would
3 expand the distribution of college savings plan
4 materials, materials which will include the 529
5 program to include pre-kindergarten students. In
6 addition, this legislation would require the
7 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to provide
8 college savings plan materials to new parents at the
9 same time when the Department provides them with
10 their child's birth certificate. As a former
11 educator, I believe strongly that every child
12 deserves the opportunity to pursue some sort of post-
13 secondary educational avenue. For young people
14 looking to forge their own career path to find high
15 paying jobs with career mobility, it has never been
16 more important to possess more than just a high
17 school diploma. Yet, such educational opportunities
18 have never been more expensive than they are today.
19 That is why it is imperative for parents to learn as
20 early as possible about every potential opportunity
21 they and their children will have to receive
22 assistance with the prohibitive cost of college or
23 other post-secondary programs. The earlier a parent
24 can begin saving and planning for their child's post-
25 secondary education, the likelier their children are

2 to receive one. I again want to thank Brooklyn
3 Borough President Eric Adams for his partnership on
4 this important legislation. Thank you again to Chair
5 Dromm for holding this hearing, and thank you to my
6 colleagues for their support of this legislation.
7 Let's help more parents give their children every
8 possible educational opportunity. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,
10 Council Member Treyger, and we're going to start with
11 testimony, but before we do, I do have to swear you
12 in, but can I ask if you would raise your right hand,
13 please. Everybody at the panel. So thank you. Do
14 you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the
15 whole truth, and nothing but the truth and to answer
16 Council Member questions honestly? Okay, very good
17 and would you please start by identifying yourselves.
18 I think we have Vanda Belusic-Vollor.

19 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: That is I.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

21 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: Good afternoon.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That would be DOH.

23 Just I want to get the other names as well. Andrea
24 Soonachan. Yeah, okay. I hope I said it right. Okay
25 and Marianna Guzman is here. Okay, and Gretchen Van

2 White. Okay, very good Gretchen. Alright, so please
3 begin. Thank you.

4 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: Good afternoon
5 Chair Dromm and members of the Council's Committee on
6 Education. My name is Vanda Belusic-Vollor and I am
7 the Senior Executive Director of the Office of Post-
8 Secondary Readiness with the new Division of Teaching
9 and Learning at the New York City Department of
10 Education. I'm joined today by Andrea Soonachan,
11 Executive Director of College and Career Planning
12 within my office, Gretchen Van Wye, Assistant
13 Commissioner of the Office of Vital Statistics within
14 the New York City Department of Health and Mental
15 Hygiene. We are pleased to be here today to discuss
16 Intro 1254 in relation to distributing information on
17 college dating plans and to discuss the DOE's ongoing
18 work to increase college awareness. This
19 administration is committed to helping students build
20 the skills needed to become college and career ready
21 as well as to navigate the college application
22 process, and has taken unprecedented—a set of
23 unprecedented steps to implement a college ready
24 culture. The Mayor's Equity and Excellence for All
25 agenda is a series of initiatives aimed at ensuring

2 that by 2026 80% of students who graduate high school
3 on time and two-thirds of graduates are college
4 ready. Through the College Access for All
5 Initiatives, part of this agenda, we are taking bold
6 and innovative steps. By 2018-19 every middle-school
7 student will have the opportunity to visit a college
8 campus. Every high schooler will graduate with an
9 individualized college and career plan, and starting
10 this school year, we are offering the SAT free of
11 charge for every junior during the school day and
12 eliminating CUNY fee application fees for low-income
13 students. The goal of College Access for All middle
14 the College Access for All Middle-School Initiative
15 is exposing students to college and beginning
16 conversations about the importance college plays
17 early in a student's academic career. This year
18 alone, 20,000 seventh graders attending almost 170
19 schools are visiting college campuses. The campus
20 visit is embedded in a broader set of students and
21 parent workshops focused on planning for high school
22 and college. Schools have access to a ten-lesson
23 curriculum including Why College, Exploring Your
24 Passion and Career, College Explorations, and Paying
25 for College. The module on paying for college is

2 meant to dispel myths around affording college.

3 Students gain a realistic view of the cost of college

4 and the various forms of financial aid they can get

5 to help pay for college. Within three years this

6 program will be in every middle school in New York

7 City. The College Access for All High School

8 Initiative continues this conversation, and will

9 ensure that every high school student in the city

10 graduates with an individualized college and career

11 plan by the 2018-19 school year. To support this,

12 100 high schools are receiving new training and

13 funding to build the schoolwide college and career

14 culture including giving students and families the

15 support around college savings, affordability and

16 financial aid that they need to pursue college. The

17 SAT school day and elimination of CUNY application

18 fees are also part of removing financial barriers to

19 college, and through a long-time partnership with

20 Goddard Riverside-Riverside Options Institute, we

21 offer an intensive six-day college access training

22 that's staff across 75% of high schools have

23 attended. With particular relevance to Intro 1254,

24 two full days of this training are on financial aid.

25 To supplement this, we also offer additional

2 workshops for school staff on topics such as college
3 counseling for students with disabilities, working
4 with immigrant students and career training and
5 college alternatives. Many of you participated in
6 last week's College Awareness Day, and I'd like to
7 thank--particularly thank Chairs Dromm and Barron for
8 issuing a proclamation recognizing College Awareness
9 Day. College Awareness Day now in its second year,
10 promotes a college going culture across New York City
11 schools and encourages students to consider a range
12 of college and career options. Schools serving grade
13 Pre-K through 12 across all five boroughs
14 participated in a special college and career themed
15 events and activities, and those coordinated efforts
16 are continuing--continuing throughout January, the
17 DOE's first ever college and career month. We have
18 also recently partnered with other agencies and not-
19 for-profits to further strengthen a culture of
20 savings for college with some of our youngest
21 students. The DOE is working with the Department of
22 Consumer Affairs, New York City Kids Rise, a new
23 charitable not-for-profit and other community
24 partners to provide students in Queens Community
25 School District 30 with a child's savings account.

2 This initiative will allocate \$100 with a potential
3 additional \$200 to every new student and during
4 kindergarten over the next three years. Each new
5 kindergartner will be automatically enrolled, and
6 there is no cost to their family to participate. By
7 the pilot's end, over 10,000 will be on the path to
8 saving for a college education. Pending this
9 successful pilot program and fundraising campaign,
10 the program could expand to include all New York City
11 kindergartners.

12 I would like to now turn to Intro 1254,
13 which requires DOE to distribute information on
14 college savings plans to families of pre-K students
15 and would also require DOHMH to distribute college
16 savings plan materials to parents and guardians at
17 the time the department mails the child's certificate
18 of registration of birth. Both the DOE and the DOHMH
19 share the city's—the City Council's goal of providing
20 families with information on college savings plans.
21 Currently, DOE's Achieve, New York City Guide, which
22 is distributed in ten languages to all of the city's
23 public school families including all pre-K families,
24 specifically includes information about college
25 access and financial plan—and financial planning. In

2 2013, we worked with the City Council on legislation
3 to expand this section to include information on
4 college savings plans, and CUNY and SUNY tuition
5 rates. DOHMH issues birth certificates for all
6 people who are born in New York City. In 2014, there
7 were 122,084 births in the city. DOHMH recognizes
8 and understand the importance of providing
9 information to parents on financial planning for
10 their children's education, and they are happy to
11 work with Council to meet the intents of the bill.
12 There are operational and confidential-
13 confidentiality issues with including additional
14 information in the initial birth certificate mailing,
15 but DOHMH is committed to finding a feasible solution
16 to share college stating information with parents if
17 it's born in New York City. While we are pleased
18 with the strides we have taken in helping students to
19 take the next step in college, we know that we have
20 more work to do to ensure that all of our students
21 have the opportunity to successfully pursue the post-
22 secondary path of their choosing. We look forward to
23 continuing to partner with the City Council on this
24 important issue, and with that, we are happy to
25 answer questions—any questions you may have.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, thank you very
3 much, and it was a pleasure to be at the celebration
4 for College Awareness Day, I ordered my T-shirt well
5 in advance and in anticipation of having a good time,
6 which it turned out to be, and I also visited Newtown
7 High School to speak with some of the students there,
8 and I spoke with two classes in the morning, and it
9 was really, really nice and I really appreciate the
10 emphasis on college preparedness because I know like—
11 and I think that's better with the celebration as
12 well, that when I was a fourth grade teacher,
13 sometimes I would ask my class who's going to college
14 and very few hands would be—you know, would rise.
15 Sometimes I think they just didn't want to go to
16 school, you know, for a longer time in their career,
17 but I think others also really thought that, you
18 know, it might not be attainable for them. So I
19 think having this emphasis on college preparedness,
20 awareness, College Access for All as the program is
21 called is really very important. I was just
22 glimpsing through the Achieve New York City book, and
23 I see that in the beginning there are some references
24 made to preparing for college, and on page 33 I think
25 as well, it offers other resources as well, a whole

2 page dedicated to that purpose. Now, this is
3 distributed in the Pre-K centers and schools as well?

4 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: Every classroom in
5 the city.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So every child
7 entering the system even starting at Pre-K will get
8 this? I noticed something that's a little bit more
9 like high school focused. Is there separate
10 materials that you also distribute, or is this—is
11 this the material that you distribute on college
12 access, you know, even starting at those entry grades
13 according to the last piece of legislation that we
14 did. I think it was kindergarten, sixth, and ninth
15 grades.

16 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: [background
17 comments] Those are not the only materials we have
18 on college access. There are other specific
19 materials. You want to talk a little bit about it,
20 Gretchen. For the younger grades specifically about
21 that.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But what I was
23 looking for really is just to get a feel for it
24 because I haven't seen it. The information that you
25 distribute at kindergarten, sixth and ninth grades

2 according to the previous legislation that was passed
3 because we—we passed legislation in the past. It
4 said it was required to give it to children certainly
5 at those grades. It seems to me that you're doing it
6 at other grades as well, and I'm wondering if there's
7 a difference between what you distribute there, or
8 what you distribute according to the law is this or
9 something else?

10 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: It is that guide for
11 all grades, and there is developmentally appropriate
12 language. They're like targeted to different grade
13 bands, as we rate different the recommendations. It
14 depends on supporting your child's academic
15 development. The financial information is the same,
16 though, for all those grades.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So is this
18 distributed every year to all students?

19 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: Yes, every year every
20 students gets that book.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So that's also a good
22 change from when I was teaching because I don't think
23 we ever got a book like this at all, and it's good to
24 see that it's all broken down into different areas as
25 well. So that answers that question. Now, just

2 going back to—and I was also at the announcement
3 about the—the New York City Kids Rise, which I
4 thought was a great program also, but I do want to
5 just ask on the potential \$200 investment. I think
6 what I was told was that it is matching. If parents
7 put money into the account when that would be matched
8 with an additional \$200? Can somebody just let me
9 know what that detail is?

10 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: If we can defer to
11 our colleague and DCA, that would be awesome.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Sure, and I'm going
13 to have to swear you in, and ask for your name as
14 well. [pause] So why don't you just identify
15 yourself. I'll swear you in and then you can answer.

16 ANNE ROMATOWSKI: My name is Anne
17 Romatowski (sic). I'm with the Department of
18 Consumer Affairs.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, and do you
20 solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole
21 truth, and nothing but the truth and to answer
22 Council Member questions honestly?

23 ANNE ROMATOWSKI: I do.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, very good.

2 ANNE ROMATOWSKI: So each scholarship
3 account for each student will be automatically seeded
4 with \$100 in kindergarten. Over the course of K
5 through third grade, students will have the
6 opportunity to receive up to an additional \$200, but
7 we sometimes are referring to our grade award or a
8 match. It's not going to be strictly tied to
9 financial behavior. Some of it may be related to
10 certain savings and activities--

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] I'm
12 sorry. It's a little hard to hear you. Maybe
13 related to what?

14 ANNE ROMATOWSKI: It's not going to be
15 related to be specifically related to savings
16 necessarily. Some of it may be tied to family
17 savings for college, but we are looking forward to
18 working with our colleague at DOE and the leadership
19 within the district as well to identify other college
20 going activities that students can achieve to earn
21 those additional funds.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So those regulations
23 about how that other \$200 will be distributed is yet
24 to be determined

25 ANNE ROMATOWSKI: That's correct.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, and not only on
3 financial needs, but on other issues as well?

4 ANNE ROMATOWSKI: Right, related to
5 educational success and college access.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, in regard to
7 setting up the accounts, is that going to require
8 parental permission? How does that piece of it work?

9 ANNE ROMATOWSKI: For the scholarship
10 components of the account, it will not require
11 affirmative permission from the parents. Parents
12 will have the opportunity to—to have their students
13 not participate on the scholarship component, but
14 that will be automatic otherwise. For families to
15 sign up for their own accounts to start saving their
16 own funds, that will—will require some parent action.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So when you're
18 talking about the scholarship funds is that different
19 from the 529?

20 ANNE ROMATOWSKI: The scholarship funds
21 will be invested in the State's 529 Plan. Those
22 funds will be in what's called an omnibus account
23 that is going to be owned and controlled by the non-
24 profit New York City Kids Rise. So that the—it
25 facilitates the operations of that account for the—

2 the non-profit to own those funds, and then
3 distribute to—to students when they pursue a higher
4 education.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And then the solvency
6 of that 501 is guaranteed. How is that guaranteed?

7 ANNE ROMATOWSKI: I am happy to get back
8 to you on that.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, so if parents
10 are assuming that, you know, that money is going to
11 be there I just would like to know how we're going to
12 ensure that that's going to happy, what, 12 years
13 down the road or especially because they'll be going
14 into kindergarten so it's 12 years down the road.
15 Okay. I'd also like to ask the DOE as well, or excuse
16 me, DOHMH. So it gets—okay. There—you said in—in
17 your testimony or—or your colleagues in your
18 testimony that there are some operational and
19 confidentiality issues. Can you elaborate a little
20 bit further on those for me, please?

21 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: So—so it's important
22 that there was--

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] If—if
24 you can identify yourself as—

2 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: Sure. My name is
3 Gretchen Van Wye. I'm the Assistant Commissioner for
4 the Bureau of Vital Statistics with the Health
5 Department. So it's important that the birth
6 certificates that we issue are sent to the correct
7 address, and—and that there's no mix up in the
8 mailings, and so adding any additional materials to a
9 mailing increases the likelihood of a mix up in the
10 mailing. So, that's—that's our concern.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So how does that add,
12 how does the—the—the extra material add to the mix
13 up?

14 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: So it could add to the
15 mix up by throwing off the production of the machine,
16 and so it's a machinery issue, and so we're very
17 committed to the college savings. We're very
18 committed to working with Council on this. It's just
19 the actual implementation with the actual newborn
20 birth certificate is something that we think could
21 increase risk of a breach of confidentiality.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I see. So is it—do
23 we contract that work out or have—no?

24 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: No, we don't.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Put them in by the
3 DOHMH?

4 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: The actual stuffing
6 of the envelopes?

7 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: Yeah, there's a
8 machine that does it.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right, right, there
10 is. Okay. So are there other materials that you
11 send home currently to parents.

12 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: There are not. We
13 have been asked to send materials. Most recently
14 there's something that we've been asked to send to
15 newborns to help with newborns, and that could
16 potentially be a vehicle, but it would have to be in
17 a different mechanism.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, does cost
19 factor into this?

20 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: Anything that
21 increases the cost of postage would increase the cost
22 of a mailing.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Generally, you can
24 get about five pieces of paper before the stamp price
25 goes up.

2 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: [laughs] But it's
3 funny. The—sending a newborn birth certificate has
4 been—we have a negotiated rate of 94 cents.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Awesome.

6 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: It's a special kind
7 of paper that has to go in a special envelope. So,
8 it's a little bit more expensive.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So it—there would be
10 a little bit of a cost for it.

11 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Additional costs on
13 that. Okay. Alright, thank you. I think I'm going
14 to turn it over to—let me just say that we've been—we
15 were joined by Council Member Maisel. Kallos is
16 still here. Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez is here
17 as well, and I know that Council Member Kallos has
18 some questions.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: So I apologize
20 that I will be a little bit off topic, but it seems
21 like they have all the right folks here. This looks
22 like a great program and a great bill, and I'd like
23 to be added as a sponsor. I just have one problem.
24 Does the NYC use the census data to determine how
25 many four-year-olds there might be in my district?

2 And I thought there were about 2,100, and as of 2014,
3 I had 124 seats in my district. So I'll let that sit
4 with you for a moment. As of right now, we're up to
5 600 seats, but I've been hearing from parents that
6 we're actually losing pre-K seats. So I just wanted
7 to touch base with Assistant Commissioner Van Wye.
8 Is there a way for us to just have a better sense of—
9 can—can you tell me how many four-year-olds we have
10 in the city of New York and how many live in each
11 Council District?

12 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: So this Gretchen Van
13 Wye. That is not something that my office handles,
14 but we do work with the Department of City Planning
15 to let them know the number of births in the city,
16 and that's something we can look into and get back to
17 you on.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Can you give me
19 the number of people—of—of—of people born four years
20 ago that did not die thereafter between then and now.

21 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: In your district?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Throughout the
23 city and in my district. There's also shortages for
24 Pre-K in Julissa Ferreras' district as well as I
25 believe Jimmy Van Bramer's district. So this is not

2 unique to my district, but there are—there are hot
3 spots. So I think that is—that is very helpful
4 information, and so you have that information and
5 then how does—how does DOE estimate how many four-
6 year-olds you're going to have?

7 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: I am not sure, but
8 we can get back to you.

9 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Perfect, and—

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Council
11 Member, are you asking for the number of seats
12 estimate?

13 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: No, I—I—I just want
14 to know—I would like to quantify. The Mayor has
15 proposed Universal Pre-Kindergarten. I support it,
16 and I would like to see every single four-year-old in
17 our city attending a public education for pre-
18 kindergarten, and so I just would like what the
19 number is because the census was in 2010, and we
20 don't have an updated number, and it doesn't seem
21 like anyone is willing to give me that number.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So it's a question
23 that I'm also curious about. I'm wondering how it
24 gets figured. We're going to be doing a hearing on
25 school seats and school sitings of seats. It's

2 something to focus on in future, and maybe just
3 giving as a follow-up question for Ms. Van Wye, if
4 May.

5 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: Sure.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: It's interested to
7 hear, if you don't mind Council Member, and we'll
8 give you your minutes back, but in terms of a follow-
9 up, I heard you mention that you do share information
10 with—I think you said with DOE about the number of
11 births. So the other city agencies, the City
12 Planning I think you said.

13 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: Uh-huh.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is that information
15 shared with the School Construction Authority?

16 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: That's—that's a good
17 question. I can find out and get back to you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, I would really
19 be curious to know that, and if you could get that
20 information to me by the next couple of weeks, I
21 would be most grateful.

22 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: So I will let you
23 know, and I actually have our Annual Summary of Vital
24 Statistics with me, and it has a list of all the
25 births related to the community districts in the

2 city, and we can pretty rapidly get you the
3 information, and that's made publicly available as
4 soon as we public it every--every year. So now the
5 most recent data available up to 2014, and we're
6 working on the 2015 publication, but that is
7 something we make publicly available to anybody who
8 would be interested in these numbers.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, thank you.
10 That would be very helpful, and I'm sorry, Council
11 Member Kallos yes.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: So there's more
13 data because I'm a data nerd. So can you tell us
14 about other data points that Vital Statistics has
15 access to such as immunization records that children
16 need in order to even go to Pre-K and other
17 information that you receive from doctors on remanded
18 for reporting requirements that beyond the birth date
19 that could help us better assess how many four-year-
20 olds we have in the city, how many three-year-olds,
21 two-year-olds and 1-year-olds as predict. Can you
22 just share some of those data points that we have and
23 how might change based on birth versus. We have a
24 lot of folks who are moving into the city with kids
25 under four.

2 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: Well I—I don't have
3 the immunization data, but it's actually a—a
4 different group at the Health Department, but I can
5 tell you that there were 122,000 births in New York
6 City in the Year 2014. I'm happy to pass over this
7 Annual Summary and leave that with you, and we break
8 down a lot of different statistics. I can tell you
9 that our life expectancy is 81.1 years based on life—
10 the—the year of birth at 2013, which is longer than
11 the—

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: What year do you
13 currently have?

14 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: This is the Annual
15 Summary for 2014.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Okay, so I have—I
17 just pulled it off on the Internet--

18 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: [interposing] Great

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: --now and thank
20 you for that, and then one other question. So we're
21 working on Pensions for all and hope to have
22 something there. Is there anything that prevents the
23 city from doing more of a match? So it's great that
24 we're doing non—that we're putting money aside
25 independent of action, but it would be amazing if

2 parents knew that if they put \$10 aside every year
3 that their child will be—sorry, \$10 aside every month
4 or a dollar a month, that the City of New York has—
5 will guarantee the child a CUNY education for free.
6 Is there some sort of partnership that we can have
7 with CUNY so kids know that if they set money aside
8 independent of things that they can go to school
9 without having to take on a loan? So I think that is
10 one of the concerns that we see amongst different
11 populations in the city based on ethnicity. People
12 tend to have different relationships with debts and
13 loan, and if you have any data on that, that would be
14 helpful.

15 ANNE ROMATOWSKI: One of the goals of the
16 New York City Child Savings Account Program is
17 certainly to reduce the burden of financing a college
18 education or higher education on families. We have
19 not yet—we had some conversations with CUNY, but not
20 specifically about the item that you raised, but we
21 are happy to—to talk to them about that and get back
22 to you.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, thank you very
25 much. I'd like to say we've been joined by Council

2 Member Rosenthal and Council Member Gentile. So a
3 few more questions. Have we seen any increase in the
4 number of accounts that have been opened or what type
5 of an impact the program might have either
6 anecdotally or statistic wise.

7 ANNE ROMATOWSKI: It's hard to-to project
8 because this is in some ways the first of its kind
9 program. There are some similar programs in other
10 municipalities and states that have adopted slightly
11 different account structure. So I will--there has
12 been sort of a wide range of those books (sic) in
13 terms of pickups. So I can get back to you with the
14 range of data that we have on that.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, you know, you
16 partially can answer it somewhat by--how many schools
17 participate in the College Awareness Day? Do we have
18 any statistics on that--numbers on that? [pause]

19 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: So there's number
20 of different activities around College Awareness
21 Days, and there's different numbers. For example a
22 free SAT is available to every high school. CUNY fee
23 waivers are available to every student in--who--who
24 meets the threshold. In terms of the actual
25 participation in different events, we don't actually

2 have—we don't actually have those numbers, but
3 they're articulated to all of the superintendents and
4 all of our schools. Participation is encouraged and—
5 and anecdotally we can say that this last year was
6 really successful.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And I'll be curious
8 to see how we couldn't improve on that, too, because
9 there was a question I had only of one student when I
10 went to the celebration is how many schools are
11 really doing it, and who participated and even my own
12 council embers. I want to increase the number of
13 council members who wore their shirts, but I
14 understand about ten elected officials or so actually
15 participated in the event this year. So I think
16 we're moving in the right direction, and just maybe
17 if we can follow up and get some of those numbers and
18 figures as well. Finally, let me ask the flyers are
19 distributed in the classroom or they're mailed home,
20 the Achieve New York booklets, or are they a
21 combination of both?

22 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: They get shipped
23 to schools and put in students' backpacks.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Into their—into their
25 what?

2 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: They're backpacked
3 home.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: In their backpacks.
5 Okay and that's true for the Pre-Ks as well?

6 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Well, this has
8 been a very quick hearing, and we're very thankful to
9 you for your efforts of making students much more
10 aware of access to college. So, yes, yes, Council
11 Member.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: And--and--so you're
13 I guess just--so how much is the fee for the SAT and
14 how many folks are now taking it versus what--and what
15 was the pre-intervention participation rate, and what
16 scores are we currently seeing pre and post-
17 intervention? So I'll just start with that to just
18 get a sense of what's happening there.

19 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: We don't have the
20 data with us today. We'll certain follow up with you
21 around increases in participation rates and average
22 scores. We project that this April 68,000 juniors
23 will take the test on the same day.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: And is that all
25 current juniors or--?

2 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: Yes, yes.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: And so just to-to
4 take another step are you also collecting data on
5 which children have prep and which don't? Are we
6 also offering corresponding pre-prep for the kids so
7 that everyone has an equal playing field?

8 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: Yes, the College
9 Board and the Department of Acana (sic) Academy to
10 offer free—a free training course and then our staff
11 work very closely with schools to ensure that they
12 have access to that course if they utilize it through
13 our Call Back. It's all initiative. We're out there
14 working closely with to support schools and offering
15 other forms of prep and tracking those equities.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: And—and just for
17 what it's worth, I believe—if you haven't paid it out
18 on the future I believe in the scientific method and
19 I have a bevy of economists who are fully funded to
20 do research on this intervention if you're interested
21 to see what the impacts are, and to do RCP models to
22 figure out what the intervention looks like. And I
23 guess one other questions is as we're talking about
24 college readiness, I don't see—some of my colleagues
25 and I went to specialized high schools. Is there

2 anything that you're doing to make sure that every
3 single child is sitting for a specialize high school
4 exam, and that they're all actually getting training?
5 I know that we've had conversations, and Chair Dromm
6 has been involved in them where the state has
7 actually made money available to pay for children to
8 receive training for specialized high schools and
9 other high schools that are in that scope. So, where
10 are we on making sure that all the kids are sitting
11 for that exam, and being prepped for that as well so
12 that they are better prepared for college?

13 [background comments]

14 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: I knew that.
15 Thank you. We do not—we didn't come prepared with
16 that information today, but I'm sure that we can go
17 back to colleagues at the DOE and better understand
18 and—and share that with you. We happen to represent
19 the high school part of the initiative that can talk
20 to our middle school colleagues.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Do believe there
22 might be—I'd be interested to find out if students
23 who are going to specialized high schools or sit for
24 that exam or whether or not sitting for that exam
25 gives you better prep for taking the PSAT and the SAT

2 having already been through one-a-a-an exam to get
3 into a school. So that's interesting to me. [pause]

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. I want to say
5 we've been joined by Council Members Deutsch and
6 Barron and Council Member Rosenthal has a question.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you very
8 much and this is off topic. So apologies to
9 everyone. I just want to make sure that you hear a
10 lot of different voices in the Council, and it's, you
11 know, Council Member Kallos is asking about the
12 specialized high schools and about the high State's
13 tests the SATs, the ACTs. They just wanted to note
14 that I-I-I wanted you to also hear from people on the
15 Council who, you know, really don't put a lot of
16 thought in any of those tests or the specialized high
17 schools. So that's too blunt. Of course, the
18 specialized high schools are important and important
19 for a lot of children. Obviously, Ben got a lot of--
20 out of it, and God bless him.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: [interposing] Do
22 you--do you want to, and I'll--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: --and--and
24 half the Council. [laughter] So--so it's great that--
25 that that's available for some students. However,

2 you know, I would note that many, you know, having
3 just gone through the college process three times
4 with my children, you know, both the ivy leagues and
5 many of the colleges now are stepping away from
6 looking at, asking about requiring the SATs and ACTs,
7 and I'm with them a thousand percent on that. I
8 think they are simply nerve-racking tasks that upset
9 children, young people throughout the country. So,
10 you know, this is my time to give two give two cents
11 for anyone who's listening. You know, let's move
12 away from those tasks. But secondly in terms of the
13 schools, I also would like the DOE to hear about and
14 be clear that, you know, for the kids who aren't in
15 the specialized high schools, there are also
16 technical schools that are excellent and I urge you
17 to continue funding those programs and making sure
18 those programs are robust. One program that I
19 followed closely is Food and Finance High School, and
20 there was a point at which, you know, for who knows
21 what reasons their budget for kitchen supplies was
22 eliminated and kitchen supplies are the crux of what
23 they do. So, in the same way that it was established
24 in the crux, what they do is perhaps require to
25 access the Internet, you know for academic research

2 or other sorts of surprises in that regard. The Food
3 and Finance High School, and I heard this was true
4 also for some of the tech—the technical high schools,
5 they need the—those things that aren't usually
6 budgeted for in other high schools. Their—they need
7 that access to having flour to make things or ovens
8 to bake things in in order for their kids to get a
9 robust education. And I think when we talk about our
10 high schools, all of them, you know, are equally
11 important for different kinds of children, and I just
12 wanted to make sure that that appoint—that point of
13 view was heard by the DOE as well. Thank you. If
14 there's something in there that's a question, you're
15 welcome to answer it?

16 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: I—I would just—
17 would just say thank you for that point of view. It
18 is the reason that our Career in Technical Education
19 portfolio actually lives within our office, and so
20 we—we understand and appreciate the comments.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you.
22 Council member Inez Barron.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you, Mr.
24 Chair and thank you to the panel for coming. In part
25 of your testimony you talk about College Access for

2 All Middle School Initiative. In my district there
3 are three schools that—three middle schools that are
4 either/or suggested to be truncated or closed. The
5 district talks about the assistance that they gave
6 these renewal schools, and that they have not met the
7 objectives, the targets, the goals. So they're
8 looking to truncate them or close them. Part of the
9 reason that the schools have been targeted is the low
10 academic achievement of the students. How are these
11 students who in one school are at 12% or on levels 3
12 and 4, how are these students going to be addressed
13 in the College Access for all Middle Schools when
14 apparently they have not achieve the levels that will
15 have accrue the credits in high school that they
16 would need to move? And how do you respond to CUNY
17 that says—I think it's 60% of the students that come
18 from DOE need remedial training, remedial classes,
19 and are not prepared for college. [pause]

20 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: So the College
21 Access for All Initiative and our work around
22 preparing students for their post-secondary pathway
23 encompasses four major tenets and values, academics
24 being one of them, awareness being another,
25 programming and planning being the third and academic

2 and personal behaviors being the fourth. Our believe
3 is that there are many facets that college and
4 readiness that schools need to work on and then they
5 can do all four successfully. Our students graduate
6 ready for their next step. Around students who are—
7 who are behind, I'd have to defer to my colleagues
8 specifically in those schools as to what academic
9 interventions you're going through, but just wants to
10 life that the academic intervention is important to
11 us, and the College Access for All, we are talking to
12 CUNY about leveraging the whole free year to make
13 sure that students who are on track to graduate high
14 school are also on track to graduate—to graduate
15 ready to start programs in CUNY with remediation.
16 And so those conversations are underway between the
17 two institutions.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: But the number of
19 students who actually graduate from high school, who
20 graduate high school, of—of that number who graduate,
21 there's a huge percentage that are not college ready.
22 So yes the DOE has passed them through and given them
23 a diploma, but they are not capable of handling the
24 level of the material that they're getting in
25 college. So there's a disconnect. It all sounds

2 good on paper. Oh, we're going to do this. We're
3 going to have individualized programs for them.
4 We're going to provide access, but are we going to
5 prepare them? How are we going to prepare them to be
6 academically ready for the college level material
7 that they're going to get?

8 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: I deeply
9 appreciate you raising this issue. The disconnect
10 between high school graduation requirements and—and
11 those requirements to post-secondary institutions,
12 there is one that is real and evident, and so the—the
13 answer is in—in helping us change state policy. For
14 example, you only need six credits in mathematics to
15 graduate high school, four of which could be in
16 Algebra, but the research also shows that six credits
17 of high school mathematics is not enough to be
18 college and career ready.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So we're not
20 limited by what the State says. That's the State's
21 ball, but it doesn't limit us as to what we offer our
22 students.

23 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: I think—I think
24 schools who are managing students' academic, levels
25 of academic. They've only got four years, and

2 they've only got a certain number of time, and
3 they've got to fit in these mandated credits, and
4 figure out how to help students pass that, but the
5 disconnect between what those credits are, and what
6 actually prepares young people for college and career
7 ready-readiness is the place that we're trying to
8 help schools understand, but the reality is that
9 they're competing for time. Like they have a limited
10 amount of time, and if a young person comes in behind
11 academically, that time in high school should get
12 them to meet the stat's bar is the first area of
13 focus. And I don't if you had anything? There is
14 one.

15 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: I—I would just
16 reiterate what Vanda was saying that part of the
17 efforts for our initiative includes deep work with
18 CUNY and around deepening and scaling supports for
19 12th grade students who are in that boat. So we're
20 really optimistic that we will be focusing on that
21 issue. And I guess I think it's worth noting as well
22 that we applied CUNY's recent work around
23 investigating their own remedial policies and rolling
24 out these changes over time that reflect a better
25 understanding of what readiness really means, and

2 looks like, and some of the unintended consequences
3 of their remedial philosophies and policies. So
4 we're optimistic about some of those changes rolling
5 out in the next two years from CUNY.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank to the
7 Chair. I just have one final comment. As we talk
8 about the savings plan that's being proposed, and
9 it's a part of the topic of today's hearing, I would
10 caution us to examine the sources and the motives of
11 the people who are offering these great plans for
12 children and that they're going to match them as
13 parents go forward. I would caution us that we not
14 get caught up with just grabbing money from people
15 who have ulterior motives that are not educationally
16 linked so that they can profit and perhaps get favor
17 and consideration for other projects that they want
18 to get from the city further down the line. Thank
19 you.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you very
21 much. Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: First of all,
23 thank you, Chairman and, you know, DOE and the
24 Administration for—

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Can I
3 just also say Council Member, we've been joined by
4 Council Member Dan Garodnick and Council Member Chaim
5 Deutsch. [background comments] Thank you.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: So, you know,
7 I—we—I believe that the whole city understands that
8 you were part in the last four years the fact that we
9 have educators in charge of the New City Department
10 of Education makes a big difference, and I believe
11 also that we have seen specific investments when it
12 comes to preferring our students who be ready to go
13 college. I can say that at the local level school
14 districts fits—it is the one that I represent is we
15 are moving forward. Today, all our schools are in
16 good standards but, you know, you would take many
17 risks, but all take the system that we inherited so
18 abruptly. That there is no—I endow and I want to be a
19 partner with a plan to accomplish the goals of our
20 2026 80% of the students who graduated from high
21 school. But I'm also very concerned on how much are
22 prepared in the city to be like college material
23 because the reality is that when we look at students
24 who are in remedial courses getting into a CUNY
25 community college, you know, that number has not

2 changed so much because it's difficult to move it.
3 More than 80% of the students entering into community
4 college and need remedial courses and they didn't
5 like math. (sic) That's what you and the middle
6 should inherit. So how much—what is the expectation
7 that we have on improving the level preparing those
8 students that we are sending to college? So that
9 instead of a student who is getting a subject that is
10 supposed to be finished in two years, and less than
11 30% get that subject, but it takes six years for them
12 to get their subject. Again, I'm not—this is not
13 what you are doing right now. I know about the
14 numbers moving. This is what you inherit. That
15 means this Administration. So how are you—and we
16 have computer science for all. We have after school
17 for all. There's a lot of initiatives that we put in
18 place, but when you look at the numbers today, can we
19 say that—that the population of the students
20 graduating for our New York City Public Schools are
21 the high schools. That number has improved when it
22 comes to a city being more prepared, and not needing
23 remedial courses when they get into community
24 college?

2 ANDREA SOONACHAN: So just to make sure I
3 understand the question. Is the question has the
4 number of students who graduate our high schools
5 ready for the post-secondary Pathways of their
6 choice? Has that number changed of the years? Is
7 that the question?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: [off mic]

9 ANDREA SOONACHAN: I—I can tell you that
10 the—for the Class of 2015, a little bit over 49% of
11 our graduates graduate college ready. So I believe
12 that number has risen through the years, but I would
13 need to confirm, but I do know in 2015 the number of
14 high school graduates who were deemed college ready
15 was 49.1%.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: [off mic] -[on
17 mic] On—the college savings piece, are the parents
18 coordinated in our schools being subject to not only
19 the students and in our schools, but also to organize
20 workshops among parents. So that we not only did the
21 max students (sic) our city has educated, but Council
22 Member Barron, the Chairman and I we've been in the
23 DOE for many years. It's previous to being here, and
24 we know it's not only the talents that we had
25 students that are not here, but our reporting was

2 such that we put in needing the parent and the parent
3 coordinated and accepted to include I filed this
4 application to also run a number of workshops to
5 educate the parents on the importance of the college
6 training field.

7 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: So work closely
8 with our Office of Family and Community Engagement or
9 FACE, as most people know them, and the information
10 is shared with them at their parent meetings, and so
11 I'm confident they are coordinating with their
12 constituents and so school based folks. So I can say
13 that the central office is working directly with FACE
14 who is working directly with parents, and we share
15 this information with them at their Saturday
16 workshop, and things of that nature.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: And my
18 suggestion is now since there are lot of especially
19 all working class New Yorkers they're going filing
20 their income taxes and getting their returns. I thin
21 that this is also a freer time to try to, you know,
22 do some work with the parents, the information to
23 send out if they put aside \$200 or \$300 dollars in
24 the college savings of the city how it will make a
25 difference for their child in this issue.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. We've
3 been joined by Council Member Andy King and Council
4 Member Inez Barron has another question.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yes, my colleague
6 Ben Kallos had to leave, but he did have a question
7 that he wanted to present. So I'm going to ask it on
8 his behalf, and the question is: As parents
9 participate in the College Savings Plan, what type of
10 information is shared with them, or what kind of
11 measures can be taken so that they won't take the
12 money that they accrue over time, and send their
13 child to a college such as Trump University based on
14 the fact that it perhaps has a name or the glitter,
15 but in fact, has no value in terms of meeting the
16 objectives. So what kind of information or training
17 can be attached so that parents don't get duped out
18 of their savings and lose all that they have
19 invested?

20 CHAIRPERSON GARODNICK: That work is
21 really the focus of our trainings--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Could you speak a
23 little more in the--

24 GRETCHEN VAN WYE: Sure, that work is
25 really a focus of our trainings with college advisors

2 who are working with our eleventh and twelfth grade
3 students. I think that's been a big focus of ours
4 over the last several years. As Vanda mentioned,
5 we've trained--about 75% of all high schools have at
6 least one trained person and in this curriculum it's
7 a particular high quality college advising, and that
8 includes two full days on financial aid and
9 understanding the post-secondary landscape, working
10 with families on accessing financial packages, and a
11 full day on working with immigrant students. And
12 then we do a number of supports and follow-ups with
13 staff following that so that we're really supporting
14 the adults doing--advising in our schools to do that--
15 that high quality work with all students in the--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]
17 Thank you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you, Mr.
19 Chari.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, just before I
21 let you go, I did promise the Chancellor's Parent
22 Advisory Council that I would read into the record
23 their testimony. The Chancellor's Parent Advisory
24 Council represents all the PAs and PTAs in New York
25 City and through them all New York City parents. We

2 applaud the efforts by the City Council and DOE to
3 ensure that all parents are aware as early as
4 possible of the importance of saving for college so
5 that a child's dream of attending college is not
6 thwarted by a lack of funds or burdened by
7 overwhelming debt. We appreciate current efforts by
8 the Department of Education to provide information on
9 college savings programs including the New York State
10 529 Plan on college tuition when children enter
11 kindergarten, sixth grade, ninth grade and whenever a
12 student matriculates into new school.

13 1. CPAC supports the City Council
14 efforts to extend this provision of information to
15 children in Pre-K and to newborns, and

16 2. CPAC urges the City Council to
17 consider requiring the DOE to expand its efforts so
18 that all children in elementary and middle schools
19 receive this information at least annually. We
20 believe that paper costs will be minimal, and parents
21 could receive this information electronically through
22 DOE led workshops. As students, teachers, and
23 parents work so assiduously to prepare students for
24 college, we believe in preparing parents early with
25 information on the need to pay for college for is

2 critical. With great appreciation, the Chancellor's
3 Parent Advisory Council.

4 So that's their position. I just wanted
5 to be able to read it in front of you as well, and
6 Council Member King has a question. Is he afoot?
7 You were going to get away, right, but Council Member
8 King has a question.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Good afternoon.
10 Thank you. Sorry for the tardiness. I was three
11 places at one time. You know how we do it. But my-
12 my question kind of follows Council Member Kallos'
13 and I'm-I just caught the tail end. So I just wanted
14 to know after a child grows and he's ready to or
15 she's ready to go to higher education, understanding
16 the protections that remind us of a bogus university.
17 How-how in this plan do we prevent a student going to
18 a bogus university? What are-are there any criteria
19 being put in place? My-I-we can always say you can
20 only go to these certain schools. This money is
21 going to qualify you for these higher education
22 institutions. So that it will eliminate it? What if
23 someone says that's discriminatory or whatever, but
24 how do we put some checks and balances in place that
25 they can only use this funding at a particular school

2 to guarantee that they don't end up going to some of
3 these institutions that we know that hurt young
4 people, and they've graduated with no degrees, or
5 halfway through it disappears and they're out
6 thousands of dollars? [pause]

7 VANDA BELUSIC-VOLLOR: So I'm not sure
8 what is in place around the college savings funds in
9 particular, but just to reiterate what Andrea was
10 saying earlier this idea of helping students
11 understand their college choices, not just for bogus
12 universities, but also for choosing universities
13 where they can be successful is a huge part of the
14 college access work. How that will translate
15 directly to the savings plans. We're eager to work
16 with our colleagues to—to help figure out, but we'll
17 defer in case there is something I'm missing.

18 ANNE ROMATOWSKI: I would just reiterate
19 that we're look forward to working with DOE on that—
20 that very issue as the students who we begin with in
21 kindergarten get older over the—the years.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you
23 Council King and thank you to this panel. I
24 appreciate that you've come in, and that we look
25 forward to having further discussions down the road.

2 Thank you very, very much. Okay. Okay, we do have
3 representatives from Borough President Eric Adams,
4 Sandra Chapman who is here. Eric Adams is also co-
5 sponsoring this legislation. [pause] And if there's
6 anybody else here who wants to give testimony, please
7 make sure that you fill out a slip with the-- Yeah,
8 we have some more, but just wanted to make sure
9 because other people have come in since--since we
10 started. [pause] Okay, and I'd just like to swear you
11 in. I'm going to ask you to raise your right hand,
12 please. Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the
13 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth and
14 to answer Council Member questions honestly? And
15 would you state your name for the record, please?

16 SANDRA CHAPMAN: [off mic] Sandra
17 Chapman.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Sandra.
19 Is that red light on?

20 SANDRA CHAPMAN: It's on now.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, very good. So
22 you may begin.

23 SANDRA CHAPMAN: Thank you. Good
24 afternoon. I'm here to provide testimony on behalf
25 of our President Eric L. Adams. My name is Eric L.

2 Adams and I am the Brooklyn Borough President
3 representing 2.6 million residents who call Brooklyn
4 home. I would like to thank Chair Dromm and members
5 of the City Council Committee on Education for the
6 opportunity to testify in support of Intro 1254, a
7 Local Law to amend the Administrative Code of the
8 City of New York in relation to expanding college
9 savings plan materials in school to include pre-
10 kindergarten and distributing college savings plan
11 materials to parents or guardians with a child's
12 certificate of registration of birth. I thank
13 Council Member Mark Treyger, who introduced this
14 legislation on my behalf as well as the bipartisan
15 group of council members who are co-sponsoring this
16 bill. Since taking office as Brooklyn Borough
17 President in 2014, I have championed financial
18 liberty and education for Brooklynites. In 2015, I
19 released Countering Consumer Debt in Brooklyn,
20 strengthening communities by raising financial
21 literacy, which outlined the causes of Brooklyn's
22 consumer debt challenges as well as identified
23 specific recommendations for government, individuals
24 and the private sector to enact my Four in Four goal,
25 which strove to reduce consumer debt by 4% in four

2 years. A key section of achieving that goal is
3 ensuring that economic opportunity is available to
4 all. Research has repeatedly indicated that economic
5 earning power and other benefits grow with increased
6 education. According to a 2012 report from the
7 United States Department of Treasury, people with
8 more education typically—typically earn more and have
9 a lower likelihood of being unemployed. Education
10 significantly increases the ability to of children to
11 move up the economic ladder. Children are bearing a
12 greater share of the college costs than a generation
13 ago, and those cost burdens continue to rise.

14 According to the College Board's Trend in Higher
15 Education, the cost of tuition and fees at a four-
16 year public college grew more than 40% from 2006 to
17 2006—I'm sorry—to 2007 to 2016 to 2017,
18 highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach to
19 reducing college costs for families to ambitious
20 plans such as making the University of New York and
21 State University of New York tuition free, and
22 empowering families to improve their ability to pay
23 for remaining education costs. In 2015, I
24 commissioned the study from the New York City
25 Independent Budget Office on the impact of making

2 CUNY community colleges tuition free. The tuition is
3 only part of the overall college expense. We need to
4 make sure families have funds they need when they
5 need them. This legislation will serve as a building
6 block for families empowering them to begin from
7 their children's—for their children's college
8 education by providing financial and college savings
9 information at the earliest opportunity for parents.
10 529 College Savings Plan were added to the—the IRFP
11 20 years ago with the intent of assisting families to
12 save funds for higher education. New York State—the
13 New York State's version of the 529 Plan allows us up
14 to \$10,000 per year to be deducted tax free for
15 married couples filing jointly or \$5,000 for those
16 who file as single. According to New York Saves.org,
17 the funds can be used for tuition, books, supplies,
18 equipment expenses, et cetera. Unfortunately,
19 according to the College Savings Plan Network, 529
20 reports an exclusive mid-year review of the 529 Plan
21 activity from September 2016 while contributions for
22 the 529 Plan nationwide approached nearly \$13
23 billion. More than half of those accounts did not
24 receive contributions in the first half of 2016.
25 Many factors need to be addressed to ensure that a

2 college education is accessible to all that choose to
3 pursue one. New York—New York City must do more to
4 make certain that all who choose to save for college
5 must have access to the information necessary to
6 benefit from existing programs. Identifying and
7 reporting such as birth certificate distribution,
8 Pre-K enrollment and other times students make
9 transitions at which to distribute this information
10 is integral to building an educated population that
11 is in more control of their education and financial
12 destiny. Long-term investments make their greatest
13 gains in the later years, meaning that early
14 investment even a difference of one or two years can
15 have a meaningful impact on family budgets. Let's
16 make sure we are fulfilling the intent of these plans
17 and ensure that families know of all their options as
18 early as possible so they could take advantage of
19 those few extra years. I urge the passage of this
20 bill from the Committee of Education for full
21 consideration by the City Council—by the City
22 Council and I thank Chair Dromm and all the members
23 of the Committee on Education for their time and
24 consideration. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, you very much
3 and thank you for coming in today, and I'm glad that
4 you highlighted at one point that New York State's
5 program does allow for the money to be spent on book
6 supplies, equipment, computing and things like that
7 because that can also be very costly. And in
8 preparation for this hearing, one of the things that
9 we discuss in my office was the cost of books alone
10 can be insurmountable sometimes with families. You
11 know, I remember I was fortunate enough to be able to
12 get grants and--and do work study for the sleepaway
13 (sic) college, Marist College that I went to, but
14 when I got socked with the cost of the books, oh, my
15 goodness, you know. So I'm glad that you pointed
16 that out. Please thank the borough president for his
17 testimony today, and we look forward to continuing to
18 work with him on these important issues.

19 SANDRA CHAPMAN: Thank you, thank you
20 for--

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Thank
22 you very much.

23 SANDRA CHAPMAN: You're welcome.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, our next person
25 Sabrina Lamb from WorldofMoney.org. [pause] And

2 Sabrina, I need to swear you in also so can I ask you
3 if you'd raise your right hand, please? Do you swear
4 or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
5 nothing but the truth and to answer Council Member
6 questions honestly?

7 SABRINA LAMB: I do.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,
9 Sabrina. Would you please begin.

10 SABRINA LAMB: Thank you. Good
11 afternoon, Chairman Daniel Dromm and Education
12 Committee member of the New York City Council. I am
13 Sabrina Lamb, Founding CEO of the World of Money. On
14 behalf of nearly 4,000 World of Money children and
15 their families, I thank you for the opportunity to
16 test-to testify today. Forty-four million borrowers
17 owe nearly \$1.3 trillion in student loan debt. The
18 average 2016 college graduate graduated with over
19 \$37,000 in students loans. To minimize the debt that
20 college students will unfortunately amass, parents
21 need access to strategies to help fund their child's
22 college education. Thus, I wholeheartedly support
23 the idea of distribution of college savings plan
24 materials for all New York City including pre-K
25 parents with qualification. The reason why I say

2 that is because parents are frightened, they're
3 immobilized with fear about this issue. One of the
4 Council Members said are you just distributing it,
5 and you hope that they will read it? What is the
6 actual engagement regarding this issue? And we
7 really have to address that because the parents that
8 I hear from they will not squarely face the reality
9 regarding their child's college education until it's
10 too late, or often that they only can apply for loans
11 with high interest fees. So the urgency in terms of
12 not only the awareness of the delivery method and the
13 engagement method for parents, and also parents who
14 have said to me, and probably Council Members as well
15 I'm trying to keep the lights on. I can't put any
16 money away for my-for-for my child and, you know, I
17 hope that the-the outcome will be optimistic in terms
18 of, you know, once that-there's the matching funds
19 and so forth are provide in accounts, but what
20 happens after that particularly with the-the parent
21 who is so immobilized financially? So what do we do
22 with those underserved populations, but perhaps the
23 funding could also be used for application fees as
24 well in addition to books and so forth. But I also
25 want to draw, you know, to make these-these quick

2 points that in--included in the materials as New York
3 State has an excellent college savings plan platform.
4 It's really--it's really great particularly because
5 they're low fees, but there are other college savings
6 plans throughout the country that are not so great.
7 In fact, they--they're almost a subprime loan,
8 subprime platform of college, so-called college
9 savings plan. And so parents when they receive these
10 materials and you have a parent who's at the table
11 and they're looking over, they need to know what is
12 the difference? What is New York State Savings Plan
13 so great, and what's the difference in terms of the
14 other ones that I'm getting this wonderful, that I
15 love? Maybe there's a celebrity attached from
16 Montana. Maybe I should. My grandmother lives
17 there. They need to know what is the difference, and
18 all college savings plans are not the same. Some
19 have very, very high fees. Maybe they're, you know,
20 putting their money, you know, investing their monies
21 in plans, you know, have a financial advisor as
22 opposed to a direct platform. These are, of course--
23 that's not the New York State model, but again, many
24 parents that I hear from are targeted from other--for
25 college plans that you don't have headquarters in

2 other states. That really, really needs to be
3 addressed, and—and the other—and parents have to
4 really understand about the see (sic) issue. They
5 feel they may breathe a sigh of relief and say I have
6 a college savings plan for my child, but they don't
7 understand on the back end all the fees that they—
8 that they have to pay that are going to be rip the
9 value of that—that actual plan away. And so, you
10 know, it's—I do believe the delivery method because,
11 just because, you know, it's almost—almost akin to
12 email. Just because you send an email does not mean—
13 --that does not guarantee that that person has
14 received it or read it, and then having some sort of
15 engagement even using technology, as you—as you know,
16 Council Member Dromm with—the World of Money has a
17 mobile app that we deliver information regarding this
18 issue with other financial education issues to the
19 mobile devices of parents, and delivering it so that
20 they can choose, they can make choices. Okay, if I
21 do this, this is going to be the outcome. If I—if I
22 do use this kind of college saving plan I have risk,
23 but also if I'm not—if I'm not interested in a
24 college saving plan, and I have an academically
25 talented child, what are the options and terms of

2 grants and scholarships, and if I start to strategy-
3 strategize now, what-what platforms are available so
4 that I can start, you know, researching all the
5 platforms that are out there. So college-I believe
6 the college savings plan is good. It's wonderful,
7 but what else and how can the materials allow the
8 parent to feel empowered to ask the right questions
9 and make the right answers for the decision that best
10 fits their family.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, thank you very
12 much for coming in again because I know you've been
13 here to testify before, and on financial education--

14 SABRINA LAMB: [interposing] Uh-huh.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: --in the schools and-
16 and this really fits right into that as well.

17 SABRINA LAMB: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And, you know, I just
19 want to say like 44 years ago when I was beginning to
20 apply for financial aid for college, it was very
21 difficult and very overwhelming for my mother. We
22 were on public assistance, and getting food stamps,
23 and even just filling out the forms for my mother who
24 was, you know, American born English speaking, was an
25 overwhelming task. It is a thick number of papers,

2 and I'm sure that that's probably the same for many
3 students today. So I think preparing at a young age,
4 getting into people's mindsets the fact that is
5 attainable, but there are certain things that you
6 need to do to prepare, finances certainly being a big
7 a part of it. But other aspects of it as well, which
8 you—you pointed out in your—in your testimony I think
9 is—is really very important.

10 SABRINA LAMB: Thank you. I agree. I
11 look forward to working with you, and sharing the
12 stories of many parents that had, you know, didn't
13 plan—didn't plan, didn't save and not because the
14 weren't well intentioned and loved their child but
15 because they were immobilized by fear, and—and the—
16 the delivery of the information is so important, so
17 key.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right and actually, I
19 was the only one as the oldest of five children, and
20 I was the only one who went to college for varying,
21 these varying reasons, you know, my other brothers
22 didn't go but, you know, everybody should be able to
23 go to college day, and it's—it's a necessity. So
24 thank you.

2 SABRINA LAMB: Absolutely. One final
3 point. So with our--our new financial education
4 mobile app, we're creating content that's delivered
5 from children for their peers. So maybe the parent
6 is immobilized by fear--

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Uh-huh.

8 SABRINA LAMB: --but, you know, being
9 engaged by their peers and having a discussion, even
10 if my parent is not engaged or involved, what can I
11 do, and what can I do from an early age?

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I agree because even
13 as a teacher often times when I didn't understand
14 material, I'd say to one of the students in the
15 class, hey, you show them how to--how to do it, and
16 they had their own vocabulary and language.

17 SABRINA LAMB: Exactly.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I think just as a
19 support system of one student talking to another
20 student saying, hey, are you going to college? This
21 is what I've done. This is what you can do I think
22 is really important and having that app, as you've
23 pointed out, which I've seen is--is--is very helpful to
24 them as well.

25 SABRINA LAMB: Yes, this--

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So thank you.

3 SABRINA LAMB: --so this is great, but
4 the devil is in the details.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, yeah,
6 absolutely. Yes. It's more to be--more to be--more to
7 learn.

8 SABRINA LAMB: Yes. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,
10 and I believe that that will be it because I don't
11 see anybody else here to testify, and we are finished
12 at 2:30. We will adjourn a 2:30 p.m. Thank you.

13 [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date January 30, 2017